Sweden: Biased Debate Participation with Nearly Equal Gender Representation

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Debates in the Swedish Riksdag

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Abstract

The Swedish Riksdag is often regarded as an ideal type for Scandinavian or Nordic parliamentarism. This relates to institutional features and party cohesion, but more often so to descriptive representation in terms of gender – an aspect where Sweden's parliament has consistently occupied the top position among European parliaments during the last decades. Yet, and despite an unlikely-case-character, previous research has shown that gender biases exist in Nordic parliaments and in the Riksdag in particular. This chapter follows this research and evaluates how gender and seniority determine legislators' opportunities to speak in plenary debates. Our results show that the gender biases found in previous research persist to date and extend further to the past. Furthermore, low seniority amplifies the effect of gender: junior female legislators have the slimmest chances to speak in plenary debates.

Keywords: Legislative speech; Gender representation; Seniority; Riksdag

Introduction

Parliamentary debate is at the heart of any representative democracy mainly since policy proposals are typically debated by legislators before they vote on them (e.g., Proksch and Slapin 2015:1). On the webpage of the Swedish Riksdag, it is stressed that the "Chamber is the heart of the Riksdag. This is where the 349 members of the Riksdag gather to deliberate and decide on matters that affect people's day-to-day lives". Hence, the Riksdag debates are seen as an important part of Swedish democracy, which suggests that we should analyze these debates if we want to know how democracy functions in the Swedish case.

Being a working parliament with well-established parliamentary policy influence, high levels of descriptive representation in terms of sociological composition, a high degree of party unity, and frequent minority governments, the Swedish Parliament may be seen as the blueprint for the Nordic parliamentarism, which is sometimes considered the "world record holder" in party cohesion (Heidar and Rasch 2017, Jensen 2000).

Beyond that some of the previous comparative literature has identified the role of gender in speechmaking (e.g., Bäck and Debus 2018) as a central focus of study. Here, Sweden can be seen as a critical case in some respect, considering that the Swedish parliament has one of the highest shares of female Members of Parliament (MPs) in the world (see e.g., Wängnerud 2009). Analyzing two legislative periods in the Swedish Riksdag, Bäck and colleagues (Bäck et al. 2014; Bäck and Debus 2016; 2018) show that female MPs consistently speak less than their male counterparts. However, female MPs are not underrepresented on the floor

when looking specifically at debates that can be considered to be ‘feminine’, such as health, education, and social welfare policy, which indicates that gender stereotypes influence speechmaking in this context.

In this chapter, we provide an updated analysis of the role of gender in speechmaking in the Swedish Riksdag for a longer period, covering six legislative terms before and after the periods that were originally investigated in Bäck et al. (2014). The analyses show that two previous findings remain valid for this extended period of observation: Gender clearly matters in Swedish legislative debates and more experienced MPs speak more frequently, suggesting that seniority also matters for debating in the Swedish Riksdag. Besides extending the validity of previous findings, the longer observation period enables us to investigate the relationship between seniority and gender. This shows that female and male MPs differ strongly in their speechmaking during their early career phases, while increasing parliamentary tenure decreases – albeit only slowly – these differences.

Hence, we show that the gender disparity continues to occur in this extended sample, albeit attributable to the early career terms of MPs. At the party level, we find that government MPs and those from the two largest parties speak much less than those of opposition and small parties, which may suggest that the minor parties are more likely to use the debate floor as a channel to take policy positions.

Institutional and party system background

Sweden has long been associated with a clearly party-centered system, with clear incentives for parties to present coherent electoral platforms. The Swedish electoral system was until 1994 a completely closed list system, with very limited possibilities for the voters to influence which individual candidates were elected. A preferential vote system was introduced in 1998, allowing voters to cast a preferential vote for one candidate on the party list. However, Oscarsson and Holmberg (2013: 268) argue that the effects of this electoral reform have been small, even though about 25 percent of the voters used the opportunity to vote for an individual candidate in the 2010 election.

This reform gives (at least some) incentives for Swedish MPs to create and foster a personal electoral platform, and giving speeches in parliament can be one way to come up with such a platform. However, the fact that the barriers for entering the Riksdag on a preferential vote are relatively high implies that there are weak vote-seeking incentives for individual MPs. Proksch and Slapin (2015) place PR list systems where voters can indicate a preference for individual candidates, such as the Swedish one, in the "moderate" category as regards personal vote-seeking incentives.

Districts are divided in 310 fixed constituency seats and 39 adjustment seats. While the number of district seats reflects the population of a district – varying from 39 seats for *Stockholms Län* to 2 for *Gotlands Län* – and seats are allocated to reflect the election result in a constituency, the 39 adjustment seats are allocated to ensure proportional representation for the election result on the national level.

The Swedish multiparty system, has, during most of the study period (1994-2018), consisted of seven parties: the socialist Left party (V), the Social Democrats (S), Greens (MP), Liberals (L), Agrarians (C), the conservative Moderate Party (M), and Christian Democrats (KD). From 2010, a right-wing populist party, the Sweden Democrats (SD), is represented in the Riksdag. The Social Democrats and the Moderates have been the two largest parties in the Riksdag over the entire period. Fragmentation in the Riksdag has increased over the past two decades, and the most significant change has been the increased seat share of SD, who currently hold 62 of the 349 Riksdag seats (about 18 percent).

Scholars usually view Swedish politics as unidimensional in the European context, and the importance of the left-right/economic dimension has long seemed to dominate (e.g., Aylott 2016). As in other countries, post-material and globalization issues have become more important in recent years, but this conflict appears to have been partly 'absorbed' by the parties traditionally competing on the left-right dimension (see, e.g., Lindvall et al. 2017). Respondents to the Swedish Election Studies place the parties left to right, as follows: V – S – MP – C – L – KD – M (Holmberg 2000). The Swedish parliamentary studies, which have asked MPs to place themselves, largely correspond to these voter perceptions, as do expert surveys. Studies using these measures do not show growth in left-right party system polarization (e.g., Oscarsson and Holmberg 2013: 224).

The populist SD is more difficult to place on a left-right dimension – voters typically place them to the left of the Moderates (Oscarsson and Holmberg 2013: 225), while the Chapel Hill experts in 2010 put them to the right of M (Bakker et

al. 2015). Concerning globalization and cultural issues, the Chapel Hill data in 2010 places SD at the extreme as MP – V – L – S – C – M – KD – SD (see Bakker et al. 2015)[1]. Some evidence suggests the Swedish party system may be growing in polarization on these issues, with SD increasingly being placed further away from the other parties (Lindvall et al. 2017: 75).

In terms of the institutional setting, Sweden is a constitutional monarchy, but the King lost his political powers when parliamentarism was established in 1917. However, it was not until 1969 that the first revisions were made to harmonize the Swedish Constitution with existing practices (Bäck and Bergman 2016). One of the most important institutional features of Swedish democracy is what is known as 'negative parliamentarism' (Bergman 1995; Bäck and Bergman 2016). In negative parliamentarism, the coming to power of a new government is based on the tolerance of a parliamentary majority, though not necessarily on its active support, which is the case under positive parliamentarism. This institutional feature is part of the reason why most (over 70 percent) Swedish cabinets have been minority governments. Many of those have been single-party minority cabinets, where the Social Democrats have ruled with the support of the Left Party and, more recently, the Greens. In the period 1998-2006, there were even written policy agreements (contracts) between the governing Social Democrats and the two 'support' parties.[2]

[1] The CHES uses GAL/TAN to refer to Green-Alternative-Libertarian/Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002)

2 Cabinets have followed a 'bloc' political pattern during most of the period under study, with the Social Democrats alone or with the support of one or more of the 'socialist' parties (V, MP), versus

Another important institutional feature in Sweden is the no confidence vote procedure, which requires that the Prime Minister (PM) and the cabinet resign when losing such votes. A parliamentary majority can also dismiss individual cabinet members by such a vote, without removing the PM. The Swedish system also includes a confidence vote, which can be used by a PM who wants to show that he or she has majority support in parliament. A Swedish PM has the opportunity to dissolve parliament and call early elections, with the restriction that regular elections will nevertheless be held at a pre-scheduled point, limiting incentives for political parties to call early elections (Bergman and Strøm 2011).

In terms of executive-legislative relations, the Riksdag clearly belongs to the "working parliament" type. Though somewhat dated, data reported in Heidar (2000) indicates that Swedish legislators regard the policy influence of committees as high, and particularly higher than legislators in Denmark – a parliament that has produced the largest number of minority governments and could therefore be seen as a "strong" parliament (Strøm 1990). Regarding committees' formal powers, Mattson and Strøm (1995: 299) rate the Swedish Riksdag's committees among the most influential in Europe. For both of their main dimensions – agenda control and

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the 'non-socialist' parties (C, L, KD, M). To compensate for their relative fragmentation, the four non-socialist parties formed pre-electoral coalitions as the 'Alliance' since 2006 based on broad policy agreements (Bäck and Bergman 2016). The socialist bloc has also organized more formally since 2008. The most recent government, formed in 2018, broke the two-bloc pattern. After the longest bargaining duration process in Swedish history (see, e.g., Bäck and Hellström 2018), a government between the Social Democrats and the Greens (from the socialist bloc) formed, with the support of the Centre party and the Liberals (from the non-socialist bloc).

drafting authority – the committees' competences are among the most developed and only matched by other parliamentary committees from consensual and/or Nordic parliaments.

The internal organization of parliamentary party groups is considered to be homogeneous for all parties, the central intra-group institution being the "trusted council" (*förtroenderåd*) which consists of a group MPs elected to coordinate common activities and the parliamentary work done by policy specialists (Hagevi 2000). Parliamentary party group leaders (*gruppledare*) are also elected by the party group and play the decisive role in decisions of parliamentary tactics and inter-party negotiations. Being central in coordinating the party groups' activities, these two intra-party institutions jointly determine the agenda of party group meetings where important issues are debated and decided (Jensen 2000). The allocation of speeches within the party group should therefore be seen as a result of collective decisions by the party group leadership/secretariat and the trusted council. The concentration of influence among individual MPs within a party group arguably depends on the size of party groups. For example, Hagevi (2000) finds that in larger parties, MPs will speak less frequently during their party group's meetings, and that the Social Democratic and Moderate party groups (the large groups), show clearer divisions of labor.

Comparatively speaking, this co-ordination leads to only moderately high cohesion scores in studies focusing on roll calls (Sieberer 2006; Heidar 2006). However, the uniformity of voting arguably stems more from political and ideological coherence than from disciplinary mechanism (Jensen 2000: 234). Put

differently, the below-perfect level of party unity in roll call votes in the Swedish parliament may actually relate to situations where the apparent “rogue” MP has received permission for his/her behavior within the party group. Similar to the moderate to high level of voting unity, the number of MPs who take the floor regularly is comparatively limited in the Swedish parliament. Bäck et al. (2019) find that the Gini-coefficient for speeches among MPs, which measures the concentration of speaking opportunities, is higher in Sweden than in many European parliaments. Again, such high concentrations in speeches may result from party disciplinary mechanisms or from thorough intra-party-group co-ordination.

The institutional setting of legislative debate

According to Proksch and Slapin (2015), the Swedish system falls into this 'intermediate' category, with both individual access and party speakers' lists. Nevertheless, Bäck and Debus (2016) argue that the general rules guiding speechmaking in the Swedish Riksdag give MPs a kind of 'freedom of speech.' The rules are hence 'open access,' giving the parties only limited influence over the debate agenda. This becomes clear in the *Riksdag Act* (*Riksdagsordningen*, 2nd chapter, §10), which says that "each member and each minister, with the exceptions in this law, can freely speak on all issues that are being discussed and about the lawfulness of everything that occurs during the meeting." Ilie (2010: 899) describes that even though "Swedish parliamentary debating rules can in principle restrict the MPs' right to speak and the length of their speech," "every MP can express himself or herself freely on any of the issues debated in the Riksdag."

Another important factor is the role of the Speaker of the Riksdag, who has the "ultimate responsibility for how the activities of the Riksdag are planned and conducted" (Illie 2010: 899). The Speaker "presides over meetings of the Chamber and is the foremost representative of the Riksdag in various national and international contexts." The MPs appoint from among themselves a Speaker at the start of the electoral period. He or she typically comes from one of the largest parties, but is "expected to be impartial concerning the political business of the Riksdag." As is described on the Riksdag webpage, the Speaker prepares the order in which business on the floor, also determining the speaking order of MPs who have given advance notice of debate participation. During the debate, the Speaker

gives the floor to the participants and controls the length of each speech.[3] Despite the Speaker's visible role in plenary debate, his or her function is mostly organizational and the sequence of speakers as well as the time they are accorded is previously determined by the party groups (cf. Heidar and Rasch 2017: 112).

Debates in the Chamber typically deal with various items of parliamentary business, that is, on specific policy proposals on which the Riksdag decides. These items are usually related to Government bills or proposals from members of the Riksdag, that is, motions. It is important to note that all propositions and motions should always be prepared in the (currently) 15 parliamentary committees. The composition of members in each committee reflects the distribution of seats in the Riksdag (Ahlbäck 1997).

Previous work on committee assignments in the Swedish Riksdag suggests, not surprisingly, that there is specialization among MPs regarding areas of policy focus. Who focuses on what particular policy area is clearly related to the MPs' committee assignments. Hagevi (1997) suggests that there are conflicts within the political parties in how these committee assignments should be distributed and that some assignments are more desired than others. According to Hagevi (1994), a principle of seniority is followed when distributing such posts, suggesting that those MPs who have been present in the Riksdag the longest, get to choose committees first.

Hence, policy proposals are debated in the Committees before they reach the Chamber According to a previous study by Ahlbäck (1997), there may be a

[3] https://riksdagen.se/en/how-the-riksdag-works/the-speaker/the-tasks-of-the-speaker/

variation across the political parties in whether they perceive the committee arena as the "real" debate arena, arguing for their political opinions, or whether representatives saved their arguments for the chamber. The interviews performed in Ahlbäck's study suggested that representatives from the parties that were new at that time (the Green party and New Democracy), were more likely to perceive the committee as the arena for debate.

The general rules of debate in the plenary prescribe that those MPs who have reserved themselves from the committee majority are allowed to speak first in a debate. Thereafter, speeches by the committee majority are allowed. If there are no reservations, speeches are held by representatives from the political parties in the order of their parliamentary size. There is no formal time limit for the first speech given by an MP in a debate when the MP has signed up for a debate the day before the debate, but the Speaker and the party group leaders have agreed that a speech should not last longer than 8 minutes, except for more important parliamentary items, where speeches may last up to 12 minutes. Participants in a debate are allowed to sign up for the Speakers' list again for giving an additional speech, which may then last up to 2 minutes. MPs and ministers who have participated in a debate are all allowed to reply to all speeches held after their own, and here participants are allowed two replies of two minutes' maximum-length.[4]

When it comes to different types of debates, there are some that should be noted. Interpellation debates *(Interpellationsdebatt)* are the most common type of

[4] https://riksdagen.se/globalassets/08.-sa-funkar-riksdagen/riksdagens-uppgifter/debattreglerr-arbetsplenum-2012-01-03.pdf

debates (see Table 1) and follow a question addressed by a member of the Riksdag to a Government minister, concerning some aspect of the minister's work. The *Riksdag Act* makes a clear distinction in the rules guiding interpellation debates. This type of debate is characterized by the fact that it results from a written question asked by a member of the Riksdag. Within two weeks after the question has been asked, the minister has to reply – likewise orally in front of the chamber, followed by a debate between the minister and the MP. Hence, the rules governing interpellation debates, to some extent, restrict access to the floor even though the party's ability to control the agenda is somewhat limited since MPs are free to ask such written questions (Bäck and Debus 2016).

Question time *(Frågestund [med regeringen])* provide MPs a venue to ask short – normally less than a minute – oral questions that are answered ad hoc by a government representative. Questions are not submitted in written form before the debates and can be asked by individual MPs. In contrast, Government report debates (*Information från regeringen*) concentrate on single topics. The responsible ministry provides information to the plenary. Following the report, legislators can submit comments and questions.

Several other types of debates exist. First, Current Affairs Debates (*Aktuell Debatt*), which are held when a party has requested that the Riksdag hold a debate on a certain topical subject, such as schools or healthcare, and when the Speaker, in consultation with the party group leaders, has decided that a debate should be held. Second, there is the Debate between party leaders *(Partiledardebatt)*, which is held three times per year, and where the leaders of all the Riksdag parties have the

opportunity to argue in favor of the policies they wish to pursue. Third, there is a special *Debate on Foreign Policy*, which is held in February each year, and begins with a presentation by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Statement of Government Policy on Foreign Affairs.[5]

Table 1: Major debate types in the Riksdag

Type of debate	# of debates	% of debates
Current affairs debates (*Aktuell debatt*)	108	3,7
Question time (*Frågestund*)	304	10,4
Question time with the PM (*Frågestund med Statsministern*)	66	2,3
Committee presentation (*Föredragning av utskottsärende*)	526	17,9
Government report debates (*Information från regeringen*)	50	1,7
Interpellation Debate (*Interpellationsdebatt*)	976	33,3
Debate between party leaders (*Partiledardebatt*)	37	1,3
Miscellaneous debates and debates without classification	864	29,5
Total number of debates	2931	100

Note: Numbers show absolute numbers and percentages for all debates since the 2002-2003 parliamentary year, when information on debate types first became available. All types of debates that account for less than 1 percent are not shown separately here (miscellaneous), and some less important debates have been included in this category (e.g. Ceremonial).

Informal rules also guide speechmaking in the Riksdag. As suggested by Proksch and Slapin (2015: 103-4), parties may design internal rules or norms to keep off the floor MPs who are likely to dissent. These informal rules are clearly more difficult to capture. For the informal rules of Swedish party groups, we also note that there are norms that guide the conduct of members of parliament in the

[5] https://riksdagen.se/en/how-the-riksdag-works/the-work-of-the-riksdag/debates-and-decisions-in-the-chamber/

chamber. On the webpage of the Riksdag, it is described that, in the "Chamber, the members of the Riksdag and government ministers can express themselves freely, provided they do not use inappropriate language or use personally insulting expressions. There should be a cordial atmosphere in the Chamber".[6]

In sum, the rules regulating access to speaking time in Sweden should be seen as comparatively stringent. As Proksch and Slapin (2015: 96) point out, these rules vary greatly across countries. In some systems, individual MPs are "guaranteed access to speaking time,' and 'backbenchers are granted equal time as party leaders." In other systems parties draft speakers lists, which gives party leaders much more control. A number of countries fall, like Sweden, somewhere between these two extreme categories, giving some opportunity for individual MPs to access the floor, but favoring party lists (Bäck and Debus 2016). The formal and informal rules described above, put the Swedish parliament in the latter category. While individual MPs do have a chance to participate in the intra-party-group decision making, for example during party group meetings, the decisions on who speaks when and for how long is clearly dominated by these collective bodies.

What is the role of intra- and interparty politics in legislative debates?

We base our analysis on an original data set that covers various characteristics of all speeches given in the Swedish Riksdag in the legislative periods from 1994 until 2018. Our dataset also includes a coding of the features of those politicians who

[6] https://riksdagen.se/en/how-the-riksdag-works/the-work-of-the-riksdag/debates-and-decisions-in-the-chamber/

were at one point in time members of the Riksdag between 1994 and 2018, respectively. The coding was mainly done on the basis of the documentation by the Swedish parliament ("Fakta om folkvalda").

In this chapter, we examine the number of speeches from 1994 to 2018 using an updated version of the data used in Bäck and Debus (2016; 2018), originally obtained from the Riksdag's OpenData/ÖppnaData (ÖD). In these analyses, speeches are discarded that come from individuals in the positions of, for example, ministers or the Speaker. This is necessary since we aggregate to term-MP observations. Most ministers spend some portion of a term in parliament, are then recruited, withdraw from their seats, and give large numbers of speeches in their new capacity. In addition, excluding these offices improves comparability since the allocation of speeches to ministers and other office holders does not follow the same logic as the allocation among MPs.

The explanatory variables we use in our analysis come from the ÖD source as well. The data includes all Regular Members "Tjänstgörande Riksdagledamot" and several types of Replacements "Ersättare", if they spent at least 30 days of a term in parliament (this criterion relates to "Ersättare" who were only in parliament for a few days and would inflate our number of observations). Since the data includes these MPs and since the time MPs spend in parliament within terms varies (due to offices, leaves, etc.), we need to control for the time they spent in parliament

within each term.[7] Table 1 below describes the variation in our dependent and independent variables.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Speeches	102.107	90.343	1	691
Words	37717	35191	17	287139
Gender (female=1; male=0)	0.450	0.498	0	1
Seniority (years)	5.240	5.756	0	37.605
Committee Chair (binary)	0.050	0.218	0	1
Leader Party (binary)	0.023	0.150	0	1
Government Party (binary)	0.451	0.498	0	1
Leader PPG (binary)	0.029	0.167	0	1
Age (years)	47.091	10.619	18	81
Exposure (share of term spent in parliament)	0.893	0.247	0.021	1
Observations		2258		

Descriptive analysis

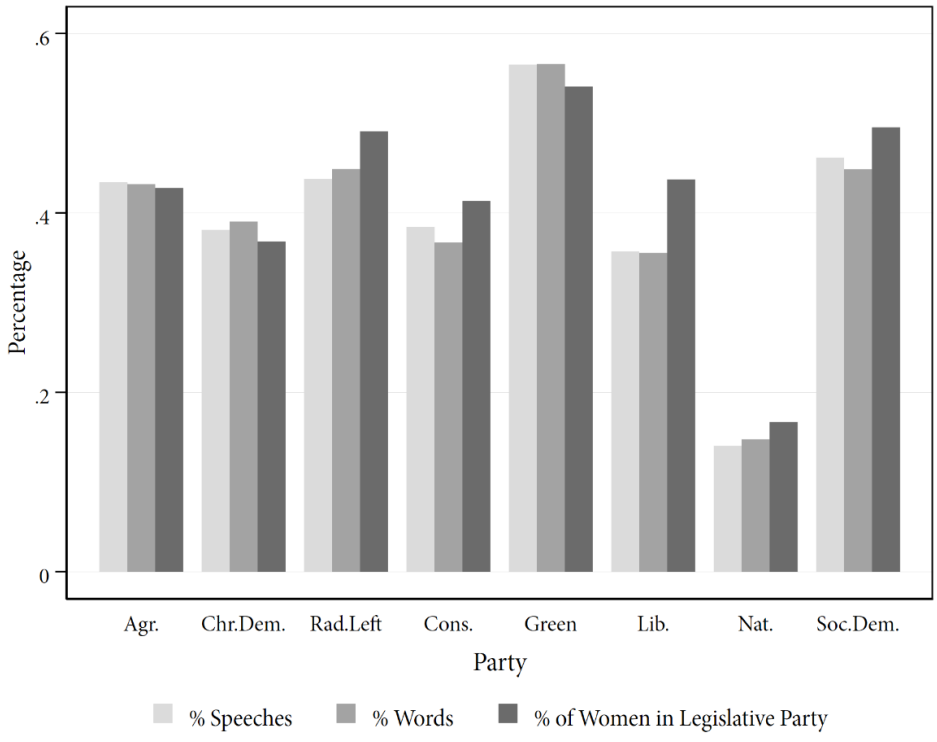
Bäck and Debus (2016; 2018) and Bäck, Debus and Müller (2014) have previously examined the gender differences in the Riksdag debates. Using a smaller data set, these studies show that female representatives participate less often in legislative debates in general when controlling for various important characteristics of the MPs. Bäck and Debus (2018) argue that the reason for this relates to gender incongruity theory, which suggest that men are valued as being assertive and suited to leadership roles, whereas women are seen as less suited to leadership roles due to their more 'communal' characteristics. Thus, they argue that women should be less likely to take the parliamentary floor due to the judgments associated with this,

[7] The inclusion of replacements is also the reason why there are more than 350 MP-observations during all terms (except 1998-02, which has only 345).

whether individually or on behalf of parties. This is similar to research that has suggested that women speak less in organizations more generally, due to concerns of gender bias in reaction (Brescoll, 2012: 625).

Figure 1 shows the proportions of speeches from male and female MPs, with the total share of seats held by women per party depicted on the right. It is apparent from the graph that in our larger sample the general pattern prevails that female MPs speak less, within almost all parties. The disparity is, however, highly variable across parties, with the Liberals (L) as the strongest case of this pattern and the Christian Democrats (KD) and the Centre party (C) actually having a slight reversal of this pattern.

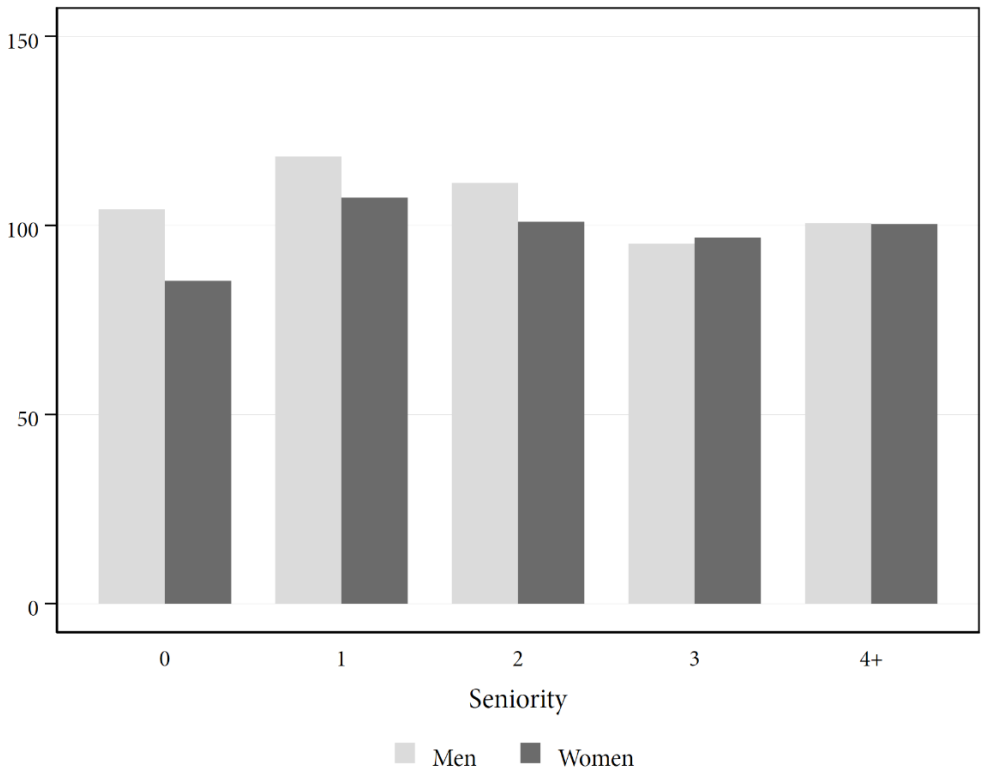
Figure 1. Gender differences in the share of speeches across party families in the Riksdag



Note: Agr. = Agrarians(C); Chr.Dem. = Christian Democrats (KD); Rad.Left = Left Party (V); Cons. = Moderate Party (M); Green = Greens (MP); Lib. = Liberals (L) and Progress Party (FP); Nat. = Sweden Democrats (SD); Soc.Dem = Social Democrats (S)

Bäck and Debus (2016) also show that experience plays a significant role in in general, with more experienced members speaking more on average in several countries, although this was not found in their smaller set of data Sweden. Figure 2 shows the proportions of speeches by level of experience, grouped into five categories based on the number of terms: none, one, two, three and greater than three. While the differences between the newest MPs and more experienced MPs is are not stark, it is noteworthy that the gender gap (in which women's speech somewhat less frequent, as we again explore below) is mostly present only in the samples with experience of two terms or less. Also, it is noteworthy that there is no *continuing* increase in speaking frequency once an MP possesses some experience.

Figure 2. Differences in the number of speeches across gender & seniority in the Riksdag



Multivariate analysis

In what follows, we make use of several regression models using each member's speech making within a term as the dependent variable. Here we include the factors just discussed, gender and experience, as well as a variety of factors relating to roles of individual MPs.

To further analyze the role of gender in speechmaking, we first include a dummy variable stating the gender of an MP. The variable takes a value of '1' for a woman MP and is coded '0' for a male MP (*Gender*).

We also include a variable that provides information on whether an MP was the leader of his/her parliamentary party group (*Leader PPG*) or the leader of his/her party (*Leader Party*) during the legislative period in which a speech was

made. We also take into account whether an MP chaired a committee (*Committee Chair*), since this may be indicative of a policy specific high status within the party, i.e. these MPs may be policy spokes persons for their party groups. Besides, holding a committee chairs may generally influence whether an MP is inclined to take the floor. We also include a dummy describing if *MPs are part of government parties* (i.e. without holding government office).

The previous literature has found legislative experience to influence speechmaking in parliament. For example, the literature on political socialization suggests that the more familiar MPs become with their parliamentary roles, the more they will support established patterns of power (e.g., Dawson et al. 1977). This relationship might also be reinforced by a better understanding of the rules of the game, and as the MPs learn how to shape the party line: long careers are proof of the ability to survive politically. This may be due to a strong independent power-base (e.g., holding a seat in one of the party's core constituencies), but it may also reflect an accommodation with the party leadership. To include these developments in MPs careers we include information on how long an MP has already served in parliament (*Seniority*), which is an MP's parliamentary experience in years.

We examine two dependent variables: overall speech counts (model 1) and overall word counts (model 2). Each model employs term fixed effects and party fixed effects. Party fixed effects allow us to test the effect of tenure while having new parties (the SD) in the data. The results are presented in Table 2, and in the coefficient plots Figures 3 and 4.

The results are consistent with the patterns seen in previous literature. Above all, we again confirm Bäck and Debus' (2016) findings that female MPs in Sweden (and other Nordic countries) speak less on average, which is robust across models. This finding is consistent with those from other nations and may result from several mechanisms identified in the literature on these discrepancies. The literature on role incongruity theory, for example, suggests that women are less likely to speak on the floor because this behavior is perceived as being 'agentic,' implying a perceived incongruity with traditional gender roles and perhaps expectations of biased, harsher judgments or hostility (e.g. Eagly and Karau 2002). Similar arguments have hypothesized that women are less likely to engage in behaviors seen as dominant or aggressive, which may include speaking in group settings in an organization (Brescoll 2012).

We also find a consistent tendency for government MPs to speak less, indicating that the opposition makes systematic use of speech as one of their limited mechanisms to indirectly influence politics inside and outside of the chamber. Elevated positions in the chamber – committee chairs, party and group leaders – have very little effect. Most importantly, only committee chairs seem to have an effect on increasing speech frequencies, and only in terms of frequency and not length. This likely stems from their formal involvement in the lawmaking process.

Table 3: Models for the number of speeches and the number of words spoken

	Number of Speeches (Negative binomial)	Number of Words (OLS regression)
Gender	-0.0903*	-3929.0*
	(-2.34)	(-2.43)
Seniority	0.0146***	718.0***
	(3.71)	(4.47)
Committee Chair	0.141*	4337.5+
	(2.19)	(1.77)
Leader Party	0.0815	955.2
	(0.77)	(0.17)
Leader PPG	-0.170	-3789.9
	(-1.62)	(-0.73)
Government party	-0.509***	-17903.2***
	(-13.94)	(-12.32)
Party FEs	Yes	Yes
Exposure	1.046***	
	(39.07)	
Age	0.0248*	719.5
	(2.37)	(1.54)
Age (squared)	-0.000348**	-11.97*
	(-3.02)	(-2.41)
Constant	4.945***	60772.2***
	(20.89)	(5.52)
Observations	2258	2258
R^2		0.355
AIC	23613.25	

Note: Standard errors are clustered by MP. *z*-statistics (model 1) and *t*-statistics (model 2) shown in parentheses. The exposure for the negative binomial model (speeches) is the logged proportion of the days an MP spent in parliament during a term. The dependent variable for the OLS model is corrected for the exposure, i.e. it is the number of words spoken divided by the proportion an MP spent in parliament during a term.

Significance: + p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Finally, more experienced members tend to participate more, which is in line with the general findings of the comparative analysis of Bäck and Debus (2016), despite that such results were not found for Sweden in the smaller sample in that study. This pattern may result from the greater probability of more senior members to have been involved in the legislative process for debated legislation, particularly within committees.

Figure 3: Coefficient Plot for Model 1

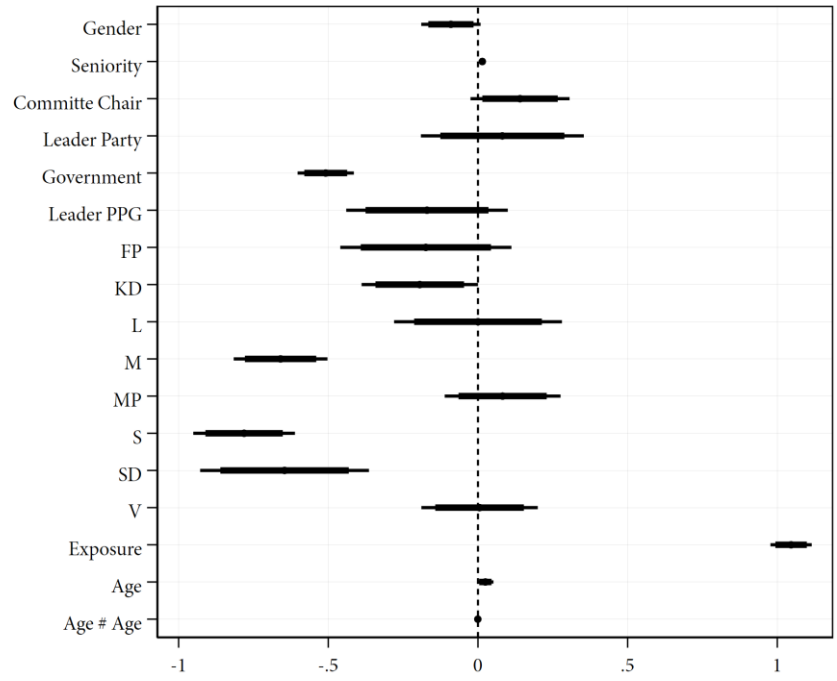
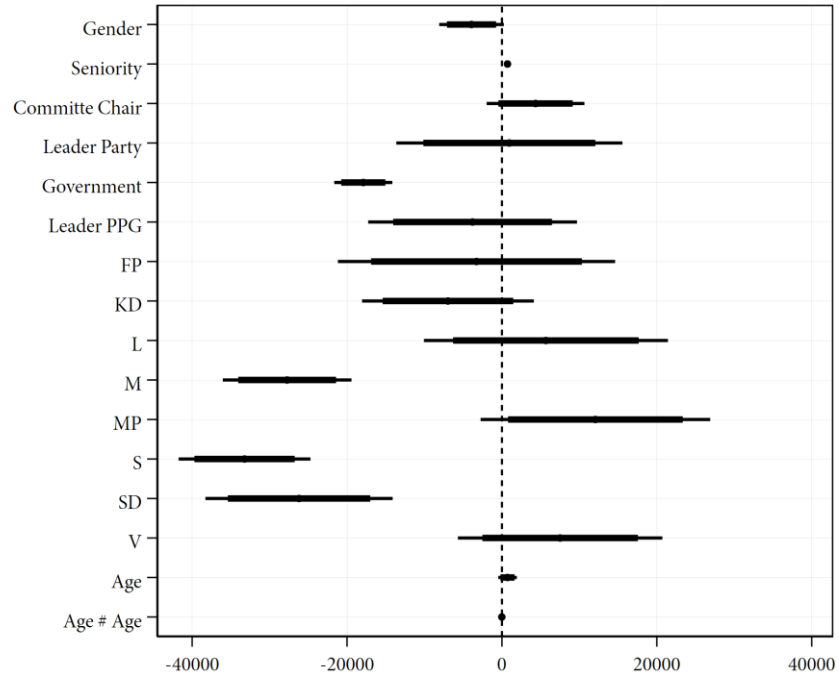


Figure 4: Coefficient Plot for Model 2



Party-specific differences and the conditional impact of gender and seniority

It is also interesting to note that there are significant differences across parties. Most clearly, MPs from the smaller parties tend to speak much more, all else equal, which is in line with the findings of Bäck and Debus (2016). This is illustrated in both Figure 3 and 4, which depicts a clear tendency for the two parties that alternately hold the prime ministership, the Moderates or the Social Democrats, to speak less, regardless of government status.

This may result from the smaller parties' greater need to use parliamentary speech to establish their positions. Notably, it is the Greens (MP) and the Left party (V), parties of the left that have not (until recently the Greens) been involved formally in government, that speak the most, although this is only distinguishable from one of the smaller right-wing parties, the Christian Democrats (KD). This could indicate that, even though the Swedish Riksdag has been characterized as having strong committees – that have high drafting authority and high agenda control (see Mattsson and Strøm 1995) – MPs from smaller parties may take the opportunity to speak on the floor to influence policy, as they have smaller opportunities to influence policy at earlier stages in the legislative process.

Meanwhile, the far-right Sweden Democrats (SD) behaves similarly to other smaller parties, despite that it has recently become relatively large (being the third largest party after the 2018 election). We can only speculate why members of this party speak less in the Riksdag, but considering that we are here controlling for seniority, it should not be due to that many of the Sweden Democrat MPs are newcomers to the Riksdag. Something that has been noted in analyses of roll-call

data in the Swedish Riksdag is that Sweden Democrat MPs often have voted with the current government, regardless of it has been led by a Social Democrat or Moderate PM (Lindvall et al. 2017). It could of course also be the case that we would see different patterns when analyzing debates in different policy areas, which we do not do here – an expectation would then be that the highly "niched" Sweden Democrats would participate mainly in debates related to immigration.

To further disentangle the effects of seniority and gender that we identified in the descriptive and the multivariate analysis, we include additional models that interact MPs' parliamentary seniority and gender. The main reason for looking at this interaction is that the role of gender stereotypes in influencing MPs' behavior may vary depending on which stage of the career an individual MP is. Some previous research suggests that women who reach higher leadership roles should face the difficulty in balancing the tension between agentic demands from the leadership role and communal demands from the gender role (Zhen et al. 2018). Whereas the communal demands would suggest that speaking less and speaking more tentatively results in more influence for women (see Carli 2002), such "compensatory behavior" may not be possible when a woman has become more senior in parliament. If this is the case, we should see that the effect for female MPs in the previous section pertains to a certain group of female MPs, that is, those who are more junior.

The results of these models are presented in table 3 for the two dependent variables, that is, for the number of speeches given and the number of words spoken. Both models indicate that including the *Gender X Seniority* effect retains the

significant effects for the gender and seniority variables. However, the effects are modified substantially in their amplitude and the interaction indicates a positive significant (at a 10 percent level) effect in the model using the number of speeches as the dependent variable.

Since interaction effects should not be evaluated solely based on coefficients (Brambor et al. 2006), Figure 5 presents predicted numbers of speeches for male and female MPs of different seniority. We find that female MPs with little parliamentary experience give substantially less speeches compared to male MPs: For a female legislator who was first elected to parliament, the model predicts a speech count of 87 speeches throughout the term. A male newcomer MP in contrast will give 101 speeches.

Table 4: The conditional effects of gender and seniority

	Number of Speeches (Negative binomial)	Number of Words (OLS regression)
Gender	-0.148**	-5615.5**
	(-3.18)	(-2.78)
Seniority	0.0103*	590.1**
	(2.21)	(3.00)
Gender X Seniority	0.0112+	330.4
	(1.71)	(1.29)
Committee Chair	0.141*	4327.6+
	(2.18)	(1.77)
Leader Party	0.0829	1286.0
	(0.82)	(0.23)
Leader PPG	-0.159	-3621.3
	(-1.49)	(-0.68)
Government party	-0.507***	-17894.5***
	(-13.87)	(-12.30)
Party FEs	Yes	Yes
Exposure	1.045***	
	(38.86)	
Age	0.0248*	725.7
	(2.36)	(1.55)
Age (squared)	-0.000348**	-12.05*
	(-3.02)	(-2.42)

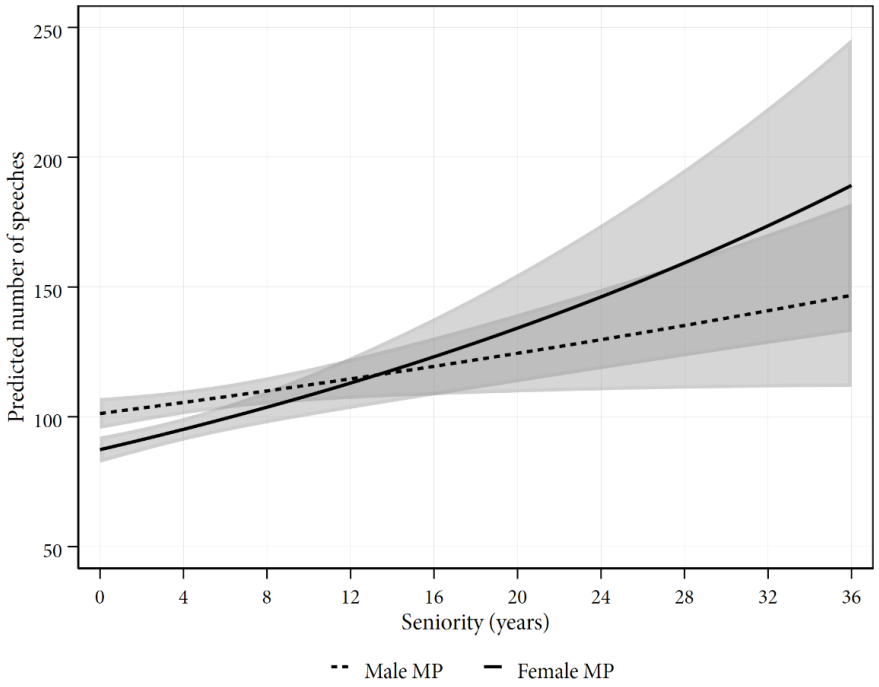
Constant	4.968***	61431.5***
	(21.06)	(5.56)
Observations	2258	2258
R^2		0.356
AIC	23609.81	

Note: Standard errors are clustered by MP. *z*-statistics (model 1) and *t*-statistics (model 2) shown in parentheses. The exposure for the negative binomial model (speeches) is the logged proportion of the days an MP spent in parliament during a term. The dependent variable for the OLS model is corrected for the exposure, i.e. it is the number of words spoken divided by the proportion an MP spent in parliament during a term.Significance: + p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Figure 5 also indicates that the gender gap decreases with increasing career duration. However, the gender difference persists for a large portion of (most) legislators' careers. It takes about five years, i.e. more than one parliamentary term, until female MPs have caught up to their male colleagues. Since the average experience in our data is 5.2 years, the gender gap therefore also relates to the majority of MPs (about 61 percent of MPs have less experience).[8]

[8] This effect is not driven by changes in the *Riksdag*'s gender composition: Including term dummies does not change these results. Furthermore, the share of female MPs was high during all of our observation period and increased only modestly (from 43 percent in the 1994-98 term to a maximum of 48 percent in the 2006-10 term).

Figure 5: The effect of gender and seniority on the number of speeches given



Note: Prediction is based on the speech model in table 4. Shaded areas are 90% confidence intervals.

Conclusions

As an example of a relatively 'open access' context for regulated speech, with a mix of both party and individual access to speakers' lists, the Riksdag offers opportunity for individual members to engage in speechmaking on behalf of their own or their party's priorities. In principle, this provides an environment in which individual characteristics may play a major role as a result of individual decision-making, goals, and strategy.

We do indeed find gender and experience correlate with the frequency of speechmaking. Consistent with the patterns observed in previous literature, and expected by literature on gender disparities, female MPs in Sweden speak less on average. More than that, we find that seniority mediates the effect of gender. This

means that female MPs with low levels of parliamentary experience are the most disadvantaged in the distribution of speaking time. Comparing these female junior MPs with junior male MPs, gender differences in speaking are quite substantial and the point in time at which gender differences do not exert a substantial effect any more is quite late in an MP's career. This pattern can be taken to indicate a limitation in the translation of the substantial degree of descriptive representation in the Riksdag into substantive or even symbolic representation. Why this occurs we can only speculate about, but it may be due to that female MPs engage in "compensatory" behavior, to avoid being criticized or met with bias on the floor.

We do not find evidence that leadership positions explain variation in increasing speech frequencies, with the exception of some effect for committee chairs. The effect of committee chairmanship may of course be due to, as suggested by Slapin and Proksch (this volume), committee chairs "play a procedural role in shepherding bills through the parliamentary process" (see also Heidar and Rasch 2017: 112). Finally, we find, in line with our expectations, that more experienced members participate more in Riksdag debates. This result also holds when controlling for chairmanship, which suggests that it is not just through committee assignments that seniority impacts work in the Riksdag. On the basis of speech patterns only, we cannot determine exactly why seniority matters for debate participation. It may simply be due to that MPs gain more experience and become more knowledgeable as they become more senior, which makes them more likely to take part in debates, but with speaking time being allocated by party groups, more

senior MPs may also have built stronger ties and better positions within the relevant party group bodies.

Much more clearly apparent is the significant differences found across parties. MPs from opposition parties speak much more often, as we would expect if their objective is to establish their positions while lacking access to power. Holding constant government status, MPs from the smaller parties – those that have not held the premiership – are always more likely to speak more often. This may simply relate to less pronounced degrees in divisions of labor within small party groups or may possibly be due to small parties' greater need to use parliamentary speech to establish and distinguish their positions.

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