The search for the elusive recipe for gender equality: when policy implementation matters

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The search for the elusive recipe for gender equality: when policy implementation matters

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Abstract

The goal of this article is to use the seven case analyses of gender equality policy implementation covered in this special issue to apply and further develop the gender equality policy in practice approach and agenda. Through using the case of France as laboratory to examine if, how and under what conditions gender equality policy implementation leads to success, overall gender transformation and enhanced gender equality, this article provides a more accurate policy recipe for gender equality policy success and the importance of the post-adoption phases of implementation and evaluation in that recipe.

Keywords Gender equality policy · Policy implementation · GEPP · Gender transformation · French gender equality policy · Gender equality policy theory

> While a rich scholarship examines gender policy, the recipe for successful policies still remains as elusive as the formula to turn lead into gold. (Engeli and Mazur 2018: 112)

Introduction

The goal of this special issue is to bring together leading experts on gender policy in France to conduct and present fine-grained case analyses of gender equality policy implementation so that these analyses can contribute to a growing body of research that focuses on policy implementation as a crucial ingredient for achieving gender equality in democracies. As our previous work contends (Engeli and Mazur 2018),

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while some progress has been made on this challenging enterprise, more detailed empirical studies need to be conducted on the post-adoption phases across a range of policy sectors within countries and across countries. Pursuing this line of work, ultimately addresses the perennial challenge that democracies have faced since second wave feminist movements first started appearing on the scene in the late 1960s: can formal policies on gender equality concretely promote women's rights, in their full intersectional complexity and strike down gender-based hierarchies? Put more simply, the goal of this special issue is to contribute to answering the questions whether, how, why and under what conditions policy implementation matters in achieving gender equality in contemporary democracies.

The Special Issue tells a complex story of the post-adoption process across seven cases of implementation over the past two decades in four different "sub sectors" of gender equality policy.[1] Each article is a fascinating tale of the struggle of state- and society-based advocates for gender equality, and more often than not, of the resistance and opposition to the implementation of gender equality. Together, the articles provide an unprecedented opportunity to systematically test the emerging theoretical proposition at the centre of the Gender Equality Policy in Practice approach, that effective implementation and evaluation are crucial for gender equality policy success. In doing so, it contributes to developing the elusive recipe for gender equality success.

We first develop the GEPP approach to theory building, the core analytical model and framework and core hypotheses and then showcase the case of France as a laboratory in which to test some of the major propositions about gender equality policy success through the within country design across four sectors of policy. We next discuss the comparative findings of the seven cases are presented in terms of the three components of the GEPP framework—mix of policy instruments, inclusive policy empowerment and gender transformation. In the conclusion we present the major lessons taken from the comparative analysis for identifying the elusive recipe for successful gender equality policy.

The GEPP approach: gendering equality policy in practice

Drawing on our theorization of the GEPP approach (Engeli and Mazur 2018), this section presents the GEPP model and discusses how the three major analytical components guide the analysis of individual case analyses of policy implementation in the seven articles that follow and the larger comparative within case analysis conducted here.

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[1] Mazur (2002) and others have asserted that feminist or gender equality policy is a transversal sector cutting across numerous policy sectors or "sub sectors" of feminist policy, such as blueprint, political representation, family law, equal employment, combining work and family, reproductive rights and gender-based violence.

Negotiating gender equality in practice

The GEPP approach has been developed as a response to emerging calls to shift the lens of analysis from the politics of how gender equality policies were placed on government agendas and formalized to what takes places following the adoption stage in the crucial, yet messy processes of implementation and evaluation given. The post-adoption stages present some key features leading to the success or failure of gender equality policies. First, the post-adoption processes are more likely to be multi-level than not and involve the participation and coordination of actors between and across levels. Second, it is also unlikely that the constellation of actors remains identical across the entire policy process. While some actors may be already present in the pre-adoption stages, the implementation process offers a new venue for pushing for and pulling away from gender equality through resistance. New constellations of actors can emerge around those processes—government bureaucrats and representatives of target and compliance groups. As a result, the way the post-adoption process unfolds is likely to significantly impact the success or failure of gender equality politics. In other words, gender equality policy and the meaning of gender equality are not only debated during agenda setting and decision making. Gender equality is also negotiated, adapted and contested in the practice of policy implementation (Engeli and Mazur 2018). This is the focus at the core of the GEPP approach.

As scholars of gender equality policy assert in general (Blofield and Hass 2013; Lombardo et al. 2013; Mazur 2017), the analytical "turn to implementation" is the logical next step in the research cycle on gender equality policy more broadly speaking. On one hand, democratic governments had been responding to feminist mobilization since the late 1960s in an ever-increasing number of policy actions that explicitly target gender equality across all of the different sectors of government action. Most of these policies have on paper the potential to affect women's rights and status as well as mitigating or dismantling gender hierarchies. On the other hand, the reality shows otherwise: many policies have not resulted in significant major progress towards the realization of gender equality. It is thus time to take stock in this broad array of policies and assess the reasons why they have largely failed in achieving gender transformation. Until recently, the gender and policy scholarship had not focused systematically on policy success and failure in terms of post-adoption and impact nor had developed a comprehensive range of tools to take on this challenging analytical task. Indeed, given the difficulty of identifying causality in long-term social change and what would constitute a successful outcome of gender equality policies, this daunting project was put on the backburner at best. Implementation was usually mentioned, but not studied in its full messy complexity. In addition, a growing number of critics asserts that the plethora of indices developed at the international level to measure gender equality across the world is insufficient to capture the complex reality of gender inequalities in practice (e.g. Lombardo et al 2009; Liebowitz and Zwingel 2014; Engeli et al. 2015).

The GEPP approach therefore is "a fresh way to asses policy success and failure (Engeli and Mazur 2018: 112)" that addresses the insufficiencies of research on gender policy and the international gender equality indices with two main aims. The
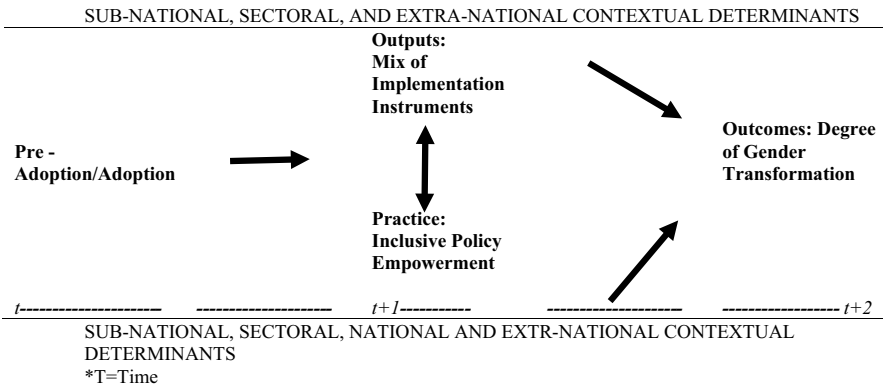
SUB-NATIONAL, SECTORAL, AND EXTRA-NATIONAL CONTEXTUAL DETERMINANTS

Outputs:
Mix of
Implementation
Instruments

Pre -
Adoption/Adoption

Outcomes: Degree
of Gender
Transformation

Practice:
Inclusive Policy
Empowerment

t--------------------   --------------------   t+1----------   --------------------   ----------------- t+2

SUB-NATIONAL, SECTORAL, NATIONAL AND EXTR-NATIONAL CONTEXTUAL
DETERMINANTS
*T=Time

Fig. 1 Gender equality policy in practice. *Source*: Engeli and Mazur (2018)

first aim is to open and unpack the black box of government once gender equality policy is adopted. The second aim is to assess whether, how, and under what conditions those specific tools and actions are successful in promoting gender equality and achieving gender transformation. The GEPP approach, therefore, conceives the post-adoption stage as an arena for the struggle over control over the meaning and content of gender equality where vested interests organize into configurations of power for and against gender equality. The outcome of this power struggle has an impact on the capacity of policy to progress towards gender equality and transformation.

The GEPP model

The GEPP model provides the framework for conducting empirical comparative theory-building studies of policy implementation. It is designed as a guide to comparatively analyse the policy implementation process and generate an empirically grounded contribution to theory of gender policy implementation in democracies. Figure 1 maps out the three analytical components of the post-adoption process in the GEPP model (Engeli and Mazur 2018).[2]

The model traces the process of policies in general terms—what happens before a formal decision is made: pre-adoption—agenda setting, problem definition and proposal generation, post-adoption including the instruments or "outputs (Dye)" formally establish to implement and evaluate the policy, the actual use of those instruments by policy actors in "practice[3]" and then the results or outcomes of that policy. As scholars of gender equality policy formation Gains and

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[2] We use the term post-adoption to describe both implementation—enforcement, administration, service delivery, etc. and evaluation—the formal and informal assessments of the impact of policies by policy actors, which often are intertwined. .

[3] Montoya (2013) first used the term "practice" in the study of violence against women policy in the European Union.

Lowndes (2015: 7 cited in Allwood and Wadia 2020) assert, the lines between pre-adoption, adoption and post-adoption are often blurred: "Policy is only really 'made' when it is brought to life by local actors, who are charged with adapting overarching policy statements to local contexts, resource bases, political sensibilities and previous policy legacies". With this observation in mind, this model provides a guide for tracing the unfolding of a given policy over time as it moves through the necessarily messy and seldom stepwise process of policy formation in democracies.

As the model shows, these "contextual determinants" can be at the sub-national, national or extra-national levels depending on the dynamics of the policy. The politics and outcome of the pre-adoption and adoption process, in particular the actual content of the policy, can also be potential determinants of both policy post-adoption and outcomes. Indeed, in many cases the specific mix of the policy instruments comes directly from the content of the formal policy. At the same time, while pre-adoption, adoption and post-adoption take place over time—indicated by $T. T+1:T+2$—the content of policies, the mix of instruments and even the goals of policy can be changed in the post-adoption stages.

Each of the three post-adoption components covers the complex parameters of gender equality policy implementation discussed above through the feminist and non-feminist literature. The mix of implementation instruments accounts for the full range of "identifiable methods through which collective action is structured to address a public problem (Salamon 2002: 9)" through four broad types of instruments identified by Ingram and Schneider (1990). It also cover for the approach, scope and authority of the policy tools as they are laid out on paper (see "Appendix" for operational definitions for each measure).

The representation potential of policy implementation is addressed in the practice of the post-adoption phase through the "inclusive policy empowerment" component. In telling the story of if and how the policy instruments were used by policy actors, the analyst is to identify who came forward to speak for women's interests in the post-adoption process, what did they say, for which groups of women were they speaking—descriptive representation—and were their demands actually incorporated in the practice of policy—the substantive element of representation. The hypothesis here is that if there are higher levels of inclusive policy empowerment it should in some ways contribute to policy success.

The third component of the model, outcomes—includes a summary measure of outcomes that is based on three different kinds of direct and indirect policy outcomes identified in the literature:

1. was the problem identified by the original policy solved;
2. were the frames about gender roles used by the major implementors of the policies changed in the practice of policy adoption and
3. did the general public attitudes about the specific issues of the policy change over time.

Thus, the question of whether the formal implementation and evaluation tools set-up by the formal policy statements were actually used in practice and whether in using the frames of policy actors change as well as the impact of the policy—direct and indirect—is incorporated into this summary measure. Moreover, this measure does not only cover whether the problem was solved and policies went beyond "symbolic reform"—policy outputs without outcomes and were "concretely" followed through.[4] It also addresses "the hierarchies of power that privilege men and the masculine, a sexual division of labour that devalues women and the feminine, and the institutionalization of normative heterosexuality (Htun and Weldon 2018: 208)" on which gender inequities were seated prior to that policy have significantly changed with the practice of that policy. According to Engeli and Mazur (2018), there are four categories of levels of transformation: gender neutral, gender row back, gender accommodation and gender transformation.

Outcome 1: gender neutral In this outcome, the policy has failed in transforming gender relations or has even not attempted to do so. It is unlikely that much money or resources were invested in the implementation…. There are numerous policies that did not result in any tangible effect on the promotion of gender and sexual equality or that were not even implemented at all. …As a result, these policies are likely, at best, to be gender neutral in their generated outcome....

Outcome 2: gender row back Equality policies working against the promotion of gender equality occur more often than scholarship might hypothesize. It can take a variety of forms according to the type of resistance and opposition that has been mobilized against the implementation of gender-related policies (Woodward 2003; Verloo 2018). Gender-related policies can be largely derailed from their original intention, however, laudable it might have been, to become a liability regarding the promotion of gender and sexual equality....

Outcome 3: gender accommodation In this outcome, a number of policy effects can be tangibly assessed, but the policy has mostly targeted accommodating or compensating traditional gender relations instead of transforming them. Decision makers, bureaucrats and policy actors are known to lag behind social change and often continue to embrace long-held norms about masculine and feminine roles and reduce the diversity of gender identities to a female–male dichotomy (Cavaghan 2017; Vis 2019)....

Outcome 4: gender transformation Such changes in gendered and sexualised norms tend to be slow moving at best and are not easily measured. In addition, the nature of gender transformation is complex and contested. Research on gender policy formation has shown how gender is defined and instrumentalized to 'frame' policies and political action by policy actors (Lombardo et al. 2009). Thus, a 'transformation' in the dominant gender norms that drive public action needs to occur in order for gender equality policies that are formally on the books to be successful (Engeli and Mazur 2018: 123).

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[4] For more on the use of symbolic and concrete reform to assess policy outcomes, based on Edelman's (1964) notion of symbolic politics, see Mazur (1995a, b; 2017).

Given how complex and ambitious such a transformation in reality, there is potential for "simple" or "complex" gender transformation.

For example, role-sharing in terms of caregiving and breadwinning would constitute a 'simple' transformative change provided that attitudes shifted with practice. In a more complex transformation, policymaker and public attitudes about appropriate caregiving roles would give way to the collapse of a binary notion of sex in favour of a more refined understanding of gender and heteronormativity. (Ibid.: 121)

While gender transformation is the gold standard, policies are more successful when they achieve gender accommodation than gender neutral or gender blind, given that there are still concrete outcomes that promoted some level of gender equality.

The issue of causality

The issue of causality is an important one, what we call the "what-if problem" in our 2018 article. That is, what if the outcome—gender policy success—was a result of other forces than policy implementation practice. For example, as much research has shown, it is difficult to implement and evaluate complex policies like gender equality policy in " hard economic times" when public budgets are being cut, particularly for gender equality policies that may viewed by non-feminist policy actors as "non essential" (Annesley et al. 2014). Another issue of causality covered in much comparative work on gender policy and politics is that rather than a single causal factor or ingredient that emerges as being important, feminist gains and successes are often a product of determinants in combination with each other. For instance, recent comparative research on gender balance in representation has shown quotas are not alone a "magic bullet" but are only successful in combination with other factors, in particular gendered electoral financing (Muriaas et al. 2020). This "configurational" logic has led students to conceptualize the search for a causal theory of gender policy formation in terms of the recipe of ingredients, or combination of conditions.

France as a laboratory for gender equality policy in practice

As the GEPP model shows, there is also the context in which the policy process unfolds which can affect how policy implementation practice occurs and policy outcomes; a context which may or may not vary by the level at which the policy is adopted and implemented as well as the general national setting. The most similar within case design of this study means that France serves as a laboratory in which to test the hypotheses about gender equality policy success in the seven cases; certain general features of the French context are held constant to allow for an assessment of key differences. Here, we discuss the similarities and differences to better highlight the theory-building potential of the comparative findings of the case analyses that follow in the next section.

The French policy lab: similarities and differences

As a rich comparative literature on feminist policy formation shows, there are certain institutional, cultural and political factors found within countries and even across country regions that are conducive to feminist policy success. The French national context provides both opportunities and barriers to gender policy success (e.g.) including gender—biased universalism, state feminism, the gender welfare regime, weak and fragmented women's movements and France's position in European Governance—the EU and the Council of Europe (e.g., Lépinard and Mazur 2009). Given the similar systems design of this study, these country contextual effects are being held constant across all of the cases, so if there is any variation in the instruments, practice or outcomes of gender equality policy across the cases, it is not coming from these commonalities.

Sector/Type vs Country/Region—Recently, a debate around whether national/regional patterns of politics, culture and institutions are more salient than sector-specific dynamics. Indeed, mixed methods cross-national studies with high levels of validity and reliability have shown that patterns of feminist influence, policy outcomes and state feminism actually tend to follow certain general types or "logics" of policies (Htun and Weldon 2018) or specific sectors McBride and Mazur 2010). The within case design of this study is able to confront head-on these competing hypotheses by selecting policy cases that were adopted and implemented beginning in the 2000s to the present across four different sectors of feminist policy—political representation policy, work and family policy, equal employment policy and gender-based violence policy.

The elder care allowance is categorized as a feminist work and family policy given the potential for policies on elder care to help women and men equalizing parenting and professional obligations; even though as Ledoux and Dussuet show the 2001 law was completely gender blind. The other three policies more clearly fell into the sub-sectors of feminist policy. Given that the two political representation policies are both a part of the larger "parity policy package (Lépinard 2018)" codified by constitutional reform in 1999–2000 further allows for determining whether these two policies processes have similar dynamics and outcomes. These policies also fall into two out of the three policy "logics" identified by Htun and Weldon (2018) that produce similar policy dynamics, however, not necessarily outcome—status and class (See Table 1). Thus, in our cross-case analysis, we can specifically isolate the impact of sector and type on outcomes.

Time Period The attributes of each case also allow us to isolate the effect of period of adoption and level of government. As Table 1 shows, in four of the cases important reforms in the policy were adopted in the early to mid-2000s and 4 cases in the mid-2000s, 10 years later. For the parity penalties, sanctions to the political parties for non-compliance were increased in 2002, 2007 and then to an extremely high level in 2014 prior to the 2017 elections, thus that case is in both categories Although the elder care allowance legislation of 2001 did not formally identify feminist goals or even mention gender at all, the 2015 reform of the allowance was gendered, including references to gendered statistics on elder care.

Table 1 Seven cases of policy implementation by sector/type, time period, governing majority and level of government

Political Representation (Status)		
Party Parity Penalties '02, '07, '14	L/R	National
Quotas in Administration '12	L	National
Work and Family (Class)		
Elder Care Allowance '14	L	Department
Equal Employment (Status)		
Pay Equity '06	L	Firm level
Gender-Based Violence (Status)		
VAW Training '05	R	Region
Forced Marriage '06	R	City
Anti-Prostitution '16	L	Department

Dates indicate when the policy was formally adopted and/or significantly reformed. L or R indicates left-wing or right-wing governing majority in power at the time of adoption

Ledoux and Dussuet (2020, in this issue) show that the integration of gendered statistics has raised awareness; thus, the formal adoption of a gendered policy in elder care is 2015 and not 2001. Thus, here the effect of the politics of adoption during those two time periods can be observed in the post-adoption that followed. While the two policies were adopted almost 15 years apart, they remain largely similar regarding the implementation timeframe—all were implemented in the context of increasing government cutbacks, shrinking budgets and the meteoric rise of Macron's En Marche.

Government Level Feminist policy and politics analysis have also pointed to the importance of level of government in terms of the success of polices. Some studies have shown that policies put into action at the sub-national or local levels may be more successful where feminists are more able to mobilize around implementation and evaluation and implementers are more sympathetic to their demands (Mazur 2002). This was the case, for example, in the violence against women campaign in Scotland in the 1990s (Abrar 1996). Here, the cross-case variation in the seven cases of policy implementation provides for comparing implementation and outcomes at the national, regional, departmental and local levels. We determine the level of government according the location of the major arena for the implementation process. In the case of the two parity laws, these were national-level laws that aimed national-level offices—upper administration and the national assembly and national-level actors—the political parties. In the five other cases, the major implementation arenas and stakeholders were at sub-national levels.

Critical Actors over Critical Mass Another difference that can be observed is whether a "critical mass" of women representatives in the national legislature or individual critical actors are important in gender equality policy success, and at which level and/or policy stage. The scholarship has nuanced the original argument of the critical mass to put the stress on the pivotal importance of critical actors. In other words, numbers may well be less important than the power and

commitment of individuals—be they women or "male allies" (e.g. Childs and Krook 2009). Given the steady increase over the period of policy implementation of the percentage of women in the National Assembly, from 12.1% in 2002 to 26.8% in 2012 to 38.7% in 2017, the critical mass hypothesis can be examined in our study. At the same time, the critical actor hypothesis is equally compelling given the presence of a powerful and active women's rights minister under the Socialist government from 2012 to 2014. Benefiting from a significant budget increase and president Holland's approval, the feminist activist minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem undertook a series of sweeping reforms for women's rights that culminated in the 2014 Vallaud-Belkacem Law on gender equality, including the increase in the parity penalty for parties in 2012. Many observers compared the impact of the Vallaud-Belkacem ministry on gender equality policy to the Roudy ministry during the Mitterrand Experiment in the early 1980s (Achin and Lévêque 2014). Thus, the presence of this "critical actor" may have been an important catalyst for gender equality policy; indeed, reforms of gender equality policy occurred in three of the cases under her watch and this was at the time when women's representation in the National Assembly was still at 26.8%, below what some have identified as the 30% cut-off for critical mass to take effect.

Party in Power/Influence of the Left Both feminist and non-feminist policy work have identified left-wing majorities as important factors in policy change (Kittilson 2006; Lombardo et al. 2013). However, recent FCP studies put into question how crucial the presence of a left-wing government is for feminist policy success—identifying cases of feminist policy failure under left-wing majorities and successes under the Right (Htun and Weldon 2018; Mazur 2002; McBride and Mazur 2010; Annesley et al. 2014; Engeli 2012). From the adoption of the first policy in this study, parity constitutional reforms in 2000 to 2017, there has been an alternation of right wing and left wing in the presidency and parliament: May 2002–May 2012 president and parliament of the Right; and from May 2012 to May 2017 a president and parliament of Left and from June 1997 to May 2002 a president of the Right cohabitating with a parliament of the Left. Thus, here too the impact of the ideology of the party in the government majority can be determined on policy implementation dynamics.

Where does path dependency fit-in?

Historical institutionalists, both feminist and non-feminist scholars, seek to understand institutional change and choice over time, as exhibited by state-based structures and rules. Theories of path dependency assert that state action is limited by the way in which "increasing returns" (Pierson 2000) develop around a specific policy. These returns create patterns of interactions linking state and societal actors and institutions that are mutually reinforcing over time. According to the path-dependent perspective, new institutions and institutional dynamics appear at specific moments during the process of development—sometimes called "critical junctures"—which set the pattern of institutional interactions until the next juncture. The outcome is that even many years after these critical junctures, it is difficult to alter political

dynamics; in other words, there is a certain "stickiness" to institutions and the policy dynamics around them (Pierson 2000).

To illustrate, Morgan (2006) shows how path dependencies in family policies developed in the Netherlands, the USA, Sweden and France, according to the way state-religion relations crystallized in each country at a certain moment in time. The set pattern of institutional relations in each country explained the differences in the extent to which family policies promoted gender equality. It is interesting to note that the particular way in which family policy emerged has meant that feminist policy actors, like women's policy agencies and feminist groups have not intervened in this area of policy in any of the countries in her study. Thus, gender-biased path dependencies can develop around policies that make it difficult to implement and pursue gender equality.

This is a serious consideration in the case of France, given what many scholars have identified the prevalence of "gender-biased universalism" where identifying gender differences in policy is ruled out based on republican equality while established gender norms still place women in inferior positions to men (Lépinard and Mazur 2009; Onasch 2020). Indeed, nearly all of the cases of policy implementation in this special issue present the gender-biased universalism as trigger for resistance to concrete achievements in gender equality policy. Thus, it seems the path-dependent gender-biased universalism could be a similarity, but as the historical institutionalist literature shows, path dependencies can also build up around specific policies or areas of policy as in the case of family policies. This corroborates arguments for sectoral patterns of policy formation by sector or policy type, over national patterns, given that certain political dynamics develop around the issues at stake. McBride and Mazur's (2010) study of state feminism also shows how institutionalized policy dynamics, including the constellation of actors or stake holders that came forward in the policy process, varies by sector as well. No matter whether it is by sector or at the national level, the path-dependent gender-biased universalism in France is an important force to observe in the comparative analysis as well as any "critical junctures" where these long-held policy dynamics have shifted. Indeed, the apparent shifts in feminist policy that were catalyzed during the Holland presidency, from 2012 to 2014, might represent a critical juncture for a real shift in the gender-biased republican model.

The French comparative lessons

The mix of implementation instruments: approach, scope and authority

Comparing the mix of policy instruments across three main dimensions is part of the larger GEPP project of opening the black box of government in the post-adoption stages to systematic analysis (See Table 2). The paper record of the policy outputs does not necessarily imply a direct translation when the policy is implemented and used in practice. The particular mix of instruments can differ according to: (1) the approach—legislative, mixed or self-regulation; (2) the scope—how comprehensive is the policy coverage and authority; and (3) whether policies used coercive

Table 2 Comparing implementation instruments

Policy	Mix of instruments	Regulatory approach	Scope	Authority
Political Representation (Status)				
Party Parity Penalties '02, '07, '14 (L/R)	Authority negative incentive	High	Medium	Moderate light coercion
Quotas in Administration '12 (R)	Negative incentive	High	Medium	High full coercion
Work and Family (Class)				
Elder Care Allowance '14 (L)	Capacity-money	High	Since '14 low	Low full voluntary
Equal Employment (Class)				
Pay Equity '12 (L)	Negative incentive capacity	Moderate	High	Moderate light coercion
Gender-Based Violence (Status)				
VAW Training '05 (R)	Capacity and symbolic	Low	High	Low full voluntary
Forced Marriage '06 (R)	All instruments	Moderate	High	High moderate coercion
Anti-Prostitution '16 (L)	Authority positive incentive symbolic	High	High	High full coercion

Years indicate when the policy was formally adopted and/or significantly reformed. L or R indicates left-wing or right-wing governing majority in power at the time of adoption

or more voluntary measures to get compliance groups to implement policies. The dimensions can be formally set up at the time of the policy adoption. They can also be adapted or more radically transformed at the time of the implementation.

What is immediately striking from mapping out formal outputs established in the seven cases is the variety and complexity of the instruments and tools for implementation and evaluation. No clear systematic pattern of mix of policy instruments across sector or time emerges. Instead, each policy case displays a specific mix of tools. Only in one case (Elder Care Allowance), is there a single tool established—a "capacity tool". Moreover, in the case of the forced marriage policy all of the instruments are used. There is no recurrent mix of policy instruments that corresponds with a certain approach, scope or authority across sectors. However, the parity policies took a state-driven approach through legislation and the three gender-based violence policies spanned all three types of approaches. There were no recurrent patterns by time period of adoption either—policies that were adopted in the first period 2002–2007 and those adopted from 2012–2016 covered all three approaches as well.

The authority dimension also reflects this absence of convergence across sectors or time. Elder Care Allowance (adopted in 2015) and the VAW Training policy (adopted in 2006) are full voluntary—low authority. All three parity penalties and the pay equity policy (adopted in 2012) are at a moderate level of authority with light coercion. The 2012 administrative quotas, the 2006 forced marriage policy and the 2016 anti-prostitution law are situated at the highest level of authority at full or moderate levels of coercion. The extent to which policy instruments have comprehensive coverage in terms of the compliance or target groups shows the highest level of convergence out of the three dimensions with the two parity levels at medium coverage and the three gender-based violence policies at the highest level of policy comprehensiveness.

The presence of left-wing government does not necessarily ensure authoritative or comprehensive policies. In all of the cases, feminist demands for more authoritative and comprehensive policy tools were systematically downgraded and/or diluted by non-feminist actors, regardless of the party in control of the governing and parliamentary majority. At least for the formal content of policy and implementation instruments, the Senate in particular has proven to be a bastion of resistance for demands for formally authoritative policy that contains challenges to the status quo on gender roles and gendered distributions of resources and power. As Gelb and Palley's (1982) classic study of feminist reform in the USA in the 1970s, the awareness of this resistance gives cause to feminist advocates to define policy proposals and draft legislation in terms of "gender role equity" and gender adaptation rather than "gender role change" and gender transformation.

Practice and inclusive policy empowerment

Turning to the actual practice of the policies and the level of inclusive policy empowerment in that practice allows for the crucial assessment of whether words were turned into deeds; whether the paper record of the policy instruments was

actually followed through on the ground. Table 3 maps this formal record alongside both policy practice and level of gender transformation.

Here too, with regards to inclusive policy empowerment on its own, there are no patterns by sector, time period of by governing majority in power. There are two instances of high inclusive policy empowerment where not only did both women's policy agencies and non-governmental groups participated in the implementation and/or evaluation processes, but they spoke for more than just the upper middle class white women including: VAW regional training and awareness campaigns about forced marriage. Demands were partially reflected in the unfolding of implementation: in the actual content of the VAW training and in the consultation regarding the evaluation of the measure regarding the forced marriage in the 2016 National Action Plan (see Table 3 in Allwood and Wadia 2020). The 2016 law that promoted both exit programs for sex workers and punishment for clients of sex work had a moderate level of IPE along with the parity penalties on parties.

State feminists in government and parliament played crucial roles in drawing attention to the parity sanctions: through naming and shaming political parties who were not in compliance with parity and through filing the formal evaluation requested by the legislation of parity in the National Assembly. They nevertheless only spoke for upper white middle class elites. Similarly, the coalition of feminist groups and femocrats in the department level delegates of women's rights that mobilized around both the social programs to help sex worker exit and the criminalization of clients tended not to speak for the sex workers themselves who were from vulnerable populations both economically and socially, often being immigrants. As St. Denny asserts (2020, this volume), this became even clearer in the voices that came forward when criminalization of clients had the unintended consequence of making it much more dangerous and less profitable for sex workers who did not choose the exit option. None of the interests of sex workers was brought forward by the state feminists or feminist groups at the local level either. There was also a moderate level of policy empowerment in the collective negotiation over equal pay at the firm level. While femocrats, representatives of trade unions and even citizen movements came forward to represent women from lower socio-economic groups, their demands were not heeded in the implementation and evaluation processes. The structural impediments based on dominant gender norms that contribute greatly to existing pay gaps between men and women were not addressed in the final equal pay agreements.

Finally, we find low cases of IPE across sectors. In the implementation and evaluation of the quota for upper level civils servants, there were some presence of femocrats and groups that spoke for women in the upper level civil service. They only spoke for upper class white women and had no real impact on the implementation or evaluation given that the successful implementation of the quota occurred outside of the typical state feminist circles. A slight turn away from the gender-blind approach of the health care and social work infrastructure occurred after 2004. Gendered statistics of elder care givers and clients have started being collected by the health care administration and women's policy offices. The fact that care workers tend to be mostly women was somewhat taken into account in the 2014 law through the mandated additional paid time for respite for elder care workers. This said, there still has not been much significant involvement of feminist groups or femocrats in how elder

Table 3 Comparing outputs, practice and level of gender transformation

Policy	Mix of instruments	Approach	Authority	IPE	Level of gender transformation
Political Representation (Status)					
Party Parity Penalties '02,'07, '14 (L/R)	Authority and Incentive Negative	High	Moderate Light Coercion	Moderate	→GA
Quotas in Administration '12 (R)	Incentive Negative	High	Full Coercion	Low	→**GT** (**Simple**)
Work and Family (Class)					
Elder Care Allowance '14 (L)	Capacity-Money	High	Low Voluntary	Low	GN →GA
Equal Employment (Status)					
Pay Equity in Firms '12 (L)	Capacity Negative Incentive	Moderate	Moderate Light Coercion	Moderate	→GA
Gender-Based Violence (Status)					
VAW Training: Regional '05 (R)	Capacity symbolic	Low	Low full voluntary	High	→GA
Forced marriage '06 (R)	All Four	Moderate	High moderate coercion	High	→GA
Anti-prostitution '16 (L)	Authority, incentive and symbolic	High	High coercion	Moderate	→GA

Years indicate when the policy was formally adopted and/or significantly reformed. L or R indicates left-wing or right-wing governing majority in power at the time of adoption

care is delivered or in practice of the various elder care policies and programs across the department where Ledoux in Dussuet conducted their extensive field work. It is also significant to note that in all of the cases feminist actors from all vantage points never raised the interests of any other groups of women than cisgender women. Heteronormativity remains a dominant organizing principle in French gender equality policy.

Gender transformation: Glass half full or empty?

At first blush, the glass is half empty for the overall assessment of impact of French gender equality policy. There is an imperative of gender accommodation across all of the cases, but one. Policies are thus not entirely symbolic and have made some gains. In the practice of the policies and in the outcomes, the gender established norms that construct men and women in differential positions are, however, still operative for implementors, evaluators and powerful non-feminist, typically white male stakeholders. Also, when women's interests are represented they tend to mostly be the ones of upper white cisgender middle class French women. As Jacquemart, Bereni and Revillard assert in this special issue, there has been an increasing broad-based acceptance of the "parity grammar" by stakeholders, elites and decision makers. Pursuing the 50–50 representation in politics, corporate board, administration is increasingly legitimized but as long as the women did not take away positions of power from men. In addition, in all of the cases, this elite resistance to gender transformation seems to lag behind public opinion that has progressed at a faster pace.

This rather pessimistic view of French gender equality policy is further punctuated by the fact that there is only one case of gender transformation and only simple transformation in the other case of implementation of parity in the upper civil service. Simple, because the coverage of the law was quite narrow—placing a quota for new hires or "first appointments" of recruitment for senior executive positions in the civil service and not all of the administrations obeyed the quota by 2015 40% of new recruits having to be women, with the economic departments in the Ministry of Economics receiving fines for non-compliance. As a result, 36% of the new appointments were women across all administrative agencies; 4 percentage points short of the required 40%. Despite this limited scope, Jacquemart, Bereni and Revillard argue that there has been a significant change in the gender norms of the male elite in charge of making civil service appointments. They show that the segment of the men in the office in charge of appointments has been through a "feminist" conversion. They do not only follow through the hiring quotas for women in most departments but have also suggested that fines paid by the non-compliant departments should apply to gender equality programs. Real gender transformation occurred in the upper civil service that had put into question previous gender-blind universalism and goes beyond the more symbolic acceptance of the new "parity grammar". As Jacquemart et al. emphasize (2020, this volume), "the most conservative attitudes towards the gender equality agenda were delegitimized, men holding executive

positions were to redefine their professional identities in relation to gender equality norms".

The gender accommodation imperative and this incremental gender transformation in a small, yet powerful part of the French bureaucracy can also be seen in terms of the glass half full. Gender accommodation includes some advancement of policies away from symbolic reform to the material and concrete end of the continuum. In all of these cases of equality policy, some progress has been made, and that progress has occurred clearly within the past 20 years. In the context of the path dependency of gender-biased universalism, this accomplishment indicates that we may be witnessing a critical juncture in the past several years. In two cases, there has been significant grassroots and group mobilization against backlash on existing policies. The right-wing efforts to turn back the clock on equal pay negotiation in 2015 and to reverse the schedule of the Sauvadet quotas were blocked. Moreover, the accomplishment of gender transformation, albeit piecemeal, at the very pinnacle and elite part of the French state can be seen a preliminary indicator that gender equality policy can succeed in the face of deep-seated gender biases. Success may also happen without the strong support of the femocracy. For example, elder care policy has moved from being gender neutral—where gender was not even mentioned in any of the policy statements on elder care and the optic of gender equality was completely missing—to gender accommodation. This evolution happened with virtually no help from femocrats in the department or at the national level. In the same vein, the progress made in the arena of gender-biased violence in areas that are quite challenging in French society—forced marriage, anti-prostitution and violence against women—indicates that there is significant foundational movement afoot.

This said, recent developments in this area including mobilization of tens of thousands in Paris to protest Macron governments budget cuts on antiviolence policies and in reaction to 121 cases of feminicide in 2019 indicate that policy reversal is never far away (*New York Times* 11-25-219). Similarly, the unintended negative consequences of the criminalization of clients and the continued pursuit or pimps by law enforcement on sex workers, often non-hetero and from non-white marginalized communities further confirms that actually the glass may switch back soon to half empty again. St. Denny's analysis of anti-prostitution policy (2020, this volume) emphasizes that France may be even further away from a critical shift in gender equality now than prior to the landslide victory of Macron's in the 2017 presidential election.

Indeed, a number of recent developments suggest that the core driver behind this slow and steady incremental change may be being phased out: the downgraded Deputy Ministry of Women's Rights and Struggle Against Discrimination (no longer gender equality), the placement of a state feminist outsider at the leadership, the reduced budgets as well as the disappearance of the administrative backbone of national-level state feminism (Service des Droits des femmes). Backsliding under the Macron presidency appears to be threatening the progress made and undermining policy implementation across all areas of policy. Similarly, the recurrence of heteronormativity as organizational principle of policy action further confirms the salience over the French national context over sector-specific dynamics.

Conclusions: causality and the winning combination of policy ingredients

For sure, the direct causal effect of policy implementation in practice remains difficult to isolate. For example, the significant advance in women's representation in the National Assemble in 2017, as Mazur et al. this volume and Durovic (2019) show, may have been a result of the Macron phenomenon and the reform in the cumul des mandats than the increase in parity penalties. The progress that has been made in the policy sectors where it could be quantitatively measured (political representation) was in some part due to the actual practice of the implementation and evaluation of the policies. Even in the clear case where progress in women's appointment to upper civil servant positions had begun prior to the adoption and implementation of the Sauvadet law, its effective implementation is likely to have continued and perhaps even sped up the numerical progress and also the value shift that occurred in the past 15 years in senior executive services. Put in a counterfactual logic, this progress might not have happened without these policies.

This special issue through the seven detailed cases analyses of the politics and outcomes of policy implementation and this article's systematic within country comparative analysis of the seven cases has moved us closer to the elusive recipe for policy success. Complete gender transformation is not an easy task and will not be reached in the near future. Incremental and piece meal policy change sometimes produce simple transformation and gender policies shifts lead to slow progress from gender-neutral policy outcomes to gender accommodation. Time will tell which way this momentum will take gender equality given on one hand the potential for a real critical juncture to change institutionalized gender-biased universalism and on the other, current political developments that signal a reversal and even gender row-back.

Clearly, the recipe for policy success must include policy implementation practice in combination with at least one of these additional ingredients—critical actors, active women's movements and state feminism-based network, and a "boomerang effect (Keck and Sikkink 1998)" through the EU or Council of Europe, however, their presence is not necessary for progress to occur. The type and authority of implementation instruments and tools, Left-wing governments, critical mass, level of policy implementation and economic climate, and pre-adoption and adoption politics are not a part of the recipe for gender equality policy success in France. National-level forces are much more important for understanding policy success than sectoral dynamics; gender-biased path dependencies are slow to change but with the right combination of conditions and the accumulation of effective gender equality policies it is possible to break that these path dependencies. However, these critical junctures are slow to occur and can experience reversals, particularly when patterns of national politics are disrupted by unexpected political developments, like the Macron phenomenon.

Thus, this study has shown that policy implementation clearly matters for gender equality policy success. It confirms previous feminist comparative policy

research about the configurational nature of causality in looking at feminist success, the importance of critical actors over critical mass, and that the left in power is not necessarily a force for change. At the same time, the study surprisingly challenges a growing body of work that asserts that success and failure can be best explained by sectoral dynamics or the type of policy. Indeed national dynamics seem to trump sectoral trends for implementing gender equality, at least in the case of France. Findings on the content of policy and the politics of pre-adoption and adoption also downplay what many scholars had identified as important forces in the unfolding of post-adoption.

In the final analysis, while this study has not come up with any definitive conclusions about a theory of gender equality policy success and implementation, it has moved forward understanding and knowledge, through applying the GEPP framework and approach to the rich case analyses by French gender policy experts, about the central role of policy implementation in gender equality policy success and has brought theory building closer to answering core questions about equality, policy implementation, power and representation at the centre of healthy and vital democracies in the twenty-first century.

Appendix: operational definitions and indicators for the three analytical components of the GEPP model

Outputs: mix of policy instruments

Types of instruments

Based on Ingram and Schneider's (1990) categorization and developed by Engeli and Mazur (2018).

> *Authority instruments* are the classic 'command-and-control' regulatory instruments. These tools aim at authorizing, prescribing or banning particular behaviours. In the context of gender-related policies, one of the classic authority tools is the constitutional/legal prohibition of formal discrimination on the basis of sex or sexual orientation.
> *Incentive instruments* aim at achieving policy goals by nudging behaviours. In contrast to the authority tools, incentives do not impose regulatory constraints on behaviour, but provide encouragements for target groups to adopt or change a particular behaviour. These incentives can be positive—for example, an extraordinary budget allocation to reward the appointment of female professors in departments where they are under-represented—or negative—sanctions for failing to reach a particular target of female members on boards, for example, automatic exclusion from public bids, as in France, or going as far as dissolving publiclisted companies, as in Denmark (Heidenreich 2013).
> *Capacity and learning instruments* are the tools that provide resources, knowledge and skills to catalyze and coordinate the actions of individual policy actors. Gender-mainstreaming training in public administration specifically aims at

informing and training civil servants, particularly in policy sectors that have traditionally been considered as gender neutral.

Symbolic and hortatory instruments are mostly communication tools that aim at emphasising positive aspects and values, and exposing negative aspects and values, linked to the targeted behaviour. Information campaigns about domestic violence and its consequences for women and children, for instance, aim at exhorting gender-related behavioural change.

Regulatory approach continuum

What is the overall approach of the policy instrument in terms of the three criterion and where is it placed on the regulatory approach continuum?

1. Legislative/state-driven approach (Regulatory end of the continuum)
2. Self-regulation approach: issued by corporate stakeholders (self-regulatory end of the continuum)
3. Mixed approach: a combination of state-driven and self-regulation (in between)

Scope continuum

To what degree do the principles of gender equality in the formal policy cover the full scope of the targeted areas of change/ regulation/ etc.?
(Examples for Gender Equality on Corporate Boards)

High Comprehensive coverage of all boards: public, listed/traded, any legal status, any size. Any type of board (executive and non-executive). Specific target is set such as "40%", "equal", and so.

Moderate Narrower coverage with some types of companies only. And/Or all the companies of a certain size And/or encouragement to achieve a specific target (non-mandatory)/autonomy granted to companies to set their own target figures (as long as they set one)

Low Loose/patchy/limited coverage (typically state-owned companies over a specific size only) with no specific target set but a recommendation of "representing both genders" for instance

Authority continuum

To what degree does the formal policy instrument make compliance groups follow the stipulations of the policy?
High

1. *Full coercion* regulation/self-regulation is binding. Monitoring and Reporting is mandatory. Non-compliance is sanctioned by penalties. Sanctions can be progressive and/or postponed until a specific date. Existence or non-existence of positive incentive

2. *Moderate coercion* regulation/self-regulation is binding. Monitoring and Reporting is mandatory. Non-compliance is not sanctioned. Existence of positive incentive.

Moderate

3. *Light coercion* regulation/self-regulation is binding. Monitoring and Reporting is optional or not required. Non-compliance is not sanctioned. Non-existence of positive incentive.
4. *Light voluntary* regulation/self-regulation is voluntary. Monitoring and/or Reporting is required. Existence of formal "comply or explain" mechanism. Existence of positive incentive (ex: complying companies are prioritized in tender application/ are eligible for subsidies/etc.).

Low

5. *Intermediate voluntary* regulation/self-regulation is voluntary. Monitoring and/ or Reporting is required *OR* Existence of formal "comply or explain" mechanism *OR* existence of positive incentive (1 or 2 options out 3).
6. *Full voluntary* regulation/self-regulation is voluntary OR there is no specific regulation, only vague/broad recommendation to look after the issue. No monitoring/ reporting, no "comply or explain" mechanism, no positive incentive.

Practice: inclusive policy empowerment

First assess, general descriptive and substantive and then identify which level of IPE in terms of the continuum.

1. *General* Were women/women's groups empowered in the practice of implementation and/or evaluation compared to when those processes began? If so, which ones, who did they speak for, groups of women based on class? Ethnicity? Religion? Age? etc? To what degree? How were they empowered? Were they any disagreements between groups With what implications?
2. *Descriptive empowerment* Were the groups present in implementation and/or evaluation": *Not at all/or reversal, low, moderate, high*
3. *Substantive empowerment* Were the group's ideas included in the content of implementation and/or evaluation : *Not at all/or reversal, low, moderate, high*
4. *Inclusive policy empowerment continuum*

    HIGH—NGOS and State Feminist actors present and speaking for intersectional interests-not just white/upper class/hetero normative AND Affected the Content of Implementation/Evaluation
    MODERATE HIGH—NGOS and State Feminist actors present and speaking for intersectional interests—not just white/upper class/hetero normative OR Affected the Content of Implementation/Evaluation

MODERATE—NGOS and State Feminist actors present and speaking for just white/upper class/hetero normative AND Affected the Content of Implementation/Evaluation

MODERATE LOW—NGOS and State Feminist actors present and speaking for just white/upper class/hetero normative OR Affected the Content of Implementation/Evaluation

LOW—Very little presence of NGOs or state feminist actors in implementation/evaluation

Policy outcomes

The three different types of outcomes are first to be assessed, and then together they help to attribute which level of gender transformation

Direct outcome: Was the problem solved?

To what degree was the implementation has been successful, how likely it is the implementation will be successful in the future.

None/negative/positive: low/positive: medium/positive: high and explain assessment. Use a variety of sources for qualifying your assessment if available.

To what degree was the policy in terms of the original policy goal as well as a more general goals? For example, a policy may set modest goals that can be easily achieved in the implementation stage. Despite this achievement, the problem has not been entirely solved as the policy goals were too modest/underestimated/mischaracterized the problem at stake.

Pay attention to intended/direct effect of the policy and the unintended/indirect effect of the policy. Impact can be **positive, negative or neutral**.

For example, a policy can have the intended impact increase women's participation on corporate board but may have the untended impact to decrease diversity or can result into the concentration of board memberships into the hands of a very small number of women (the golden skirt problem).

Indirect outcome I: Decision-maker/gatekeeper level (indirect)

To what extent have the views/conceptualization/problematization of gender relations, roles, identities and stereotypes of the part of the stakeholders/policy community/implementing/evaluating agents involved with implementation and evaluation? How likely it produces gender transformation in the future in state and corporate actions. For the implementing/evaluating, agents did their approach/or frames with regards to gender change.

Indicators: **None/negative/positive: low/positive: medium/positive: high**

Indirect outcome II: Societal level

To what degree to public opinion, general attitudes around the core issues of the policy Public opinion data that hints to a change or status quo in public attitude would be useful here if there is any available. Any individual assessment of the benefits of the policy can be mentioned here as long as taken with a grain of salt.

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