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# When male heterosexual leaders politicize gender and sexual issues: The logic of representation in the 2014 Bordeaux municipal election campaign

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**Abstract** Gender and sexual politics were major issues during the 2014 French municipal elections campaign. A few weeks before the election, France experienced large-scale campaigns against gay marriage and gender equality policies. The aim of this article is to question the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation in the context of the municipal election campaign in Bordeaux. In the context of the ‘demo for all’, the return of a religious-based opposition between ‘moral order and permissiveness’ calls for further investigation. This article thus offers an original point of view based on fieldwork at the municipal level and polling data.

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Gender and sexual politics were major issues during the 2014 French municipal elections campaign. In November 2012, following the election of President François Hollande in May of that year, the Taubira Bill, which introduced civil marriage for same-sex couples, was first debated into Parliament. From this moment until the promulgation of the *loi Taubira* (17 May 2013), France experienced large-scale campaigns against gay marriage and gender equality policies. The demonstrations received a great deal of media attention. Paradoxically, in other Latin countries and in

the United Kingdom, similar measures have been adopted without any major protests from the Catholic Church and right-wing governing parties (Pérez Agote and Groupe [p.83]

européen de recherches interdisciplinaires sur le changement religieux, 2012). In France, though, some religiously inspired groups, unified under the banner of the *Manif pour Tous* ('Demo for all'), attempted to use the March 2014 municipal elections to further their cause and jeopardize the new law. According to French law, the mayor or one of the city councilors performs civil marriages. As a result, once the law was passed, protests were directed at candidates in the municipal election rather than at parliamentary lawmakers. Some councilors or candidates at these elections pledged to sign the *Charte des municipales* (Local Elections Charter) in defense of the family and in favor of repealing the law.<sup>1</sup> A tiny group went so far as to refuse to perform homosexual marriages.

By 2014 both the national political context and the academic agenda regarding gender and politics had changed. Until this time, most of the French scholarship related to gender and campaigns had been focused on the 'Parity' reform<sup>2</sup> (Achin *et al*, 2007), and how it affects women and politics. This left the issue of how candidates and campaigners addressed women's issues still to be investigated (Sénac and Parodi, 2013). Moreover, for a long-time sexual and gay issues have not been taken into consideration. In fact, since the civil partnership law for same-sex couples was passed (PACS) in 1999, the issue of same-sex unions was no longer on the political agenda. The right's victory at the 2002 general election might have silenced the claim for equal sexuality. Nevertheless, the 2012 presidential election gave the Socialist Party the opportunity to raise the issue of civil unions for gay and lesbian couples (Morabito, 2013; Prearo, 2013). How have gender and sexual issues shaped political representation since this time in a situation where most of the leaders are straight men?

Following Pitkin's (1967) theoretical work and Celis's (2008) work on gendering representation, the aim of this article is to question the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation – an issue that lies at the heart of feminist analysis (Childs and Lovenduski, 2013) – in the context of campaign activities which are themselves important components of formalistic representation. In short, how do male heterosexual campaigners deal with gender and sexual minorities issues? This question is particularly important in the French context where gender and gay issues are closely interlinked. They constitute what Fassin (2009) defines as 'sexual issues', a term shaping gender and sexuality issues.

This investigation into the dynamics of campaigns about gender and sexualities at local level should be seen in the context of political and scientific debates about the decline of party political divisions in French local politics (Arnaud *et al*, 2007;

Baumgartner *et al*, 2009). This article questions Haegel's (2005) observation about the return of a religious-based opposition between 'moral order and permissiveness'. Moreover, this article offers a point of view that is different from the usual analyses of electoral campaigns. According to Restier-Melleray (2002), most of the scholarship on electoral campaigns looks at the effects of the campaign from a national [p.84] perspective. For example, recent research has been used to understand the role of the media or opinion polls in the production of electoral issues or the coverage of candidates (Brookes *et al*, 2014). In order to grasp the politics of gender and sexual representation in an election campaign, here we adopted a research strategy focusing on fieldwork at the municipal level (Agrikoliansky *et al*, 2011).

## Methodology

This article considers the Bordeaux municipal elections of 2014. Located on France's Atlantic west coast, Bordeaux is the core of a metropolis (a political and administrative division) of almost 740 000 inhabitants within an urban area (*aire urbaine*, the statistical unit used by the INSEE) of more than 1 100 000 inhabitants. The service sector (administration, wine trade, tourism and so on) is the main driver of economic activity (67 per cent of jobs). The city has built the image of an attractive city; it regularly features in media listings of the French towns regarded as the best to live in. In political terms, this case is of interest because of the national standing of the two main candidates. The leading right-wing candidate, outgoing mayor and eventual winner of the 2014 election, Alain Juppé, was a former Prime Minister (1995–1997), a Minister on a number of occasions and leader of the right party (Union for Majority Presidential).<sup>3</sup> His main Socialist Party challenger was Vincent Feltesse. He was a member of the National Assembly from 2012 to 2014 and is close to François Hollande, considering himself to have been particularly involved in Hollande's victorious presidential campaign of 2012.

Our approach is threefold. The ethnography of political groups is particularly suitable for following an election campaign (Agrikoliansky *et al*, 2011). The in-depth observation of various types of electoral meetings (big gatherings, house meetings and so on) allows us to see the real place where the themes of campaign occur over and above speeches and programs. This technique allows us to access the discourse and the opinions of the militants and to place them in the context of the observation of campaign work.

The three candidates were: Alain Juppé, the chief candidate of the 'One Step Ahead with Alain Juppé' list comprising a local alliance of the UMP and parties of the center-right. Juppé is the political heir of the former mayor of Bordeaux – Jacques

Chaban-Delmas (Lagroye, 1973). He graduated from the *École Nationale d'Administration*, which makes him a symbol of technocracy and the old-school French political establishment. This link with a highly conventional environment that is redolent of social and masculine domination in politics has not prevented him from exercising a certain amount of innovation in his leadership style. Juppé's personal and political evolution toward a 'center-right modernity' has been discussed by the media and in the scientific literature (Le Bart, 2009; Arambourou, 2014). He has presented himself as having broken – at least partially – with his previous 'old-school [p.85] establishment image'. To this end he has gradually engaged with ecological issues, participatory democracy and sexual issues. This constitutes a move away from traditional masculine leadership and technocratic rigidity. Moreover, Alain Juppé has distanced himself somewhat from right-wingers such as Nicolas Sarkozy and has positioned himself on the center-right.

The Socialist, Ecologist and Radical list 'A Great Bordeaux for a Change of Era' was led by the Socialist, Vincent Feltesse. Throughout his local political career, he has constructed an image of political modernity by implementing gender mainstreaming policies (Arambourou, 2009). Feltesse was elected mayor of the northern suburb of Blanquefort in 2001 and was re-elected in 2008. In 2007, he was elected as the head of the Bordeaux's inter-communal executive. In performing these functions, he has placed an emphasis on a so-called alternative political masculinity that favors sexual equality and he has engaged in the promotion of gender mainstreaming at the local level. He has also presented himself as marking a break with old-school politicians through a high-profile involvement in setting up mechanisms to promote participatory democracy.

Finally, the 'Bordeaux bleu marine' list supported by the Front National (FN) and the Rassemblement bleu Marine ('Marine Blue Gathering' – with a clear reference to the national color and to the name of Marine Le Pen), together with SIEL (Sovereignty, Independence and Liberties) was led by Jacques Colombier (FN).

We use a classic method in electoral sociology, that is a quantitative survey based on an exit poll carried out on mayoral election day – 23 March 2014 – at a polling station in the west of the city. By so doing, this survey helps to understand the way voters had perceived the campaign and its various themes. This polling station was chosen as representative of the electorate and was used to compare results with a poll carried out during the municipal elections of 1995 at the same polling station (Restier-Melleray, 2002). Finally, we organized a local press watch to isolate salient issues and identify the interactions between journalists and politicians.

This study begins by examining the ways used to represent women and gays in the campaign. It then explains the reasons why gender and sexual politics was represented in these ways.

## How Can Straight Notable Men Represent Gender and Sexual Minorities?

Municipal politics is built around the idea of a respectable masculine leader. The presence of women and gay candidates in support of political leaders illustrates the 'arrangement between the sexes' (Goffman, 1977) and the use of sexualities as a political mark. Leaders believe that the presence of minorities is needed to represent minority groups. [p.86]

### Gender identities: The 'respectability' of the main candidates

Despite moves in 2000, 2007 and 2010 to strengthen gender parity rules at municipal and inter-communal elections, the 2014 campaign seemed to confirm the remarks made by the former mayor of Bordeaux, Jacques Chaban-Delmas. When he announced that Alain Juppé would be his successor, Chaban-Delmas, who was Prime Minister from 1969 to 1972 and mayor of Bordeaux from 1947 to 1995, summed up the qualities that were required by the leader of the council: 'To be Mayor of Bordeaux, you have to be a man of genuine worth and imposing dimensions' (Victoire, 2007, p. 28). Referring to the individual's stature as well as to his capacity to embody the alliance between diverse tendencies (*de bon aloi*), this remark reveals the masculine and bourgeois character of the mayoral office and the feudal lordship model (Mabileau, 1994) that structures the French political system.

Alain Juppé's team was very careful to present its candidate as a 'statesman'. From this perspective, being a man and accumulating positions of institutional power are necessary but not sufficient conditions to be a gentleman and worthy successor of the 'Duke of Aquitaine'— the nickname given to Chaban-Delmas. Equally indispensable are a career progression through ministerial offices, a political inheritance and a *habitus* that complies with traditional bourgeois proprieties and expectations.

The presentation of a candidate's political style can be analyzed through the role played by the politician's spouses (Restier-Melleray, 2005). Isabelle Juppé's involvement in her husband's political project dates back to before this campaign. In 2014 poll, she again took up the supporting role she had played during the 2008 election and during the key events in her husband's political life. Although her absence from Bordeaux life was increasingly noted during 2013, she was well to the fore at the media event marking the opening of the candidate's campaign rooms. Alain Juppé frequently called her up on stage at the beginning and the end of

electoral meetings and regularly entered events in her company. She was also well to the fore in photos taken by journalists and the candidate's communications team. This political couple is an example of the relatively conservative use of marriage in political life. Isabelle Juppé is also an executive woman who works for the media branch of the Lagardère group and who uses her professional skills to serve her husband's career. A male candidacy is seen as a conjugal enterprise, with the wife putting her resources – such as her exteriority to the political field – at the disposal of the male candidate who is looking to diversify his political capital (Guionnet, 2013). This is a traditional pattern in political couples, one that is based on complementarity and that is firmly anchored in gender difference.

By contrast, Vincent Feltesse's spouse refused to appear as merely somebody's wife. This model of conjugality is marked by a dissociation between the political project of the candidate and that of his wife, who asserts her exteriority *vis-à-vis* the political field as much as her own engagement. Bearing a different family name, a bookseller and a well-known committed feminist, Feltesse's partner made sporadic appearances at campaign events. When she spoke at the feminist meeting organized by Vincent Feltesse in December 2013, she did so as a feminist activist, and not as his partner. As a young parent, Vincent Feltesse agreed to have his photo taken with his son (whose face did not appear) playing football or on the way to school, for the regional newspaper *Sud-Ouest*. His political modernity was expressed as much by displaying his role as a parent as by downplaying the conjugal side of his marriage in the name of his wife's autonomy and independence. Running against an incumbent father aged almost 70 who himself did not hesitate to ride a bicycle in order to become the high priest of low-key, healthy, ecological urban mobility, Vincent Feltesse's conjugal and paternal status was at the heart of his strategy of embodying a renewal of local politics and a progressive masculinity. The empowerment of a cultural and creative middle and upper class was also symbolized by this conjugal arrangement.

The third model of political conjugality was one that connected both the political and private in which two political activists each had her/his own career. This can be seen with the *FN*. Valérie Colombier was present at all her husband's meetings as well as at Marine Le Pen's electoral meeting in Bordeaux. Herself a long-time *FN* activist, she was a companion in activism rather than a wife who was external to the political field and who helped the husband. There was thus no difference between her militant and her marital commitment in a manner that recalls other types of activist conjugality within either Catholic Action (Della Sudda, 2010) or the Communist Party (Denis, 2005). For the *FN*, the model presented was less the reflection of the desire for a certain social order than a highly devoted type of political activism that tends to mingle public and private life.

In short, Juppé embodied a traditional political masculinity, but this gender and

political identity has recently been characterized by his openness toward gender and sexual issue, a characteristic he shared with his Socialist opponent.

### Gender and Sexual Divisions: The Roles Played by Women and Gay Candidates

In spite of the 2000 Law on Political Parity, the main male candidates at the Bordeaux election were in a position to choose the women and men on their electoral lists and place in a rank order. What were the qualities of these women and men?

The second place on the Feltesse list was a woman, Michèle Delaunay, a government Minister until the end of the municipal elections. Her position as second on the list did not prejudice Feltesse's place at the top. As a Minister, she was often away from Bordeaux. She was also not the only woman who backed the socialist candidate, another prominent woman in his team was Emmanuelle Ajon. She was the only person who occupied three positions in the campaign organization chart: she was the *réfèrent territorial* (local and regional technical adviser) of a specific district, [p.86] responsible for age issues (youth, elderly people and so on) and spokeswoman for the candidate's project. This should doubtless be seen as a compensation for the fact that in June 2012 she was replaced as Delaunay's *suppléant* as a *députée* in favor of Feltesse, which cleared the way for him to find a power base within Bordeaux local government. The other key post in the electoral campaign was that of the Director. The campaign's co-director was a young woman: Emmanuelle Fourneyron, 37 years of age and like Feltesse a graduate of high-level business school *Hautes Etudes Commerciales*, and the head of a mutual insurance firm. This choice for a *paritarist* as campaign manager aimed to symbolize a commitment to gender equality.

The highly personalized list formed around Alain Juppé nevertheless found room for one woman with an unusual profile. The former Prime Minister achieved a media coup by including Virginie Calmels on his list. Aged 42, at that time 'completely unknown in Bordeaux<sup>4</sup>', a political novice (with no political party affiliation), and presented as 'the greatest surprise in the Juppé list' by the daily newspaper *Sud-Ouest*,<sup>5</sup> she was an asset for a mayor wishing to incarnate a modern center-right candidate. Virginie Calmels, former president of a major private media company, Endemol France, matched perfectly what Juppé wanted to promote in his campaign: women's capacity for enterprise and business. In addition, his list was characterized by the discreet adoption, a new type of right-wing women in politics. While this type of candidate had previously been selected on the basis of their exteriority to the political field (a trait which meant that they were highly likely to make a rapid exit from the political field and which gave them limited influence



over municipal affairs), the Juppé list enabled the election of two women who, although young and newly elected, were both characterized by their political experience (as the leader of the UMP's youth wing *Jeunes populaires* and as a collaborator of right-wing local councilors respectively). By surrounding himself with young women who were highly professionalized in communication and well-connected to political networks, Juppé dismissed the handicap caused by his biological and political age, which his opponent was trying to construct as a problem for him.

This arrangement of the sexes could also be seen in campaign activities. Public and electoral meetings were central activities for both lists. The electoral meeting is a political rite within which the symbolic order is revealed and therefore strengthened. Speeches by the chief candidates are always eagerly awaited. Silence falls around the figure, who, at least for a time, is consecrated as a 'Big Man'. The presentation of the members of the political teams during these public meetings occasionally provided an opportunity to emphasize the gendered traits of the candidates. For example, during a public meeting for the Juppé list, one outgoing councilor responsible for the city of Bordeaux campaign introduced a young fellow candidate and PhD student in Public Law in these terms: 'There she is, five foot nine of charm and intelligence, and I say intelligence because it means a lot to her'. The physical beauty of the young woman was emphasized as well as her seductive charm, thus confirming that 'harmonious inequality' (Elias, 1987) of gender relations which is held to [p.87] characterize French society (Ozouf, 1995). This positioning was again reinforced during another public meeting when young candidates from the list offered a rugby ball to an outgoing deputy mayor known for his rugby playing and his family's involvement in local rugby circles.

Within the Feltesse team, the gender division of the work of campaigning could be observed behind the electoral stage. When Feltesse got himself into difficulty by admitting to a journalist of Agence France Presse that he was conceding defeat two weeks before the first round of voting, Socialist women secretly organized a meeting 'to buck him up'.<sup>6</sup> On Saturday 1 March, *Sud-Ouest* headlined 'Feltesse displays his defeatism' while its placards in the city read: 'Feltesse's bizarre admission'. On the same day female activists mustered party workers and supporters who hid in the election rooms and surprised the candidate with a show of support in an attempt to give him heart. This rallying round, like the SMS texts that preceded it, was marked by kindly concern and enthusiasm. Alongside seasoned activists who like Emmanuelle Ajon had nevertheless been sacrificed on the altar of the candidate's career, female sympathizers and grassroots activists thus used the register of maternal solicitude to console a challenger whose election appeared increasingly unlikely.

On the extreme-right, Marine Le Pen's electoral meeting on Saturday 1

February, when she came to support the FN candidate Jacques Colombier, was remarkable; the party and political hierarchy took precedence over the gender hierarchy. Within the FN, the low intensity of the campaign gave no signs of a gendered division of labor. This is except for the security personal who was entirely male. The distribution of roles seemed rather to reflect the position of the candidate's staff within the FN and the *Rassemblement bleu marine*. As in the executive direction of the FN, political hierarchies seem to have taken precedence over gender hierarchies.

The two main lists both put forward gay men. The most visible of these candidates was Matthieu Rouveyre, a close associate of Vincent Feltesse. He has been openly gay since his involvement in the Socialist party at the beginning of the 2000s. Indeed, his political activity and his associative responsibilities in the local gay movement are closely linked. During the campaign and in line with Feltesse's political style, Rouveyre took positions on LGBT issues that went further even than those suggested by the Socialist government. For instance, he called for free access to medically assisted reproduction for lesbian couples. Quite surprising, though, was the presence of an LGBT activist alongside Alain Juppé, This was Marik Fetouh, a physiotherapist known for his previous activism in the Bordeaux LGBT movement. This political recruiting has to be understood in connection with Juppé's position on *Mariage pour tous*. Unlike other national leaders from the UMP, Juppé did not participate to the *Manif pour tous* events. Throughout the whole legislative debate on gay marriage, the mayor of Bordeaux defended other forms of progress toward sexual equality such as an improved civil partnership. After the election victory, Fetouh was rapidly promoted: although newly elected to the Municipal Council, he was immediately made the mayoral assistant responsible for Equality and Citizenship. In addition, [p.88] he is currently responsible for the new discrimination watchdog body set up during the first months of the new mayoralty. More favorable to LGBT issues than part of his electorate, Juppé handled opposing views with care during the campaign period. Thus, he recruited an anti-gay marriage activist, the local leader of *La Manif pour tous*, Edouard du Parc, but he was relegated in the composition of the municipal government; he is a simple municipal councilor. As regards the FN, no candidates were openly gay on Jacques Colombier's list. Nevertheless, the party had to solve the conflict raised by the marriage of one male activist with his partner in June.

We can consider the municipal political scene of 2014 as a 'gender scene' (Achin *et al*, 2007). That is gender divisions – and sexual divisions – underlie political activity and performance; the descriptive dimension of representation illustrates the good will of male candidates acting for sexual minorities. Moreover, the presence of member of women and sexual minority groups, as well as the involvement of gender issues in politics are to some extent intertwined (Bereni,

2015). This can be seen in a particular way in the case of Bordeaux. In this local electoral campaign, the two main political sides attempted to show their commitment to gender and sexual issues by recruiting members of gender and sexual minorities. But why did Bordeaux *notables* from both the left and republican right want to act for gender and sexual minorities?

### Why Notables Want to Act for Gender and Sexual Minorities

The distinguishing feature of the 2014 campaign was its inversion of the positions that had previously marked women's advocacy during debates about parity (Bereni, 2007). Positions hostile to gender equality in political representation could be observed on the right, while reform in favor of parity was supported by the left and the Socialist government. This evolution on gender representation can be explained by the positive opinion toward gender parity reform. Paradoxically, in 2014 the topic was played down within the Socialist campaign, which focused on the equality of sexualities rather than equality between the sexes.

### Why the Right Supports Women's Rights (And Why the Left Forgot Them)

Two months before the 2012 presidential elections, the TriElec survey of the values of French citizens drew attention to the open-mindedness of French people as regards the roles of women (Morabito and Reguer-Petit, 2013): 80 per cent of those questioned agreed with the idea that women are *not* made above all else to have children and to bring them up. In addition to socio-professional category, religious affiliation was an essential determinant of this value judgment. Those individuals who stated that they had right-wing views were more inclined to feel that the role of [p.89] women is above all else maternal: more than a third of those taking this view were 'right wing' or 'very right wing', compared with just 11 per cent of these respondents seeing themselves as left-wing.

The exit poll carried out in Bordeaux during the first round of the 2014 municipal elections showed massive support for political parity:<sup>7</sup> two-thirds of the electors questioned found this to be a good thing. This points toward a vision of social roles that is more egalitarian and one that is shared by men and women. It should be noted that the slight difference between women and men in their views over parity is significant at the 5 per cent level ( $\chi^2 = 9.82$ ). Gender and view of parity are thus linked, but only weakly (Cramer's  $V=0.10$ ). See Table 1.

Measures reserving elected offices for women were supported both on the right and the left of the electorate. However, the political self-positioning of voters

surveyed showed greater support for the left than for the right, confirming the national-scale surveys (Sénac and Parodi, 2013). While those who supported parity were also a majority of those supporting Alain Juppé, many more of those who voted for Vincent Feltesse declared that parity is a good thing (a difference of 23 points between those who voting for Alain Juppé and those voting for Feltesse). The relationship is significant to a threshold of 1 per cent ( $\chi^2 = 35.20$ ). Voting choices and view of parity are thus linked quite strongly (Cramer's  $V=0.24$ ). See Table 2.

Perhaps this acceptance of parity by voters and the support of right-wing voters for parity is related to the fact that Juppé made the place of women a central plank of his electoral campaign. But many factors might shed light on this choice, such as the need to capture a part of the left-wing electorate. Given the number of votes that went to Hollande in Bordeaux during the 2012 presidential election (57.18 per cent), Juppé needed to position himself as valuing the feminine. More specifically his communication strategy focused on valuing the performance of career women in the economic world. This shift toward a traditional left-wing stance might be seen as an attempt to position himself at the center-right both at the local and the national level.

Marked by his less than feminist treatment of the so-called *jupettes* (those women Ministers who were quickly dropped from his government when he was Prime Minister in 1995), Juppé was not in the best position to play the card of women's empowerment. Nevertheless, nearly 20 years after this notorious episode in French political life, Juppé's local election campaign took place after he had signed the

Table 1: Attitudes toward parity at the first round of the 2014 municipal elections in Bordeaux

<i>View of parity</i>	<i>It is a good thing</i>	<i>It is a bad thing</i>	<i>Other (please specify)</i>	<i>No response</i>	<i>Overall total</i>
<i>Women</i>	335 (68.09%)	43 (8.74%)	98 (19.92%)	16 (3.25%)	492 (100%)
<i>Men</i>	257 (63.30%)	58 (14.29%)	85 (20.94%)	6 (1.48%)	406 (100%)
<i>Overall total</i>	592 (65.92%)	101 (11.25%)	183 (20.38%)	22 (2.45%)	898 (100%)

Table 2: Attitudes toward parity and voting at the first round of the 2014 municipal elections in Bordeaux

<i>View of parity</i>	<i>It is a good thing</i>	<i>It is a bad thing</i>	<i>Other (please specify)</i>	<i>Overall total</i>
<i>Juppé voters</i>	230 (57.21%)	66 (16.42%)	106 (26.37%)	402 (100%)
<i>Feltesse voters</i>	168 (80.38%)	9 (4.31%)	32 (15.31%)	209 (100%)
<i>Overall total</i>	398 (65.14%)	75 (12.27%)	138 (22.59%)	611 (100%)

[p.90] European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life (May

2013) and before he set up on 6 October 2014 a discrimination watchdog for Bordeaux (the *Observatoire bordelais de l'Égalité*) that is intended to combat all discrimination, including discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation. The campaign can be seen as a moment when the policy of equality between women and men was given a boost, strengthening it and making it more visible.

The women question – that is how equality between women and men is to be achieved – was regularly brought to the fore of Juppé's campaign. Both the electoral meeting organized at the *Théâtre Femina* on 17 January 2014 and the one held on the evening when the election campaign rooms were inaugurated (13 December 2013) were used to promote Bordeaux as a 'feminine city'. They did so by emphasizing the place of women in sport (their practices, community association responsibilities, high-level sport) and by promoting domestic and family responsibilities. The main campaign document included an insert titled 'Bordeaux, a feminine city' and dealt mainly with family issues, though it avoided promoting public service for daycare.

The evening of 7 March showed in condensed form how the right-wing team politicized the women question. Isabelle Juppé concluded the public meeting with a long speech and was primarily responsible for the organization of this event. She played upon the inversion of gender roles, stating that, for once, Alain Juppé would be doing more listening than talking. In the end, this gender 'subversion' proved to be very limited and completely benign. Female entrepreneurship was particularly foregrounded: in addition to Isabelle Juppé, Virginie Calmels concluded the public meeting with a long speech. A conciliatory representation of gender relations emerged from this encounter. In her remarks, the future city councilor at no point mentioned that she had met with any resistance from men. In great contrast, she praised those men who, in the business or political sectors (here Alain Juppé was held up as a paragon), put their trust in women. This meeting and speeches by Isabelle Juppé, Virginie Calmels and various women speakers also put forward differentialist representations eulogizing traditional feminine qualities. If women are encouraged to embark on entrepreneurial activities, this is because they have a 'feel' for networking (and thus for relationships), for sharing (and thus selflessness), and for sustainable development (and thus for nature). The models held up were the ability to cope and find imaginative individual solutions, mutual help by women and intergenerational solidarity.

The image projected of Alain Juppé was far less that of a feminist man than of a candidate promoted and supported by women, endorsing the harmonious conception [p.91] of gender based on seduction that supposedly characterizes French society. One might therefore ask whether this pro-women positioning and the promotion of women do not, paradoxically, strengthen the conventional image of the Big Man. A Big Man perhaps surrounded by women, but women invariably younger than he

and who attest to the leader's masculinity. The centrality taken on by the issue of women entrepreneurs in Alain Juppé's political enterprise could also be used to reproduce an ideological position, one linked to a moderate form of economic liberalism: finding a trade-off between hailing business freedoms and celebrating relationships of selflessness and solidarity.

As would be expected of a left-wing candidate known for his commitment to women's issues, Vincent Feltesse did not completely sideline the gender equality issue. Thus, as part of the municipal campaign, a public meeting on 'Equality Between Women and Men' was held on 19 December 2013. This provided an opportunity to tap into feminist support in terms of organizations and networks, and to celebrate the candidate's feminism. Various feminist representatives made speeches from the platform, in particular from *Osez le féminisme* (Dare to be feminist) and the CIDF (Centre for Information for Women's Rights); speakers came from those organizations closest to the Socialist party locally. In addition, the fellow candidate and outgoing city councilor, Emmanuelle Ajon, vigorously denounced the early childhood policy of the outgoing city council and proposed a policy of equal sharing of the work of parenthood. The signs of Vincent Feltesse's commitment to feminism were strengthened by the fact that during this event, his wife, a noted feminist activist, took the floor in her own name. In his final remarks, Vincent Feltesse attempted to make his feminism into a marker distinguishing him from Alain Juppé: 'Alain Juppé is totally apolitical. Never mind that he founded the UMP ... We need to look at what makes him a right-winger ... In politics, there are always signs of an ideology [...] Bordeaux is the only city in France without a Women's Rights and Family Planning Information Centre. I won't even mention what Bordeaux has become: a Pro-Life Showcase ...' Vincent Feltesse naturally took part in the events organized for International Women's Rights Day on 8 March. The Socialist leader spoke on this occasion at the invitation of Naïma Charaï, a fellow candidate and regional councilor and Delegate for Solidarity, Women's and Men's Equality and Combating Discrimination, and the MP Noël Mamère, who is well-known for his support for same-sex marriage. Charaï was Feltesse's spokesperson on a broad range of subjects: 'City policy, combating discrimination, and parity'. The functions and positions held by this young woman of Moroccan origin increased the relative invisibility of the question of equality between women and men which found itself competing with and neutralized by the wider issue of discrimination.

In contrast to the Juppé campaign, neither the women issue nor that of gender equality appeared in the socialist campaign manifesto. The explanation for this absence is not simply because it was diluted within the broader issue of discrimination. Feltesse's opponents were quick to remind him of his supposed contempt for the [p.92] women in politics question when in 2012 he brutally evicted Delaunay's

*suppléante*, taking her place to pursue his own political interests.

This case illustrates how descriptive representation and substantive representation can be partially disconnected by the lack of political stance about gender issues. Feltesse made Juppé's involvement in women's issues more noticeable because of his relative sidelining of the issue. Was it the same for LGBT issues?

### Gay Marriage Acceptance, A Marker of Local Respectability

At first sight, the Bordeaux mayoral campaign seems to be characteristic of national debates in general and in the treatment of gender issues in particular. This observation tends to illustrate the unification of political markets in which peripheral markets – and above all those in the major cities – lose some of their specific nature (Lehingue, 2014). Specifically, the politicization of same-sex marriage led here to the reinforcement of the substantive dimension of representation. While during the presidential campaign at national level it was the Left-Front group which defended positions closest to the LGBT movement (Morabito, 2013), in Bordeaux context, with the presence of LGBT activists strongly engaged alongside Feltesse in community associations, the Socialist Party spearheaded the defense of LGBT rights. Although Feltesse was a straight man, he claimed to represent LGBT interests with the support of local gay leaders and the involvement of gay men in his political team. These issues were projected by means of media stunts and grand gestures skillfully staged by the Socialists. The first of these was mounted on 28 January, when Alain Juppé's list was unveiled. It included in 41st position an active member of the traditional gender-oriented pressure group *Manif pour tous*, Edouard du Parc, a close associate of Ludovine de la Rochère, the organizer of this group. The presentation of Alain Juppé's list provided an opportunity to gather a large amount of support for Feltesse, particularly via social networks, denouncing the presence of an anti-gay marriage figure on the right-wing list.<sup>8</sup> This operation was sparked in particular by the socialist municipal councilor Matthieu Rouveyre, a well-known LGBT activist, and by Paul Vinot, the current secretary of the Lesbian and Gay Pride (a local LGBT association) and member of Feltesse's staff at the metropolis. A joint press release signed by LGBT and feminist associations called for Edouard du Parc to be dropped from the outgoing mayor's electoral list. The text denounced 'the presence of one of the founders of Bordeaux's *Manif pour tous*, which includes all Bordeaux can show in the way of extremist, homophobic and racist organizations among its followers'. The local press reported this appeal on 30 January.<sup>9</sup> On 31 January, *Sud-Ouest* published a portrait of Edouard du Parc: *La part à droite de Juppé (Juppé's Right- Wing Element): In 24 hours Edouard du Parc has gone from being the illustrious nobody of the Juppé list for the*

*municipal elections to being the candidate who brings scandal in his wake.*<sup>10</sup> *Sud-Ouest* again covered the polemic on 13 February. The regional daily emphasized the number of right-wing groupings in Bordeaux wishing to put pressure on the mayor's position on homosexual marriage, thinking it to be too moderate.<sup>11</sup>

On 3 February, the debate on 'What policies for LGBT in the city?' organized by LGP Bordeaux and chaired by Paul Vinot provided an opportunity to emphasize the difference between the two main lists. Juppé did not send a representative to the meeting. The socialist candidate had clearly embarked on a strategy of capturing the lesbian and gay electorate. This can be seen in letters written personally by him that were disseminated by well-placed supporters within the LGBT community and activist networks in the city. The socialist candidate stressed in these letters that 'The fight against homophobia is a striking example of the current municipality's lack of courage' about issues of 'open-mindedness toward differences'. He also mentioned his regular presence at gay pride marches as well as his staunch support for 'marriage for all' (gay marriage) and for 'medically assisted reproduction for lesbian couples'. He thus set himself apart from the Socialist government, which had become apprehensive about these questions. [p.95]

During the campaign, Juppé was obliged to take account of the reservations held by part of his electorate about homosexuality, especially in the context of 2014. The perception of homosexuality is still a divisive issue for conservative voters. But, in 2012, the majority of centrist voters (56 per cent) supported gay marriage (Sénac and Parodi, 2013). Juppé tried to embody the political alliance of center and right parties. Even if he is under pressure from right-wing and Catholic activists, he still sent out more positive messages to his partners and voters from the center. In this way, although he included an anti-gay marriage activist on his list, he took a public position against the repeal of Taubira's bill and policies implemented after his victorious campaign addressed the fight against homophobia and transphobia.

The FN evaded this issue. The FN candidate made much of having signed the *Manif pour tous* Charter, though without making opposition to 'marriage for all' a central plank in his campaign (<http://www.infos-bordeaux.fr/2013/breves/jacques-colombier-fn-a-signe-la-charte-de-la-manif-pour-tous-5219>). For him, as for Marine Le Pen,<sup>12</sup> these debates were smokescreens, masking the 'real problems faced by the French people'. He nevertheless presented himself as a defender of the traditional family and the supposed natural order enshrining heterosexuality and its reproductive function.<sup>13</sup> This position created some conflict within the FN Federation, with the homophobic comments made by Jacques Colombier behind the scenes being condemned by part of the Young Guard in the Gironde.<sup>14</sup>



## Conclusion

Male and heterosexual leaders can politicize gender and sexual issues. To achieve this goal, they count on members of their political team that are identified with gender and [p.96] sexual minorities. Indeed, they believe in the necessity of these minorities to develop a convincing position on gender and sexual issues that they are supposed to represent. Sexual issues were on the agenda during the 2014 Bordeaux municipal election campaign. By taking the way candidates deal with this issues helps us to delve much deeper into link between descriptive and substantive representation. Certainly the two campaign leaders supported equality. More than that, though, women and gay men were coopted reflecting changes and expectations of local society. By putting women and gay candidates on their list, *notables* demonstrate their desire to act against discrimination based on gender or sexuality at a moment where women and gay issues still divided the left, center-right and the extreme-right. Over time, as Taubira Bill passed and the *Manif pour Tous* campaign weakened, Alain Juppé tended to adopt the leftist position on gay marriage. By personal inclination or because he anticipated voters' attitude to gay marriage, the UMP's candidate endorsed an open-minded position on this issue. In fact, our exit poll indicates strong changes in the electorate in favor of gender equality in politics. Despite a certain amount of continuity in the political roles held by men and women in this municipal election campaign, the poll underlined changes in electoral themes and positioning, in particular compared with the first municipal elections run under the new gender parity rules in 2001. In a certain sense, women and gay issues have become normalized, but right-wing and centre parties are more likely to deal with these issues in differentialist terms than from an egalitarian perspective (Sénac, 2015). In the case of Vincent Feltesse, recent events were a crucial constraint to his politicization of the women question. This is in contrast to Juppé, who managed to play down his male chauvinism of the 1990s (Sineau, 2011). The capacity of male leaders to politicize gender and sexual issues is relatively low. Sexual issues help to reproduce the traditional representation of municipal power in Bordeaux, not challenging the usual assumptions that masculinity is the normal embodiment of political power.

If in France, universalism is an official juridical and political doctrine, in practice political leaders believe that minority representation is an imperative for political action and, more than that, for the electoral support needed for the formalistic authorization to act. In one respect, this French case can be compared with the situation in the United States where the politicization of gay issues at the local level is a mix of the activism of the gay electorate and a covenant with the straight electorate (Haider-Markel *et al*, 2000).

## Notes

- 1 The Charter is rather ambiguous as regards the implementation of the law: it does not mention any refusal to celebrate same-sex marriages.
- 2 The 'Parity' laws introduced legal requirements for parties to present 50 per cent of women and 50 per cent of men.
- 3 Previously the Union pour la majorité présidentielle – Union for the Presidential Majority – and, since 2012 the Union pour un mouvement populaire – Union for a Popular Movement (Haegel, 2012). Now, this party is named 'Les Républicains'.
- 4 *Sud-Ouest* 29 January 2014 'Semi-Renewal of Juppé's team: From Endemol to the Town Hall: the Calmels Surprise (*Equipe à moitié renouvelée pour Juppé: d'Endemol à la mairie: la surprise Calmels*): 'with a look like a laser, perfectly controlled hair, impeccably turned out, and a smile to resist any test, Virginie Calmels, 42, has the look of a well-brought up young woman'. (Translated).
- 5 (ibid).
- 6 These remarks, reacting to a poll giving him 24 per cent of votes (compared with 38 per cent in April 2013), were said to have been made in mid-February to an AFP journalist before being made public by *Sud-Ouest* on 1 March. 'Contacted by *Sud-Ouest* he (VF) explained: "People criticize me for not waffling on. Speaking as an expert, being 30 points behind makes it difficult. But that makes no difference to my determination, I will be the mayor of Bordeaux"'.<sup>6</sup>
- 7 It should nevertheless be stressed that nearly 60 per cent (58.9 per cent) of the sample of 600 persons were individuals with a graduate level of education or higher.
- 8 Aged 42, four children, CEO of a real estate company. A declared supporter of the line taken by Ludovine de la Rochère (co-founder and spokesman for *La manif pour tous*) he filed LMPT's articles of association and is its co-treasurer.
- 9 'Municipales à Bordeaux: des associations demandent le retrait d'un candidat de la liste Juppé', *Sud-Ouest*, 30 January 2014, <http://www.sudouest.fr/2014/01/30/-1445794-4583.php>.
- 10 'La part à droite de Juppé', *Sud-Ouest*, 31 January 2014. <http://www.sudouest.fr/2014/01/31/la-part-a-droite-de-juppe-1446896-2780.php>.
- 11 *Sud-Ouest* 13 February 2014.
- 12 Press conference, Bordeaux Palais des expositions, 1 February 2014, 'the Socialists stir up sensitive issues...to cause tensions to arise'.
- 13 'This movement [*Manif pour tous*] has transformed itself into the advocate for defense of the family, the sole fundamental unit in our society, conceived from the union of a man and a woman, a unit of love, equilibrium and education for children, and the generations to come. My municipal program has a special place for families with precise, concrete proposals. As an opponent of homosexual "marriage", I will refuse to carry out this type of marriage.' he declared to the *infos bordeaux* independent press agency which had asked him about the marriage for all issue, <http://www.infos-bordeaux.fr/2013/actualites/entretien-avec-jacques-colombier-fn-nous-representerons-a-la-mairie-de-bordeaux-tous-les-oublies-et-laissons-pour-compte-5276>.
- 14 'Petite guerre entre amis au Front national en Gironde', *lefigaro.fr*, 20 June 2014, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/le-scan/coulisses/2014/06/20/25006-20140620ARTFIG00164-petite-guerre-entre-amis-au-front-national-de-gironde.php>.

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