

Publication

Power-seeking, networking and competition: why women do not rise in parties

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Why do women fail to rise in parties, especially youth parties? This analysis shows that female party members' preferences regarding the purpose of a committee, networking and the election rule in party organisations differ from male party members' which is likely a reason why women face challenges to rise in parties. This article investigates for the first time these gender based differences in preferences simultaneously by conducting a survey experiment with youth party members. Respondents ($n > 1200$) were asked if they would run for a seat in a decision-making committee of their youth party. In order to analyse which youth party members opt for which opportunities, the purpose of these committees, the networking opportunities they provide, and the election rule for these committees vary at random. The results show that female members hesitate to join committees that would grant them power, and that they are less likely to opt for upward networking opportunities than their male party colleagues. This effect is particularly strong in hierarchically organised youth parties of centre-right parties. Findings on preferred election rules mostly hold for women from left-wing parties. In contrast to men, this group prefers party quotas. Analysing differences by gender and political orientation, this article shows a clear gender preference gap exists both within and across youth parties.

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