Quadernidi**Biblioteca della libertà**

A cura di Licia Claudia Papavero
e Francesco Zucchini

GENDER AND SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION

Summary

Licia Claudia Papavero
Francesco Zucchini

Presentazione

Per un filone importante della teoria politica femminista un maggior numero di donne nelle arene istituzionali rappresentative non significa solo minore diseguaglianza nell'accesso a cariche pubbliche a favore di una componente maggioritaria della cittadinanza. È anche, e forse soprattutto, un'opportunità per interessi e valori altrimenti negletti, senza "corpo" e voce, di venire finalmente rappresentati e stare a fondamento di politiche nuove. Donne parlamentari più numerose per una politica e per politiche diverse dal passato. La premessa empirica di questa convinzione e auspicio è che i comportamenti politici delle donne siano differenti da quelli degli uomini e che, al crescere della presenza femminile nelle istituzioni, questa differenza non equivalga più a subalternità e irrilevanza. Il quaderno della Biblioteca della Libertà che abbiamo l'onore di presentare raccoglie due articoli che indagano in modo preliminare e parziale ma anche speriamo originale e rigoroso la fondatezza di questa premessa.

La strategia di ricerca che caratterizza e lega entrambi i contributi è quella di sottoporre a uno scrutinio statistico il più accurato possibile la relazione fra il genere dei rappresentanti e alcuni loro comportamenti legislativi importanti e facilmente rilevabili, quali la scelta della commissione legislativa e quella di sponsorizzare un progetto di legge.

Il primo articolo, dedicato alla composizione delle commissioni legislative nel Parlamento Europeo durante la 6ª e la 7ª legislatura, si propone di valutare se e quanto il genere, una volta controllatone l'impatto per una ricca batteria di variabili individuali, partitiche e istituzionali, orienta la scelta delle commissioni legislative. Sono le donne parlamentari europee maggiormente orientate (o indotte) a occuparsi di alcuni temi rispetto agli uomini parlamentari europei anche quando fra le prime e questi ultimi non corre quasi alcuna altra differenza? E in caso positivo quali sono questi temi, quanto sono importanti se comparati a quelli preferiti dagli uomini, date le prerogative del Parlamento Europeo e dell'Unione Europea rispetto ai sistemi politici nazionali? È visibile con il passare delle legislature e l'anzianità parlamentare una convergenza di attenzione fra uomini e donne per certe commissioni? Non sono domande di ricerca nuove ma la varietà e l'ampiezza della base dati utilizzata permettono risposte più generali e meno provvisorie di quelle fornite in passato da studi di caso nazionali. Se l'arena è

una sola, il Parlamento Europeo, la varietà di provenienze nazionali, affiliazioni partitiche e profili culturali e professionali dei suoi membri, consente infatti di proteggere la ricerca di una relazione fra il genere e la scelta delle commissioni legislative dall'interferenza di molte altre variabili che altri studi hanno dimostrato influenzare o che sospettiamo influenzino tale scelta.

Il secondo articolo è incentrato sulla sponsorizzazione dei progetti di legge nella Camera dei deputati del Parlamento Italiano dal 1979 al 2013. Quel che rispetto all'articolo precedente viene perso in termini di varietà dei contesti culturali e istituzionali di provenienza dei parlamentari è guadagnato in termini di durata dell'arco temporale preso in considerazione e varietà di regole elettorali che hanno presieduto al reclutamento dei rappresentanti. Sulla base di tutti i progetti di legge firmati da almeno due deputati viene misurata tramite l'analisi delle componenti principali la vicinanza su uno spazio di policy multidimensionale dei parlamentari fra loro, a seconda del genere e del gruppo parlamentare di affiliazione. Secondo alcuni studi compiuti in sistemi politici diversi da quello italiano l'appartenenza allo stesso genere consentirebbe alle rappresentanti, in particolare al crescere del loro numero, di promuovere iniziative trasversali indebolendo quando necessario la coesione partitica in Parlamento. Quindi in questo secondo studio gli autori cercano di capire l'importanza, la natura e l'evoluzione nel tempo della relazione fra genere e coesione partitica, misurata quest'ultima come prossimità sullo spazio politico attraverso la decisione di ciascun parlamentare di sottoscrivere un progetto di legge insieme a un altro, una volta tenuto conto di molte altre variabili che potrebbero influenzare questa decisione. Anche in questo caso le risposte che l'analisi fornisce non sono ovvie e forse non del tutto, in una prospettiva femminista, incoraggianti.

Non è però nelle nostre intenzioni, come per altro nel caso del primo articolo, anticiparle.

Lasciamo al lettore il gusto degli autori, quello della scoperta.

Fabio Franchino
Licia Claudia Papavero
Francesco Zucchini

**Gender and committee
assignment in the
European Parliament**

1. Introduction

According to an important stream of literature about gender and politics that has developed in political science and political theory under the influence of the politics of presence perspective (Phillips 1995), the increase of the number of women elected in democratic parliaments is normatively desirable and should be facilitated (at least temporarily) also by the introduction of quotas in the process of selection and election of MPs. Indeed, in the last 40 years the adoption of quotas has spread both within parties and representative institutions, and the percentage of female representatives has increased, sometimes rapidly, in many countries around the world. Nevertheless, at a first glance, it is not easy to reconcile such a position in favor of descriptive representation with the standard version of political representation in the liberal democracy. Even among normative theorists who advocate group representation, the ideal of descriptive representation finds little support. A number of arguments has been proposed in order to defend this ideal. Some are very general and unrelated to the substantive representation of interests. Few women in parliaments could "create the meaning that (..) women cannot rule, or are not suitable for rule" (Mansbridge, 1999: 649), while increased descriptive representation of women in the legislatures would undermine the perception that politics is a male domain. Moreover, a significant proportion of women in the parliament can increase the de facto legitimacy of the polity.

However, important as these arguments are, according to the same scholars who support the politics of presence from a normative point of view, the existence of a link between descriptive representation and substantive representation is crucial.[1] Two intertwined arguments convincingly relate the proportion of women representatives (and more in general of repre-

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[1] As Mansbridge (1999: 630) underlines, "The primary function of representative democracy is to represent the substantive interests of the represented through both deliberation and aggregation. Descriptive representation should be judged primarily on this criterion. When non descriptive representatives have, for various reasons, greater ability to represent the substantive interests of their constituents, this is a major argument against descriptive representation".

sentative of disadvantaged groups) with the promotion of women's substantive interests. The first maintains that when the interests of historically disadvantaged social groups are still uncrystallized, the shared experience imperfectly captured by their descriptive representation may facilitate the relationship of accountability between representatives and citizens by improving the communication between those elected and voters. In particular, this shared experience may help representatives to act according to not yet explicit preferences, expectations and values of their constituents, and to give a public relevance to some specific demands and interests that would be otherwise overlooked (Phillips, 1995; Mansbridge, 2000). The second argument focuses on the incomplete information that characterizes the legislative process and policy making. As Phillips argues (1995: 44), "New problems and issues always emerge alongside unanticipated constraints, and in the subsequent weighing of interpretations and priorities it can matter immensely who the representatives are. When there is a significant under-representation of disadvantaged groups at the point of final decision, this can and does have serious consequences […]. However strong our attachment to the politics of binding mandates (people of course vary in this), representatives do have considerable autonomy, which is part of why it matters who those representatives are".

The robustness of these arguments is indeed based on an empirical premise. Whatever are women's interests - and there is no agreement among scholars and among activists - there should be evidence that women representatives tend to behave inside the parliaments (at least in some circumstances) differently from men as their interests and/or priorities are different[2]. Finding such an evidence is not a trivial task. First, it is necessary to ascertain whether the relationship between gender and legislative behavior is spurious. For example, men and women MPs with the same combination of social and professional features may behave in a similar way. In this case, no argument that is based upon substantive representation and policy outcomes can be put forward to encourage larger women's descriptive representation. Second, women could tend to behave differently from men, prioritizing issues and policies of particular interest to women, but it could be difficult to disentangle whether this different behavior is fully driven by their preferences and values or it is due to marginalization by male leadership (Franceschet, 2011; Miguel, 2012).

2. TESTING THE POLITICS OF PRESENCE

The main aim of this paper is to rigorously test the empirical premise of the normative argument put forward by the politics of presence perspective. Do women and men MPs

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[2] As Phillips (1995: 68) points out, "The argument from interest does not depend on establishing a unified interest of all women: it depends, rather, on establishing a difference between the interests of women and men".

prioritize different issues in their legislative activity? Does gender matters for the substantive representation of women's interests?

An extensive literature in political science has focused on the different behavior of men and women within legislative institutions, in several cases relying (explicitly or implicitly) on the politics of presence argument. However, so far, no conclusive results have been reached. Researches differ in methods of inquiry, units of analysis and they focus on different countries. A majority of them seems to support the hypothesis that there is a significant difference between women and men in political preferences and in some legislative behaviors as bill introduction or committee selection. Studies that analyze bills introduction have found that female MPs tend to introduce women-related legislation more than men. Comparing the US and Argentine Low Chambers, Jones (1997) finds that in both countries women introduce much more than men bills concerning policies in the areas of women's rights, children and family, while in other policy fields regarded as traditional areas of interest of women—such as health care, education, welfare and environment—no significant differences are evident between men and women. Similar findings are stressed in the study of the legislature in Canada (Tremblay, 1998). Here, women MPs are more likely than men to devote their parliamentary activity (including bill introduction) to issues concerning women. The stream of research on committee assignments often shows that women are more likely to be appointed into committees dealing with social issues or committees with stereotypically feminine issue domains (e.g., culture, education, health care, human rights, and family and youth) (Heath, Schwindt-Bayer and Taylor-Robinson, 2005; Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Thomas, 1994; Towns, 2003) and less likely to be appointed to economic committees (Kerevel and Atkeson, 2013).

Nevertheless, some studies disconfirm these findings or reduce their scope. Researches from Great Britain, Scotland, Sweden, and Wales do not find systematic gender differences in committee assignments (Brown *et al.*, 2002; Kerevel and Atkeson, 2013; O'Brien,2012). Other studies show that when factors such as seniority and institutional position are taken into account, there is no real demonstrable difference between the effectiveness of women and men in the US House of Representatives. In general, the connection between gender and policy preferences and/or legislative behavior is very rarely controlled for other crucial variables as professional background, education, parliamentary seniority.

Among scholars who find in their studies that women and men MPs behave differently in their legislative activities an even sharper divide characterizes the explanation of this difference. While some studies argue that specialization in legislative committees and in bill co-sponsorship by gender would depend on marginalization of women and could counterintuitively increase with the growth of women representation (Heath, Schwindt-Bayer and Taylor-Robinson, 2005), others insist on the role played by the true preferences of female representatives. For example, studies from the US

Congress and Danish local councils find that gender differences in committee assignments are consistent with legislators' preferences and are unlikely to be determined by discrimination (Bækgaard and Kjaer, 2012; Thomas, 1994). In the case of Latin America, Schwindt-Bayer (2010) ascertains that women's overrepresentation in social issues committees is consistent with legislators' preferences, yet women's underrepresentation in powerful committees and more stereotypically masculine domain areas is not consistent with legislators' preferences and thus can be attributed to discrimination.

According to some scholars the role of women's true preferences in guiding women's behavior is temporarily limited by two crucial factors: women's seniority and number. Studies about local government and national parliaments (Jeydel and Taylor, 2003) argue that seniority could play a more important role among women rather among men. Burns (2014) suggests that, while women that are at the beginning of their parliamentary career may be more available to accept marginal positions than men in the same condition, senior female legislators may play a much more important role as mentor and guide for women newcomers than their male counterparts for male rookies. Using the theoretical framework proposed by Kanter (1977) some studies also point out that we should expect variation in the policy priorities of women representatives as their number in representative institutions increases: the higher the number of elected women, the higher the priority women will give to female-related issues in their legislative agenda (Vega and Firestone, 1995; Saint-Germain, 1989; Thomas and Welch, 1991, Dodson and Carroll, 1991). According to Barnes (2014), women in numerous interviews attest that being a numeric minority makes it more difficult to speak up and ask for what they want, but having other female colleagues can provide encouragement and confidence to overcome these barriers. It is also possible to imagine an interaction between seniority and numbers. As significant proportions of women serve in the legislature for multiple sessions, women will be better equipped to transfer institutional knowledge from one cohort of female legislators to the next. Conditional on women holding a significant proportion of seats in the legislature, as the duration of the parliamentary mandate increases, women will be less likely to be appointed to committees on women and family oriented issues and to committees dealing with social issues and more likely to be appointed to power and/or economic and trade committees (Barnes, 2014). However, according to Thomas (1991) in some US state legislatures a higher share of women among legislators had an impact not only on women MPs' policy agenda, but also on that of the whole assembly, leading men legislators to prioritize more legislation dealing with women, children and family. Therefore, it is not clear if an increase (and over which threshold) of women's proportion in the legislative assemblies makes women legislative behavior more or less similar to that of their male colleagues.

In sum, the main research questions that emerge from literature about the legislative behavior of women and men MPs are three:

a) Does gender significantly affect the legislative behavior of MPs?
b) If gender makes any difference for MPs legislative behavior, is this difference due to some kind of discrimination against women or does it come from genuine different preferences and different sensitivities?
c) Does an increase of the number of women in the parliaments and an increase of women's parliamentary seniority, either alone or in interaction, encourage the convergence of behavior between female and male representatives?

In order to answer these questions and to test the empirical premise of the politics of presence, in this paper we focus on committee assignment in the European Parliament. This choice has important advantages and few drawbacks. First, committee selection is a behavior quite easy to be assessed and it is not inconsequential. Committees are in fact the workhorses of the modern parliaments and in many circumstances, including European Parliament, they enjoy an agenda setting power vis-a-vis the floor. Second, there is a huge literature, mainly based upon rational choice institutionalism, about committee selection that ignores gender as a possible explanatory variable but identifies a number of other explanatory variables that can usefully be included in our test as control variables. Third, European Parliament on its turn has a unique advantage as case study. Most of the previous researches focus on individual countries or on countries that belong to the same cultural area, with quite similar level of socio-economic development. On the contrary, the European Parliament is a multicultural and multi-layered institutional setting. Therefore, it is possible to control for contextual variables as MPs' national, cultural and socio-economic background or party organization and ideology. Fourth, in many country studies some committees are considered less important than others without a clear definition of the criterion that is applied in order to build up such a hierarchy. On the contrary, given the different role played by the European Parliament in the European decision making according to the different policy areas, it is easy and almost unquestionable to identify the important legislative committees, that is the committees whose decisions have a significant impact on policies. Last, the lack of a strong electoral connection in the European Parliament (Hix and Holland 2013) suggests that the assignments of MEPs to committees should depend more directly on the policy objectives of MEPs and on the legislative importance of the committees than on electoral profitability of some policy areas or the media visibility of a specific institutional body. This feature should allow to better ascertain the true and original preferences of MEPs in terms of policies.

On the other hand, other features of the European Parliament may make our findings less generalizable. Indeed, three of the twenty parliamentary standing committees are defined 'neutral' as their members can be also effective members of other committees. The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) is one of them. Therefore, in the European Parliament, differently from other parliaments, this committee could largely absorb women MEP's priorities and we should expect gender to play a very marginal role for the selection of the rest of the committees.

3. Gender and theories of committee assignment

A very preliminary exploration of the distribution of female and male representatives among (non neutral) committees in the last three European Parliaments shows a considerable and almost persistent gender specialization (Tab. 1).

TABLE 1. PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN BY COMMITTEE (6TH, 7TH AND 8TH EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTS)

	EP6	EP7	EP8
Percentage of women in the EP	30.32	35.56	35.82
AFET – Foreign Affairs	17.2	26.55	18.31
DEVE – Development	33.33	31.43	28.57
INTA – Intrenational Trade	25.71	27.27	36.59
BUDG - Budgets	30.61	31.91	29.27
CONT – Budgetary Control	26.32	28.57	20.00
ECON – Economic and Monetary Affairs	16.67	28.3	21.31
EMPL – Employment and Social Affairs	32.08	55.56	58.18
ENVI – Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	47.83	48.57	44.93
ITRE – Industry, Research and Energy	36.54	37.88	25.37
IMCO – Internal Market and Consumer Protection	46.67	44.44	45.00
TRAN – Transport and Turism	21.43	29.79	40.82
REGI – Regional Development	29.82	26.67	34.88
AGRI – Agricultur and Rural Development	25	33.33	31.11
CULT – Culture and Education	47.22	42.42	36.00
JURI – Legal affairs	23.08	29.17	45.16
PECH - Fisheries	16.67	22.22	41.67
LIBE – Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	40.32	48.39	60.00
AFCO - Constitutional Affairs	18.18	9.68	20.00
FEMM – Women's Rights and Gender Equality	94.44	91.43	94.12
PETI - Petitions	32.14	48.78	55.88

If we consider as gender biased any committee in which the percentage of men/women is at least 5 percent lower/higher compared to the overall percentage of men/women in the legislature, men seem to be persistently overrepresented in four committees - Foreign Affairs (AFET), Budgetary Control (CONT), Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON), Constitutional Affairs (AFCO) -, while women are persistently overrepresented in other three committees - Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI), Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO), and Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE).

However, in order to assess whether gender plays a specific role in committee selection in the European Parliament, it is necessary to control for other potential explanatory variables of this legislative behavior. We draw these variables from an extensive literature developed

within the theoretical framework of rational choice institutionalism, which aims at explaining the US Congressional organization, and which can be applied to the European Parliament. Indeed, both the European Parliament and the US Congress are bodies of bicameral legislatures (at least if we consider the European Council of Ministers as an upper chamber) operating in separated power systems, they have strong committees and their members are subject to weaker partisan control than are usually the members of national parliaments in parliamentary democracies. However, the US House is bipartisan, it represents one nation and congressmen are electorally connected to their territorial constituencies, while the European Parliament is characterized by a plurality of parties and nations and MEPs do not seem to be electorally connected to their territorial constituencies (McElroy, 2007: 446).

Broadly speaking, the above mentioned literature can be grouped in three theories that have three different rationales: distributive (Shepsle, 1978; Shepsle and Weingast, 1995), informational (Krehbiel, 1991) and partisan (Cox and McCubbins, 1993). The distributive approach (Shepsle, 1978; Weingast and Marshall, 1988) assumes the existence of a multidimensional policy space. Legislators seeking re-election from their territorial constituencies self-select «to those committees that have the greatest marginal impact over their electoral fortunes» (Weingast and Marshall, 1988: 145), which results in committees staffed with relatively homogeneous high demanders on a specific policy dimension.

The distributive theory cannot be applied directly to the study of the European Parliament due to the lack of a strong electoral connection of MEPs to clearly defined territorial constituencies. In other terms, at best the work of MEPs within the European Parliament has only a marginal effect on electoral outcomes which alone may not be sufficient to induce legislators to specialize in certain areas and to choose a certain committee. Yet, Yordanova (2009; 2013) suggests that MEPs' special interests related to their ties to certain groups other than their constituencies can drive them to self-select to some interest-driven committees. For instance, MEPs with strong ties with trade unions are expected to select the committee Employement and Social Affairs (EMPL).

According to the informational theory the high uncertainty about the link between policy means and outcomes induces the legislature to create institutional incentives (e.g. structural resources, parliamentary rights and restrictive rules) for committee members to pursue specialization and share it sincerely with the chamber (Krehbiel, 1991; see also Gilligan and Krehbiel, 1989). Committees would be staffed with MPs who are «a representative sample of the Floor (non-outlying legislators or bipolar outliers). They can specialize at relatively low cost because of their prior experience or intense interest in the policies that lie within a committee's jurisdiction» (Krehbiel, 1991: 136; Gilligan and Krehbiel, 1990). Therefore, the European Parliament committees are expected to be staffed with members who can easily become specialists in the particular area due to their educational and occupational background. Moreover, as MEPs acquire expertise during their service in the European Parliament, parliamentary seniority may play an important role too.

Lastly, according to the partisan rationale (Cox and McCubbins, 1993; Kiewiet and McCubbins, 1991), party members delegate to majority party leaders the responsibility to ensure party cohesion around common policy objectives by giving them a monopoly over the allocation of parliamentary offices and resources as a disciplining tool. Party leaders would use this power to ensure that important committees are staffed with loyal members and consequently to prevent that on important issues the party could be sharply divided and the party majority could be defeated in the parliamentary voting.

The theories we summarized are not exclusive and it seems quite reasonable that they could work differently according to the different kind of committee. According to previous studies (McElroy, 2007; Yordanova, 2009), committees, because of their jurisdictions, may be divided into:

1) information driven, with predominantly regulatory output,
2) interest driven, with predominantly distributive output (affecting specific constituencies or organized homogeneous interest groups),
3) mixed.

Moreover, all these committees can be also differentiated into more or less powerful sub-committees based on their influence over the EU budget and legislation. When they are powerful, we can imagine that also a partisan rationale drives committee assignment. While most of the committees are permanently powerful or weak during the whole period we take in consideration, others have largely increased (or decreased) their relative influence because of the Treaty of Lisbon in the 7th legislature of the European Parliament. Table 2 updates Yordanova's data about the nature of the European Parliament committees according to their policy area and their normative prerogatives during the 6th legislature.

TABLE 2. CLASSIFICATION OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT COMMITTEES

	Steadly powerful	Weak in EP6, powerful in EP7	Powerful in EP6, weak in EP7	Steadly weak
Information Driven	BUDG			AFET
	TRAN			DEVE
	IMCO	INTA		
	JURI			CONT
				AFCO
				PETI
Mixed	ECON			FEMM
	ENVI			
	ITRE			
	LIBE			
			CULT	
Interest Driven	EMPL	AGRI		
				REGI
				PECH

The introduction of the variables suggested by the three theories we reviewed can a priori nullify (subsume) the seeming role played by gender in committee assignment. According to the distributive approach, the overrepresentation of women (men) in some committee could be associated with the ties of many female (male) MEPs with some specific interest groups. According to the informational rationale, such an overrepresentation could be the byproduct of a high (or low) level of expertise of men/women in some policy area. Last, partisan rationale could suggest that women (men) are concentrated in some powerful committees just because they are particularly loyal toward their party group in the European Parliament. For instance, women as disadvantaged group may be more loyal to the parliamentary group in exchange for the leadership support.

If after all controls gender keeps its explanatory power in the selection of some committees, we could argue that there are unknown features that induce women (men) towards a certain committee (namely towards a certain policy) and that they are gender specific. They are mainly shared with people of the same gender and cannot be 'embodied' in representatives of a different gender. This conclusion would offer empirical support to the normative argument of the politics of presence.

4. DATA AND MEASUREMENT

Our analysis relies on a pre-existing dataset (Yordanova, 2009) that collects several relevant information about MEPs' biographies and committee membership in the 6th legislature, which we have updated and integrated with the same kind of information about MEPs of the 7th legislature. Therefore, we consider two legislatures of the European Parliament, the 7th (EP7) and the 6th (EP6). Our units of analysis are single MEPs per legislature.

Our dependent variable is a dummy variable, different for each non neutral EP committee, that assumes value 1 when a MEP in a legislature has been effective member of a committee. Substitute members are not taken in consideration.

Following Yordanova (2009), in order to account for the possibility that some MEPs self-select to interest-driven committees, we take in consideration a set of dichotomous variables, which assume value 1 when a MEP has ties with the interest groups she represents. For instance, trade unionists are people with ties to organized trade and they are assigned value 1 for the variable Trade union ties. The variable Experience in local government has been considered as a proxy of ties with very local interests.

Pure expertise is mostly derived from educational and occupational characteristics that do not imply any clear outlying interest in certain policies. These include expertise in law (law and legal career), medicine (doctors, pharmacists and ex-ministers of health), economics and finance (academic training in these topics), transport and telecommunications (local and national-level officials in the sector) and engineering

and natural sciences (academic training in these topics). Members with international experience are those who have worked in the national foreign ministries, in foreign affairs committees of national assemblies or in international organizations such as NATO, the United Nations or the Council of Europe. Other two variables that can (imperfectly) measure the expertise are the experience in national parliaments and cabinets and the seniority in the European Parliament. The latter is a continuous variable and is measured in years. As the increase of experience is not linearly dependent on the number of years that are spent in a Parliament, we have considered the logarithm of this measure.

Partisan theory predicts that party loyalty is the most important determinant of committee assignment. Following previous studies (Yordanova, 2009; Curini and Zucchini, 2012), group loyalty is defined as the frequency of voting with the group majority, which is reflected in the Euclidean distance between a legislator's score and the point that is median of his or her party group on the first two W-NOMINATE dimensions. The first dimension represents the classical left-right dimension, while the second is subsumed under the label 'pro-against European Integration'. Following Poole and Rosenthal (1997), only roll calls with at least 2,5 percent in the minority are included in the computations and MEPs with fewer than 20 votes are excluded.

Besides gender, a number of control variables are considered, including age and experience in national party organizations. The variable Incoming MEP differentiates between who selected the EP committee at the beginning of the legislature (value 0) and MEPs who entered the European Parliament later (value 1). We have also introduced the variable EP Groups, which classifies and gather together parliamentary groups according to their ideology. Some parliamentary groups disappeared from one legislature to the following one and new groups were created in the 7th Parliament. Therefore, we have classified the groups Union for Europe of the Nations (UEN) (6th Parliament) and European Conservatives and Reformists (ERC) (7th Parliament) as a same group according to their prevailing ideology, as well as we did with the groups Independence/Democracy (IND-DEM) (6th Parliament) and Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) (7th Parliament). We have also introduced a variable that differentiate European countries according to cultural and political areas, characterized also by different welfare systems: Central Europe, Northern Europe, Southern Europe, Anglo-Europe, Eastern Europe. Lastly, we consider also the different electoral systems under which MEPs were elected in their countries of origin. The variable Personal vote has value 1 when the proportional system allows voters to cast a vote of preference.

TABLE 3: CLASSIFICATION OF CONTROL VARIABLES

Expertise experience	Interest group ties	European parliamentary group loyalty	European regions	European parliamentary group	Personal/ structural attributes
Background as a member of EU supranational institutions	Medical profession ties	Euclidean distance from EP group median member	Central Europe (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands)	EEP (European People's Party)	Gender (Male=1)
International relations experience	Industry groups ties		Northern Europe (Denmark, Finland, Sweden)	S&D (Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats)	Age
Legal education or experience	Trade union ties		Southern Europe (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain)	ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe)	Incoming MEP
Economics/finance education or experience	Social Groups		Anglo-Saxon Europe (Ireland, UK)	Greens-EFA (The Greens – European Free Alliance)	Personal vote
Transport, telecommunications, postal services experience	Green ties		Post-Communist Europe (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia)	GUE-NGL (European United Left - Nordic Green Left)	
Work in media	Farming/ agriculture interests			UEN/ECR (Union for Europe if the Nations/ European Conservatives and Reformists)	
Work in education sector	LocRegexp (Local and regional experience)			IND-DEM/ EFD Independence/ Democracy / Europe of Freedom and Democracy)	
Engineering or natural science expertise				NI (Non Inscrits)	
In cabinet before entering EP					
Parlamentary experience					
Years in European Parliament					
Party Experience					

5. Empirical analysis and results

For all the non neutral committees we have run three logistic regression models with robust standard errors and fixed effects[3]. In the first model, in addition to gender, we consider few plausible control variables that are not suggested by the theories of committee assignment (age, personal vote, incoming MEP, parliamentary seniority, European parliamentary group, European regions, legislatures). In the second model also the other variables are included. In the third analysis we take into account the possibility that the effect of gender is conditional to the legislature we consider and to the parliamentary seniority of MEPs. We run for each committee in which the full model identified an effect of gender another logistic regression with an interaction term among gender, EP seniority and legislatures. As we have already mentioned, some studies argue that the actual difference in legislative behavior between men and women is temporary and that with the strengthening of women in the society and politics we should observe a convergence. EP7 is not only a more recent parliament but it enjoys a slightly bigger proportion of elected women (more than 35 percent) than EP6 (around 30 percent). Therefore if this hypothesis is correct we should observe a decreasing impact of gender when we move from EP6 to EP7. Other scholars insist also on the importance of parliamentary seniority, which indeed may affect committee assignment differently according to the gender of MEPs. Women who have already had an experience as MEP should behave more similarly to men, while, on the contrary, among absolute beginners the assignment to EP committees should largely vary according to gender.

The results of the first and second analyses are illustrated in the tables 4a, 4b and 4c. The incomplete models show that gender affects the selection of committees in 9 committees. Women seem to prefer to work in the committees Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI), Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO), Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) and Culture and Education (CULT), while men would choose Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON), Transport and Turism (TRAN), Foreign Affairs (AFET) and Constitutional Affairs (AFCO). However, as we introduce the variables connected with the theories of committee assignment, gender seems to have no effect on the choice of LIBE, ECON and TRAN. In LIBE an interest driven variable seems to play a crucial role. Women are more likely to be member of this committee as they probably are more frequently connected with social groups. Men are more likely to be member of TRAN and ECON both because of their training and because of their connection with interest groups. Therefore, only for six committees gender seems to affect significantly the assignment. Women have around half probabilities of men to select AFET and less than 30 percent

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[3] Diagnostic tests exclude the necessity and possibility to run multilevel models.

of the probabilities of men to select AFCO. On the contrary, they have almost twice the probability of men to select ENVI and more than one and a half probability to select EMPL, IMCO, CULT. Moreover, if the regression coefficients of gender in the incomplete models are compared with the same coefficients in the full models, very little variation can be noticed, with the exception of CULT. In other terms, not only gender affects significantly the choice of these committees but the introduction of all other control variables does not weaken its explanatory power.

The analyses of the interaction of gender with parliamentary seniority and the European legislatures are illustrated in figures 1 and 2 (the models with the regression coefficients are available on request). In the figures 1a and 2a two lines and their confidence intervals show the probability of men (Female = 0) and women (Female = 1) to select a certain committee according to the level of parliamentary seniority (in logarithmic scale) both in general and separately for each legislature. When one line is inside the confidence interval of the other the predictive margin of being women is not significantly distinguishable from the predictive margin of men. Figure 1b and 2b illustrate how the same probabilities change with the change of the legislatures, both in general and separately for gender. In three commettes (AFET, ENVI and AFCO) the trends shown by beginners MEPs are further accentuated when we consider senior MEPs. In particular, for women the probability of selecting ENVI (AFCO) rapidly increases (decreases) as parliamentary seniority increases. Women without previous experience as MEPs have almost the same probability of men to select committee ENVI (less than 9 percent). However, after five legislatures this probability is 15 percent, almost twice the probability of men. AFCO (Constitutional Affairs) is a relatively small committee (25 members), therefore in general the probability to be member is a priori quite low. However, after five legislatures among women it is almost zero while among men it is about 6 percent. The interpretation for other committees is less clear. In the committee IMCO the probability of women tend to decrease with the increase of seniority significantly more than the probability of men, but only in EP6 and for low level of seniority. Seniority does not seem to affect significantly the propensity to select EMPL and CULT differently according to MEPs gender and in any case no convergence among the probability of women and the probability of men seems to take place. If we focus on the effect of being MEP in different legislatures, only in AFET, ENVI and AFCO gender significantly affects committee assignment in both EP6 and EP7. In ENVI the change from EP6 to EP7 slightly decreases the probability of women while increasing the probability of men to select this committee. Therefore there is a convergence. Exactly the opposite happens in AFCO. The difference between the probability of women and the probability of men to be assigned to AFET is almost the same in both legislatures

TABELLA 4A.

	AFETbasic		AFET		DEVEbasic		DEVE		INTAbasic		INTA		BUDGbasic		BUDG	
	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se
Female	-0.523***	0.176	-0.674***	0.193	-0.070	0.274	-0.155	0.287	-0.375	0.284	-0.452	0.290	-0.174	0.227	-0.035	0.241
Age	0.011	0.008	0.003	0.009	0.020	0.015	0.020	0.015	-0.028**	0.012	-0.021	0.014	0.000	0.010	-0.005	0.012
ln_Year_served_EP	0.244***	0.076	0.045	0.097	-0.066	0.134	-0.089	0.163	0.126	0.130	0.093	0.143	0.131	0.116	0.262*	0.137
Personalvote	0.083	0.182	-0.017	0.195	-0.015	0.287	-0.116	0.296	-0.575*	0.307	-0.530*	0.321	0.106	0.234	0.203	0.242
incoming	-0.162	0.319	0.308	0.356	-0.674	0.612	-0.518	0.639	0.815**	0.373	0.696*	0.402	0.362	0.366	0.306	0.391
Parlexp			0.456**	0.190			0.585**	0.283			-0.249	0.293			-0.225	0.260
In cabinet before enter EP			0.208***	0.071			-0.223*	0.133			-0.055	0.124			0.128	0.094
Partexp			-0.212	0.195			-0.132	0.282			0.051	0.310			0.124	0.291
Background in EU supranational institutions			-0.143	0.246			-0.053	0.378			-0.459	0.507			0.316	0.291
International relations experience			1.138***	0.204			0.212	0.318			0.199	0.287			-0.098	0.260
Legal education or experience			0.126	0.200			-0.299	0.337			-0.046	0.302			-1.272***	0.401
Economics/finance ed. or exp.			-0.450*	0.240			-0.496	0.392			0.733***	0.276			0.917***	0.227
Transport,telecom.,postal services experience			-0.553	0.523			-0.964	1.019			-1.077	0.996			0.284	0.524
Work in media			0.266	0.214			0.043	0.350			0.406	0.306			0.350	0.308
Work in education sector or was a teacher			-0.119	0.180			-0.280	0.297			-0.071	0.256			0.084	0.235
Has engineering or natural science expertise			-0.543*	0.304			0.149	0.406			0.325	0.414			0.125	0.310
Medical profession/ties			-0.231	0.355			0.554	0.378			-1.568	1.032			0.003	0.454
Farming/Agriculture interests			-0.624	0.477			-0.923	0.729			-0.559	0.578			0.276	0.387
Industry groups ties			-0.341	0.332			-0.439	0.439			-0.773*	0.457			0.323	0.325
Trade union ties			-0.665*	0.404			0.210	0.428							0.016	0.434
Social Groups			0.320	0.263			0.249	0.393			0.598*	0.345			-0.819	0.500
Green ties			-0.227	0.405			-0.413	0.586			1.160***	0.391			-1.033	0.708
LocRegexp			-0.548***	0.188			-0.692**	0.282			0.237	0.255			-0.207	0.235
Disteucl			0.171	0.319			0.365	0.536			-0.183	0.409			0.245	0.427
EEP	(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)	
S&D	0.231	0.191	0.169	0.207	0.247	0.307	0.121	0.323	0.133	0.316	0.135	0.324	0.161	0.249	0.132	0.281
ALDE	0.203	0.253	0.027	0.271	-0.211	0.453	-0.230	0.492	0.023	0.446	-0.078	0.468	-0.090	0.337	-0.058	0.347
Greens-EFA	0.657**	0.303	0.753**	0.342	0.286	0.467	0.136	0.483	0.226	0.485	-0.399	0.509	-0.274	0.494	-0.029	0.506
GUE-NGL	0.160	0.363	0.241	0.419	0.346	0.516	-0.197	0.624	0.348	0.506	0.461	0.575	-0.075	0.492	-0.123	0.547
UEN / ECR	0.192	0.378	0.341	0.391	-0.127	0.702	-0.334	0.724	0.220	0.544	0.274	0.560	-0.420	0.620	-0.425	0.654
IND-DEM/EFD	-0.217	0.405	-0.124	0.438	-0.619	0.789	-0.393	0.823	0.427	0.525	0.253	0.583	-0.656	0.612	-0.670	0.637
NI	-0.027	0.410	-0.382	0.467	-0.037	0.636	-0.215	0.639	0.085	0.659	-0.355	0.834	0.094	0.488	0.319	0.521
Central Europe	(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)	
Northern Europe	-0.115	0.383	-0.318	0.409	-0.996	0.773	-1.033	0.775	-0.496	0.800	-0.469	0.825	-0.136	0.494	-0.420	0.480
Southern Europe	-0.170	0.222	-0.415*	0.231	-0.468	0.361	-0.653*	0.369	0.176	0.330	0.287	0.322	-0.186	0.288	-0.184	0.293
Anglosaxon Europe	-0.739**	0.353	-0.669**	0.384	0.003	0.492	-0.199	0.546	1.061**	0.438	1.332***	0.467	-0.477	0.426	-0.861*	0.479
Post.Communist Europe	0.542**	0.218	0.043	0.267	-0.169	0.357	-0.505	0.437	-0.076	0.381	-0.029	0.392	0.292	0.295	0.031	0.328
6b.leg	(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)	
7.leg	0.166	0.151	0.474***	0.169	-0.007	0.250	-0.046	0.263	-0.096	0.247	-0.126	0.263	0.001	0.209	0.011	0.240
Constant	-2.822***	0.457	-2.472***	0.554	-3.832***	0.807	-3.176***	0.844	-1.659**	0.729	-2.131**	0.877	-2.799***	0.578	-2.842***	0.743
Number of observations	1.630		1.611		1.630		1.611		1.630		1.502		1.630		1.611	
chi2	39.175		139.338				50.014				80.807		9.155		67.849	

note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

TABELLA 4B.

	ECONbasic		ECON		EMPLbasic		EMPL		ENVIbasic		ENVI		ITREbasic		ITRE	
	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se
Female	-0.425*	0.230	-0.180	0.251	0.556***	0.212	0.568**	0.226	0.665***	0.194	0.638***	0.204	0.095	0.201	0.154	0.206
Age	-0.008	0.010	-0.001	0.011	0.015	0.010	0.015	0.011	-0.017*	0.009	-0.019*	0.010	0.013	0.009	0.002	0.009
ln_Year_served_EP	-0.002	0.105	0.134	0.123	-0.137	0.105	0.058	0.122	0.155*	0.089	0.235**	0.120	-0.105	0.096	-0.031	0.115
Personalvote	0.007	0.239	0.020	0.246	-0.101	0.258	-0.139	0.268	0.347	0.218	0.418	0.257	-0.019	0.214	0.053	0.224
incoming	-0.181	0.424	-0.056	0.465	0.268	0.350	0.091	0.371	-0.162	0.367	-0.346	0.406	0.029	0.348	0.042	0.353
Parlexp			-0.244	0.253			-0.032	0.249			-0.106	0.234			-0.118	0.236
In cabinet before enter EP			0.088	0.100			0.006	0.114			-0.125	0.107			0.083	0.098
Partexp			0.045	0.264			-0.069	0.260			0.489**	0.249			-0.504**	0.233
Background in EU supranational institutions			0.137	0.309			-0.700*	0.397			0.177	0.271			-0.612	0.377
International relations experience			-0.457*	0.265			-0.829***	0.291			-0.367	0.243			-0.028	0.246
Legal education or experience			0.407	0.259			-0.112	0.269			-0.251	0.261			-0.379	0.270
Economics/finance ed. or exp.			1.291***	0.237			0.030	0.269			-0.171	0.254			-0.341	0.254
Transport, telecommunications, postal services experience			0.180	0.509			-1.123	0.815			-0.304	0.481			0.365	0.453
Work in media			-0.065	0.319			-0.253	0.349			0.177	0.282			-0.108	0.298
Work in education sector or was a teacher			0.073	0.235			-0.003	0.229			-0.212	0.215			0.327	0.200
Has engineering or natural science expertise			-0.371	0.438			-0.661	0.430			1.169***	0.246			0.917***	0.259
Medical profession/ties			-0.787	0.728			0.105	0.421			1.378***	0.292			-2.436**	1.035
Farming/Agriculture interests			-1.359*	0.740			-0.756	0.611			-0.635	0.532			-1.410*	0.745
Industry groups ties			0.830***	0.280			-0.537	0.441			-0.662*	0.399			0.771***	0.272
Trade union ties			0.239	0.386			1.683***	0.304			0.201	0.347			0.337	0.354
Social Groups			-0.316	0.422			0.001	0.349			-0.159	0.328			-0.726	0.455
Green ties			-0.639	0.665			-1.314	0.851			2.236***	0.360			-0.130	0.451
LocRegexp			-0.655***	0.230			0.047	0.222			0.359*	0.201			0.128	0.208
disteucl			-0.206	0.412			0.012	0.449			-0.376	0.336			-0.207	0.422
EEP	(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)	
S&D	-0.213	0.257	-0.187	0.280	0.002	0.263	-0.400	0.312	-0.217	0.228	-0.247	0.250	-0.006	0.233	-0.054	0.244
ALDE	-0.034	0.314	-0.289	0.341	-0.138	0.341	-0.167	0.350	-0.330	0.319	-0.150	0.355	0.039	0.295	0.029	0.326
Greens-EFA	-0.448	0.456	-0.022	0.510	-0.128	0.443	0.198	0.484	-0.184	0.359	-1.748***	0.516	-0.285	0.430	-0.475	0.461
GUE-NGL	-0.577	0.538	-0.229	0.548	0.301	0.423	-0.090	0.471	0.022	0.398	-0.246	0.458	-0.273	0.470	-0.193	0.518
UEN / ECR	-0.775	0.611	-0.834	0.669	-0.325	0.542	-0.228	0.570	0.212	0.443	0.032	0.493	-0.374	0.547	-0.408	0.566
IND-DEM/EFD	-0.074	0.465	0.068	0.493	-0.452	0.581	-0.415	0.647	0.261	0.396	0.046	0.466	0.195	0.436	0.154	0.476
NI	-0.108	0.496	0.152	0.533	-0.135	0.577	-0.225	0.613	-0.494	0.551	-0.324	0.604	-0.248	0.544	-0.170	0.551
Central Europe	(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)	
Northern Europe	-0.083	0.474	-0.287	0.493	-0.058	0.518	0.017	0.513	0.184	0.369	0.367	0.402	0.482	0.381	0.365	0.397
Southern Europe	-0.174	0.272	-0.236	0.283	0.009	0.290	0.089	0.295	-0.398	0.263	-0.349	0.309	0.180	0.250	0.154	0.259
Anglosaxon Europe	0.057	0.387	-0.036	0.411	0.832**	0.374	0.756*	0.408	-0.081	0.341	0.009	0.418	-0.329	0.406	-0.488	0.442
Post-Communist Europe	-0.614**	0.312	-0.763**	0.359	-0.115	0.322	0.015	0.357	-0.358	0.272	-0.442	0.341	-0.152	0.277	-0.320	0.318
6b.leg	(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)	
7.leg	0.006	0.200	-0.016	0.223	-0.065	0.204	-0.320	0.223	-0.020	0.179	-0.059	0.208	0.182	0.190	0.266	0.214
Constant	-1.745***	0.551	-2.194***	0.706	-3.495***	0.607	-3.027***	0.732	-1.789***	0.538	-2.215***	0.644	-3.131***	0.510	-2.261***	0.575
Number of observations	1.630		1.611		1.630		1.611		1.630		1.611		1.630		1.611	
chi2	11.709		103.866		21.315		95.132		33.493		150.685		11.652		79.963	

note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

TABELLA 4C

	IMCObasic		IMCO		TRANbasic		TRAN		REGIbasic		REGI		AGRIbasic		AGRI	
	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se
Female	0.465**	0.215	0.490**	0.234	-0.436*	0.235	-0.422	0.272	-0.320	0.219	-0.291	0.224	-0.197	0.251	0.108	0.286
Age	-0.005	0.011	0.003	0.013	0.011	0.009	0.014	0.011	-0.003	0.010	0.002	0.011	-0.018*	0.010	-0.028**	0.014
In_Year_served_EP	-0.075	0.108	-0.141	0.136	-0.085	0.096	-0.000	0.023	-0.336***	0.122	-0.095***	0.033	-0.027	0.112	-0.034	0.031
Personalvote	0.226	0.280	0.320	0.295	0.224	0.258	0.138	0.288	-0.286	0.222	-0.310	0.236	-0.367	0.266	-0.547*	0.320
Incoming	0.409	0.332	0.285	0.363	-0.005	0.386	-0.149	0.406	0.460	0.323	0.460	0.338	0.233	0.397	0.382	0.494
Parlexp			-0.845***	0.298			-0.125	0.254			0.232	0.224			0.192	0.309
In cabinet before enter EP			0.151	0.112			-0.217*	0.124			-0.256**	0.110			-0.050	0.130
Partexp			0.338	0.287			0.166	0.265			0.316	0.278			-0.488	0.312
Background in EU supranational institutions			0.021	0.350			0.530	0.330			0.266	0.338			-0.811	0.599
International relations experience			0.183	0.290			-0.536*	0.283			-0.102	0.242			0.019	0.328
Legal education or experience			-0.030	0.271			-0.184	0.275			-0.345	0.277			0.170	0.361
Economics/finance ed. or exp.			-0.124	0.309			-0.691**	0.302			0.131	0.244			-0.381	0.311
Transport, telecommunications, postal services experience							2.295***	0.327			-1.789*	0.972				
Work in media			-0.181	0.322			-0.600	0.396			-0.683*	0.353			-0.192	0.385
Work in education sector or was a teacher			-0.034	0.252			-0.361	0.247			0.116	0.237			-0.018	0.294
Has engineering or natural science expertise			-0.130	0.382			0.244	0.306			-0.163	0.309			-0.277	0.425
Medical profession/ties			0.167	0.427			-0.754	0.528			-0.289	0.435			0.218	0.530
Farming/Agriculture interests			-1.743*	1.032			-0.671	0.511			0.148	0.451			3.823***	0.381
Industry groups ties			0.651*	0.369			-0.185	0.397			-0.234	0.392			-0.833	0.572
Trade union ties			0.332	0.407			-0.236	0.466			0.160	0.407			-0.694	0.540
Social Groups			-0.167	0.353			-0.802*	0.486			-0.324	0.384			0.207	0.381
Green ties			-0.557	0.548			0.072	0.467			-0.249	0.546			-0.901	0.874
LocRegexp			-0.385	0.242			0.917***	0.282			0.757***	0.215			0.584**	0.276
Distreucl			0.474	0.425			0.033	0.426			-0.208	0.456			-0.146	0.521
EEP	(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)	
S&D	0.114	0.254	-0.106	0.275	0.142	0.256	0.327	0.295	0.261	0.260	0.211	0.267	0.088	0.275	0.747**	0.348
ALDE	-0.176	0.377	-0.150	0.396	0.045	0.355	0.507	0.421	0.427	0.317	0.537	0.332	-0.607	0.442	-0.185	0.482
Greens-EFA	-0.860	0.565	-0.585	0.533	-0.209	0.465	-0.588	0.431	0.468	0.425	0.667	0.468	-0.103	0.488	0.879	0.586
GUE-NGL	0.198	0.427	-0.176	0.457	-0.138	0.511	0.085	0.534	0.487	0.411	0.251	0.458	-0.974	0.740	-0.101	0.796
UEN / ECR	-0.064	0.547	-0.444	0.620	0.177	0.476	0.092	0.534	0.425	0.475	0.524	0.482	0.216	0.501	1.094*	0.648
IND-DEM/EFD	-0.192	0.581	-0.315	0.656	0.417	0.443	0.216	0.437	-0.079	0.508	-0.296	0.595	0.288	0.488	1.084*	0.586
NI	-0.055	0.542	-0.443	0.654	0.216	0.476	0.239	0.574	0.116	0.501	0.416	0.513	0.631	0.450	1.234**	0.568
Central Europe	(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)	
Northern Europe	0.733*	0.391	0.699*	0.422	-1.007*	0.594	-0.907	0.683	-0.597	0.638	-0.439	0.665	-0.402	0.679	0.081	0.649
Southern Europe	-0.482	0.296	-0.547*	0.319	-0.449	0.285	-0.310	0.341	0.310	0.300	0.400	0.312	0.063	0.315	0.343	0.376
Anglosaxon Europe	-0.107	0.404	-0.346	0.420	-0.343	0.389	-0.104	0.446	0.339	0.457	0.568	0.491	0.248	0.446	0.265	0.608
Post.Communist Europe	-0.488	0.344	-0.487	0.387	-0.826**	0.335	-0.344	0.379	0.659**	0.291	0.875***	0.330	-0.152	0.346	0.156	0.437
6b.leg	(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)		(dropped)	
7.leg	0.073	0.212	0.075	0.247	-0.119	0.201	-0.269	0.214	-0.087	0.202	-0.064	0.228	-0.058	0.223	-0.172	0.281
Constant	-2.594***	0.618	-2.929***	0.754	-2.717***	0.518	-3.339***	0.732	-2.473***	0.526	-3.241***	0.711	-1.609***	0.555	-2.001**	0.895
Number of observations	1.630		1.546		1.630		1.611		1.630		1.611		1.629		1.545	
R2																
chi2	28.458		65.185		15.406		140.842		37.174		96.510		18.219		162.083	

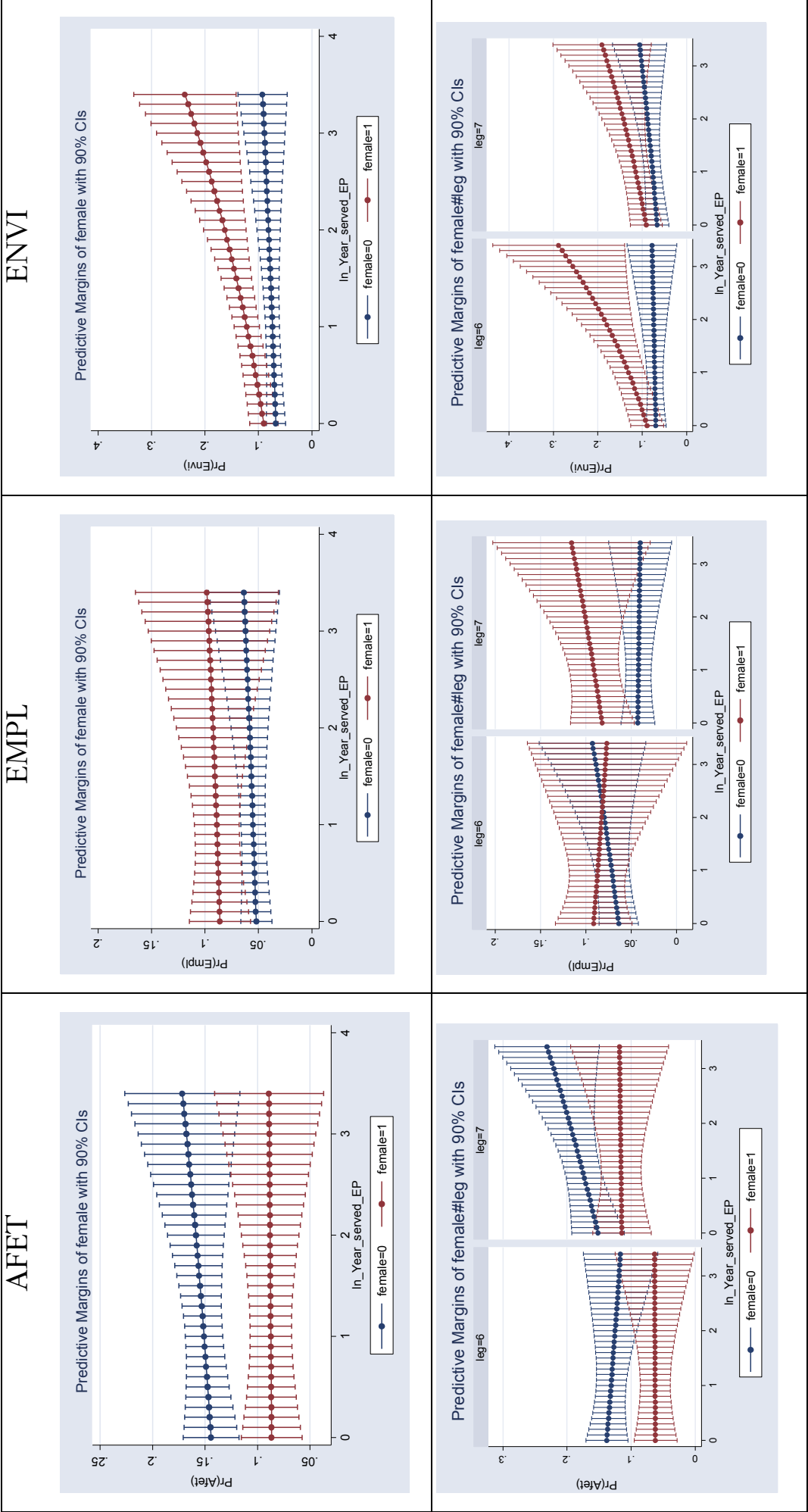note: *** p<0,01, ** p<0,05, * p<0,1
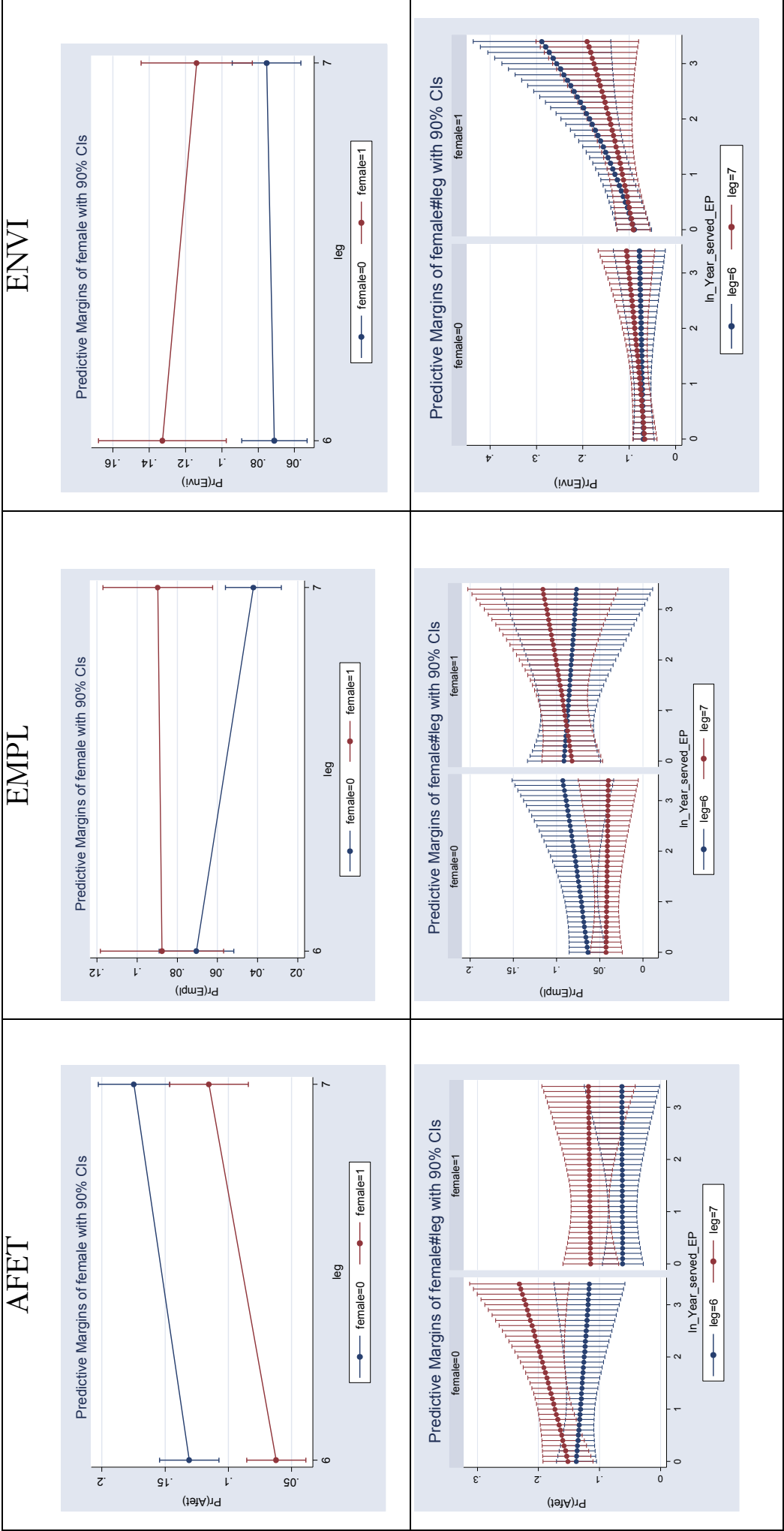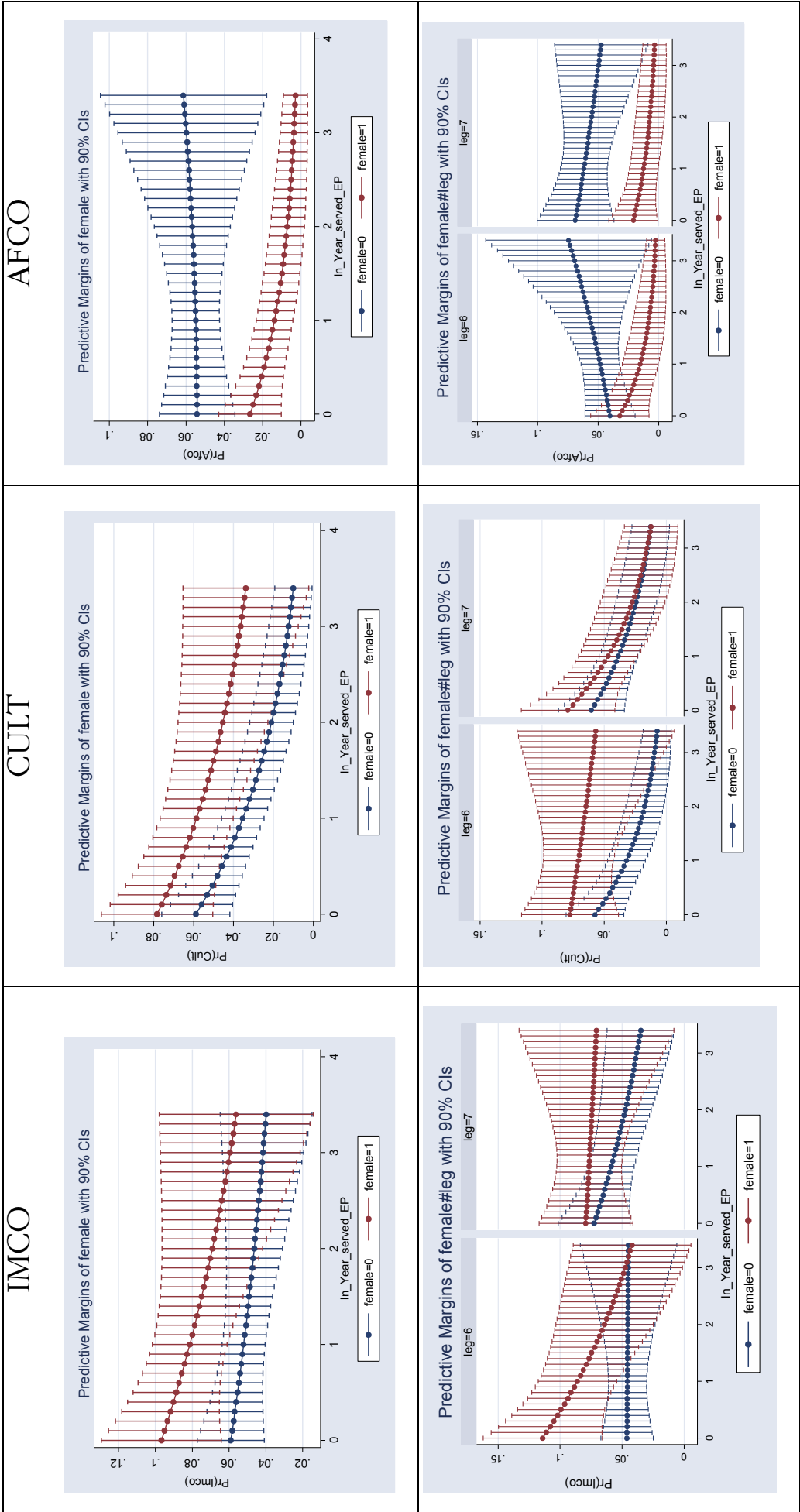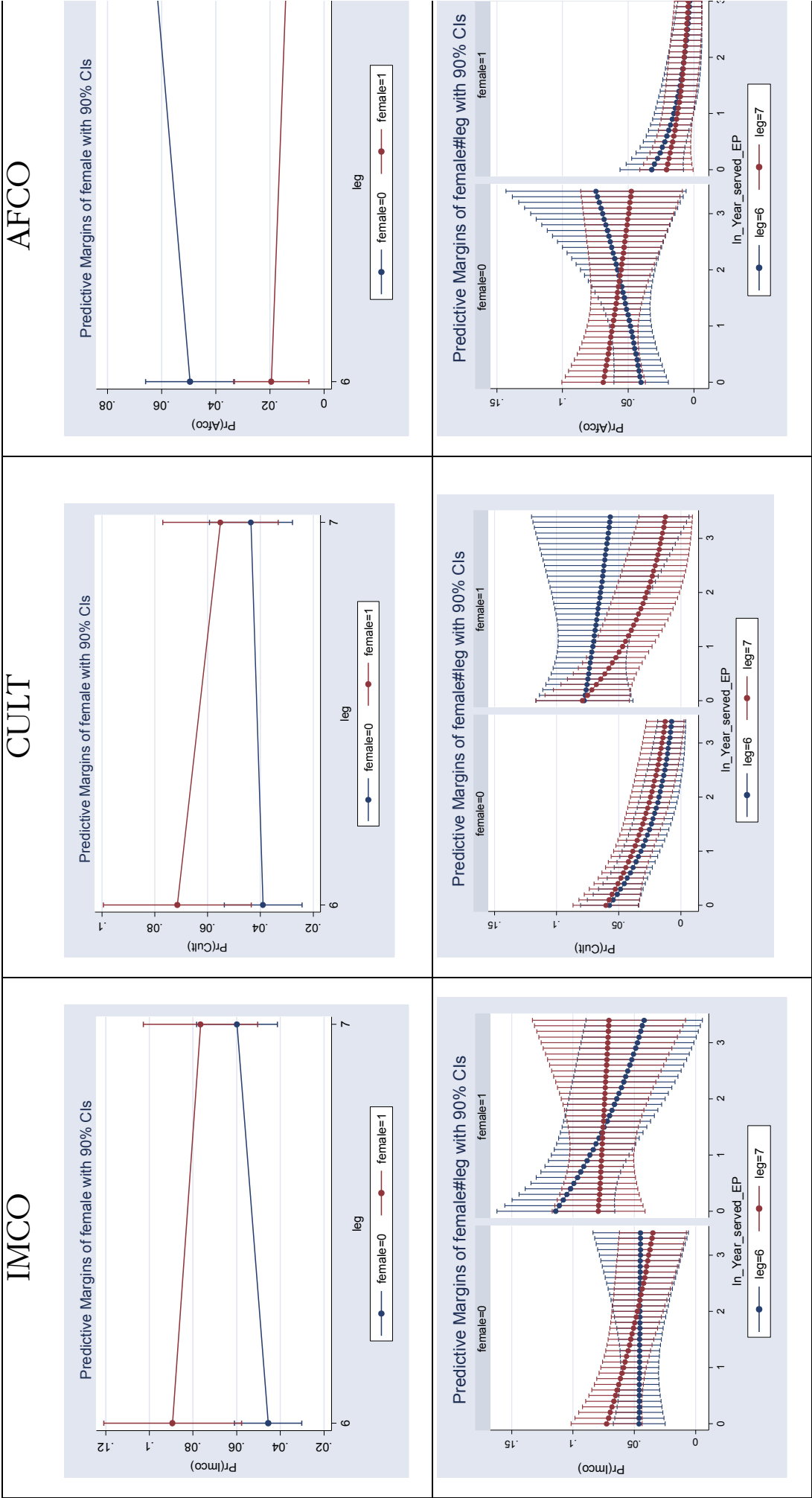
FIGURA 1A.

FIGURA 1B.

Figura 2a

FIGURA 2B

6. DISCUSSION

In order to interpret these results we resume the research questions of the first part of this contribution.

a) *Does gender significantly affect MEPs legislative behavior?*

The data about committee assignment in the European Parliament we presented in the previous section suggests a positive answer.

In general, the results of our analysis disconfirm some findings of previous studies and confirm others. On the one hand, once all the variables that can affect committee assignment are taken under control, women in the European Parliament are not less likely than men to choose committees focused on economic issues. We find that gender does not play any role in the choice of ECON (Ecnomic and Monetary Affairs), BUDG (Budgets), CONT (Budgetary Control), INTA (International Trade), ITRE (Industry, Research and Energy), while there is a systematic propensity of women to select IMCO (Internal Market and Consumer Protection) in EP6. On the other hand, our analysis confirms a propensity of women MEPs towards the committees oriented to social issues (ENVI - Environment, Public Health and Food Safety – and EMPL – Employment and Social Affairs). Evidence of a committee specialization by gender is however less robust. Only in AFET (Foreign Affairs), AFCO (Constitutional Affairs) and ENVI (Environment, Public Health and Food Safety) gender significantly affects the choice of committee in both the legislatures we take in consideration, while for other committees the effect of gender is limited to a single legislature, probably mirroring the changing saliency of different issues in different legislatures.

b) *If gender makes any difference for MPs legislative behavior, is this difference due to some kind of discrimination against women or does it come from genuine different preferences and sensitivities?*

The results of our analysis suggest that the role of preferences is crucial in the choice of EP committees, and that no discrimination against women is working in the process of committee assignment. Indeed, as we mentioned above, women are more likely than men to be assigned to certain committees, which are also among the most powerful in the European Parliament. On the contrary, at least if we focus on the legislative role of the European Parliament, men seem to steadily prefer weak committees, like AFET (Foreign Affairs) and AFCO (Constitutional Affairs), whose policy areas predominantly fall under the responsibility of individual states, rather than of the European Union. We can only put forward some conjectures about this almost surprising behavior. Maybe men want to play important games in the wrong place, or they simply prefer a 'sine cura' in order to invest more time and energies in national politics.

c) *Does an increase of women in parliaments and an increase of women's parliamentary seniority, either alone or in interaction, encourage the convergence of behavior between female and male representatives?*

All in all, the answer to this question is negative or interlocutory. An increase of the parliamentary seniority in some cases makes even diverging the probability of women and that of men to select the same committee. Among the committees in which gender significantly affects committee assignment in both legislatures, the probability of women and men to select AFET or ENVI is slightly more similar in EP7 than in EP6, while exactly the opposite happens in the choice of AFCO.

As mentioned at the outset of this work, the main argument of the politics of presence is based upon the empirical premise that women in legislative assemblies behave differently from men. The results of our study seem to confirm this premise. However, the same scholars that support the politics of presence argue that as the number of women is sufficiently high and women's interests sufficiently 'crystallized', we should expect a convergence among the behavior of men and women. Moreover, as argued by a feminist scholar (Wagnerud, 2013: 60), "The question of how the presence of women affects behavior and culture within political institutions is […] not just about whether women behave differently, or whether they meet certain obstacles, or whether, beyond a certain threshold of numbers, they are able to make an impact. The question is also whether their presence has an impact on the behavior of men, either reinforcing gender differences or modifying them". The percentage of women in the two legislatures of the European Parliament we considered overcomes the threshold of 30 percent and our research suggests that this not negligible presence, slightly increasing from one legislature to the following, actually does not affect so much men's priorities and seems at most to keep unchanged gender differences. In other terms, while our research shows that women's presence matters, it also suggests that more presence does not make the politics of presence less necessary.

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ABSTRACT

According to the 'politics of presence', the increase of the number of women elected in democratic parliaments is normatively desirable and must be facilitated (at least temporarily) also by the introduction of quotas. When the interests of disadvantaged groups such as women are uncrystallized and decision making uncertain, who the representatives are (also in terms of gender) should matter. The robustness of these arguments is based on an empirical premise. As women's interests are different from those of men, evidence that women's parliamentary behavior (at least in some circumstances) is different from that of men representatives should be found out. The main and general goal of this paper is to rigorously test this empirical premise, answering the following research questions: a) Does gender significantly affect the legislative behavior of MPs? b) If gender makes any difference for MPs legislative behavior, is this difference due to some kind of discrimination against women or does it come from genuine different preferences and sensitivities? c) Does an increase of the number of women in parliaments and an increase of women's parliamentary seniority, either alone or in interaction, encourage the convergence of behavior between female and male representatives? Focusing on the committee assignment in the European Parliament during the 6th and 7th legislatures, we find that gender affects the committee assignment in a non discriminatory way and that no convergence between female and male choices takes place, no matter the number of elected women in the European Parliament and their parliamentary seniority.

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1. Introduction

Female representation in contemporary parliaments has been intensively studied from both the perspective of legislative recruitment (Lovenduski and Norris, 1993; Matland and Studlar, 1996) and of legislative behavior (especially in terms of policy preferences) of elected women (Thomas and Welch, 1991; Reingold, 1992; Wängnerud, 2000). The importance of improving women's descriptive representation has often been supported by arguing that women, once elected, may "act for women", so that having more women MPs may have significant political consequences for the legislative agenda of a country. Studies on legislative behavior have mostly concentrated on single countries, focusing especially on the Anglo-Saxon and Northern European countries, and have highlighted that, under certain circumstances, women parliamentarians tend to prioritize more than men women-related legislation in their legislative activity. This stream of literature suggests that when introducing and/or approving a feminist agenda is at stake, women parliamentarians may challenge party cohesion by allying across party lines (Swers, 2002; Sanbonmatsu, 2006). However, evidence is mixed (see for example Childs, 2004; Lloren, 2015), and how and why gender cohesion within the legislature may emerge and whether it is actually a threat to party cohesion are still open questions.

The present paper focuses on the Italian case-study and aims at testing whether and how gender is a source of sub-group cohesion in the parliament and in the parties, and whether and how it may affect party cohesion in general. The interpretation of the results of this analysis suggests as well some hypotheses about the selection and recruitment of prospective MPs and the re-election of incumbents.

The paper is innovative both for data source and methodological approach. First, contrary to several studies about gender cohesion in legislative behavior, which focus on the last stage of the legislative process (final votes, roll-calls),[1] here we focus on the original preferences of women and men MPs.

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[1] For an exception see Swers (2002), in which also co-sponsorship in two legislatures in the US Congress is analyzed and Barnes (2012) who analyzed legislative assemblies in Argentine provinces.

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Following a previous study about the Italian committee cohesion (Curini and Zucchini, 2012), we use a specific parliamentary activity – bill co-sponsorship – in the Italian lower chamber between 1979 and 2016 as a source of important information about the original preferences of MPs. Actually, in the Italian legislative environment co-sponsorship reveals individual legislative preferences that are very likely to be original and very weakly affected by party discipline and strategic calculus (see Aleman *et. al.*, 2009), as we argue in the following section.

The second innovation deals with the methodology applied to this study. In fact, we use a principal component analysis of co-sponsorship data in order to identify the ideal points of MPs in a multidimensional space for each legislature. The data obtained using this technique allows us to identify the position of MPs in a multidimensional space, so that we can analyze cohesion at the individual level while controlling for the impact of several other variables of different kind (individual, partisan and institutional). In turn this information helps us to answer in a reliable way some simple questions: do women form a separated group in the Italian parliament? On average, are they more or less distant from the center of their parties than men? Does gender affect systematically party cohesion?

Third, we consider the entire range of policy issues covered by the co-sponsorship activity, and not only women-related legislation, and this allows us to conduct a more complete analysis of cohesion.

Moreover, the time span we cover in our analysis is longer than that considered in any other study on the topic. The data we use ranges throughout nine legislatures (37 years). The array of control variables we consider in the analysis enables us to assess the impact of gender on party cohesion very precisely.

Finally, this paper reduces the impressive gap in the literature about female representation in the Italian parliament, where female legislative behavior has rarely been considered (for exceptions, see Papavero, 2011 and Carando, 2010; Pansardi and Vercesi, 2016).

As to the structure of the paper, in the following section we explain why and how we build a multidimensional legislative space based on co-sponsorship behavior. The data we obtain allows us to estimate, in the third section, the cohesion of women and men as groups across party lines and inside parliamentary parties, and party cohesion separately for male and female MPs. In the fourth section, we put forward a number of general hypotheses about the causes of party cohesion. In the sections five and six, the variables inferred from these hypotheses allow us to estimate by multilevel regression models the net effect of gender on party cohesion. In the final section we discuss the main results of our analysis and what they reveal about parliamentary recruitment of men and women in the Italian parties.

2. Estimating MPs' (almost) original policy preferences

Trying to empirically estimate the original MPs' policy preferences is not an easy exercise. One obvious but still somehow misleading way to do it is to use each MP's actual voting

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behavior. This strategy has led to the development of an extensive literature in political science that analyzes roll-calls. Originally born to investigate the US Congress, this methodology has been increasingly employed even in other contexts, including parliamentary democracies (see Poole, 2005; Cox and McCubbins, 2005; Hix, Noury and Roland, 2005; Curini and Zucchini, 2010). The problem of this methodology is that, especially in a parliamentary context, the scaling of roll-calls measures just the structure of the "revealed behavioral space" (Hix and Jun, 2009). Therefore the MPs' estimated ideal points, as well as the latent dimension(s) revealed by their voting behavior, are linked only indirectly with the underlying ideological and policy dimensions of conflict in a polity (Shepsle and Weingast, 1995; Hall and Grofman, 1990). They are also the outcome of the impact of party discipline (that, on average, is clearly (much) higher in parliamentary democracies compared to presidential ones) on MPs behavior. In this case, we cannot talk about cohesion anymore, as the similarity of preferences is not original. Discipline is a "top down" phenomenon, the outcome of a strategic game played within the party in which rank and file members respond to rewards and punishments created by some internal party decision-making regime or by the legislative rules (Giannetti and Laver, 2009). The confidence vote procedure, for instance, is an institution that can affect the level of discipline.[2] Moreover, many roll call studies are indiscriminately based on very large samples of votes that are inherently determined by endogenous agenda formation processes that clearly introduces the possibility of a selection bias in roll-call votes (see Carrubba *et al.*, 2006; 2008).

The most common alternative data sources to identify policy positions are not available in European countries or are completely blind to the preferences of individual MPs. Party manifestos and/or expert surveys belong obviously to this last category. On the other hand, interest groups ratings are absent in European countries.[3]

One possible solution to this riddle is to rely on legislative co-sponsorship as the best source from which to infer, at least partially, the MPs' original preferences. Indeed, as rightly noted in the path breaking contribution by Aleman *et al.* (2009), "activities that have no immediate policy consequences and do not depreciate the party label are not as tightly monitored by party leaders. Consequently, floor voting choices should more intensely reflect the costs of defection imposed by parties than cosponsoring should". A second advantage of using co-sponsorship pertains to agenda processes. Bill sponsorship takes place at the beginning of the legislative process and it is usually less affected by strategic considerations than other parliamentary behaviors. Finally, in the Italian Par-

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[2] On the conceptual difference between unity, cohesion and discipline see Sieberer (2006) and Hazan (2003).

[3] Nevertheless, note that, although supplied by observers qualified and sophisticated enough "to differentiate legislators according to genuine policy differences rather than inconsequential or symbolic behavior" (Krehbiel, 1991: 118), interest group ratings are still mainly built upon roll calls.

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liament sponsoring a bill is a very frequent and easy activity, which does not require to comply with any special rule or criterion: any individual MP can do it.

The decision to cosponsor a bill reveals a MP's preference for the proposal over the current status quo, as well as a special interest in or importance attached to that particular bill. Moreover, while effective voting decides a policy, cosponsoring legislation can be seen as a low-cost position taking by MPs who signal their policy preferences to target audiences (e.g., constituents), or to fellow representatives, or to both (see Kessler and Krehbiel, 1996).

FIGURE 1. IDEAL POINTS OF DEMOCRATIC OF THE LEFT (DS) PARTY AND OF FORZA ITALIA (FI)
IN THE 14TH AND 16TH LEGISLATURES BY GENDER
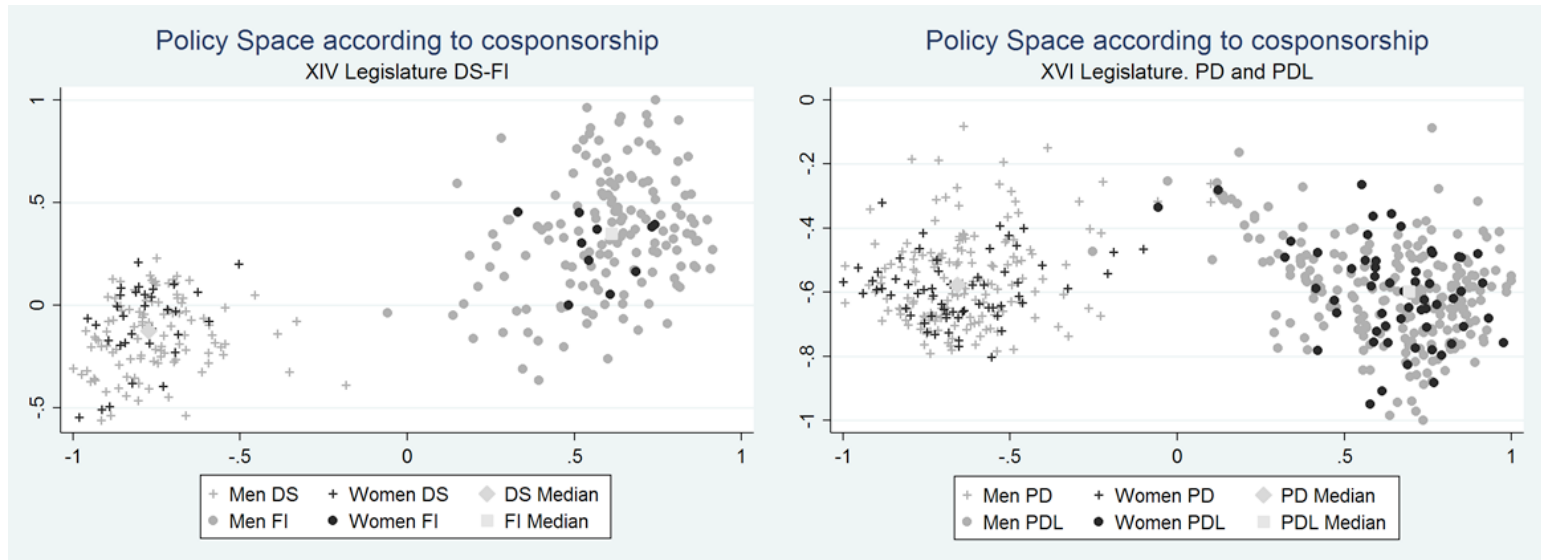
Data Source: the Italian Chamber of Deputies web site (www.camera.it).

As far as data inferred from co-sponsorship describes original policy preferences, we have indirectly also information about the identity of MPs who have been selected by parties and voted by the electorate. The bills MPs sponsor mirror their preferences before entering the parliament better than any other behavior. We rely on data provided by the Italian Parliament website about all the bills introduced in the Italian Chamber of Deputies between 1979 and 2013, that is from the 8th to the 16th legislature.[4] This data has been already processed in a previous paper (Curini and Zucchini, 2012) about committees' cohesion and we use the same individual ideal points extracted in that study.[5] In short,

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[4] Previous legislatures are not available in the Digital Data Archive in the Italian Parliament website. See http://www.senato.it/leggiedocumenti/index.htm

[5] In this article we use also the data about the 16th legislature. We thank Luigi Curini for his help in integrating the new information in the data set.

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Curini and Zucchini built an affiliation matrix for each legislature, with each cell indicating the number of times that each pair of legislators cosponsored legislation together. Then they used a principal-components analysis (PCA) with singular-value decomposition on this agreement matrix to extract the ideal-point estimates of the Italian MPs. To decide how many components (i.e., dimensions) to retain in each legislature, they rely on the popular Cattell's scree test. The underlying idea is that any two MPs present more similar (dissimilar) policy preferences the more (less) they co-sponsor the same bills. In the Figure 1, as an example, the ideal points of female and male legislators of the two main Italian parliamentary parties in the 14th and 16th legislatures are plotted with the two party medians.

3. Gender cohesion and party cohesion in the Italian Chamber of Deputies

The concept of cohesion has an immediate spatial description. If we can represent individual preferences on the policy space as individual ideal points, the proximity of the ideal points of MPs who belong to a certain subset of the parliament represents the level of cohesion of that subset. In order to measure the proximity or dispersion of MPs with respect to a specific subset of MPs, we can calculate the Euclidean distance separating each MP from the median position of the subset. We call this measure DISPERSION. The subsets of the Parliament considered may change according to the research questions. The debate in the literature about gender and party cohesion suggests three research questions (and three possible subsets):

Are women MPs closer to each other (i.e. more cohesive) than men in the Parliament?

Are women MPs closer to each other than men in their parties?

Does gender affect party cohesion and how?

The first is only seemingly an easy question. If we decide to measure directly the distance of each woman MP from the multidimensional median of women in parliament, we will obtain a measure overwhelmingly biased by the distribution of women MPs among different parties. In the Italian Parliament, women have been disproportionally concentrated in the Communist Party and in its heirs (Democratic party of the Left – PDS, and Democratic Left – DS). Therefore, according to this biased measure, women would be systematically always less dispersed (i.e. more cohesive) than men. Using this measure, in fact, we would somehow compare the cohesion of a party with the cohesion of the whole Parliament. On the contrary, we are interested in checking the cohesiveness of women (compared with that of men) once we have controlled for their party affiliation. For this purpose, a plausible descriptive measure of gender cohesion in the parliament can be constructed in four steps:

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– we should calculate the median of each gender subset for each dimension within each party that has women MPs;
– we calculate a median value for each dimension of the previous medians of the two gender subsets;
– we calculate for both women and men the Euclidean distances that separate the medians of the two gender subsets in each party from the medians of their medians;
– we calculate the mean of the previous distances.

FIGURE 2. DISPERSION WITHIN GENDER SUBSETS IN THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENT
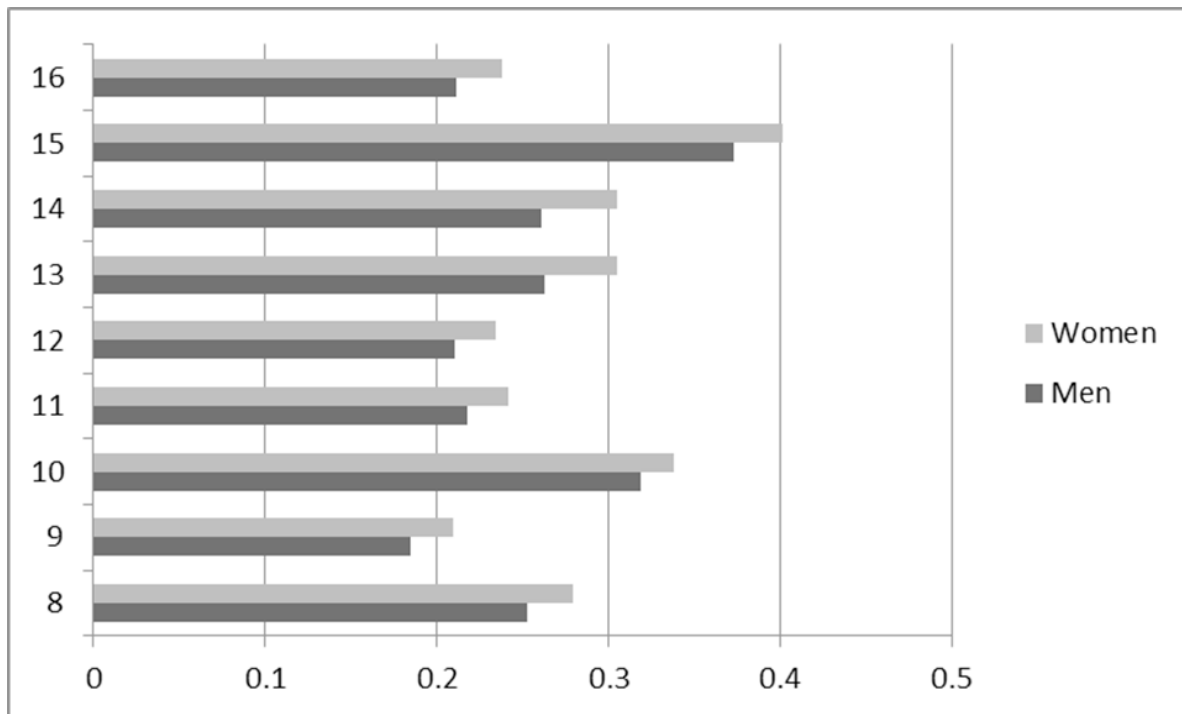(8TH TO 16TH LEGISLATURES)
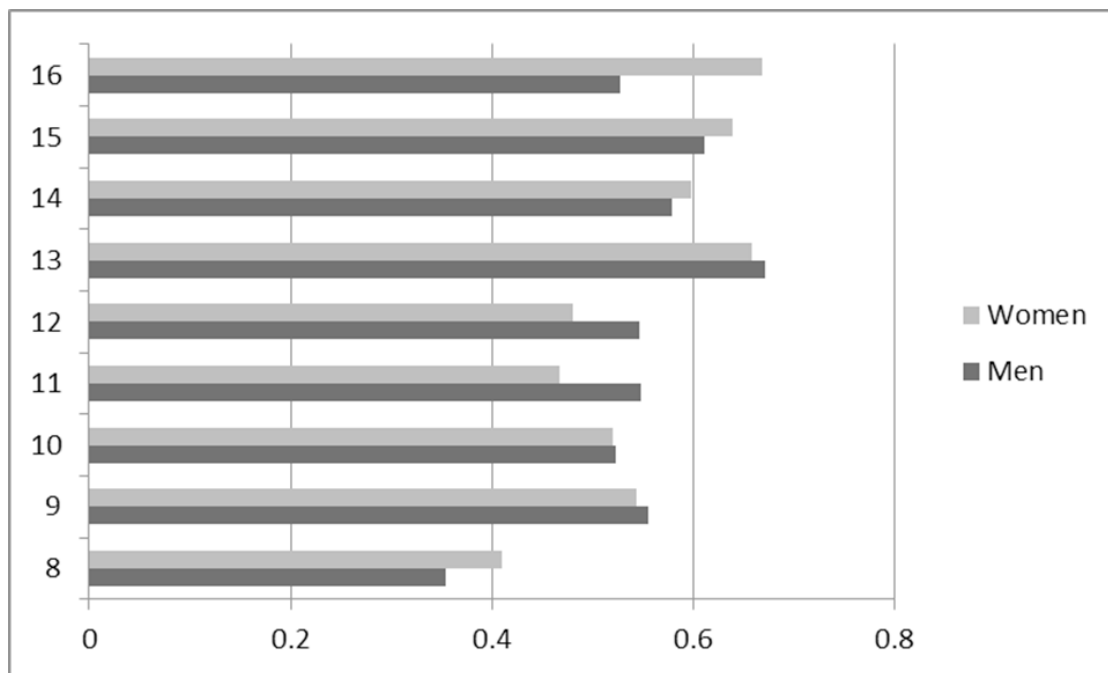
Data Source: the Italian Parliament website (www.camera.it). Bills introduced in the Chamber of Deputies (1979-2013).

Figure 2 illustrates such a mean per legislature. No stable pattern is displayed, thus we do not have any reason to argue that women are in general systematically more cohesive with each other (less dispersed) than men, after controlling for party affiliation.

As to the second question is concerned, when we consider the cohesion of the two gender subsets inside parties, women MPs appear almost always less cohesive than men (see Fig. 3). The mean of the DISPERSION of women around their median is almost always higher.

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FIGURE 3. DISPERSION WITHIN GENDER SUBSETS IN THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES
(8TH TO 16TH LEGISLATURES)

Data Source: the Italian Parliament website (www.camera.it). Bills introduced in the Chamber of Deputies (1979-2013).

As to the third question, in all the legislatures considered, excepted the 8th, women are not only more dispersed than men as regards the gender medians within the party but also less distant – i.e. less dispersed – than men from the median of their parties (Fig. 4). In other words, women are systematically closer to the legislative preferences of the party majority than their male colleagues. Therefore, far from being an element of party heterogeneity, women seem on average to strengthen the party cohesion. This result suggests that gender should be seriously taken into consideration when political scientists try to explain party cohesion, at least in the Italian legislative arena.

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FIGURE 4 PARTY DISPERSION BY GENDER IN THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES,
CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES (8TH TO 16TH LEGISLATURES)
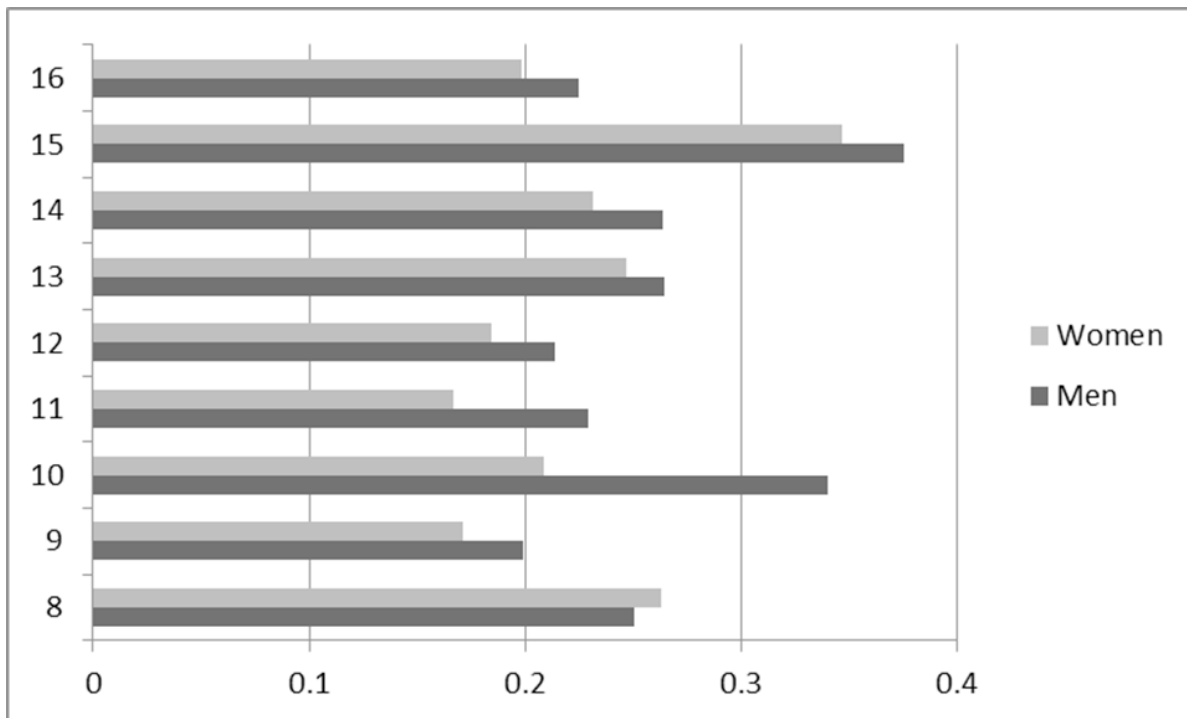
Data Source: the Italian Parliament Website. Bills introduced in the Chamber of Deputies 1979-2013

Aggregate data is suggestive but cannot provide any reliable answer about whether and how gender affects the distribution of the MPs' policy preferences inside the legislative arena. These results may actually depend on many factors and the relationship between gender and cohesion can be in fact spurious. For instance, cohesion could depend on the prevailing presence of women MPs in certain parliamentary parties, which differ from the others in terms of organization and size. Women could be younger and with less parliamentary seniority than men and their 'cohesiveness' could compensate a lack of experience and political resources. Once these factors or others have been taken into consideration, the influence of gender on cohesion at the aggregate level may disappear or display a reverse sign. Therefore, only a multivariate analysis at the individual level that takes explicitly into consideration other factors may assess the impact of gender on party cohesion and its implications. In the next session we put forward some hypotheses about the factors that a-priori can affect party cohesion and encompass the impact of gender.

4. BEHIND THE EFFECT OF GENDER: POTENTIAL INDIVIDUAL, PARTISAN AND SYSTEMIC
EXPLANATIONS OF PARTY COHESION

The propensity of MPs to align their legislative preferences to the preferences of the majority of the party may depend a-priori on their lack of autonomy and resources. It

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may also reflect the MP's "party socialization" and/or the position held in the party organization and in the Parliament as party representative. Following these arguments, five hypotheses at the individual level may be put forward:[6]

– H1: The legislative behavior and preferences of young MPs are more affected by the preferences of the party majority. Therefore, party dispersion decreases as age increases.
– H2: Rookies are the most affected by the preferences of the party majority. Thus, we expect that party dispersion increases as parliamentary seniority increases.
– H3: MPs with lower levels of education are less dispersed (more cohesive) than MPs who hold higher levels of education.
– H4: Any MP holding a parliamentary office mirrors more faithfully the party majority position.
– H5: MPs who had previous experience in the party organization are more likely to be aligned with their party majority and such alignment increases with the importance of their role in the party organization. However, as an important role in the party organization usually implies more individual autonomy and political resources, we expect also that cohesion increases at a decreasing rate.

Still at the individual level, it is plausible to argue that MPs with a professional background as politicians before entering the parliament may be more sensitive to the legislative preferences of the party majority as they do not have alternative career perspectives if the party decides to dismiss them. Therefore, we expect that:
– H6: Professional politicians are less distant from the party median than MPs with a different professional background.

Other factors that may affect party cohesion work at the party level. Big parties are supposed to be more heterogeneous than small ones. Ideological and organizational legacies can make some parties more cohesive than others. In Italy, the Communist Party until 1991 and the parties that after its dissolution inherited part of its organizational structure have always been more centralized at the national level than any other party. Moreover, according to some studies (see for example Newell, 2000), in general leftist parties tend to be more cohesive than rightist ones. They insist more on the uniformity of the ideological message and less on the local leadership. Therefore, at the party level we put forward the three following hypotheses:
– H7: MPs are more likely to be more distant from the median position of their parties (namely to be more dispersed) in big parties than in small parties.
– H8: The MPs in the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and its successors (PDS, DS) are less dispersed than any other.

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[6] As explained in section 3, our measure of cohesion is its opposite, that is dispersion. As our statistical models include the latter as dependent variable, in this and the following sections, both in the hypotheses and the analyses of data, we will refer more to dispersion than to cohesion.

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– H9: Dispersion increases as the party ideology moves from the left to the right in the ideological spectrum.

Finally, at the systemic level electoral systems should play an important role in affecting the alignment of the MP's policy preferences to the party's policy preferences. According to Shugart and Carey (1995), when personal vote prevails we should expect less party cohesion. In this respect, plurality rule with single member districts and proportional systems with open lists induce much more personal vote than proportional systems with closed lists. Between the 8th and the 11th legislature, the Italian deputies were elected by a proportional open list system, while between the 12th and the 14th the electoral system was mixed, with 75 percent of MPs elected in single member districts and the remaining 25 percent elected in closed party lists. The members of the Chamber of Deputies in the last two legislatures we take in consideration (the 15th and 16th) were elected by a proportional system with closed list and a majority prize at national level. We hypothesize that H10: MPs elected in single-member districts or in proportional systems with open lists are more dispersed than MPs elected in proportional systems with closed lists.

5. VARIABLES OPERATIONALIZATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1 summarizes the main variables and the hypotheses about how they may affect party dispersion (cohesion) we have considered so far.

TABLE 1. VARIABLES SUMMARIZING THE HYPOTHESES ABOUT PARTY DISPERSION (COHESION)

Control variables	Distance from the party median (PARTY DISPERSION)
Individual level	
H.1 AGE	+
H.2 TENURE	+
H.3 EDUCATION (1= university degree; 0=other degrees)	+
H.4 PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE (1=committee office; 0=no committee office)	-
H.5a PARTY EXPERIENCE (simple term)	+
H.5b PARTY EXPERIENCE (quadratic term)	-
H.6 PROFESSION (professional politicians)	-
Party level	
H.7 PARTYSIZE	+
H.8 PARTYORG (Communist Party and its heirs)	-
H.9 IDEOLOGICAL POSITION (0=most leftist-10=most rightist)	+
Systemic level	
H.10 ELECTORAL SYSTEM (Personal vote)	+

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The majority of the independent variables potentially affecting party dispersion (cohesion) are operationalized in a simple and uncontroversial way. TENURE is the number of legislatures each MP has served before the legislature taken in consideration in the analysis. EDUCATION is a dummy variable equal to 1 when a MP holds a university degree. PARTYSIZE is the number of MPs who belong to a parliamentary party. PROFESSION is a categorical variable comprising ten groups of professions. The operationalization of other variables requires a slightly longer explanation. PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE is a dummy variable assuming value 1 when a MP holds a committee office in the Chamber of Deputies. PARTY EXPERIENCE is an ordinal variable that ranks from 0 (no party experience) to 8 (member of the party national executive). In order to control for the organization peculiarity (PARTYORG) of the Italian Communist party we created a dummy variable with value 1 when the MP belongs to the Italian Communist Party or to all the parties that are usually considered its organizational heirs (PDS, DS). In order to estimate the party positions (IDEOLOGICAL POSITION) along a generic left-right scale, we use different expert surveys (Castles and Mair, 1984, Huber and Inglehart, 1995, Benoit and Laver ,2006; Curini and Jacus, 2008). To allow direct comparisons, we have normalized all the expert left-right scores on a 0 to 10 scale (on this transformation, see Gabel and Huber, 2000). Finally, as to the role of electoral rules, we have introduced the variable ELECTORAL SYSTEM that is worth 1 when the MP is elected through a party-centered system as PR with closed list, and 0 when, on the contrary, the system is more candidate-centered, as in proportional systems with open list or plurality system with single member district (SMPs). In our case-study, the first option applies to the MPs elected during the 15th and 16th legislatures and to the MPs elected in the PR quota from the 12th to the 14th legislature; the other options apply to the MPs elected by SMPs from the 12th to the 14th legislature and to the MPs elected between the 8th and the 11th legislature.

Our dataset is structured in four levels. Ignoring this multilevel character of the data could affect the validity of our estimation. In particular, this could lead to residuals that are not independent within the same MPs, within the same party and within the same legislature, violating one crucial assumption of OLS regression (Steenbergen and Jones, 2002). However, each level is not perfectly nested in the upper level. MPs are quite often reelected, therefore more than one observation corresponds perfectly to only one MP. Moreover, MPs can belong to different parliamentary parties in different legislatures and on their turn the same parliamentary parties are not always present in all the legislatures we consider. Therefore we run a random intercept multilevel crossed-classified model where the first level (a MP in a legislature) is nested in the upper one (the MP identity).

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TABLE 2: GENDER AND PREDICTORS OF PARTY DISPERSION

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
VARIABLES					
AGE		0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
		(0,000)	(0,000)	(0,000)	(0,000)
TENURE		0,0136***	0,0146***	0,0145***	0,0146***
		(0,00183)	(0,00191)	(0,00207)	(0,00191)
EDUCATION		0,00587	0,00551	0,00526	0,00524
		(0,00647)	(0,00647)	(0,00647)	(0,00646)
PARTYEXP		-0,0111***	-0,0111***	-0,0110***	-0,0111***
		(0,00334)	(0,00334)	(0,00334)	(0,00334)
PARLOFFICE		-0,0154**	-0,0154**	-0,0154**	-0,0154**
		(0,00761)	(0,00761)	(0,00761)	(0,00761)
GENDER (woman)	-0,0156**	-0,0211***	-0,0221	-0,0334*	-0,0301
	(0,00785)	(0,00800)	(0,0192)	(0,0200)	(0,0195)
PARTYEXP*PARTYEXP		0,00114***	0,00114***	0,00113***	0,00113***
		(0,000422)	(0,000422)	(0,000422)	(0,000422)
PROFESSION (Political Professions as benchmark)		-	-	-	-
Public Bureaucrat		-0,00917	-0,00932	-0,00965	-0,00955
		(0,00923)	(0,00923)	(0,00923)	(0,00923)
Lawyer		-0,00471	-0,00500	-0,00487	-0,00483
		(0,00958)	(0,00956)	(0,00957)	(0,00955)
Other Professional		-0,0153	-0,0151	-0,0152	-0,0150
		(0,0126)	(0,0126)	(0,0126)	(0,0125)
Architect and engineer		-0,0296*	-0,0293*	-0,0291*	-0,0290*
		(0,0169)	(0,0169)	(0,0169)	(0,0169)
Doctors and apothecary		-0,0338***	-0,0338***	-0,0336***	-0,0335***
		(0,0129)	(0,0129)	(0,0128)	(0,0128)
Professions of Education		-0,00556	-0,00462	-0,00452	-0,00434
		(0,00882)	(0,00883)	(0,00883)	(0,00882)
Private Sector's activities		-0,00797	-0,00805	-0,00809	-0,00810
		(0,00884)	(0,00883)	(0,00883)	(0,00882)
Agriculture's activities		-0,0135	-0,0143	-0,0160	-0,0160
		(0,0279)	(0,0278)	(0,0278)	(0,0278)
Other professions		0,0404*	0,0404*	0,0413*	0,0414*
		(0,0232)	(0,0232)	(0,0232)	(0,0232)
IDEOLOGICAL POSITION		0,00000	-0,000678	-0,000441	-0,000442
		(0,00321)	(0,00308)	(0,00315)	(0,00315)
PARTYORG		-0,0590*	-0,0570*	-0,0544	-0,0538
		(0,0337)	(0,0314)	(0,0642)	(0,0640)

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PARTYSIZE		0,0003***	0,0003***	0,0003***	0,0003***
		(0,000)	(0,000)	((0,000))	((0,000))
PERCWPARTY			-0,0783	-0,0638	-0,0632
			(0,0692)	(0,0715)	(0,0715)
GENDER*PERCWPARTY			0,0566	0,0902	0,0870
			(0,0912)	(0,0966)	(0,0965)
GENDER*PARTYORG* PERCWPARTY				-1,102**	-1,076**
				(0,471)	(0,470)
PARTYORG*PERCWPARTY				-0,0191	-0,0193
				(0,262)	(0,262)
GENDER*PARTYORG				0,253**	0,241**
				(0,103)	(0,101)
TENURE*PARTYORG				0,000723	
				(0,00501)	
GENDER*TENURE			-0,0116*	-0,00874	-0,0126**
			(0,00600)	(0,00803)	(0,00601)
GENDER*TENURE* PARTYORG				-0,00883	
				(0,0126)	
ELECTORAL SYSTEM		-0,0262**	-0,0266**	-0,0263**	-0,0259**
		(0,0115)	(0,0115)	(0,0116)	(0,0116)
Constant	0,248***	0,253***	0,263***	0,262***	0,261***
	(0,0213)	(0,0296)	(0,0314)	(0,0319)	(0,0319)
Log likelihood	1373,2366	1465,46	1467,9424	1471,6614	1471,4063
LR Test against null model	647,47	430,92	405,24	399,45	399,2
Variance at level 1	0,0335914	0,0318143	0,0318692	0,0318124	0,0318362
Variance at level 2	0,0012692	0,0007375	0,0006702	0,0006716	0,0006501
Variance at level 3	0,0019561	0,0011763	0,0009291	0,0010056	0,0010089
Variance at level 4	0,0030461	0,0007375	0,0032368	0,0033046	0,0033014
(observations)	5435	5106	5106	5106	5106
Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0,01, ** p<0,05, * p<0,1					

The Model 1 includes only the effect of gender, while in the Model 2 all the explanatory variables inferred by the hypotheses described in the session 4 are included. Against any plausible expectation, in the latter gender still has a significant and negative impact on dispersion. Several of the hypotheses about the role played by other explanatory variables are confirmed but none encompasses the effect of GENDER. At the individual level, TENURE increases DISPERSION while PARLOFFICE and PARTYEXP significantly decrease it, and the latter at decreasing rate. Among the variables at the party

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level, the size of the parliamentary groups (PARTYSIZE) has always a small but positive and significant effect on dispersion, while if the MP belongs to the Communist party or its successors she is less distant from her party median. The only real surprise comes from the effect of the type of ELECTORAL SYSTEM. Contrary to our expectations (H10), the electoral rules that are usually supposed to emphasize the personal vote significantly decrease party dispersion.

Summing up, women do not appear to be less dispersed than men neither because they belong overwhelmingly to a specific and very cohesive party, nor because they have on average less parliamentary seniority, nor because they are more involved in the party offices, or because they mainly belong to small parties. If we exclude a "biological" attitude under the different behavior of women and men, such a result suggests that some of the plausible predictors of party cohesion work differently for women and men. In the following section, we will consider some interaction terms in order to assess whether, as we suspect, a different recruitment process or, on the contrary, a different evolution of policy preferences at the individual level encourage more party cohesion among women MPs than among men. To this purpose, we consider further hypotheses present in the literature about those factors that may potentially explain the different behavior of men and women.

6. Minority status, seniority and party organization. Where does the effect of gender come from?

Minority status

Women in the Italian parties have always been a minority group. Even in the last legislature (16th) they just reached the 30 percent threshold in the Chamber of Deputies and inside the big parties they never have overcome that of 40 percent. Such a circumstance may suggest that the effect of gender on party cohesion is in fact a byproduct of the numerousness of women in the parliamentary parties. In other terms, the higher level of party cohesion of women we found out may depend on their status as a minority without any substantial and enduring difference in their policy preferences vis à vis men. The proportion of women in the legislative parties can affect women preferences as they are revealed in the legislative behavior but it can also affect the nature of women's "original" preferences in the parliament. According to the critical mass theory, when a minority group grows in size, its members can more effectively combat the direct and indirect influences that has led them to produce mimetic behaviors and to emulate the majority group's preferences (Kanter, 1977; Dahlerup, 2006). The type of relationship between "conformism" and proportion of minority group is not continuous: the percentage of members who belong to the minority has to overcome a threshold to induce the minority members to reveal their sincere preferences. However, the value of this threshold

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is quite changeable according to the authors and fields where this argument is applied, which makes the argument itself troublesome (Kanter, 1977; Dahlerup, 2006; Child and Krook, 2006; Beckwith 2007; Beckwith and Cowell Mayers, 2007).

As an alternative, we can also imagine that when women are a small minority in the parliamentary parties, women's preferences are originally more "aligned" as a consequence of the recruitment process. Suppose that men and women who aspire to be elected in a certain party are two distinct groups of the same size, both normally and similarly distributed in terms of policy preferences around the central positions of the party. Both men and women are selected according to a lexicographic criterion: first aspirant politicians close to the central preferences, then aspirant politicians more and more distant from the center. When the sample of women that are selected and voted is smaller than the sample of men, the percentage of women close to the party center will be much higher than the percentage of men in the same condition. As the sample of women grows in comparison with the sample of men, the impact of gender on party dispersion should have to increase. We can call this a cooptation mechanism.

Whatever the causal mechanism, we should expect that as the proportion of women increases also the level of dispersion (continuously or after a certain threshold) of women within the party increases until it is impossible to distinguish that of women from that of men.

This line of argumentation leads us to hypothesize that:

– H.11 As the proportion of women elected in a party increases, the impact of gender on party dispersion decreases until it disappears completely.

Seniority

According to some scholars the role of women's true preferences in guiding their behavior is temporarily limited by their seniority. Studies about local government and national parliaments (Jeydel and Taylor, 2003) argue that seniority plays a more important role among women rather among men. Barnes (2014) argues that, at the beginning of their legislative career, women tend to accept marginal roles more than men. She also seems to suggest that higher seniority has a different impact on the legislative behavior of women and men. Indeed, "senior female legislators are likely to mentor newcomers and teach them how to work within the system to accomplish their goals" (Barnes, 2014: 141), while mentoring seems to be less important among men.

Therefore, we should expect that as the individual seniority increases, women's legislative behavior becomes more similar to that of men.

Following this line of argumentation we hypothesize that

– H12: Among rookies, women are less dispersed from the party median than men. However, gender tends to have no effect on party dispersion as parliamentary seniority increases.

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Both hypotheses H11 and H12 are tested by introducing two new models (see Tab. 2). In Model 3 we add two interaction factors to Model 2. The first one is composed by GENDER and the proportion of women in parliamentary parties (PERCWPARTY) and the second one by GENDER and TENURE. Following the hypotheses we put forward, we expect that the impact of gender on party dispersion disappears as the percentage of women is sufficiently high (H11), and as their parliamentary seniority increases (H12). In Model 4, we add to the previous interaction terms also the variable PARTY ORGANIZATION to check whether the previous interaction effects change according to different party organizations and traditions. Indeed, the Communist party and its heirs (PDS, DS) were seemingly more women's friendly, as they recruited more women also introducing affirmative action in their statutes. We expect that in these parties the effect of the previous interactions is positive (that is, the higher the percentage of women and their seniority, the higher the level of dispersion) and stronger than in all the other parties.

Models 3 and 4 show that our a-priori expectations are partially disconfirmed. In Model 3 the interaction between gender and the proportion of women in the party is not significant. Nevertheless, if we differentiate between types of party organization (PARTYORG), as in Model 4, the results are intriguing. The interaction factor with three variables has a negative and marginally significant coefficient.

Similarly, when we investigate the effect of TENURE in interaction with GENDER, the hypothesis H12 is not confirmed. The interaction has a negative sign and, as individual seniority increases, party dispersion of women further decreases significantly, no matters the type of party organization and tradition (PARTYORG) we take in consideration (Model 4).
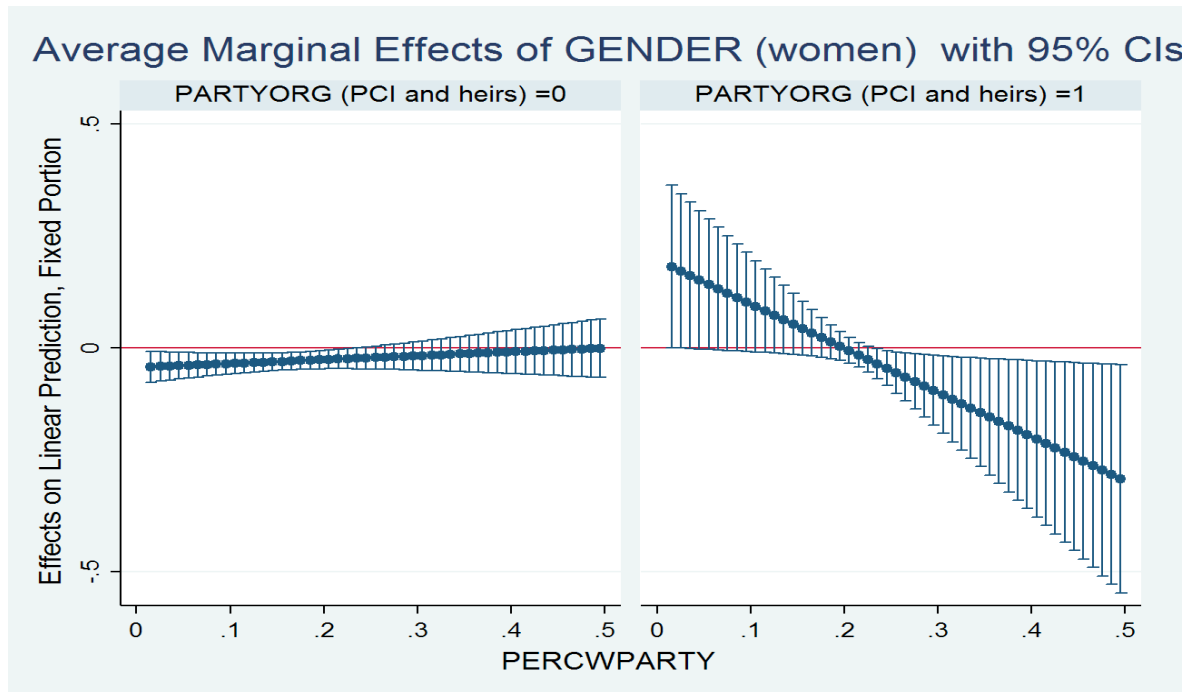
Both these results deserve an in depth analysis of GENDER's marginal impact, as we do in Model 5, where the three variables interaction term GENDER*PERCWPARTY*PARTYORG and the two variables interaction term GENDER*TENURE are introduced.

As Figure 5a shows, in the parties different from the Communist Party (and its heirs) being a woman has a small negative impact on PARTY DISPERSION when PERCWPARTY is small. As PERCWPARTY increases, such an impact slowly diminishes until it becomes not significant, as predicted by H11. On the contrary, when we consider the Communist Party (and its heirs) for small proportions of women, the impact of gender is positive but marginally significant. However, as the percentage of women increases, the positive impact of gender on PARTYDISPERSION decreases, and when the percentage of women overcomes the 20 percent threshold its impact becomes stronger and stronger but significantly negative. In other terms, the expectations of hypothesis 11 are completely reversed. The implications from both the critical mass theory and the cooptation mechanism we illustrated above seem to be fully disconfirmed. Indeed, in the Communist and derived parties, as the proportion of women expands, the latter become closer to the party median. This result seems to suggest that while enhancing the opportunities of election

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for women, the mechanism of recruitment adopted by the Communist party and its heirs tended also to "filter out" the less aligned to the party central preferences.

The insight coming from the study of the interaction between GENDER and TEN-URE is even more striking (see Fig. 5b). Among new legislators, gender does not significantly affect party dispersion. As seniority grows, being a woman has an increasingly negative impact on party dispersion, contrary to the expectations of Hypothesis 12. The data we gathered from the Italian Parliament shows that, in general, incumbent women MPs are less likely to be confirmed in the next legislature than their male colleagues, as well as more "dispersed" MPs are less likely to serve also in the next legislature. Moreover, senior female legislators are on average more cohesive than their male counterparts. According to us, one possible interpretation of these results still deals with the different mechanisms of legislative recruitment and survival of men and women in the legislative arena. It is very likely that while for men seniority implies the opportunity to gather additional political resources that allow them to be more "independent" from (less aligned to) the party majority, for women seniority is the consequence of a loyal, cohesive behavior. In other terms, in a competitive environment, women seem to rely on legislative party loyalty and cohesion for their survival much more than men.

FIGURE 5A. AVERAGE MARGINAL EFFECTS OF GENDER (WOMEN = 1) BY THE PERCENTAGE OF WOM-EN IN PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES (PERCWPARTY) AND PARTY ORGANIZATION (PARTYORG)
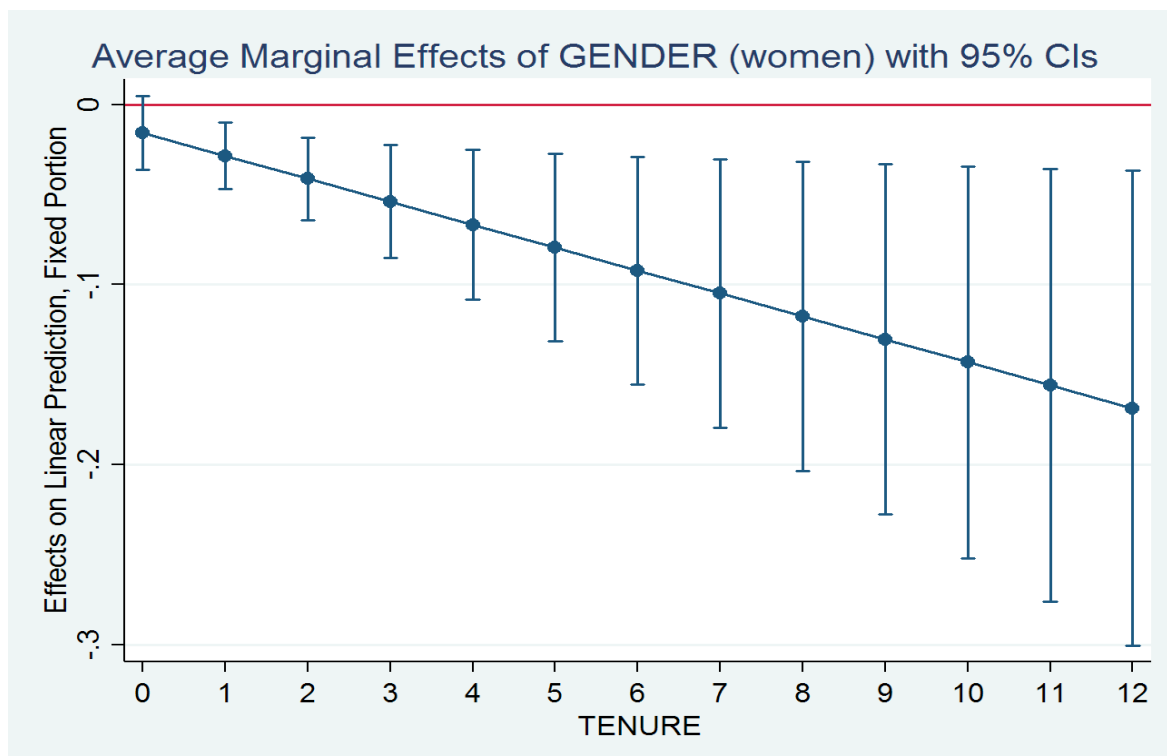
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FIGURE 5B. AVERAGE MARGINAL EFFECTS OF GENDER (WOMEN=1)
BY PARLIAMENTARY SENIORITY (TENURE)

7. SUMMARY AND (PROVISIONAL) CONCLUSIONS

At the outset of this paper we put forward some research questions about gender and cohesion in the Italian parliament: are women MPs more cohesive than men? Do they form a separated sub-group in their parties? Are they more or less distant than their male colleagues from the center of their parliamentary party? The study of policy preferences that we inferred from co-sponsorship behavior in the Italian Parliament has given us some unexpected answers.

As to the first question, gender does not appear to be a factor able to create a trans-party similarity in policy preferences. This suggests that the Italian women MPs do not behave as a cross-party interest group, at least when we look at the co-sponsorship activity. On the contrary, within each single parliamentary party women appear to form a less cohesive group than men, and at the same time to be closer to the party center. Indeed, once the effects of a rich variety of other variables at individual, partisan and

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systemic level are controlled, contrary to other studies, we found out that being women not only does not feed party dispersion in the Italian parliament, but it also encourages party cohesion. We also found out this to be a quite structural and persistent feature of the Italian Parliament. The critical mass theory we considered in the section 6 as well as the simple cooptation mechanism argument suggest that an increase of the number of women in the party would imply a decrease of the party cohesion. The growth of the number of women would allow women to better pursue women's policy agenda. This circumstance should make women at least as "dispersed" as their male counterparts. Yet, the data we analyzed for the Italian case study is partially at odds with this prediction. Indeed, in the parties that do not belong to the organizational tradition of the Communist Party, an increase of the percentage of women tends to nullify the impact of gender on party cohesion as we expect. On the contrary, in the Communist party and its derived parties, such an increase has made women's closeness to the center of the legislative party even stronger.

As we argue in section 4, some studies show that when women are rookies they are much more available to accept marginal and unimportant roles than men in the same condition (Barnes, 2014). This suggests that tenure should mitigate the party cohesion of women as it should supply political resources to be more independent. However, the empirical results of our analyses disconfirm even these plausible expectation. Contrary to what happens to men, seniority does not seem to provide women with additional resources to behave according to preferences that are non-majoritarian in the parliamentary party. A plausible interpretation of this finding seems to be that the experienced female legislators survive in a much more selective political environment than that of men, where probably the main resources they could rely upon to remain in office come from their parliamentary party through the party discipline.

Thus, coeteris paribus, being a woman persistently and positively affects, at least until now, party cohesion in the Italian parliament. This seems to suggest that if party cohesion reinforces a party's brand (Cox and McCubbins, 2001; Cox and McCubbins, 2005), recruiting women MPs could be a good investment for the party leadership, no matter women candidates' profession, age and education or the kind of electoral system in use. The "returns" of this investment in terms of cohesion are likely to be diminishing as the proportion of women in the legislative party increases (unless the recruitment process becomes similar to the Communist party´s one), but the filtering mechanisms that allow female incumbents to be reconfirmed seems to guarantee that a reelected incumbent woman will be much less "dispersed" than a man.

All in all, the persistent greater proximity of the Italian women MPs to the party center compared to men may have two different implications. On the one hand, it may be seen as the effect of a persistent political weakness of women, which has its roots in the original legislative recruitment process. Women are selected by a party leadership that is also

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the main (if not the only) political resource they have to be elected and to stay in office. If this were true, party cohesion would mean lack of autonomy from the party leadership. On the other hand, women MPS' proximity to the center of their parliamentary parties may reflect their perfect integration in the party establishment, with also some influence on the process of selection and recruitment of other women. This would mean that they would have the possibility to co-opt (and confirm) female prospective MPS with very similar preferences, and this would give them more chances to achieve some shared policy goals once in the parliament. However, as we show in this paper, at the moment the lower level of cohesion of women as a group makes this interpretation less plausible. Future studies may assess whether increasing proportions of women MPS from the actual 30 percent will give women this opportunity.

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ABSTRACT

Studies on female legislative behavior suggest that women parliamentarians may challenge party cohesion by allying across party lines. However, evidence is mixed, and how and why gender cohesion within the legislature may emerge and whether it is actually a threat to party cohesion are still open questions.

In this paper we analyze a specific parliamentary activity - bill co-sponsorship - in the Italian lower Chamber, between 1979 and 2016, as a source of information about MPs' original preferences to study how gender affects party cohesion and gender cohesion. Do women form a separated group in the Italian parliament? On average, are they more or less distant from the center of their parties than men? Does gender affect systematically party cohesion? A principal component analysis of co-sponsorship data allows us to identify the ideal points of all MPs in a multidimensional space for each legislature. Based on these data we estimate the impact of gender on party cohesion at the individual level while controlling for the impact of several other variables of different kind (individual, partisan and institutional). We find that: 1) on average, women show lower cohesion as a group inside different parties and higher party cohesion than men; 2) the influence of gender on party cohesion is not conditional upon individual characteristics, upon the size and organization of parliamentary parties and upon the share of women in their parliamentary groups; 3) the different behavior of women MPs may depend on the different patterns of recruitment in the parties.

Biographical notes

Fabio Franchino is Professor of Political Science at the Università degli Studi di Milano. He is primarily interested in the politics and policy of the European Union and in comparative legislative, executive and bureaucratic politics. He published *The Powers of the Union: Delegation in the EU* (2007) and several articles in political science journals, such as *American Political Science Review*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *European Journal of Political Research* and *European Union Politics* [fabio.franchino@unimi.it].

Licia Claudia Papavero is adjunct professor of Political Science at the University of Milan, and scientific coordinator of the activities of NASP (Network for the Advancement of Social and Political Studies). Her research interests are: comparative politics, gender studies, normative and positive theory of political representation, legislative studies. Among her publications, "The election and the XV legislature" (co-authored with L. Verzichelli), in J.L. Newell (ed.), *The Italian General Election of 2006. Romano Prodi's Victory* (2008); "Donne e rappresentanza parlamentare nell'Italia repubblicana", in A. Bonomi, N. Pasini e S. Bertolino (eds), *Struttura della società, valori e politica*, vol. V, *La cultura italiana* (2009); "Il sistema politico", in L. Zanfrini (ed.), *Sociologia delle differenze e delle diseguaglianze* (2011); "A gendered agenda? Female representation and bill sponsorship in the Italian parliament (1987-2008)" in Working Paper – LPF (2011).

Francesco Zucchini is Professor of Political Science at Università Statale di Milano where he is also director of the PhD programme in Political Studies (http://www.nasp.eu/pols-faculty-and-staff.html). He is co-editor of the professional on-line journal Italianpoliticalscience.com and coordinator of the standing group Parliament, Representation and Lawmaking of the Italian Political Science Association. His research interests include lawmaking, representation, courts, electoral behaviour. He has published in *Political Science Research and Methods*, European *Journal of Political Research*, *European Political Science Review*, *Public Choice*, *Southern European Society and Politics* and *Constitutional Political Economy*. He has recently published a book in Italian dedicated to the Italian political system (*La Repubblica dei veti*, Milano, Egea, 2013) [francesco.zucchini@unimi.it].

Licia Claudia Papavero is adjunct professor of Political Science at the University of Milan, and scientific coordinator of the activities of NASP (Network for the Advancement of Social and Political Studies). Her research interests are: comparative politics, gender studies, normative and positive theory of political representation, legislative studies. Among her publications, "The election and the XV legislature" (co-authored with L. Verzichelli), in J.L. Newell (ed.), *The Italian General Election of 2006. Romano Prodi's Victory* (2008); "Donne e rappresentanza parlamentare nell'Italia repubblicana", in A. Bonomi, N. Pasini e S. Bertolino (eds), *Struttura della società, valori e politica*, vol. V, *La cultura italiana* (2009); "Il sistema politico", in L. Zanfrini (ed.), *Sociologia delle differenze e delle diseguaglianze* (2011); "A gendered agenda? Female representation and bill sponsorship in the Italian parliament (1987-2008)" in Working Paper – LPF (2011).

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