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RESEARCH NOTE



WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN  
PARLIAMENT

The Role of Political Parties

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ABSTRACT

Parties vary substantially in the proportion of women they send to parliament. I examine how party characteristics affect women's representation in the parliamentary parties of 12 advanced industrial nations over time. Four party-level factors have some explanatory power: organizational structure, ideology, women party activists and gender-related candidate rules. A temporal sequence is proposed in which these factors and electoral rules directly and indirectly affect women's representation. Women party activists and gender-related rules are the more direct mechanisms affecting women's legislative representation. Further, New Left values and high levels of women activists within the party both enhance the likelihood that gender-related candidate rules will be implemented.

KEY WORDS ■ gender quotas ■ political parties ■ women's representation

Women are still under-represented in the parliaments of all advanced industrial democracies. In 1997 women averaged only 12 percent of the membership of national parliaments worldwide (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1997). Thus, women participate little in the national decision-making process and this under-representation also exists at lower levels of government. The severe under-representation of one-half of the population not only limits the

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diversity of parliaments but also contradicts one of the central tenets of representative democracy.

Virtually all prior comparative empirical research has focused on national-level patterns of women's parliamentary representation. A national-level analysis overlooks the fact that individual parties vary greatly in the proportion of women MPs within each nation. Parties differ in the number of women they nominate, where they rank women on party lists, and the proportion of women that they send to parliament. Parties are the real gatekeepers to elected office (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Norris, 1996). Because they play such an important role in the composition of parliament, we must understand how parties differ in encouraging or discouraging women's access to parliament.

This paper analyzes party-level variation in women's representation in parliament. By treating the party as the unit of analysis, rather than the nation, we can isolate the role of the party in promoting women. Prior research on this topic has concentrated on case studies of individual parties or national party systems. With a small number of cases it is difficult to disentangle the interrelated effects of party characteristics.

This study of parties in 12 advanced industrial democracies enables research to go beyond these prior studies and determine which party characteristics are conducive to the parliamentary representation of women. In addition, examining the representation of women can also provide insight into two larger questions. First, which party characteristics may enable parties to increase the descriptive representation of other under-represented groups? Second, how can those same characteristics influence a party's ability to adapt to political pressures generated from new social conflicts?

### Examining Party-Level Differences

This study systematically examines four general party characteristics that have been hypothesized to affect the proportion of women MPs: a party's organizational structure, its ideology, the proportion of women party activists, and party gender-related representation rules.

#### *Party Organization*

Three aspects of party organizational structure may influence women's representation: centralization, institutionalization and the location of candidate nomination.

The first component, *centralization*, describes the distribution of control over decision-making within the party hierarchy. Does a centralized or a decentralized party better promote women MPs? In a highly centralized party, leaders have the control to create openings for women – when they want to do so. Matland and Studlar (1996) theorize that centralized procedures allow party leaders to respond to pressures for greater

representation. In response to pressures from other parties and the electorate, party leaders may seek votes by broadening the diversity of party MPs. Therefore, one might expect that women will be better represented where the party leaders *can* effectively make an effort to promote women candidates through the use of particular party policies.

Further, a centralized party organization may be more accountable for its inclusion of female candidates. Groups seeking increased representation have a central target for their demands. If those demands are not met, the groups can fault the party leaders. In a more decentralized system each locality must be individually pressured to support women.

The degree of *institutionalization* determines the nature of the process by which MPs are recruited. A high degree of institutionalization denotes a more rule-orientated process (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995). Highly institutionalized parties provide all potential MPs, especially those without ties to the power center, with a set of understandable rules. Czudnowski (1975) reasons that the more institutionalized the selection process, the easier it is for any outsider to understand how the selection process works. Aspiring office-holders anticipate the criteria by which they will be judged. If the rules do not overtly discriminate against women, women might have a better chance in a highly institutionalized environment.

In addition, with institutionalization, party leaders have less leeway to bend the rules in favor of certain candidates. Weakly institutionalized parties tend to bias candidate nomination in favor of those who have accumulated 'personal political capital', resources based upon personal status or external group support (Guadagnini, 1993). Thus women, as newcomers to parties, may have fewer of these resources and might find it more difficult to catch up with established men.

Another important characteristic is the *level of nomination* for parliamentary candidates. One might hypothesize that localized nomination is more hospitable to women because they are more likely to work in community politics and may work their way up to the national level (Lovenduski and Norris, 1993). Such is the case in Swedish parties where local office is the springboard to national office (Sainsbury, 1993). In contrast, a centralized nomination pattern may provide a more structured internal party career ladder. Women who work in the party bureaucracy can be repaid with a party office. In general, this intra-party career ladder is characteristic of the labor parties in Europe (Czudnowski, 1975: 226).

### *Party Ideology*

Another explanatory factor is party ideology. Left parties may be more likely to support women's candidacies than right parties because left parties espouse egalitarian ideologies (Duverger, 1955; Beckwith, 1986: 1992). Traditionally the women's movement has been linked to left parties (Jenson, 1995). Matland and Studlar (1996: 27) suggest that parties on the left may

'feel a need to be sensitive to groups traditionally excluded from the circles of power' – and this may include women. To support this claim, Matland (1993) finds that leftist parties in Norway began to send higher percentages of women to parliament than rightist parties in the 1980s. Similarly, Caul (1997) finds that a history of left parties in government is strongly associated with high levels of women in parliament.

Lovenduski and Norris (1993) contend that while left ideology may once have been a strong influence on women's parliamentary representation it is no longer as strong. Left parties may no longer be the only parties to support women because such support spreads across the ideological spectrum. Matland and Studlar (1996) support this diffusion of support for female candidates across parties in the same nation with case studies of Norway and Canada. Rule (1987) theorizes that women are less likely to be nominated by rightist parties because they hold a more traditional view of women's roles, but finds weak evidence in her national-level model. Therefore, the impact of party ideology on women's representation must be examined over time.

In addition, the traditional unidimensional left-right ideological continuum may be too simple to describe how ideology affects women's representation. The lines of political conflict were once based upon 'Old Politics' cleavages of class conflict: Old Left parties, such as labor and socialist, are orientated toward the concerns of the working class; and Old Right parties are orientated toward business interests. The rise of a 'New Politics' cleavage adds a new dimension to our conceptualization of ideology. 'This New Politics dimension involves conflict over a new set of issues: environmental quality, alternative lifestyles, *minority rights*, participation, and *social equality*' (Dalton, 1986: 153; emphasis added). New Left parties may be even more closely linked to the women's movement than are the Old Left parties (Kitschelt, 1989; Jenson, 1995).

The year a party enters the political system may be another measure of 'newness' that affects the representation of women. Single-nation evidence suggests that new parties may be more supportive of female candidacies. For example, the newest Dutch party, Groen Links, has the highest proportion of women of all Dutch parties (Leijenaar, 1993). New parties may be more likely to open their doors to a less powerful group such as women and to encourage them to run for office. New parties may be more likely to hold postmaterialist values such as equality and increased internal democracy (Dalton, 1991). In addition, new parties have few entrenched power-holders and are thus open to newcomers because no incumbents will be deposed in the process. Norris (1996) thus notes new parties may be 'more receptive to entry by minority groups than traditional parties'.

### *Women Activists*

During the 1970s, increasing numbers of women took their demands for increased participation to the political parties. For instance, Lovenduski and

Norris (1993) suggest that women's participation in parties at the grassroots level has increased to rival men's in recent years in Sweden and Germany.

Once women began to enter the lower party ranks, they could directly increase pressure for representation at the highest level – parliament. In other words, women's participation inside the party as party activists at the local level, as organizers of intra-party women's groups, and as internal office-holders should buoy up women's power in the party. This power should increase women's opportunities to lobby for further support of women as candidates for parliament. Women's party activity also creates a new pool of politically experienced women. In studying Swedish parties, Sainsbury (1993) explained how women's direct activity within parties increased the number of women MPs. Thus, those parties with higher proportions of women activists may display correspondingly high proportions of women MPs.

### *Party Rules*

Parties can increase the proportion of nominated female candidates by creating formal rules that prescribe a certain proportion of women among the party's candidates. Such direct action can take the form of a quota (mandated percentages of women) or a target (recommended percentages of women). Implementation of gender quotas or targets by parties not only reflects the acceptance that gender under-representation is a problem, it also demonstrates a willingness to act to fix the problem.

Gender goals and quotas within parties first emerged in the late 1970s. The number of parties implementing these goals and quotas rose throughout the 1980s (Caul, 1997). In advanced industrial societies, the number of parties establishing quotas and targets doubled between 1975 and 1985. Matland (1993) gives evidence of the strong and rapid effect of gender quotas adopted by the Norwegian Labor Party in 1983. The percentage of women in the party delegation increased from 33 in 1981 to 51 by 1989. Germany is another exemplar for the strong impact of party-level gender quotas (Kolinsky, 1989, 1993). In summary, the parties that implement formal rules to promote women's representation should directly increase the number of females nominated.

Party organization and ideology may influence whether there are gender rules for candidates. Party organization affects a party's capacity to make enforceable rules concerning equal representation of candidates. For example, in the USA the weak and decentralized parties are unlikely to attempt to establish candidate quotas because they lack any mechanism to enforce them. Party ideology is likely to affect whether or not parties see fit to adopt quotas. A leftist party might reason that equal opportunity is not enough to help severely under-represented groups, while more conservative parties may extend their 'hands-off' approach to the economy to the gender of party candidates (Lovenduski and Norris, 1993: 320).

### *Electoral System*

The focus of this research is on party-level differences. However, the electoral system remains an integral component in explaining women's representation. Several studies have established that a nation's electoral system strongly influences women's representation in national legislatures. Party-list PR systems produce more women in parliament than plurality systems (Duverger, 1955; Lakeman, 1994). The standard explanation is that parties in PR systems are more likely to add women to the list in order to broaden their appeal and balance the ticket. The perceived electoral risk with a female candidate decreases when a female is part of a group, rather than the sole candidate.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis is based on 68 parties in 12 advanced industrial democracies.<sup>1</sup> This study is limited to the USA and West European nations because these are the main focus of the established cross-national party literature. A party was included in the study if it gained at least one seat in parliament at any one of the three time points under review. The threshold for inclusion is low in order to incorporate new and small parties which are expected to have some special characteristics that are conducive to promoting female candidates.

The participation of women is examined at three points in time: 1975, 1985 and 1989. These were selected because it was at the beginning of this time frame that women increased pressures for greater political representation. By 1975, attention had been called to the dearth of women MPs in advanced industrial democracies. By 1985, some parties had substantially increased their level of women's representation. Finally, by 1989, the last data point available in Katz and Mair's (1992) study, it is possible to evaluate how new parties and new rules for gender parity affect party levels of women's representation.

### **Women MPs**

Table 1 presents the percentage of women by party in the national parliaments in 1975, 1985 and 1989, as well as the percentage point difference between 1975 and 1989.<sup>2</sup> The data show that the percentage of women increases over time: from 12 percent in 1975 to 19 percent in 1985 and 23 percent in 1989. There has been progress, but it has been limited.

It is also readily apparent that there are substantial variations among parties in the percentage of women they send to parliament. For example, the Norwegian Labor Party had 19, 42 and 50 percent women MPs in 1975,

1985 and 1989, respectively. In stark contrast, Fianna Fáil of Ireland had 1, 6 and 6 percent women MPs in the same three years. Within Italy, the Communists sent 18, 19 and 32 percent female delegations to the national legislature, while the Liberal Party sent no women in any year. Similar variation exists within several nations.

Taking into account that basic party characteristics are fairly stable, a party's proportion of female MPs should be strongly correlated with the previous time point. Indeed, the data reveal that the parties that elect the highest proportion of women candidates in 1975 are among the highest in this respect at the next two time points. The correlation between the percentage of women MPs in 1975 and 1985 is .43.; the correlation between 1985 and 1989 is .69 ( $p < .05$  in all cases).

## Predicting the Representation of Women

### *Party Organization*

Table 2 displays all the bivariate relationships between measures of party characteristics and the percentage of women MPs. The first hypothesis is that a more highly centralized party will better promote women MPs.<sup>3</sup> The index of membership centralization is moderately related to women MPs in each year, yet the leadership index of centralization is only positively related to women MPs in 1975. More highly centralized parties appear only slightly more likely to have women MPs. A second set of party characteristics measures the degree of institutionalization. More highly institutionalized parties are in fact more likely to elect women to office at each time point. A more specific measure of party centralization is the pattern of candidate nomination. 'Candidate nomination level' scores nomination at the local level as 1 and nomination at other levels as 2.<sup>4</sup> In 1985 and 1989, candidate nomination at the local level is associated with higher percentages of women MPs. This suggests that centralized control over nomination is *not* conducive to women's representation.

### *Party Ideology*

Leftist parties may be more supportive of gender equality than rightist parties. As a first test of this idea, Figure 1 displays the average percentage of women MPs for different ideological families of parties in 1989. Overall, the chart supports the hypothesis. On the whole, the party types to the left have higher percentages of women MPs than the parties to the right. Environmental and communist parties average the highest percentages of women. In stark contrast, the discontent and ultra-right parties send virtually no women to parliament. Surprisingly, the conservative and rural parties both have more women MPs on average than the left socialist parties.

Table 1. Women MPs by party (%)

<i>Country and Party</i>	<i>1975</i>	<i>1985</i>	<i>1989</i>	<i>Difference 1975–89<sup>a</sup></i>
<b>Austria</b>				
People's Party (OVP)	6	9	12	+ 6
Freedom Party (FPO)	0	16	21	+21
Greens (GA)	–	12	50	+50
Socialist Party (SPO)	9	12	21	+12
<b>Belgium</b>				
Christian People's (CVP)	12	18	23	+11
Socialist (Flemish) (BSP)	3	6	11	+8
Liberty (Flemish) (PVV)	0	5	4	+4
People's Union (VU)	9	6	20	+11
Ecology (Flemish) (AGA)	–	50	14	+36
<b>Denmark</b>				
Socialist People's (SF)	22	43	33	+11
Social Democrats (SD)	11	18	33	+22
Social Liberals (RV)	31	20	50	+19
Christian People's (KRF)	33	20	25	– 8
Center Democrats (CD)	0	38	44	+44
Liberal (V)	17	27	14	–3
Conservative (KF)	20	31	31	+11
Progress Party (KRP)	13	17	44	+31
<b>Finland</b>				
People's Democratic (SKDL)	38	31	26	– 12
Social Democratic (SPD)	24	32	46	+22
Center Party (KESK)	18	28	27	+ 9
Swedish People's (SFP)	22	8	25	+ 3
National Coalition (KOK)	25	42	50	+25
<b>Germany</b>				
Social Democratic (SPD)	5	10	27	+22
Christian Democratic (CDU)	8	7	15	+ 7
Christian Social Union (CSU)	2	6	10	+ 8
Free Democratic (FDP)	10	9	20	+10
Greens (G)	–	20	38	+18
<b>Ireland</b>				
Worker's Party (WP)	0	0	0	0
Labour (LAB)	5	7	0	–5
Fianna Fáil (FF)	1	3	6	+5
Fine Gael (FG)	2	8	10	+8
Progressive Democrats (PD)	–	29	33	+4
Greens (G)	–	0	0	0
<b>Italy</b>				
Proletarian Democrats (DP)	17	0	25	+8
Communist Party (PCI)	18	19	32	+14
Socialist Party (PSI)	1	1	5	+4
Christian Democracy (DC)	3	3	5	+2
Republican Party (PRI)	7	0	0	–7
Liberal Party (PLI)	0	0	0	0
Social Movement (MSI)	3	5	3	0
Radical Party (PR)	50	9	23	–27
Greens (VER)	–	–	46	–



## CAUL: WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT

Table 1. continued

<i>Country and Party</i>	<i>1975</i>	<i>1985</i>	<i>1989</i>	<i>Difference 1975-89<sup>a</sup></i>
Netherlands				
Communist Party (CPN)	0	67	-	-
Labour Party (PvdA)	17	21	29	+12
Pacifist Socialist (PSP)	0	33	-	-
Radical Political (PPR)	33	50	-	-
Christian Democrats (CDA)	10	16	13	+3
Democrats '66 (D'66)	25	67	33	+8
People's Party (VVD)	18	19	18	0
Green Left (GL)	-	-	50	-
Norway				
Socialist People's (SV)	19	50	41	+22
Labour Party (DNA)	19	42	50	+31
Center Party (SP)	14	17	27	+13
Christian People's (KRF)	5	25	29	+24
Liberals (V)	0	-	-	-
Conservatives (H)	17	30	24	+7
Progress (FRP)	0	0	0	0
Sweden				
Communist Party (VPK)	21	16	38	+17
Social Democratic Worker (S)	23	34	40	+17
Center Party (C)	12	32	36	+24
People's Party (FP)	15	39	43	+28
Right Party (M)	16	22	30	+14
Environmental (MPG)	-	-	38	-
UK				
Labour (LAB)	5	5	9	+4
Liberal/Liberal Democrats (LIB/SDL)	0	0	9	+9
Conservatives (CON)	3	3	5	+2
USA				
Democrats (DEM)	6	5	8	+2
Republicans (REP)	2	6	5	+3
Mean	12	19	23	+11
Standard deviation	11	18	16	

Source: Katz and Mair (1992)

<sup>a</sup> If no data are available for 1975, then this is the percentage point difference between 1985 and 1989.

But party type is an extremely blunt indicator of ideology. In order to measure party ideology rather than party labels, voter self-placement on the left-right ideological continuum is used. The moderately strong and statistically significant correlations between leftist self-location and percentage of women MPs supports the hypothesis (Table 2).

Separate measures of Old Politics and New Politics ideology were also collected.<sup>5</sup> The correlations in Table 2 suggest that the more leftist the party, on old or new cleavages, the more women MPs the party tends to have. The most striking finding is that the summary indices for the New Politics

**Table 2.** Bivariate correlations among party characteristics and women's representation

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Percentage of women MPs</i>		
	1975	1985	1989
Party organization			
Leadership centralization	.21	.07	-.08
Membership centralization	.22	.15	.20
Index of institutionalization	.22	.23*	.25*
Candidate nomination level	-.18	-.29**	-.22*
Party ideology			
Left self-location	.35**	.25*	.37***
Old left position	.18	.27*	.28**
New left position	.31***	.28**	.33**
'Newness' (year party founded)	.07	.08	.03
Women party activists			
National executive	.32*	.47**	.42***
Middle-level elites	.35*	.55**	.47**
Local activists	.35	.48**	.40*
Party rules			
1975	.19	.29**	.25*
1985	—	.02	.25*
1989	—	—	.27**
Electoral system			
Party-list PR system	.36**	.36**	.46**

\*\*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \* $p < .10$ 

dimension yield higher correlations than the Old Politics indices. Further, there is little support for the diffusion of women's representation across the ideological spectrum. Ideology does not play a stronger role in 1975 than in 1985 or 1989. The correlations for the Old Politics indices actually grow stronger over time. This moderate strengthening of the Old Politics indicator suggests that Old Left parties may have responded in the late 1980s to New Left parties' efforts to promote women MPs in the early 1980s.

A related expectation is that the 'newness' of the party is positively associated with women's representation. The correlation between the year a party was founded and the percentage of women MPs is weak in each case. Newer parties do not appear to be more hospitable to women.

### *Women Activists*

With more women active at different levels within a party, the party may send more women to the national legislature. The percentage of women is

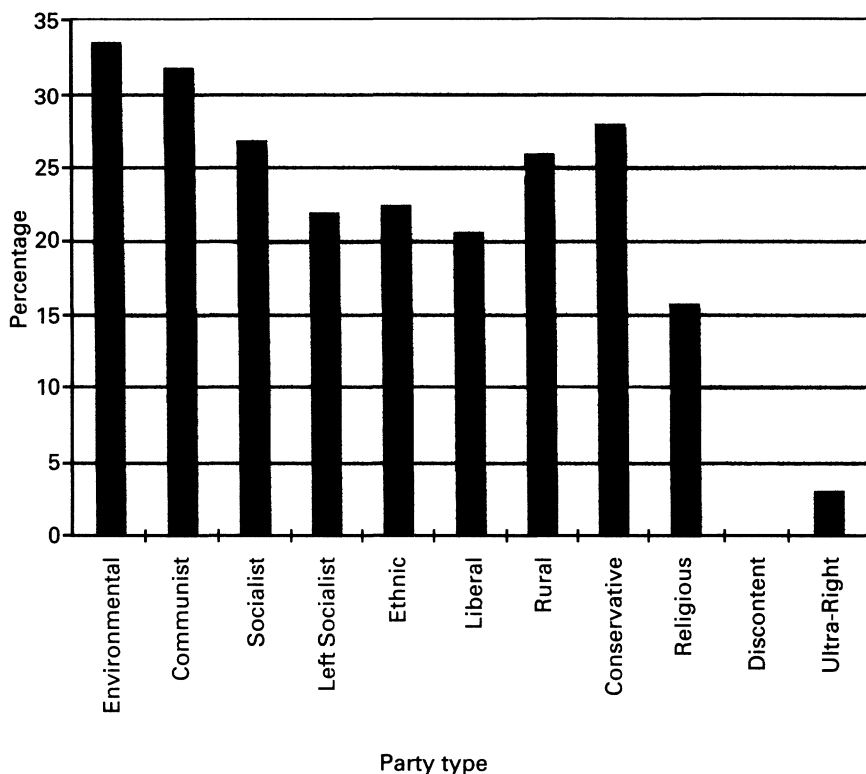


Figure 1. Women MPs by party type (average percentage)

examined at three internal levels within the party: representation on the party's national executive, among middle-level elites, and among local party activists.

The first striking finding is that the average percentage of women party activists at the local level is lower than the average percentage of women who are middle-level party elites. Further, both these averages are lower than the percentage of women on the national executive in 1975, 1985 or 1989! The average percentage of women local activists is 12 while among the middle-level elites it is 14 percent. The average proportion of women on party national executives is 16 in 1975, 24 in 1985 and, by 1989, the average grows to 27 percent. Parties appear to have more women at the top of the internal party ranks than at the lower-level elite positions. This finding violates Putnam's supposed 'law of increasing disproportion', which would imply that the representation of women should be lower at higher organization levels (Putnam, 1976).

Table 2 shows that in each year there is a moderately strong and statistically significant relationship between the level of women in the party national executive and its level of MPs. The correlations grow stronger and

more significant over time. This finding reveals a lag effect. In a party where there is a higher proportion of women on the national executive in 1975, by the next time point there is a higher percentage of women in parliament. In sum, women at upper levels within the party appears to encourage more women in parliament.

A high level of women working within the party ranks may also increase the party's promotion of female candidates. The middle-level elite indicators measure the percentage of women party elites who are delegates at 1977 national party conferences and the percentage of women working as local activists. The correlations suggest that high levels of women delegates and local activists also lead to high levels of women office-holders in later years.

### *Party Rules*

Party rules range from strict quotas to softer recommendations for a certain proportion of women candidates. Accordingly, parties with explicit quotas score 2 points, while parties with targets score 1, and parties with no gender rules score zero. Each party was scored in this manner in 1975, 1985 and 1989.

Only three out of our 68 parties had any candidate gender goals or quotas in 1975. The number of parties with candidate gender rules grows by 1985, reaching its highest level in 1989 at 21 out of 68 parties. In 1989, those parties that have implemented candidate gender rules average 28 percent women in their delegation to parliament, while those parties without any form of gender rules average 22 percent women.

As one might expect, the influence of party candidate gender rules on the percentage of women MPs has a lagged effect. For candidate gender rules adopted in 1975 there is a low correlation in 1975 itself, and a higher and significant correlation in both 1985 and 1989. For those rules adopted by 1985 there is a weak positive correlation with MPs in 1985 itself. However, by 1989 the rules adopted in 1985 seem to have had their impact. The effects of the quotas instituted in the late 1980s may not show up until the mid-1990s.

### *Electoral Rules*

As hypothesized earlier, parties in party-list PR electoral systems may have higher levels of women in their delegation to parliament. Parties in a party-list PR system scored 1 and parties in any other type of system scored zero. The resulting correlations reveal that parties embedded in party-list PR electoral rules do in fact send more women to parliament.

### **Multivariate Analysis**

There are strong relationships for variables in each of the four categories. The next goal is to determine which characteristics work best together to

maximize women's representation. To avoid possible multicollinearity problems, the strongest independent variables from each of the five categories were selected and entered into a multivariate regression analysis. From the party organization variables, both the index of institutionalization and the level of candidate nomination were selected as a measures of party centralization.<sup>6</sup> From the party ideology variables, the New Politics index emerged as the strongest. From among the women activist indicators, the percentage of women on the national executive in 1985 was selected. In addition, the presence of rules in 1985 was selected.<sup>7</sup> The lagged variables were utilized as predictors because the bivariate relationships suggest that it takes time for these variables to have their desired impact. Finally, the type of electoral system in 1989 is included.

### *Causal Flow Chart*

These party characteristics are linked.<sup>8</sup> Their combined impact on women's representation may not be simultaneous, but rather linked in a chain of favorable influences. Figure 2 displays the manner in which one might hypothesize that these party characteristics work together to influence

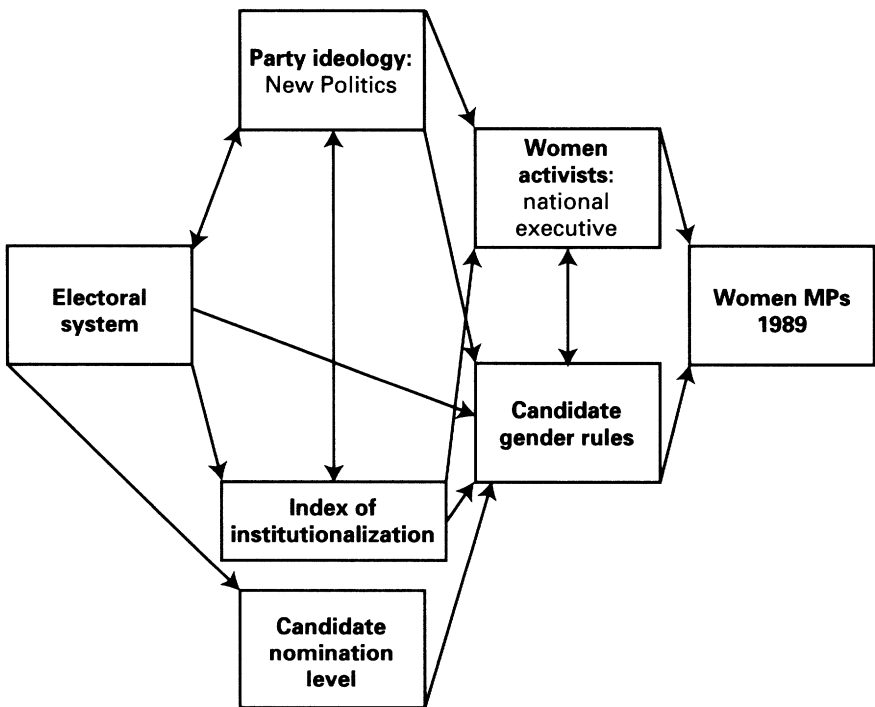


Figure 2. Party-level influences on women's representation: a casual model

women's representation. The broader and indirect party influences on women's representation lie toward the left and the direct influences lie closer to women's representation. The first and broadest influence is the electoral rules in which the parties are embedded. The electoral system should be linked to the ideologies of the parties and should also shape the internal organization of those parties. Specifically, a party-list PR system should increase a party's ability to adopt candidate rules because achieving gender balance on a list should be more feasible than mandating that one particular seat be filled by either gender.

Moving through the causal process, parties with New Left values have more women on their national executives and also should be willing to adopt candidate gender rules. In addition, a more highly institutionalized party may nominate more women to a rule-making body such as the national executive and is more apt to adopt and implement formal rules to help promote women. Also, the level of candidate nomination should have an impact on the ability of the party to implement those candidate rules.

At the next level, a reciprocal relationship may exist between the two most direct influences.<sup>9</sup> Parties may adopt internal gender targets and quotas for party decision-making bodies, such as the national executive. In turn, the presence of women on the national executive may encourage the adoption of candidate rules; women active at high levels within the party can add the direct pressure necessary to create and implement gender quotas and goals. Finally, women on the national executive and candidate rules may both have a direct and significant impact on the level of women in parliament.

### *Estimating the Model*

Table 3 displays the results of multivariate analyses in 1989.<sup>10</sup> The first model predicts the level of women activists on the national executive of each party in 1989.<sup>11</sup> The resulting equation is as follows:

$$\text{Activists} = .28 - .02(\text{Inst.}) - .05(\text{Nom.}) - .52(\text{NewPol.}) + .09(\text{ES})$$

The only strong and significant indicator in this model is the New Politics index. Hence, in 1989 a party's New Left orientation alone best predicts its level of women activists.

The second model predicts the presence of candidate gender rules in 1989 and the resulting equation is:

$$\text{Rules} = -.28(\text{Inst.}) + .11(\text{Nom.}) - .27(\text{NewPol.}) + .18(\text{ES}) + .43(\text{Act.})$$

The index of institutionalization, the index of New Politics and the level of women activists all predict the presence of candidate rules. Yet the indicator for women activists is the strongest. In the initial causal flowchart we

Table 3. Multivariate analyses 1989

<i>Party-level measures</i>	<i>Multivariate models to predict:</i>		
	<i>Women activists</i>	<i>Candidate rules</i>	<i>Women MPs</i>
Index of institutionalization	-.02	-.28**	.01
Higher-level candidate nomination	-.05	.11	-.14
New left position	-.52***	-.27*	-.13
PR electoral system	.09	.18	.35***
Women activists	—	.43***	.39***
Candidate gender rules	—	—	.06
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.21	.30	.41

Note: Table entries are standardized regression coefficients. \*\*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \* $p < .10$

expected that high levels of New Left values and women on the national executive would advance the adoption of gender rules. It was previously hypothesized that parties with *high* levels of institutionalization would be more likely to adopt these rules. However, according to this multivariate model, once the other variables are controlled for, parties with *low* levels of institutionalization tend to have gender-related rules. In response, one might hypothesize that if candidate gender rules are largely a function of women on the national executive and their efforts to pressure the party, then rule-orientated parties are less flexible and more focused upon the party's program and thus reluctant to adopt measures to promote women.

The third model finally predicts the level of women MPs in 1989. The formula for the model is:

$$\text{MPs} = .01(\text{Inst.}) - .14(\text{Nom.}) - .13(\text{NewPol.}) - .35(\text{ES}) + .39(\text{Act.}) + .39(\text{Rules})$$

The type of electoral system and women activists both have a direct impact on the level of women MPs.

Comparing the models, while the impact of a party-list PR electoral system appears limited to the final outcome of women MPs, a high level of women activists on the national executive is important both to the implementation of candidate rules and to the level of women MPs directly. In contrast, the impact of the index of New Politics is mediated by the women activists variable. In sum, New Left values are important in elevating women within the party's internal hierarchy. Then, women use their new power to push for candidate gender rules and to promote women MPs.

According to the theoretical model, candidate gender rules should be a powerful influence on women's representation.<sup>12</sup> On the one hand, it is possible that gender goals and quotas do not have the strong effect that we had

hypothesized. Upon close inspection of the data over time, of the parties with candidate gender rules in 1985, five out of the 15 decline or remain the same in their proportion of women MPs from 1985 to 1989. On the other hand, and based on the success of the lagged candidate gender rules variable in the bivariate analysis, one expects that gender quotas and targets take time to realize their full impact. It was not until the mid-1980s that many parties began adopting such candidate gender rules. As such, the effects of these new rules might not be visible until the 1990s.

## Conclusions

The women's movement and rising levels of women's political participation have increased the pressure on parties to send more women to parliament. These findings reveal that certain party characteristics actually influence party-level variation in women's representation. High levels of institutionalization, a localized level of candidate nomination, and leftist and postmaterialist values all individually enable parties to increase the representation of women. Further, high levels of women working at internal party offices and the presence of formal rules designed to increase the number of women MPs are both conducive to women's representation.

It appears that women's party activism, especially at the high levels, triggers the other factors, such as quota rules, that facilitate women's representation in parliament. The finding that women's party activism is integral is especially encouraging in an era when women's activity in party politics has increased substantially. Not only can women party activists pressure the party for women's representation in parliamentary office, activists can also institutionalize the gains made by pressing to implement rules that call for guaranteed proportions of female candidates.

These findings have larger implications for party adaptation. The same party-level characteristics that are conducive to women's representation may also help other traditionally under-represented groups, such as ethnic minorities and environmentalists. Party-level characteristics that influence the manner in which parties adapt to new social pressure can be broken down into two groups: characteristics that increase the likelihood parties will want to promote an under-represented group and characteristics that enable parties to increase their proportion of MPs directly. *First, parties with New Left values of social equality and minority representation are more likely to see the need to promote traditionally under-represented groups within the party.* Second, New Left values, low levels of institutionalization and the presence of women party activists in high-level positions together *help parties adapt* by increasing the likelihood parties will implement new rules to promote women candidates.

Importantly, the finding that women's activism within the party is a significant factor emphasizes the importance of direct action. The evidence



indicates that under-represented groups can increase their representation through party channels. Environmentalists, racial and ethnic minorities and citizen movements more generally might find descriptive representation by establishing themselves within the internal ranks of parties. The internal organization of these parties is secondary to the presence of activists who can directly push for increased representation and who themselves can be recruited for national office. Specifically, activists at high levels of office within the party, such as the National Executive, have the most power to press for increased representation and new candidate rules.

Yet it is vital that activism interacts with ideology. Leftist (especially New Left) parties appear the most likely to welcome activists from under-represented groups. Hence, efforts may be most effectively aimed at those parties that are already receptive to claims for equal representation. The traditional relationship shared between leftist parties and the women's movement on women's issues certainly extends to women's representation in parliament. And this relationship is even stronger in those parties with New Left or postmaterialist values.

National-level research has identified structural factors that influence under-representation, most specifically the type of electoral system. These structural factors are difficult to change. However, there are opportunities for activists to effect change, even through conventional channels of participation. Because parties are vote-seeking organizations they can be pressured to promote minority candidates. As the gatekeepers to parliamentary office, the parties' efforts can directly increase the proportion of under-represented groups in parliament.

## Notes

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- 1 The nations included in this study are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the UK and the USA.
- 2 The percentage of women among the party MPs and among candidates in 1975, 1985 and 1989, and the presence of gender-related party quotas were collected from Katz and Mair (1992).
- 3 The index of institutionalization measures a party's programmatic orientation. All the party organization variables, plus party type, self-location, and women on the national executive are collected from Lane and Ersson (1991). In order to uncover which measures tapped underlying sub-characteristics, the groupings of items under party organization, ideology and women activists were factor analyzed using a principal components analysis involving the extraction of a varying number of factors, corresponding to each grouping of items. The only

- set of indicators that are intended to measure the same characteristic, but do not appear to tap the same dimension, are Lane and Ersson's summary index of integration (centralization) items. Therefore, I present the factor scores from each of these dimensions as the leadership and membership indices of centralization.
- 4 Candidate nomination level is taken from Lane and Ersson (1991) and these scores are verified and supplemented with the information on candidate selection in Gallagher (1995), Gallagher and Marsh (1988) and Norris (1996).
  - 5 The Old and New Politics indices were created from scores given to parties on select issues from Laver and Hunt (1992). The first two issues, which make up the Old Politics index, are 'Increase Public Services vs Cut Taxes' and 'Public Ownership vs Anti'. The third and fourth issues make up the New Politics issues: 'Pro-Permissive Social Policy vs Anti' measures a party's position on abortion and homosexual law; and 'Environment vs Growth' measures the party's support of protection of the environment, even at a cost to economic growth. I have selected the elite-level adjusted scores on these issues because we are interested in the attitudes of party elites.
  - 6 There are two measures from the centralization category – the index of institutionalization and the level of candidate nomination – because both have equally strong correlations and it is therefore difficult to say which is *the* strongest indicator. I have also run the same multivariate analyses using only one or the other and the results are similar to the model with both.
  - 7 When lagged variables are replaced by indicators from 1989 the models change very little. The same predictors remain strong in each model. However, the explained adjusted variance drops.
  - 8 Intercorrelation exists among the party characteristics. The New Politics index is strongly associated with the percentage of women on the national executive, and with the index of institutionalization. Further, the level of women on the national executive has a moderate relationship with the index of institutionalization. Strikingly, the presence of candidate rules strongly correlates with the New Politics index, the level of women on the national executive and the type of electoral system.
  - 9 It is difficult to determine the sequence of the relationship between gender party rules and women party activists. From the case study literature it appears that women party activists began pressuring parties to open their hierarchies to women, and as more women gained clout within the party, changes occurred at even higher levels. Many parties set aside seats on the national executive for a representative of the women's wing. Perhaps these women used their position to press for opportunities for women candidates.
  - 10 I ran the same models for both 1975 and 1985. Overall, both the 1975 and 1985 models are very similar to the 1989 models.
  - 11 The models are estimated with a pairwise deletion of missing data because there are missing scores on some indicators. When the same multiple regressions are run with a listwise deletion of missing data the explained adjusted variance on each equation increases considerably.
  - 12 Candidate gender rules is a highly intercorrelated indicator (as indicated by its strong correlations with several indicators and by its low tolerance levels in the multivariate regression). Therefore, its impact may be reduced by multicollinearity problems.

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