"Righting" Conventional Wisdom: Women and Right Parties in Established Democracies

Diana Z. O'Brien
Associate Professor of Political Science
Texas A&M University

Abstract

Parties are the key actors shaping women's representation in advanced parliamentary democracies. Based on traditional patterns of feminist organizing, conventional wisdom suggests that parties of the left are the strongest advocates for women. Despite the prevalence of this claim, a burgeoning body of work indicates that parties on the right can–and often do–seek to represent women. To address these competing narratives, this paper offers the first large-N, party-level study of women's descriptive and substantive representation over place and time. The results suggest that party ideology continues to affect women's representation: right parties lag behind their left counterparts with respect to women's presence in elected office, and right and left parties address women differently on their platforms. At the same time, there is significant heterogeneity among right parties. Christian democrats, for example, are much more likely than conservatives to adopt voluntary gender quotas and make policy claims on behalf of women. The traditional left-right distinction is thus too coarse to explain party behavior in these states.

ONLINE APPENDIX

This appendix provides supplementary information about the empirical analyses presented in the paper. It explains how I defined party family and includes a full list of organizations included in the analyses. It provides plots of women's descriptive and substantive representation by party family and offers an extended description of each of the statistical models. It also includes a full list of the terms included in the dictionary used to construct the measure of substantive representation, as well as the subsets of terms used to create the outcome variables in Models 7 through 11. Finally, it provides an extended description of the key explanatory covariate (party family) and the control variables.

Defining Party Families

The Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP) provides the most widely used classification scheme for grouping parties into families. The CMP identifies 10 distinct party families: AGR–agrarian parties; COM–socialist parties; CON–conservative parties; ECO–ecological parties; ETH–tthnic and regional parties; LIB–liberal parties; NAT–nationalist parities; SOC–social democratic parties; SIP–special issue parties. The coding frame also accounts for electoral alliances of diverse origin without dominant party.

Most parties considered in this study are classified based on their membership in international organizations, including international party groups and factions in the European Parliament. For parties that do not participate in international organizations, classification is based on Arthur Banks' *Political Handbook of the World* (**?**, 158-9).

The CMP party family codes are fixed and do not vary over time. This is an intentional choice, as it allows scholars to observe changes in the average ideological position of each party family across elections. For my purposes, it allows me to observe patterns in descriptive and substantive representation across place and time.

Parties Included in Analyses

Table 1: Parties Included in Descriptive Representation Analyses (Models 1–5)

Party Family	Country	Political Party
Greens	Austria	Green Party
	Finland	Green League (VIHR)
	Ireland	Green Party
	New Zealand	Green Party
	Sweden	Greens (MP)
Communists	Denmark	Socialist People's Party (SF)
	Finland	Finish People's Democratic Union (SKDL)
	Finland	Left Alliance (VAS)
	Japan	Japan Communist Party (JCP)
	Sweden	Communist Party/Left Party (SKP/VKP/Vp)
Social Democrats	Australia	Australian Labor Party (ALP)
	Austria	Social Democratic Party (SPO)
	Canada	New Democratic Party (NDP)
	Denmark	Centre Democrats (CD)
	Denmark	Social Democrats (Sd)
	Finland	Social Democratic Party (SSDP)
	Germany	Social Democratic Party (SPD)
	Ireland	Labour Party (Lab)
	Japan	Democratic Socialist Party (DSP)
	Japan	Japan Socialist Party/Social Democratic Party (JSP/SDP)
	Japan	Socialist Democratic Federation (SDF)
	Netherlands	D66
	Netherlands	Labour Party (PvdA)
	New Zealand	Labour Party (LP)
	Sweden	Social Democrats (SAP)
	United Kingdom	Social Democratic Party (SDP)
	United Kingdom	Labour Party (Lab)
Liberals	Austria	Freedom Party (FPO)
	Austria	Liberal Forum (LIF)
	Canada	Liberal Party (LP)
	Denmark	Social-Liberal Party (RV)
	Denmark	Venstre (V)
	Finland	Liberal People's Party (LKP)
	Germany	Free Democratic Party (FDP)
	Ireland	Progressive Democrats (PD)
	Netherlands	Freedom Party (VVD)
	New Zealand	ACT Party
	New Zealand	United Future New Zealand
	Sweden	Liberals (FP)
	United Kingdom	Liberal Democrats (LD)
	United Kingdom	Liberal Party (Lib)
Christian Democrats	Austria	Austrian People's Party (OVP)
	Denmark	Christian People's Party/Christian Democrats (KrF/K)
	Finland	Finnish Christian Union (SKL/KD)
	Germany	Christian Democratic Union (CDU)
	Ireland	Fine Gael (FG)
	Japan	Komeito Party (K)
	Netherlands	CDA (Christian Democrats)
	Sweden	Christian Democrats (KD)
Conservatives	Australia	Liberal Party (LPA)
	Canada	Conservative Party of Canada
	Canada	Progressive Conservative Party/Conservative Party (PCP/CPC)
	Canada	Reform Party /Canadian Alliance (RPC/CA)
	Denmark	Conservative People's Party (KF)
	Finland	National Coalition Party (KOK)
	Ireland	Fianna Fail (FF)
	Japan	Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)
	Japan	Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)
	Japan	New Liberal Club (NLC)
	New Zealand	National Party (NP)
	New Zealand	New Zealand First Party
	Sweden	Moderate Party (M)
	United Kingdom	Conservative Party (Con)
Far Right	Austria	Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ)
	Denmark	Danish People's Party (DF)
	Denmark	Progress Party (FP/FrP)
	Sweden	New Democracy (NyD)
Agrarian	Australia	National Party (NPA)
	Finland	Centre Party (KESK)
	Finland	Finns Party (PS)
	Finland	Finnish Rural Party (SMP)
	Sweden	Centre Party (C)

Table 2: Parties Included in Substantive Representation Analyses (Models 6-12)

| Party Family	Country	Political Party
Greens	Austria	Green Party
	Belgium	AGALEV/Green!
	Ireland	Green Party
	Netherlands	GreenLeft (GL)
	Sweden	Greens (MP)
Communists	Denmark	Red-Green Unity List (EL)
	Denmark	Socialist People's Party (SF)
	France	Communist Party (PCF)
	Germany	Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS)
	Norway	Socialist Left Party (SV)
	Spain	Communist Party|United Left (PCE | IU)
	Sweden	Communist Party/Left Party (SKP/VKP/Vp)
Social Democrats	Austria	Social Democratic Party (SPO)
	Belgium	Flemish Socialist Party (SP)
	Denmark	Centre Democrats (CD)
	Denmark	Social Democrats (Sd)
	France	Socialist Party (PS)
	Germany	Social Democratic Party (SPD)
	Ireland	Labour Party (Lab)
	Netherlands	Democrats 66 (D66)
	Netherlands	Labour Party (PvdA)
	Norway	Labour Party (DNA)
	Portugal	Socialist Party (PS)
	Portugal	Social Democratic Party
	Spain	Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE)
	Sweden	Social Democrats (SAP)
	United Kingdom	Labour Party (Lab)
Liberals	Austria	Freedom Party (FPO)
	Austria	Liberal Forum (LIF)
	Denmark	Social-Liberal Party (RV)
	Denmark	Venstre (V)
	Germany	Free Democratic Party (FDP)
	Ireland	Progressive Democrats (PD)
	Netherlands	Freedom Party (VVD)
	Norway	Liberal Party (V)
	Sweden	Liberals (FP)
	United Kingdom	Liberal Democrats (LD)
Christian Democrats	Austria	Austrian People's Party (OVP)
	Belgium	Christian People's Party (CVP)/ Christian Democrats (CD&V)
	Denmark	Christian People's Party/Christian Democrats (KrF/K)
	Germany	Christian Democratic Union (CDU)
	Ireland	Fine Gael (FG)
	Netherlands	CDA (Christian Democrats)
	Norway	Christian People's Party (KrF)
	Portugal	Democratic and Social Centre – People's Party (CDS-PP)
	Spain	Democratic and Social Centre (CDS)
	Sweden	Christian Democratics
Conservatives	Denmark	Conservative People's Party (KF)
	Ireland	Fianna Fail (FF)
	Norway	Conservative Party (H)
	Spain	People's Party(PP)
	Sweden	Moderate Party (M)
	United Kingdom	Conservative Party (Con)
Agrarian	Norway	Centre Party (Sp)
	Sweden	Centre Party (C)

Plots of Women's Descriptive and Substantive Representation by Party Family

Figure 1: Percentage of Women in Parties' Parliamentary Delegations
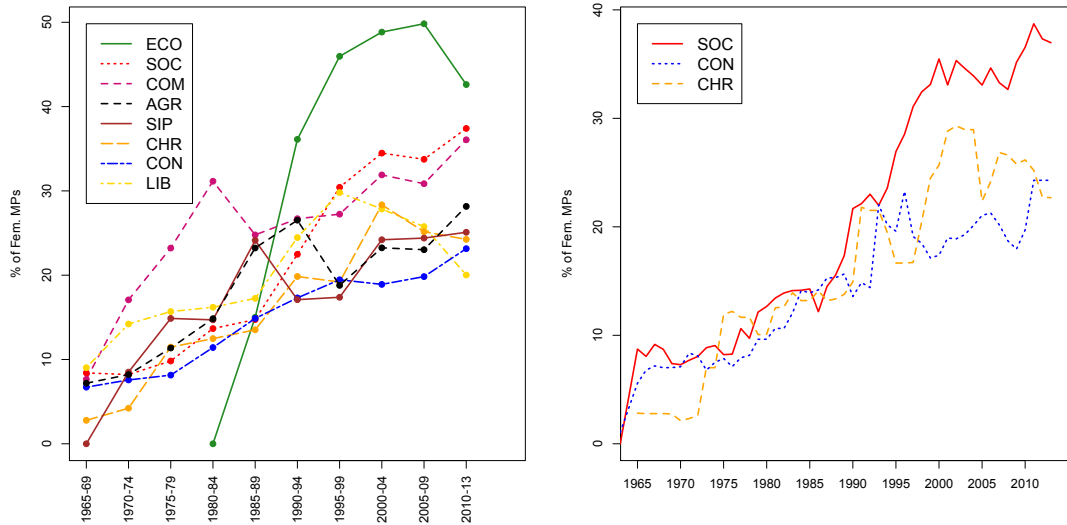
Notes: The plot depicts the proportion of female held seats across different party families (as identified by the Comparative Manifestos Project) over time. The legend is organized from highest to lowest mean level of representation in the last period/year of the study.

Figure 2: Percentage of Words for Women on Parties' Manifestos
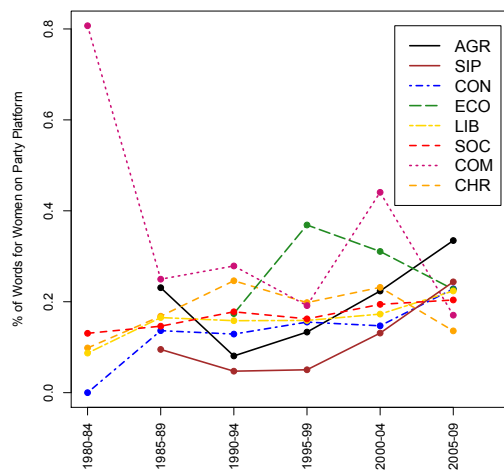
Notes: The plot depicts the proportion of female-oriented framing words on the manifestos of 58 parties across eight party families in 12 Western European democracies over multiple elections. The legend is organized from highest to lowest mean level of representation in the last period of the study (2005-2009).

Extended Description of Statistical Models

The following subsections provide a fuller description of the statistical models presented in the paper.

Models 1, 3, & 5: Proportion of Women in the Parliamentary Party

In these models the outcome (or dependent) variable is the *percentage of seats in the parliamentary party held by women*. The outcome variable is calculated as the log of the odds ratio of the percentage of women elected:

$$Y_i = \log\left(\frac{p_i + .5}{101 - p_i}\right) = \text{logit}(p_i)$$

where each p_i is taken to be between 0 and 100.

In order to meet the Gauss-Markov assumptions, I use the logistic transformation to place the data on the whole real line. This is particularly important because several of the values of the outcome variable are small, and a linear model would allow the normal densities of the errors to have mass below zero. These error processes would then have a non-zero probability of generating negative realizations of the outcome variable and could produce negative predicted values. The small correction term allows for the calculation of the outcome variable in cases where there are no women in the parliamentary party.

Model 2: Presence of a Gender Quota

In this model the unit of analysis is the party-year and the outcome (or dependent) variable is an indicator variable that distinguishes between *parties that implement a voluntary gender quota* and those that fail to do so. That is, the outcome variable captures whether each party is employing a voluntary gender quota policy in any given year. As the outcome variable is a binary measure, I employ a binomial logistic regression model that links the probability of success $p_i \in (0,1)$ to the whole real line via the transformation $\mu_i = \log\left(\frac{p_i}{1 - p_i}\right)$.

While many different types of parties implement quotas, no Conservative party in the sample has done so. When modeling the presence of a quota, party ideology perfectly predicts the

outcome variable. When a covariate perfectly predicts the response—that is, when we encounter complete separation—its parameter estimate diverges to infinity. To address this complete separation, I use a bias reduction method originally proposed by Firth (1993). Firth's penalized likelihood approach always yields finite estimates of parameters under complete separation, and simulation results indicate that even under extreme conditions these estimates have relatively little bias (Heinze and Schemper 2002).

Model 4: Presence of a Female Leader

In this model the unit of analysis is the party-year and the outcome (or dependent) variable is an indicator variable that distinguishes between *parties that are female led* and male-led parties. That is, the outcome variable captures whether each party has a female leader in any given year. As the outcome variable is a binary measure, I employ a binomial logistic regression model that links the probability of success $p_i \in (0, 1)$ to the whole real line via the transformation $\mu_i = \log\left(\frac{p_i}{1-p_i}\right)$.

Models 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 12: Count of References to Women

In these models the outcome (or dependent) variable is a *count of the number of references to women on parties' policy agendas*. Social scientists typically opt to model count data as a Poisson distribution. One of the key features of the Poisson distribution is that the variance equals the mean. With respect to words for women, however, the outcome variable exhibits overdispersion. That is, the variance is larger than the mean. I thus opt for a quasi-Poisson model. Quasi-Poisson regression uses the mean regression function and the variance function from the Poisson GLM, but leaves the dispersion parameter ϕ unrestricted. That is, ϕ is estimated from the data rather than being assumed to be fixed at 1. This results in the same coefficient estimates as the standard Poisson model but adjusts the inference for overdispersion (Zeileis, Kleiber, and Jackman 2008).

Model 11: Presence of Reference to Women

While almost all parties include some references to women on their agendas, some party families do not use dictionary terms related to subsets of women's interests. In particular, center-right and agrarian parties simply do not use the terms lesbianism, feminism, and sexism. When modeling the use of these terms, party ideology perfectly predicts the outcome variable. When a

covariate perfectly predicts the response—that is, when we encounter complete separation—its parameter estimate diverges to infinity. To address this complete separation, I use a bias reduction method originally proposed by Firth (1993). Firth's penalized likelihood approach always yields finite estimates of parameters under complete separation, and simulation results indicate that even under extreme conditions these estimates have relatively little bias (Heinze and Schemper 2002). In Model 11 the unit of analysis is the party-election year and the outcome (or dependent) variable is an indicator variable that distinguishes between platforms that use these terms at least once and those that do not. As the outcome variables are binary measures, I employ binomial logistic regression models using Firth's penalized likelihood approach.

Content Analysis Dictionary Capturing Attention to Women on Political Parties' Electoral Manifestos[1]

Abortion	Flextime	Pay Equity
Alimony	Gender	Pay Inequity
Antenatal	Genital	Pay Inequality
Birth Control	Girl[2]	Platform for Action
Breast	Gynecologic	Pornography
Burqa	Her	Postnatal
CEDAW	Hijab	Postpartum
Cervix	Historically Male	Pregnancy
Chador	Homemaker	Prenatal
Childbearing	Housewife	Prostitute
Childbirth	Incest	Rape
Childcare	Lactate	Reproductive
Child Maintenance	Lady[2]	Scarf
Child Minder	Lesbian[2]	Sex[2]
Child Support	Lone parent	Sexism
Contraception	Male-dominated	Sexist
Crèche	Mammogram	Single Parent
Daughter[2]	Maternal	Spousal Violence
Daycare	Maternity	Stay-at-home
Domestic Violence	Menopause	Traditionally Male
Domestic Worker	Midwife	Trimester
Dominated by Men	Miscarriage	UNIFEM
Dowry	Mother[2]	Uterine
Equal Pay	Niqab	Uterus
Family Maintenance	Nursery	Veil
Family Planning	Obstetrics	Wage Discrimination
Female[2]	Osteoporosis	Wage Gap
Feminine	Ovary	Widow[2]
Feminism	Pap Smear	Wife[2]
Fertility	Parental Leave	Woman[2]

[1]The text analysis accounts for plural words and variation. For example, in addition to "mother," the outcome variable also includes mentions of "mothers," "motherhood," and "mothering." The analysis also sought to capture spelling variations, for example recording both "flextime" and "flexitime."

[2]As the text analysis sought to exclude statements that do not specifically address the position of women, words in this subset were included in the final count only if they occurred independently from their "masculine" counterpart. For example, claims for both "men and women" (as well as "sons and daughters," "girls and boys," etc.) are excluded from the analysis.

Content of Women's Substantive Representation

The following subsections provide a list of the terms used to construct the outcome (or dependent) variables in Models 7 through 13. In these models, the outcome variables focus on subsets of dictionary terms that capture distinct expectations concerning women and their roles in the private and public spheres.

Model 7-Mothering

The "mothering" model includes the following dictionary terms (and their plurals): maternal, maternity, mother, motherhood, mothering, homemaker, housewife.

Model 8-Working Parents

The "working parents" model includes the following dictionary terms (and their plurals): childcare, creche, daycare, flextime, nursery, parental leave.

Model 9-Pregnancy

The "pregnancy" model includes the following dictionary terms (and their plurals): antenatal, fertility, gynecology, lactate, midwife, miscarriage, obstetrics, prenatal, postnatal, postpartum, pregnant, reproductive, trimester.

Model 10-Pay Equity

The "pay equity" model includes the following dictionary terms (and their plurals): equal pay, pay equity, pay inequity, pay inequality, wage gap, wage discrimination.

Model 11-Feminist Issues

The "progressive issues" model includes the following dictionary terms (and their plurals):feminist, feminism, lesbian, sexism, sexist.

Explanatory and Control Variables

Across models, the primary explanatory variable is a categorical measure of *party family* based on Comparative Manifestos Project coding. I further interact this variable with the presence of a voluntary gender quota (Model 3) and the presence of a female leader (Model 5). These interaction effects capture whether these two important demand-side factors affecting women's

descriptive representation operate differently across party families. In Model 12, I interact this measure with the proportion of seats held by female parliamentarians. The interaction effect captures the differential impact of descriptive representation on substantive representation across party families.

Beyond the main predictors, I also control for factors that may otherwise bias the results. In the models related to women's descriptive representation (Models 1 through 5), I recognize that newer parties may be more likely to select women than those with established patterns of male dominance. I thus control for *parties founded after 1980*. I also account for *party size*, as those organizations with larger seat shares may be more likely to successfully elect women. I further include a covariate controlling for *majoritarian electoral systems*, as electoral rules affect both the number and type of parties present in the country and the proportion of women elected.

Among these analyses, the models predicting the proportion of seats held by women in the parliamentary party (Models 1, 3, & 5) control for both *quota policies* and the *presence of a female leader*, as each of these variables may be correlated with both party ideology and the selection of female candidates. Likewise, the models predicting the presence of a quota policy (Model 2) and female leader (Model 4) account for the *lagged proportion of seats held by female MPs* within the parliamentary delegation, as parties with more female parliamentarians are more likely both to adopt quotas and also to select a female leader.

The models predicting women's substantive representation (Models 6 through 14) also include control variables. I recognize that female-led parties may select more female candidates and include more references to women on their manifestos. I thus include covariates capturing whether the party has *ever been female-led* or is *currently female-led*. As longer manifestos have more space to address women, I control for the *log length of the manifesto*.

In all models I account for the fact that over time parties become more likely to select female candidates and discuss women on their platforms. The models thus include a mean-centered linear measure accounting for the passage of *time*. Finally, across the states included in the analysis, there may be baseline differences in countries' propensities to elect women to parliament or dis-

cuss women's policy representation. All models therefore include *country-level fixed effects*.

Supplementary Analysis of Female Leaders in Far-Right Parties

To strengthen my discussion of women in nationalist parties, I conducted a supplementary analysis examining gendered patterns of party leadership in 464 party-election years in 30 OECD countries in elections between 1996 and 2016. In total, the dataset includes 196 political parties. Of the 464 party-election observations in the dataset, 82 (almost 18%) are female led. As I show below, among this set of parties, nationalists are as (un)likely to be female-led as other party types.

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)
(Intercept)	-0.84	0.32	-2.65	0.01
ECO	0.71	0.38	1.88	0.06
COM	0.36	0.37	0.99	0.32
SOC	0.14	0.35	0.40	0.69
LIB	-0.44	0.39	-1.14	0.26
CHR	0.12	0.37	0.34	0.74
CON	-0.30	0.38	-0.77	0.44
AGR	0.19	0.40	0.49	0.63
ETH	-4.52	151.17	-0.03	0.98
SIP	0.03	0.48	0.07	0.95
% Vote Share	-0.01	0.01	-1.41	0.16