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<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/wirc/index.aspx>
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This submission speaks to the three final questions in the call for evidence:

- How can a more inclusive culture be adopted in the House of Commons?
- Which individuals or bodies are responsible for taking action?
- What and who should drive change on this issue?

The submission is informed by three recent empirical research projects analysing data collected within a political party and two UK public sector organizations. These three projects focused on the tensions produced when women begin to make up a more equal proportion of a powerful professional group demographically, while the group or organization continues to show signs of a dominant, normative, masculine culture designed for men. The key aspect of these analyses we want to concentrate on here relate to how to approach change in those cultures, with the aim of achieving desegregation and challenging cultural exclusion sooner rather than later. This outline suggests three foundations for making change happen in this area, and offers recommendations in response to the three questions above.

First, those designing and implementing change in this area have to be committed to, and comfortable with, conflict for some period of time. Change in this area will provide challenges to professional values or organizational identity, as any change implies that the community is currently failing to reach equality, diversity, and inclusion. Interventions in this area are also likely to uncover further areas of discrimination, such as racialized exclusion or intersectional inequalities, that will then need to be considered in their own right. This often presents significant challenges, as those affected can be understandably reluctant to speak about their experiences.

Second, change interventions designed to address gender inequality, lack of diversity, and gendered exclusion provoke a range of responses and emotions in those benefitting from existing norms, and in those for whom change is intended to benefit. Men who have been successful within patriarchal cultures, for example, are likely to resist structural change interventions, obliquely if not openly, often using the language of meritocracy to justify their resistance. Similarly, women who have succeeded in reaching positions of power within male-gendered groups (such as corporate CEOs), often resist the use of quotas to introduce more women into those groups, arguing that such appointees lack credibility. Men often point to the existence of formal policies to argue that the organisation is inclusive, and that women are favoured by, for example, parental leave policies. However, men are recognised as giving insufficient credence and attention to the masculine organizational or occupational cultures, especially in framing judgements made about women who use such policies. Positive discrimination practices are especially controversial, suggesting that change interventions focus less on numerical or demographic representation, and more on culture change. Such change interventions have been happening for almost half a century now, and there are well established forms of best practice to implement.

Third, it can be difficult to show that an organization or profession is failing to be gender sensitive if only quantitative form of evidence is admitted. Demographics often show that quantitative equality is improving, sometimes rapidly, suggesting that gender dynamics are

changing; however, qualitative accounts of experience and feelings can suggest exactly the opposite, providing insight into the continuing reproduction of exclusionary cultures. This results in a significant amount of loss to the organization, as highly trained women either leave or accept roles that do not make best use of their training and skills.

Thus, in response to the three questions drawn from the call for evidence, we would suggest:

- How can a more inclusive culture be adopted in the House of Commons?

Through careful qualitative data collection to complement more focused quantitative analysis that moves beyond counting, will provide insights into everyday human experiences of discrimination, exclusion, and inequality; through specific, targeted interventions at both policy and cultural levels; and through explicitly challenging established ways of working that are gendered in their effects and outcomes.

- Which individuals or bodies are responsible for taking action? What and who should drive change on this issue?

All parliaments are exceptionally complex organizations, especially the UK parliament. However there are good analogies to draw through comparison with other professional groups and organizations; research on the legal profession, for example, shows clearly that partners and legal professionals can drive change most effectively in their line management capability. However, their power stems from their professional identity as much as their line management responsibility. We therefore suggest that politicians are responsible for taking action, especially in areas where they control the conditions of work for both themselves and for Service colleagues, in ways that support and enable those with line management responsibility. Without this crucial nexus, change is unlikely to happen.

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