Getting in, moving up, dropping out. The threefold social selectivity of participation in political parties – an empirical analysis of party members, former party members and the general public in Germany in 2017

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Abstract

Does the probability to join a political party, to become a party functionary, and to leave a party depend on individuals' socioeconomic status? Political parties are central mediating actors between the population and the state; thus, it is reasonable to assume that unequal participation within parties fosters unequal political representation. However, due to data limitations no study has hitherto examined the social selectivity of the whole party membership cycle. We shed light on these issues by analyzing original data from the German Party Membership Study 2017. We find that socially disadvantaged individuals are less likely to become and to stay party members and have a lower proclivity for holding political offices. These effects persist even after controlling for socialpsychological variables and the general incentives for party membership. However, in line with recent findings on voter turnout we show that social selectivity is partly mediated by political efficacy.

1. Introduction

Socially distorted political participation can result in unequal political representation. Thus, the interests of social groups with a disproportionately high share of non-voters find their way into policy-making only to a limited extent (Fowler, 2013; Griffin & Newman, 2005). A socioeconomic distortion of participation in political parties should lead to similar consequences, since parties serve as the central linkage mechanism between the population and the state. In fact, a difference in socioeconomic status (SES) between party members and the rest of the population was repeatedly observed. Recently, Gauja and van Haute (2015, pp. 194 f.), referring to party

member studies from ten different countries, reported that party members earned above-average wages and were better educated.

While SES-differences are well documented and relevant in normative terms, we still lack knowledge about the reasons for the deviating social composition of party members. Firstly, due to data limitations, previous research did not distinguish between the two individual level decisions that shape the composition of party memberships: joining and leaving a party. Ten years of differentiated recording for German parties (Niedermayer, 2017) reveal that both phenomena are equally frequent. Therefore, it is an empirical question whether members stand out because of social selectivity in the decisions of joining and/or leaving a party. Secondly, the specific mechanism for the potential social biases regarding joining and leaving has not been specified.

We address these issues using data from the German Party Membership Study 2017. To determine the predictors of joining and leaving, we estimate multinomial regressions comparing current party members, former members and individuals who have never been in a party. Concerning the mechanism behind social selectivity, we transfer findings from recent literature on electoral behaviour to the subject of party membership. Kraus et al. (2015) found political efficacy to be an impactful mediator between SES and voter turnout. If lacking political self-confidence (internal efficacy) and lowered perceived responsiveness (external efficacy) indeed discourage socioeconomically disadvantaged people from participating in intra-party activity, SES-effects should vanish or decrease significantly when introducing these mediators into our models.

In addition to the motives for joining and leaving a party, we identify the relevant explanatory variables for the attainment of political offices. Given that incumbents in particular have direct opportunities to exercise political influence, the social characteristics of party functionaries can be even more important for unequal political representation than the social composition of ordinary party members. Additionally, socially biased distribution of offices can foster socially distorted patterns of joining and leaving. In light of this interdependence, we consider it reasonable to study these three phases together in a conclusive analysis of social selectivity in the party membership cycle.

Although we are interested in socioeconomic status, our analyses are based on three classical explanatory approaches for participation in political parties: the social-structural approach, the social-psychological model, and the General Incentives Approach. By explaining our dependent variables as comprehensively as possible, we reduce the risk of an omitted variable bias.

To conclude, we analyse social selectivity regarding joining and leaving a party as well as acquiring a political office. Additionally, we investigate if eventual social distortions result from varying levels of political efficacy between the different SES-groups. To fulfil this objective, we first describe our theoretical expectations concentrating on the mechanisms underlying the impact of socioeconomic status on intra-party participation (Chapter 2). We then explain the state of research on social distortions in the decisions to join or leave a party as well as in intra-party activity (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 describes the two surveys of the German Party Membership Study 2017, which serve as the database for our empirical analyses in Chapter 5. The findings on party members' entry and exit decisions are presented together in Chapter 5.1 before the findings on political office acquisition are discussed separately (Chapter 5.2). Finally, we summarise the results of the analyses and explain the implications of our empirical findings (Chapter 6).

2. Theoretical expectations

For several decades, participation researchers have demonstrated the negative impact of a low socioeconomic status on the probability to participate politically (Brady et al., 1995; Verba & Nie, 1972). Although their book is regarded as the seminal work of the social-structural approach or the resource model, Verba and Nie (1972) already identified varying political attitudes as a main reason for these SES-effects. Specifically, they referred to 'civic orientations' consisting of political interest, external efficacy and political knowledge as well as 'a sense of contribution to the society' (Verba & Nie, 1972, p. 133). While their US-based study obviously did not consider party membership, they documented this mediation to be empirically valid for multiple modes of participation.

More recent research focussed on individual elements of these civic orientations and explained the specific mechanisms behind their mediating effects. Especially the role of political efficacy has been repeatedly examined (Cohen et al., 2001; Kraus et al., 2015). As opposed to these more contemporary articles, Verba and Nie used respondents' answers to factual questions about politics, but did not directly measure internal efficacy, i.e. 'beliefs about one's own competence to understand and to participate effectively in politics' (Craig et al., 1990, p. 290). That is a crucial omission because low internal efficacy does not necessarily indicate an objective lack of political empowerment, but can also result from a distorted negative self-image. This subjective component can be equally significant for the willingness of socially disadvantaged people to participate. According to Kraus et al. (2015, p. 7), people with a low socioeconomic status often feel a lack of control over various areas of their lives. The authors argue that this

feeling of loss of control is omnipresent among people with low resources and therefore also evident in the political sphere. How people perceive their chances to exert political influence reflects their political self-confidence but also their perception of the responsiveness of the political system, the so-called external efficacy. Marx and Nguyen (2018, p. 921) explain that external efficacy correlates negatively with SES due to de facto discrimination of resource-weak groups in policy-making, complementing Verba and Nie by providing a specific argument for the mediating effect of external efficacy.

To sum up, classical research concerned with social-structural variables already identified varying political attitudes as a contributing factor to SES-effects on political participation. More recent studies narrowed the focus by considering different attitudes resulting in a feeling of not being able to influence politics, i.e. internal and external efficacy, as the key mediator variables. However, said research is not focussed on participation in political parties, necessitating our own empirical assessment in chapter 5.

For simplicity's sake, in our models, we only assign socio-demographic variables to the social-structural approach. For attitudinal variables, we use two complementary approaches. We attribute the essential concept of political efficacy to the social-psychological model as it originated from research done by Campbell and his colleagues (Campbell et al., 1954). Regarding this model, our predictions are straightforward. We expect positive attitudes towards politics in general, i.e. political interest and efficacy, and, vis-à-vis, the preferred party, namely party identification, to increase the tendency for intraparty activity.

Finally, within the context of the General Incentives Approach (Seyd & Whiteley, 1992), the decision to participate in political parties is regarded as the result of a cost–benefit analysis. Thus, we expect the potential benefits (positive incentives) to increase the propensity to participate, while the varying types of costs (negative incentives) should have an opposite impact. The specific set of motives considered as well as their operationalisations are subject of Chapter 5.

3. State of research

Before we can elaborate on the state of research on joining a party, intra-party activity and the decision to leave a party, it should be noted that socioeconomic status is rarely the focus of papers on participation in political parties. Accordingly, such studies usually only consider individual elements of SES. Verba and Nie (1972) refer in their influential contribution to educa-

tion, income and occupational status. Following their direction, our literature review incorporates studies that include either income, occupational position, occupational prestige, educational attainment or subjective social status.

Firstly, reference should be made to articles that draw on international population surveys. Scarrow and Gezgor (2010) show with Eurobarometer data for the 1990s and with the European Social Survey for the 2000s that party members in almost all countries spend on average more years in educational institutions than non-members. In accordance with this, Ponce and Scarrow (2016) also observe a positive effect of education and income on the probability of being a party member. Their research is based on the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2004 and the World Value Survey 2005. Whiteley (2011) confirms – also utilising ISSP 2004 data but using different control variables – the findings of an increased level of education for party members. He also shows that the subjective social status of party members is on average higher than that of non-members.

Since only a few of the eligible voters are party members – on average 5% at the turn of the millennium in Europe (Mair & van Biezen, 2001) – and party members are not overrepresented in the samples of these international surveys, the analyses mentioned are based on comparatively few cases per country. Against this background, it should be emphasised that the effects of education and occupational status also occur on the basis of surveys of party members (Gallagher & Marsh, 2004 for Fine Gael in Ireland; Pedersen et al., 2004 for Denmark; Whiteley & Seyd, 2002 for the British Labour Party). As the listed publications make clear, party membership studies in the past often only covered specific parties. This is a problem because party preferences vary systematically with social status. An analysis of the membership of a social democratic party, for example, would probably identify fewer social distortions vis-à-vis the population than an analysis centered on the membership of an economically liberal party.[1] Against this background, the findings of Gauja and van Haute (2015) are particularly remarkable. Investigating party membership studies from ten countries, which typically include members of all nationally relevant parties, they conclude that party members on average receive an increased income and have a higher level of education. The authors base their assessment, inter alia, on the German Party Membership Study 2009. Using data from the same project, Hoffmann and Springer (2019) additionally show that party members in Germany have a higher

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[1] Typically, this problem is lessened by contrasting a party's electorate to its membership.

self-assigned social status and are less likely to be blue-collar workers or white-collar workers in the private sector.[2]

Accordingly, the group of those who are eligible for office in political parties is already socially distorted. The findings on whether it is the socially advantaged from this preselected group who acquire more political offices are mixed. Whiteley and Seyd (2002, pp. 86–89) show separately for Labour and the Conservatives that 'high-intensity participation' becomes more likely as the level of education increases. In addition to holding a political office, this includes, for example, attending meetings or distributing leaflets. In contrast to the hypothesis-conforming effect of the level of education, the effects of income and social status on high-intensity participation, as understood in this way, are not statistically significant for the Conservatives. In the case of Labour, both variables, contrary to expectations, even have a negative effect on the probability of participation. In the German Party Membership Study 2009, political office holders neither have a higher formal education than the other party members, nor do they have an increased occupational prestige (Rohrbach, 2013, p. 220). In contrast, Spier (2010) has shown on the basis of the German Party Membership Study 1998 that party functionaries on the local level (Ortsebene) are on average not more educated than the other party members, but on the level above – the county level (Kreisebene) – a clear overrepresentation of high school graduates and academics can already be observed. The results from Allern et al. (2015, pp. 81 ff.) for survey data from Norway 1990, 2000 and 2010 are similar. They show for each point in time that the social differences between party members as a whole and delegates for the national congress are less pronounced than the differences between party members and the national members of parliament. Both studies are thus in line with Putnam's law of increasing disproportion which states that social selectivity rises with the level of hierarchy (Putnam, 1976).

Unfortunately, there exist few studies on the third element of potential social distortion – the decision to leave a party. The aforementioned analyses of the ISSP 2004 by Whiteley (2011) show a comparable level of educational attainment between former and current party members. However, a social selection effect is indicated in the case of subjective social status, as ex-party members locate themselves on average lower than current party members. In contrast to this, using the telephone survey of the German Party Membership Study 2009, Rohrbach (2011) does not find any effects of the educational level or the self-assigned social status. Only the

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[2] These comparisons of frequency distributions are complemented by multivariate models. Their analyses, however, do not consider the group of non-members as a whole but differentiate between those who can imagine being a party member and those who cannot. In this context, only the SES-differences between party members and individuals being sure not to join a party are statistically significant.

generally higher occupational prestige of current party members is in line with the expected social distortion (Rohrbach, 2013). Nonnenmacher and Rohrbach (2019) apply the same data but do not consider the occupational prestige and, more importantly, reduce the sample to members who are discontent with the party as well as former members who left because of discontentment. The authors find – besides a slightly increased income for former party members – no differences in the socio-demographic profiles of these subgroups. Finally, Whiteley and Seyd (2002) report an increased likelihood of blue-collar workers leaving the party, but limit themselves to the analysis of former Labour Party members who left the party between 1997 and 1999.

These mixed findings on the determinants of leaving a party contrast with the clear effect of SES on the decision to join a party. It is indicated by the few published studies that only some components of SES influence the decision to leave a party. Regarding office-seeking, social selectivity seems to depend on the importance of the political office. However, caution must be exercised when interpreting the results for all three phenomena, as existing articles focus primarily on the effects of education, which makes a comprehensive assessment of the influence of SES hardly possible to date.

Another caveat is, that none of the aforementioned studies, including the articles based on the German Party Membership Studies of 1998 and 2009, elucidate which differences in political attitudes result in social selectivity. For any variable to be a mediator, it should be correlated with the elements it mediates between. We already elaborated on the correlation between SES and political efficacy and it has been repeatedly stated that party members indeed exhibit increased internal and external efficacy (see e.g. Rohrbach, 2013; Whiteley et al., 2006, p. 85). Although these preconditions are given, the mediating effect between SES and participation within political parties itself has so far only been examined to a limited degree. Cohen et al. (2001) empirically validate the hypothesised mediation and they even refer to party membership, but this is only one of eleven types of political participation that are included in their dependent variable. In our analyses in Chapter 5, we extend this state of research by examining whether political efficacy plays a central role in social biases in intra-party participation. We determine to what extent the effects of SES on leaving and joining a party as well as on political office acquisition will only persist if we refrain from additionally using internal and external efficacy as explanatory variables.[3]

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[3] The correlation between political participation and political efficacy is partly attributable to the effect of political participation on efficacy (Finkel, 1985). Is this reverse causality a problem for our argumentation? The fact

4. Database

The empirical analyses presented in this paper are based on the German Party Membership Study 2017. This study consists of two components: A telephone survey of the general public and a postal survey of the members of Germany's six parties with the largest memberships.

To model entry and exit decisions, random samples for current party members, former party members, and individuals who have never been in a party (non-members) must be available. Fortunately, the telephone survey has the required design. More specifically, it is a disproportionately stratified, nationally representative survey that comprises 1,001 current and 1,001 former party members as well as 1,000 non-members. Having random samples of these three group is exactly what is needed to model entry and exit decisions. The interviews were conducted between 20 March and 5 May 2017. Since it was not possible to access the party membership registers for this survey and since there is no list of former party members, the current and former party members had to be recruited via screening interviews. Before the actual survey, these were carried out by the survey institute between 4 October 2016 and 10 March 2017, in the context of the forsa bus, a multitheme survey conducted every working day. The questionnaire contained questions that were asked in identical form in all three survey groups, but also specific questions for current and former party members as well as for the rest of the population.

Concurrently with the population survey the postal membership survey was carried out. Since only party members are included, the number of interviewed party members is considerable larger than in the telephone survey. We use this wider data base for our analyses of political office acquisition. It is a nationally representative survey of the following six parties' members: CDU, CSU, SPD, FDP, Die Linke and Bündnis90/Die Grünen. These are all the parties that were represented in the German Bundestag at the time of data collection, with the addition of the FDP, which had no parliamentary seats in that specific legislative period but was included to ensure continuity with the previous German Party Membership Studies. The samples used for the survey were taken from the electronic party member registers by the party headquarters according to uniform guidelines. They included 3,000 individuals each for the parties operating nationwide and 2,000 for the CSU limited to Bavaria. In the case of the parties not confined to one federal state, the samples were also disproportionately stratified according to West and East Germany. In total, the gross sample comprised 17,000 persons. The survey was conducted according to the specifications of the Total Design Method (TDM) by Don Dillman (1978). At

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that political self-confidence improves with political work is independent of how high an individual's SES is. Accordingly, it cannot be assumed that this mechanism would be responsible for a disappearing SES effect when we control for efficacy.

around 60 percent, the response rate was pleasingly high. Hence, a total of 9,748 cases are available for analysis.

5. Empirical analyses

Before we subsequently explain the findings of the empirical analyses, we first describe the operationalisations of the determinants of political participation.

Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) already showed that the individual elements of SES each have a different impact on political participation. To identify these structures, we look at the level of education, employment status, occupational categories and occupational prestige separately instead of using a composite variable for SES. In addition to the objective indicators of SES, we also use a subjective component to explain political participation in parties: the self-assigned social status. In contrast to the original conception of Verba and Nie (1972), we do not include income. This decision was made because many respondents refuse to provide information on their earnings. In addition, the income was not recorded in the postal survey. This omission is partially compensated by a more detailed recording of the occupational situation, which in turn is of central importance for individual earnings.

Apart from that, the measurement of political efficacy is important for the investigation of social selectivity in political parties. External efficacy has been identified on the basis of agreement with the statements 'Politicians don't care much about what people think' and 'Politicians generally try to represent the interests of the population.' Similarly, for the measurement of internal efficacy we rely on the assessment of the statements 'Politics is so complicated that somebody like me can't understand what's going on at all' and 'I believe I am able to take an active role in a group that deals with political questions.' For both dimensions, the mean value of the corresponding items was calculated.

In addition to describing the measurement of such variables, which we require directly to test our theoretical expectations, we need to explain how the General Incentives Approach is operationalised. The model states that an individual becomes active within a political party if the benefits of participation outweigh its costs. Seven different positive incentives are described as well as three negative. In Table 1 we present our operationalization of the model. We differentiate between telephone and postal surveys to document the differences in the measurement of incentives between the two surveys.[4]

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[4] Those respondents from the telephone survey who had never been a member of a party had some problems assessing the costs of membership. For this reason, missing values were replaced by mean value imputations, with

5.1 Determinants of joining and leaving political parties

Although our analyses are based on two different data sets, we can draw on largely identical explanatory variables for political participation. This enables us to carry out the analyses for our different dependent variables according to the same scheme. Thus, we first present separate models for the social-structural approach, the social-psychological model and the General Incentives Approach before estimating overall models with variables from all approaches. The social-structural approach and the social-psychological model are each implemented in two variants. Regarding the social-structural variables, we estimate different models using subjective and objective indicators of SES, respectively. In the social-psychological approach, we introduce the efficacy variables with a delay. This is due to the expected function of political efficacy as a mediator between socioeconomic status and intra-party participation.

Using multinomial probit models,[5] we investigate entry and exit decisions of party members on the basis of the telephone survey. We identify the determinants of party membership through the contrast pair of current party members and non-members

[Table 1]

(Table 2), while we compare current and former party members to determine the explanatory variables of the decision to leave a party (Table 3).[6] In the first step of describing the determinants of party membership, the explanatory power of the various models must be addressed. We find that the social-psychological model has a higher explanatory power than the other approaches. This should not come as a surprise, since political attitudes, such as the party identification, are logically particularly close to the explanandum. The explanatory power of the social-structural approach and the General Incentives Model, on the other hand, are on a comparable level.

Considering the normative significance of social distortions in political participation, our theoretical focus lies on the social-structural models. Nevertheless, we briefly need to refer to the empirical findings regarding the other approaches in Table 2. All the variables of the social-

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the average calculation and the value substitution being carried out separately for current and former party members as well as non-members.

[5] According to the Hausman test, our outcome categories do not have the property of independence of irrelevant alternatives. Therefore, instead of using multinomial logistic analyses, we decided to estimate multinomial probit models which relax the assumption of independence of irrelevant alternatives.

[6] The comparison between former members and non-members results logically from the difference between the coefficients of Tables 2 and 3. Although this contrast is irrelevant for our focus, we have included a corresponding table (A1) in the online appendix to the document with the complete results. It is available through the following Figshare DOI: https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.11357705.

psychological model have the effects that the relevant state of research would suggest (M4). The effects in the General Incentives Model are also plausible except for one: The normative incentive belonging to the positive incentives surprisingly reduces the probability of joining a party (M5). However, this finding is not necessarily to be interpreted in such a way that it is more likely that people who do not expect any social approval will join a party. Rather, it can be assumed that the observed effect is due to the fact that party members have experienced that party work is viewed negatively by parts of the population.

[Table 2]

[Table 3]

Regarding the social-structural variables, our attention is focused on the fact that hypothesis-conforming effects can be observed for both subjective and objective factors of SES. The objective parameters show that a high degree of occupational prestige and a high level of education promote party membership, whereas blue-collar workers are underrepresented among current members (M1). In addition, people who assign themselves to the upper class are more often party members than those who feel they belong to the lower middle class (M2). However, the positive effects of the objective indicators of SES are already lost with the addition of the reduced set of political attitudinal variables and the general incentives variables (M6). In contrast, the participation-enhancing effect of a high social status (M9) does not vanish until the efficacy variables are introduced. Here the socially unequal participation is mainly due to differences in the self-attributed political competence, internal efficacy, and less due to the varying assessment of the responsiveness of the political actors. The diminished political self-confidence of the socially disadvantaged thus seems to contribute significantly to their underrepresentation in political parties.

Table 3 makes it possible to identify the determinants of the decision to leave a party by comparing current and former party members. For the social-psychological variables (M4) and the general incentives variables (M5), the effect patterns for party members' entry and exit decisions correspond to each other. In contrast to their impact on the decision to join a party, the objective indicators of SES are not statistically significant in any of the models. Subjective social status on the other hand again proves to be a powerful explanatory variable: people who classify themselves as being in a low status group are more likely to leave a party (M2). Even when controlling for social-psychological explanatory variables and the general incentives variables, individuals who feel that they at most belong to the lower middle class have a stronger tendency to leave the party than respondents from the middle and upper classes (M8). Only

after the introduction of political efficacy into the models, there are no longer any statistically significant differences between the classes (M9). For the decision to exit a party, external efficacy proves to be more important than internal efficacy. Due to a lack of longitudinal data, it is not possible to assess whether these persons displayed lower levels of external efficacy before joining the party or whether they had undergone a process of disillusionment regarding the parties' responsiveness to citizens' wishes during their time as a party member.

5.2 Determinants of the acquisition of political offices

Examining the political activity of party members, we focus on the acquisition of political offices, since this is the political activity that can have a direct influence on policy-making. We now utilise the postal survey of the German Party Membership Study. In this study, party members were asked whether they held different political offices in the past or present. Both, party offices and political mandates were considered. We condensed this information into whether a respondent ever held an office on at least the district level (Bezirksebene), which applied to 14% of party members surveyed.[7] Due to its dichotomous scaling, we estimate binary logistic regressions for the explanation of this dependent variable.[8]

Firstly, the results in Table 4 illustrate that the social-psychological approach is again comparatively powerful in explaining our dependent variable. Although the social-structural models have the lowest predictive power, they also offer an independent explanatory contribution. Regarding the effects of the variables in the social-psychological model and

[Table 4]

the General Incentives Approach, we merely discuss the patterns that need to be explained. To begin with, the missing effects of having a party attachment stand out compared to its previously reported strong impact on the decisions concerning party membership (M4). Since the vast majority of party members identify with their party, there was only limited explanatory potential here all along. The negative effect of the supposedly positive expressive incentive in the General Incentives Model (M5) also appears contradictory at first glance but is plausible in the context of office acquisition: An expression of sympathy towards a party and its politicians simply does not require one to apply for office.

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[7] We considered the positions of executive board members, chairs of the executive board and elected officials at district, state, federal and European level.
[8] We weight the data to ensure that our results apply to all members of the six parties we surveyed. For one thing, we correct for the disproportionate sample (see section 4). For another, the members of the various parties are weighted relative to each other according to the number of members of their parties.

Concerning SES, there are two effects that are significant at the 5% level (M1): Blue collar workers hold political office with less probability than self-employed individuals. Compared to pensioners, the unemployed are less likely to acquire a political office (M1). Both effects vanish even before introducing political efficacy into the model (M6). More importantly, the acquisition of office is favoured by a high occupational prestige (M1), and the subjective social status is also effective in the expected way (M2). Occupational prestige and the contrast of individuals with high and low subjective social status remain statistically significant even after controlling for political efficacy (M7, M9). However, this does not mean that political efficacy is not a relevant predictor of office acquisition (M4). On the contrary, internal efficacy is particularly important: After all, it makes little sense not to trust oneself to take on an 'active role' in a political group but still hold political office.

Finally, the fact that internal efficacy does not fully explain the differences between SES groups is to be clarified. While individuals make their own decisions about party membership, political mandates and party offices are awarded through elections. It is therefore important which abilities are assigned to the candidate by the voting persons. It seems plausible that especially occupational prestige serves the evaluators as a proxy for the (political) competence of a candidate.

6. Conclusion

In this article, social distortions in the entire party membership cycle were analysed for the first time. More specifically, we examined the impact of the individual SES on decisions about joining a party, political office acquisition, and exiting from a party. Our analyses point to the existence of social distortions for all three phenomena examined. This threefold social selectivity is manifested by the fact that people who attribute a low social status to themselves are less likely to join parties and to hold political office as well as over-proportionally express a willingness to leave the party. In addition to the impact of the subjective social status, objective SES indicators also show statistical effects indicating political underrepresentation of socially disadvantaged individuals. A high occupational prestige increases an individual's inclination to join a party and to acquire political office. Furthermore, the professional position and the individual level of education determine the likelihood of joining a party. Finally, the decision to leave the party is not influenced by any of the objective indicators of SES.

What are the reasons for this threefold social selectivity of political participation in parties? Our analyses suggest that the observed social distortions mainly result from differences in political

efficacy between social groups. To counteract social selectivity, it is therefore necessary to understand the causes of the varying efficacy. Unfortunately, regarding external efficacy, a vicious circle must be outlined: The perception of a low responsiveness of the political system by socially underprivileged individuals leads to their lower political participation rate. Due to this reduced political participation, the own social group is politically underrepresented, resulting in a further decline of external efficacy (see Merolla et al., 2013). How can this self-reinforcing process be stopped? At least regarding the allocation of party offices, quotas can contribute to adaptation to social conditions. Negative attitudes of socially disadvantaged people towards politics could be reduced by equal political representation. As a result, their willingness to enter parties and to become politically active could increase. However, due to the high complexity of dividing individuals into SES groups and the variability of the individual SES over the course of a person's life, such an undertaking is unlikely to be practicable for political parties.

Funding

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Table 1: Measurement of the General Incentives Model

	Telephone survey	Mail survey
Question/request	Assessing statements about engagement in political parties[a]	Reasons for joining a political party/ for becoming involved in a party[b]
Selective, outcome incentives	It provides professional benefits for people like me to get involved in a party.	To gain job-related benefits
	Anyone who aspires a career as a fulltime politician must be an active party member.	To gain a party office
		To gain public office
Selective, process incentives	As an active party member you can get to know interesting people.	Doing party work for fun
	As an active party member you can develop expert knowledge for political questions.	To be with nice people
		To be better informed about politics
Collective political Incentives	The active participation in a party is a suitable way, in order to personally exercise impact on policies.	To further the goals of the party
		To strengthen the influence of the party
Normative Incentives	Who is engaged in a party can count on respect and acknowledgment.	Due to the influence of family and friends
Ideological Incentives	By being a party member one expresses his support for the political ideas of this party.	To influence the political course of the party
		To support a specific wing of the party
Altruistic Incentives	Democracy can function only if the citizens cooperate in political parties.	To fulfill my civic duties
Expressive Incentives	By being a party member one expresses his sympathy for the party and its politicians.	Because of impressive personalities at the top of the party
		To express my sympathy for the party
Opportunity costs	Engagement in a party often leaves too little time for friends and family.	Engagement in a party often leaves too little time for friends and family.
Disutility of effort	Working for a party can be very boring.	Working for a party can be very boring.
		Besides an exhausting everyday life, going to party events can be very tiring.
Financial costs	Membership in a party is associated with high membership fees.	-

[a]   "Regardless of whether one works in a party oneself, one can have different views about political engagement in the parties. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements."

[b]   In the postal survey, the positive and negative incentives of the General Incentives Model were measured on the basis of different question terms. To obtain the positive incentives, it was asked: "Why did you join [CDU/CSU/SPD/FPD/Grüne/Linke]?" The negative incentives were measured on the basis of the following question: "There are various reasons for becoming more or less involved in the party. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?"

Table 2: Determinants of joining a political party (multinomial probit models, party member vs. non-member)

	(M1)	(M2)	(M3)	(M4)	(M5)	(M6)	(M7)	(M8)	(M9)
Gender (ref. female)	0.44***	0.45***	0.36***	0.30***	0.44***	0.41***	0.36***	0.40***	0.35***
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Age (ref. up to 29)									
30 to 44	1.49***	1.42***				1.15***	1.19***	0.99**	1.02**
	(0.28)	(0.26)				(0.34)	(0.35)	(0.32)	(0.33)
45 to 59	1.14***	1.07***				0.75*	0.78*	0.59	0.62
	(0.28)	(0.26)				(0.34)	(0.35)	(0.32)	(0.32)
Over 60	2.38***	2.02***				1.78***	1.83***	1.41***	1.50***
	(0.30)	(0.25)				(0.36)	(0.37)	(0.31)	(0.32)
Education (ref. up to sec. education)	0.25**					0.20	0.13		
	(0.09)					(0.11)	(0.11)		
Occupat. cat. (ref. blue-col. worker)									
Salaried empl.	0.53**					0.06	-0.01		
	(0.18)					(0.21)	(0.21)		
Civil Servant	0.82***					0.20	0.10		
	(0.21)					(0.24)	(0.24)		
Self-employed	0.87***					0.28	0.21		
	(0.21)					(0.25)	(0.25)		
Freelancer	1.14***					0.44	0.34		
	(0.28)					(0.32)	(0.32)		
Employment stat. (ref. unemployed)									
Employed	0.05					0.07	0.02		
	(0.21)					(0.23)	(0.24)		
Retired	-0.35					-0.22	-0.21		
	(0.23)					(0.26)	(0.26)		
Treiman-prestige	0.01**					0.01	0.00		
	(0.00)					(0.00)	(0.00)		
Subj. social status (ref. max. lower middle class)									
Middle class		0.45***						0.17	0.12
		(0.11)						(0.13)	(0.13)
At least upper middle class		0.85***						0.38**	0.27
		(0.12)						(0.14)	(0.14)
General pol. interest			0.48***	0.38***		0.37***	0.31***	0.43***	0.35***
			(0.07)	(0.08)		(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Local pol. interest			0.44***	0.41***		0.42***	0.40***	0.40***	0.38***
			(0.05)	(0.05)		(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Regional pol. interest			0.05	0.03		0.03	0.02	0.03	0.02
			(0.06)	(0.07)		(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
National pol. interest			0.04	-0.02		-0.04	-0.08	-0.05	-0.09
			(0.07)	(0.07)		(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Party attachment			1.34***	1.25***		1.26***	1.22***	1.24***	1.20***
			(0.09)	(0.09)		(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)
Internal efficacy				0.26***			0.21***		0.24***
				(0.05)			(0.05)		(0.05)
External efficacy				0.20***			0.12*		0.12*
				(0.04)			(0.05)		(0.05)
Sel., outcome inc.					-0.02	-0.04	-0.04	-0.05	-0.04
					(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Sel., process inc.					0.54***	0.46***	0.42***	0.47***	0.44***
					(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Collect. pol. inc.					0.11**	0.06	0.03	0.05	0.02
					(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Normative inc.					-0.13**	-0.12*	-0.12**	-0.12**	-0.12**
					(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Ideological inc.					0.12*	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.02
					(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Altruistic inc.					0.19***	0.15***	0.14***	0.15***	0.15***
					(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Expressive inc.					-0.00	-0.05	-0.04	-0.06	-0.06
					(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)

Table 2 (continued)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Opportunity costs					-0.17***	-0.14***	-0.13**	-0.14***	-0.12**
					(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Disutility of labour					-0.07*	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.02
					(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Financial costs					-0.30***	-0.30***	-0.28***	-0.31***	-0.28***
					(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Constant	-3.13***	-2.31***	-5.00***	-5.67***	-2.24***	-6.91***	-7.14***	-6.48***	-6.84***
	(0.37)	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.29)	(0.37)	(0.64)	(0.65)	(0.56)	(0.57)
Adj. Count R²	0.1813	0.1638	0.3102	0.3429	0.2262	0.4064	0.4070	0.3959	0.3959
n	2612	2612	2612	2612	2612	2612	2612	2612	2612

Probit regression coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses; $^{*} p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$, $^{***} p < 0.001$

Table 3: Determinants of leaving a political party (multinomial probit models, party members vs. former members)

	(M1)	(M2)	(M3)	(M4)	(M5)	(M6)	(M7)	(M8)	(M9)
Gender (ref. female)	-0.04	-0.03	-0.00	-0.03	-0.04	-0.01	-0.02	0.01	-0.00
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Age (ref. up to 29)									
30 to 44	0.03	0.10				-0.11	-0.07	-0.09	-0.06
	(0.34)	(0.34)				(0.39)	(0.39)	(0.38)	(0.39)
45 to 59	-0.24	-0.16				-0.36	-0.33	-0.33	-0.31
	(0.34)	(0.34)				(0.38)	(0.39)	(0.38)	(0.38)
Over 60	-0.25	-0.12				-0.49	-0.46	-0.37	-0.33
	(0.35)	(0.33)				(0.39)	(0.40)	(0.37)	(0.38)
Education	-0.03					0.02	-0.01		
	(0.09)					(0.10)	(0.10)		
Occupational category									
Salaried employee	0.11					-0.16	-0.20		
	(0.19)					(0.21)	(0.21)		
Civil Servant	0.33					-0.03	-0.09		
	(0.21)					(0.24)	(0.24)		
Self-employed	-0.03					-0.33	-0.36		
	(0.21)					(0.24)	(0.24)		
Freelancer	0.49					0.14	0.10		
	(0.27)					(0.30)	(0.30)		
Employment status									
Employed	0.13					0.20	0.18		
	(0.20)					(0.22)	(0.22)		
Retired	0.17					0.31	0.32		
	(0.22)					(0.24)	(0.24)		
Treiman-prestige	0.00					0.00	0.00		
	(0.00)					(0.00)	(0.00)		
Subj. social status									
Middle class		0.38***						0.26*	0.24
		(0.11)						(0.12)	(0.12)
At least upper middle class		0.46***						0.27*	0.22
		(0.12)						(0.13)	(0.14)
General pol. interest			0.15*	0.09		0.14	0.13	0.14	0.12
			(0.07)	(0.07)		(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Local pol. interest			0.32***	0.30***		0.29***	0.27***	0.28***	0.27***
			(0.05)	(0.05)		(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Regional pol. interest			0.07	0.06		0.07	0.07	0.08	0.07
			(0.06)	(0.06)		(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
National pol. interest			-0.17*	-0.20**		-0.21**	-0.22**	-0.21**	-0.22**
			(0.07)	(0.07)		(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Party attachment			1.15***	1.07***		1.07***	1.04***	1.05***	1.02***
			(0.09)	(0.09)		(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)
Internal efficacy				0.13**			0.06		0.05
				(0.04)			(0.05)		(0.05)
External efficacy				0.20***			0.09*		0.09*
				(0.04)			(0.05)		(0.05)
Selective, outcome incentive					-0.03	-0.05	-0.05	-0.06	-0.06
					(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Selective, process incentive					0.33***	0.26***	0.25***	0.26***	0.24***
					(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Collective political incentive					0.19***	0.16***	0.14***	0.16***	0.14**
					(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Normative incentive					-0.02	-0.03	-0.03	-0.02	-0.03
					(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Ideological Incentive					-0.01	-0.06	-0.06	-0.05	-0.05
					(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Altruistic Incentive					0.21***	0.18***	0.18***	0.18***	0.18***
					(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Expressive incentive					0.02	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02
					(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)

Table 3 (continued)

Opportunity costs					-0.17***	-0.15***	-0.14***	-0.15***	-0.14***
					(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Disutility of labour					-0.08**	-0.04	-0.04	-0.05	-0.05
					(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Financial costs					-0.17***	-0.19***	-0.18***	-0.18***	-0.17***
					(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Constant	-0.11	-0.24	-2.22***	-2.76***	-1.56***	-2.37***	-2.49***	-2.56***	-2.70***
	(0.42)	(0.35)	(0.27)	(0.29)	(0.37)	(0.64)	(0.64)	(0.59)	(0.59)
Adj. Count R²	0.1813	0.1638	0.3102	0.3429	0.2262	0.4064	0.4070	0.3959	0.3959
n	2612	2612	2612	2612	2612	2612	2612	2612	2612

Probit regression coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4: Determinants of holding an office (binary logistic regressions)

	(M1)	(M2)	(M3)	(M4)	(M5)	(M6)	(M7)	(M8)	(M9)
Gender (ref. female)	0.82*	0.91				0.72***	0.66***	0.79**	0.71***
	(0.07)	(0.08)				(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Age (ref. up to 29)									
30 to 44	1.05	1.05				1.21	1.19	1.23	1.23
	(0.29)	(0.29)				(0.34)	(0.34)	(0.35)	(0.35)
45 to 59	1.45	1.36				2.06**	2.02**	1.96*	2.04**
	(0.38)	(0.35)				(0.56)	(0.55)	(0.53)	(0.55)
Over 60	2.11**	2.13**				3.35***	3.64***	3.37***	4.06***
	(0.55)	(0.53)				(0.92)	(1.00)	(0.89)	(1.08)
Education	1.06					1.17	1.04		
	(0.10)					(0.11)	(0.10)		
Occupational category									
Salaried employee	1.23					1.18	1.02		
	(0.23)					(0.22)	(0.20)		
Civil Servant	1.43					1.32	1.13		
	(0.27)					(0.26)	(0.22)		
Self-employed	1.50*					1.37	1.20		
	(0.29)					(0.27)	(0.24)		
Freelancer	1.51					1.57	1.39		
	(0.35)					(0.38)	(0.34)		
Employment status									
Employed	1.38					1.25	1.20		
	(0.27)					(0.25)	(0.24)		
Retired	1.49*					1.36	1.38		
	(0.29)					(0.27)	(0.28)		
Treiman-prestige	1.03***					1.03***	1.02***		
	(0.00)					(0.00)	(0.00)		
Subjective social status									
Middle class		1.40*						1.44*	1.28
		(0.20)						(0.21)	(0.19)
At least upper middle class		2.17***						2.20***	1.65***
		(0.31)						(0.32)	(0.25)
General political interest			2.26***	1.55***		1.94***	1.46***	2.03***	1.46***
			(0.20)	(0.15)		(0.18)	(0.14)	(0.18)	(0.14)
Local political interest			1.51***	1.57***		1.39***	1.40***	1.35***	1.38***
			(0.09)	(0.10)		(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)
State political interest			1.07	1.10		1.04	1.03	1.02	1.02
			(0.08)	(0.08)		(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
National political interest			0.84*	0.80**		0.85*	0.80*	0.87	0.81*
			(0.07)	(0.06)		(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Party attachment			1.05	0.10		1.11	1.07	1.10	1.07
			(0.13)	(0.12)		(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.14)
Internal efficacy				1.81***			1.75***		1.84***
				(0.10)			(0.11)		(0.11)
External efficacy				1.15**			1.18**		1.18**
				(0.06)			(0.06)		(0.06)
Selective, outcome incentive					1.47***	1.65***	1.63***	1.65***	1.63***
					(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Selective, process incentive					1.16**	1.16**	1.12*	1.12*	1.09
					(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Collective political incentive					1.21***	1.05	0.98	1.08	0.99
					(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06
Normative incentive					0.95	0.96	0.98	0.95	0.98
					(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Ideological incentive					1.12**	1.10*	1.09*	1.08	1.09*
					(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Altruistic incentive					1.00	0.10	1.00	0.10	0.10
					(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Expressive incentive					0.89*	0.83***	0.85***	0.80***	0.84***
					(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)

Table 4 (continued)

Opportunity costs					0.99	0.10	0.99	0.99	0.99
					(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Disutility of labour ("tiring")					1.01	1.01	1.01	1.01	1.01
					(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Disutility of labour ("boring")					1.00	1.01	1.01	1.01	1.01
					(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Constant	0.01***	0.05***	0.00***	0.00***	0.02***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
McKelvey/Zavoina R^2	0.068	0.043	0.121	0.171	0.071	0.226	0.256	0.203	0.242
N	7069	7069	7069	7069	7069	7069	7069	7069	7069

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$