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**A GENDERED AGENDA?
FEMALE REPRESENTATION AND
BILL SPONSORSHIP IN THE
ITALIAN PARLIAMENT (1987-2008)**

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L'idea alla base di questo approccio è che sia non solo desiderabile ma istituzionalmente possibile muovere verso forme di politica «civile», informate a quel «pluralismo ragionevole» che Rawls ha indicato come tratto caratterizzante del liberalismo politico. Identificare i contorni di questa nuova «politica civile» è particolarmente urgente e importante per il sistema politico italiano, che appare ancora scarsamente preparato ad affrontare le sfide emergenti in molti settori di policy, dalla riforma del welfare al governo dell'immigrazione, dai criteri di selezione nella scuola e nella pubblica amministrazione alla definizione di regole per le questioni eticamente sensibili.

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KEYWORDS

women, policy priorities, bill sponsorship, Italian Parliament,
descriptive and substantive representation

ABSTRACT

**A GENDERED AGENDA? FEMALE REPRESENTATION
AND BILL SPONSORSHIP IN THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENT (1987-2008)**

While dynamics in female legislative recruitment have been considered in some studies and researches about the Italian politics, less attention has been paid to the legislative activity of women elected in the Italian Parliament, and to whether it differs somehow from that of their male colleagues. Does gender matter for the decision-making process and its outputs? Once elected in the Parliament, do women MPs display distinctive legislative interests? Which priorities do they display in their legislative activity? Does an increase of the presence of women in the Parliament affect the legislative agenda of the legislature? Does it change the policy priorities of the entire legislature? This paper aims to answer these questions, which are relevant to understand how values, interests and rules interact and affect the law making process, through a quantitative analysis of the bills introduced in the Italian Chamber of deputies in six legislatures over a time span of twenty years.

A GENDERED AGENDA? FEMALE REPRESENTATION AND BILL SPONSORSHIP IN THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENT (1987-2008)

INTRODUCTION

The number of female MPs in the Italian Parliament has significantly increased in the last two legislatures, after several years of oscillation around the 10% threshold. Actually, in the 15th legislature (2006-2008) more than 17% of the 630 elected deputies were women in the Italian Lower Chamber, while in the current legislature (i.e. after the 2008 general elections) they are almost 21%. The reform of the electoral system, which has reintroduced the principle of proportional representation, has to be mentioned among the variables that have contributed to this change by favoring a process of “contagion” in the patterns of female legislative recruitment among all the major Italian parties (Papavero and Verzichelli 2008). The most striking novelty can in fact be identified in the center-right area, where women, very underrepresented in past legislatures (below 10%), have increased their presence dramatically, reaching almost 20%. Thus, for the first time in the Italian democratic Parliament, the female representation gap between left-wing parties and (center-) right parties has narrowed.

While dynamics in women recruitment in the Italian Parliament have been considered in some studies and researches (see for example Guadagnini 1987 and 1993; Cotta, Mastropaolo and Verzichelli 2000), less attention has been paid to their political consequences.

Does gender matter for the decision-making process and its outputs? Once elected in the Parliament, do women MPs display distinctive legislative interests? Which priorities do they display in their legislative activity? Does an increase of the presence of women in the Parliament affect the legislative agenda of the legislature? Does it change the policy priorities of the entire legislature?

These questions are relevant to understand how values, interests and rules interact and affect the law making process. Indeed, theories that stress the importance of descriptive representation of historically disadvantaged social groups, like women, argue that the shared experience imperfectly captured by *descriptive representation* may facilitate the relationship of accountability between representatives and citizens by improving the communication between those elected and

voters¹. In particular, it may help representatives to act according to not yet explicit preferences, expectations and values of their constituents, and to give a public relevance to some specific demands and interests that would be otherwise overlooked (Phillips 1994, Mansbridge 2000). Feminist theory, on the other hand, suggests that there is a set of issues that can be identified as specific interests of women and may be supported by female politicians. In particular, in their institutional activity female representatives may not only express different types of values and attitudes, they are also very likely to *substantively represent* women, giving priority to those issues that are closer to their particular life-experiences at home, on the workplace and in the public sphere, such as childcare, health, education and welfare (Lovenduski and Norris 2003, Phillips 1995).

The increased number of women elected in the Italian Parliament in the last twenty years and the progressive narrowing of the gap between left and right parties in female recruitment allow to empirically address the hypotheses implied by these theories as well as to answer the above mentioned questions—some already explored for other political and cultural contexts. This is what this paper does, by focusing on female MPs' policy priorities in Italy through a quantitative analysis of the bills introduced in the Italian Chamber of Deputies in six legislatures over a time span of twenty years.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Legislative behavior of female officers has been at the core of a broad literature in the last forty years, especially in the Anglo-Saxon and Northern European countries. The studies on this topic have usually confirmed that, in their legislative behavior, women display different values, attitudes, styles and policy priorities from their male counterparts, although with some variation over time and across policy sectors. Some studies on the congressional voting behavior in the US highlight, for example, that female legislators usually display more “liberal” values than their male colleagues. However, these patterns of voting become significantly less different over time and they seem to depend largely on the different constituency bases of men and women MPs, as the latter are more often elected in more liberal districts (Welch 1985, Vega and Firestone 1995). Lovenduski and Norris (2003)

¹ Descriptive and substantive representation are two of the four different views of representation (formalistic, symbolic, descriptive and substantive representation) identified by Hanna Pitkin (1972) in her classic discussion of *The Concept of Representation*. Descriptive representation refers to the extent to which a representative resembles those being represented, i.e. how much a representative looks like, has common interests with, or share certain experiences with the represented. In contemporary literature on political representation this concept more generically defines also the numeric similarity between legislative bodies and the electorate they represent in terms of gender, race, ethnicity or other demographic characteristics. Substantive representation, instead, refers to the extent to which a representative advance the policy preferences that serve the interests of the represented. In other words, it refers to the activity of representatives, i.e. the actions taken on the behalf of, in the interest of, as an agent of, and as a substitute for the represented.

find that female and male MPs in the British Parliament, regardless of their party affiliation, do not differ significantly in either support towards the traditional left-right divide on economic values, or attitudes towards Britain's role in the EU, and even moral traditionalism. Yet, significant differences emerge when issues directly related to women interests—such as affirmative action and gender equality—are at stake. Several other studies confirm that women tend to think of themselves as representatives of women and to consider women as a constituency group with specific concerns (Thomas and Welch 1991, Thomas 1991, Reingold 1992, Bratton and Haynie 1999, Wängnerud 2000). Some of them point out that women tend to rank higher in their legislative agenda those policies related with women's rights, children and family issues, such as reproductive rights, sexual rights, prevention of women's illnesses, parental leave, domestic violence, marital status, children care and so forth. Studies that analyze bill introduction have found that female MPs tend to introduce women-related legislation more than men. Comparing the US and Argentine Low Chambers, Jones (1997) finds that in both countries women introduce much more than men bills concerning policies in the areas of women's rights, children and family, while in other policy fields regarded as traditional areas of interest of women—such as health care, education, welfare and environment—no significant differences are evident between men and women. Similar findings are stressed in the study of the 35th legislature in Canada (Tremblay 1998). Here, women MPs are more likely than men to devote their parliamentary activity (bill introduction included) to issues concerning women, and this activity is mainly focused on family and children. However, for both men and women MPs, the parliamentary activities in favor of women remain marginal from a quantitative point of view.

While stressing a different legislative behavior between men and women when policy areas of interest of special concern for the latter are at stake, this literature also points out that we should expect variation in the policy priorities of women representatives as their number in representative institutions increases: that is, the higher the number of women elected, the higher the priority women will give to female-related issues in their legislative agenda. Vega and Firestone's (1995) study of women MPs' legislative behavior in the US House of Representatives showed that between 1982 and 1992 the proportion of women-related legislation introduced and enacted by women increased parallel to the increase of women's numbers in the House. Similar findings were showed by some scholars in previous researches carried out on some US state legislatures (Saint-Germain 1989, Thomas and Welch 1991, Dodson and Carroll 1991). Using the theoretical framework proposed by Kanter (1977) in her study of corporate sale forces about the effects of minority status on behavior of those in minority, these scholars have argued that when women representatives are still a skewed group (about 15% or less) they may feel constrained in their behavior, and it is more difficult for them to translate their feminist concerns into policy activity. The fear of being labeled as too "narrow" or "only" interested in women's issues might be at the origin of such a difficulty. However, as the size of this minority group increases, it should be easier for

women to make alliances, and to act in a more assertive way, eventually transforming the institutional culture, norms and values. More interestingly, Thomas (1991) found that, in some US state legislatures, the different share of women among legislators had an impact not only on women MPs' policy agenda, but also on that of the whole assembly. Women officeholders were found to give higher priority to issues traditionally considered of interests of women in those state legislatures with a more balanced presence of men and women among legislators rather than in state legislatures where women were still a skewed group. Also, in legislatures with a higher share of women, legislative proposals introduced by women were more likely to succeed than in the other legislatures, and men legislators tended more to prioritize legislation dealing with women, children and family.

2. HYPOTHESES, DATA AND METHOD

2.1. *The hypotheses*

Following this strand of studies, in the next sections I will focus on the legislative behavior of the Italian deputies in the six legislatures between 1987 and 2008. The activity of bill sponsoring will be analyzed in order to assess whether men and women MPs display different policy priorities in their legislative agendas. More in details, two main hypotheses are tested and discussed:

H1. Women are more likely than men to introduce bills concerning women's rights, children and family, while women do not differ significantly from men when bills are concerned with health care, education, welfare and environment.

These expectations have found some corroboration in other studies, but there are additional reasons to expect that the second part of this hypothesis is also confirmed in the case of the Italian Parliament. Actually, the Italian welfare state presents a peculiar architecture, which is still largely centered on the traditional post-war welfare "clientele"—i.e. mainly male skilled industrial workers and full-time wage-earners, as well as pensioners (or people close to retirement) who rely almost exclusively on state pension provision (Bonoli 2007)—and highly fragmented along occupational lines. Thus, in welfare policy several influential categories compete for (ever more) limited resources. If we exclude—as I do in my classification of bills by policy area—welfare policies specifically targeted to women, who are currently one of the categories most exposed to the so called "new social risks" (Armingeon and Bonoli 2007), it is not plausible to think that welfare and the related interests are not as prior for men legislators as they are for women. This means that other factors rather than gender may better predict the tendency to prioritize welfare policies in the legislative agenda of Italy's MPs. A similar argument can be made also in relation to health care and education. Italy has a health care system which is mainly publicly funded, as well as staffed with public

employees and managers sometimes selected according to political affiliation². Similarly, education in Italy is mainly public, and it is an important basin of public employees' recruitment. Moreover, it is one of the fields in which the traditional cleavage confessional/secular is still active and relies on the confrontation between the Catholic Church asking for public provisions to sustain private Catholic schools and those who oppose this request. All this suggests that several different constituencies are concerned with these two policy fields, so that it is unlikely that men and women legislators consider them with different intensity in their legislative activity.

The second hypothesis tested here is about the influence of a changing share of women legislators on the legislative agenda. Following Thomas (1991), I expect that

H2. The increase of the number of women in the legislature has implications on the legislative behavior of women. Precisely, the higher the number of women MPs, the higher will be the priority they give to issues traditionally considered of interests of women.

In the period considered in this study the proportion of women elected in the Italian Parliament has fluctuated around 10%, with three peaks: in the 10th legislature (13%), in the 12th one (15%) and in the 15th legislature (17%). These figures are higher than those of the previous legislatures of the so called "First Republic", and since the 12th legislature a general trend of growth of the numbers of women MPs can be observed (especially in center-right parties), although it is not a steady and linear process. However, if the causal mechanism between the share of women and their legislative behavior actually works according to Kanter's approach, we can expect that when the number of women increases also the number of women-related legislation introduced by female MPs increases; by contrast, when the share decreases or remains stable also the number of bills concerning women's interests introduced by female legislators decreases or remains stable.

2.2. *The data*

In order to identify the policy areas relevant for this study, the bills introduced by every single MPs at the Chamber of Deputies were gathered for six legislatures, from the 10th (1987-1992) to the 15th (2006-2008), from the website of the Chamber of Deputies. I considered only bills introduced by MPs³, and not those sponsored by the national government, by regional assemblies, by the National Council for Economy and Labour (CNEL) and by citizens (so called *leggi di iniziativa popo-*

² Indeed, in the time span considered in this study, most of the competences for health care policies has progressively shifted from the national government to the government of regions, whose budgets, however, mainly rely on the provisions coming from the central government.

³ The majority of bills have co-sponsors. However, for the purposes of this study, only MPs that were first sponsors of a bill have been included in the analysis.

lare). The huge amount of bills sponsored by MPs in each legislature (see table 3 in section 3) proves that this activity is “free” and not particularly demanding for MPs: no parliamentary rule requires a minimum number of sponsors for a bill, or the political group’s authorization to sponsor it. Therefore, bill sponsoring reflects quite faithfully the sincere preferences of MPs.

The parliamentary bills were then grouped in the following seven categories, determined in accordance with both the titles of the bills and the classification code parliamentary offices assigned to them:

- (1) *women’s rights* (WR)⁴, which comprises bills specifically targeted to women, such as bills concerning equal opportunities in politics and in the work place, maternity leave, abortion, regulation of assisted reproduction, domestic and sexual violence, pension benefits, medical treatment of typically female illnesses, and so forth;
- (2) *children and family* (C&F), including bills dealing with issues related to family, marital status, parental leave, child care, the protection of children from any kind of abuse, etc.;
- (3) *health* (H), comprising bills regarding with medical care and medical standards, public health, health care institutions and their organization. It also comprises bills related to the medical personnel and its career;
- (4) *education* (E), which labels bills addressing issues related to school, university and the personnel working in these public institutions;
- (5) *welfare policies* (Wel), that is bills focusing on pensions, measures against unemployment and poverty, and specific provisions towards disabled people;
- (6) *environment* (Env), which includes bills dealing with issues such as pollution and environmental quality, natural parks and preservation of animals and plants;
- (7) *other* is a residual category comprising bills dealing with issues different from those mentioned above.

Following Jones (1997), I also considered a category (WCF) in which two of the previous categories were merged—that is women’s rights and children and family—as several issues falling in the latter two categories very often overlap.

2.3. *The legislatures*

The six legislatures considered in this study cover a historical period characterized by important changes in the Italian political system. Such a long time span allows to control also for the impact of different parliamentary majorities on the policy priorities of women MPs. The 10th (1987-1992) and 11th (1992-1994) legislatures were actually the last two legislatures of the Italian “First Republic”: MPs were elected with a fully proportional electoral system, with preference vote, and the

⁴ Previous studies provide different frameworks for the classification of bills into thematic categories. Here I follow one of the most used models of classification (Jones 1997, Dodson and Carroll 1991), in which a wide range of different policies or rights falls into the same category “Women’s rights”.

party system still presented some characteristic of the first legislatures of the Republic. The pivotal role was played by the large center party, the Christian Democratic party (DC), which had continuously governed either alone or in coalition with (or with the external support of) the parties to its left (PSI, PSDI) and right (PRI, PLI), while the main left-wing party, the Communist Party (PCI), had remained permanently in opposition, and an important right-wing post-fascist party existed (MSI).

The 12th, 13th and 14th legislatures—respectively covering the periods 1994-1996, 1996-2001 and 2001-2006—are considered the first legislatures of the so called “Second Republic”, characterized by a radical transformation of the Italian political system (Cotta and Verzichelli 1996) and especially the alternation of different parliamentary majorities in the cabinets (a center-right government in the 12th and the 14th legislatures, a center-left in the 13th). Following the introduction of a new electoral system in 1993, from the 12th to the 14th legislature MPs were elected through a mixed-proportional electoral system.

In the 15th legislature (2006-2008) new electoral rules were introduced. These are based on the principle of proportional representation but also include a “majority prize”, that is awarded to the winning coalition in order to ensure that it controls at least 54 percent of the 630 seats in the Chamber of deputies, and closed and rigid party lists. In 2006 the center-left coalition won the elections in accordance with the new rules and formed the government.

2.4. *The method*

Each of the policy areas previously classified in seven categories was re-coded as a dummy, with value 1 for the specific area and 0 for the others, and put as dependent variable into seven different logit models for each of the six legislatures considered in this study. The models measure the impact of the explanatory variables on the probability that a bill concerning one of the specific policy areas mentioned above is introduced.

2.5. *The explanatory variables*

Together with the main explanatory variable, that is gender (male=0, female=1), I included in the models (for the purpose of control) the age, tenure in office, constituency of election and partisan affiliation of MPs.

Age is expressed in years and has been calculated at the beginning of each legislature. This variable may affect the dependent variable in different ways, according to the policy area at stake. In particular, I expect that, *coeteris paribus*, the younger are the MPs, the more likely is the introduction of bills on WR, C&F and WCF. Younger MPs may be more sensitive to the issues related to these policy fields, as their primary socialization took place in a historical period full of important

changes in women and men's roles in the society and in the family, and they have probably experienced those changes. By contrast, it is likely that older MPs are more active in the introduction of bills concerning welfare, as elderly people are more often affected by changes in this policy (especially in Italy, in light of the hypertrophy of the pension system with respect to other welfare sectors).

Tenure is coded as a dummy variable in which newly elected MPs are coded as 0 and MPs with one or more legislatures of parliamentary experience are coded as 1. Parliamentary experience may affect MPs' behavior, increasing both the knowledge of rules and self-confidence so that tenured legislators may be more likely to introduce bills than less experienced ones. Thus, I expect that being a newcomer decreases the probability of introducing bills concerning any policy field.

The constituency of election is also a dummy in which the electoral districts of the South of Italy are coded as 1, and the other districts are coded 0⁵. This variable should account for the impact of socio-political differences on the legislative agenda. Southern regions actually display a lower level of economic development, they are also the regions in which right and center-right parties have usually gained more votes, and in which only a few women were elected as MPs (at least until 2006). So, if this variable may have an impact on the priority MPs give to policies related to women's concerns, I expect that being elected in a Southern electoral district is negatively correlated with the dependent variable. On the contrary, for the policy fields strongly relying on public expenditure—such as Health, Welfare and Education—I expect an inverse sign of the correlation.

Partisan affiliation is a variable that accounts for the parliamentary group of which a MP is member when introducing a bill. A MP's parliamentary group does not necessarily coincide with his/her party of election, as the standing orders of the Italian Chamber of Deputies give to MPs a large freedom to move from one parliamentary group to another, and also to create new groups with a minimum number of deputies; thus, it is possible that the same deputy introduced some bills under a certain label, and some under another. This phenomenon, insignificant in the 10th and 11th legislatures, has become slightly more relevant from the 13th legislature onwards. Moreover, as a reflection of both the increased fragmentation of the Italian party system and its continuous transformation over the period considered here, also the number of parliamentary groups has increased. In order to ensure a certain degree of intertemporal homogeneity, and to simplify a very com-

⁵ In order to keep some homogeneity in the longitudinal analysis, I considered the region in which the MP's district of election is comprised rather than the actual district, as the design of the electoral districts has changed over time due to the three reforms of the electoral system in the time span considered in this study. So, regions of the South were coded 1. Code 0 was assigned to the Center and Northern regions, but also to the "nation-wide district" (the so called *Collegio Unico Nazionale*), in which in the 10th and 11th legislatures the seats were assigned according to the rests of the percentages of votes collected by parties at national level, and to the "abroad" district that was introduced in the 15th legislature by the new electoral reform.

plex political and ideological scenario, when possible, I grouped different parliamentary groups into six main political families according to their ideological or political proximity: (1) the “New Left”; (2) the “Traditional Left”; (3) the “Moderates”; (4) the “Catholic center”; (5) the “Right”; and (6) “Other”. The composition of each ideological family is briefly described in Table 1. These groups have different numbers and proportions of female members (see Table 2). I expect that being member of a parliamentary group of the New Left or the Traditional Left increases the probability of introducing bills on WR.

Table 1 – **Families of political parties and parliamentary groups in the Chamber of Deputies (1987-2008)**

POLITICAL FAMILIES	PARTIES AND PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS
New Left	Green Party; Radical Party; some small post-communist and post-socialist parties and groups. Despite some ideological differences, these parties put great emphasis on civil rights, women’s rights and environment, and they are connected to social movements standing for those issues.
Traditional Left	Socialist Party (PSI); Communist Party (PCI) and, after the 10 th legislature, its main heirs, PDS and DS.
Moderates	Social Democratic Party (PSDI); Republican Party (PRI); Liberal Party (PLI) (experts of the Italian political system usually define these three parties “secularized moderates”, in order to distinguish them from the big Catholic party of the center, the Christian Democratic party); in the 14 th legislature the Dasy (La Margherita), a small party composed by some moderates (especially Republicans) and a strong component of non-conservative Catholics coming from the left wing of the Christian Democratic party (DC).
Catholic Center	Christian Democratic party (DC); after the 11 th legislature: the party Christian Democratic Center/Union of the Center (CCD/UDC); the UDEUR; the party Pact for Italy, led by Mariotto Segni; the Popular Party (PPI).
Right	Italian Social Movement (MSI), and since 1994 its heir National Alliance (AN); Go Italy! (FI); Northern League (LN).
Others	It includes MPs members of the parliamentary group denominated “Mixed Group”, which is composed by MPs elected in parties representing linguistic minorities, single representatives without a specific party affiliation in the Parliament, MPs from other small parties that could not be classified in one of the other five political/ideological families.

Table 2 – Share (%) of female MPs in each parliamentary group (or political family) in the Chamber of Deputies, by legislature

	X	XI		XII	XIII	XIV	XV
New Left	32,3	8,3	New Left	15,1	18,8	33,3	24,1
PCI (Trad. Left)	26,9	18,1	PDS (Trad. Left)	29,0	19,1	23,2	
PSI (Trad. Left)	5,1	4,2	Margherita (Mod. Center-Left)	22,1	8,1	6,7	
Moderates	0,0	1,6	Ulivo (Mod. Center-Left)				20,7
DC (Catholics)	4,5	4,7	Catholics	11,9	2,1	6,3	9,4
MSI (Right)	2,6	5,9	Right	10,7	7,7	6,9	16,4
Other	0,0	11,0	Other	0,0	10,6	18,2	9,7
Total % W MPs	12,4	8,3	Total % W MPs	15,0	11,3	11,5	17,6
(Total n. MPs)	(670)	(652)	(Total n. MPs)	(638)	(652)	(644)	(649)

Source: CIRCaP's Archive of the Italian Parliamentary Personnel, University of Siena

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The number of bills sponsored in the Italian Parliament has always been huge in the period considered in this article, as Table 3 shows. Between the 10th and the 15th legislatures almost 25,000 bills were proposed by MPs in the Chamber of Deputies. Nearly 9% of those bills concerned Welfare issues, while less than 5% addressed other policy areas such as Health, Education and Environment. Bills dealing with both Women's rights and Children&Family were 6.3% of the total number of bills introduced in the six legislatures under scrutiny. It is also interesting to stress that WCF is the only policy area in which the share of proposed bills has grown steadily over time: in the 10th and 11th legislatures just nearly 4% of the bills concerned these issues, while in the subsequent legislatures the share has increased, reaching 10% in the 15th legislature. This trend clearly suggests a growing interest of legislators, regardless of gender, in issues related to this policy, as I will discuss in the following sections.

Descriptive statistics also show a clear tendency of female MPs to introduce women-related legislation more than their male colleagues. Considering bills sponsored by women in the six legislatures analyzed here, we can observe that on average more than half (50.5%) dealt with issues related to WCF, Welfare, Healthcare, Education and Environment. Nearly 21% of bills dealt specifically with WCF issues (11.4% WR, 10% C&F). However, when looking at the trend of female MPs' bill sponsorship activity across legislatures, it is possible to observe that it is not a linear one. Variations across legislatures are more significant in the policy fields of Welfare, Health care and Environment, while the share of bills concern-

ing WR sponsored by women has decreased between the 10th and the 12th legislatures and then increased between the 13th and the 15th legislatures.

Table 3 – Number and share (%) of bills by policy area and legislature

Legislature	X		XI		XII		XIII		XIV		XV	
Policy Area	% bills (N)	% bills sponsored by women (N)	% bills (N)	% bills sponsored by women (N)	% bills (N)	% bills sponsored by women (N)	% bills (N)	% bills sponsored by women (N)	% bills (N)	% bills sponsored by women (N)	% bills (N)	% bills sponsored by women (N)
Women's rights	2.4 (107)	13.7 (70)	2.1 (54)	11.1 (26)	2.6 (71)	8.9 (41)	2.3 (144)	9.2 (77)	3.4 (189)	12.4 (106)	4.5 (144)	12.6 (90)
Children& Family	1.8 (77)	7.1 (36)	2.4 (62)	9.4 (22)	3.4 (93)	9.3 (43)	2.9 (184)	7.8 (65)	4.4 (245)	10.7 (91)	5.7 (180)	8.7 (62)
Welfare	12.9 (565)	14.5 (74)	14.9 (382)	12.4 (29)	7.4 (205)	5 (23)	6.7 (428)	5.9 (49)	6.1 (338)	7.4 (63)	7.6 (243)	8.5 (61)
Education	6.1 (266)	11.6 (59)	4.7 (120)	16.2 (38)	5.8 (160)	15.2 (70)	4.7 (299)	12.6 (105)	3.8 (210)	8.8 (75)	3.8 (121)	7.3 (52)
Public Health	4.4 (194)	5.5 (28)	1.6 (40)	1.7 (4)	3.8 (104)	4.1 (19)	4.8 (309)	6.3 (53)	6 (337)	9.4 (80)	5.7 (183)	7.8 (56)
Environment	4.3 (190)	5.9 (30)	1.6 (42)	1.3 (3)	4.8 (134)	3.5 (16)	4.6 (295)	3.6 (30)	4.8 (267)	6.5 (55)	4.2 (135)	3.6 (26)
Other	68.1 (2990)	41.9 (214)	72.7 (1859)	49.6 (116)	72.3 (2003)	54 (249)	74.1 (4743)	54.7 (457)	71.6 (3992)	44.8 (382)	68.6 (2197)	51.4 (367)
All policy areas	100 (4389)	100 (511)	100 (2559)	100 (234)	100 (2770)	100 (461)	100 (6402)	100 (836)	100 (5578)	100 (852)	100 (3203)	100 (714)

Fonte: elaborazione su dati Camera dei Deputati (www.camera.it)

At a first glance, descriptive statistics suggest that gender is an important factor that can determine the priority MPs give to specific policies in their legislative activity. However, it is less clear whether variations in the policy priorities of female legislators across legislatures are important and can be related to their varying number in the assembly. In order to better assess the impact of gender on the policy priorities of the Italian MPs, and to test the hypotheses exposed in the section 2.1, it is necessary to control other factors that may potentially affect the MPs' tendency to prioritize some issues more than others. That is why I run logit analyses in which the effect of gender is contrasted with that of other factors.

The statistical models (see Appendix) partially confirm the expectations of Hypothesis 1. As in other cultural and political contexts, also in the Italian Parliament women tend more than men to prioritize bills concerning issues directly connected with women's life experience, those that here were classified under the labels WR and C&F. For bills concerning Wel and Env the empirical evidence is not straightforward, as gender differences are less pronounced and more variable over time. Contrary to my expectations, however, in all the legislatures Education has emerged as a further policy area of special concern for women MPs, and in some legislatures also Health care is significantly prioritized according to MPs gender.

Empirical evidence supporting Hypothesis 2 is also mixed: the interest of women MPs in WR and C&F is very high when the proportion of women in the legislature is high; this is true only in the 10th legislature, while after this legislature the intensity of women's activity on those policy areas decreases (or remains stable) even when the share of elected women increases. Thus, after the 10th legislature, if the number of women MPs plays a role, then it seems to be opposite to the expected one: as the number of women MPs increases in the legislatures, the priority they display on women's issues decreases.

In order to make as clear as possible the data analysis and discussion, I present the models concerning WR, C&F and WCF separately from the other models.

3.1. Women's rights, children and family policies

In all the six legislatures considered in this study, gender is the explanatory variable that most accounts for the probability that a bill related to these policy areas is introduced in the legislature. Once controlled for the other variables, gender is always very significant, and its predictive power (as measured by the Exp(B)) is the highest also among the other variables whose impact is significant. This happens in all the three models that have as dependent variables respectively WR, C&F and WCF. Moreover, the models about WR and WCF show a predictive power considerably higher than that of the models about C&F. In fact, WR models' predictive power shows a range of variation that goes from a maximum of almost 21% of the explained variance in the 10th legislature to a minimum of almost 12% in the 13th legislature. C&F models, on the other hand, show a predictive power that only in the 10th legislature overcomes the 10% and reaches its lowest value in the 15th legislature (2.3%). These differences parallel those pointed out in the Exp(B) for the variable gender in the same models in each legislature. This analysis suggests that, without the presence of women in the Parliament, it is very likely that those issues would have been disregarded, while issues related to C&F would have received some (though little) attention.

The varying intensity of the predictive power of gender in the six legislatures deserves additional attention as it seems to contradict the Hypothesis 2. In the WR models (and in WCF models) the highest intensity is displayed in the 10th legislature, when being a woman increases the probability that a bill on WR or WCF is introduced by 20 and 14 times respectively. After the 10th legislature, however, the intensity presents a declining trend, reaching the lowest score in the 15th legislature.

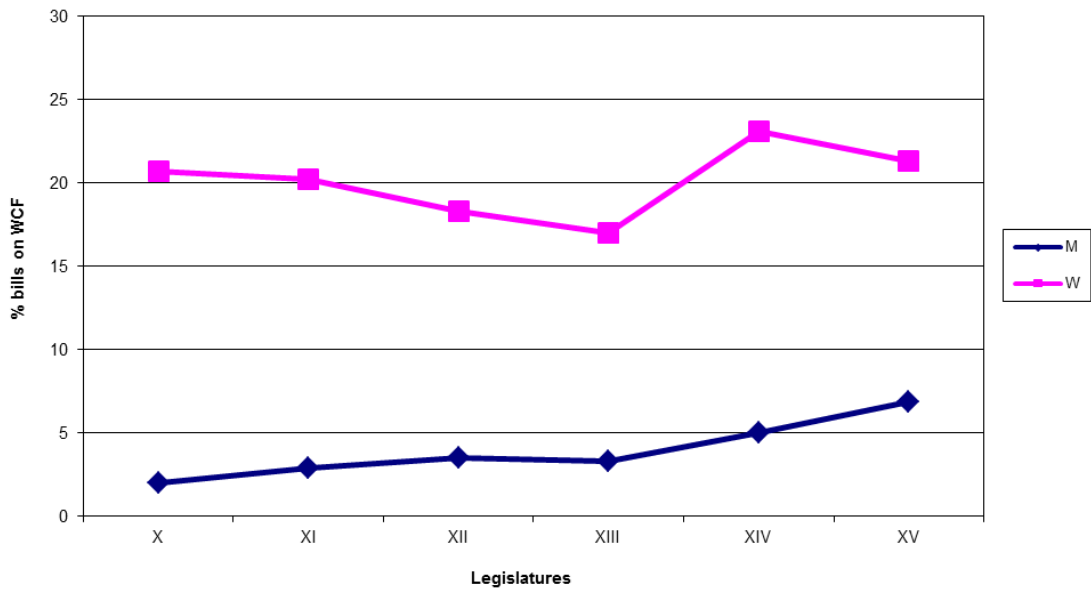
How can this decreasing trend be interpreted in the legislatures in which the number of women MPs is stable or increases? Some hypotheses can be formulated. The first hypothesis is that those differences reflect a different degree of "ideological" commitment of women MPs towards WR and WCF issues. It might not be by chance that the highest score is displayed in the 10th legislature: in fact, during

the 1987 general elections, a specific campaign was conducted by a group of women within the Communist Party, aimed at the election of more women to the Parliament. This group was led by Livia Turco, the head of the PCI's Secretariat for Women, and included some women from the Italian feminist movement who jointly proposed a political document, the *Carta itinerante delle donne* (Itinerant Charter for Women), attempting to place the issue of female representation at the centre of the PCI's political agenda. However, the relationship of the PCI with this section of Italian feminism had been conflictual from the very beginning, and tension arose mainly over the different meanings given to the concept of "female representation". So, after the 1987 elections this cooperative experience was not pursued further. Yet, the 1987 campaign, accompanied by the slogan "Woman votes for woman", led to a substantial increase in the number of women elected on PCI tickets, and to a small increase also in the governing parties and the extreme right party. That motto implicitly suggested that, by voting female candidates within any party list, women voters would have been also substantively represented in the Parliament. It is likely that the legacy of this feminist campaign influenced the entire legislature and, partially, the following one, with women elected in all the main parties considering themselves as representatives of women's interests in the Parliament. After that legislature, this legacy has possibly weakened and a less "feminist-minded" new generation of women MPs has entered the Parliament. A more qualitative analysis, which goes beyond the scope of this paper, would help to corroborate this interpretation.

Another possible explanation of the different intensity statistical models show might be that a sort of gender division of labor is at work, which varies according to the changing share of women MPs in the legislatures. According to this interpretation, the increase of the number of women MPs would have consequences on the policy agenda of women MPs and also of men MPs, though in an opposite direction from what expected in Hypothesis 2. Since the 12th legislature, there is a general trend of growth of the number of women MPs and this may have contributed to change the priority ranking in the policy agenda of women MPs. When they were less numerous, they might have tended to "specialize" their policy agenda, giving more priority to issues related with WR and C&F. It can be hypothesized that a sort of "labor division" was at work within each party, which led women to have a "lexicographic ordering" of their policy priorities: that is, the few female MPs probably felt they had to deal *first and foremost* with women's issues, and then with other issues. As the number of women MPs started to increase, women could start to differentiate their policy agenda: WR and C&F issues were always at the top of their "lexicographic ordering", but now also other issues ranked closer to the top. This is especially clear in the last legislature, the 15th, which is also the legislature with the highest number of women MPs in the period under scrutiny. On the other hand, also men MPs' policy priorities started to change: as the Figure 1 shows, there is an increasing tendency of men MPs to deal with WCF issues, a trend that has accelerated since the 13th legislature. Whether this tendency can be seen as a simple by-product of the increasing number of

women MPs, as suggested by some previous studies, remains, however, still an open question as I will discuss in the conclusions of this paper. Nevertheless, this tendency may account (at least partially) for the decreasing intensity of the predictive power of the variable gender in the statistical models.

Figure 1 – Percentage* of bills on WCF introduced by women and men MPs between the 10th and the 15th legislature



* Percentages are calculated as the share of WCF bills introduced by women (or men) over the total number of bills introduced by women (or men).

Fonte: elaborazione su dati Camera dei Deputati (www.camera.it)

Another interesting finding that has emerged from the statistical analysis is that in all the legislatures the affiliation to some parliamentary groups significantly affects the probability that a bill on WR, C&F and WCF is introduced. In the 10th legislature, if an MP belongs to a group like the Socialist, the secularized Moderates and the Fascist, he/she is more likely (*coeteris paribus*) to introduce a bill on WR or WCF than an MP belonging to the Communist Party (which is considered as basis for the statistical analysis). In the 11th legislature, being an MP belonging to the MSI increases significantly the same probability. Still, since the 12th legislature, being member of a Catholic centrist group, or of the moderate group of the Left coalition (which has a significant presence of Catholic MPs within), significantly increases the probability that a bill on WR and WCR is introduced rather than being member of the group of the “New Left” (the benchmark group in the statistical analysis). Does this mean that ideology matters in defining policy priorities? It can be argued that Catholic MPs—especially members of Center parties—and MPs belonging to traditionalist/right-oriented parties (like the fascist MSI) are more likely to prioritize policies about family and some issues (like abortion) that

are very important for the doctrine of the Catholic Church. As we do not know the full text of the bills here considered, we can just hypothesize that the specific provisions they provided were more conservative in the bills proposed by the center/right-oriented Catholics and more “liberal” in those proposed by the left-oriented ones. For example, we can imagine that conservative Catholics were more likely to introduce norms that restrained the freedom of choice in case of abortion, while non-conservative Catholics possibly focused more on the discipline of measures for the prevention of abortion. At the same time, more secularized and liberal-oriented parties (like the moderates and the Socialist in the 10th and 11th legislatures) are more interested in the same issues from a reformist and liberal perspective.

3.2. Health care, education, welfare and environment policies

As mentioned in the introduction of this section, the models concerning health, education, welfare and environment policies are less significant than those on WR and WCF. In the models concerning environment, gender is slightly significant only in the 13th legislature, but with a negative sign: being a woman would decrease the probability to introduce a bill on environment. Moreover, the only factor that has a significant influence on the dependent variable is partisan affiliation: not surprisingly, being member of the group “New Left” significantly increases the chances to introduce a bill concerning environment in all the legislatures (except the 11th). Also the data on welfare issues offer a somewhat contradictory picture. Gender is significant in the 10th, the 12th and the 14th legislatures, but the sign of the relationship with the dependent variable is positive in the 10th and the 14th while it is negative in the 12th. This means that women MPs put welfare among their top policy priorities in some legislatures only.

Health and education models were actually surprising. For health models, gender is not significant in the 11th and 12th legislatures. In all the other legislatures, being a woman increases significantly the probability that a bill concerning health is introduced in the legislature.

For models with education as dependent variable, gender is always significant: the Italian women MPs give higher priority than men also to this policy area. This finding may be actually interpreted as a reflection of a further way women MPs articulate their policy agenda and represent substantive interests of women. The Italian job market is characterized by a high level of gender segregation, with women strongly concentrated in public employment, especially in primary and secondary school. Education is therefore a sector of particular interest for Italian women. Moreover, teachers have been one of the most represented professional category among the Italian women MPs, with a decrement occurred only in most recent legislatures (Papavero 2006). Obviously, this policy area does not include only policies concerning school or university personnel. However, the proportion of bills related to it is fairly high within this group of bills. There are also other

elements in the statistical models that suggest that public employment is a central issue when dealing with this policy area. First of all, the variable “constituency of election” significantly affect the dependent variable in all the legislatures but the last one. This means that being elected in a constituency of Southern Italy, which is traditionally more dependent on public employment, substantially increases (no, significantly) the probability that an MP introduces a bill concerning education. Moreover, the statistical models show that political affiliation to parliamentary groups that have stronger electoral roots in the Southern part of the country has a large impact on the dependent variable as well.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, following a long tradition of studies on the subject, I tested whether women officeholders in the Italian Parliament tend to prioritize women-related policy issues in their bill sponsoring activity. Precisely, I hypothesized that: first, women tend to prioritize legislation concerning women’s rights, children and family, but not welfare, health care and environment; second, that as the number of women increases in the assembly, female legislators tend to sponsor more bills dealing with women-related issues.

The statistical analysis carried out on six Italian legislatures has provided a further confirmation to the first hypothesis. Contrary to other studies (Jones 1997) and the expectations of my hypothesis, however, I found that in Italy female MPs also prioritize other traditional policy areas of interest for women, such as education and health care. I suggested that the characteristics of the Italian job market mostly account for this result.

As several studies highlighted especially for Anglo-Saxon and Northern European countries, also this study suggests that variations in the numbers of female legislators may have consequences on the legislative behavior not only of women but also of men representatives. The analysis conducted in this paper is obviously not conclusive, and further refinements are needed. However, the empirical evidence gathered for the Italian case suggests some interesting considerations and raises new questions on this point. Previous studies following Kanter’s theoretical framework especially focused on a possible strategy women representatives adopt when they are very few in the legislature, that is the limitation of their visibility by adopting a “low profile” in the legislature, which means that they tend to refrain from acting in favour of women’s interests. According to this perspective, as the number of women increases, this attitude tends to disappear and women display different values and priorities from men; then, once a certain “critical mass” is reached, the differences between women and men’s legislative behavior usually start to decrease. This argument is not completely confirmed by the Italian case. Even when they are very few (less than 15%), the Italian female legislators tend to

give very high priority to women's issues, especially to women's rights. I suggested that this finding might be explained by two alternative factors: the "quality" of women recruited by parties and elected in the legislature, that is whether they are more or less feminist-minded, or alternatively the presence of a gender labor division that assigns (stereotypically) to women the task to deal with women's issues when female legislators are "tokens". Both these hypotheses, however, would deserve—as well as require—further analysis.

The analysis of the data on legislators' activity has shown that in the Italian Parliament male representatives as well have changed over time their way to consider the issues traditionally of higher interest for women. We have seen that progressively—slowly at first, then faster in the last two legislatures—men have tended to converge with women legislators, giving more attention in their policy agenda to issues related to women's rights, children and family. Moreover, the number of bills concerning these issues introduced in the Italian Parliament has progressively increased over time. Sue Thomas (1991) suggested in her work on the US state legislators that such a new tendency could be interpreted as a by-product of the increasing attention that women's activity brought towards those issues as their number in the legislature increased. My conclusions are more cautious. This could be a plausible interpretation, but we should be able to control whether those changes are also correlated with more profound social changes, in the family, in the workplaces, and more in general in the relationships between genders. Moreover, as the data I used in this study are based on a classification of the bills introduced in the various legislatures only according to their subject matter, nothing (or little) can be said about the "substantive" content of those bills. The growing attention to issues related to women's rights might be the signal of a higher sensitiveness towards the discriminations and difficulties that still women face in Italy. However, it could also be the signal of a tendency to use more legislative instruments in order to regulate some aspects of private and public life that are often very divisive and controversial in contemporary political communities.

A cautious interpretation of the data is also suggested by the findings on the role of political ideology in determining policy priorities in the Italian Parliament. As we have seen, secularized and extreme right parties in the "First Republic", as well as the members of Catholic parliamentary groups since the 12th legislature, have shown a significant activism on issues concerning women, children and family. This is an interesting finding which differentiates the Italian case from the cases usually studied in the literature (Anglo-Saxon national and sub-national legislatures, Scandinavian Parliaments, Argentine Parliament) where partisan affiliation, when considered, does not significantly affect MPs' priorities on women-related legislation. Controlling data for more legislatures than those considered in this study, and using a comparative research design, would shed more light on these differences. Moreover, a qualitative research design might be useful to analyze more in depth this specific finding, which may be part of the more general

resurgence of the secular/confessional cleavage that has invested Italy since the early-2000s.

A recent literature on welfare state changes in post-industrial societies (Armingeon and Bonoli 2007) has stressed the existence of a strong correlation between the difficulties in developing new social policies to tackle new social risks and the limited power resources held by social groups mostly affected by those new risks (women, young people and unskilled workers). The data I gathered for the present study can be very useful to test systematically this hypothesis in the Italian case. More generally, a more in depth analysis of bills introduction can help to better understand the consequences in terms of policy outputs of the political under-representation of certain social categories.

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APPENDIX
STATISTICAL MODELS

Table A1 – Models for the X legislature (1987-1992)

Explanatory variables	Women's rights, children and family		Women's rights		Children and family		Health		Education		Welfare		Environment	
	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)
Gender (male)	2.684*** (.190)	14.647	3,022*** (,255)	20,533	1,980*** (,276)	7,245	,389* (,228)	1,475	1,020*** (,180)	2,773	,440** (,148)	1,553	-,084 (,222)	,919
Age	-.008 (.011)	.992	,006 (,014)	1,006	-,026 (,017)	,975	-,003 (,010)	,997	-,034*** (,009)	,967	,016** (,006)	1,016	-,027** (,010)	,973
Tenure (new elected)	.063 (.192)	1.065	,007 (,250)	1,007	,099 (,277)	1,104	,319* (,194)	1,376	,407** (,171)	1,502	,406*** (,124)	1,502	-,149 (,174)	,862
Constituency of election (Centre-North)	-.023	.977	-,011 (,275)	,989	-,083 (,310)	,920	-,028 (,179)	,972	,918*** (,138)	2,504	-,483*** (,117)	,617	-,709** (,227)	,492
Political groups (PCI)														
PSI	.501** (,237)	1.651	,256 (,316)	1,292	,661 (,333)	1,937	,362 (,248)	1,437	,480** (,234)	1,615	,467** (,155)	1,596	-,407* (,227)	,665
Secularized moderate	.905** (,372)	2.472	1,020** (,498)	2,773	,751** (,546)	2,120	,791** (,303)	2,205	,421 (,345)	1,523	-,406 (,261)	,666	-,522 (,380)	,594
DC	.082 (,233)	1.085	,098 (,296)	1,103	,044 (,351)	1,045	,081 (,242)	1,084	,857*** (,211)	2,356	,766*** (,142)	2,151	-,554** (,221)	,575
MSI	.548* (300)	1.730	,821** (,365)	2,274	-,029 (,514)	,971	,213 (,309)	1,238	,758** (,256)	2,133	-,215 (,215)	,807	-,544 (,353)	,580
New Left	-.607 (,433)	.545	-,410 (,514)	,664	-,924 (,763)	,397	,930** (,308)	2,535	-,113 (,429)	,893	-,224 (,270)	,799	1,002*** (,236)	2,723
Other	.898 (,756)	2.455	1,018 (1,056)	2,768	,710 (1,062)	2,033	,179 (,753)	1,196	,335 (,628)	1,398	-,661 (,735)	,516	-18,346 (5309,644)	,000
Cost.	4.306 (11,588)	74.147	-11,599 (14,838)	,000	22,176 (17,634)	4E+009	-,166 (9,967)	,847	31,179 (9,703)	3E+013	-19,008** (6,473)	,000	25,855** (10,178)	2E+011
Nagelkerke R square	.196		.209		.105		.015		.072		.052		.072	

*** = significant at .001; ** = significant at .05; * = significant at .1

Table A2 – Models for the XI legislature (1992-1994)

Explanatory variables	Women's rights, children and family		Women's rights		Children and family		Health		Education		Welfare		Environment	
	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)
Gender (male)	2.085*** (.224)	8.047	2.350*** (.325)	10,487	1,678*** (.301)	5,355	-,117 (.547)	,890	1,684*** (.236)	5,385	-,128 (.215)	,880	-,526 (.616)	,591
Age	-.014 (.015)	.987	-,014 (.023)	,986	-,012 (.019)	,988	-,021 (.022)	,980	,010 (.014)	1,010	-,014* (.008)	,986	-,038* (.022)	,962
Tenure (new elected)	.646* (.333)	1.908	,996* (.553)	2,707	,396 (.410)	1,487	,154 (.492)	1,167	,170 (.307)	1,185	-,271* (.156)	,763	1,327** (.513)	3,770
Constituency of election (Centre-North)	-.366 (.251)	.694	-,567 (.375)	,567	-,265 (.334)	,767	-,719* (.422)	,487	1,013*** (.202)	2,755	-,423** (.150)	,655	-,751* (.450)	,472
Political groups (PDS+RC)														
PSI	.363 (.414)	1.437	,617 (.657)	1,853	,156 (.515)	1,168	,841 (.618)	2,318	-,055 (.406)	,946	,226 (.218)	1,254	-1,017* (.565)	,362
Secularized moderate	.472 (.490)	1.603	,753 (.806)	2,124	,274 (.600)	1,315	-,938 (1,130)	,391	-,115 (.513)	,891	-,429 (.277)	,651	-1,089 (.795)	,337
DC	.528 (.364)	1.696	,685 (.592)	1,983	,376 (.445)	1,456	,919 (.578)	2,507	,579* (.335)	1,785	,366* (.194)	1,442	-,665 (.461)	,337
MSI	.760** (.385)	2.138	1,526** (.602)	4,600	-,009 (.515)	,991	,195 (.674)	1,215	-,002 (.375)	,998	-,652** (.248)	,521	-,593 (.508)	,553
New Left	.754 (.609)	2.125	1,398 (.905)	4,049	,241 (.819)	1,273	-,393 (1,134)	,675	-17,314 (3811,832)	,000	,876*** (.263)	2,402	-,100 (.683)	,905
Other	.523 (.557)	1.687	,790 (.945)	2,203	,306 (.670)	1,359	-16,870 (2925,024)	,000	,327 (.532)	1,387	-,267 (.273)	,766	-,310 (.725)	,734
Cost.	-3.737*** (.772)	.024	-5,255*** (1,208)	,005	-3,861*** (.981)	,021	-3,453** (1,124)	,032	-4,497*** (.754)	,011	-,926** (.388)	,396	-2,517** (1,068)	,081
Nagelkerke R square	.126		.152		.067		.051		.120		.053		.047	

*** = significant at .001; ** = significant at .05; * = significant at .1

Table A3 – Models for the XII legislature (1994-1996)

Explanatory variables	Women's rights, children and family		Women's rights		Children and family		Health		Education		Welfare		Environment	
	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)
Gender (male)	1.752*** (.178)	5.768	2,049*** (.265)	7,761	1,363*** (.231)	3,908	,131 (.269)	1,140	1,427*** (.181)	4,165	-,478** (.233)	,620	-,242 (.278)	,785
Age	.005 (.011)	1.005	,002 (.016)	1,002	,007 (.014)	1,007	-,015 (.012)	,986	,016 (.010)	1,016	-,007 (.009)	,993	-,014 (.011)	,986
Tenure (new elected)	.239 (.175)	1.269	,260 (.255)	1,297	,182 (.227)	1,200	-,110 (.211)	,896	-,267 (.178)	,765	,188 (.153)	1,207	,419** (.185)	1,521
Constituency of election (Centre-North)	.262 (.177)	1.299	,480* (.262)	1,616	,061 (.228)	1,063	,421** (.211)	1,524	,382** (.177)	1,466	,141 (.152)	1,152	,093 (.187)	1,098
Political groups (New Left)														
PDS	.351 (.320)	1.420	,379 (.467)	1,460	,292 (.422)	1,340	-,769** (.346)	,463	,193 (.382)	1,213	-,629** (.271)	,533	-,646** (.268)	,524
Moderate of Center-Left	.761** (.329)	2.140	,288 (.504)	1,334	,996** (.415)	2,708	-,401 (.405)	,670	1,301*** (.355)	3,673	-,351 (.336)	,704	-2,372*** (.734)	,093
Catholics	1.057** (.350)	2.878	,517 (.548)	1,678	1,259** (.432)	3,523	-,907* (.501)	,404	,679 (.416)	1,972	-,194 (.337)	,824	-2,838** (1,018)	,059
Right	.027 (.282)	1.028	,122 (.410)	1,130	-,084 (.376)	,920	-,727** (.252)	,483	,715** (.307)	2,044	-,205 (.193)	,815	-,862*** (.212)	,422
Other	.935** (.450)	2.547	1,247* (.644)	3,479	,627 (.613)	1,873	-,772 (.556)	,462	,722 (.546)	2,058	-,714* (.427)	,490	-1,347** (.540)	,260
Cost.	-4.098*** (.548)	.017	-5,093*** (.811)	,006	-4,516*** (.715)	,011	-2,205*** (.593)	,110	-4,639*** (.548)	,010	-2,050*** (.426)	,129	-1,806*** (.523)	,164
Nagelkerke R square	.134		.120		.098		.021		.100		.014		.060	

*** = significant at .001; ** = significant at .05; * = significant at .1

Table A4 – Models for the XIII legislature (1996-2001)

Explanatory variables	Women's rights, children and family		Women's rights		Children and family		Health		Education		Welfare		Environment	
	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)
Gender (male)	1.823*** (.124)	6.192	2,183*** (,180)	8,872	1,389*** (,165)	4,011	,347** (,159)	1,415	1,377*** (,133)	3,964	-,194 (,159)	,824	-,348* (,200)	,706
Age	-.015** (,007)	,984	,009 (,011)	1,009	-,035*** (,009)	,966	-,012* (,007)	,988	,018** (,007)	1,018	-,003 (,006)	,997	-,005 (,007)	,995
Tenure (new elected)	.285** (,142)	1.330	,134 (,214)	1,144	,378** (,184)	1,460	-,094 (,132)	,910	,382** (,158)	1,466	,062 (,114)	1,063	,791*** (,167)	2,205
Constituency of election (Centre-North)	-.203* (,122)	,809	-,326* (,185)	,722	-,109 (,157)	,897	,365** (,120)	1,440	,435*** (,129)	1,546	,174* (,102)	1,190	-,047 (,123)	,954
Political groups (New Left)														
DS	.230 (,222)	1.259	,127 (,313)	1,136	,306 (,303)	1,358	,044 (,198)	1,045	,086 (,268)	1,090	,605*** (,185)	1,831	-,992*** (,182)	,371
Moderate of Center-Left	.287 (,268)	1.333	-,147 (,394)	,863	,607* (,351)	1,836	-,100 (,264)	,905	,528* (,298)	1,695	,231 (,250)	1,259	-,1375*** (,329)	,253
Catholics	.938*** (,259)	2.556	,825** (,370)	2,283	,981** (,333)	2,666	-,010 (,248)	,990	1,137*** (,274)	3,117	,279 (,234)	1,322	-,1,657*** (,325)	,191
Right	.141 (,199)	1.152	-,062 (,284)	,940	,302 (,271)	1,353	-,318* (,177)	,727	,673** (,221)	1,961	,213 (,171)	1,238	-,1,132*** (,145)	,322
Other	-.178 (,339)	,837	,084 (,435)	1,087	-,508 (,523)	,602	,181 (,284)	1,198	,531 (,357)	1,701	,287 (,285)	1,332	-,1,263*** (,360)	,283
Cost.	-2.940*** (,376)	,053	-4,877*** (,569)	,008	-2,813*** (,489)	,060	-2,449*** (,354)	,086	-5,237*** (,403)	,005	-2,864*** (,314)	,057	-2,414*** (,370)	,089
Nagelkerke R square	.104		.119		.061		.012		.081		.007		.056	

*** = significant at .001; ** = significant at .05; * = significant at .1

Table A5 – Models for the XIV legislature (2001-2006)

Explanatory variables	Women's rights, children and family		Women's rights		Children and family		Health		Education		Welfare		Environment	
	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)
Gender (male)	1.832*** (.111)	6.249	2.063***	7.873	1.434***	4.196	.620***	1.858	1.375***	3.957	.312**	1.366	.165	1.180
Age	-.009 (.006)	.992	.008	1.008	-.019**	.981	-.007	.973	.003	1.003	.008	1.008	-.005	.995
Tenure (new elected)	.229* (.120)	1.258	.007	1.007	.374**	1.453	-.014	.986	-.222	.801	.156	1.169	-.310**	.677
Constituency of election (Centre-North)	-.292** (.106)	.747	-.381**	.683	-.180	.835	.291**	1.338	.666***	1.946	-.048	.953	-.229*	.795
Political groups (New Left)														
PDS	-.004 (.196)	.996	.126	1.135	-.112	.688	.127	1.136	.409	1.505	.407*	1.502	-1.193***	.303
Moderate of Center-Left	.530** (.224)	1.700	-.026	.975	.846**	2.331	.132	1.141	.562	1.754	-.083	.920	-1.067***	.344
Catholics	.630** (.243)	1.878	.668**	1.950	.551*	1.735	.620**	1.859	.836**	2.307	.810**	2.247	-2.825***	.059
Right	.272 (.173)	1.313	-.056	.815	.521**	1.685	.034	1.035	.856**	2.354	.329	1.381	-1.205***	.300
Other	-.097 (.299)	.746	-.049	.953	-.100	.905	-.384	.681	.140	1.150	-.089	.914	-1.935***	.144
Cost.	-2.801*** (.329)	.061	-4.309***	.013	-3.039***	.048	-2.741***	.065	-4.618***	.010	-3.562***	.028	-1.355***	.258
Nagelkerke R square	.113		.129		.062		.018		.064		.010		.056	

*** = significant at .001; ** = significant at .05; * = significant at .1

Table A6 – Models for the XV legislature (2006-2008)

Explanatory variables	Women's rights, Children and family		Women's rights		Children and family		Health		Education		Welfare		Environment	
	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)	β	Exp(β)
Gender (male)	1.392*** (,126)	4.023	1,942*** (,185)	6,975	,760*** (,169)	2,138	,424** (,171)	1,527	1,112*** (,196)	3,041	,183 (,158)	1,201	-,284 (,229)	,753
Age	-.005 (,007)	.995	-,017* (,010)	,983	,004 (,009)	1,004	,007 (,008)	1,007	,005 (,010)	1,005	-,001 (,007)	,999	,009 (,010)	1,009
Tenure (new elected)	-.092 (,138)	.504	-,014 (,198)	,986	-,124 (,179)	,883	,220 (,195)	1,246	,044 (,225)	1,045	,035 (,162)	1,035	-,091 (,212)	,913
Constituency of election (Centre-North)	-.104 (,126)	.901	-,177 (,186)	,838	-,028 (,162)	,972	,383** (,159)	1,466	,082 (,195)	1,086	,043 (,139)	1,044	-,555** (,199)	,574
Political groups (New Left)														
Ulivo	.212 (,200)	1.236	,270 (,269)	1,310	,131 (,276)	1,140	-,178 (,251)	,837	,204 (,337)	1,226	,233 (,226)	1,262	-,761** (,268)	,467
Catholics	.648** (,215)	1.912	,568** (,306)	1,764	,636** (,282)	1,889	,097 (,265)	1,102	,692** (,350)	1,999	,382 (,243)	1,466	-,887** (,322)	,412
Right	.262 (,185)	1.299	,042 (,262)	1,042	,366 (,247)	1,442	-,097 (,225)	,907	,594** (,300)	1,811	,169 (,209)	1,185	-,596** (,225)	,551
Other	.915*** (,250)	2.498	,900** (,359)	2,460	,829** (,322)	2,292	-,986** (,489)	,373	,363 (,468)	1,438	-,024 (,329)	,976	-1,893** (,607)	,151
Cost.	-2.577*** (,369)	.076	-3,112*** (,545)	,045	-3,481*** (,476)	,031	-3,522*** (,459)	,030	-4,331*** (,587)	,013	-2,699*** (,404)	,067	-2,689*** (,514)	,068
Nagelkerke R square	.082		.126		.023		.021		.039		.004		.031	

*** = significant at .001; ** = significant at .05; * = significant at .1