'An Unconventional MP': Nancy Astor, public women and gendered political culture

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**'AN UNCONVENTIONAL MP': NANCY ASTOR, PUBLIC WOMEN
AND GENDERED POLITICAL CULTURE**

Scottish Women and Political Representation in the UK and Scottish Parliaments (1918–2020)

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This article reviews the record of Scottish women's representation in the UK Parliament since 1918, and in the Scottish Parliament since 1999. Women candidates have stood for election to Westminster at every General Election since 1918, with the first Scottish woman MP being elected in 1923. Subsequently, there have always been women MPs representing Scottish constituencies, with the number increasing in 1997, as elsewhere in the UK. The Scottish Parliament, created in 1999, has consistently seen a higher level of representation of women than that achieved for Scottish MPs at Westminster. The article examines political parties' track records in promoting women candidates, and comments on the careers of women politicians. The article argues that the increase in women's representation in recent decades is attributable to the efforts of women activists, and to the specific strategies adopted by parties to achieve this. It also argues that the Scottish Parliament has significantly extended opportunities for women to participate in political decision-making and in policy-making.

Introduction

This article gives an account of Scottish women's representation in the UK parliament since the 1918 Representation of the People Act enfranchised most women over 30, and of women's representation in the Scottish parliament since its inception in 1999. This late-twentieth-century political devolution can be understood as the outcome of tensions between the Union settlement of 1707 and the growing need for parliamentary time and administrative structures closer to the Scottish people. Such tensions were manifest from the late nineteenth century onwards, resulting in the establishment of the Scottish Office in 1885, and further administrative devolution in the 1930s and 1940s (see, for example, Keating, 2010; McCrone, 2017; Paterson, 1994). Along with local government, this provided focal points for activism and engagement at Scottish level prior to political devolution.

The same political parties operated in Scotland as elsewhere in Britain, apart from Scottish and Welsh nationalist parties, with the Scottish National Party (SNP) being formed in 1934. The inter-war years witnessed the rise and fall of locally-based parties, such as Protestant Action in Edinburgh and the Scottish Protestant League in Glasgow. The Liberal Party, dominant in the nineteenth century, became increasingly divided over disestablishment and Irish Home Rule. In 1886, the Liberal Unionists split from the Liberal Party, eventually merging with the Conservative Party in 1912. Liberal Unionism proved strong in Scotland, and the Conservatives fought elections in Scotland as the Unionist Party until the 1960s (Burness, 2003). Liberal decline after World War I was rapid, although certain areas of Scotland maintained loyalty to the Liberals, and later the Liberal Democrats, for example, Orkney and Shetland and the Scottish Borders. By the late nineteenth century the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party (ILP) were attracting members in Scotland; the ILP remained a force in Scottish politics well after the rise of the Labour Party. The Communist Party of Great Britain established itself in Scotland from 1920, maintaining a stronger presence than elsewhere in Britain. In the inter-war years, the British Union of Fascists also had a presence in Scotland.

All the main parties had Scottish organisations, not necessarily identical to those in England or Wales. Levels of party support differed from England, and varied

geographically within Scotland. As Baxter (2013) has pointed out, the changing party fortunes of the inter-war years, particularly Liberal decline and Labour's rise, made for a competitive political environment. After World War II the political landscape changed again. Unionist support peaked in 1955, and declined as Labour grew to dominate Scottish politics from the 1960s to the 2010s. By the 1960s the SNP was enjoying some electoral success. Thus, while Labour and the Conservatives still dominated elections, there was already a four-party system in Scotland. Further change has followed the advent of the Scottish Parliament. Its system of proportional representation has allowed the representation of smaller parties, such as the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) and the Green Party, and was thought to favour multi-party representation and coalition government. The SNP's success in gaining a majority in the Scottish Parliament was thus unanticipated. The party has also captured a large number of Scottish seats at Westminster in the most recent three UK general elections.

As noted, this article focuses on Scottish women's representation in the UK and Scottish parliaments; they have also been represented in local government and the European Parliament. The wider sphere of women's political engagement over the twentieth century lies beyond the scope of this article, but it is worth noting that local government has played an important role. Before 1918, women in Scotland, as elsewhere in the UK, exercised their rights to vote and stand for public office. While success in achieving representation varied across Scotland, suffragists made their mark in getting women on to school boards (McDermid, 2010). In Edinburgh, from the 1870s onwards suffragists organised strategically to get women elected to school boards, parochial boards, and the successor parish councils (Breitenbach, 2019). After 1918, the successor organisations to the suffrage societies, the Women Citizens' Associations and Societies for Equal Citizenship, continued to campaign for equal suffrage, and supported women candidates for councils and parliament (Breitenbach and Wright, 2014). While they claimed success for their efforts, levels of representation nonetheless remained low (Baxter, 2008). Women's representation in local government in Scotland remains lower than in England, but has increased over time, now standing at 29 percent. With the advent of Women's Committees in the 1980s, local government came to play a crucial role as a training ground for

women politicians and in building an equalities policy community (Breitenbach and Mackay, 2001).

This overview of Scottish women's parliamentary representation is structured around several questions, addressed by both historians and political scientists. It provides a statistical summary of candidates, MPs, MSPs, and party affiliations, complementing previous work, and tracks incremental gains in women's representation over time. Each section, firstly on the UK Parliament, and, secondly, on the Scottish Parliament, discusses candidates, women voters, parties' records of getting women elected, political careers, and whether women politicians have acted to further 'women's interests'. Defining 'women's interests' is not straightforward (see, for example, O'Brien and Piscopo, 2019), but is here understood as measures to promote equality such as equal pay and anti-discrimination legislation, maternity leave and childcare provision, as well as public service provision of particular importance to women. In conclusion, the article outlines key factors underlying the growth in women's representation, and suggests areas for future investigation. Finally, it asks whether there are distinctive characteristics to Scottish experience.

The UK Parliament
Scottish women's representation at Westminster

The number of Scottish seats at Westminster reflects the size of its population, although historically this has been overrepresented, given low population densities in some rural constituencies. Over time the number of seats has changed, reflecting Scotland's changing demography and redrawn boundaries. Most recently, as part of the devolution settlement, the number of Scottish constituencies has shrunk to 59, forming 9.1 percent of the current 650 seats in the UK Parliament (see **Table 1** below). Thus, numbers of women elected have always been small in comparison with England; in the early years following women's enfranchisement they were very small.

The first woman to be elected to Westminster was Constance Markiewicz, who, as a Sinn Féin member, famously refused to take her seat. As this special issue of the *Open Library of Humanities* journal commemorates, Nancy Astor was therefore the first woman to take her seat, in 1919. In 1923 the first Scotswoman was elected to

Table 1: Proportion of Scottish MPs who are women: General Elections, 1918–2019.

General election	Total no. of seats	Total no. of women MPs	Women as % of Scottish MPs
1918	74	0	0
1922	74	0	0
1923	74	1	1.4
1924	74	1	1.4
1929	74	2	2.7
1931	74	3	4.1
1935	74	3	4.1
1945	74	3	4.1
1950	71	4	5.6
1951	71	4	5.6
1955	71	4	5.6
1959	71	5	7.0
1964	71	5	7.0
1966	71	4	5.6
1970	71	2	2.8
1974 (F)	71	3	4.2
1974 (O)	71	4	5.6
1979	71	1	1.4
1983	72	2	2.8
1987	72	3	4.2
1992	72	5	6.9
1997	72	12	16.7
2001	72	11	15.3
2005	59	9	15.3
2010	59	13	22.0
2015	59	20	33.9
2017	59	17	28.8
2019	59	18	30.5

Sources: Compiled from Craig (1977; 1983; 1984), Rallings and Thrasher (1998; 1999; 2005), Morgan (2001), and BBC News (2010; 2020). 1974 (F) refers to the election held in February, and 1974 (O) to the election held in October.

Parliament, Katharine Stewart-Murray, the Duchess of Atholl, Unionist MP for Perth and Kinross. In 1929 the second Scotswoman was elected, Jennie Lee, elected as Labour MP at a by-election for North Lanarkshire. Lee lost this seat in 1931, and was later elected to Staffordshire Cannock in 1945. She served in the Labour Cabinet in the 1960s, and is remembered particularly for the creation of the Open University. Both elections made an impact: the Duchess of Atholl as the first woman MP from Scotland, and Lee as the first Scottish Labour woman MP, notable also for her youth. Elected in March 1929 at the age of 29, she was still too young to vote, as the 1928 Equal Franchise Act came into effect only at the 1929 General Election in May.

From 1923 onwards, Scots MPs always included a woman, generally with several serving at any one time. However, in 1979, Scotswomen's representation at Westminster dropped to a sole woman MP, Judith Hart, Labour MP for Lanark. Numbers rose slowly thereafter, with 1997 representing a breakthrough, when 12 women MPs were elected. Declining to nine by 2005, the number then increased again. The high point was the 2015 election, when 20 women MPs were elected from Scotland. In 2017, 17 women were elected to Scottish constituencies, and 18 women in the 2019 election. In total, 66 women have been elected as MPs for Scottish constituencies since 1918. Although numbers of Scottish women MPs were low throughout the twentieth century, the longer-term pattern in Scotland has been close to that for the UK. Baxter (2008) has commented of the earlier twentieth century that the proportion of Scottish women MPs was sometimes higher than for UK as a whole; however, electing one more or one less woman MP could have a big impact on percentages. Women candidates were rarely selected to stand for safe seats and were often elected at by-elections. Indeed, between 1918 and 1995, 11 of the 24 Scots women elected to Westminster were first elected at by-elections, as listed in **Table 2** below.

Over time, the proportion of Scottish seats held by women has slowly increased, as **Table 1** above indicates. Looking at the pattern since 1997, deemed a breakthrough moment for women's representation at Westminster (Lovenduski, 1997), we can see how Scottish women's representation compares with that for the UK as a whole, illustrated in **Table 3**. While it increased in 1997 to 16.7 percent from 6.9 percent in

Table 2: Scottish women MPs elected at by-elections.

Year	Constituency	MP	Party
1929	North Lanark	Jennie Lee	Labour
1937	Springburn	Agnes Hardie	Labour
1946	Aberdeen South	Lady Grant (later Lady Tweedsmuir)	Conservative
1948	Gorbals	Alice Cullen	Labour
1958	Kelvingrove	Mary McAlister	Labour
1967	Hamilton	Winnie Ewing	SNP
1973	Govan	Margo Macdonald	SNP
1982	Queen's Park	Helen McElhone	Labour
1987	Paisley North	Irene Adams	Labour
1994	Monklands East	Helen Liddell	Labour
1995	Perth and Kinross	Roseanna Cunningham	SNP

Sources: Compiled from F. W. S. Craig (1977; 1983; 1984), and C. Rallings and M. Thrasher (1999).

Table 3: Women as proportion of MPs at Westminster, 1997–2019.

Year of general election	Percentage of women elected to Scottish constituencies	Percentage of women elected to all UK constituencies
1997	16.7	18.2
2001	15.3	17.9
2005	15.3	19.8
2010	22.0	22.0
2015	33.9	29.4
2017	28.8	32.0
2019	30.5	34.0

Sources: Compiled from Rallings and Thrasher (1998; 2005), Morgan (2001), BBC News (2010; 2020), and Audickas, Cracknell and Loft (2019).

1992, the proportion of Scottish women elected was below the UK average, and apart from the high achieved in 2015, it is still slightly below the UK average.

Women's representation in the UK Parliament does not rate highly in international comparisons, and this is true for Scottish representation as well. Following the 2019 general election, the UK was listed in 39th place in global rankings, with 33.9 percent

of its parliament as women members (Interparliamentary Union, 2020). Of the developed countries, Sweden comes highest in 7th place with 47 percent. In 2019, the regional average for Europe was 29.6 percent, with the Nordic countries together at 44 percent (figures relate to comparisons with the House of Commons, and do not include comparison of upper houses) (Interparliamentary Union, 2019).

Candidates

Following the Parliament (Qualification of Women Act) 1918, which enabled women over twenty-one to stand for election as an MP, there have been women candidates at all elections. In 1918, the sole woman candidate, Eunice Murray, stood as an Independent in Glasgow Bridgeton. Murray had been active in the Women's Freedom League (Burness, 1992; Ewan et al., 2018). Mrs Hope, of Luffness, attempted to stand against Asquith, but an inaccuracy in her nomination paper disqualified her (Baxter, 2008). In 1922, of three women candidates (all Liberals: two were supporters of Asquith, and one, a National Liberal, a supporter of Lloyd George), none was successful. In 1923, two Liberals and one Unionist stood; the latter, the Duchess of Atholl, was successfully elected. In 1924 the first two Labour women candidates stood, as well as a Liberal and three Unionist women candidates. By 1929 there were nine women candidates; two were successful, both Unionists. Some candidates stood on several occasions, for example, the National Liberal candidate Helen Fraser; these candidates tended to be long-standing party members, to have a public profile, and previous experience within the party or as councillors. Women candidates were often relatively well-known, and with track records of activism, whether in parties or otherwise. For example, Chrystal Macmillan was an active suffragist, had taken a case to the House of Lords on behalf of women graduates in 1908, and was later a member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Open Door Council (Ewan et al., 2018). Liberal candidate Mrs Burnett Smith was well-known in Scotland, not just as a Liberal but as the popular novelist, Annie S. Swan (Burness, 1992; Ewan et al., 2018). In the first years after enfranchisement, then, the main parties all fielded women candidates. As Burness (1992) has noted, 30 of the 33 women candidates in the period 1918–1945 were party candidates.

Before World War II the highest number of women candidates at any election was ten, in 1931; only two were elected, both Unionist. In the 1950s and 1960s the number of candidates was usually in the teens, and then began to increase from 1970 onwards. As **Table 4** below indicates, the number of women candidates standing at general elections has increased substantially, and did so long before the numbers of women elected began to increase. The increase in women's representation since 1997 seems to have had the effect of pushing up further the number of women candidates. In 2019, as for the UK overall, a record number of women candidates stood; 34 percent of UK candidates were women, while in Scotland there was a total of 293 candidates, with women making up 38.9 percent of the total.

Table 4: Women candidates by party: General Elections, 1918–2019.

General Election	Unionist/ Conser- vative	Labour	Liberals/ Lib Dem	SNP	SDP/ Alliance	Scottish Socialist Party	Green	Others	Total
1918								1	1
1922			3*						3
1923	2		1						3
1924	3	2	1						6
1929	4	3						2	9
1931	4	4						2	10
1935	4	3	2						9
1945	3	3	1					1	8
1950	4	4	5					2	15
1951	3	6							9
1955	4	8							12
1959	3	5	1						9
1964	2	5						3	10
1966	3	3	1					4	11
1970	2	3	3	10				1	19
1974 (F)	5	5	2	7				1	20
1974 (O)	5	7	2	8				1	23

General Election	Unionist/ Conservative	Labour	Liberals/ Lib Dem	SNP	SDP/ Alliance	Scottish Socialist Party	Green	Others	Total
1979	4	3	7	6				6	26
1983	6	3	5	9	6		3	2	34
1987	10	3	8	6	9		3		39
1992	11	5	20	15			6	5	62
1997	10	16	19	15			1	19	80
2001	7	15	16	15		24	1	10	88
2005	5	10	14	13		16	6	13	77
2010	18	14	12	17		2	12	9	84
2015	9	16	16	22		1	14	14	92
2017	18	28	20	20			2	7	95
2019	22	33	20	20			11	8	114

Sources: Compiled from table for 1918–1955 by Baxter (2008), Craig (1977; 1983; 1984), Rallings and Thrasher (1998; 1999; 2005), Morgan (2001), and BBC News (2010; 2020). 1974 (F) refers to the election held in February, and 1974 (O) to the election held in October.
* Two candidates were Liberals, and one a National Liberal.

The dominant parties, or rising parties in the case of the SNP in previous decades, have between them fielded the majority of women candidates. There have also been women candidates standing for small parties on the left and right, or standing on single issue campaigns such as legalising cannabis, or for groups such as the Natural Law Party, or as Independents. Women have been active across the political spectrum, including as candidates for the British National Party and National Front, as well as more recently the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the Brexit Party, several small left-wing groups such as the Workers' Revolutionary Party, Socialist Labour Party, Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) and individuals such as Lady Muck Cronin of the Rock 'n' Roll Loony Party (who stood in Linlithgow in 2001). The Communist Party also put forward women candidates in several general elections. The growth in fringe party candidates and independents has been noticeable from the 1980s onwards. Most such candidates have little chance of electoral success, although some have enjoyed a rise (and fall) in political fortunes, such as the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), UKIP and the Brexit Party. The Greens first started fielding

candidates in 1983, and have increased their support in both Scottish Parliament and UK general elections, although failing to win any Scottish seats in the latter. The SSP ambitiously fielded candidates for most Scottish constituencies in 2001 and 2005, including a considerable number of women candidates. No doubt this was encouraged by their success in returning several MSPs to the Scottish Parliament, facilitated by the system of proportional representation. However, the subsequent bitter disputes over the conduct of its leading member, Tommy Sheridan, resulting in a 'spectacular tabloid scandal' (Keating, 2010: 75), did much to undermine the party.

Generally speaking, in the earlier decades after enfranchisement it was difficult for women candidates to be selected for safe, or winnable, seats. There is evidence of women experiencing prejudice on the basis of their sex in earlier years, but also of women being encouraged to stand (Baxter, 2008). How many women may have come forward and been rejected is not known, but getting women candidates to come forward could also be difficult, as the Liberals found in the inter-war years (Burness, 1992). It was not until the 1980s that the debate around Labour's failure to select women for winnable seats came to prominence. Criticisms were made of sexist attitudes, party selection procedures which chose 'favourite sons', the influence of male-dominated trade unions, and a party culture that meant many able women effectively selected themselves out of the process (Brown, 1996; 1998). Given the Labour Party's dominance in Scotland at the time, any progress in women's representation was likely to lie primarily with it.

As **Table 4** above indicates, there has been growing interest in standing for office among women. Of the greater numbers of candidates coming forward now, many will have only limited chances of success. However, standing for election without expectation of winning a seat has also served to build parties and political careers. This can be demonstrated by the rise of the SNP and the role of prominent women politicians in the party's early electoral successes. The numbers of candidates coming forward have also reflected moments of success for smaller parties, such as the SSP. Arguably the growing number of women candidates contributes to a process of normalising women's presence in political life. Nonetheless, there has not yet been a general election in Scotland in which every constituency has had at least one woman

candidate. There have, however, quite often been multiple women candidates in several constituencies. It may be that the success of a woman candidate attracts other women to stand against her, or that parties perceive this as a strategic choice.

Parties and women: voters, members, representatives

Women's support for parties has at times differed from men's. Although the extension of the franchise in 1918 favoured middle-class voters, Dyer has argued that evidence of Unionist bias among women is less than circumstantial (Dyer, 1996). It may be that women voters contributed more than male voters to Unionist success, because of the apparent greater effectiveness of Unionist women's organisation, compared to other parties, and perhaps because of a greater propensity of middle- and upper-class women to vote. Norris's (1996) analysis of Gallup polls from 1945 onwards, and of British Election Studies from 1964 onwards, indicates that across Britain as a whole, between 1945 and 1959 women were more likely than men to favour the Conservatives. By the 1980s the gender gap in voting was insignificant, although there were generational differences. After Unionist support in Scotland peaked in 1955, Labour attracted support from the majority of male and female voters. However, more women than men supported the Conservative party until the 1990s; by then there was little difference in women's and men's voting behaviour relating to the then-dominant parties (Breitenbach and Wasoff, 2007).

As elsewhere in Britain, from the 1880s onwards, women began to join political parties, or party-affiliated organisations, where admission to full party membership did not occur until 1918. As Burness (1992) has noted, parties' reactions to women's enfranchisement varied in their organisational responses, with Liberal and Unionist parties creating structures that made women members more visible than they were in the Labour party. Little is known, however, about levels of women's membership of parties in the earlier decades of the twentieth century. Baxter (2008) has cited evidence of high levels of women's membership in local parties, while Burness (1992) has noted that, given the dominance of male trade unionists, women's membership of Labour was low. For recent years data on party membership remains scarce, and data giving a gender breakdown at Scottish level is even more scarce. Mackay (2003) noted

that in 2003 women comprised 42 percent of Scottish Labour membership. Johns, Bennie and Mitchell (2011) reported the level of women's membership of the SNP at 32 percent in 2007/08. They also noted percentages of women members of Scottish parties for selected years: in 1997, 39 percent of Scottish Labour's membership were women; in 1992, 61 percent of Scottish Conservative party members were women; and in 2002, 37 percent of Scottish Green party members were women. Recently published data for parties' UK membership indicated Labour had the highest level of women members at 47 percent, followed by the Green Party at 46 percent and the SNP at 43 percent (Audickas, Dempsey and Loft, 2019). Since there are few SNP members elsewhere in the UK, this reflects the growth of women's membership in Scotland. There is no recent data on Conservative party membership in Scotland; it is impossible to say whether women continue to form a majority.

Neither popularity with women voters nor levels of women's membership seem to be closely related to a party's propensity to select women candidates. Indeed, the SNP would provide a contrary example of a party appealing more to male voters, but having a track record of high-profile women politicians. Prior to the 1980s there is little evidence of debates within parties about women standing, at Scottish or local level, or about strategies to support women. However, the Women for Westminster campaign in the 1940s attracted some interest in Scotland (Burness, 2010a), and this may have had an impact on the numbers of women candidates coming forward in the 1950s. By the 1980s, frustration among women activists in the Labour Party resulted in organised action to get women's issues and women's representation on the agenda. Within the Scottish Labour Party, the Women's Action Committee campaigned for quotas and women-only shortlists, paralleling moves in the Labour Party elsewhere in Britain (Burness, 2010b). These campaigns resulted in the application of All-Women Shortlists (AWS) for some Scottish seats and had a particular impact on proposals for women's representation in the Scottish Parliament, as discussed below. A number of Labour MPs were selected through AWS, including Anne Begg, Anne McGuire, and Sandra Osborne, who were selected for the 1997 election, and Sheila Gilmore, and Pamela Nash, selected for the 2010 election.

Since 1918 a total of 66 women have been elected as MPs for Scottish constituencies. **Table 5** below indicates their distribution by party. The Labour party leads with 29 women MPs, followed by the SNP with 26, the Conservatives with

Table 5: Scottish women MPs by party: General elections 1918–2019.

General Election	Labour	Unionist/ Conservative	Liberal/ Lib Dem	SNP	Total MPs
1918					0
1922					0
1923		1			1
1924		1			1
1929	1	1			2
1931		2			2
1935		3			3
1945	3				3
1950	3	1			4
1951	3	1			4
1955	3	1			4
1959	4	2			6
1964	3	2			5
1966	3	1			4
1970	1	1			2
1974 (F)	1	1		2	4
1974 (O)	1	1		2	4
1979	1				1
1983	1	1			2
1987	1		1	1	3
1992	4		1	1	6
1997	9		1	2	12
2001	10			1	11
2005	8		1		9
2010	11		1	1	13
2015			1	18 (+2 later Ind)	21
2017	2	1	2	12	17
2019			2	16	18

Sources: Compiled from Craig (1977; 1983; 1984), Rallings and Thrasher (1998; 1999; 2005), Morgan (2001), and BBC News (2010; 2020). 1974 (F) refers to the election held in February, and 1974 (O) to the election held in October.

seven, and the Liberal Democrats (LibDems) with four. Since 1997, the 'breakthrough' moment, the party breakdown has been as follows: Labour – 20 women MPs; SNP – 21 women MPs; Conservatives – one woman MP; and LibDems – four women MPs. Conservative women politicians have had a much better showing in the Scottish Parliament. The LibDems have not done well in either parliament in getting women elected, although they have put forward women candidates in general elections over a period of decades, often outdoing Labour in numbers as indicated in **Table 4** above (Burness, 2010a).

Political careers and policy interests

It is possible to offer here only very limited commentary on the careers of Scottish women MPs at Westminster. Few have written autobiographies or been the subject of biogaphies. Burness (1992; 2010a) has provided accounts of Scottish women MPs between 1918 and 1990, while Baxter's (2008) doctoral research gives a more in-depth account of Scottish women politicians' careers between 1918–1955. Several have held ministerial office: the Duchess of Atholl (the first Conservative woman to do so), Florence Horsbrugh (Conservative), Peggy Herbison (Labour), Lady Tweedsmuir (Conservative), Judith Hart (Labour), and Helen Liddell (Labour). Of these, four held Cabinet Office: Horsburgh, Herbison, Hart and Liddell. Since 1997, no other woman minister in UK governments has been an MP from Scotland; by contrast, several male politicians representing Scottish constituencies have held leading government roles, for example, Robin Cook, Gordon Brown, and Alastair Darling. In recent decades some women MPs have held junior government posts, such as Parliamentary Private Secretaries (PPS) to Ministers or as Shadow Cabinet members. This has included Rachel Squire, Anne McGuire, Sandra Osborne, and Lynda Clark, all Labour MPs.

The Duchess of Atholl had been an anti-suffragist, believing that local government was an appropriate sphere of public life for women, but that they were not sufficiently well-educated politically to vote for the 'imperial' Parliament. Her own imperial interests informed the issues that she took up in Parliament, such as the 1929–1931 campaign with Independent MP Eleanor Rathbone for the abolition of 'female circumcision' in Kenya (to which she had been alerted by Church of

Scotland missionaries) (Pedersen, 1991), and opposition to self-government in India based on her belief that Indian women and children required the protection of British rule. Her subsequent support for Spanish civil war refugees was connected to her anti-appeasement stance, and resulted in the loss of her seat in 1938. She opposed equal pay in the civil service, and the extension of the vote to all women in 1928 (Burness, 1992). Florence Horsbrugh, also Conservative, was regarded as a competent minister, who, among other things, had responsibility for the evacuation of children during World War II. She also sponsored two private members' bills, on the curbing of drinking methylated spirits, and on the regulation of the adoption of children (Baxter, 2008).

Of Labour MPs, Jennie Lee's perceived support for the provision of contraception contributed to the loss of her seat in 1931, on account of Catholic hostility (Burness, 1992). Agnes Hardie, Alice Cullen and Jean Mann took up concerns of working-class women, such as pay and prices, health services and housing (Burness, 1992). In the 1960s, Judith Hart supported legislation empowering local authorities to provide family planning advice (Davidson and Davis, 2012). Of Scottish women MPs in the House of Commons at the time of its passage and in the years immediately following, only Judith Hart voted for the 1967 Abortion Act and against subsequent attempts to restrict it (Chambers and Cossey, 1982). Subsequently, Maria Fyfe was active in organising opposition to the 1988 Alton Bill, which sought to reduce the time limit for abortions (Fyfe, 2014).

Although some policy interests of earlier women MPs are noted here, there has been no systematic research into the careers of Scottish women MPs which would enable an assessment of their support for legislation and policies particularly affecting women. In general, UK government policies that have underpinned progress towards gender equality – whether explicitly or resulting from broader reforms promoting social equality – have tended to be enacted by the Labour Party. Similarly the Labour Party has the best track record to date in terms of the number of women MPs elected, and was the first to adopt measures to promote women's representation. Within the Scottish Labour Party, Maria Fyfe took a leading role in promoting better representation of women, while some women Labour MPs elected

from the 1990s onwards have been self-identified feminists, such as Sandra Osborne, Margaret Curran and Sheila Gilmore.

The SNP women elected to Westminster in earlier decades – Winnie Ewing, Margo Macdonald, and Margaret Bain (later Ewing) – all had a high public profile. Burness (2010a) has commented that Ewing's influence as a role model was 'immense', with her election at the 1967 Hamilton by-election marking the start of a long political career in Westminster, the European Parliament, and the Scottish Parliament. She was the first MSP to be sworn in at the new Parliament in 1999. Both Macdonald and Bain were also elected MSPs in 1999. The recently elected SNP women MPs are unlikely to ever serve in government at Westminster, and face a challenge in building political careers in a context in which constitutional change is likely to remain their priority. To date, Joanna Cherry has probably had the highest profile, given her role in initiating legal challenges to the Conservative government over process relating to Brexit and the prorogation of Parliament.

The Scottish Parliament

Pressure for devolution has been a frequent feature of Scottish politics, from the late nineteenth century demand for 'Home Rule All Round', to the demand for an Assembly in the 1970s and the subsequent campaign for a Parliament from the late 1980s onwards. Support for devolution has fluctuated over time. While stimulated in the 1970s within the two dominant parties by anxiety over rising support for independence and the SNP's electoral success, it was insufficiently strong in the 1979 referendum to deliver a large enough majority in favour. Among the factors subsequently fuelling support for devolution was a growing frustration at the centralisation of power in Westminster, the lack of parliamentary time for Scottish legislation, and a widespread feeling that Scotland failed to be represented adequately by Conservative governments, for whom the majority of Scots had not voted. Labour Party support was for some based on the idea that a strong Scottish Parliament would 'decaffeinate' nationalism, or, in the words of George Robertson, kill it 'stone dead' (McCrone, 2017). Support for a Parliament grew from the late 1980s onwards, pushing Labour to commit to holding a referendum. Following Labour's victory in the 1997 general election the referendum was duly held, asking whether there

should be a Scottish Parliament and whether it should have tax-varying powers. The result was a majority of 74.3 percent for the Scottish Parliament and of 63.5 percent for tax-varying powers, and in 1999 the first election for the Parliament was held.

As noted, much administrative devolution had already taken place. What the Parliament represented was political devolution, conferring the right to legislate in many areas to the new political institution. Key devolved powers include: agriculture, forestry and fishing; education and training; environment; health and social services; housing; law and order; local government; and sports and the arts. Some forms of taxation and aspects of transport were also devolved. There has been further devolution of powers more recently, including other forms of taxation, and some responsibilities relating to welfare benefits. Significant powers remain reserved to Westminster, such as defence and foreign policy, but also powers including a number of areas having important impacts on women's lives, such as social security, pay and employment rights, equality legislation, and abortion.

The campaign for a Scottish Parliament from 1989 onwards involved demands for greater women's representation, both in the Scottish Constitutional Convention (SCC) and in the proposed parliament, as well as the promotion of equal opportunities as a key principle for the Parliament, guiding its conduct and style of politics (Breitenbach and Mackay, 2001). The devolving of powers for equality legislation was also lobbied for, although unsuccessfully. A broad alliance of women's organisations, and women from inside and outside political parties, came together to pursue these aims. A central part of women's lobbying was the 50:50 campaign (McDonald, Alexander and Sutherland, 2001; Burness, 2010b; Fyfe, 2014). The demand for equal representation of women and men in a Scottish Parliament was first put forward in 1989 in a submission from the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) Women's Committee to the SCC Working Party on Women's Issues. In 1991 the STUC and the Scottish Labour Party both adopted this policy. The STUC Women's Committee built support for this demand, and from this the Scottish Women's Co-ordination Group (SWCG) emerged in 1992. The Group organised a series of round-table discussions with women from political parties, with all the main parties participating, except the Conservatives; there was support for improved women's representation but

there was no consensus on strategies. Discussions with the SNP took place, but since the SNP, as standing for independence, did not participate in the SCC, it was not associated with 50:50. In 1995, agreement was reached between Scottish Labour and the Scottish Liberal Democrats, accepting the principle. The groundwork was then laid for the strategy of 'twinning' in the Labour Party, that is, the pairing together of neighbouring constituencies with a female candidate for one and a male candidate for the other. The SWCG campaigned for a double 'Yes' vote in the 1997 referendum – for a Scottish Parliament and for tax-varying powers. When the Parliament came into being, it was only the Labour Party that used formal mechanisms to increase women's representation. The 50:50 campaign could claim partial success, with women making up 39 percent of MSPs in the first Scottish Parliament. It also demonstrated the significance of dialogue between women's organisations and parties, and the capacity of a wide range of women's organisations to work together to enhance women's political rights and representation. Furthermore, the involvement of women activists in the campaign for the Scottish Parliament, and their contribution to the blueprint for the Parliament developed by the SCC, meant that the Parliament had as one of its four founding principles the principle of equality, and a standing Equal Opportunities Committee. The civil service, renamed the Scottish Executive, oversaw the creation of an Equality Unit, the adoption of an Equality Strategy, and active support for consultation with women's organisations.

Parties and women: voters, members, representatives

As indicated, there had been intense debate over several years about increasing women's representation, the need for mechanisms to ensure this, and the specific measures that different parties might adopt. Strategies had to be adapted to the system of proportional representation adopted for the Scottish Parliament, the Additional Member System. This combines 73 MSPs elected for constituencies by the first-past-the-post system, and a further 56 additional members with seven MSPs being elected for each of eight Parliamentary Regions. The second vote is for a party, not a candidate, and the parties are allocated additional seats to make the overall result more proportional. The regional lists are compiled by the parties, and where candidates are placed on the

list is key to their likelihood of being elected. The distribution of a party's support also makes decisions about how they allocate candidates between constituencies and lists of crucial importance to the outcome for particular candidates. It is worth noting here that not only is the voting system different from Westminster's system, but who gets to vote also differs. People can register to vote if they are a British, Irish, Commonwealth or EU citizen resident at an address in Scotland. Since 2015, this applies to anyone 16 years old and over; 16-year olds were empowered to vote in the Independence Referendum of 2014 by a separate Act.

As noted above, gender differences in voting behaviour have declined with regard to Conservatives and Labour in Scotland. Historically there has been a gender gap in voting for the SNP, with men more likely than women to support the party (Johns, Bennie, and Mitchell, 2011). However, this gender gap has been declining; McCrone (2017) notes that for the 2011 Scottish Parliament election the gender gap in voting for the SNP was estimated to have reduced to three percent. There has also been a gender gap in attitudes to independence, with the 2014 referendum result indicating a gap of around five percent: 49.5 percent of male voters supported independence, while 44.7 percent of female voters did so (McAngus and Rummery, 2018). Recognition of the gender gap in voting behaviour seems likely to have influenced the SNP into taking a more proactive stance on women's representation.

Since its inception, the Scottish Parliament has had higher levels of women's representation than Westminster, and also higher than in local government. Despite the decline in the proportion of women in the Scottish Parliament since the 1999 and 2003 elections, as indicated in **Table 6** below, it still maintains the record of having the highest proportion of women, compared to Westminster and local government.

Table 6: Women MSPs in Scottish Parliament elections 1999–2016 (numbers and percentages).

Year of election	1999	2003	2007	2011	2016
No. of women MSPs	48	51	43	45	45
Proportion of MSPs who are women	37%	40%	33%	35%	35%

Sources: Compiled from Scottish Parliament Election Results, 1999; Scottish Parliament 2003: Election Facts; Scottish Parliament Statistics, 2007–2008; 2011–2012; 2016–2017.

To date, 104 women have been elected as MSPs, which is 104 in 20 years, compared to Westminster's 66 women MPs in 100 years. These levels have been achieved for the most part through the use of measures by parties to promote women candidates, including the Labour Party's use of the twinning mechanism to guarantee equal representation in constituency seats in 1999, informal measures by the SNP in earlier elections (Breitenbach and Mackay, 2001), and subsequent adoption of AWS for the 2016 election (Kenny, Mackay, Murtagh, 2016). This also includes measures such as 'zipping' on regional lists by the Green Party and by Labour, who also brought AWS into play again. However, as Mackay and Kenny (Mackay, 2004; Mackay and Kenny, 2009; Kenny, 2011; Kenny and Mackay, 2014; Kenny, 2015) have shown, such measures have not consistently been applied, with some backtracking by Labour over efforts to promote women candidates, and tensions between central and local party organisations. The desire of local branches to select candidates also formed part of the resistance to positive action measures in the SNP. This indicates both that positive action measures do make an impact, but that these require being maintained to prevent the level of women's representation stagnating. The level of women's representation remains a live issue, with the 50:50 campaign undergoing a revival from 2014, and feminist organisations such as Engender campaigning for legislation to ensure that parties adopt quotas, an argument consistently put forward by commentators such as Mackay and Kenny.

Table 7 below illustrates the varying performance of Scottish parties in getting women elected as MSPs. Labour and the SNP have made the most significant contributions. Since 1999, each party's total of women MSPs is as follows: Labour – 43; SNP – 38 (two subsequently became Independents); Conservatives – 11; LibDems – four; Green Party – three; and one Independent. As with Westminster elections, Labour has taken the lead in getting women elected, with the SNP rapidly catching up. According to Kenny, Mackay and Murtagh (2015), much of the change in the SNP has been driven from the top, with Nicola Sturgeon 'making powerful statements on women's representation', including the appointment of a 50:50 cabinet. However, they also note significant changes within the party coming from the bottom up, with rapid growth in women's membership and entrance of grass roots activists, including

Table 7: Women MSPs by party: Scottish Parliament elections, 1999–2016.

Party	Scottish Labour	Scottish Conservative and Unionist	Scottish LibDem	SNP	Scottish Green	Scottish Socialist Party	Others
Election year							
1999	28	3	2	15	0	0	0
2003	28	4	2	9	2	4	2
2007	23	5	2	12	0	0	1
2011	17	6	1	19	1	0	0
2016	11	6	0	27	2	0	0

Sources: Scottish Parliament Election Results, 1999; Scottish Parliament Election Results, 2003; Scottish Parliament Statistics, 2007–2008; 2011–2012; 2016–2017.

women from Women for Independence (WFI). Emerging in the run-up to the 2014 referendum, this was an autonomous organisation, distinct from the 'Yes Scotland' campaign, with women from a range of professional and political backgrounds (McAngus and Rummery, 2018). Among founding members were members of Scottish Labour, Greens, SNP and the SSP. As well as promoting independence, WFI linked constitutional change to greater democracy, gender equality and social justice, and worked to increase women's political engagement. McAngus and Rummery have argued that WFI can be characterised as a social movement organisation overlapping with the broader women's movement. This contrasts with Women Together, which was part of the Better Together campaign, and supported by some leading women Labour party figures, including Maria Fyfe, Margaret Curran, Johann Lamont, Kezia Dugdale and Jackie Baillie. Women Together ended with the referendum, while WFI has continued to be active.

Candidates

It is a feature of Scottish Parliament elections that there have been far higher numbers of candidates than at Westminster elections. At each election there have been more than 800 candidates, and in 2007, this reached a total of 1050. This includes over 300 candidates for constituency seats and over 500 for list seats in each election. There have consistently been high numbers of candidates in the 'Others' category; Independents, single issue campaigns, and small groups such as left-wing splinter

Table 8: Candidates by gender and party, Scottish Parliament election, 2016.

Party	Constituency ballot		Regional ballot	
	No. of candidates	% women	No. of candidates	% women
SNP	73	41.1	93	45.2
Conservative	73	19.2	71	19.7
Labour	73	53.4	86	48.8
Liberal Democrat	73	38.4	63	42.9
Green	3	33.3	65	49.2
UKIP	0	–	26	15.4
Others	18	5.6	115	44.3

Source: Hawkins (2019).

groups, and so on. Very few such candidates, among whom there appears to be a substantial proportion of women, can hope to be elected. At the least, however, it indicates a commitment to taking the opportunity to have a public platform for whatever cause the candidates espouse. Statistical reports on elections from the Scottish Parliament have not offered a gender breakdown of candidates; however, an analysis for the 2016 Scottish Parliament election was provided in a House of Commons Library Briefing Paper (Hawkins, 2016).

As **Table 8** above indicates, there was a higher proportion of women candidates than of women elected. Overall, about 36 percent of constituency candidates were women, and 41 percent of regional candidates. It also indicates the variation in parties' records in standing candidates, with the Labour party continuing to stand the highest proportion of women candidates, followed by the SNP. The table also indicates parties' choices for placing candidates, for example, a small party such as the Green party, which will attract a larger share of its vote through the regional ballot.

Political careers

Reviewing twenty years of devolution, the Institute for Government (2019) noted that in the first two decades of its existence, 48 people had served in Scottish Cabinets, with about one-third of them being women. Of the 20 members of the first Scottish Executive led by First Minister Donald Dewar, five were women (Dalgety

and Phillips, 2013). This pattern was repeated by successive First Ministers, Henry McLeish and Jack McConnell. A 60:40 split of male to female had been achieved by the SNP government in 2007, with a smaller cabinet dominated by men. When Nicola Sturgeon became First Minister in November 2014, she had a cabinet of ten members, with equal numbers of men and women. The 50:50 split was maintained subsequently in a slightly larger cabinet. With the appointment of Kate Forbes to the cabinet in February 2020, following the resignation of Derek Mackay, this changed to seven women and five men, with women therefore making up 58 percent. Including the Cabinet and other ministers, there are 14 women and 14 men.

To date, 31 women MSPs have served in ministerial posts, one as acting Minister for a colleague on maternity leave (Scottish Parliament Public Information Service, 2007–2018). Of these, 16 have served in Cabinet posts, and the rest as junior ministers; some may of course go on to reach Cabinet rank. By party, there have been 11 Labour women MSPs serving as ministers, seven in Scottish Executive Cabinets, and there have been 20 SNP women MSPs serving as ministers, with nine in Scottish Executive/Government Cabinets (the Scottish Executive was renamed the Scottish Government in 2012).

Women MSPs who have served in Cabinet positions are as follows:

Wendy Alexander	Labour	(1999–2002)
Sarah Boyack	Labour	(1999–2001)
Susan Deacon	Labour	(1999–2001)
Jackie Baillie	Labour	(2000–2001)
Patricia Ferguson	Labour	(2001–Oct 2004; June 2005–2007)
Cathy Jamieson	Labour	(2001–2007)
Margaret Curran	Labour	(2002–2007)
Fiona Hyslop	SNP	(2007–)
Nicola Sturgeon	SNP	(2007–)
Roseanna Cunningham	SNP	(2014–)
Shona Robison	SNP	(2014–2018)
Angela Constance	SNP	(2014–2018)
Aileen Campbell	SNP	(2016–)

Jeane Freeman	SNP	(2018–)
Shirley-Anne Somerville	SNP	(2018–)
Kate Forbes	SNP	(2020–)

It has been a feature of the Scottish Executive/Government that there have been frequent changes in Cabinet personnel or in the title and scope of ministerial portfolios. For the most part, even where the title and scope of ministerial positions changed, the postholder continued to hold similar responsibilities, but some women MSPs have held positions covering different areas. Several women MSPs were appointed to Cabinet rank without holding a junior ministerial position: Wendy Alexander (Labour), Sarah Boyack (Labour), who later held a junior post, Susan Deacon (Labour), Patricia Ferguson (Labour), and Cathy Jamieson (Labour), Fiona Hyslop (SNP), and Nicola Sturgeon (SNP). The others achieving Cabinet rank have held junior ministerial posts prior to this. Ministerial portfolios have ranged across areas such as Communities and Social Inclusion, Enterprise, Justice, Transport and the Environment, Culture and Tourism, Higher Education, Health, Employment, and Social Security. Nicola Sturgeon, while Deputy First Minister, was also Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities. Having held the Deputy First Minister post since 2007, she became First Minister in 2014. In February 2020, Kate Forbes became the first woman Cabinet Secretary for Finance. In addition to ministerial roles, several women MSPs have been Presiding and Deputy Presiding Officers (Speaker), and women MSPs have also served as convenors of Parliamentary Committees. In 2001, Elish Angiolini was appointed the first woman Solicitor General for Scotland, and in 2006 she was appointed the first woman Lord Advocate.

Of the women ministers in the first Scottish Executive, no-one had previous experience of elected office, and not only had the challenge of learning how to run government departments, but also encountered difficulties with senior male civil servants, and much sexism from the media (Dalgety and Phillips, 2013). However, they drew support from networks in the trade union movement, women's organisations and community groups. Some of those interviewed by Dalgety and Phillips (2013) made explicit their feminist beliefs, as they did in the Scottish Parliament. The

national strategy on domestic abuse and support for refuge provision was seen as a significant achievement, but women ministers also saw themselves as implementing female-friendly social policies in transport, community justice, and childcare. By contrast, strategies such as gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting were seen as not well understood by civil servants, and not very effective.

While the campaigners of the 1990s had expectations of increased women's representation, they had not necessarily expected women politicians to become so high profile in Scotland, in particular as party leaders. Since 1999 the following have led parties: Wendy Alexander, Johann Lamont, Kezia Dugdale (Labour); Annabel Goldie, Ruth Davidson (Conservative); Nicola Sturgeon (SNP). Kenny and Mackay (2014) suggest that the high visibility of women politicians in the Scottish Parliament led to complacency over strategies on candidate selection, leading to the decline of levels of women's representation. The Labour Party's rapid turnover of leaders has also led to public criticism. For example, Wendy Alexander was forced to stand down over the issue of accepting a donation from a businessman in Jersey, which was a contravention of rules on political donations. Subsequent leaders of Scottish Labour, men as well as women, have inevitably incurred censure as Labour's electoral support in Scotland has declined. Ruth Davidson achieved a high profile as leader of the Scottish Conservatives, and her socially liberal views appear to have gained her some popularity beyond her party. She has been less radical over issues such as restricting child benefits, and other austerity policies. Nicola Sturgeon became First Minister in November 2014, and enjoys wide recognition not only in Scotland but in the UK in general, given the ongoing debates about Scottish independence and the state of the union in the United Kingdom.

Representation of women's interests
As noted, the Scottish Parliament has equal opportunities as one of its founding principles, has a standing Equal Opportunities Committee, and there is an Equality Unit within the civil service. In the early days of the Scottish Executive's existence the Equality Unit produced a strategy committed to mainstreaming equality, while at the same time building up links with the various equality constituencies and networks in Scotland. This included setting up a Women in Scotland Consultative Forum in the

initial years of the Scottish Parliament, and subsequent support for the autonomous Scottish Women's Convention.

Policies on domestic abuse provide the clearest policy example where the presence of women MSPs has made a difference, in particular MSPs with a feminist background. Mackay (2010) has charted the stages of development of Scottish Government legislation, policies and support for service provision relating to domestic abuse, noting how it has been championed by a number of women MSPs. It also provides an example of collaborative working between Scottish Women's Aid, the Scottish Government, councils, health bodies and the criminal justice system. Furthermore, it represents an area of policy development in which Scottish approaches and levels of provision are different in kind and extent to those south of the border. A characteristic of Scottish strategies on domestic abuse is their framing by a feminist analysis and definition of domestic abuse. Where other policies have been claimed as particularly benefiting women, it is less clear that they have been explicitly informed by gender equality or feminist perspectives, for example, free personal care for the elderly (Dalgety and Phillips, 2013). It is worth noting that the latter policy seems to be frequently misunderstood as meaning free social care. It is in fact much more restricted, and applies to funding of care where individuals require assistance with getting up, being dressed, bathing and toileting, or have restricted mobility.

Chaney's (2012) analysis of selected Scottish Parliament proceedings, including parliamentary debates and committee meetings, concluded that there was evidence of 'substantive representation' in the Scottish Parliament, that is the advancement of women's interests in policy-making and debate, as contrasted with the number of women present as elected members, or 'descriptive representation'. It examined contributions by MSPs relating to domestic abuse, childcare, equal pay, gender and criminal justice, equality in the labour market, women's health and women's representation. More women than men MSPs raised such 'women's issues', although not all female MSPs did, and some men did so. Chaney argued that such substantive representation was dependent not just on a 'critical mass' of women MSPs in the Parliament, but also on the presence of 'critical actors', a relatively small number of Labour MSPs with feminist views, who were most likely to promote women's interests.

In general, the Scottish Executive/Government and Scottish Parliament are more accessible to Scottish interest groups and civil society organisations than are Westminster governments. As Keating (2010) has commented, the voluntary sector has been a gainer from devolution. This includes feminist organisations such as Scottish Women's Aid and Engender, while the Scottish Women's Convention seeks women's views through roadshows and other events, about key issues such as women's health, poverty, and so on. It also publicises government consultations and lobbies MSPs. Compared to the pre-devolution situation, where access to the Scottish Office by women's organisations, and especially feminist organisations, was practically non-existent, this has been a big step forward. Nonetheless, equal access for women is not yet available through all government channels. As Bochel and Berthier (2018) found in a review of evidence-giving to Parliamentary Committees (for selected Parliamentary sessions), women remained in a minority. Only around 40 percent of witnesses to Committees were women in the parliamentary session 2016–2017 (first ten months), although this represented an increase from just over 25 percent in 1999–2000. The numbers of women giving evidence also varied according to committee, with higher numbers being invited to give evidence to the Equality and Human Rights Committee and Health and Sport Committees, for example, in 2016–17.

Conclusion

This article has provided an overview of Scottish women's representation in the UK parliament since 1918 and the Scottish Parliament since 1999, with statistics on candidates and representatives identifying trends over time. Yet this focus should not be taken as in itself a proxy for women's engagement in politics, nor a measure of their capacity to influence policy making. There remain considerable gaps in the history of Scottish women's political activity, which must be addressed if a fuller understanding of its impact is to be gained. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to address women's involvement in local government and the impact of wider women's movements, as has been argued elsewhere, women's organisations and activists, inside and outside parties, have effectively collaborated to extend women's political rights.

This was the case for the women's suffrage movement in Scotland before 1918, and for the movement's successor organisations and other women's organisations in the inter-war years. The 1950s remain a relatively unexplored decade of women's political history in Scotland, but it is likely there are some continuities and connections to be found with the feminism of earlier and later decades. As Sarah Browne has commented in her history of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) in Scotland, demands and ideas from the campaigns of previous generations fed into the developing feminism of the late 1960s, such as equal pay and opportunity and the right to birth control and abortion, even though the new generation of feminists knew little of their precursors (Browne, 2014). In a similar way, the activism of the 1970s provided the groundwork for the shift to demanding greater representation in formal politics, whether in local government, Westminster, or the Scottish Parliament. The participation of feminist activists in the devolution campaign also drew in other women, inside and outside of parties, who would not themselves have been of the WLM generation. In a similar way, the more recent debates about women's participation in formal politics that was generated around the independence referendum of 2014 drew in new groups of activists, who would not necessarily have had a connection to previous feminist organisations or campaigns. Furthermore, although often connected to wider GB/UK or international networks, it has been at local and Scottish level that women have built organisations, campaigns and networks to advance their aims. This has been not least because of the degree of administrative devolution already existing prior to 1999 and the need for separate Scottish legislation in many areas, even before the Scottish Parliament existed.

Since being legally enabled to do so, women have stood as candidates at parliamentary elections in Scotland. The question of candidate selection and the context of the contests which women fought have been the focus of scrutiny by both historians and political scientists. Potential women candidates sometimes encountered direct discrimination, but dominant expectations of gender roles also acted as a barrier. Women candidates often had difficulty in getting selected for safe or winnable seats, a factor underlined by the high number of women MPs who first

won seats at by-elections, where the contest between parties for government office was not at issue. The overall pattern of Scottish women's representation in the UK parliament has been of gradual incremental gains, with 1997, as elsewhere in the UK, representing a 'breakthrough' moment. Following hard on the heels of this breakthrough was the creation in 1999 of the Scottish Parliament, which, as a new institution without incumbent representatives, offered the opportunity to push for increased representation of women.

The numbers of women candidates began to increase some time before the numbers of women representatives did, with a considerable increase occurring by the 1980s. More research into candidates' backgrounds and political track records should prove revealing, particularly given that numbers have now grown substantially. Keating (2010) noted of the early intakes of the Scottish Parliament that women MSPs were more concentrated in professional and business categories than were male MSPs, and has also commented on the growing professionalisation of politics. Education and employment experience, family connections, party roles and responsibilities, and the numbers of elections contested and at which level of government, might usefully be compared for female and male candidates for Scottish parliamentary seats at both Westminster and Holyrood since the late 1990s. The issue of the calibre of candidates could also be addressed, particularly since it remains salient in arguments against gender equity measures. As research by Nugent and Krook has shown, despite the charges against AWS of tokenism, or of less able candidates being selected by this method, the opposite was found to be the case (Nugent and Krook, 2016).

Women candidates have come from across the political spectrum, underlining the fact that women are not a homogenous group. They have neither voted as a block nor voted along identical lines to men, although gender gaps in voting behaviour have diminished over time. All the main parties operating in Scotland have stood women candidates for the Westminster parliament, as have some smaller parties. Given its system of proportional representation, the Scottish Parliament has seen women candidates standing for a wider range of parties. The parties achieving the highest numbers of elected women representatives, in Scotland, as in many countries,

have been social democratic in character. Formal and informal measures to increase women's representation were crucial to this process, with Labour initially leading, now followed by the SNP. Over the long term the Liberals/LibDems track record has been poor. The Unionists/Conservatives demonstrated the capacity to support women candidates earlier in the twentieth century, but since the 1980s the general decline of Conservative fortunes in Scotland has resulted in a dearth of Conservative women MPs. Since the inception of the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Conservative party has had two women leaders, but lags behind Labour and the SNP in the proportion of women representatives they send to either parliament, a consequence of their refusal to adopt any specific mechanisms to promote women candidates. In the Scottish Parliament, smaller parties of the left have had some success in getting women elected through the use of specific strategies for selection, although their levels of representation have been vulnerable when only small numbers have been elected. Commentators on the plateauing of women's representation in the Scottish Parliament have expressed concern that without stronger positive action measures, further progress may be stalled, and like their counterparts commenting on Westminster have favoured taking it 'out of the hand of parties' and legislating for quotas (Childs and Evans, 2012). The changes in the political landscape in Scotland since 1999 certainly suggest that no single party can be relied on to deliver and maintain equal representation over the longer term.

As noted, research into the careers of Scottish women politicians remains limited, mainly confined to the earlier women MPs. There is some evidence of the kind of 'women's interests' taken up by early women MPs, and of the impact of feminist ideas on the issues taken up by 'critical actors' in Holyrood. Yet we still lack any detailed account of the legislation of the inter-war years, for which women's organisations lobbied MPs. Nor is there any systematic examination of Scottish women MPs' voting records or contributions to House of Commons debates, which would make it possible to assess to what extent they may have promoted women's interests, among their other political interests and responsibilities to constituents. The stances of Scots MPs on key legislation affecting women, such as the Abortion Act 1967, Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts of the 1970s, the Sex Discrimination

(Election Candidates) Act (2002), and so on, would merit investigation, as would the voting records of male MPs, given how few Scots women there were in the House for some of this legislation. A further question is the role of women in both parliaments in promoting legislation and policy most likely to improve women's positions, whether or not debated in gendered terms. Also pertinent is the question of alliances, between women and men, and across parties, particularly given the criticism that party loyalties and control have inhibited the capacity of the Scottish Parliament for innovation (Keating, 2010).

To what extent has Scottish experience been distinctive? The incremental gains made in women's representation to the UK parliament are in line with trends for the UK as a whole, despite differences in the party political landscape in Scotland, the distribution of support for parties, and the relative autonomy of party organisations in Scotland. Yet, the debates about women's representation and the adoption of formal and informal mechanisms for increasing it of necessity had to take place at local and Scottish level. This emphasises the importance of women's collective action in achieving change, particularly borne out in the Scottish Parliament, which represents the most distinctive divergence from the Westminster pattern. This has not only achieved significantly higher levels of representation for women than has the UK parliament, but has provided the opportunity for many more women to take up political careers, to act as legislators and policy makers, to convene Parliamentary Committees, and to serve as Ministers. The number of women who have served as party leaders in Scotland has also been notable. If there remains frustration at the failure to achieve equal representation, this nonetheless represents a major advance for women in their access to political office and parliamentary experience.

From women's perspective, then, the recent constitutional change in Scotland has enhanced their capacity to participate as actors in electoral politics. Within the hierarchy of political institutions now existing in the UK, the Scottish Parliament has fewer powers than the Westminster Parliament, but considerably more than either the Welsh Parliament (formerly National Assembly of Wales) or Northern Ireland Assembly; of the devolved administrations, the Welsh Parliament has achieved the highest level of women's representation. This raises the question

as to whether gendered expectations of political office are influenced by the status of the institution as such, and whether the level of powers held by any institution is a factor in sharpening competition between men and women candidates. Whether or not such a perception influences political ambitions, it can be argued that the Scottish Parliament may well appear more attractive to women than the UK Parliament. The chances of getting selected and elected may be higher; it is more physically accessible for Scottish residents and therefore likely to make the combination of family and political life more feasible; it may be perceived as being a more welcoming institution for women; and it appears to be perceived as the legislature with Scottish interests most at heart. If, in the current political context, the security of the constitutional settlement of 1999 cannot be guaranteed, it is to be hoped that the greater gender democracy enabled by the creation of the Scottish Parliament will provide a firm grounding for any future arrangements.

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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