

Research Question: *How is representation of women affected by institutional processes and spaces?*

Aims

Examining the impact of 1) ceremonial and ritualised processes and 2) parliamentary spaces on substantive and symbolic representation of women. In particular:

- Examining the integration and belonging of representatives in relation to their sex, and its intersection with party, class, race, region.
- Examining the perceptions of external groups and women in society

Objectives

- To investigate the implications of ceremonial and ritualised processes on the experiences and perceptions of representatives and the represented.
- To examine the importance of parliamentary buildings and political symbols for inclusion and exclusion.

Methodology

Three methods in both sites:

1. Participant observation through 'shadowing placements' with MPs and MSPs;
2. Elite interviews with MPs/MSPs (both those who claim to 'act for' women and random sample) and women's groups (random sample);
3. Focus groups – discussion between women constituents on perceptions of parliament and accompanying all women tour groups around parliament.

Fieldwork

Internship with Lib Dem MP, parliamentary researcher:

"Such an old-fashioned building, pictures of Prime Ministers, give you a sense something happened here. There's something about this place... it feels special. Things like signs giving signs giving precedence to MPs reinforce the sense of hierarchy."



Working Assumptions

Institutional processes and spaces differentially affect the practice of representation and privilege some groups above others.

More specifically:

- First, formal procedures affect interaction between representatives and the represented. Hierarchical structures are likely to privilege historically dominant groups.
- Second, institutional processes contain gender norms. Gendered practices (including rules, norms, rituals and ceremonies) affect representatives' feelings of belonging and the mode of representation.
- Third, the physical space in which representation occurs affects behaviour and perceptions. Political buildings contain cultural assumptions that speak to some groups more than others. This may impact on feelings of inclusion and marginalisation among representatives and the represented

