

Endurance at the Top: Gender and Political Ambition of Spanish and Swedish MPs

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It is widely assumed that an accurate representation of women in political office is consistent with the legitimacy of the democratic system (Stevens 2007) and makes a difference in the priorities and nature of policies (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004; Clots-Figueras 2012; Rehavi 2008; Schwindt-Bayer 2006). The underrepresentation of women in politics has been largely documented, but its causes are far from clear. More precisely, there is a lively debate on whether this underrepresentation is caused by demand-side factors — that is, the characteristics of parties, electorates, and electoral systems — or by supply-side factors. The latter

The authors want to thank the following colleagues for their insightful comments on an earlier manuscript: Celia Valiente (Universidad Carlos III), Tània Verge (Universitat Pompeu Fabra), Antonio M. Jaime (Universidad de Málaga), and participants in several international conferences.

Published by Cambridge University Press 1743-923X/16 \$30.00 for The Women and Politics Research Section of the American Political Science Association.

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doi:10.1017/S1743923X16000416

include candidate resources such as money, time, experience, and education, as well as political ambition (Norris and Lovenduski 1995).

Political ambition is the main motivational factor needed to fuel and pursue a political career (Schlesinger 1966). This supply-side factor has been found to be unevenly distributed across sexes — men being more ambitious than women — and therefore it is an important aspect of women's underrepresentation (Lawless and Fox 2005, 2010). Although institutional factors such as nomination and party selection processes are important (Hinojosa 2012), the crucial ingredient for a political career is political ambition (Macdonald 1987).¹ More specifically, women's lack of progressive political ambition is a supply aspect that may explain why so few women serve as cabinet ministers (Reynolds 1999).

Despite its relevance, what causes women's lack of political ambition has been underresearched. In comparison to men, women's lower level of political ambition is often attributed to different socialization patterns and values (Fox and Lawless 2003; Lawless and Fox 2005, 2010), which are believed to produce a scarcity of female politicians as role models (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006). However, we know that the roles of family dynamics and political socialization in the development of political attitudes and values are highly dependent on a country's political culture. Yet research on women's political ambitions lacks a comparative perspective. Furthermore, findings concerning women's political ambitions have yet to be empirically tested outside the United States.

Consequently, in this article, we take a novel step in the field of gender as it relates to career ambition by adopting a comparative perspective. We aim to test the impact of family dynamics and political socialization on the political ambitions of female members of parliament (MPs) in two countries that are similar in their institutional settings but different in terms of their welfare state policies supporting women's professional careers and political culture, especially regarding gender roles. For this purpose, we use two representative surveys of Swedish and Spanish MPs. We find that classical explanations based on politicians' early socialization explain the gender gap regarding political ambition only in Sweden. In contrast, explanations based on family arrangements seem to

1. In her research, Hinojosa suggests that because we already know that women are less inclined to be self-starters, the focus on supply-side factors is inadequate. Instead, the attention should be shifted to the nomination process within the parties. Hinojosa argues that open and decentralized systems are the main obstacles for an improved representation of female legislators "since they require self-selection and increase the influence of local power monopolies" (2012, 79).

work well to explain females' political ambitions in Spain. Women depend on their family support in order to develop ambition for long political careers only where the welfare state is not strong enough to enact basic policies helping women fully participate in the public sphere.

GENDER AND POLITICAL AMBITIONS

The importance of political ambition in representative democracies was first stressed by Joseph Schlesinger (1966), who distinguished between discrete, static, and progressive political ambitions. Politicians bearing discrete ambitions will most likely withdraw from public service. Those with static political ambitions will stay in the same office they are already holding. Finally, those with progressive ambitions will seek to advance upward in their political career. Schlesinger's point of departure is that if politicians do not care about their political future, voters have little chance of controlling their representatives. Hence, discrete political ambitions hamper citizens from making politicians accountable. Today, it is more or less established that a healthy political system should have a supply of career-oriented candidates eager to step forward and challenge current officeholders (Maestas et al. 2006; Schlesinger 1994).

Schlesinger's work has inspired researchers to study the importance of career ambitions in politics from different angles (Brace 1984; Codispoti 1982; Kazee 1994; Norris and Lovenduski 1995; Stone and Maisel 2003). More recently, scholars have turned their attention to the gender dimension of career ambitions. In general, women are seen as less interested in having political careers, in addition to seeing themselves as less qualified for political office than their male counterparts see themselves (Fox and Lawless 2003; Lawless and Fox 2005, 2010). In other words, they are more prone than men to have discrete political ambitions, and this diminishes their chances of running for office, winning seats as MPs, and, ultimately, serving as cabinet ministers. As Sapiro and Farah point out, "women may enter into lower level elite positions with discrete ambitions and leave at will" (1980, 19), which would explain why women limit themselves to working as party staff or why they assume local leadership positions rather than actively seeking seats in parliament or serving as cabinet ministers.

Hence, the low level of women's political ambitions is closely related to their underrepresentation in national parliaments, a phenomenon that is often seen as a democratic flaw (Carroll 2001; Mansbridge 1999; Phillips

1995; Young 2000). Moreover, women's lack of political ambition may have further implications. For instance, politicians' willingness to stay in politics affects how MPs allocate their time and resources (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996) and consequently may help explain the differences between men and women regarding how they perform as representatives (Barnello and Bratton 2007; Carroll 2001). Furthermore, if women are less prone to be ambitious in the long run, there will be fewer senior women than men in parliaments, which, in turn, will diminish their chances of being designated as cabinet ministers (Krook and O'Brien 2012; Rashkova 2013).

Note, however, that most attention has been paid to women's decisions to enter politics (Lawless 2012; Lawless and Fox 2005, 2010) and to step up from party delegates (Constantini 1990; Sapiro and Farah 1980), local councils (Allen 2013; Bledsoe and Herring 1990; Burt-Way and Kelly 1992), or state parliaments (Burt-Way and Kelly 1992; Fulton et al. 2006) to the national level. Another section of the literature has focused on elected MPs, finding that women are more likely to be forced out of politics than men because of party selection. These last works, however, neglect the role of career ambitions in the selection process (Vanlangenakker, Wauters, and Maddens 2013).

What causes the uneven distribution of political ambition across genders? Ideology and religion are definitely explanatory factors. Republican and religiously affiliated women are less ambitious than democrats and those without religious affiliation (Constantini 1990). It has also been argued that women are less likely to pursue the "pipeline" professions that precede a political career (i.e., legal or business careers; see Fox and Lawless 2004). Age, marriage, and out-of-home work experience also explain why women are less ambitious when it comes to politics (Carroll 1994; Constantini 1990; Fulton et al. 2006; Palmer and Simon 2003). But the most powerful explanatory factor is the prevailing social and political culture (Palmer and Simon 2003).

Politics — and everything related to the public sphere — has traditionally been associated with men (Constantini and Craik 1977; Lee 1976; Mayer and Schmidt 2004), and so is political ambition. Gender stereotypes, primarily cultivated through socialization and role models, have transcended into politics, and they are seen as crucial reasons why women are less likely to become politicians (Elder 2004; Mayer and Schmidt 2004; Wolak and McDevitt 2011). It has been found that frequent political talk at home while growing up makes women more prone to develop a sense of political efficacy. In turn, this fosters the

positive effect of having a female political reference on the future choice of a political career (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006; Gidengil, O'Neill, and Young 2010). Similarly, an early, politically active socialization is one of the most important factors for closing the gender gap between men and women when it comes to the decision to run for office (Lawless and Fox 2005). To sum up, engaging girls in political discussions at home — regardless of the content or tone of the political talk — will foster a connection to political matters, allowing girls to be better able to understand and take a position in those discussions. Parents who talk politics at home positively affect the political ambitions of their daughters, particularly in comparison with their sons, who already receive from society the supportive message that being involved in politics is worthwhile.

While familial upbringing may make a woman as likely a candidate as a man, Fox and Lawless also found that, later in life, “family arrangements are not a primary factor explaining why female potential candidates exhibit lower levels of political ambition than do men” (2014, 399). Hence, family burdens and dynamics are not determining for adult women’s political ambitions. This finding goes against conventional wisdom and established research, which shows that family responsibilities constitute bigger problems for women in politics than for men (Burrell 1994; Conway, Ahern, and Steuernagel 2004; Dolan, Deckman, and Swers 2010; Maestas et al. 2006; Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1995).²

The relationship between familial responsibilities and women’s political ambitions speaks to the literature on demand versus supply factors. As Krook (2003) suggests, the distinction between supply and demand factors is actually fuzzy, as demand can shape supply, especially when it comes to gender issues. In her words, “women often interrupt their careers when they have children, making it difficult to begin, sustain, or resume active party engagement until they are much older. Unsurprisingly, many women who do follow a political career are single or divorced with no children” (2003, 17). Following this line of thought, female MPs without children are probably making efforts to fit into the role model of a productive, dedicated MP, therefore harboring high expectations with regard to their careers. On the contrary, a woman who is not willing to abandon the idea of being a mother would send signals that she does not fulfill the appropriate MP profile, and she may further

2. See also Mestre and Marín (2012) for the effect of unequal sexual division of household tasks in the political interest gender gap.

inhibit herself from pursuing and/or developing a political career (Lovenduski 2005; McKay 2011).

Family burdens, family dynamics, and political socialization may not exert the same influence on the development of women's political ambitions across all contexts. It is very likely that institutional incentives and political culture interact with politicians' upbringing and familial situations, resulting in higher or lower levels of political ambition. However, research on this matter has mainly been confined to single-case studies, which do not allow for comparatively testing the roles of institutional and cultural factors, a reason why these explanatory factors have long been disregarded (Borchert and Stolz 2011).³ With very few exceptions, the proportion of single-case studies on the United States is overwhelming,⁴ despite the fact that the United States is not a good example of countries where women are well represented in politics. Actually, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IUPU, August 2014) ranked the United States 86th on its list of countries according to the percentage of female legislators in their representative houses, with just a modest 20% of women in the House and the Senate.⁵ This entails that individual variances within U.S. female MPs' characteristics — regarding their attitudes, family constraints, or socialization patterns — are probably too low to find significant relationships between these factors and women's political ambition. An unexplored alternative consists of comparing countries that have better representation of women.

WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND THE GENDER GAP IN SWEDEN AND SPAIN

The comparison of two countries that have similar institutions but differ in a few ways is a research design that allows us to control for a series of contextual factors when explaining differences in female MPs' ambitions. For this purpose, we have chosen Spain and Sweden, two

3. An important exception to this is found in Hinojosa's work (2012), comparing the process of candidacy selection in Mexico and Chile at the municipal level, finding that women's reluctance to step forward as candidates might be behind their lower chances — compared with men — of being elected in inclusive nomination systems.

4. For some exceptions on this matter, see the works on Taiwan (Clark, Clark, and Chou 1993) and Latin America (Schwindt-Bayer 2011). Nevertheless, these studies mostly focus on presidential systems, although parliamentary systems are the majority among democratic countries (44% parliamentary, 24% mixed, 32% presidential; according to the Quality of Government 2015 database, Teorell et al. 2015).

5. Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in national parliaments," <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (accessed November 10, 2014).

parliamentary monarchies with similar proportional electoral systems. Both are full members of the European Union (Spain since 1986, Sweden since 1995). This means that both countries are affected by similar institutional constraints.

Both Spain and Sweden are quite successful in terms of the proportion of female MPs represented, but they still differ significantly from each other. If we look at women's presence in the lower house, Sweden is ranked fourth with 45% of female MPs, and Spain is 11th with 39.7%.⁶ The influx of female MPs has been different, though. Since the mid-1990s, Sweden has had a proportion of more than 40% female MPs. In Spain, however, the proportion of female MPs did not exceed 15% until 2000.⁷ The picture changed in 2007, when the socialist government passed the Bill for Effective Equality, which states that political parties should build lists in which the presence of people of the same sex cannot be below 40% or above 60% within each section of five candidates.

Among the differences that may explain success in women's representation — and probably also differences in women's political ambitions at the individual level — two elements stand out in both countries: gender equality policies and cultural background regarding gender roles. Both countries have developed different welfare systems, which facilitate, with different intensities, women's participation in public life. Sweden fits into the Nordic system of welfare states (Esping-Andersen 1999).⁸ Since the late 1960s, it has had a generous welfare system that provides care for children and the elderly (Oláh and Bernhardt 2008). Fathers can take long parental leaves, women are fully incorporated into the job market, and the country promotes a dual-earner family model. As a result, women in Sweden have less household work burden than in other countries (Fuwa and Cohen 2007), and they are less economically dependent on their husbands (Evertsson and

6. Inter-Parliamentary Union, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (accessed September 20, 2014).

7. Note that these data refer to the first day of the legislature. The data do not take into account the substitutions that happen during each legislature. In fact, when substitutions occur (when an MP dies or leaves or resigns and needs to be substituted), the proportion of women increases (Coller, Santana, and Jaime 2014), which shows that a proportion of women enter parliaments as second choices for the selectorates of their parties.

8. Both countries have also developed different varieties of capitalism, as Sweden is a coordinated market economy where the state has a prominent role in providing social protection and working conditions are regulated by agreements between employers and unions. Spain, on the other hand, is placed along with France or Italy in an intermediate category between the coordinated market economy and the liberal market economy named "Latin capitalism," "mixed market economies," or "state-influenced market economies" (Hall and Gingerich 2009, 458; Molina and Rhodes 2007; Royo 2008; Schmidt 2009).

Nermo 2004). Moreover, egalitarian gender attitudes are comparatively widespread in Sweden (Svallfors 2006), and the aim of Sweden's gender equality policies is, and has been, to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in all areas of life, in particular with regard to work and family life.⁹ This was not done in vain: Sweden ranked fourth in the world for gender equality in the Global Gender Gap Report of 2013 and was the world leader in 2012.

Conversely, Spain belongs to the "Mediterranean model" (Bettio and Villa 1998) or "southern" welfare state type (Esping-Andersen 1999). In general terms, this model is based on women being in charge of the family (even the extended one), irrespective of their work outside the household. Even though the participation of women in the labor force has increased over the years, women's employment rates in Spain are significantly lower than in Sweden (51.3% versus 71.8%, respectively, in 2012) and lower than those of their male counterparts. Maternity leaves are relatively short (16 weeks), and public child care for the youngest children is scarce and expensive (Lapuerta, Baizán, and González 2011). In short, Spanish women have more difficulties reconciling their professional careers with their family lives (Valiente 2000), which explains why Spain's position in the Global Gender Gap Index in 2013 was 30th.

There are prevalent gender stereotypes in Spanish society, making it difficult for women to participate in public life if they have to take care of what is considered to be "their" family duties. The last wave of the World Values Survey (2011) revealed that in Sweden, only 2% of citizens believed that when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to work than women, whereas in Spain, this percentage was 10 points higher (12%). In the same survey, Swedes believed that equal rights for men and women are more important for democracy than did Spaniards (an average of 9.6 and 9, respectively, on a 1–10 importance scale).¹⁰ These prevalent gender stereotypes in Spanish society are partly inherited from culturally Catholic traditionalist values (strongly promoted by the previous authoritarian regime, between 1939 and 1976), which limited women to a domestic role rather than a public one (Galais 2008). Indeed, religion is a cultural aspect that has been proven relevant for the development of gender stereotypes and female labor

9. See <http://sweden.se/society/gender-equality-in-sweden/#start> (accessed August 10, 2014).

10. World Values Survey Wave 6 (2010–2014), v.20150418, World Values Survey Association, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>.

force participation, Catholicism being among the organized religions — along with Islam and Hinduism — that have lower female labor force participation rates (Psacharopoulos and Tzannatos 1989). Sweden offers a completely different scenario in this respect. Greater religiosity is not associated with patriarchal views for members of the Church of Sweden (whose membership accounts for 66% of the Swedish population) but partly explains gender stereotypes for those professing other faiths (Goldscheider, Goldscheider, and Rico-Gonzalez 2014).

EXPECTATIONS

To what extent might these scenarios explain political ambition gender gaps between MPs across the two countries? In the first place, because it is easier for women in Sweden than in Spain to combine family life with work, we believe this may have consequences for the supply of candidates able to reach any political office, especially in parliaments. In other words, Spanish women will have a harder time combining family life with a political career and, consequently, will have to travel a greater social distance than men in order to become candidates.¹¹ More precisely, we expect Spanish female MPs to make greater personal and familial sacrifices than their fellow countrymen and Swedish counterparts.

Moreover, the Nordic welfare state provides incentives for women to invest time and effort in developing their careers, while the Mediterranean model is less generous. As a result, Spanish women must rely to a larger extent on family support for their public (mainly working) activities. Moreover, potential candidates who are encouraged by their families to run are clearly more likely to actually stand as candidates (Fox and Lawless 2003). Extending these two arguments to female MPs, we expect that when family support is absent or weak, it will be harder for female MPs in Spain to continue their political careers. Conversely, Swedish female MPs likely will not experience this trade-off between political ambition and family support. As Swedish policies and institutions enforce gender equality and empower women, female MPs will need less encouragement and support from their families to consider a long-term political career.

Finally, we test elected representatives on the classical assumption that active political socialization patterns assist in overcoming gender gaps in

11. The “norm of distance” was introduced by Sartori et al. (1963, 317) as a way of highlighting that some citizens from nonprivileged environments find it more difficult to access politics than others.

political ambition. Modernization and democratization processes have helped slowly replace traditional values and gender roles in Spanish society, which are nevertheless still strong among older generations (López-Sáez, Morales, and Lisbona 2008). Hence, we expect greater variation with regard to active/passive political socialization styles between individuals in Spain compared with those in Sweden, where political culture is more gender egalitarian. In other words, we assume that active political socialization will be more evenly distributed across Swedish MPs regardless of gender. Therefore, either having or lacking early politicized socialization will play more of a role for female MPs' ambitions in Spain compared with those in Sweden.

To summarize our expectations,

H₁: Spanish female MPs will face more family costs than Spanish male MPs and Swedish MPs.

H₂: Family support will predict female MPs' political ambitions in Spain, but not in Sweden.

H₃: A politicized upbringing will be more strongly associated with female MPs' willingness to stay in politics in Spain than in Sweden.

DATA AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Our data come from two surveys that were conducted independently during the same period of time in Spain and Sweden. The Spanish survey was conducted face to face from 2009 to 2011 on a representative sample of 133 from a total of 616 MPs from national parliaments (about 22% of the total).¹² Interviewed MPs were selected on the basis of sex, party, and territory quotas in order to have the same distribution as the total population of Spanish MPs, with a 5% margin of error. The Swedish data come from the international Comparative Candidate Survey project, sent out as an online survey to all candidates in the national election in 2010, and include all members of parliament. The Swedish survey was launched in the first half of 2011. A total of 181 out of 349 (52%) MPs answered. In relation to gender, age, and party affiliation, the respondents are representative of the totality of MPs in the Swedish parliament, with less than a 2% margin of error.

12. The survey was carried out by the research group Democracy and Autonomies: Society and Politics (DASP, Universidad Pablo de Olavide), <http://www.upo.es/democraciayautonomias>. Data also include a representative sample of regional MPs (not used here).

We decided to tap the phenomenon of MP's political ambitions with a dichotomous variable that distinguishes politicians who want to stay in politics and those who want to quit in the long run. Both surveys included a question about what the respondents would like to do "10 years from now" that allowed us to create a dichotomous variable that takes the value 1 for those who want to stay in politics and the value 0 for those who do not.¹³

Both surveys included a question about how often the respondents had political discussions at home during their childhoods and whether their parents were active in politics.¹⁴ The latter refers to any kind of political activity, in unions, local politics, assemblies, social movements, or any other field. As for family support, the Spanish questionnaire asked a question about whether the MPs would say that their families support them in their political careers or whether their families would prefer that they were not in politics.¹⁵ Although the meaning of "support" may vary between some kind of diffuse, moral support or "tolerance" that encourages the MP to pursue his or her political career to actively providing resources — babysitting, money — when needed, the question is useful because it is not gender specific. In the Swedish survey, this question was framed as the extent to which the MP is supported by his or her husband/partner/wife. In both cases, family support is coded as a dummy variable (0 indicates not supported by the family, 1 means supported by the family).

We focus on how these variables interact with sex on the MPs' political ambitions in different contexts.¹⁶ As control variables, we use age (three

13. Note that this is analogous to collapsing Schlesinger's (1966) static and progressive ambitions against discrete ambitions. Originally, respondents could choose between different options, among them, being member of the national parliament, being active in local politics, being a member of the government, an MP in the European Parliament, or quitting politics altogether. Unfortunately, the anonymity process of the Spanish data impeded matching MPs' current positions, offices and responsibilities with their prospects. Thus, the only way to detect those who are ambitious to some degree is by distinguishing them from those who definitely want to quit politics in the long term.

14. The exact wording in the Swedish survey was, "during your upbringing, how often did your parents have political discussions with you." Choices were "Often," "Occasionally," "Seldom," and "Never."

15. The exact wording in the Spanish survey was, "would you say that a) your family supports you in your dedication to politics or b) your family would prefer that you were not in politics". The wording in the Swedish survey was: "if you are married or have a partner, to what extent did he/she encouraged you to stand as a national candidate?" Choices were "Very encouraging," "Fairly encouraging," "Not very encouraging," "Not encouraging at all," and "I do not have a partner." In this case, we coded the "very" and "fairly" categories as family support (value 1) against all the other values.

16. Another relevant difference emerges here between the Spanish and the Swedish questionnaires. While the first asks for children in general, the second explicitly refers to children at home. This might sound problematic but, as we will see, if both questions about children were identical, the different patterns would be even more in favor of our first hypothesis.

groups), education (attended university or not), seniority (number of election periods as an MP), and self-placement on the left–right scale (0–10). For more information about the coding and descriptive statistics of these variables, we refer the reader to the online appendix.

On the basis of these data, we conduct two different analyses. First, we present descriptive data on political ambitions for each country. Afterward, we examine the extent to which female MPs in Spain and Sweden have made personal and familial sacrifices compared with their male colleagues. Finally, we test the effect of MPs willingness to stay in politics on the interaction between sex, on the one hand, and familial support and political socialization, on the other. These interactions are expected to find in what context and for what sex these two sets of explanations better predict political ambition — in other words, in what country they work better at reducing the gender gap.

RESULTS

Figure 1 shows the willingness of MPs to stay in politics. When asked whether they would like to be in politics 10 years from now, there were no gender differences between the Swedish MPs: half of them wanted to stay, and half of them wanted to quit in the long run. In Spain, there was a gender difference — 55% of female MPs wanted to stay in politics, while only 44% of male MPs shared the same ambition. However, the gender gap in Spain is not statistically significant.¹⁷

Table 1 depicts MPs' family situations. As expected, there are some contextual differences. In Sweden, female MPs tend to be married and have children proportionally more often than men, although the differences are not statistically significant. We find the reverse in Spain: female MPs tend to be married and have children proportionally less than their male counterparts, and the difference is significant at the .05 level.

The picture that emerges is that of Swedish MPs for which family (marriage and children) has the same characteristics for both men and

17. This result is consistent with previous research. While Schwindt-Bayer (2011) found that female Latin American MPs had levels of political ambition very similar to those of men, Palmer and Simon (2003) found that American congresswomen exhibited lower levels of political ambition than men. Maybe the first generations of women entering parliaments in younger democracies are also younger than their male counterparts, and also more eager to close the gap with men, hence, more ambitious. This points to the advisability of considering age as an individual-level explanatory factor of political ambition.

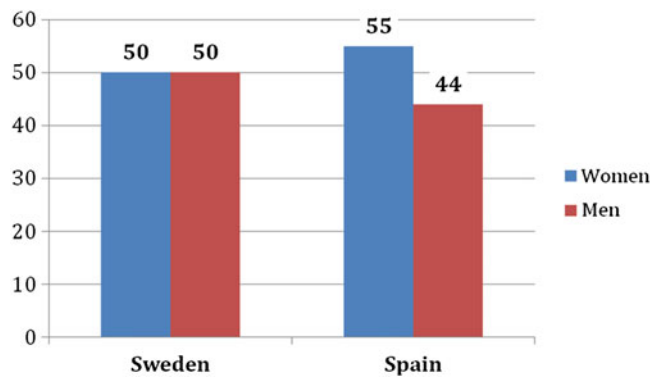


FIGURE 1. Distribution of political ambition (percentage who want to stay in politics within 10 years) and gender, per country.

Table 1. Differences among female and male MPs, by country, family variables

	Sweden			Spain		
	Men	Women	Diff.	Men	Women	Diff.
Are married/have partner	77.4	82.2	4.8 (166)	76	50	−26* (90)
Have children	76.3	85.5	9.2 (142)	89	71	−18* (110)

Notes: Cells denote column percentages. For dichotomous variables, only the positive category is shown.

Total number of observations per row shown in parentheses.

* Identifies significant differences in proportions between sexes at the .05 level.

women. Therefore, we can assume that familial status has no effect on the presence of Swedish MPs in the parliament and that these variables probably cannot account for any difference between men and women. Conversely, married women with children are less frequent in the Spanish parliament than married men with children. This does not necessarily imply that Spanish women are sacrificing a family life in order to get into parliament. Spanish women are actually less likely to have children than Swedish women, with lower birth rates during the period analyzed.¹⁸ But this does not explain gender differences for the MPs within each country. On the other hand, the differences observed between Spanish and Swedish MPs regarding their family composition may be due to age — a reason to delay marriage or children — as

18. The number of births per thousand habitants in Spain for the period 2009–11 was 10.37. In Sweden it was 11.77.

Spanish female MPs are much younger than their male counterparts. This difference is negligible in Sweden.¹⁹ Therefore, we must control for the effect of age in subsequent estimations of political ambition. But if, after considering age, ideology, and other factors leading to the decision to stay single and childless, family situation still explains females' political ambitions, this could suggest that they are adapting their personal lives to the expectations that come with the job (Krook 2003).

Next, we estimated political ambition for each country (see Table 2). In the first model, we introduced all the variables that could explain why some politicians are more ambitious than others. Sex is our main independent variable here. The coefficient for the variable "woman" is positive in Spain and negative in Sweden, although it does not reach the .1 threshold of statistical significance in either case. Age is introduced as a set of dummy variables to estimate the effect of belonging to the young or middle-age cohorts against the older cohort (born before 1959). We see in both cases a positive, significant effect of the middle cohort. Indeed, those born between 1959 and 1973 were more willing to remain in politics in 10 years than the older cohort. The variable tapping the experience of the MP in terms of legislatures does not play a role in Spain, but it does in Sweden. Veteran Swedish MPs, regardless of their age, sex, studies, and so on, are less willing to stay in politics in the long term. Self-placement on the left–right scale does not play a role in predicting political ambition.

If we move to the variables that capture family and socialization, we do not appreciate any significant effect, although some peculiarities appear. Having children seems positively — although not significantly — related to ambition in Sweden, whereas this coefficient is negative for Spain. Neither of the two variables intended to capture the effects of an active, early socialization seem to play a role in political ambition, and this is true for both of the countries analyzed. Finally, and according to the value of the R^2 in both countries, the model fits the Swedish data slightly better.

The second model features interactions between the two indicators of interest (family support and family discussion at home when growing up), on the one hand, and being a woman, on the other.²⁰ Control variables do not change substantively when compared with the previous

19. In all, 16% of female and 9% of male Spanish MPs were born after 1973, while in Sweden the proportion for both sexes is 17%. Similarly, 36% of female MPs in Spain and 54% of males belong to the oldest cohort (born before 1959) while proportions in Sweden are 44% and 46%.

20. In alternative models — not shown but available upon request — interactions have been introduced one by one, achieving the same results in the second model shown here.

Table 2. Logit estimations of political ambition, by country

	Sweden		Spain	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Woman	-.11 (.39)	-1.75 (1.06)	.22 (.45)	-1.38 (.91)
Age: Young cohort	.67 (.57)	.67 (.61)	1.3 (.89)	1.47 (.93)
Age: Middle cohort	1.53** (.64)	1.57** (.67)	1.45** (.47)	1.48** (.48)
Age: Old cohort (ref.)	—	—	—	—
University	-.03 (.43)	.05 (.46)	.24 (.71)	.3 (.77)
Children	.44 (.45)	.32 (.48)	-.18 (.61)	-.07 (.83)
Ideology (left, 1 to right, 10)	.10 (.08)	.12 (.09)	.008 (.14)	-.03 (.14)
Mandates	-.50** (.18)	-.52** (.19)	-.06 (.21)	-.03 (.22)
Family support	-.01 (.49)	-.12 (.63)	.32 (.42)	-.44 (.53)
Political discussions at home: A lot	.31 (.48)	-.79 (.61)	.09 (.48)	.15 (.62)
Active parents	-.48 (.44)	-.40 (.47)	-.7 (.48)	-.96* (.51)
Family support * Woman		.79 (1.19)		2.3** (1)
Political discussions at home * Woman		4.71** (1.53)		.43 (1.1)
Constant	-.21 (.86)	.14 (.90)	-.78 (1.1)	-.04 (1.2)
Pseudo R ²	.132	.193	.112	.15
N	145	145	124	124

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .1$.

model, with the exception of having active parents in Spain, which is now significant at the 10% level. Although the magnitude of this effect is not remarkable, the negative influence of family roles on politicians' ambitions is an intriguing and robust finding, taking into account that we observe the same pattern in both countries under analysis. Apparently, having parents who were involved in politics does not encourage representatives to stay in politics for longer periods of time, from which we can derive that MPs find some drawbacks to having politically engaged parents.

On the other hand, belonging to the middle cohort still has a positive, significant effect in both countries; the number of mandates exerts a

negative, significant effect in Sweden but none in Spain, and the level of education, having children, or the self-placement in the left–right scale, holds no influence in Sweden or in Spain. In this second model, the coefficient for the variable “woman” indicates the effect of sex on political ambition when a woman has neither family support nor a history of political discussions at home while growing up. Regardless of the country, this effect is not significantly different for women compared to men. As for the remainder of the principal effects, “family support” and “political discussions at home” have no significant effect on the men’s subsample, as indicated by the nonsignificant coefficients of the variables.

Moving now to the interactions between sex and the other main independent variables, we see that while having familial support seems to boost females’ political ambition in Spain, this plays no role in Sweden. This is the only significant interactive effect for Spain. In the Swedish case, we observe that growing up in a politicized family that frequently discussed politics has a considerable effect on females’ political ambitions: it is significantly more important for women than for men. This effect is not significantly different for Spanish male and female politicians.

Figures 2 and 3 depict the two main interaction effects found for Sweden and Spain. We can see that family discussions operate in different directions for Swedish women and men. While a lot of family discussion during childhood seems to predict lower levels of ambition for males compared with those who did not discuss politics as much, female MPs follow a different pattern: the more often they discussed politics, the more likely they were to consider longer political careers. This, although in line with previous literature, falsifies our initial hypothesis. In spite of a longer tradition of gender equality, political discussions at home while growing up reduced the political ambition gender gap more in Sweden than in Spain.

Moving to Figure 3, we see that while familial support does not make a big difference for Spanish men (a 10-point decrease in the probability of considering a long political career as compared to those who claimed that they lack family support), this effect is larger and goes in the opposite direction for women. A female Spanish MP without family support has a 27% probability of having the ambition to stay in politics, and one who claims to have familial support has a 64% chance of wanting to stay in politics, everything else being equal.

Moving to the magnitude of these effects, Table 3 displays the predicted probabilities for the willingness to stay in politics over the following 10 years

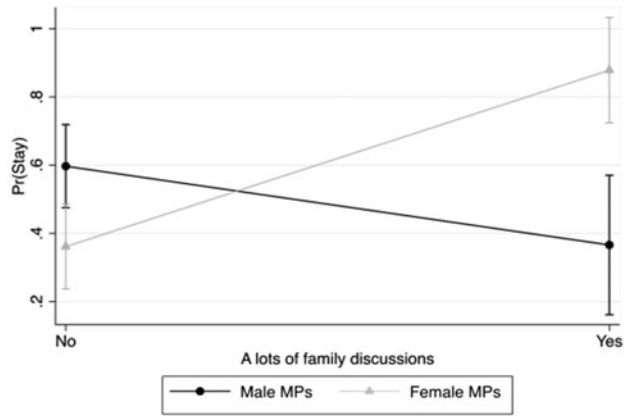


FIGURE 2. Interaction between gender and family discussion, Sweden.

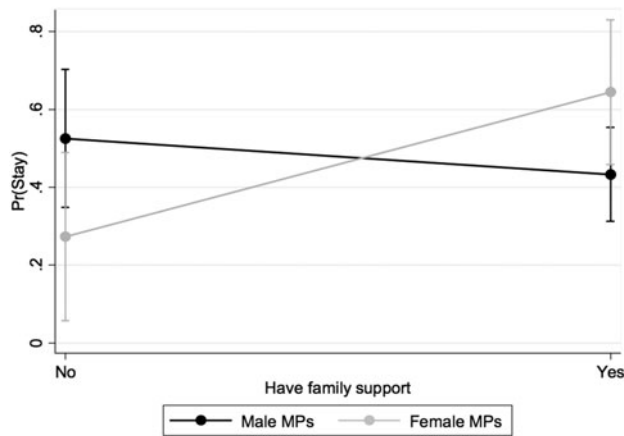


FIGURE 3. Interaction between gender and family support, Spain.

for female Spanish and Swedish MPs. We can see that different combinations of the four aforementioned factors focusing on family burdens and a politically engaged socialization produce different results in each case.²¹ With regard to Sweden, the most favorable situation for females’ political ambition is that in which women have children,

21. The probabilities have been calculated keeping the rest of variables in the model at their actual values. In other words, these are average of the predictions, not predictions at the average. Hence, the cell entries represent the average of the probability of considering staying in politics within 10 years among actual persons in the data.

Table 3. Predicted probabilities after Model 2, [Table 2](#)

Swedish Female MPs					Spanish Female MPs				
Children	Family Support	Discussed Politics a Lot	Active Parents	Predicted Probabilities	Children	Family Support	Discussed Politics a Lot	Active Parents	Predicted Probabilities
V	V	V	V	.87	V	V	V	V	.58
X	V	V	V	.83	X	V	V	V	.64
V	X	V	V	.73	V	X	V	V	.21
V	V	X	V	.42	V	V	X	V	.45
V	V	V	X	.91	V	V	V	X	.77
X	X	V	V	.51	X	X	V	V	.26
V	V	X	X	.67	V	V	X	X	.66
X	X	X	X	.26	X	X	X	X	.33
Average predicted probabilities .52					Average predicted probabilities .48				

familial support, and were born or socialized in families that used to discuss politics a lot but in which their parents were not actively involved in politics (91% probability of considering staying in politics over the following 10 years). Conversely, the most detrimental combination for women's political ambitions is that in which a representative has neither children nor family support nor a politicized background. If we look more closely at the contribution of each one of these factors or the combination of them, we see that a low or medium level of political discussion at home when growing up — as opposed to a high level — is the variable that causes the greater change in probabilities (a reduction of 49 percentage points compared with the most beneficial combination of factors). This situation, however, predicts a 42% chance of considering a political career 10 years from now, which is only 10% less than the average probability for the whole sample.

If we move to the Spanish case, we see that the most beneficial situation for females' political ambitions is one in which women have children, have familial support, and often discussed politics while growing up, combined with parents who were not politically engaged. This is the same situation as in Sweden, although it only yields a 77% probability of being "ambitious." If we consider a situation in which parents were actively involved in politics, the probability goes down to 58%. Taking this last scenario as a baseline, we see that not having children increases the chances of being ambitious by 6 percentage points. Lacking frequent political discussion at home is definitely detrimental because it reduces the chances of being ambitious by 13 percentage points. Clearly, however, the most detrimental situation for Spanish females' ambitions is that in which the representative has children and claims to not have familial support. With this being the case, a female MP would only have a 21% probability of being willing to stay in politics over the following 10 years. Family support is the crucial variable here. It is so important that the probabilities of considering a long political career are almost equally low for women with (21%) and without children (26%) if they lack this support.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article, we addressed gender differences with regard to MPs' political ambitions in two European countries. The aim was to push the boundaries of the research on the gender gap and political ambition, which has mostly focused on U.S. candidates and their willingness to run for office, testing

classical explanations for this gender gap based on political socialization patterns and family dynamics, as well as bringing forth new explanations, such as the role of the welfare state on downplaying or fostering the explanatory power of such factors.

For this purpose, we compared Spanish and Swedish representatives. We found that there are no significant differences among male and female MPs in Sweden with regard to their willingness to stay in politics in the long run. However, Spanish female MPs are, comparatively, slightly more ambitious than their male counterparts. More precisely, we found that 55% of female MPs plan to stay in politics in the forthcoming 10 years, while only 44% of male MPs have the same ambition. Although this came as a surprise, these data should probably be interpreted in the light of gender roles and political culture in the two countries. For Spanish women, it is — and had been especially so up to 2008 — harder to be placed on the electoral lists in a position that allows them to become MPs. Thus, it makes sense that a greater dose of ambition is still required for women. The gender gap in favor of Spanish female MPs will persist once women make their way to their parliamentary seats. This is also consistent with previous research on entrepreneurial attitudes. According to this literature, countries scoring high on the masculinity index, such as Spain, have clearly distinct gender roles (men expected to be assertive, competitive, tough, and goal oriented; women expected to be modest, cooperative, empathic, and tender), and people in managerial roles are expected to have stereotypical masculine qualities (Mueller and Dato-On 2008). Following this line of thought, female elected politicians would be expected to possess some stereotypical masculine traits — in this case, greater ambition — to adapt to a masculine world.

We hypothesized that female Spanish MPs face higher costs and make greater sacrifices in their private lives if they want to have a political career. This assumption was based on the fact that women in Spain have difficulties combining family life and a career because women, to a larger extent than men, are responsible for the care of children, the sick, and the elderly. Given the development of an egalitarian welfare state in Sweden, we assumed that this trade-off would be less prevalent there. A test of the equality of proportions showed that Spanish female MPs are less likely to have children and a partner than their male counterparts, whereas the opposite is true in Sweden, where female MPs are more likely to have a partner and children. Hence, Spanish female representatives are not only more ambitious than their male counterparts or their Swedish colleagues, but also they make greater sacrifices in order

to get into parliament. Although the relationship between gender and family variables is probably moderated by age (younger MPs are less likely to have a family), this is in line with the aforementioned finding on Spanish female MPs being the most ambitious subsample in our research. This also opens the door to considering family arrangements and dynamics as a plausible explanatory factor for a gender gap regarding political ambitions.

The next step was to study the importance of political socialization and family support for women's long-term ambitions. On the basis of history, culture, and the welfare state institutions of each country, we advanced two main hypotheses. First, political socialization is a factor that encourages women's long-term ambitions, and this should be especially important for women in a country such as Spain, with a relatively recent authoritarian and traditionalist regime that would be related to more within-individual variation regarding active socialization patterns.²² We also advanced the hypothesis that familial support should be of greater importance for female MPs in a country with more traditional gender roles entrenched in its political culture and less intense welfare state policies fostering females' participation in public life. Only one of these two hypotheses was supported by our analyses, however. As expected, female MPs in Spain depend on family support. Women with family support are more ambitious than women who are not encouraged and backed by their families. The importance of familial support for female MPs in Sweden, on the other hand, is of lesser significance. This lends support to the idea that the independence and ambition of female Swedish politicians result from the combination of culture and welfare state institutions.

However, we detected the opposite pattern for political socialization, as female MPs in Sweden are more ambitious if they grew up in a home with lively political discussions. A politicized family background does not seem to be of relevance for female MPs' ambitions in Spain. Furthermore, having parents that had been involved in politics seems to predict a lower willingness to stay in politics, especially in Spain. We find this intriguing, and the result deserves the attention of further research.

Our research suggests that it is either the political culture or the welfare state explanation — or both — that explains why Swedish female MPs do

22. The standard deviation of this variable (see the online appendix) contradicts this expectation. This statistic is almost identical in both countries (and even slightly lower for Spain). Maybe our assumption that there should be more variation regarding active socialization in Spain than in Sweden would work for regular citizens, but not for elected politicians.

not need familial support in order to envision themselves running for office in the long run. In this manner, our work contributes to an ongoing discussion of how supply factors relate to women's underrepresentation. Individual factors such as political socialization and family dynamics help explain the political ambition gender gap, but these depend in turn on the institutional and cultural contexts. Women's motivation reacts to the expectations that come with the role of MP, but also to contextual incentives, benefiting from either public or private support, and ultimately predicting their resilience as politicians and probably their success and their likelihood of achieving important offices. Naturally, we would like to have enough second-level units (countries) to put contextual hypotheses to empirical test, but these, as many other causes and combinations related to female MPs' ambitions, are beyond the scope of these pages.

Previous research has been conducted in a presidential system (United States) with an electoral system focusing on individual candidates. In contrast, our study gives attention to parliamentary systems with strong political parties and where politicians and candidates are less likely to be known to their voters (Holmberg 2009). Our research therefore deals with processes and attitudes that go unnoticed as compared to the nomination and selection of candidates in presidential systems, which adds value to our work. On the other hand, we do believe that our results tell a simple story. The recent intense incorporation of women into the Spanish parliament has resulted in ambitious female politicians, especially when taking into account that they are usually younger than their male counterparts. This being said, to be an ambitious female politician in Spain is conditioned: candidates must fight harder than men in order to establish a family and are still more dependent on familial support in order to fulfill their career ambitions.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

To view supplementary material for this article, please visit <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X16000416>

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