

Abstract

Prior to any legislative election, parties must decide on a set of candidates among which voters can choose at the ballot. The process by which parties nominate candidates shapes attitudes and behavioral patterns of gatekeepers in traceable ways and determines the composition of lists. In consequence, candidate selection mechanisms have far-reaching consequences. They structure the perception and electoral success of each political party as candidates define to large extents the demographical, geographical, and ideological characteristics of the organization. In this dissertation, I argue that the institutional set-up guiding this nomination processes does not only influence the share of women on ballots-descriptive representation-but also whether aspirants reflecting the preferences of female citizens are nominated-substantive representation. The incentives of political gatekeepers to socially and ideologically balance lists hinge on the mode with which parties select their candidates.

This dissertation demonstrates that differences in selection methods affect the descriptive and substantive representation of women based on a comparative study analyzing the recruitment process in a large set of European countries, using a common theoretical framework and covering all aspects of candidate selection. In the cross-national and cross-party comparisons drawing mostly on self-collected original data, I investigate the inclusiveness of the selectorate and the territorial centralization of the decision-making. The first study concentrates on women's presence on lists and reveals that exclusive and centralized procedures results in their lower numbers. Men's domination in national networks and party executives' reliance on traditionally male candidate pools go hand in hand with women's discrimination during the selection procedures. Shifting the focus to candidates' perceptions about their likelihood to win the election echoes these findings. Exclusive and centralized selection mechanisms decrease women's probability to feel confident in their chances to win a mandate compared to men selected by the same process. This result indicates that party leaders and national bodies do not support women's placement on top positions of lists or their efforts during the campaign to the same extent as men's. Comparing the level of correspondence between policy positions of female citizens and parties, the last empirical chapter provides further evidence for the diverging incentives of gatekeepers. Exclusive nominations enhance the extent to which parties represent women's preferences. While leaders might nominate male candidates from their own circles, they are aware that they need the support of the wider electorate to ensure their political survival and have an interest in balancing lists ideologically. This dissertation thus provides new evidence for the gendered consequences of political recruitment and implies that previous research has missed an important link between candidate selection and the substantive representation of women.

Keywords: candidate selection mechanisms, women, descriptive representation, substantive, comparative politics.