

Women at the Grassroots: A Cross-National Analysis of Party Members

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Abstract¹

Studies on the sociodemographic representativeness of party members have consistently shown that political parties' membership bases are disproportionately male. Political parties are crucial for the numeric representation of women in parliaments and governments and for the consideration of their interests, and relatedly continue to rely on their members, among others, as recruitment pools for candidates and office-holders and as linkage agents that keep the party connected to broader society. Moreover, also the fact that parties have gradually granted their members a larger formal say in intra-party decision-making renders an analysis of who joins parties highly relevant. Using data from the 2014 Citizenship Survey by the International Social Survey Program (ISSP Research Group) data, this paper sketches a profile of female party members in Europe (focusing on sociodemographic characteristics and levels of political interest, knowledge and trust) by making a double comparison: between female members and non-members on the one hand, and between male and female party members on the other. Our results suggest that political interest and knowledge, and professional and civic activity increase the likelihood for women to join parties. Family factors, on the other hand, do not play a role. In comparison with men, especially the civic activities have a less outspoken effect.

Keywords: Political parties, party members, women, descriptive representation

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1. Introduction

The underrepresentation of women in politics is one of the fundamental problems modern democracies still struggle with. To this day, politics continues to be a male-oriented enterprise. The share of women in political institutions does not correspond to their share in the overall population (Caul, 1999; Krook, 2007; Matland, 2005): only a minority of members of parliament and government worldwide is female (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2016) and also in political parties women remain underrepresented. The latter is not only the case higher up parties' hierarchical ladders (O'Brien, 2015; Wauters & Pilet, 2015) but also when descending to their grassroots (more in particular: a majority of party members are men) (see for instance: den Ridder, 2014; Devroe, de Vet, & Wauters, 2017; Scarrow & Gezgor, 2010; Van Haute, Amjahad, Borriello, Close, & Sandri, 2013; Whiteley & Seyd, 2002a).

Parties are, however, key players for both the numerical representation of women in parliaments and government, and for the consideration of their interests (Celis, Childs, Kantola, & Krook, 2014; Childs & Webb, 2011). In these functions, party members continue to be important, as parties rely on them as a recruitment pool for potential electoral candidates, staff members and office-holders, and as democratic linkage mechanisms that keep the party connected to the wider community. In addition, as the formal role and impact of party members in parties' internal-decision making procedures have increased during the past few decades (Cross & Blais, 2012a), an analysis of who joins parties - and why certain social groups are still underrepresented - remains important, also from a gender perspective.

Existing research on the socio-demographic profiles of party members has often taken the form of single-country studies (Allern, Heidar, & Karlsen, 2010; Pedersen et al., 2004; Van Haute et al., 2013) or even on single-case studies (Childs & Webb, 2011). The occasional cross-country analysis was conducted with data at the party level (Scarrow & Gezgor, 2010). In this paper, we conduct an international-comparative analysis at the individual level, with a specific focus on female party members. Using data from the 2014 Citizenship Survey of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP Research Group), we sketch a thorough profile of female party members across a large number of countries and aim to answer the following research questions: (1) in what ways do female party members differ from women who do not become member of a political party? and (2) in what ways do female party members differ from male party members?

We focus on individual factors, which are related to (political) resources (e.g. educational level, political knowledge and interest), professional status and family composition, and other sociodemographic variables including age and ethnic origin, and on country-level variables² in order to grasp the influence of the institutional and political context on the propensity to join a political party.

By making a double comparison (between female party members and non-members on the one hand, and between female and male members on the other) this analysis will yield further insights on which women join political parties, and what possible barriers they encounter.

We proceed as follows: first we sketch a view of the consequences of the (limited) presence of women in politics in general and in party memberships in concrete. Drawing on the political participation literature among others, we then discuss the possible causes that keep (some) women from engaging in party politics. After discussing the data and methods, we proceed with our analysis of the profile of party members in 21 European countries, after which we summarize our main findings.

2. The role of party members

Referring to Katz and Mair's (1993) well-known 'three faces of party organisation', scholars of party transformation have often pointed out the reduced importance of 'the party on the ground' for parties' political survival in recent decades. Parties have indeed adjusted their organizational structures, withdrawing from society and moving closer towards the state, resulting in a shift away from Duverger's (1954) ideal type of the 'mass party' towards the model of the more elitist 'cartel party' (Katz & Mair, 1995). As parties increasingly tap into state funding, professionalize their structures and activities, and centralize decision-making in a small power elite, they become less dependent from their grassroots members, reducing the power of the 'party on the ground' (Krouwel, 2012). This 'party on the ground' is witnessing a severe crisis, illustrated by declining popular support for political parties (Dalton & Weldon, 2005), rising levels of electoral volatility (Dassonneville & Hooghe, 2011; Drummond, 2006),

² Since the ISSP questionnaire contains a question on whether or not one is member of a political party, but not about which party, it is not possible to link individual respondents to particular parties (and their characteristics).

reduced levels of party identification (Dalton, 2002) and declining party membership figures (Scarrow & Gezgor, 2010; Van Biezen, Mair, & Poguntke, 2012),

Still, party members continue to play a role within parties. Partly in response to declining membership figures, parties have even extended the formal opportunities for party members to engage in **intra-party decision-making** (Cross & Katz, 2013; Young, 2013) for instance by giving them the right to vote directly on important matters such as the selection of party leaders (Cross & Blais, 2012b; Pilet & Cross, 2014; Wauters, 2014) and the selection of electoral candidates (Bille, 2001; Pennings & Hazan, 2001; Rahat, 2013).

In addition, **selecting political personnel** and allocating public offices are key functions parties in modern democracies fulfill. Not surprisingly then, an important reason why parties recruit members is that they are potential candidates (Scarrow, 1994). Having a strong and diverse membership base means having a stable reservoir of electorally-interesting candidates, potential leaders, office-holders and staff members, at the (supra)national, regional and local levels of government. Consequently, the underrepresentation of certain social groups (women, for instance) logically reduces the proportion of possible candidates for party or public office of that group.

The underrepresentation of certain groups does not only have consequences in terms of political recruitment, it can also **affect the political course of parties** (Pedersen et al., 2004). It is often reasoned that members of certain social groups share unique characteristics, experiences and interests that are best articulated by members of that same group (Paolino, 1995). Anne Phillips' (1995) 'politics of presence' argument, for instance, states that due to different life experiences, personal characteristics of representatives have an impact on their points of view and on the issues they prioritize. Put differently, the presence or absence of social groups in the political arena is expected to have an impact on the content of the political debate and could have an impact on the way representatives act for their constituents (Jones, 1997; Schwindt-Bayer, 2011; Schwindt-Bayer, 2006). Applied to party members, who are increasingly involved in the formal approval of party programs, this would imply that the under- or overrepresentation of certain groups could have a substantial impact on party policies. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, party members are often seen as agents that establish the link between the party and broader society that is needed for the aggregation and articulation of specific interests, and for political socialization and mobilization (Scarrow,

1994; Van Haute & Gauja, 2015). Hence, if certain groups are underrepresented as party members, their specific voices might not be transferred to the party elite adequately.

3. Women as party members

Besides the specific reasons set out above, the presence of women in politics is important for a number of general reasons as well. Firstly, it is linked to general conceptions of democracy, liberty and justice (Pitkin, 1967). Karp and Banducci (2008) found that citizens in countries with greater female representation are more likely to be satisfied with the way democracy works, enforcing positive political attitudes. This also relates to the **symbolic dimension of representation**: if women are better represented in parties, they will feel more involved, enhancing their confidence in parties and politics in general (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005). Secondly, it is argued that **institutions are often gendered** (Acker, 1992; Kenney, 1996). Political parties, as institutions, have historically been dominated by men. Therefore, institutional rules and norms often reflect the power of the dominant and the masculine norm, and, by consequence, tend to exclude the formulation of women's interests (Franceschet, 2010). Raising the percentages of women in political parties is crucial in this regard: by entering parties, they come into politics and its gendered institutions allowing to change the gendered nature of these institutions (Meier, 2000).

As stated above, however, parties' membership bases can hardly be considered as a proper representative reflection of diversity in society. Just like the young and the lower-educated, among others, women are systematically underrepresented as party members (Childs, 2013; Scarrow & Gezgor, 2010). Despite the declining presence of traditional gender role divisions, the adoption of quota to promote the political participation of women in parliament (Caul, 2001), and the slow increase in the number of women in political leadership functions (Krook & O'Brien, 2012; Wauters & Pilet, 2015), men outnumber women in parties, also in their lower echelons.

Research on the presence of women in parties has often focused on the demand side by examining how parties affect women's representation and how they recruit and select women. This is found to be influenced by both formal and informal norms, such as the size and the composition of the selectorate (Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2016; Gauja & Cross, 2015; Rahat, Hazan, & Katz, 2008; Randall, 1987), the presence of women among the party elite

(Bjarnegård, 2013; Niven, 1998; Vandeleene, 2014), the use of specific measures (Krook & Norris, 2014) and informal norms of what constitutes a good candidate (Kenny & Verge, 2016; Lovenduski, 2005; Tremblay & Pelletier, 2001). When examining party membership, however, it is also essential to consider supply side factors (i.e. factors on the side of women themselves) that might explain women's involvement in party politics. For that purpose, we turn to the literature on political participation and the factors that could explain differences in terms of political engagement.

4. Who joins a party?

The factors that explain participation in political parties in general (for both men and women) have long been a point of interest to political scientists. Being a member of a political party is a high-cost type of political participation, which involves a variety of different political activities such as attending meetings, public speaking, organizing campaigns and running for office, both within and outside the party organization. From an idealistic point-of-view, one could assume that people are active within a party because they want to contribute to society. It is, however, often assumed that party members are rational actors and that their decision whether or not to participate actively depends on the outcome of a cost-benefit analysis (Hillebrand & Zielonka-Goei, 1989; Scarrow, 1994). The costs of participation include, amongst others, the time it requires, or financial costs such as membership fees. The benefits include the influence one has by participating in decision-making processes, for example, by choosing the party leader or deciding upon the party's policy position. From an economic rationality perspective, however, Olson (1965) argues that the personal benefits of membership cannot outweigh its costs.

Several models of political participation further explain why individuals join political parties. The *civic voluntarism model* argues that participation is largely determined by individual's resources, such as their social status, professional occupation, education and income (Fox & Lawless, 2003; Verba & Nie, 1972). Subsequent work has defined these resources as time, money and civic skills (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995) and the individual's social status and educational attainment (Whiteley, 2011). Whiteley (2011) also includes political efficacy, looking at other indicators of civic skills such as voluntary work and religious attendance. Active engagement in non-political voluntary organizations should enable individuals to acquire civic skills which can be helpful in supporting their political participation and to

develop associational ties as a springboard for a political career (Almond & Verba, 1965; Nie, Powell, & Prewitt, 1969).

The *cognitive engagement* model stresses that political participation is influenced by one's ability and willingness to process and understand political information (Clarke, Sanders, Stewart, & Whiteley, 2004; Dalton, 2005; Norris, 2000). Political knowledge and interest, and particularly educational attainment are essential, as this is the main factor increasing individuals' ability to critically process and understand political information (Whiteley, 2011).

Thirdly, the *social capital model* (Putnam, 2000) argues that individuals who are embedded in strong networks of social and voluntary relationships are more likely to participate in politics. As interactions between individuals generate interpersonal trust, trust is seen as the key indicator of social capital (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Fukuyama, 1995; Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2004; Putnam, 2000; Van Deth, Maraffi, Newton, & Whiteley, 1999). Whiteley (2011) also includes trust in government and marital status as indicators of social ties that are likely to foster social capital.

Applied to party members, indeed, those who join parties tend to be relatively high educated and have a higher social status (Scarrow & Gezgor, 2010; Verba, Nie, & Kim, 1978; Whiteley, 2011). Likewise, membership of other voluntary organizations and religiosity all positively influence party involvement. This also applies to political interests, civic norms and interpersonal trust. Trust in government, however, is found not to have an unequivocal effect on whether or not joining a party (Whiteley, 2011). Furthermore, some research suggests that respondents with full-time occupations are more likely to get involved in parties than part-timers or retired people (Whiteley, 2011), whereas others find that party members have more leisure time because they tend to be in the later part of their careers or have only recently retired from their jobs (see for example Parry, Moyser, & Day, 1992; Scarrow & Gezgor, 2010; Verba et al., 1978; Widfeldt, 1995). In sum, both individual resources (education, profession, voluntary association membership, political interest and knowledge) and more general socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. age, ethnicity, region of origin) influence party membership. But how can we understand differences in political participation between men and women?

5. Differences between men and women for joining a party

When looking at the professional sphere, and considering women's individual resources, it is often argued that women play by a different, and often more demanding set of rules than men. Therefore, we indicate whether and why the reasons to join a party (outlined in the previous section) might differ between men and women.

We start by discussing the role of education and knowledge (two elements that take a central position in both the civic voluntarism and cognitive engagement model). The literature on women and politics has dedicated significant attention to outlining the institutional and cultural factors that determine women's presence in politics. As mentioned before, one important reason women less often gain political power could be that they might be less likely to value (or to aspire) its achievement (Farah, 1976; Fowlkes, Perkins, & Rinehart, 1979; Sapiro & Farah, 1980), to express political aspirations (Fox & Lawless, 2005) and/or to have different motivations and levels of ambition (Davidson-Schmich, 2015; Lawless & Fox, 2010). This refers to the supply-side: women are less likely to select themselves to become active in politics. But also the demand-side could play a role in this respect: to be considered highly capable in the professional sphere, women are still often required to display greater level of competences than men (O'Brien, 2015; Ridgeway, 2001). This could also be applied to female party members, in the sense that we could possibly expect women to be higher educated and dispose of a greater level of political knowledge and interest in order to be asked to become involved in politics. As we will make a double comparison, between female members and non-members, and between female and male party members, we formulate the following hypotheses regarding the social and political resources of female party members:

H1a: Female party members are higher educated, dispose of more political knowledge and exhibit higher levels of political interest than female non-members.

H1b: Female party members are higher educated and dispose of more political knowledge and exhibit higher levels of political interest than male party members.

Secondly, we look at the professional and societal position of party members. Professional and social activities allow both to develop certain competences needed to function in politics, and to become involved in social networks which can be useful. Literature suggests that political participation can be linked to gender role socialization (Fox & Lawless, 2003).

Traditional sex-role socialization has historically resulted in men's entry into the public world of politics and women's transmittal to the private domain of the household (Fox & Lawless, 2004). Research on gender socialization reveals that women and men, regardless of their occupational status, continue to view their responsibilities differently (e.g. Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 2001; Jamieson, 1995; McGlen & O'Connor, 1998). Although the historical gender-based division of labor has certainly declined, analyses continue to reveal prevalent stereotypes associated with these traditional roles (Dolan, 2010, 2014; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a, 1993b). Fox and Lawless (2003) found that traditional family structures decrease the likelihood of running for all levels of office. The responsibilities associated with motherhood and household management implicate that women often do not have the time or energy to pursue political activities and do not have the contacts to get involved in the political arena (Stoper, 1977; Welch, 1978, p. 372). Particularly for women, having a professional occupation and being civically active proves to be an important predictor of political ambition and participation. It is seen as a manifestation of social integration that may both reflect and contribute to the sort of self-confidence from which women benefit as they envisage activities more typically associated with men (Costantini, 1990). Civic activism may be seen as a means of overcoming the structural disadvantages ambitious women suffer vis-à-vis their male competitors (Merritt, 1977). As such, we formulate the following hypotheses based on gender socialization:

H2a: Female party members are professionally and civically more active than female non-members.

H2b: Being professionally and civically active is a more important determinant for female party membership than for male party membership.

H3a: Women who have a partner and children are less likely to become a party member.

H3b: Not having a partner and children is a more important determinant for female party membership than for male party membership.

In our analysis we will also control for differences in age. We do not formulate hypotheses considering this variable, however, as we do not expect differences between male and female party members, but only that party members are generally older, as found in most studies on party membership (Scarrow & Gezgor, 2010).

6. Data and Methods

In order to sketch a view of female party members, we conduct an international-comparative analysis at the level of the individual party member, using data from the 2014 Citizenship Survey of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP Research Group). The ISSP is a cross-national collaboration programme conducting annual surveys on diverse topics relevant to social sciences. We use, more in particular the data of the 2014 Survey on issues related to citizenship. Surveys were conducted in 34 countries worldwide, and the number of observations was 49,807 (ISSP Research Group, 2016).

Dependent variables

Our dependent variables (being a female party member, a female non-member or a male party member) are constructed using a survey item on respondents' gender and a question on whether or not they belong to a political party³. Given that the question wording of the ISSP Citizenship survey team allows respondents to define 'belonging to a party' subjectively, and given that a different meaning might be attached to this wording across different countries (Whiteley & Seyd, 2002b; Whiteley, 2011), this brings some challenges for cross-national comparison. In most European democracies 'belonging to a party' means having paid a membership fee to a political party and thus being a registered party member. In other countries, like the United States, however, citizens might conceive of themselves as belonging to a political party when they are actually party supporters who register to vote for a party, but this does not necessarily involve paying membership fees to a party organization. We therefore decided to restrict our analysis to European countries only. Respondents from Australia, Chile, India, Japan, South-Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, the United States, Venezuela and South-Africa were excluded from our sample. Moreover, in countries where civil liberties are not (completely) guaranteed, it might be that party membership is enforced and/or needed to become other things. Therefore, we also opted to exclude countries with a score on the civil liberties index of Freedom House equal and above to 3 (on a scale from 1 to 7). As such, we additionally excluded Russia, Turkey and Georgia.

³ The answers 'I belong to a party and actively participate' and 'I belong to a party but do not actively participate' are coded as being a party member; the answers 'I used to belong to one but not anymore' and 'I never belonged to one' are coded as not being a party member'.

Independent variables

In line with our hypotheses formulated above, we include three kinds of variables into the analysis: variables about capabilities and motivation to engage in politics, variables about professional and social activity rate, and variables about family status.

The first kind of variables about capabilities and motivation fall apart into three variables. The first one is **political knowledge**, which is measured on a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5) about the statement ‘most people are better informed than I am.’ **Political interest**, the second variable of this group, is based on a self-evaluation of one’s level of interest in politics, ranging from very interested (1) to not at all interested (4). In order to capture the level of education of a person, we rely on the **number of years of education**. As such, we circumvent the difficult comparability of different education systems and educational degrees.

A second set of independent variables refers to professional and societal activities. For the former, we use two variables: a **dummy variable** indicating whether or not a person currently conducts **paid work**, and a variable about the **number of working hours** in average week. In order to grasp the level of activity in society, we rely on a question in which respondents had to indicate for a number of **associations** whether they **belong and actively participate**, belong but do not participate, used to belong, or never belonged to it. These associations include trade unions, religious organisations, sport clubs, and other organisations.

A final group of independent variables concern the family status of a person. We take into account two elements: whether or not a person has a **partner** (with a further distinction based on the question whether or not this person shares a household with this partner), and the **number of children** of a person.

Country variables

Also at the country-level some variables could impact the willingness of citizens (and women in specific) to engage as party members. First, some societies are more tolerant and supportive for women’s public participation, while others are more conservative. The **Gender Inequality Index (GII)**, developed by the United Nations Development Program (2013), enables us to grasp this effect. This index calculates the disadvantages women encounter on three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment (including presence in parliament) and labor market. The index ranges from 0 (a situation in which women and men fare equally) to 1

(indicating that women fare as poorly as possible on the three dimensions). For each country, such an index is calculated.

A second possibly intervening variable is related to the party system: the **number of effective parties** in the political system. A proliferation of effective parties might stimulate party membership, but it might also have the opposite effect, as the political space becomes very crowded, which is likely to disincentivize party involvement (Whiteley, 2011). This will be measured by the effective number of parties that achieved at least 5 percent of the vote in the most recent legislative elections, using the *parlgov*-dataset (Döring & Manow, 2016)

Thirdly, we will also control for electoral system effects. Electoral disproportionality, stemming for instance from a single-member plurality system, is likely to reduce incentives for parties to campaign equally in all constituencies, which, as a consequence, reduces the incentives to recruit and retain activists. In contrast, in proportional electoral systems with less distortion, parties have an incentive to campaign everywhere, since every vote counts. By implication, party involvement will be lower in countries where electoral distortion is high (Whiteley, 2011). Besides, numerous studies have shown that countries with proportional representation (PR) systems have significantly more women in office, all else equal (Caul, 1999; Matland, 1998; Norris, 1985, 2004; Rule, 1987), which could also affect women's political ambition.⁴ Therefore, we include a variable indicating whether the electoral system is a PR list system, a plurality or majority system, or a mixed system.

Lastly, we will include a measure of democracy: the degree of civil liberties, calculated by the Freedom House. This variable, based on a checklist of 14 civil liberties, represents the levels of political rights and civil liberties in each country, on a scale from 1 (most free) to 7 (least free) (Isham, Kaufmann, & Pritchett, 1997). It is reasonable to argue that there will be less incentives for citizens to engage with and participate in politics and political parties in countries with lower levels of civil liberties. As we have excluded the most illiberal countries

⁴ There are also some party-level variables that could affect levels of women's political ambition. Van Haute et al. (2017) demonstrate, for example, that the construction of party membership (the mix of costs and benefits) affects the social mix among members. However, we decided not to integrate these party-level variables and to focus solely on individual and country-level variables.

(see above), this is a variable with only 2 categories (completely free, and almost completely free).

7. Empirical results

In this section, we present the results. We start with the comparison between female party members and women who are not member of a party. Results are presented in the first three columns of Table 1.

For H1a, we find an effect for political interest and (to a lesser extent) political knowledge, but not for education. The number of years of education does not have a significant effect on the chance of a woman to become party member, while the level of political interest and political knowledge increases the chance to be a party member. Women with higher levels of political interest and knowledge are more likely to join a party compared to women with lower levels of interest and knowledge.

H2a formulated expectations about professional and social activities. Again a confirmation of the hypothesis is found. Women who participate in civic organisations (including trade unions, religious organisations, sport clubs and other organisations) have a significantly higher chance to become party member. We should note, however, that especially for sport clubs the effect is less outspoken, and that in general, it is mostly the act of belonging that matters, rather than also being active within that organisation. Women who have a paid job are also more likely to join a party. The number of hours worked in a week has a positive, but non-significant effect. All this seems to prove that being active both in the professional and societal domain provides additional resources and networks to women that increases their chances to become party member.

H3a looked at the family situation of women in order to explain their propensity to be a party member. Here, we find no significant effects: both the partnership status and the number of children do not have an impact on the likelihood to join a political party.

Table 1: Logistic regression explaining the chance to be party member, for women and for men

	Women			Men		
	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Political knowledge (low-high)	,102 ^x	,059	1,107	,095 ^x	,050	1,100
Political interest (high-low)	-,700***	,082	,497	-,778***	,068	,459
Years of education	-,020	,014	,980	-,019 ^x	,011	,982
Trade union (ref=belong + participate)	***			***		
Belong but don't participate	-,135	,163	,874	-,395**	,136	,674
Used to belong	-,485*	,196	,616	-,464**	,153	,628
Never belonged to it	-,910***	,184	,402	-,869***	,145	,419
Relig. organ. (ref=belong + participate)	***			***		
Belong but don't participate	-,433**	,151	,649	-,186	,142	,831
Used to belong	-,771***	,212	,463	-,448**	,172	,639
Never belonged to it	-,885***	,164	,413	-,786***	,148	,456
Sport clubs (ref=belong + participate)	*			***		
Belong but don't participate	,238	,170	1,269	,370**	,132	1,448
Used to belong	-,310*	,148	,734	-,223 ^x	,117	,800
Never belonged to it	-,049	,165	,952	-,424**	,151	,655
Other organ. (ref=belong + participate)	***			***		
Belong but don't participate	-,173	,171	,841	-,127	,152	,881
Used to belong	-,400*	,161	,671	-,230 ^x	,133	,795
Never belonged to it	-,899***	,155	,407	-,671***	,126	,511
Paid work (1 = yes)	,664*	,274	1,942	,621*	,245	1,860
Hours worked weekly	,006	,005	1,006	,007 ^x	,004	1,007
Partnership (ref = yes + same household)				**		
Yes, but not same household	-,199	,244	,819	,100	,205	1,106
No partner	,007	,134	1,007	,404***	,121	1,498
Number of children	,060	,055	1,061	,006	,048	1,006
Age	,008	,005	1,008	,010*	,004	1,010
Gender Inequality Index	-,606	2,170	,546	,244	1,649	1,277
Effective number of parties	,132**	,042	1,141	,040	,036	1,041
Electoral system (ref = list PR system)	**			***		
Majority or plurality	,451	,297	1,570	-,030	,320	,970
Mixed system	-1,217***	,405	,296	-,944***	,241	,389
Civil liberties	,801***	,191	2,227	,716***	,160	2,047
Constant	-2,385	,690	,092	-1,751	,599	,174
Nagelkerke R ²	0,159			0,178		

^x < 0.1 ; * < 0.05 ; ** < 0.01 ; *** < 0.001

As for the control and the context variables, our results indicate that the effective number of parties, the electoral system and the civil liberties exhibit significant effects. It appears that in systems with a high number of parties, women are more likely to join a party. On the other hand, in mixed systems (combining elements of PR systems and majoritarian systems), women are less likely to be a party member than in PR system. Rather surprisingly there is no significant effect of majoritarian systems. This could be explained by the fact that part of this effect is absorbed by the effective number of parties (which is automatically lower in majoritarian systems). This expectation is confirmed when we run a model without the effective number of parties, which yields a strong and statistically significant effect of majoritarian systems (not in table). And finally, we do find that in countries with fewer civil liberties (indicated by a higher score on the index), women are also more likely to join a party. This finding is also puzzling, but could maybe be explained by the (almost) necessity to join a party in order to obtain things in this kind of countries and/or by the pervasiveness of the dominant party.

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) has a negative effect, meaning that countries who score lower on gender equality decrease the chance of women to be a party member, but this effect is not statistically significant.

The second part of the analysis of Table 1 focuses on men (last three columns), allowing us to compare between men and women and the factors influencing their party membership. Marked differences (which are indicated in grey in the table) will be discussed here.

We start again with H1b, which expects differences in the effects of political interest, political knowledge, and education between men and women. Table 1 demonstrates that political interest and political knowledge also have an effect on the chance of men to be a party member. Coefficients (and significance levels) are, however, almost the same as those for women, which indicates that the effect of these two factors is almost the same for men and women. This allows us to reject our hypothesis. Also the coefficient of years of education is similar (although for men it becomes slightly significant). Contrary to our expectations, this coefficient is negative, meaning that men (and also women) with a lower number of years of education are slightly more likely to be a party member. Anyway, also for the effect of education, no differences between men and women can be noted.

As for the professional and social activities (which are treated in H2b), differences between men and women are more outspoken, but more prominently for civic activities than for professional activities. The coefficients for the dummy variable paid work and for the number

of working hours are again strikingly similar for both men and women. For social organisations, two differences strike the eye. First of all, it appears that sport clubs are much more important in explaining party membership for men than for women. For women, only those that used to belong to sport clubs have a (slightly significant) lower chance to be a party member compared to women who actively participate in a sport club at the moment. For men, both former sport club members and people who have never been a member of a sports club are less likely to engage in political parties compared to active sport club members, and also even compared to passive sport club members. Secondly, especially for trade unions, it appears that simply joining a trade union is sufficient for women to increase the likelihood to be a party member, while among men, active trade union members have a higher chance to join a party than passive trade union members, who on their turn have a higher chance than former members and non-members.

We then turn to H3b about the family status of party members. For women, we found no effects of these variables on the chance to join a party. Rather surprisingly, we do find a significant effect for men: men who do not have a partner have a significantly higher chance to be a party member than men with a partner. For the number of children, however, there is no significant effect (which is similar for women).

As for the control and context variables, there is only one difference between the analysis of men and that of women: the effective number of parties is no longer significant when we conduct an analysis on men only.

8. Conclusions

The empirical observation that women are underrepresented in a large number of Western political institutions (including political parties) was the starting point of this paper. Political parties are crucial for the numeric representation of women in legislative and executive institutions and for the substantive representation of their interests. Parties continue to rely on their members to perform these functions. Moreover, party members are also a recruitment pool for potential office-holders, and linkage agents that have the ability to shape party policies through (increasingly) inclusive intra-party decision-making processes. Therefore, an analysis of which women join parties is highly relevant. Moreover, this might point towards potential barriers women encounter.

Using data from the 2014 ISSP Citizenship Survey, we examined the profile of female party members by focusing on individual factors, such as sociodemographic characteristics, levels of political interest and knowledge, family situation and professional and civic activities. Our comparison was twofold: between female party members and non-members and between male and female members. Drawing on the civic voluntarism model, the cognitive engagement model and the social capital model, we expected that female party members would have higher levels of political interest and knowledge and would be more professionally and civically active than non-members, and that having a partner and children reduced the likelihood of becoming a member. Simultaneously, we expected that these factors are less essential for male members compared to male non-members, and thus that female party members experience higher thresholds based on factors related to cognitive engagement and civic voluntarism than men.

Our results mainly confirm the first group of hypotheses. Female members' higher levels of political knowledge and interest, and their more active engagement in professional and civic activities stand out in comparison with female non-members. Surprisingly, and in contrast with previous studies, we find no effect related to women's family situation. Neither the partnership situation nor the number of children do have a significant effect. This could be an indication that traditional family structures constitute a smaller barrier than initially thought. For the second group of hypotheses, our findings are mixed. Our expectation that high levels of education, political interest and knowledge are more important for women than for men in order to become party member is not confirmed. With regards to professional activity, we again find no clear differences, and with regards to civic activities these differences are not always unequivocal. This is at odds with our claim that women play by a more demanding set of rules. Furthermore, and quite surprisingly, whereas the family situation had no statistically significant effect on the probability of women to become party members, we find that men who do not have a partner have a significant higher chance of being a party members. Turning to our contextual variables, a higher effective number of parties increases the chance for women to be a party members, whilst this effect does not hold for men.

In sum, our results demonstrate that all three models of political participation (i.e. the civic voluntarism model, the cognitive engagement model and the social capital model) prove to be helpful in explaining women's political engagement. Moreover, our findings point to the importance of supply-side factors, related to political sophistication (interest and knowledge)

and civic and professional activities, in explaining why some women join parties and others do not. However, these supply-side factors are not satisfactory to explain gendered differences in party membership, since these also apply to men. We should note, however, that at least some of these variables (interest and knowledge in particular) are based on self-evaluations of respondents. It might be (and there are indications for in the literature) that women are less confident about their own capabilities in politics, and systematically assess their interest and knowledge lower than men do (notwithstanding possessing equal capabilities). This might explain that although the same mechanisms are at work for men and women (interest and knowledge influencing the decision to join a party), the outcome is different.

Instead, further research should probably focus either on the intrinsic motivations of female and male party members themselves to become party member, or - given the impact of the effective number of parties on female party membership, but not on male party membership - on context factors such as the party and electoral system. To that end, we will further develop our statistical analyses by running multilevel models. This will allow us to better grasp the role of the institutional and cultural context in influencing female party membership.

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