Rules of Engagement?

Party Membership Costs, New Forms of Party Affiliation, and Partisan Participation

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Party Membership Costs, New Forms of Party Affiliation, and Partisan Participation

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1. Political Parties as Voluntary Organizations: Quantitative and Qualitative Changes

In many countries, joining a political party is a time-honored way for citizens to express their political views and get politically engaged. At least since the middle of the twentieth century, most political parties in parliamentary democracies have maintained their own voluntary organizations as part of their efforts to identify and mobilize their supporters. Yet these traditions seem increasingly endangered. For the past twenty-five years, comparative studies of party membership have identified a downward trend in party enrollments (Katz and Mair 1992; Scarrow 2000; Mair and van Biezen 2001; van Biezen et al. 2012). Even so, questions remain about the extent and causes of the changes, because within-country variations are big, and the trends at the party level are far from uniform (Delwit 2011; Kölln 2014).

Part of the difficulty in explaining cross-party variation is that most explanations of declining membership focus on the supply-side, i.e. on potential members (Norris 2002). Whilst these supply-side explanations can partly account for the general decline of party membership and activism, they cannot explain why this trend affects some political parties more than others. Interparty differences within countries cannot be the result of national political culture, party subsidies, institutional design or proximity of elections; instead, party-level factors probably play an important role in mediating the impact of cultural change. This calls for demand-side approaches. These approaches stress that parties are not powerless in the face of societal changes. They assume that parties design strategies to attract and retain members and other affiliates, and that some of these strategies are more successful than others. Another reason to adopt a demand-side approach is because the numerical story does not fully describe ongoing changes in parties' extra-parliamentary organizations. Some contemporary parties in many countries are lowering their membership requirements and/or introducing new affiliation options (Scarrow 2014; Gauja 2015), and are ascribing increasing rights to their individual members; one result of these changes is a growing demand-side variation in the appeals that parties make to prospective members.

In adopting a demand-side approach to ongoing changes in parties' grassroots organizations, this paper investigates the impact of party affiliation rules. The basis of our investigation is the new Political Party Database (the PPDB), a project which is the product of a multi-country research network. The Round 1 release of this database contains information on the structures, resources

and practices of 121 extra-parliamentary parties in 19 countries. With over 300 variables, the data present a detailed portrait of organizational life in these parties during the 2011-2014 period.[1] The database offers scholars unique opportunities to investigate the impact of parties' organizational decisions.

In this paper we first use the data from the PPDB to document party affiliation rules, charting the changing nature of party membership in contemporary parliamentary democracies. We examine the extent to which political parties are offering alternative options for partisan affiliation, as well as what it means to acquire traditional party membership today. We then explore the impact of these affiliation rules on the number of party members and party affiliates, and on the level of party member activism. In particular, we examine whether the costs of membership act as a filter, with "cheap" enrollment costs likely yielding a membership that is less politically engaged. In doing so, this paper goes beyond the familiar numerical story. As these investigations will show, new forms of party affiliation may allow parties to connect with different types of supporters, but also to raise the level of activism among their traditional members. In this sense, the story of parties' organizational change is much more complex than a simple tale of decline.

2. Varieties of Party Affiliation

When establishing and maintaining their voluntary organizations, political parties make decisions about how they want to link with their supporters. They set rules regarding party affiliation, and these rules differ across parties, as well as within single parties over time (Heidar 1994; Scarrow 1996; van Haute 2011; Scarrow 2014). As a result, the terms *party affiliation* and *party member* have always covered a wide variety of relationships between individuals and organizations. Political parties have historically maintained multiple types of formal and informal links with their closest supporters, including direct membership and membership through collateral organizations. Whereas direct members join the party itself, indirect members join another organization that is affiliated with the party (Panebianco 1988). This could be a non-party organization, such as a trade union, a co-op, or a farmer's organization, or it could be a party-sponsored organization, such as a women's group or youth group. Direct membership has itself varied greatly in both its formality, and its accessibility. Indeed, one observer concluded,

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[1] For more information about the PPDB project, please see "Party Rules, Party Resources, and the Politics of Parliamentary Democracies: How Parties Organize in the 21st Century," Thomas Poguntke, Susan Scarrow and Paul D. Webb, paper presented at ECPR General Conference, Montreal, August 2015.

"It is less easy to define a member of a political party than of any major organization" (von Beyme 1985: 168). Parties set the rules for formal direct party membership. They set up the system of dues, the conditions for membership, and the procedures by which party members formally join the organization. These represent the financial and procedural costs of joining in the perspective of the individuals, that is, the barriers to entry.

Given past variations in the construction of party membership, it is no surprise that such relations continue to evolve. These differences may well affect the appeal of membership. For instance, in recent years many parties have been reducing the costs of acquiring traditional direct membership. One commonly-used device has been to lower the procedural costs of joining, making it possible to acquire membership through the party webpage, rather than requiring contact to a local party branch. Another cost-reducing device has involved setting minimum membership dues at low levels, i.e. reducing financial costs of joining (van Haute and Gauja 2015). In a different vein, some parties have introduced alternative affiliation categories for supporters who may shy away from the commitment of full membership, including guest membership, or opportunities to register as a party friend or sympathizer (Katz and Mair 1995; Krouwel 2006). These alternatives could be collectively described as various types of "membership lite" (Scarrow 2014). Parties are also taking advantage of new social media, web pages and blogs to connect with supporters in other ways, encouraging them to provide contact information to party outlets, thus enabling the party to send them Facebook updates, Twitter messages, blog posts or the like. These new types of affiliation carry neither the rights nor the obligations of traditional party membership, but they do resemble it in some other crucial ways: self-identified supporters voluntarily connect with a party, and the party is able to use this connection to message with, and mobilize, its supporters. Parties may view these alternative affiliations as first steps towards traditional membership, or as destinations in themselves. The spectrum of connected supporters, from traditional members through Facebook friends and Twitter followers, can collectively be described as *party affiliates*.

Before turning to the analyses of the implications of the party affiliation rules on party participation, we examine how parties in the PPDB now approach issues of affiliation, looking at the breadth of affiliation options, and at the financial and procedural costs of traditional party membership. The strongest --if unsurprising-- finding is that direct individual membership (*traditional membership*) is the norm in our sample. It is available in all but one of the 121

parties in the PPDB. However, when it comes to non-traditional forms of affiliation, 39 parties, or just under one third of the 121 parties, recognize some category of "membership lite".

We now turn to the variations in the financial and procedural costs of traditional membership. Formal party membership has generally been distinguished by established enrollment procedures and regular dues payments. In the PPDB universe, the vast majority (84%) of the national parties set uniform minimum dues rates, but 20 parties do not.[2] Those who do not still expect members to pay dues, but leave it to regional or local parties to set the rate. After converting all dues to a standard Euro rate, we see wide variation in the minimum dues rates[3] for membership (Table 1), ranging from a very affordable €1.3 (Jobbik in Hungary) to €110.5 for the most expensive (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy in the Netherlands). To take account of the wide cost-of-living disparities in our countries, we also standardize these minimum annual dues rates in terms of each country's average annual wages. This gives a slightly different picture of cost differences, with dues rates ranging from 0.01% of annual average wage (Belgium: Christian Democratic and Flemish; Canada: Bloc Québécois; Sweden: Liberal People's Party) to 0.4% (Netherlands: People's Party for Freedom and Democracy).

Table 1. Absolute and Relative Financial costs of Party Membership

	Dues (in euro)	Dues / Average wage (%)
Minimum	1.3	0.01
Maximum	110.5	0.4
Average	28.2	0.1

Source: PPDB; Note: average monthly wage 2011 based on Database International Labour Organization (gross average nominal monthly wages per country), multiplied by 12; exchange rate 09/20//2014

In addition to requiring dues payment, parties have traditionally differed in terms of the procedures for gaining membership. Some have made it easy to acquire; some have set additional barriers, such as requiring sponsorship by an existing member, or requiring prospective members to sign a statement of support for party principles (Scarrow 1996;

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[2] Including all of the Australian parties: The Greens, National Party, Liberal Party, Labor Party; Austria: The Greens, People's Party; Canada: New Democratic Party; Czech Republic: Christian Democratic Union, Civic Democratic Party; Israel: Balad, Shas, Hadash, Agudat Yisrael; Netherlands: Reformed Political Party, Party for Freedom; Portugal: Communist Party; Ecologist Party "The Greens"; Sweden: Christian Democrats, Moderate Party, Social Democrats.

[3] The minimum dues rate is defined as the minimum standard rate for working adults. It does not include reduced rates for the unwaged, youth, seniors, etc.

Detterbeck 2005; Sandri and Pauwels 2011). In our sample, we find only limited use of these two membership hurdles (Table 2). Of the 117 parties for which there was data, only 13 imposed a probationary period,[4] while 11 parties required members to be sponsored by an existing member.[5] Only one party, the Basque National Party, imposed both requirements. Many parties imposed only lower barriers, such as requiring would-be members to actively affirm party principles, or prohibiting them from holding simultaneous membership in another party (exclusivity). Furthermore, almost a quarter of the parties enabled prospective members to conduct the enrollment process completely online, thus reducing the procedural costs of joining. For supporters wishing to join these parties, enrollment could be a spur-of-the-moment decision completed in minutes, rather than one which required them to mail in forms or find the officers of their local party branch.

Table 2. Procedural Costs of Party Membership

	% Parties Applying Procedural Costs	N Parties
Probationary period	11	13
Sponsorship by member	9	11
Agreement with principles, program or statutes	70	83
Exclusivity	82	98
Online membership	23	28

Source: PPDB.

In sum, at the beginning of the twenty-first century party membership looks a bit different than the portraits of membership parties painted in the middle of the twentieth century. In most parties, membership is individual (not corporate), it is maintained by the national party, and it is associated with dues payment. Parties vary more in how easy they make it to obtain and retain traditional membership, and in the extent to which they offer alternative affiliation options. These are the types of differences we would expect if we conceive of parties as strategic actors, ones which alter the terms of membership according to the size and type of membership they

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[4] Australia: The Greens; Belgium -Ecolo; Canada: Green Party; Denmark: Danish People's Party; Ireland: Sinn Féin, Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour Party, Green Party; Italy: Northern League; Netherlands: GreenLeft, Christian Democratic Appeal; Spain: Basque National Party.
[5] Hungary: Socialist Party, Hungarian Civic Alliance, Political Can Be Different; Poland: Polish People's Party, Democratic Left Alliance; Portugal: Communist Party, Socialist Party, Social Democratic Party; Spain: Basque Nationalist Party, People's Party, Democratic Convergence of Catalonia.

wish to attract. In the remaining sections of this paper we explore whether these differences have political consequences, looking for evidence of whether *how* parties construct membership affects *who* chooses to affiliate. Such differences could show up in membership numbers, and/or in patterns of participation.

3. The Impact of Party Affiliation: Some Expectations

If party affiliation provides a crucial linkage between citizens and those who govern, does the form of these linkages matter, or are all forms of linkage equal in their impact? We start our investigation by laying out our expectations about how parties' use of affiliation options may affect participatory behaviors. When looking at party affiliation, we look at our two dimensions of party affiliation: the barriers to entry and the breadth of affiliation. From a supply-side perspective, at the individual level, this means that citizens have to assess these two dimensions when entering a relationship with a party organization: (1) which costs would they have to pay for formal membership? and (2) which affiliation option(s) could they choose among those offered by the party organization? When looking at participatory behaviors, we look at direct membership and party member activism, and direct affiliation only – the types of affiliation for which individuals directly bear the costs.

Turning to the hypotheses, we first focus on the impact of the financial and procedural costs of membership, and then on the impact of the breadth of party affiliation. First, we assume that affiliation rules act like a sieve, with narrower openings admitting only those who already are likely to be politically active. This argument is often developed in models of party organizations (Katz and Mair 1995; Krouwel 2006) but it has never been subject to a systematic cross-national empirical test. Higher financial and procedural barriers will deter some supporters who might otherwise decide to join. This is a relative effect, and it may be evident even if the barriers to entry are rather low in substantive terms. In regard to the financial costs, even at the top end, the real cost of party membership is quite low compared to many consumer goods; hence, from an economic standpoint we would not expect to see big differences in market appeal due to real costs. However, it is possible that these prices have a symbolic effect, and that different types of supporters join as the price of membership becomes almost free.

> Hypothesis 1 (H_1): Parties with higher financial and procedural membership costs have lower success in enrolling their voters as members.

However, we do not expect the barriers to entry to impact the overall number of affiliates the party is able to attract. We expect that potential members who are unwilling to bear the higher costs of traditional membership will find other (cheaper) ways to affiliate, but in sum, no more affiliates are recruited.

> Hypothesis 2 (H$_2$): Parties with higher financial and procedural membership costs do not have a higher overall number of affiliates.

We also assume that those (fewer) members willing to pay higher costs to enter a party are more committed and hence more disposed to also pay the opportunity costs of participating in party activities. This party-level factor is often ignored in the explanatory models of party membership and activism that rely heavily on individual-level factors inspired by models of political participation (Whiteley et al. 1994; Whiteley and Seyd 1996; Gallagher et al. 2002; Whiteley and Seyd 2002). Parties may spur activism by making membership more exclusive.

> Hypothesis 3 (H$_3$): Parties with higher financial and procedural membership costs have higher levels of party member activism.

We now turn to the expectations of the impact of increasing breadth of affiliation. Parties potentially provide various types of affiliation to citizens: direct and indirect, member, supporter, friend, social media followers, instant members, etc. Individuals may therefore face a choice of how to affiliate to their preferred party. First, we expect that parties are able to recruit fewer individuals as formal members when other types of affiliation are available. These forms of "membership lite" have lower costs and are hence expected to be more accessible for citizens than formal membership. Potential members are less likely to enroll as party members if they have other affiliation options that they may engage in instead. Instead of joining the party to show support, get access to information and be active, potential members may affiliate as "friend" or "supporter" and get the same out of it. Some potential members opt for the less demanding affiliation when available, whereas this is not an option in parties that allow only formal party membership. On that basis, parties will recruit fewer formal members.

> Hypothesis 4 (H$_4$): Parties offering more modes of affiliation have lower success in enrolling their voters as members.

Secondly, we expect that the recruiting impact of broader affiliation options will not be able to offset the decline in traditional party membership. Potential affiliates have the options of party membership and lighter versions, but in sum, no more affiliates are recruited.

> Hypothesis 5 (H_5): Parties offering more modes of affiliation do not have a higher overall number of affiliates.

In regard to the impact of the breadth of party affiliation on traditional party member activism, we expect that increasing breadth will result in a higher level of party member activism. The reason is that the proliferation of affiliation options makes traditional membership more expensive relative to other options. Therefore we expect the "sieve" effect to work. When cheaper options are available, only the more motivated voters become party members. Increasing the breadth of affiliation options should lead to a traditional membership that is more active (though smaller). Furthermore, it could be argued that otherwise inactive traditional party members may be mobilized to activism by some of the "lighter" partisan activities offered to affiliates. For example if a lively Facebook site, aiming at mobilizing supporters, also mobilizes party members who would otherwise not have been active.

> Hypothesis 6 (H_6): Parties offering more modes of affiliation have higher levels of party member activism.

We explore the implications of the variations in party affiliation for partisan participation both at the party and the individual levels. Table 3 presents the overview of the hypotheses.

Table 3. Overview of Hypotheses

	Aggregate-Level			Individual-Level	
	Party Membership (M/V)	**Party Affiliation (A/V)**	**Party Member Activism (AACT)**	**Party Membership (IPM)**	**Party Member Activism (IACT)**
Financial and Procedural Costs increasing	Decreasing (H_1)	No effect (H_2)	Increasing (H_3)	Decreasing (H_1)	Increasing (H_3)
Breadth of affiliation increasing	Decreasing (H_4)	No effect (H_5)	Increasing (H_6)	Decreasing (H_4)	Increasing (H_6)

Before turning to the analyses of these expectations about the connection between party affiliation rules and participatory behaviors we introduce the methods and data which enable us to do this in the following section.

4. How Much Do Affiliation Costs Vary?

Our main question is whether party affiliation rules affect partisan participation. As noted above, our primary data source for this analysis is the PPDB, covering 121 parties in 19 countries. For each party, we have selected the most recent case in the database. We begin by describing the extent of variation in the costs of acquiring traditional party membership.[6] To assess our first independent variable --costs of affiliation--, we use two measures. Financial costs (FINCO) are measured by the minimum dues for formal membership expressed in euros, as a proportion of the average income in the country. It ranges from 0% to 100% of income dedicated to membership dues. Procedural costs (PROCO) are measured by a scale combining five indicators. The scale ranges from 0 (no procedural costs) to 5 (maximum procedural costs).

We operationalize our second independent variable --breadth of affiliation (BREAFF)--, as a dichotomous variable coded 0 if the party allows only formal membership, and 1 if the party also offers an alternative affiliation option, such as party "friend" or "registered sympathizer".

As shown in Table 4, there is a country effect on all our independent variables. This suggests a strong within-country contagion effect of affiliation rules. This may be due to the fact that parties compete in a closed national market, which gives them strong incentives to align their behavior. This is not a classic cartel, because potential party members are probably very brand sensitive (i.e., they will not join a particular party merely because it has the lowest price). Nevertheless, parties appear to be reluctant to set a minimum price that deviates greatly from those of their competitors.

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[6] A detailed description of each index is provided in Appendix.

Table 4. Average Breadth and Costs of Affiliation across Parties, by Country

Country	FINCO (0-100)[1]	PROCO (0-5)[2]	BREAFF (0-1)[3]
Australia	0.18	2.1	0.25
Austria	0.08	1.4	0.00
Belgium	0.04	1.9	0.45
Canada	0.03	2.2	0.00
Czech Republic	0.14	2.6	0.20
Denmark	0.08	0.9	0.00
France	0.10	1.5	0.50
Germany	0.20	1.8	0.86
Hungary	0.07	3.6	1.00
Ireland	0.05	3.2	0.40
Israel	0.06	2.4	0.00
Italy	0.08	2.3	1.00
Netherlands	0.15	1.9	0.40
Norway	0.06	2.3	0.00
Poland	0.05	2.2	0.50
Portugal	0.10	3.3	0.17
Spain	0.21	3.8	0.80
Sweden	0.04	0.7	0.00
United Kingdom	0.10	1.9	0.29
Total	0.09	2.1	0.32

Source: PPDB; Note: difference between groups determined by one-way ANOVA; 1: F=5.03; p=.000; 2: F=10.15; p=.000; 3: F=5.10; p=.000

In contrast to these cross-country differences, party families show no statistically significant differences in terms of costs and breadth of affiliation (Table 5).

Table 5. Distribution of Costs and Breadth of Affiliation by Party Family

Party Family	FINCO (%)	PROCO (0-5)	BREAFF (0-1)
Christian Democrats/Conservatives	0.11	2.2	0.3
Social Democrats	0.09	2.1	0.4
Liberals	0.10	2.0	0.3
Greens	0.07	2.4	0.3
Left Socialists	0.08	2.4	0.2
Right-wing (populists)	0.07	1.6	0.2
Far right (extreme right)	0.04	2.1	0.4
Total	0.09	2.1	0.3

Source: PPDB; Note: difference between groups determined by one-way ANOVA with all p>.05

How much do these differences matter? We assess their impact by looking at three main dimensions of partisan participation: the number of party members, the number of party affiliates more broadly defined, and the behavior of those who choose to affiliate. We investigate these relations looking at both aggregate and individual-level data.

At the aggregate level, the first dependent variable is the relative number of party members (M/V). We use party voters as the denominator (rather than total electorate) to roughly control for the relative political appeal of the various political parties. The M/V ratio ranges from 0% (PVV in the Netherlands) to 97% for the Portuguese Communist Party. On average, the parties included in our sample display a M/V ratio of 7%, meaning that about 7 out of 100 of their voters are members of the party.

The second dependent variable is the relative number of party affiliates (A/V). We use Facebook likes as a proxy estimate of parties' success in getting supporters to share their contact information with the party and to use social media to show support. Of course, some members will have liked the party's Facebook page, so this measure undoubtedly includes some double-counting, but this effect should be similar for all parties. The A/V ratio ranges from 0.5% for the Conservative Party in Canada to 97% for the Portuguese Communist Party. The average proportion of affiliates is 12%, meaning that parties as a group manage to affiliate on average more than 1 voter out of 10.

The third dependent variable is the average level of party activism (AACT) which ranges from 26% in the Israeli Kadima to 87% in Die Linke in Germany. Among parties in our sample, the average level of declared activism is 60%. This may seem like a lot, but it is mainly due to our very low threshold to be considered as active in the party, namely having attended a party meeting within a year, devoting time to the party or declaring that they have been active.

At the individual level, we measure partisan participation based on ESS data.[7] Individual party membership (IPM) is measured by a dichotomous variable coded 0 if the individual is not a member of a political party, and 1 if (s)he is. The individual level of party activism is measured by a dichotomous variable coded 0 if the individual has not been active in a political party in the last 12 months, and 1 if (s)he has been active.

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[7] Round 5 (Wave 2010/11) – this round covers 14 of the 19 countries included in the PPDB data. It includes individual-level information on partisan participation for 88 parties for which we have PPDB information.

We now turn to the analyses of the impact of party affiliation rules on partisan participation. In the first section below, section 5, we analyze the impact of party affiliation rules (financial costs, procedural costs, and breadth of affiliation) on aggregate levels of partisan participation. Section 6 investigates the impact of these factors at the individual level.

5. Party affiliation rules and Partisan Participation: Aggregate-Level Analyses

In this section we test our hypotheses concerning the impact of financial costs, procedural costs, and breadth of affiliation on aggregate levels of partisan participation. In order to do so, we run three separate sets of linear regression analyses,[8] testing the impact of our independent variables on our three dimensions of partisan participation (relative number of members, relative number of affiliates, and average aggregate level of activism).

First, we look at the effect of party affiliation rules on the relative number of members (Table 6). At the aggregate level there is not evidence that either financial or procedural costs set by parties affect their capacity to mobilize their electorate (H_1 not supported). Parties with lower fees or easier membership procedures are not more successful in mobilizing their basis than parties with higher barriers. However, in line with our expectations about the effects of cheaper affiliation alternatives, we find that parties with a friend affiliation option have lower M/V ratios (H_4 supported). When membership 'lite' options are available, fewer voters choose formal membership.

Table 6. Effects of Party Affiliation Rules on Party Membership Ratios, Aggregate Level

	Model 1	Model 2
FINCO	-0.079 (9.534)	
PROCO	-0.061 (0.700)	
BREAFF		-0.171* (2.154)
Constant	7.256 (1.792)	7.875*** (1.249)
R^2	0.010	
N	102	110

Source: PPDB; Sign.: ***p<.001; **p<.01; *p<.05.

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[8] Given the low number of cases in these regressions, we are not able to control for the country or party family effects.

As Table 7 shows, there is no relation between the financial and procedural costs of traditional membership and the overall number of affiliates (traditional members plus other affiliates). This matches our expectations that traditional membership costs do not alter the size of the total pool of likely affiliates (H_2 supported). Similarly, as we expected, parties with more affiliation options do not have more affiliates (H_5 supported). This implies that parties opening up do not seem to be more capable of attracting more citizens with their various affiliation modes: they do not attract more affiliates than parties that do not open up, even if they tend to have fewer members. What this does not tell us is whether these new strategies are completely ineffective, because it may be that parties which experiment with new affiliation options were the smallest to begin with. To get a true sense of the tradeoffs between these options we would need to have longitudinal data at the party level for various types of affiliation; lacking that, what we can say is that our data suggest that lighter affiliation options are not the cure for decreasing memberships.

Table 7. Effects of Party Affiliation Rules on Party Affiliation Ratios, Aggregate Level

	Model 1	Model 2
FINCO	-0.044 (19.149)	
PROCO	-0.068 (1.406)	
BREAFF		-0.102 (3.054)
Constant	14.080*** (3.600)	13.128*** (1.771)
R^2	0.06	0.010
N	102	110

Source: PPDB; Sign.: ***$p<.001$; **$p<.01$; *$p<.05$.

Lastly, in Table 8 we see as expected that parties offering alternative affiliation options have a higher overall level of intra-party activism (H_6 supported). The costs of membership partially affect the level of intra-party activity of members once they have joined. Parties with higher fees also have higher average levels of party member activism. Higher fees may act as an incentive for members to make the most of their membership once they have joined. However, having more procedural requirements does not seem to have a similar effect, perhaps because dues costs are recurring, whereas procedural costs are paid only a single time (H_3 partially supported).
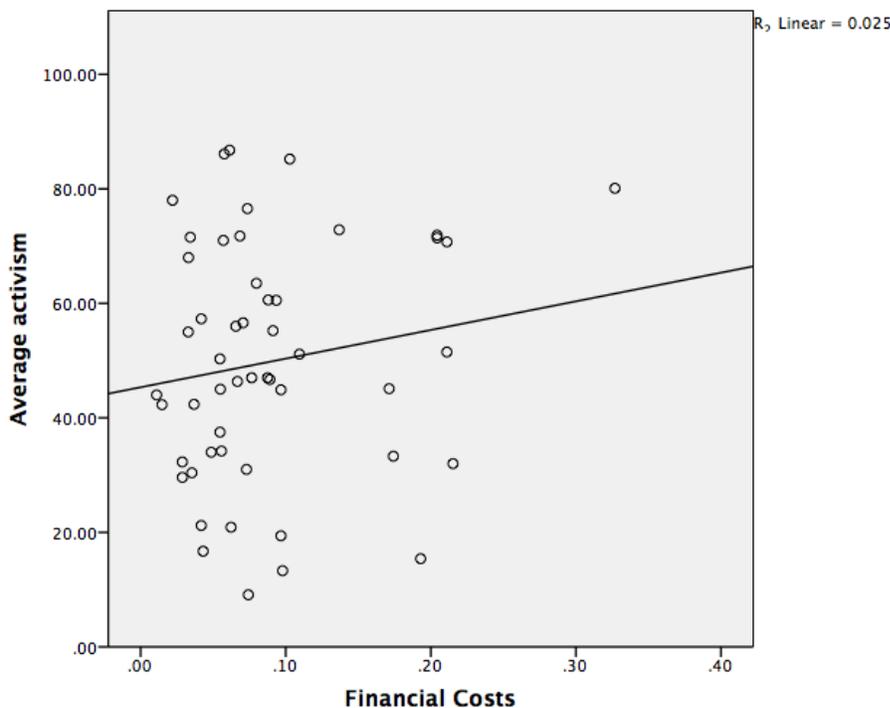
Table 8. Effects of Party Affiliation Rules on Party Activism, Aggregate Level

	Model 1	Model 2
FINCO	0.365* (42.371)	
PROCO	-0.158 (3.695)	
BREAFF		0.495** (5.959)
Constant	59.381*** (8.491)	56.590*** (2.934)
R^2	0.173	
N	32	33

Source: PPDB; Sign.: ***$p<.001$; **$p<.01$; *$p<.05$.

Figure 1 illustrates the positive relationship between financial costs and party member activism.

Figure 1. Financial costs and average level of party activism

Overall, these aggregate-level results point toward a limited impact of party affiliation rules on partisan participation. They offer more evidence of impact on the behavior of those who join (there is a more active membership when relative costs are higher) than on the overall numbers

15

of members or affiliates. As shown in the descriptive analysis, parties have overall rather low financial costs of affiliation, and there is a great deal of within-country similarity regarding membership costs (though there is some variation by party family). Given the low number of cases and the low variance in financial costs, we find it all the more striking to find this aggregate-level evidence of the theoretically predicted impact of party affiliation rules. Do we find similar patterns at the individual level?

6. Party affiliation rules and Partisan Participation: Individual-Level Analyses[9]

In this section we re-visit our hypotheses concerning the impact of party affiliation rules, this time evaluating them in light of individual-level data from ESS. Given the dichotomous character of our dependent variables, we run logit regression analyses, testing the impact of our independent variables on our two dimensions of individual partisan participation party membership and party activism). To account for some of the other factors that might influence participation, we control for individual resources that are commonly linked with political participation, including age, gender, educational level, and income. We also include country dummies (not shown), to account for country-specific patterns of mobilization, and country-specific political events which might affect political participation (including election campaigns).

First, we look at the effect of party affiliation rules on the probability of being a party member. As Table 9 shows, the patterns of affiliation partially match our expectations. Model 1 shows that there are negative relations between financial costs and individual membership, with higher real dues rates associated with a lower probability of being a party member. However, there is no relationship between procedural costs and individual party membership, contrary to our expectations (H_1 partially supported). At the aggregate level, there is no relationship between costs and party membership; hence, the results at the individual level only partly match our findings at the aggregate level. Model 2 examines the relation between the breadth of affiliation and individual party membership. Here we also expect to see a negative relationship, assuming that with broader affiliation options, some supporters who might otherwise become traditional

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members may choose looser affiliation options. Once again, the ESS data support this expectation (H$_4$ supported), matching what we found at the aggregate level with the MAPP data.

Table 9. Effects of Party Affiliation Rules on Individual Party Membership

	Model 1		Model 2	
Age	0.005	***	0.004	***
	(0.001)		(0.001)	
Gender	0.582	***	0.595	***
	(0.087)		(0.083)	
Income	0.033		0.030	
	(0.017)		(0.016)	
Education level	0.023	*	0.024	*
	(0.012)		(0.011)	
FINCO	-1.688	*		
	(0.822)			
PROCO	0.006			
	(0.084)			
BREAFF			-0.268	*
			(0.121)	
Intercept	-3.363	***	-3.281	***
	(0.263)		(0.204)	
	N=11,386		N=12,234	

Source: ESS (Round 5)/PPDB; Sign.: ***p<.001; **p<.01; *p<.05; Note: sample based on respondents who voted for the parties included in our analyses in that election.

We turn next to the questions concerning the activity levels of those who do join a party: are party members more likely to be active in a party if it costs them more to join the party? As Table 10 shows, we do not find evidence of any link between membership costs (procedural or financial) and the likelihood that individuals will be active within a party (H$_3$ not supported). This partly differs from our findings at the aggregate level, where we observed a positive effect of financial costs on membership activism levels. However, we do see the expected positive relationship between affiliation breadth and party member activism. This confirms again our findings at the aggregate level. Both individual ESS data and aggregate MAPP data point in the same direction: parties with broader affiliation options might have fewer members, but these members are individually more active.

Table 10. Effects of Party Affiliation Rules on Individual Party Activism

	Model 1		Model 2	
Age	-0.011	*	-0.012	
	(0.005)		(0.005)	
Gender	0.265		0.291	*
	(0.179)		(0.172)	
Income	0.087	*	0.082	
	(0.036)		(0.035)	
Education	0.301		0.029	
	(0.024)		(0.023)	
FINCO	0.172			
	(2.073)			
PROCO	0.006			
	(0.172)			
BREAFF			0.705	*
			(0.251)	
(Intercept)	-0.803		-0.943	**
	(0.619)		(0.510)	
	N=649		N=721	

Source: ESS (Round 5)/PPDB; Sign.: ***p<.001; **p<.01; *p<.05; Note: sample based on respondents who are party members for parties in the PPDB set.

7. Conclusion

This paper has advocated adopting a demand side approach to explaining party memberships, arguing that taking account of party agency and party initiatives will lead to a more rounded understanding of changes in party membership. We have used this approach to try to parse the impact of parties' recent changes in how they construct party membership. The purpose of this paper was therefore first to document the diversity of party affiliation rules on the basis of data from the 121 parties in the PPDB. We showed that there is substantial diversity among parties in terms of affiliation options. Whereas all but one party offers the traditional party membership, one third also offer a lighter version, such as registered party friends. We also found measurable variation in the minimum costs of party membership, even if in real terms the costs are seldom very high (with basic dues ranging 0.01-0.4 per cent of average income). Given this variation, our second, and more novel, task has been to use cross-party and cross-national data to assess the potential political impact of the trend towards offering cheaper types of affiliation: is there any

evidence that demand-side forces (party affiliation rules and options) affect the behavior of party supporters? To answer this question, we examined individual-level and aggregate data to see if we could find evidence of impact of these membership strategies: a) Are potential members cost-sensitive in regards to the affiliation alternative that they choose? b) Does "cheaper" traditional membership attract a different kind of member?

We found only limited support for most of our assumptions about the effects of membership costs. Perhaps most importantly, we found an apparent difference between the impact of financial and of procedural costs. At the individual level, financial costs have the expected effect, with an inverse relationship between costs and membership ratios: controlling for country effects and for individual resources usually associated with political participation, party supporters are less likely to join parties with higher membership fees. In addition, both the aggregate and individual level data show that in parties where dues rates are relatively higher, traditional party members are more likely to be active. Nevertheless, we have to be cautious in drawing conclusions from this, because our aggregate data do not support the idea that parties can increase their memberships by lowering the annual costs of maintaining membership (dues). One possible explanation for the difference between our individual-level and aggregate-level results is that the parties which are most likely to lower their dues costs are those which are already losing members for other reasons, or which don't have many members to begin with, meaning that their initial circumstances obscure any gains due to lower costs.

In contrast, procedural costs do not show any effects at either the aggregate or individual level. This data suggest that procedural costs are neither obstacles nor incentives for partisan participation. While on-line membership registration and same-time sign up certainly makes membership easier to obtain, these results suggest that the formality of party membership does not deter voters from enrolling.

We find more support for our assumption that the introduction of different types of affiliation options will create options that sort out supporters based on the intensity of their partisan engagement. The broadening of affiliation options, that is, introducing other affiliation options than traditional party membership, such as party friends, has an impact at both the aggregate and individual level. When other options are possible, fewer party voters enroll as members, but parties do not compensate with more affiliates. This suggests that parties cannot make up for

decreasing numbers of traditional members by introducing other kinds of affiliations; however, we would need to have longitudinal data to assess whether this is actually true. Furthermore, the existence of alternative affiliation options is reflected in the behavior of those who opt for traditional party membership: the traditional members tend to be more active in parties which have opened up.

This latter finding sheds a more positive light on party experiments with alternative forms of affiliation. Not only do these new options not dilute the rights of party members to the extent that traditional members become less active; those who do opt for traditional membership seem to be more committed to their party (at least so far). Thus, even though parties may not reap huge enrollment benefits from adopting new affiliation options, in terms of the activities explored in this paper, parties which are interested in mobilizing activists may prefer offering membership lite alternatives rather than offering financially cheap membership: at least that would make it easier for them to adopt differentiated approaches to those whose activism is unlikely to go beyond mere affiliation, and those who may be willing to get more engaged.

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9. Appendix

Financial costs (FINCO)

This measure is based on one indicator included in the PPDB questionnaire: CR10DUESPRICE1: 'If dues rates are expressed as a price, the minimum annual dues level for full members (expressed in national currency). The minimum does not refer to reduced dues levels for youth, unemployed, etc.'. The rates were converted to euros (exchange rate 09/20//2014), and expressed as a proportion of the average income in the country (average wage 2011 based on Database International Labour Organization. Gross average monthly wages *12).

Procedural costs (PROCO)

This measure combines five questions included in the PPDB questionnaire: whether online enrollment is possible, whether party statutes require a probationary period, sponsorship from a current member, or agreement with the party's principles, or whether rules explicitly prohibit members from belonging to another party or political organization (questions A37, A38, A40, A41, and A98 in Module A). These indicators are coded 0 if the party does not apply the requirement, and 1 if it does, with the exception of online membership, which contains 3 categories (0 if the party offers full online membership; 0.5 if it offers partial online membership, and 1 if the party does not offer any online membership option). These indicators were used in a single additive scale that ranges from 0 (no procedural costs) to 5 (maximum procedural costs).

Breadth of affiliation (BREAFF)

This measure is based on one indicator included in the PPDB questionnaire: CR7FRIEND: 'Party statutes recognize a separate level of formal affiliation with reduced obligations and reduced rights (for instance, party "friend" or "registered sympathizer"). This does not include members with reduced dues but full rights, such as reduced fees for young people or unemployed'. The variable was coded 0 if the party allows only formal membership, and 1 if the party also offers an alternative affiliation option.

Relative number of party members (M/V)

M/V divides the number of party members as displayed in PPDB (CR12MBRNUM: 'Number of individual members') by the number of party voters at the closest election year (retrieved from ParlGov for the closest election year).

Relative number of party afilliates (A/V)

A/V sums the number of traditional party members and lite members (for the few parties for which we have estimates), as well as the number of Facebook likes of the party's official Facebook page (if the party has one). This data was retrieved by Cevipol on 18/03/2014 (except for France, and the UKIP and GPEW in the UK, retrieved on 10/06/2015). This total number of affiliates is divided by the number of party voters at the closest election (see M/V).

Average level of party activism (AACT)

This measure combines two data sources: the share of party members having attended a party meeting within a year (using data from national party member surveys from MAPP), and the share of party members devoting more than 0 hours to party work on average (MAPP). In order not to lose too many cases in our analyses, we use one or the other measure depending on what is available for the party under study, as the two measures are highly correlated (0.78). In cases for which we have both measures for a single party, party activism is computed as the mean of the two data points. This strategy allows us to produce a measure of activism for 33 parties.

Individual party membership (IPM)

This is measured by one question in the ESS questionnaire (Round 5, 2010/11): B21: 'Are you a member of any political party? (Official membership or registration with a party is meant)'. The variable was coded 0 if the individual reported not to be a member of a political party, and 1 if the individual reported to be a member of a political party.

Individual party activism (IACT)

This is measured by one question in the ESS questionnaire (Round 5, 2010/11): B14: 'There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? Worked in a political party or action group'. The variable was coded 0 if the individual reported not to have worked in a party or group, and 1 if the individual reported to have worked in a party or a group.