WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN NORWAY: A COMPARATIVE ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE

By

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We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

March 1995

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March 30, 1995
ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the reasons for the high political representation of women in Norway. Norwegian women have achieved what has been called ‘world-record representation’ both in the parliament and in the cabinet. Despite Norwegian women’s success in the political sphere, women are virtually absent in positions of power in the economic/corporatist sphere. This paradox in women’s representation in Norway is the focus of this thesis. The contextual factors which have facilitated women’s political representation in Norway have not worked to women’s advantage in positions of power outside the political arena. This thesis takes a comparative approach and uses data from all 23 OECD democracies in order to make cross-national comparisons and assess the various variables which influence high representation of women in national legislatures. Norway is specifically contrasted with Australia which is at the opposite end of the continuum with respect to female representation in parliament. In summary, Norwegian women’s political success is a result of Norway’s egalitarian political culture and the principle of group representation; its facilitating political institutions such as a proportional representation electoral system with party lists, a multi-party system, the power of left-wing political parties and formal candidate selection procedures; the successful strategy of a strong and unified women’s movement which focused on women’s integration into the existing party structure; and the high female labour force participation facilitated by Norway’s social democratic welfare state. The contextual factors favourable to women’s inclusion into politics have to a very large degree been present in Norway but not in Australia (or most other democracies). Nonetheless, it has been more difficult for Norwegian women to advance to positions of power outside the arena of politics, mainly because there is a lack of competition and moral obligation to include more women in private sector business and in the peak labour market organizations. By virtue of its nature, the political arena has to be more responsive to public opinion than do other organizations in society. Hence, the paradox in Norwegian women’s representation in the political arena and in the economic/corporatist sphere.
# Table of Contents

Abstract .............................................................................................................. ii  
Table of Contents ................................................................................................. iii  
List of Tables ......................................................................................................... iv  
List of Figures ......................................................................................................... v  
Acknowledgments ................................................................................................. vi  

## Chapter 1  
Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1  
1. Women and Politics ...................................................................................... 1  
   1.1 Political Rights and Representation: Theoretical Discussion .............. 6  
   1.2 Women’s Special Interests .................................................................. 11  

## Chapter 2  
Women in National Legislatures ..................................................................... 14  
2. Women and Political Representation ......................................................... 14  
   2.1 Party Politics and Female Representation ........................................ 15  
   2.2 Socio-Economic Factors and Female Political Representation .......... 26  

## Chapter 3  
Political, Economic and Social Developments in Norway ......................... 32  
3. Overview ...................................................................................................... 32  
   3.1 Historical and Political Development .............................................. 33  
   3.2 Representation: Electoral System and Political Parties .................. 34  
   3.3 Political Institutions ........................................................................ 41  
   3.4 The Social Democratic Welfare State ........................................... 42  
   3.5 The Norwegian Economic Model ................................................... 46  
   3.6 Recent Developments ...................................................................... 48  

## Chapter 4  
The Central Position of Women in Norwegian Politics ............................. 50  
4. Norwegian Women’s Political Success ...................................................... 50  
   4.1 Historical and Cultural Preconditions .............................................. 52  
   4.2 Facilitating Political Institutions ...................................................... 54  
   4.3 The Role of the Women’s Movement .............................................. 68  
   4.4 Women in the Labour Force ............................................................ 73  

## Chapter 5  
Women in the Economic/Corporatist Sphere ............................................ 77  
5. Few and Far Between: Women in Leading Positions Outside Politics .. 77  
   5.1 The Norwegian Welfare State and Women .................................... 81  
   5.2 Female Representation in Norwegian Labour Market Organizations 83  
   5.3 Barriers to Women ........................................................................... 88  

## Chapter 6  
Conclusions ...................................................................................................... 93  
6. The Equal Status Act ................................................................................. 93  
Selected Bibliography ......................................................................................... 100
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Year of Female Suffrage and Female Parliamentary Representation in the 23 OECD Democracies as of June 1994. (Figures in percentages) ................................................................. 2

Table 2.1 Type of Electoral System and Percentage of Women in Parliament as of July 1994. .. 18

Table 2.2 Party Competition: Party Ideology and the Number of Parties ............................................. 20

Table 2.3 Organization and Institutionalization of Recruitment Procedures in Political Parties. 24

Table 2.4 Female Labour Force Participation Rates in the Current 23 OECD Democracies in 1960 and 1992. (Figures in percentages) ................................................................. 28

Table 4.1 1993 Gender Breakdown of Norwegian MPs by Party. .......................................................... 61

Table 4.2 Number of Female Cabinet Members in the 23 OECD Democracies as of December 31, 1993. .................................................................................................................. 62

Table 4.3 Ranking of Favoured Ministries in Norway (1989) and Gender of Minister(s) as of Fall 1993. .................................................................................................................. 64

Table 4.4 Representation of Women in the Cabinet, the Storting and Municipal Councils from 1980 to 1994. (Figures in percentages) ................................................................. 71

Table 5.1 Percentage of Women in Leading Positions in the 200 Largest Private Enterprises in Norway. .................................................................................................................. 78

Table 5.2 Percentage of Women among Members and Boards in the Large Labour Market Federations in Norway. .................................................................................................. 84
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1 Norwegian Political Parties from Left to Right. ................................................................. 38

Figure 4.1 Women’s Representation in the Storting 1965-1993. (Figures in percentages) .......... 51
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1. WOMEN AND POLITICS

The political status of women has changed remarkably in many liberal democracies since the second wave of the women's movement took place during the 1960s. Until recently, women were virtually absent from central decision-making bodies. Since the end of the 1970s, political parties have been under pressure to integrate women into the political system and to create policies aimed at bringing about gender equality in politics and in society as a whole. Nonetheless, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, women average only 11 per cent of the legislators in its 144 member countries.1 Sweden and Norway represent the most advanced countries with respect to women's representation in parliament (see Table 1.1), but there is a parallel economic sphere in these two countries where the advancement of women lags far behind their political success.

The recent increase in women's political status is a result of a combination of factors. Society has undergone tremendous changes over the past two decades and so has the position of women within society and thus women's way of life. In general, women are better educated, more employed and have fewer children than previously. Women's growing participation in the labour market has led to increased political mobilization and organization of women. Moreover, as this thesis will discuss, contextual factors such as electoral system, party system, political culture and ideology are critical for the political integration and participation of women.

Demands for increased female political representation have been most successful in the Nordic countries, and have had less success in countries with different political systems and different cultural and political traditions (See Table 1.1). This thesis will seek to explain why

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Norwegian women have been so successful at entering politics on the one hand, but less successful at penetrating the economic arena on the other hand. Which factors favour women’s entry into politics? What are the contextual factors behind the Norwegian women’s political success? Why have these factors not worked to women’s advantage in the economic realm? Women’s absence from the important economic/corporatist arena is interesting in this respect. In order to better understand the Norwegian case, this thesis will contrast Norway with Australia, which is at the other end of the spectrum with respect to female representation in parliament, as well as with all the 23 OECD democracies.

Table 1.1 Year of Female Suffrage and Female Parliamentary Representation in the 23 OECD Democracies as of June 1994. (Figures in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Universal Female Suffrage</th>
<th>Female Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1906</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1893</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) After September 1994 election.

Sources: Inter-parliamentary Union (1991); (June 1994); Current Sweden, No. 406.; Alan Siaroff: 98.

\(^2\) To be assessed specifically with regards to elite positions in the private sector and the peak labour market organizations.
Women in Norway and Australia acquired the right to vote early in this century, both countries have experienced strong women's movements, and both countries are currently governed by a social democratic party. Norway is Protestant, and for the most part so is Australia. There are of course a multitude of political and social differences between the two countries. However, these differences as well as the similarities may help us understand not only why women in Norway have achieved high political representation, but also why women in Australia have been less successful.

I will argue that the reasons for the political success of Norwegian women are fourfold. First of all, the historical and cultural preconditions have been favourable for women's inclusion into politics. Secondly, Norway's political institutions have facilitated women's political participation. Thirdly, the strategies of a strong and well-organized women's movement have to a large extent been successful in increasing women's chances of participation and representation. Finally, the high female labour force involvement has affected women's political assertiveness in Norway.

Despite their political advances, Norwegian women are few and far between in leadership positions outside politics. Women are under-represented in the peak labour market organizations as well as in leading positions in the private sector. Why has the political sphere proved to be more accommodative to Norwegian women's demands than the powerful economic/corporatist arena? I submit that the reason for Norwegian women's under-representation in the economic/corporatist sphere is the lack of moral obligation and competitive pressure to include more women. Moreover, the facilitating contextual factors which have aided women's demands for political representation

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have so far had minimal effect on Norwegian women reaching leading positions outside the political arena.

Can women really be politically strong and influential when they have little economic influence? The fact that Norwegian women have been integrated into politics rather than the economic sphere has led to claims that women are being integrated into so-called shrinking institutions, that is, institutions that are losing their influence and efficacy?\(^4\) Does this paradox in terms of female representation and power create tensions in Norwegian society, or is it only a matter of time before Norwegian women will enter the economic sphere in larger numbers? These are questions this thesis will seek to answer.

The methodology used in this thesis is to set Norway in a comparative perspective. Although the focus is on women’s political representation in Norway and Australia, data will be drawn from all 23 OECD democracies in order to make cross-national comparisons and thereby assess the various variables which influence high representation of women in national legislatures. The variations with respect to female political representation will also be compared with female economic participation in the same group of countries. Through this comparative approach, we expect to find that certain economic, political, social and cultural factors are more congenial to high representation of women in parliament than others.

The analysis is divided into five subsequent chapters. The rest of this chapter is a summary of the literature on women’s growing political participation and representation, from the early suffragettes to today’s feminist movements. What principles are their demand for increased female political representation based on? The second chapter focuses on women’s representation in national legislatures, with emphasis on the role of political parties. What political and socio-economic factors are favourable to the political advancement of women? Moreover, do female

Introduction politicians have a particular mandate to fulfill? If this is the case, will an increase in the representation of women lead to changes in the political agenda? The third chapter provides a general introduction to Norway, its history, modern political development, institutional structures and political culture. This chapter will not be concerned with the advancement of women in Norwegian society per se, but will hopefully give the reader a better understanding of Norwegian society in general. In the fourth chapter, the various theories on female representation in national legislatures will be applied to Norway and Australia. The focus will be on the political advancement of women in Norway, stressing the favourable contextual factors, as well as the role played by the women's movement and the labour movement in bringing gender equality to the political agenda. For contrast, comparisons will be made with Australia. Furthermore, this chapter will seek to answer whether or not the increasing female representation in parliament has changed the content of the political discourse in Norway.

The fifth chapter will seek to explain the anomaly that Norwegian women are represented politically but not economically. Women participate in the labour force on equal footing with men, but women are generally found in the less prestigious and lower paying jobs. Moreover, there are few women in leading positions outside of politics. Consequently, women have little economic power. In order to explain this paradox, it is necessary to look to other countries such as United States and Canada where women have achieved representation in the economic sphere despite their relative lack of political power. The virtual absence of women in the economic/corporatist arena calls into question the advances made by women in the political realm. Are Norwegian women being integrated into institutions that are losing their power and efficacy? Has power moved along with the men from the political arena to corporatist institutions?

Finally, the last chapter will delve further into this intriguing contrast of high political mobilization but low economic mobilization of women in Norway and what this contrast means
for Norway as a polity. Does it produce tensions in terms of who is governing whom? Can the women in politics really make a difference with so little economic power or is the political arena still more important?

1.1 POLITICAL RIGHTS AND REPRESENTATION: THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

Despite universal suffrage and the fact that women have shared the same formal rights as men for decades, women in most liberal democracies still do not share political power on an equal basis with men. The literature on women's political behaviour and involvement is largely concerned with women's participation within formal, constitutional, government-oriented institutions such as political parties, national legislatures, and bureaucracies. The following discussion will seek to identify factors which, according to the literature, promote or hinder women's political participation and representation within such conventional political institutions. Although there are various arenas of political participation, female representation within national legislatures is considered the most symbolic indicator of political equality. Political parties are critical in this respect, mainly because they act as gatekeepers to elected office and because they provide an important linkage between citizens and government. The political composition of government is also critical with respect to cross-national variations of gender equality as well as differences in policy outcomes concerning gender equality. Moreover, political parties present women with opportunities for political involvement, ranging from participation at the grassroots level to elite political participation. However, the number of women tends to decrease the higher

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up the party hierarchy one looks. As the iron law of power states – the more power the fewer women.\footnote{Torild Skard and Elina Haavio-Mannila et al., “Mobilization of Women at Elections”, in Elina Haavio-Mannila et al., Unfinished Democracy: Women in Nordic Politics, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1985: 42.}

It is necessary to start with the beginning of women’s political involvement – women’s enfranchisement. The most basic participation in political life is to vote in elections and thereby influence the composition of the national legislature and local councils. The incorporation of women into the electorate was the critical first step in women’s political participation. The timing and conditions under which women were enfranchised are important in any examination of the extent of women’s political activity in various countries today. Along with universal suffrage, eligibility to stand for election to the national assemblies was another crucial step in women’s political integration. Not only could women vote, but once elected it was believed that women could influence and bring about changes in women’s conditions. In many countries women were eligible to stand for election to the national assemblies at the same time as they won the right to vote, but as might be expected there were few women to choose from. Compared with men, women were and still are political newcomers. Although the introduction of universal suffrage made it possible for women to participate in elections, it has generally taken longer for women to become politically mobilized and make use of their right to vote and to stand for elections to the same extent as men.

In some countries women have had more time to become politically involved and to gain access to political power due to the early granting of political rights. Australia is a paradox in this respect. When Australian women acquired the right to vote as well as the right to stand for election to parliament in the federal elections in 1902, they were the first women in the world with these rights. Women in New Zealand could vote in federal elections in 1893, but they could not run for
parliament until 1919. Nevertheless, as will be discussed later, in spite of this early granting of political rights, it has taken Australian women a long time to achieve even minimal levels of political power. Women in the Nordic countries, on the other hand, who also won the right to vote relatively early in this century, are now setting new world records in female political representation. It should be noted, however, that the high number of women in politics in these countries is a recent occurrence. By contrast, Switzerland was the last of the 23 OECD democracies to extend the right to vote to women in 1971. (In fact, women in Liechtenstein had to wait until 1984 before they could vote in national elections.) In summary, there are cross-national variations in the time and conditions under which the principle of universal suffrage was established.

Voting is a crucial criterion for political participation, although somewhat overestimated according to Vicky Randall. She questions the value of the individual vote as a measure of political participation since the individual commitment is modest, elections infrequent, the choice of candidates limited, the information given to the electorate is skewed, and once elected the candidates are relatively independent. Hence, as a criterion for political participation, voting has its limitations. Nevertheless, through his/her vote the voter legitimizes the political authorities and system, and is given an opportunity to influence the composition of the parliament. For the early suffragettes, however, the right to vote was a symbol of emancipation and as such the beginning of women's effective political participation. With the knowledge of hindsight, women today know that in order to become political participants on equal footing with men, more measures are needed than the fundamental right to vote. First of all, according to theories on political movements,

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9 Finland was the first country in Europe to introduce universal suffrage at parliamentary elections in 1906; Norway followed in 1913; Iceland and Denmark introduced universal suffrage in 1915; and Sweden in 1921.
10 Randall: 51.
women have to be politically mobilized which implies that first they have to develop group consciousness. Only when women realize that they share a common experience of oppression will they develop a feminist consciousness which is a prerequisite to political mobilization. Secondly, they have to be recognized as electable alternatives to men, equally qualified and competent. Finally, in many countries, policies aiming to aid women achieve this recognition has been implemented due to pressure from strong women’s movements. These policies range from rhetorical statements to the implementation of quotas in order to encourage and aid more women to get elected.

The first wave of feminists around the turn of the century fought for women’s equality as citizens. The second wave of the women’s movement which gained strength at the end of the 1960s emerged as women realized that the granting of constitutional rights was not sufficient. Women demanded direct political representation and the inclusion of particular women’s concerns on the political agenda. Although women differ in their political ideology, the fact that they share a common experience as mothers and care givers, often referred to as the ‘nurturing principle’, has led many to argue that women bring a different experience and set of priorities into politics. There are of course exceptions to this rule, Mrs. Thatcher being one of the most obvious ones.

In the 1960s and 1970s autonomous social movements attracted feminists who were critical of political institutions and their role in bringing about gender equality. They were frustrated with the slow process of integrating women into politics and sought to change the status quo through protest movements. But the 1980s brought about yet another change in this perception

and a recognition of party politics as an arena where feminists could exercise influence. Women’s movements in various countries chose different strategies to increase women’s involvement in party politics. Some movements were more successful than others, notably the Norwegian feminists who in the late 1960s-early 1970s chose to focus on electoral politics as a route to equal participation for women at all levels of government. They advocated the integration of women into the existing party structure, and by the early 1990s the success of this strategy became obvious. In Australia, meanwhile, the objective of the women’s movement has been to recruit women to high ranking positions in the government bureaucracy.¹³

Cross-national differences in women’s political representation can partly be explained by the different strategies chosen by the respective women’s movements, partly by the cultural, social and historical circumstances unique to every country, and partly by the opportunities offered by the political system itself. Some political systems are more accommodative and responsive to women’s demands than others. Different party systems and electoral systems have led women to choose different strategies for empowerment. And the pressure from women’s organizations and voters has forced political parties to consider the political relevance of gender.

According to Joni Lovenduski, the development of women’s demands on political parties began when issues such as sex equality in employment, equal pay, reproductive rights and child care were brought to the political agenda by women’s organizations at the end of the 1960s. As campaigns for sex equality gained support, parties were forced to respond.¹⁴ As a result, gender equality soon became an important issue within the parties themselves. Once a party was committed to the principle of gender equality in employment, party women with support of the

women's movement used this commitment to argue for increased representation in the political sphere. Increased political representation of women implies that not only will the elected assemblies mirror the electorate to a larger extent, but it is believed to broaden the scope of politics. Furthermore, it is perceived as an insurance that women's interests will not be ignored.

1.2 WOMEN'S SPECIAL INTERESTS

There are two aspects of the issue of female political representation in national legislatures. One is concerned with the achievement of the democratic principle of equal representation. In short, the composition of elected assemblies should reflect the composition of the electorate. The other aspect is concerned with the representation of special interests. It reflects the belief that women's interests differ from men's and therefore only women can represent such interests. These interests include traditional women's concerns such as child and family, education and social welfare. According to the literature, it is particularly in these public policy areas that women can contribute to change due to their unique experiences as mothers and caretakers. Moreover, female legislators are likely to focus on specific women's issues such as rape, violence against women and anti-pornography laws in order to directly promote and support the interests of women. This is the most direct way women as a group can bring about change.

Women, it is argued, can also alter the way in which decisions are reached. Women bring to the political arena a specific women's culture which values cooperation, interdependence and caring. Political institutions will become more responsive, flexible, democratic and personal as a result of this specific women's culture. However, in order for women to have an impact on public policy priorities, a certain level of representation has to be reached. Jill M. Bystydzienski, who bases her findings on Norway, concludes that it was not until female representation in the

Introduction

12

Storting reached 15 per cent that women began to make a difference to the public policy agenda.\(^{16}\) Hence the mere presence of women in powerful political positions is not sufficient to bring about political change. As the number of women representatives increases it facilitates the expression of particular women’s issues as well as the implementation of such issues. In Norway, for example, women politicians are believed to have been largely responsible for putting ‘care and career politics’ on the agenda.\(^{17}\) Bystydzien'ski found that women’s concerns and perspectives began to gain legitimacy in the early 1970s after Norwegian women passed 15 per cent representation (See Figure 4.1). For example, the Norwegian Equal Status Act was adopted in 1978, and from the early 1970s issues such as child-care centres, daily work hours and parental leave became more evident in party programmes.\(^{18}\) Not surprisingly, the political concern with these issues coincided with women’s increasing labour force participation.

Do women politicians ally with other women on specific issues or do they follow the party line and the party ideology in terms of the types of policies they advocate? In general, despite an overall agreement among female politicians about the importance of gender equality policies, party loyalty tends to be stronger than gender, and cross-party alliances among women are rare. There has been various attempts to create women’s parties in different countries, but these attempts have been short-lived and sporadic.\(^{19}\) Political parties themselves respond to women’s pressures by seeking to accommodate these demands, according to their ideology. As a result, party ideologies have an impact on gender-specific issues.\(^{20}\)

\(^{16}\) Ibid: 15.


\(^{18}\) Ibid.: 250.

\(^{19}\) Skard and Haavio-Mannila et al., “Mobilization of Women at Elections”: 43-8. Only in and Denmark have separate women’s lists had some significance, but largely in local elections. In the early 1980s, lists of women candidates reappeared in Iceland, and the newly formed Icelandic Women’s Alliance won three parliamentary seats in the 1983 national election. By 1987, this number had risen to six representatives (10 per cent of the Alting).

\(^{20}\) Skjeie, “Ending the Male Political Hegemony”: 243.
To sum up, women’s political representation has gained recognition as an important democratic principle over the last two decades. The three most common types of arguments for women’s inclusion into politics are, first of all, that women have a democratic right to be represented on an equal basis with men, since women constitute half of the population. Secondly, because women bring to the political arena a different experience, their opinions have to be taken into account. Moreover, women bring new issues to the political agenda, and as a result broaden the scope of politics. Thirdly, the integration of women is based on the belief that only women can look after particular women’s interests. Areas of particular interest to women are rape, incest, pornography and violence against women, as well as the issue of equality in terms of wages and political representation. Consequently, women politicians are believed to address such issues, in addition to create new strategies to encourage more women to enter political office.

Second wave feminists realized that they would have more power to influence public policies from within political institutions than they would have from outside. In general, political parties have been more responsive to women’s demands and more willing to incorporate women into their ranks than have other interest organizations. The next chapter will analyze women’s representation in national legislatures and discuss the dependent variables which explain cross-national variations in women’s integration. Through this analysis it will become clear why political parties in particular have responded to women’s claims for representation. Socio-economic variables such as female labour force participation and its effect on women’s political participation and representation will also be discussed.
CHAPTER 2
WOMEN IN NATIONAL LEGISLATURES

2. WOMEN AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

In their book *Gender and Party Politics*, Lovenduski, Norris, et al. present a comprehensive framework for analyzing the role of political parties in changing or perpetuating female under-representation in national legislatures. By looking at political representation of women in eleven liberal democracies, the analysts outline various independent variables which determine the recruitment of women and their political participation.\(^{21}\) Through this framework it becomes clearer why some countries have been more successful than others at integrating women into politics.

Political parties have differed in their responses to women's demands for greater representation, largely based on the party system and party ideology. However, a growing number of political parties in many liberal democracies have recently developed policies to enhance the representation of women. These policies range from rhetorical statements made in party programs and campaigns, to strategies of positive discrimination such as implementing targets or quotas in the candidate selection process.\(^{22}\) The main objective of such party strategies is to attract more female voters, but also to satisfy the demands of women party members and women's organizations. Even if rhetorical statements to include more women in the party do not produce actual change, such statements often lead to increased expectations among women that effective action will be taken. If rhetorical strategies are not acted upon, women are likely to increase their pressures for representation. Hence, the use of rhetoric can often be a first step towards the introduction of other party strategies such as the adoption of targets or even mandatory quotas at the different levels of the party structure. This dynamic of women's claims

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\(^{21}\) Lovenduski and Norris (eds.), 1993.

\(^{22}\) Lovenduski, "Introduction: The Dynamics of Gender and Party", ibid.: 8-11.
and parties' responses has influenced the process of women's integration into party politics. Once a party has accepted the rhetoric of sex equality in its pursuit for votes or because of an ideological commitment to equality, its own political under-representation of women will be questioned. As a result, the party will be forced to take action to recruit and nominate more women.

Another aspect of the party system is the competition for votes among the various parties. Once one party decides to increase its female representation, other parties are likely to follow suit for fear of losing female voters. Parties are encouraged to be more equal due to the competitive nature of the party system.

2.1 PARTY POLITICS AND FEMALE REPRESENTATION

Norris presents three levels of analysis that are useful in order to compare and contrast parties' recruitment processes and factors that influence female political participation across nations.\textsuperscript{23} The first level is the political system which provides the broad context within any country. This broad context comprises a country's political culture, electoral system, party system and legislative competition. The next level of analysis is the party context, which is determined by a particular party's ideology and organization. At the last level of analysis is the recruitment process which influences individual candidates' decisions to stand in an election.

At the broad level of the political system, we have to ask how independent variables such as political culture, electoral and party systems and legislative competition have a direct influence on women's political representation. In this context political culture is defined as the dominant values and attitudes towards the role of women in society and in political life.\textsuperscript{24} These attitudes can be put on a continuum ranging from traditional to egalitarian political culture. In a

\textsuperscript{23} Norris, "Conclusions: Comparing Legislative Recruitment", ibid.: 309-30.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.: 312.
traditional political culture, political parties tend to be reluctant to introduce effective gender
equality policies whereas parties in egalitarian political cultures more readily embrace the goal
of gender equality. The egalitarian political culture of the Nordic countries is often used as one
of the main explanations for the high degree of female political representation in these countries.
The problem with political culture as an explanatory variable is, however, that it is hard to
measure and compare across nations.25

Religion is another cultural variable which is found to affect women’s political
representation.26 Because Catholicism has a more traditional and conservative perspective on
women, we can expect a negative relationship between the percentage of population which is
Catholic and the level of female representation. Protestantism, on the other hand, has been found
to be positively related to the political representation of women in legislatures, since
Protestantism is more open to individual rights in the political as well as economic arena.27

There is extensive evidence and agreement in the literature that the type of electoral
system is the most critical independent variable explaining the extent of female representation in
national legislatures.28 The electoral system determines the effect of votes by allocating seats to

25 Richard E. Matland, “Women’s Legislative Participation in National Legislatures: A Comparison of
Democracies in Developed and Developing Countries”, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
three measures to compare women’s standing in society to that of men. His measures are: the ratio of
men’s literacy rate to women’s literacy rate; the ratio of men’s labour force participation to that of
women’s labour force participation; the ratio of the proportion of eligible males in secondary school to the
proportion of eligible females in secondary school. He finds that the cultural factor has a noticeable effect
on women’s political representation, although not statistically significant. This is rather curious in the
context of his other findings which stresses women’s labour force participation rates as the second most
important independent variable explaining women’s political representation.
26 Wilma Rule, “Electoral Systems, Contextual Factors and Women’s Opportunity for Election to
of Nations: Patterns of Public Policy in Western Democracies”, Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1993: 208, 228,
footnote 10.
28 See Rule (1987): 481-3; Matland (1994): 5-6, 9; Vernon Bogdanor, “Conclusion: Electoral Systems and
Party Systems” in Vernon Bogdanor and David Butler (eds.), Democracy and Elections: Electoral Systems
the parties in the legislature. There is a positive relationship between women’s representation and the party list system of proportional representation (PL/PR) (See Table 2.1). The proportion of women in the legislature is considerably higher in systems where the proportion of seats given each party reflects the proportion of votes, as is the case in the Nordic countries. It is the lowest in single-member district (SMD) majority/plurality or “first past the post” electoral systems as in Britain and her former colonies (it should be pointed out that in both Canada and New Zealand, however, rates of women’s representation have increased recently despite SMD plurality systems). Other alternatives are systems with a single transferable vote, most notably Ireland, and single nontransferable vote as in Japan. In general, these electoral systems tend to fall between the two extremes of PR and SMD majority/plurality electoral systems. The system of alternative vote as practiced in Australia and second ballot systems as in France are, according to Table 2.1, not favourable to the representation of women in parliament. The alternative vote is used only in Australia. It is used to ensure majority representation in each constituency. The winning candidate in a constituency must secure absolute majority, that is, more than 50 per cent of the total. Voters have to rank alternative candidates according to preference, and if absolute majority is not obtained in the first count of votes, then the candidate with the fewest votes will be eliminated, and this candidate’s second preferences will be redistributed before the second count. This procedure continues until absolute majority is achieved by one candidate. The French second ballot system is a variant on the alternative vote. Here the voters have to vote twice. The two highest ranking candidates from the first election run for the second ballot in a constituency, in an effort to ensure that the winner has absolute majority. Both the alternative vote and the


second ballot system have more in common with plurality or majority systems than PR systems, since they seek the election of representatives with an absolute majority of the vote.

Table 2.1 Type of Electoral System and Percentage of Women in Parliament as of July 1994.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Female %</th>
<th>Type of Electoral System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>Partly List/Proportional Representation (PL/PR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>PL/PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>PL/PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>PL/PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>PL/PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>PL/PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>PL/PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>Single Member District (SMD) Plurality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>PL/PR with Additional Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>PL/PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>SMD Plurality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>PL/PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>PL/PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>PL/PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>Single Transferable Vote (STV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>SMD Plurality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>PL/PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>SMD Plurality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>PL/PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>PL/PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Alternative Vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liechtenstein</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>PL/PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>SMD Majority-Plurality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>PL/PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Through 1993 election.

b) In Germany each voter has two votes. With the first vote voters elect one candidate nominated by the parties in the constituency. The second vote is used to elect a party list of Land (state) parliament candidates.


d) Through 1993 election.


According to Norris, there are three main factors in electoral systems which impact on women's representation. First and most importantly, the structure of the ballot is critical. Does the party present a party list or a single candidate on its ballot? Party lists are more favourable to the recruitment of women than are single candidates. When parties in single member constituencies have to choose their one candidate, they hesitate to pick a woman since she could
Women in National Legislatures

represent an electoral risk. Parties do not want controversy to arise over their choice of candidate and are most likely to play safe by picking a male candidate because they cannot afford to upset the electorate. In proportional systems, on the other hand, the logic of choice is different. Here the parties have an incentive to present a balanced candidate selection. Party representation is emphasized as opposed to individual representation. A party which presents a list without any women, or other minority groups for that matter, may risk to lose votes to other parties with balanced tickets. The absence of women may be an indication of party prejudice, which many, women in particular, may find offensive and hence the party risks losing votes. In short, in a party list system of proportional representation women are added to the party list in order to maximize votes, whereas in SMD majority/plurality systems women candidates are considered an electoral risk. According to Matland, parties in proportional representation systems have more ability to nominate women because “the costs involved are smaller, and the perceived benefits are greater than in a majoritarian system.”

Secondly, district magnitude or the number of representatives per district has been found to directly affect the rate of turnover in parliament which impacts on women’s representation. As the number of representatives per constituency increases, the number won by any given party increases. Therefore the chances for women to be included on the party list is greater the higher the number of seats per district. Hence, the greater the district magnitude, the greater the percentage of women representatives, and vice versa.

Thirdly, the degree of proportionality, how votes are allocated to seats, has an effect on the extent of women in parliament. The more proportional systems seek to reflect the population to a larger extent, thus the greater the possibility for women to be elected. Also party competition increases with the degree of proportionality. Furthermore, in proportional systems, more seats

are likely to change from election to election providing opportunities and access to women and other under-represented groups. In majoritarian systems, seats will only change if there is a change in who wins the majority of votes.

The type of electoral system has a strong effect on the nature of party systems. The competition between the parties is determined by the number of parties in the parliament. As a rule, SMD plurality or majority systems tend to produce two major parties, whereas proportional representation will lead to a number of parties being represented in parliament. The extent of competition between parties in the legislature is another element believed to affect women's electoral possibilities. The hypothesis is that the more competition there is between the parties, the more opportunities there are for women candidates. Increased party competition and competing ideologies facilitate and encourage the entry of new groups, such as women. On the other hand, as Diane Sainsbury points out, the rise of new parties can also make it difficult for parties to win more than one seat per constituency. Thus, as long as men continue to top the party lists, the entry of new parties may actually work against women candidates.

Table 2.2 Party Competition: Party Ideology and the Number of Parties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Few Parties</th>
<th>Many Parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Catch-all” Centrist</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideologically Polarized</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Norris, 1993: 317, Figure 13.2.

Moreover, various parties are guided by different ideologies and appeal to different sections of the electorate. In countries with few political parties represented in the legislature,
parties seek to appeal to and accommodate voters across the ideological spectrum. Thus parties move towards the centre in order to maximize their votes. Countries can be grouped according to the strength of their parties and the parties' ideological commitment as presented in Table 2.2.

Norris does not include any countries in the top-right box, nor does she distinguish between the two groups of countries classified as having few parties with respect to female representation. It is not clear from her analysis which of the two groups provide more political opportunities for women. According to Table 2.1, women's representation in parliament is slightly higher in Canada, Ireland and United States which have "catch-all" political parties, than it is in Britain and Australia where the legislature is dominated by two major parties of left and right. The differences are small, however, and there is little evidence in the literature that one of the two groups is more favourable to female candidates.

In sum, ideologically polarized multi-party systems usually provide more political opportunities for women and as a result have more women in parliament than do systems with fewer parties. France must be considered an outlier in this respect. Although classified as a multi-party and ideologically polarized system, France is at the bottom of our list in terms of women in parliament. Obviously, other crucial variables such as electoral system, political culture and the nature of the political parties themselves must be considered.

Closely connected with the type of party system is the number of contestants for nomination which is believed to influence women's possibilities for election. Where legislative competition is weak, the greater the chance for women and other minority groups to be included, and vice versa.\textsuperscript{34} The number of contestants is affected by factors such as the prestige of a seat in parliament, the number of seats available, the number of parties and the turnover of incumbents. The turnover of incumbents is particularly important in this respect as low turnover

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.: 315.
presents a barrier to women seeking entry. Again, majoritarian systems provide the most obstacles to women. In order for a woman to run, an incumbent may need to step down or a powerful intra-party interest may need to step aside. A party in this situation is not likely to risk alienating serious party supporters or removing incumbents.  

The prestige of legislative office also affects the extent of legislative competition. Does a seat in parliament imply social status and power, or are positions outside parliament more prestigious? Legislative competition will increase with the prestige of being a parliamentarian. In general, the harder the legislative competition, the harder it is for women to win parliamentary seats, because more men will compete for seats as well. This is another independent variable which is difficult to quantify, but is to some extent dependent on the size of a country and the size of parliament, as well as the function of the parliament, and the power, salary and fringe benefits associated with a seat in parliament, as opposed to other political and non-political positions. Women’s political representation in most liberal democracies may be represented by a pyramid where most women are found at the lowest levels, and fewer women are found at the top. This is what Putnam has labelled the “iron law of andrarchy” which states that as power and prestige increase, the proportion of women decreases.  

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36 Matland has made an attempt to develop a measurement for degree of power and prestige associated with a seat in parliament. A country’s total population is divided by the number of seats in the lower house to get the population per member average. The assumption is that in countries where MPs only represent 25,000 people, a seat in the legislature carries less prestige than an MP who represents 100,000 or more people. This rather crude measure is also affected by the size of the country, which indirectly measures power, and the size of parliament, which indirectly measures prestige. Although Matland finds little statistical significance between the status of being a parliamentarian and its effect on women’s political representation, he is hesitant to reject this hypothesis. Ibid.: 11-12.  
Rebecca H. Davis has looked at the recruitment norms of Western European party elites and their effect on women.\textsuperscript{39} Specifically, she describes the process of promotion from parliamentarian to cabinet minister by grouping countries along a generalist/specialist continuum. Generalist cabinet systems tend to recruit ministers with broad political backgrounds. Thus, long service in parliament is often a prerequisite for a cabinet post. In specialist cabinet systems, on the other hand, ministers are recruited to work in their area of expertise, which means that specialist systems tend to rely on the recruitment of outsiders, and as a result they are more permeable.\textsuperscript{40} Ireland and the United Kingdom are prototypical examples of generalist countries, whereas the Netherlands and Sweden fall close to the specialist prototype. In short, Davis argues that women stand a better chance of being promoted to a position of power in specialist systems than they do in generalist systems. Specialist systems are less hierarchical, more open to new groups, and have relatively open decision-making processes. Meanwhile, tenure and performance in parliament is critical for promotion in generalist systems, and as a result women are disadvantaged since women often enter politics at a later stage in their lives. Hence, women are presently being excluded from promotion to positions of political power by virtue of having been absent in the past.\textsuperscript{41}

Returning to Norris' analysis, her next level of analysis examines the party context. Here the ideology of the party is important. According to the literature, right wing political parties have a negative effect on women's representation in parliament because they have a more traditional view of women's role in society.\textsuperscript{42} As a result, parties of the right are less likely than left-wing and Green parties to nominate women for parliament. Moreover, right wing political

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.: 2-3.
\textsuperscript{41} Davis notes this dilemma specifically in the case of the United Kingdom. Ibid.: 9-10.
parties are non-interventionist and do not believe in regulating the selection procedure through affirmative action programs to increase the number of women parliamentarians. Social democratic parties, on the other hand, believe such intervention is necessary to bring about change. This belief has resulted in the adoption of 40 per cent quotas by the social democratic parties of Norway, Sweden, and Germany. What is the main rationale behind the adoption of quotas for social democratic parties? Ideology is important in the sense that parties of the left embrace egalitarianism, and as a result they cannot justify a situation where women are hardly represented in parliament. However, the self-interest of the parties and their electoral strategy should not be overlooked. This becomes particularly obvious when the adoption of quotas leads to a chain reaction among other parties. Once quotas have been set by one party, other parties may follow suit in an effort to compete for votes. Thus, the competitive nature of the party system might lead several other parties to adopt the goal of equality as an election strategy.

Table 2.3 Organization and Institutionalization of Recruitment Procedures in Political Parties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>Centralized</th>
<th>Localized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Italy DC, PSI French UDF</td>
<td>US Democrats Canadian Liberals Australian parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Netherlands VVD French PC NZ Labour</td>
<td>Norwegian parties Swedish parties German parties British Labour, Cons.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Norris, 1993: 321, Figure 13.3; Michael Gallagher, 1988: 236, 241, 245; author's additions.

Along with party ideology, party organization also influences the various parties' recruitment process and strategy. As shown in Table 2.3 there are two dimensions of party organization – the degree of centralization and the degree of institutionalization. First of all, the degree of centralization of the decision-making process ranges from centralized to localized. The nomination and recruitment of candidates is centralized in parties where the central authorities determine who is to be nominated as a candidate. In contrast, localized nomination procedures
mean that the local party factions have authority to select candidates on behalf of the party. In general, federal states have less centralized procedures than unitary states, although Norway is an exception to this rule since local government is strong and candidate selection is locally controlled. The second dimension is concerned with the degree of institutionalization of party rules in the selection process. On this continuum parties range from formal, where detailed rules are in place to standardize the selection procedure, to informal, where the nomination procedure is less bureaucratic and rules are seldom implemented. Women stand a better chance to be nominated in what Norris has labeled formal-localized recruitment procedures where explicit rules are in place and where the central party elite exercises limited control over the selection procedure. In informal-centralized systems, on the other hand, women experience the most obstacles to nomination. This is largely explained by the influence of the party leaders in this type of recruitment process, as well as the lack of formal rules, leaving it largely up to the party leadership to decide who is to be nominated. If there is no tradition of internal party democracy and the party leadership largely consists of men with no commitment to gender equality, they are unlikely to encourage the inclusion of women on their ballot. On the other hand, if the central party leadership were committed to the inclusion of women, in this type of system they would have the power to do so. In informal-localized recruitment, by contrast, the central party leadership has little power to influence the recruitment of candidates, whether it is to promote or restrict women from running. In the United States it is the voters who decide on the candidates through the primaries. Anybody is free to stand for elections as long as they pass minimum legal requirements. On the other side of this spectrum is the formal-localized party organization. In this category measures such as positive discrimination to recruit women are likely to be most successful. Here candidate selection takes place at the constituency level, but according to rules

and regulations set by the party. For example, both the Swedish Social Democrats and the Norwegian Labour Party have adopted a 40 per cent quota for women, and as a rule the party list should list men and women on every second place, but it is up to the local party leadership to decide who these candidates should be. In short, quotas are not likely to succeed in any type of informal systems.

Finally, Norris' last level of analysis is concerned with the recruitment process within the parties in order to explain factors which influence the individual candidates' decision to run for office. Such a decision is dependent upon the individual candidate's motivation and resources which again are a product of a person's social background and education. Individual decisions depend on the obstacles presented by the broader political system. For example, the decision to run for office in single-member districts is a time consuming and expensive commitment. This is not so much the case in multi-member districts with party lists, where the party covers most of the costs. This is also one reason why more women find it is easier to participate in politics at the national level in countries where they can run as part of a team, rather than as an individual candidate.

In sum, the number of women in various national assemblies is affected by a variety of factors – from personal factors such as political drive, education, resources and time, to party ideology and organization, and by even broader systemic variables such as the type of electoral and party system, and political culture. All these variables are crucial when looking at the extent of women's political inclusion.

2.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS AND FEMALE POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

Whereas Lovenduski and Norris are largely concerned with political and cultural variables to explain the role of political parties in promoting or hindering women's political representation, Rule and Matland are both also concerned with socio-economic factors and their
effect on female representation in national legislatures. Such factors include women's level of education, the proportion of women in the labour force and the degree of unemployment. The levels of education and labour force participation are believed to influence women's eligibility for parliamentary recruitment. In addition, both factors are believed to have a significant positive effect on women's political mobilization. There is a positive relationship between working outside the home and female political participation. The assumption is that paid employment in particular, brings women in closer contact with society.\(^{44}\) Through increased education, labour force participation, independent income and social contacts, women will acquire more political resources. As more women become politically active, demands on particular female issues such as gender equality and reproductive rights increase.\(^{45}\) This may eventually result in demands on political parties for increased representation of women, and for changes in party politics with respect to public policies aimed at creating a more women-friendly society.

With respect to the level of education, the assumption is that as more women graduate from university the pool of eligible candidates to parliament will increase. First of all, education leads to greater participation in societal affairs. Secondly, formal education is increasingly required in order for candidates to run. It could also be the case that as there are more educated women in society, the demand for female parliamentarians increases. Rule found there to be a positive relationship between the proportion of women with university education and the proportion of female parliamentarians.\(^{46}\) Matland, on the other hand, found that there is no relationship between the two.\(^{47}\) However, both Rule and Matland agree that women's level of

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labour force participation is the second most significant independent variable after the electoral system in explaining the degree of women's political activity.

Table 2.4 Female Labour Force Participation Rates in the Current 23 OECD Democracies in 1960 and 1992. (Figures in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1992</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>70.9</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>68.9</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Countries are ranked according to 1992 figures.
b) 1991 numbers.
c) 1989 numbers.
d) Labour force data include a significant number of persons aged less than 15 years.


Has women's political representation increased simultaneously with women's increasing employment? This has certainly been the case in the Scandinavian countries, but despite relatively high female labour force participation in most of the English-speaking nations, women are still politically under-represented.
Female labour force participation is also related to religion. Female labour force participation is higher in Protestant countries. In contrast to Catholicism (and other traditional religions), which view a woman's place to be in the home, Protestantism has been more open to the incorporation of women into the economy. In particular, as Manfred G. Schmidt points out, this is the case in Protestant countries with a centre-left or left-wing government, where policies concerning parental leave and child care have been implemented to facilitate women's entry into the labour force. According to Schmidt, religion is one of the key explanatory variables to cross-national differences with respect to female labour force participation. In fact, all the ten countries with the highest female labour force participation in Table 2.4 are predominantly Protestant, according to Alan Siaroff's scheme, with the exception of Canada which is classified as a mixed Protestant-Catholic country. This in turn shapes female political representation. Indeed, there is a moderately significant relationship [at the .05 level] between female labour force participation in 1992 (Table 2.4) and female representation in parliament (Table 2.1) for the 23 OECD democracies \( r = 0.492 \). This calculation only explains half of the overall variance with respect to women in parliament. Obviously, for many countries there is no direct link at all, hence there are other factors which influence the number of women in parliament. The Netherlands, for example, has a relatively high number of female representatives in parliament but scores low on female labour force participation. Japan is an example with the opposite scenario, where female labour force participation is fairly high, but where there are few women parliamentarians. Other factors such as religion and type of electoral system are critical in this respect. To repeat, the relationship between women in parliament and female labour force

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49 Schmidt: 208.
50 cf. Siaroff: 98, Table 6.6.
51 I am thankful to Alan Siaroff for his help with the statistics.
participation is moderate because what really relates (in a statistical sense) to female labour force participation is Protestantism. Moreover, as will be discussed later, the type of welfare state has an impact on the extent of female labour force participation.

Rule has also suggested that unemployment levels influence female recruitment to parliament. Full employment countries provide more opportunities for women, whereas countries with a high level of unemployment are not favourable to women's political participation. Matland's findings however, show the degree of unemployment to be insignificant to women's political representation.

Matland also argues that the level of development is a relevant factor. The assumption he makes is that "as countries become more developed, women will be increasingly integrated in all spheres of public life including representation in the national legislature." His findings do show that as development progresses the number of women in national legislatures increases. This is not surprising in light of his previous findings emphasizing women's labour force participation and its impact on women's political participation. Generally, increased development will lead to higher female employment and hence an increase in political representation.

Employment has also been found to affect women's attitudes and behaviour because through participation in the labour force women have acquired more political resources, and as a result they have become more integrated into political life. Lise Togeby, who bases her findings on Denmark, argues that as more women enter the labour force, the public sector will

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52 See Schmidt's analysis and findings on the strong statistical and causal relationship between Protestantism and the supply of, or the demand for, female labour. Schmidt: 228, footnote 10; cf. Siaroff: 94-95.
55 Ibid: 11.
56 Togeby: 217.
take on roles traditionally performed by women, such as child care. Because of the importance of child care and family policies to working mothers, public policies will therefore become more relevant to many women. As a result, women will increase their political involvement. Furthermore, as women's participation in the labour force increases, men's participation at home can be expected to increase. Hence, Togeby believes that men are likely to become more involved in issues that previously were considered a woman's domain.\textsuperscript{57}

To conclude, there are various ways in which political parties can integrate women into politics. However, as this chapter has sought to explain, the extent to which political parties are able to integrate women into their ranks depends on numerous contextual factors such as a country's political culture and religion, its electoral and party system, as well as socio-economic factors such as the proportion of women in the labour force.

Before applying the various theories summarized in this chapter to Norway, the next chapter will outline Norway's political traditions and institutions, as well as its modern economic and social development. In order to better understand why Norwegian women have been so successful at entering politics, but less successful at penetrating the economic sphere, it is important to have some sense of Norwegian society, its organizations, institutions and people.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
CHAPTER 3
POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN NORWAY

3. OVERVIEW

Consensus and peaceful coexistence are words that are frequently used to describe modern Norwegian political history. Norway is a small, unitary and fairly homogeneous country. In economic terms, Norway is historically an industrial latecomer and has been largely dependent on natural resources for its economic development. It has enjoyed long-term political stability with the exception of the German occupation in World War II. As in the rest of Scandinavia, there is a tradition of peaceful evolution which over the centuries has encouraged consensus and compromise. One example of this type of consensus is the historical alliance between farmers and workers to be discussed later, an alliance essential to the development of the Norwegian social democratic welfare state.

The Norwegian welfare model is described as a variation of the broader Scandinavian model. In the comparative political science literature Norway and Sweden are both considered exemplary social democratic welfare states in which social policies are institutionalized, universal and comprehensive, as opposed to means-tested. Moreover, in both countries the social democrats have experienced long-standing political hegemony and labour movements have historically been unified and strong. Both countries are considered economic successes in terms of economic growth and equitable distribution. Norway was until the late 1980s considered a full-employment country where unemployment remained under 3 per cent.

The objective of this chapter is to give the reader a background to Norwegian society and politics. After a brief historical outline, this chapter will discuss the Norwegian political

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landscape, its cleavages and its most important actors. Emphasis will be on the social democratic welfare state, since this type of welfare state is governed by broader principles of equality and solidarity which are essential to understanding the advancement of women in Norwegian society. Concepts such as the power resources of labour and corporatism will be touched upon in relation to Norway’s social democratic welfare state.

3.1 HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

In 1814 Norway ceased to be a Danish colony and gained home rule in a union with Sweden. Soon after Norway became independent, the autocratic Danish government was replaced with constitutional government and the Norwegian parliament (Storting) was established. The Norwegian constitution was promulgated May 17, 1814 which marks the birth of the modern Norwegian nation. In spite of many amendments, it is still in force, making it Europe’s oldest constitution.

Norway’s period of independence was brief, however. Later in that same year, Norway was forced to accept union under the Swedish crown, as a result of Denmark’s defeat by Sweden at the end of the Napoleonic wars. According to the Treaty of Kiel, the king of Denmark was obliged to award his Norwegian colony to the Swedish king. In 1884 the Swedish king accepted the supremacy of the Norwegian parliament in domestic affairs, but full independence did not come until 1905 when the union with Sweden was peacefully dissolved with a referendum, and the Norwegian parliament acquired full sovereignty. Universal manhood suffrage was attained in 1898, and was extended to include women in 1913. Because women were excluded from voting in the 1905 referendum, women’s organizations arranged a petition in favour of the separation from Sweden. The high turnout of women (280,000 signatures) facilitated the agreement between the political parties to later extend the vote for women.59

Parliamentarism was introduced in 1884 as a means to restrain the powers of the Swedish monarch. The struggle for parliamentarism in Norway was at the same time a struggle for independence, which united the more radical elements of Norwegian society, farmers and urban middle classes, with the nationalist upper classes. The difference between social classes in Norway was less marked than in most other Western European countries. Norway was basically a nation of small-holders and lacked an independent national bourgeoisie. All citizens were equal before the law and farmers were free and economically independent, a feature strongly facilitating the development of democracy.\(^\text{60}\)

Norway's path to independence was relatively easy, seen in comparative perspective. Norway had the advantage of challenging a foreign monarch whose local authority was limited. There was no violent struggle or civil war to achieve autonomy. Furthermore, the indigenous nobility was weak and was disestablished in 1815. The nationalist movement was led by urban radicals but found its main support in the countryside among an anti-Swedish, anti-urban movement. The goal of independence moderated internal divisions between the different classes. The quest for national independence thus dominated and facilitated Norway's initial phase of parliamentary democratization.

3.2 REPRESENTATION: ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND POLITICAL PARTIES

The electoral system is the method whereby individual votes are translated into seats in parliament. Proportional Representation (PR) in multi-member constituencies was adopted in Norway in 1921, and has gradually been made more proportional. Prior to 1921, Norway had single-member plurality system, an electoral system which did not favour the emerging labour movement. The principle governing PR electoral systems is that all significant social groups

should be represented in parliament, which can make it difficult for a single party to achieve an absolute majority.

There is a strong tradition of social representation or group representation in Norwegian politics.\textsuperscript{61} Moreover, a proportionally representative government is believed to serve as an equalizer of social and economic differences.\textsuperscript{62} In other words, the belief in social justice and in participatory government are important aspects of Norwegian political culture and are reflected in the type of electoral system. As a result of this egalitarian political culture and PR electoral system, the socioeconomic composition of the \textit{Storting} with respect to education, occupation, region, and age resemble the population more than what is the norm in other national legislatures.\textsuperscript{63} Recently, gender has also become an important consideration in this respect.

Representation in the Norwegian parliament is based on territorial seats. Norway is divided into 19 multi-member constituencies, each comprising one county (\textit{fylke}). The number of seats varies from four to sixteen depending on the size of the population.\textsuperscript{64} Although a constitutional clause requiring two-thirds of the seats in the \textit{Storting} to be reserved for rural constituencies was removed in 1952, extra weighting still exist for the sparsely populated areas of northern Norway, so that a vote there counts twice as much as a vote in Oslo and surrounding counties.\textsuperscript{65} Until 1989 all \textit{Storting} representatives were elected from multi-member

constituencies, but in order to reduce the over-representation of large parties, eight supplementary seats were added in 1989. There are 165 seats in the Storting.

Norwegian voters are presented with a party list of candidates prepared by the local party organizations. Rather than voting for a particular candidate, they vote for the party as a whole. Seats to the various parties are then allocated depending on the proportion of votes a party receives. The number of candidates on the list must equal the number of seats available, but parties can list up to a maximum of six 'reserve' candidates. Obviously, list position is critical in the selection of candidates, since only the top candidates stand a chance of being elected. In local elections, voters can cross out or add candidates to the party lists, but not in national elections. As we will see later, the women's movement was able to take advantage of this particular feature of the Norwegian electoral system.

The type of electoral system has a direct effect on the number and nature of political parties, and PR systems tend to favour multi-party as opposed to two-party competition. Norway has a multi-party system which can best be understood in the context of cleavage alignments. Cleavages have developed as a result of complex historical processes and conflicts. In general, Norwegians vote according to their location in social, geographical and cultural cleavages, and political parties articulate issues and mobilize voters accordingly.

The early party system was based on cultural and regional differences, and these cleavages, although weakened somewhat, remain dominant to this day. According to Henry

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67 Valen: 212.
Valen there are six principal political cleavages in Norwegian society. First of all, there is a territorial or geographical cleavage which Valen defines as a cleavage between centre and periphery. The peripheries are the south-western and the northern parts of Norway, which have mobilized against the urban dominated centre. Then there are three cultural cleavages. These cleavages are (i) the socio-cultural linguistic conflict between Bokmål and Nynorsk which has led to the development of two national languages; (ii) the moral conflict over the production and consumption of alcohol led by the temperance movement; (iii) a religious cleavage which is mainly concerned with the level of control of the Lutheran state church. These socio-cultural cleavages represent what Valen has termed the “counter-cultures” in Norwegian society. The territorial and socio-cultural cleavages have found most support in the periphery, as they are all opposed to urban dominance. Their origins lie in Norway’s mountainous geography and sparsely populated areas. Despite the fact that Norwegians come from the same ethnic background and nationality, they are very regional in terms of language, dialects, religious and moral beliefs. The fifth cleavage Valen discusses is the economic or class cleavage; labour versus capital, which has had the greatest impact in urban areas as well as in northern Norway. Finally, there is an urban-rural cleavage between the primary sector of the economy and the other sectors.

The Norwegian party system has evolved in relation to this cleavage structure of society. A basic three party system had developed around the turn of the century: the Liberals (Venstre, literally Left) based on farmers and urban intellectuals, and the Conservatives (Høyre, literally Right) primarily supported by the new industrial and commercial classes as well as higher civil

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69 Valen, ibid.: 308-310, and Olsen: 190-96.
70 Nynorsk (New Norwegian), is a written language which was created by Ivar Aasen in 1854. It was constructed on the basis of various rural dialects, as an alternative or counter-language to Bokmål, the urban language identical to Danish.
servants\textsuperscript{72}, both formed in 1884. The Labour party (Arbeiderpartiet) was founded in 1887, but did not win its first seat in parliament until 1903. Norway’s late industrialization explains why the economic or class cleavage did not gain prominence until later. Moreover, the early territorial and cultural cleavages between the centre and the periphery retarded the development of straight class politics especially in the areas where the counter-cultures were the strongest.

Later the Liberal party split into urban (Liberal) and rural (Agrarian) parties and the more radical elements of the Labour party left to create the Communist party. By the 1920s a five-party system was in place, but further fragmentation occurred later. In 1933 the Christian People’s Party was formed, reflecting the importance of religious and moral values, and in 1961 the Socialist People’s Party (later Socialist Left Party) was created when the more radical elements of the Labour party broke away. After the very divisive referendum on Norway’s entry into the European Economic Community in 1972, the number of parties represented in the Storting jumped from five to eight. The most important change was the creation of an entirely new party on the extreme right – the \textit{Anders Langes Party}, later the Progress Party, which is a populist anti-tax and anti-public spending party. Although regional contrasts are sharp, Norwegian parties are usually presented on a left-right continuum according to their ideology on economic policy:

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3.jpg}
\caption{Norwegian Political Parties from Left to Right.}
\end{figure}

| L | Communists (RV) - Socialist Left (SV) - Labour (AP) - Liberals (V) - Christian People’s Party (KrF) - Centre Party/Agrarians (SP) - Conservatives (H) - Progress Party (FrP) | R |

Region is still a crucial factor in Norwegian electoral studies. People belonging to the counter-cultures are inclined to vote for the centre parties, whereas people in the urban areas tend to vote either socialist or conservative. However, these voting patterns are changing, especially since the parties to a large degree represent the cleavage structure of the past. Substantial changes in the social structure have caused changes to the party system. The decline of the industrial sector of the economy has led to the emergence of new occupational groups especially in the service sector. This has weakened the left-right dimension since the socio-economic basis for voting has eroded. Moreover, changes have also taken place with respect to the rural counter-cultures due to the urbanization process. For example, fewer people are employed in agriculture, nynorsk is declining and the temperance movement is losing its strength. As a result, there has been an increase in voter mobility and partisan change over the last decade. Recent studies by Valen and Aardal suggest that traditional cleavages are losing ground.

Until recently, Norwegian membership in the European Union has been high on the Norwegian political agenda, but on November 28, 1994, Norwegians, for the second time, voted against joining the European Union. This has been a very divisive issue which has cut across party lines and cleavages. Basically, Norway has been and still is divided on the issue of EU membership, with Oslo and the counties around the Oslo-fjord in favour of membership, and the rest of the country against. Another interesting fact is that women, in general, were much more opposed to membership than men. 57 per cent of women were against membership, whereas 48 per cent of men voted no. In particular, women working in the health sector and in education were against EU membership. The preservation of the Norwegian welfare state seems to have been more important to women. In recent years, women have moved to the left of the political

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74 Ibid.: 259.
Political, Economic and Social Developments in Norway

spectrum, while men have drifted to the right. The main reasons for women's increasing support for the Socialist Left, in particular, lie in the party's support for the women's movement and increased welfare state activities. However, the Christian People's party is also very popular among women voters who are more traditionally and religiously oriented. Hence, Norwegian women channel their vote in two different directions.76

In conclusion, the Norwegian party system was stable until the end of the 1960s. Norway was a multi-party system with one dominant party – the Labour party – until 1965. In general, the socialist parties received around 51 per cent of the vote, the centrist parties 29 per cent, and the conservative party 21 per cent. Since then Norway has been governed either by Labour minority governments or Conservative-Centre coalitions. Although there are many political parties, there are essentially two blocs of left and right. Historically, the left has been in power more often, and as a result the left, and Labour in particular, has been able to achieve its agenda. Even when the conservatives have been in power, there have been no dramatic changes to the economic policies in place. The full employment and welfare policies associated with Labour have been maintained.

Currently, Norway is governed by a Labour minority government under the leadership of Gro Harlem Brundtland. The Labour party won the last election in September of 1993 with 36.9 per cent.77 According to Valen, the 1993 national election was a deviation from previous elections and broke a long-term trend in Norwegian electoral politics.78 The so-called wave to the right that began in the middle of the 1970s was reversed, and the extent of voter mobility increased. The main reason behind this change in electoral pattern was the question of Norway's

77 Election results for the other parties: Centre (16.8%), Conservative (17.0%), Socialist Left (7.9%), Progress (6.3%), Christian People's Party (7.9%).
entry into the European Community (EC). Because the Centre party (Agrarians) was perceived as the only "No to EC" party, the party, which experienced a landslide victory among those who opposed Norwegian membership in the EC, recruited voters from all the other parties. Its largest gains were in the peripheries where the resistance against EC entry is massive. Moreover, the Conservatives were for the first time not perceived as a governing alternative to Labour. The bourgeois parties were unable to form a coalition, and consequently the country was without any credible governing alternative to the Labour party.

3.3 POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Norway is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary form of government. When Norway gained independence from Sweden in 1905, it voted to reintroduce the monarchy and invited Prince Charles of Denmark to reign. He did so as King Haakon VII of Norway. His grandson King Harald V is the current King of Norway. The King is the commander in chief of the armed forces and the head of the Church of Norway. Although executive authority is nominally vested in the King, his role has become mainly ceremonial and he acts in accordance with the will of parliament. Executive authority is exercised by the Cabinet (Regjeringen), comprised of the Prime Minister and his/her ministers.

The Cabinet is responsible to the legislative authority, the Storting. The Storting has 165 members who are elected for a fixed four year term. The structure of the Storting can be described as a divided unicameral structure. It is elected as a single body, but divides itself into two chambers once it is convened: the Odelsting and the Lagting, to provide double scrutiny. The Odelsting consists of 3/4 of the elected members and the Lagting of 1/4. All bills are introduced in the Odelsting, the lower chamber, and if passed, they are sent to the Lagting, the

As of November 1993, now called the European Union (EU).

Tor Bjerklund, "Summary: An Election Coloured by the EC Controversy", Tidsskrift for Samfunnsforskning, 34 Nr. 5/6, 1993: 458.
upper chamber, to be passed or amended. When a bill has been passed, it is then sent to the Cabinet for royal assent in order to become law. In general, a bill needs the support of the majority in order to be passed, except with respect to constitutional amendments or if the two chambers are in disagreement. In these cases, a 2/3 majority in the Storting as a whole is needed.

3.4 THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC WELFARE STATE

Norway, along with Sweden, is described as the ideal-typical social democratic welfare state. The principal characteristics of this type of welfare state are, first of all, that universal and comprehensive social programs are institutionalized. As a result, the degree of social spending is high. Secondly, social and economic equality is highly valued. Income distribution is high and the extent of poverty is low. Thirdly, there is a political commitment to full employment, not just as a macroeconomic goal but as a social policy goal. Fourthly, female participation in the work force is higher than in most other countries. Finally, trade unions tend to be strong and centralized, and the working class is not as vulnerable to market forces. The rationale behind this type of welfare state is to ameliorate the negative effects of capitalism such as social and economic inequality, in order to reach the ultimate goal of economic and political stability.

Why did Norway develop into a social democratic welfare state? The social and political power of the labour movement is critical in this respect. The development of the Norwegian welfare state is inextricably linked to the political dominance of the social democrats and their strong relationship with the trade union confederation (LO). But its origins lie in the historical red-green compromise between farmers and workers in the 1930s. Around this time the emerging labour movement initially aligned with the radical peasantry. It was this political alliance between the working class and the radical farmers which laid the foundation for the modern Norwegian welfare state. Norwegian farmers were politically articulate and organized, and constituted an important electoral group. The emerging labour movement needed political allies
to gain a majority. In return for full employment policies, the farmers received subsidies.\textsuperscript{81} Because the first modern welfare legislation needed the support of the farmers to pass, it was constructed to benefit a wider range of the population than the working class. The slogan of the second Labour government formed with the help of the farmers in 1935 was very descriptive with respect to this political alliance: "By og land, hand i hand" ("Town and country, hand in hand").\textsuperscript{82}

Subsequently, the success of the labour movement has been linked to its capacity to forge cross-class alliances.\textsuperscript{83} Thus the new class structure of the 1950s compelled the labour movement to realign with the emerging wage-earner class. Welfare programs were not designed solely for the industrial working class, but included the entire population, a factor which encouraged future cooperation from white-collar groups in the making of social policy. In short, the fact that welfare policies are universal has encouraged greater collaboration between various social strata throughout modern Norwegian history.

The historical preconditions for social democratic power were favourable in Norway. The principles upon which the social democratic welfare state rests were already ingrained in Norwegian society. Principles such as universalism, equality, and solidarity were part of Norwegian political culture. Norway was largely a rural and undifferentiated society in which poverty was shared by all. Hence it was easier for socialists to have their principles of solidarity and equality accepted.

The end of World War II marked the beginning of the Norwegian social democratic welfare state. Prior to the war Norway had experienced the worst industrial conflict of any of the

\textsuperscript{81} Esping-Andersen, 1990: 30.
Scandinavian countries. After a turbulent period of lockouts, strikes and rising unemployment, the Basic Agreement was signed by the Confederation of Labour (LO) and the Norwegian Employers’ Association (NAF) in 1935. This marked the beginning of a long period of peaceful cooperation between labour and business. The Basic Agreement set out a corporatist framework for structuring the relationship between workers’ organizations on the one side and employers’ organizations on the other. The war had forged a high degree of national consensus to reconstruct and eliminate the poverty and unemployment of the 1920s and 1930s. The political parties jointly believed that economic modernization was the only solution to the economic problems. Only through economic growth, industrialization and mass education could Norwegian society advance. Unemployment would be fought by means of public expenditure. Equitable distribution and social solidarity were critical in order to avoid the hardships of the pre-war years. This strategy of an all-embracing welfare state was dependent on high economic growth to be successful. Peace in the labour market was a precondition for this objective to be achieved. As opposed to the prewar period, the postwar period can be described as one of peaceful coexistence between the major interest groups. The Basic Agreement of 1935 provided the framework for Norway’s consensual industrial relations system discussed below, which gained influence throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

Furthermore, the tradition of peaceful evolution is essential to the Norwegian welfare state, and can only be explained by historical and geographical circumstances. First, Norway has been isolated from the rest of the world. Second, Norwegians themselves have traditionally been isolated from each other, due to the geography of the region. There was already a feeling of equality in the sense that there was virtually no aristocracy and hence no real class distinctions since almost everybody was poor. The isolation and living conditions forced people to cooperate.
As a result a distinctive culture and tradition has developed – a culture which believes in solidarity, equality and a need to cooperate.

These principles are present in the social security system which guarantees universal coverage and equal treatment of all citizens. When the Labour party embarked on the creation of a social democratic welfare state in Norway, it had no blueprint as to exactly how this would be achieved. But it had considerable support in the Storting including the Conservative party. In 1945, all Norwegian parties agreed on the so-called Folketrygd program, which set out the postwar welfare policies. In short, its objectives were to eliminate the need for social assistance, guarantee an acceptable basic income standard for all, secure uniform and equal treatment of all with an emphasis on greater equality, and promote continued full employment. The goal of full employment was later emphasized by a constitutional amendment in 1954. In contrast to countries like Japan and Switzerland, in Norway full employment is for both women and men.

The success of social democracy in Scandinavia has been ascribed in the literature to the so-called power resources of the left. According to Walter Korpi, the power resources of labour have to be strong and unified in order for social democratic policies to succeed. In short, the power resources of labour are dependent on a politically powerful social democratic party and a strong and centralized union movement. Union and party represent a combined entity. In general,

\footnote{Gøsta Esping-Andersen and Walter Korpi, “From Poor Relief to Institutional Welfare States: The Development of Scandinavian Social Policy”, in Erikson, Hansen, Ringen and Uusitalo (eds.): 51.}

\footnote{Ibid.: 58. The amendment stated that “it shall be the duty of the state authorities to create conditions which ensure that ever able-bodied person can earn a living by his labour.”}

\footnote{Siaroff: 85.}

\footnote{Walter Korpi, The Democratic Class Struggle, London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1983, Chapters 1-3, in particular pp. 39-43. Korpi defines power resources of labour as being high where there is a high degree of unionization in industrial unions, where the union confederation is strong and centralized, where the trade union movement closely collaborates with the politically dominant and stable left party. The power resources of labour are lower if one or more of these conditions are lacking. Korpi measures power resources of labour according to the level of unionization and the share of electorate voting for left parties. In addition, he looks at the weighted cabinet share of socialist parties in government and the stability of socialist control over government. Whereas Norway and Sweden are examples of high power resource countries, the United States and Canada are clearly low power resource countries, since in these countries unions are weak and socialist parties are either non-existent or marginal at the federal level.}
the power resources of labour are stronger where this relationship has remained intact over longer periods of time. Both Norway and Sweden are classified as high power resource countries according to Korpi, and this explains why the Norwegian welfare development has led to a social democratic welfare state.

In conclusion, a combination of factors have led to the economic and social success of the Norwegian welfare state. The social and political power of the left combined with its ability to forge class alliances is critical in this respect. However, although a unified and powerful labour movement is necessary, it is not sufficient for social democratic policies to be successful. Other contextual factors include underlying cultural factors such as egalitarianism and solidarity, as well as favourable historical circumstances.

3.5 THE NORWEGIAN ECONOMIC MODEL

Norway was a late but rapid industrializer. Prior to industrialization the Norwegian economy was largely based on fisheries, agriculture, shipping and the export of wood. When industrialization began after the turn of the century, it was largely based on the exploitation and export of natural resources such as minerals, timber and hydroelectric power. Due to the lack of a large capitalist class, the modernization of Norwegian industry was dependent on foreign money and technology. As a result of this foreign involvement, an independent, national capitalist class did not emerge nor did a private financial system. Rather it was the state which became the central actor in economic and industrial development. In addition, the conservative party lacked state power due to its weak economic and class base, and as a result the labour movement gained more political strength. Labour also benefited from a fragmented opposition with mixed class linkages. After the turn of the century, rapid industrialization was followed by

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88 Dolvik and Stokland: 150-51.
89 Ibid.
rapid union growth among unskilled workers. This strengthened the position of the labour movement as a whole.

Norway’s industrial relations system has been characterized by close tripartite collaboration and consensus, between the government, the unions and business in particular in the case of wage bargaining. This corporatist structure is often quoted as one of the main reasons behind Norway’s rapid economic success and full employment. Collective agreements and legislation are decided upon within this tripartite structure of peak interest organizations.\textsuperscript{90} Corporatism is more likely to develop in countries with small, open export-oriented economies like Norway’s. This facilitates elite interaction and cooperation. Moreover, for corporatist structures to be economically successful, labour has to be centralized and strong. There has to be a strong and stable link between the union and a politically strong left-wing party. In the Norwegian case the workings of this tripartite collaboration can be summed up as follows:

"The trade unions have traditionally followed a solidaristic wage policy, while the state has guaranteed full employment by means of active labour market intervention, counter-cyclical management of the economy, and the promotion of structural change. This system has been made possible partly by the relative weakness of national capital, and its stability and flexibility have been underpinned by the revenues from exports of raw materials, shipping and oil."\textsuperscript{91}

The Norwegian full-employment policies can only be understood with respect to the above. Full employment has always been a major social democratic objective, but it needed the help of a centralized trade union movement and a cooperative business organization in addition to state revenues to survive and be successful.

\textsuperscript{90} In short, one of the main characteristics of corporatism is that it is a system of interest intermediation between the state and the peak interest organizations in society. The peak interest organizations represent labour and business, and have been granted "representational monopoly in return for the observance of certain controls on their selection of leaders and in the articulation of their demands". Korpi: 10. Corporatism can also refer to the role that peak interest organization play in formulating and implementing policy, often via guaranteed positions on para-public boards and agencies. This aspect is, however, of less concern in our analysis. The literature on corporatism is extensive. For a quick review see for example John H. Goldthorpe (ed.), \textit{Order and Conflict in Contemporary Capitalism: Studies in the Political Economy of Western European Nations}, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984., in particular chapters 2 and 3.\textsuperscript{91} Dolvik and Stokland: 143.
At present, the main actors in the Norwegian organizational structure are: The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), and the Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry (NHO) (previously NAF), in addition to the state. In more recent years, LO has experienced increasing competition from other independent federations such as Confederation of Vocational Organizations (YS) and Federation of Norwegian Professional Associations (AF). In view of the above, labour market organizations are powerful actors in the Norwegian political landscape. Consequently, the position of women in these organizations is critical when analyzing women's increasing influence in Norwegian society. As will be discussed below, it has been more difficult for women to be accepted in leading positions in the powerful labour market organizations than it has in the political parties.

3.6 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Until the mid-80s, unemployment in Norway was around two to three per cent, but by 1991 it had risen to six per cent. It is currently 7.4 per cent. As a result of de-industrialization the service sector is gaining strength and working class mentality is eroding. This has seriously affected the support base of the Labour party as it has lost its political hegemony over the working class. It has become more difficult for the Norwegian state to achieve its goals of economic growth and full employment that historically have been a precondition for Norway's consensual industrial relations system.

Political consensus has been maintained through economic growth and full employment policies, generous public welfare services and transfers to the rural primary sectors, and labour market intervention by the state. This settlement has remained relatively unchanged despite periods of conservative government in Norway. It should be kept in mind, however, that the

92 In 1957, 76 per cent of workers voted Labour, but only 47 per cent did so in 1989. 12 per cent voted for the Socialist Left party and 41 per cent voted for non-socialist parties, and 33 per cent of LO-organized workers voted for non-socialist parties. Ibid: 158.
extensive welfare state and full employment policies probably could not have been as extensive had it not been for oil revenues from the North Sea. The oil revenues combined with expansionary incomes policies have enabled the Norwegian government to fund welfare programs and full employment programs. Oil revenues have also been used to eliminate enormous budget deficits during the last two decades.\(^93\) Thus, without this goldmine in the North Sea, the expansionary welfare policies of the Norwegian government would probably have been more difficult to sustain over such a long period of time.

According to Dolvik and Stokland, it is reasonable to assume that as long as unemployment is at an acceptably low level, the basic framework of Norway's industrial relations system will remain in place.\(^94\) However, as a result of the transformation of social and industrial structures combined with the decline in social democratic hegemony and a following increase in market-oriented policies, the role of the state in industrial relations is decreasing. It is becoming more difficult for the state to achieve the goals of economic growth and full employment.

With this background information on Norway in mind, the following chapter will apply the theories outlined in the second chapter. Specifically, I shall discuss the Norwegian political culture, electoral and party system, as well as the role of the social democratic welfare state in relation to the high political representation of women in the Storting.

\(^{93}\) Esping-Andersen, (1990): 182.  
\(^{94}\) Dolvik and Stokland: 164.
CHAPTER 4
THE CENTRAL POSITION OF WOMEN IN NORWEGIAN POLITICS

"If women are to have a say in the lives they lead, they must enter politics."
Fernanda Nissen (1862-1920)
Norwegian feminist and politician

4. NORWEGIAN WOMEN’S POLITICAL SUCCESS

Women are at the forefront of Norwegian politics. In the last national election in 1993, the leaders of the three main parties were all women, including the rather traditionalist agrarian Centre Party, two-thirds of whose membership consists men. After the election women’s representation in the Norwegian parliament (Storting) increased to 39.4 per cent, which means that Norway then had the highest female participation rate in the world. Since then it has been narrowly surpassed by Sweden (see Table 1.1). Moreover, in that same year a woman was chosen to be President of the Storting, the second highest position in the Norwegian Constitution next to the King. The Nordic nations lead the world in female parliamentary representation, and at present Sweden and Norway lead in terms of number of women in Cabinet. In Norway, eight of a total of 17 ministers are women, among them the Prime Minister. Sweden has 11 female ministers out of 22, but has never had a female Prime Minister, nor until recently a female leader of a main party.

The high number of women in Norwegian politics is a recent occurrence. Although Norwegian women acquired the right to vote and to be elected in 1913, fifteen years after Norwegian men, it is only in the past two decades that women’s representation has reached record numbers. Since the late 1960s, the number of women in the Storting has increased after each national election (See Figure 4.1). This chapter will examine the political advances made by Norwegian women. Why have Norwegian women come so much further than women in other
liberal democracies with respect to political representation? What has been their strategy and what are the contextual factors surrounding women’s political advancement in Norway?

**Figure 4.1** Women’s Representation in the Storting 1965-1993. (Figures in percentages)

![Graph showing women's representation in the Storting 1965-1993](image)

*Source: Olaf Chr. Torp, 1994: 160.*

In order to better understand what is particular about Norway, the situation in Australia will be considered for contrast. Although Australia was the second country in the world to extend suffrage to women (1902), today women constitute only 8.2 per cent of the Australian House of Representatives. It took forty-one years from when women achieved full political rights before any women entered federal politics, and nearly forty years more before women reached minimal representation in the Parliament.\(^95\) Women are, however, better represented in the Commonwealth Senate with 21.1 per cent, a fact which will be discussed below. Australia is a federal state, and has a two or two-and-a-half party system, as opposed to Norway’s unitary state and multi-party system. The Australian government operates on the British-Westminster model. There are two major parties; one representing the labour movement, the Australian Labor Party (ALP)\(^96\), and one party representing capital, the (conservative) Liberal party, although this party has regrouped and/or changed its name several times. Since 1920 there has been a third party, the


\(^{96}\) I shall be using the formal Australian spelling of the Australian Labor Party.
Country party, which has never been large enough to govern on its own, except in the state of Queensland, but tends to be the junior coalition partner of the Liberals. The Liberals or their antecedents have held office nationally for most of this century, although currently the ALP has been in office since 1983.

By comparing the advances of women in Norway with those of women in Australia, the theoretical argument presented earlier will become clearer. The two nations are situated at opposite ends of the continuum with respect to female political representation. In short, the contextual factors favourable to women's inclusion into politics have to a very large degree been present in Norway but not in Australia.

Following the outline of the theories discussed earlier, this chapter will discuss the Norwegian political culture, then its political institutions such as the electoral system and party fragmentation, in order to explain the achievements of Norwegian women in the political sphere. The party context including the recruitment process of candidates will be examined. Do Norwegian political parties differ in their viewpoints and strategies with respect to the political inclusion of women? The role of the women's movement will also be discussed. Moreover, socio-economic variables such as women's labour force participation and education will be considered.

4.1 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL PRECONDITIONS

As described in the previous chapter, the passion for equality and justice are important elements of Norwegian political culture. Moreover, the government has traditionally been looked upon as an equalizer of social and economic differences. As a result, the strong belief in group representation in parliament has helped women gain legitimacy for their demands for equal representation. From the mid-1960s when the movement to increase women's representation

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The Central Position of Women in Norwegian Politics

53

The Central Position of Women in Norwegian Politics

53

The strong tradition of group representation is obvious in the nomination of party candidates. Factors such as a candidate’s education, occupation, region, age and more recently sex are considered in the selection process. Although ‘individual competence’ is critical, parties have generally tried to make sure all socio-economic groups and geographic areas are represented on their ballot. By appealing to the democratic spirit of political parties, women gained recognition as one of the groups that also needed representation. The principle of group representation is a unique Norwegian feature.

As a Protestant country, Norwegian society has been more open to a non-traditional division of labour not only in economic terms but also in political terms. Protestantism’s less traditional views on family and women in particular, have facilitated women’s political participation and representation. In Australia, the early influence of Irish Catholics with little sympathy for women’s rights might have been an impediment to female political participation. The Irish Catholics were particularly strong in the trade union organizations, which constituted

the foundation of the Australian Labor Party. This might explain why Australian women have traditionally played a larger role in the Liberal party than they have in the Labor party.

In summary, the egalitarian Norwegian political culture and traditional descriptive representational principles combined with the women's movement's careful framing of participation claims have in part led to the political achievements of Norwegian women over the last two decades. Australia, by contrast, despite the early granting of female suffrage, lacks an egalitarian political culture and is more liberal and individualistic in its traditions. The concept of group representation, although recognized in the Australian political system with respect to workers and farmers, stopped short of recognizing women and aboriginals as groups with legitimate rights to participate in decision-making procedures. It was not until the 1970s that the concept of 'representative bureaucracy' started to gain acceptance in Australia. The "femocrats" are significant women bureaucrats who are employed within the state bureaucracies and who work to advance women's position within society at large through the development of equal opportunity policies and anti-discrimination policies. However, the concept of 'representative parliament' has yet to be recognized in Australia.

4.2 FACILITATING POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

In addition to an egalitarian political culture, political institutions such as the electoral system, party system, and candidate nomination have facilitated women's inclusion into politics in Norway. Norway has all the institutional advantages associated with high female representation in parliament. Proportional Representation with party lists and a multi-party system are institutional variables which facilitate women's entry into politics. Norway's wide

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100 Joan Rydon, "Representation of Women and Ethnic Minorities in the Parliaments of Australia and New Zealand", in Rule and Zimmerman, (eds.): 224.
102 Ibid.: 245.
array of political parties not only provide more opportunities for women to participate in politics but also encourage party competition with respect to which party can be the most equal.

Party-list/PR was introduced at the national elections in 1921. The first woman, Karen Platou of the Oslo Conservative Party, was then elected to the Storting. However, as already mentioned, it is only during the last twenty years that female political representation has increased dramatically (See Figure 4.1). Obviously, there have to be additional reasons for women’s political advancement. District magnitude, or the number of seats per district, is critical in this respect. The larger the district magnitude, the easier it is for parties to balance their tickets. Matland measured the effect of district magnitude on female representation in Norway where district magnitude varies from four seats to 16 seats.\textsuperscript{103} His findings suggest that it is party magnitude, that is, the number of seats a party has in a district, rather than district magnitude which has an effect on women’s representation in Norway, although the two are causally related. The larger parties in particular are likely to win more seats as the district magnitude increases. The more seats a party has in a district, the greater the chances that women will be represented. When a party has more than one representative per district, it becomes easier to satisfy the demands of various intra-party interests. In general, districts with most seats elect a larger number of women and the larger parties return the largest number of female representatives per district.\textsuperscript{104} However, Matland’s findings suggest that once women become well established within the parties, the effect of party magnitude decreases.\textsuperscript{105}

Australia’s electoral system, on the other hand, is not favourable to political representation of women. Australia is the only country which practices alternative majoritarian voting in single-member districts, or preferential voting as it is called in Australia. This means

\begin{footnotes}
\item[104] Nicholson: 256.
\end{footnotes}
that voters rank order the candidates and in order for a candidate to win s/he has to receive a majority of preference votes. Although it was hoped that the adoption of preferential voting would change the pre-selection of candidates by the parties themselves, this has not been achieved, according to Joan Rydon. Nevertheless, it means that parties can endorse more than one candidate and leave it up to the voters to decide who will be the winning candidate. In general, parties do not endorse more than one candidate, as this would divide party resources. Moreover as Rydon points out, “if there were strong support for endorsement of a woman, often a man would be nominated as well.”

The electoral system for the Commonwealth Senate is different, using proportional representation and single transferable vote in multi-member state level districts. This system is similar to party-list/PR in that parties present a ballot of rank ordered candidates. Each state has twelve senators and normally six of them are chosen statewide at each election. There are also two senators for each of the two territories. The Australian case provides evidence for the hypothesis that women do better under party-list/PR electoral systems in multi-member constituencies than they do in plurality and majoritarian systems. In fact, following the introduction of PR in 1948 in the Australian Senate, two women senators were elected. By 1965, this number had risen to five. In 1993 there were 16 women senators out of a total of 76. In general, the parties have been more willing to include women and place them in winnable positions on the ballot for Senate elections, rather than pre-selecting women for secure single-member district seats for elections to the House of Representatives.

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106 Rydon: 225.
107 Ibid.
108 By contrast, in the House of Representatives there were 12 women out of a total of 147, according to the Inter-parliamentary Union, 1994.
109 Rydon: 227.
The candidate nomination process also helps explain the high female representation in Norway. Valen describes Norway’s candidate selection procedure as decentralized group-representation.\textsuperscript{110} Nominations for party lists take place at county meetings, and any dues-paying party member can nominate another member. Thus the local county party organizations control candidate nominations according to selection guidelines set by the national party, and according to the Act of Nominations of 1921 which prescribes the procedures for nominations.\textsuperscript{111} Based on the recommendations from local party organizations, the county party organization prepares a rank-ordered list of candidates and alternates which is then taken to the county’s nominating convention where final decisions are reached. In general, the proposal is accepted with only minor changes, although the convention is free to propose or reject candidates, or alter the rank ordering of candidates.\textsuperscript{112} This selection process has encouraged various interest groups such as women’s party caucuses and feminist groups to become involved in the candidate selection process, especially at the local level.\textsuperscript{113} Over the past two decades, the inclusion of women has become one of the most central considerations when selecting candidates and parties are now expected to present well-balanced lists.\textsuperscript{114} This type of recruitment process, classified as formal-localized by Norris (see Table 2.3), is according to her theory more favourable to women’s representation, in particular with respect to the adoption of quotas.\textsuperscript{115} Quotas are less likely to succeed in informal systems like Australia’s. Australia’s recruitment process would be classified as informal-localized according to Norris’ scheme. Because of Australia’s federal structure, the Australian parties’ selection procedures vary from state to state, and as a result the central party plays an insignificant role in the selection of

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{111} Ibid.: 210.
\bibitem{112} Matland (1993): 745-46.
\bibitem{113} Bystydzienski (1994): 57.
\bibitem{114} Valen (1988) 223.
\bibitem{115} Norris (1993): 327.
\end{thebibliography}
candidates.\footnote{Gallagher: 236, 241.} It is the state branches of the parties which control candidate selection for state and national elections. However, there has been an increasing trend in the ALP for the national executive to intervene in candidate selection.\footnote{Marian Simms, “Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: Women and the Australian Party System”, in Lovenduski and Norris (eds.), 1993: 18.} In fact, in September 1994 the ALP introduced mandatory quotas for female parliamentarians. It was decided that at least 35 per cent of its parliamentarians should be women by the year 2002.\footnote{“Australia” #108, Australian High Commission, Ottawa, 31 October 1994: 3.} This means that at least 35 per cent of winnable seats have to be handed to female candidates within eight years. State branches who fail to comply will face intervention from the National Executive of the Labor Party. In effect, the ALP is moving towards a more formal candidate selection procedure which is more favourable to women candidates.

In view of the above, there seems to be little support for Norris’ argument that localized recruitment of candidates, as opposed to centralized, will aid women’s political representation. Rather, the important variable here is whether recruitment procedures are formal with a specific set of rules and regulations that parties have to comply with or whether they are informal. Both Norway and Australia have localized selection procedures, but only in Norway, which has formal selection procedures, is female political representation high.

The Norwegian party list electoral system favours competition between parties and not between individual candidates. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, in local and municipal elections voters may add or strike names of candidates, or cumulate their votes for one candidate and thereby change the ballot list. Although these practices have been restricted in recent years, women have successfully used these methods in election campaigns to get more women elected to public offices. In the campaign leading up to the local elections in 1971 the women’s movement encouraged women to cross out the men on the party list and replace them...
with women. The result was that three local councils returned a majority of women, including the capital, Oslo. The Australian electorate has never had the ability to alter the party lists in the Senate elections, but has to count on the parties themselves to include more women on the lists.

Including more women on the ballot is not enough, however. The chance of being elected depends on the candidate’s position on the party list. If women are to be elected they have to be in eligible positions, which implies that one or more of the top positions on the list must include women. According to Skard and Haavio-Mannila, there has been a general tendency to include women candidates further down the list in the so-called “ornamental” or “decorative” places, as opposed to placing women in the almost secure “mandate” places. However, Norwegian parties now seek to place women and men alternately on the list, in an effort to encourage fair representation. As already noted, the willingness of parties to top their lists with women is connected with the size of the party and how many seats it counts on winning. It is also influenced by party ideology.

When examining the party context, the existence of left and centre parties in Norway is another independent variable used to explain the high levels of female representation. Left-wing parties have a propensity to be more supportive of female candidates, and hence are more likely to nominate and elect women. This is certainly the case in Norway where the Socialist Left and the Liberal party were the first (1973) to adopt formal quotas in order to get more women on their party lists. These parties require that at least 40 per cent of their representatives shall be women. The Labour party was next to follow their example and endorsed affirmative action in the early 1980s, partly due to fear of defections to the Socialist Left party and partly due to pressures coming from the women’s groups within the party. A 40:60 quota rule was adopted so that each sex is guaranteed at least 40 per cent representation. As a result, local party leaders

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have been forced to find suitable women candidates. In 1989 the Centre party followed suit with respect to instituting quotas. The Christian People’s party has yet to make up its mind, and the Conservatives have so far rejected quotas.\(^{120}\)

The Australian Labor party has traditionally not been governed by the same social democratic commitment to equality between the sexes as its Norwegian counterpart. Rather the ALP was created as the political arm of the unions, which were overwhelmingly male and whose objective was to achieve a ‘family wage’ for male breadwinners.\(^{121}\) As a result, it was a party which excluded women. From 1901 to 1975 the non-Labor parties actually fielded more women for the House of Representatives than did the ALP.\(^{122}\)

With respect to the introduction of quotas, a somewhat similar pattern of development has taken place in the Australian political parties, although it is more difficult to introduce quotas where the electoral system is based on single-member constituencies and where the candidate selection process is less formalized. The Australian Labor Party has in recent years been more willing to endorse women candidates, and has increasingly placed women in safe seats for the House of Representatives. In 1981, after a disastrous performance in the 1977 national elections, the ALP adopted affirmative action policies in order to increase the number of female candidates and delegates at party conferences. It was required that a minimum of 25 percent of each State delegation be women, and that state branches should seek to increase the representation of women to equal their membership which generally has been about one-third.\(^{123}\) However, state parties did not have to apply affirmative action to the selection of parliamentary candidates, thus the new rules were targets rather than quotas. The conservative parties have not adopted

\(^{120}\) Skjeie, “The Uneven Advance of Norwegian Women”: 97.
\(^{121}\) Sawer and Simms: 17-18.
\(^{122}\) Ibid. Whereas the ALP fielded 35 women for the House of Representatives between 1901-1975, the non-Labor parties fielded 51 women.
\(^{123}\) Simms: 19.
affirmative action policies, but they are nevertheless increasing their number of female candidates and MP’s\textsuperscript{124}, probably as a result of party competition. Small parties, such as the post-materialist Australian Democrats, which in 1990 selected a woman leader, have been more willing to endorse women candidates.\textsuperscript{125}

The implementation of quotas has been relatively smooth in Norway. Men have not been forced to give up their seats in parliament or to forego re-election. The turnover rate of candidates is high with about a third or more of representatives leaving parliament at each election, so that one or more places on most lists are made available for reallocation.\textsuperscript{126}

Table 4.1 1993 Gender Breakdown of Norwegian MPs by Party.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>No. of Women</th>
<th>Female %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labour Party (AP)</td>
<td>33/67</td>
<td>49.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre Party (SP)</td>
<td>14/32</td>
<td>43.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian People’s Party (KrF)</td>
<td>5/14</td>
<td>38.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist Left (SV)</td>
<td>4/13</td>
<td>30.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives (H)</td>
<td>8/28</td>
<td>28.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress Party (FrP)</td>
<td>1/11</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberals (V)</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist Party (RV)</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>65/165</strong></td>
<td><strong>39.40</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1986, on coming back to power, the Norwegian Labour party also applied the principle of 40 per cent representation in the Cabinet, which resulted in 44 per cent women cabinet ministers (8 out of 18) by 1990. In summary, party competition has served the cause of women, since even the non-socialist parties which in principle are opposed to the quota system, have had to increase their representation of women considerably in fear for losing votes. The spill-over effect has led to increased female representation in all the parties. As Table 4.1 shows, the one exception is the right-wing Progress party which until the most recent election has had

\textsuperscript{124} Rydon: 227.
\textsuperscript{126} Nicholson: 262.
no female representatives in the Storting, and which is the only Norwegian party to avoid politicizing the issue of women’s representation.127

Table 4.2 Number of Female Cabinet Members in the 23 OECD Democracies as of December 31, 1993.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Women in Cabinet</th>
<th>Female %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>8/21</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>6/17</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>6/18</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>7/24</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>3/14</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>4/20</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>3/17</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>4/23</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>3/18</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>3/18</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>3/21</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1/7</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>2/16</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>3/25</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>1/10</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>3/30</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>1/10</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>2/22</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1/18</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1/20</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1/22</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Koole and Mair (1994), Table 1: 224.

A similar spill-over effect has taken place with respect to the parties including women in their top leadership. In fact, the acceptable minimum level of women in cabinet has increased over time regardless of which party has been in power.128 In the late 60s, at least two women cabinet ministers became the norm, but this increased to at least four in Gro Harlem Brundtland’s first cabinet (1981), and the numbers doubled again in Ms. Brundtland’s next cabinet. As Table 4.2 shows, the Nordic countries, with the exception of Iceland which only had

128 Ibid.
one female cabinet minister at the end of 1993, have the highest number of female cabinet ministers. At present, Norway has eight women in the Cabinet out of a total of 17 ministers. Sweden surpassed Norway after its last general election in 1994 with eleven women cabinet ministers out of a total of 22. Skjeie argues that integration politics can be perceived as a competition which produces a politics of no return.\(^{129}\) In Australia, on the other hand, no such precedent has been set with respect to female cabinet ministers. By the end of 1993, there was only one female cabinet minister out of 18 at the national level (See Table 4.2). Not surprisingly, she was the Minister of Health.

When taking a closer look at women in cabinet positions, women are generally not found in senior cabinet positions like finance, defence and foreign affairs. Instead, women tend to head "soft" departments like health and social affairs and child and family welfare. In Norway, the issue that women often are found in "soft" departments and men in "hard" has led to claims that women are in effect marginalized and consequently still lack influence on political decisions. In order to assess whether certain cabinet positions are considered to be of less or more importance than others, Skjeie asked members of the Norwegian cabinet to indicate which ministries they found the most important and attractive. The ministries were then grouped in descending order according to their perceived importance and attractiveness (See Table 4.3).\(^{130}\) The departments not ranked in Skjeie's analysis are listed alphabetically in Group 4. Table 4.3 also lists the gender of the current minister(s) in charge of the department or its current equivalent.

The more important functions were not surprisingly the office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance. As Table 4.3 shows, there are currently three women in the top ten

\(^{129}\) Ibid.

\(^{130}\) Skjeie, "The Rhetoric of Difference: On Women's Inclusion into Political Elites": 130-33. The data is based on an interview series conducted in February 1989 with the members of Gro Harlem Brundtland's Cabinet of 1986-1989. Some of the departments have since been reorganized and have changed names, and new departments have been created.
cabinet positions according to this ranking. Women are also found in so-called “hard” departments like agriculture, and the Department of Labour and Administration was led by three different women ministers from 1990 to fall of 1993. For more than a decade a woman has been in charge of the Department of Justice and Police. On the other side, when the Department of Family and Consumer Affairs was established it was first headed by a man and the current Minister of Health is a man. Thus it seems that efforts have been made to make most cabinet portfolios available to both women and men. Nonetheless, women ministers are still not found in the traditional male ministries of Finance, Defence, and Foreign Affairs.

Table 4.3 Ranking of Favoured Ministries in Norway (1989) and Gender of Minister(s) as of Fall 1993.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Ministries</th>
<th>Gender of Minister(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Social Affairs a</td>
<td>F/M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labour and Local Administration</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trade (Dept. of Foreign Affairs)</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Industry b</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oil and Energy b</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental Affairs</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family Affairs and Child Care c</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Church and Education</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culture and Science</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defense</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fisheries</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Foreign Aid (Dept. of Foreign Affairs) d</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Justice and Police</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>M</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

a) The current name is Department of Health and Social Affairs and there is a Minister of Health (M) and a Minister of Social Affairs (F).
b) The Department of Industry and the Department of Oil and Energy have been reorganized into one department called the Department of Industry and Energy.
c) New department as of January 1, 1991. Its predecessor, the Department of Family and Consumer Affairs, was only in place for one year.
d) Has been under the Department of Foreign Affairs since January 1990.
Potential cabinet ministers are not free to choose which Cabinet post they get, but Skjeie's study also looked at the preference patterns of women and men members of parliament with respect to the different parliamentary committees where there is basically 'free choice'. Women members were over-represented in the "soft" committees of Health and Social Affairs and Church and Education, while men were clearly in majority in the "hard" committees of Finance, Foreign Affairs, Agriculture and Transportation. According to Skjeie's survey, this distribution to a large extent reflects preferences of the members of parliament. Therefore, she argues, there is little support for the argument that women politicians are marginalized in Norway. Skjeie also concludes that Norwegian female cabinet ministers are not systematically barred from high ranking positions just because they are women.\textsuperscript{131} It is however difficult to decide whether women are marginalized or whether personal preferences are critical. There is of course a distinction between peoples' general perceptions of which departments or issues are "soft" or "hard", and the MPs ranking of their preferences.

Davis argues that the recruitment of women to cabinet posts is influenced by a country's tradition of elite recruitment.\textsuperscript{132} As noted earlier, countries range from specialist to generalist recruitment systems, with specialist systems providing most opportunities and openings for women and new groups. Norway is classified as a specialist country, where recruitment to positions of power is based on areas of expertise rather than tenure and broad political background.\textsuperscript{133} Davis claims that her findings challenge the importance of egalitarian political culture as an explanation of the high female political representation in the Scandinavian

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.: 133.
\textsuperscript{132} cf. Davis.
\textsuperscript{133} It is interesting to note that Norway's current Minister of Culture and Science is a recognized artist and had a long career as a singer before she became a minister. Similarly, the current Minister of Church and Education is a professor of sociology who has published widely on the distribution of power in Norwegian society.
countries, and that it is broader institutional variables which are critical. Women have achieved high representation in cabinet due to the openness of the institutional structure, as opposed to the open, egalitarian political culture. Although her specialist/generalist continuum explains the high number of women ministers in Norway, Sweden and Finland, it does not explain the fact that the Netherlands and Austria, although classified as highly specialist countries, have only three female ministers out of 14, and two out of 12, respectively (See Table 4.2). Obviously, other factors such as religion and political culture cannot be completely overlooked.

Women's political participation in Norway is also facilitated by the nature of the recruitment process. Running for political office is in general an expensive affair and is often described as a major hindrance to women, but in Norway as in most other countries with multi-member districts, campaign expenses are covered by the political parties and the public authorities. This means that women and men alike can run for office without too much economic risk.

It is believed that women and other minorities stand a greater chance of being nominated and elected in countries where competition for seats in the legislature is weak. As already mentioned, Norway has a high turnover rate of candidates, which makes it easier for new groups to get elected. Legislative competition is also influenced by the constitutional context. Federal countries like Australia have powerful and prestigious state governments which provide women with an alternative route to political office. This is not to mention the fact that a seat in a state government might prove more attractive for women with family and children. Traditionally, the vast distances have made it more difficult for women to run for national elections, as women

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134 Ibid.: 18.
have been less mobile than men because of their roles as mothers and homemakers.\textsuperscript{136} There are few alternative routes to political power in Norway. However, although a seat in local government does not carry equal prestige, it is often a first step to a career in the Storting.

Matland argues that legislative competition also depends on the prestige and power of a seat in parliament. As mentioned previously, this is a difficult variable to measure. There is little evidence for Matland's assumption that because a typical Norwegian MP represents approximately 25,000 people a seat in the Storting holds less prestige than a seat in the British House of Commons where an MP represents approximately 100,000 people.\textsuperscript{137} However, as David Arter notes, the nature of the relationship between voters and members of parliament is nowhere clearly defined.\textsuperscript{138} In the case of Norway, arguments have been put forward that the Storting is losing its importance relative to other institutions, and that real power lies elsewhere, in particular in corporatist organizations.\textsuperscript{139} The argument that women are being integrated into "shrinking institutions" is used to explain the large number of female politicians in Norway, since as more women are being integrated into politics, men and the power associated with them are moving outside the political realm.\textsuperscript{140} According to this iron law of andrarchy, the proportion of women increases as the power and prestige decrease. It could be argued that the relatively high turnover rate in the Norwegian Storting is an indication that there are many attractive positions outside the political arena. Be that as it may, Erik Damgaard's recent analysis of the Nordic parliaments, concludes that the influence of the Storting is in fact increasing.\textsuperscript{141} There is increased parliamentary activity in committees and in party groups. Hence, the Storting performs

\textsuperscript{136} Sawer and Simms: 18.
\textsuperscript{140} cf. Skjeie, "The Uneven Advance of Norwegian Women": 82.
\textsuperscript{141} Damgaard (ed.): 16, 198.
more tasks than simply rubber-stamping cabinet proposals. In short, the Storting has not ceded any further powers over economic policy to the corporatist actors in the past couple of decades. This is not to deny that the actors continue to play a central role in a corporatist country like Norway, however, we must stress that the Storting remains an important political institution, and one that is in no way ‘shrinking’.

Norway must therefore be considered an exception to the iron law of andrarchy. Norway has a high number of women in a still prestigious parliament, plus a high number of women in cabinet, among them the Prime Minister. However, despite the advances Norwegian women have made politically, they are far behind in terms of reaching equal representation in the economic/corporatist arena. Here it is certainly true that women are found at the lower levels, and men at the top. It is this paradox that will be the topic of the two last chapters.

4.3 THE ROLE OF THE WOMEN’S MOVEMENT

In spite of all the above mentioned conditions favourable to women’s political advancement, why is it only during the last twenty years that Norwegian women have reached record representation? (See Figure 4.1) Eighteen years ago, Robert Putnam identified Scandinavia as “the only significant exception to the general exclusion of women from positions of political leadership.” The main reason, he argued, is the historical strength of women’s movements in Scandinavia.

142 Ibid.: 198; Damgaard, “Parliamentary Change in the Nordic Countries”, ibid.: 203; Hilmar Rommetvedt, “Norway: From Consensual Majority Parliamentarism to Dissensual Minority Parliamentarism”,: 96.
143 Philip Norton has produced a comparative analysis of West European parliaments, which however does not include Norway. yet it does include Sweden which is probably analogous to Norway. Norton, building on Arter’s analysis of Sweden, concludes that the Swedish Riksdag is at least as effective with regards to shaping public policy as most other West European legislatures, and moreover is one of if not the most legitimate legislature in terms of citizens’ confidence. Norton, “Conclusion: Legislatures in Perspective”: 147. cf. Arter: 120-41.
144 Putnam: 33.
Historically, women’s movements have been strong in Norway, and women have always played an important role in the large number of voluntary and non-governmental organizations. In 1990, there were about 1,300 organizations, in which the total membership amounted to three times the total population. More than two thirds of these organizations represent economic interests. Women have traditionally been found in typical women’s organizations such as The Norwegian Women’s Public Health Organization, Norwegian Housewives Association and Norwegian Country Women’s Association or in religious, social or humanitarian organizations. More men are members of trade unions than women, although there is an increasing tendency for women to become unionized. There are also women’s associations within the political parties, which exercise influence on the formulation of public policies. The various women’s organizations have provided women with an indirect channel of influence and hence an opportunity to be politically involved. However, the position that Norwegian women enjoy in politics today is to a large extent a result of the new women’s movement which emerged towards the end of the 1960s and whose main objective was the liberation of women from their oppressed position in society. The new women’s movement revitalized the traditional women’s organizations.

By the late-60s the second-wave feminists had succeeded in including female political representation on the political agenda, and were able to influence the candidate selection and nomination process. The Norwegian women’s movement campaigned for increased representation in local and national elections, in particular in the run-up to the local elections in 1967 and 1971. Their strategy was aimed at the nomination of candidates, and the general electorate’s ability to influence candidate selection in local elections. After the local elections in 1967 women’s representation in local councils increased from 6 to 10 per cent, and again to 15

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146 Women’s Status in Norway 1990, Oslo: Likestillingsrådet: 5.
per cent in 1971. The movement's strategy was aimed at local elections rather than national for two reasons. First, women's representation in local councils was lower than in parliament, and indeed still is (See Table 4.4). Second, in local elections, voters have the ability to cross out candidates if dissatisfied as well as to add names to the list. The campaign therefore urged voters to support women candidates by altering the lists. The result of the 1971 election has later been referred to as the "women's coup" since in three major local councils, among them Oslo and Trondheim, women were in a majority, and constituted 40 per cent or more in six other councils.\textsuperscript{147} The main reason behind this success was the increase in the number of women who were nominated as candidates. Women candidates were not only recognized as electable, but they were also gaining important experience in local government, which later influenced an increase in female nominations for parliamentary elections.

The so-called "women’s coup" of 1971 marked the beginning of women’s integration into party politics in Norway. The main objective of the women’s movement was to empower women through integration into the existing party structure.\textsuperscript{148} What made this integrationist approach possible was the cooperation between women inside the parties and the women in the movement who worked for a common goal despite party differences. Moreover, there was a close link between a growing volume of feminist research and the women’s movement. The researchers emphasized a specific women’s culture of shared experiences of oppression and care work, and suggested that women needed political power in order to improve their position. The women’s movement argued that not only did women have a democratic right to participate, but also that women would bring valuable and different experiences to politics. Furthermore, only women could represent women’s interests, thus actual representation by women was necessary.

\textsuperscript{147} Nicholson: 257.
\textsuperscript{148} Skjeie, “Ending the Male Political Hegemony: The Norwegian Experience”: 232.
Aided by the tradition of group representation, gender was recognized as a politically relevant category.

The women's movement strategy of integration is shared by the Nordic countries, and partly explains why women's parliamentary representation is higher in the Nordic countries than elsewhere. However, electoral campaigns to nominate more women are a Norwegian phenomena and have in fact become a regular feature of Norwegian elections. Party differences are set aside and the women's organizations cooperate with the women's factions within the different parties. A severe backlash occurred after the women's coup in 1971 when activists were accused of ruining the election process and electoral laws were changed to make it more difficult for voters to alter ballots. There was no campaign leading up to the local election of 1975 and as a result the number of female representatives increased by only 0.6 per cent. Campaigns have been run at every election since then. In recent years, however, the electoral campaigns have been administered and funded by the government and organized jointly by the Equal Status Council and women's organizations. The goal is no longer simply to increase the number of women in politics, but to achieve equal representation by women and men. Thus the strategy is now to encourage the parties themselves to nominate more women and place them in winnable positions rather than altering the ballots. Quotas are a result of this new approach.

**Table 4.4 Representation of Women in the Cabinet, the Storting and Municipal Councils from 1980 to 1994. (Figures in percentages)**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storting</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Councils</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In Britain, by contrast, the strategy of working within state institutions has been viewed with suspicion by feminist groups. In Australia, women have also worked from within the state institutions but their strategy has been aimed at the bureaucracy rather than the political parties. Early on, the Australian women's movements focused on participation in the bureaucracy, and as a result women are strong in the state and federal bureaucracies. The "femocrats", as they are called, influence and formulate public policies in particular with respect to women's issues and social policies. Nevertheless, as Sophie Watson points out, men are still in control of the candidate selection process and of party life in general. As a result, female representation in the House of Representatives is low.

Although not a part of the women's movement as such, the role of the Norwegian Equal Status Council in bringing about gender equality should also be mentioned. The Equal Status Council was first established in 1972 and serves as a liaison between the authorities, organizations and the public on all matters of particular interest to women and equal opportunities. The Equal Status Council is under the Department of Family Affairs and Child Care. Its basic duties are to act as an advisor to society in issues of importance for equality between the sexes, in addition to dispersing information and conducting inquiries with respect to gender equality in all spheres of society. The Equal Status Ombud administers the Equal Status Act.

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150 Sophie Watson, "Unpacking the State: Reflections on Australian, British and Scandinavian Feminist Interventions", in Katzenstein and Skjeie, (eds.): 115-16.
151 Ibid.: 126.
152 The Equal Status Council took over the tasks of the previous Equal Pay Council which had been established in 1959 as a result of Norway's ratification of ILO Convention no. 100 on equal pay for work of equal value.
153 The title 'Ombud' is used as the politically correct version of the more familiar title 'Ombudsman', which means a person elected or appointed to take care of other peoples' interests. When the Storting discussed a Bill on equality between women and men, criticism arose with respect to the word 'Ombudsman', which would have been the traditional title for a person appointed to enforce the Equal Status Act. The outcome of these deliberations was that the commissioner under this particular Act was given the more neutral title 'Ombud'. The Norwegian Equal Status Act With Comments, Equal Status Council, Revised Ed., 1989: 3-4.
In Norway, the rationale of integration politics has changed over the years, according to Skjeie. Although the main objective is still to achieve equal representation, it is no longer because it is fair; but because it is believed to bring about change in public policies. Hence, today women's political mandate is that they will bring new priorities to the political agenda and thereby broaden the scope of policy making. However, as Skjeie notes, arguments of difference do to some extent overlook the logic of the party system. Women and men politicians enter politics through the party system, which means that they have already made an ideological choice according to their priorities. Party identification is in most cases stronger than gender identification with respect to public policy decisions. This is also the case in Australia. Moreover, women politicians probably vary to the extent that they feel they have a specific women's mandate to fulfill while in office. Although women politicians have common concerns, they promote competing alternatives and answers to these concerns as a result of different values.

4.4 WOMEN IN THE LABOUR FORCE

Labour force participation and education are important factors with respect to the high representation of women in Norwegian politics. In the 1960s and 1970s, as the new women's movement grew in size, large numbers of women entered the labour force. Thirty years ago, nine out of ten mothers stayed at home, whereas today the situation is close to the opposite, with eight out of ten mothers with small children employed outside the home. At present, more than 70 per cent of Norwegian women are employed outside the home. Their participation in the work force increases with the age of the children. Furthermore, since the early 1980s, increasing numbers

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of Norwegian women complete higher education. Today, women account for 52-55 per cent of the total number of students enrolled at universities and colleges.\textsuperscript{156}

There are several reasons why the female ratio of labour force participation is high in Norway. According to Schmidt, the particular configuration of economic, social and political factors which has prevailed in the Scandinavian countries has been conducive to high levels of gender equality.\textsuperscript{157} First of all, the growth of the welfare state has generated work for women in the public sector. Norway has experienced rapid growth of employment in the public sector, in particular in social services, education and health care. Just under half of all employed women work in the public sector. Moreover, the welfare state has made it easier for women to work by providing child care facilities and other measures to help parents with small children reconcile work and family responsibilities. Secondly, Norway’s egalitarian political culture has influenced government’s progressive attitude and stance with respect to public child care and family policy which facilitates women’s participation in the work force. Thirdly, the political strength of the left also has to be taken into account. Powerful trade unions committed to the goal of full employment are generally in favour of women’s incorporation into the economy, as are left-wing governments. Thus, in Norway, as in the rest of Scandinavia, increasing levels of gender equality has met minimal political resistance. Until recently, the same minimal resistance applied to increasing public employment. Finally, Protestantism is a relevant variable which has been found to affect women’s high labour force participation,\textsuperscript{158} and consequently their political representation. Norway thus ‘fits’ the Protestant pattern as described by both Manfred G. Schmidt and Alan Siaroff.

\textsuperscript{156} "Women in Politics – Equality and Empowerment": 5.
\textsuperscript{157} Schmidt: 189.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid.: 192-209; Siaroff: 94-95.
Like most other English-speaking nations, Australia does not differ significantly from Norway with respect to high female labour force participation. In 1960, the female labour force participation in both countries was around 35 per cent. In 1992, more than 62 per cent of Australian women were employed outside the home (See Table 2.4). However, this does not seem to have had any major effect on women's political representation. Australia lacks all the other favourable cultural and institutional factors that Norway has, except for the fact that Australia is also largely Protestant. Nevertheless, in the Australian case, Protestantism and its effect on female labour force participation has so far not had a major impact on women's political representation. It should also be noted that Australia lacks an extensive social democratic welfare state to facilitate women's labour force participation and hence political representation. Australia's welfare state is selectivist in nature as opposed to the universalist Scandinavian model. In spite of relatively high labour force participation by Australian women, this variable alone is not sufficient for women to achieve higher political representation. Australia does not have an egalitarian political culture or favourable political institutions. Although the women's movement is strong it is not as strong as its Norwegian counterpart. Due to different electoral and party systems, the Australian women's movement never focused on integration of women into the existing party structure, rather it concentrated on integrating women into the powerful state bureaucracies.

In summary, the interaction of the four sets of factors described above account for the political achievements of Norwegian women. The combination of an egalitarian culture and a tradition of group representation, a favourable electoral and party system, in addition to a strong women's movement have led to record female political representation. Because the women's

movement focused on integration, it was able to use the electoral and party system effectively to elect more women into public offices. Moreover, the growing number of women in the labour force and in education over the last decades has impacted on the political representation of women. The fact that Norway is a Protestant country has influenced a more progressive policy stand by the government with respect to female labour force participation as well as political participation. A precedent has been set with respect to women in public office, and women expect to be represented on equal footing with men. Since women constitute half of the electorate, it will be very difficult to return to a situation where women are under-represented in politics.
CHAPTER 5
WOMEN IN THE ECONOMIC/CORPORATIST SPHERE

5. FEW AND FAR BETWEEN: WOMEN IN LEADING POSITIONS OUTSIDE POLITICS

A recent survey undertaken by Bergens Tidende, a local newspaper for the Bergen area, shows that almost all Norwegian businesses are run by men.\(^{160}\) Women in leadership positions are as few and far between as they were 12 years ago. The top level of leadership in 15 of Norway’s largest companies consist of 91 men and two women. At the next level of leadership, the survey found 354 men and 16 women. Despite male leaders proclaiming that it is their priority to get more women into leadership positions, there have been few changes since the early 1980s. Even Norway’s largest company, Norsk Hydro, which is half state-owned, has never had a woman among its leadership. The Equal Status Ombud says she is disappointed but not surprised at these findings, since other surveys have shown similar numbers.\(^{161}\)

As these numbers indicate, there is a darker side to women’s advancement in Norwegian society. Whereas the arena of party politics has opened doors for women, there are only a handful of women in leading positions in Norwegian business and industry, as well as in government administration.\(^{162}\) Recruitment of women to leading positions in both public and private sectors has proven more difficult than recruiting female politicians. Obviously, the facilitating political factors mentioned previously have not had the same positive effect on female representation outside politics. In this chapter the emphasis will be on the representation of women in leading positions in the peak labour market organizations and in private sector businesses.

\(^{160}\) Bergens Tidende, Thursday, January 12, 1995: 11.
\(^{161}\) Nytt fra Norge, Tuesday, January 17, 1995: 18.
\(^{162}\) Randi Kjeldstad, “Kvinner med makt?” (Women with power?), Samfunnspesilet 2/94: 3.
In general, it is no surprise that there are fewer women the higher up the managerial structure one goes. Management has traditionally been a male domain and continues to be so. Is Norway's position better or worse than other countries with respect to women in top positions outside the arena of politics? Although Norway and Sweden are currently leaders in the world with respect to female political representation, they are not doing as well in terms of women in other leading positions. It does seem to be the case that more women are found in the middle and upper ranges of the private sector in most Anglo-Saxon countries than is the case in the Nordic countries. However, it is somewhat difficult to compare countries according to the level of female representation in leading positions since the definition of what is considered a leading position and who is a leader can vary. How many levels of leadership are to be included in such a comparison? The levels of leadership also differ from sector to sector and from business to business. The Nordic Council looked at the managerial levels in the 100 largest enterprises by number of employees in all the Nordic countries, and found that women constitute a negligible share of executive directors, and that men are the overwhelming majority in management and on boards. In fact, according to this survey, in Norway in 1992-93 there was not one single female executive director. A larger survey including 200 of the largest private Norwegian

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Female Percentage</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Members of Enterprise Assembly</td>
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<td>1462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Directors</td>
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<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rest of the Administrative Top Leadership</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Level after the Top Leadership</td>
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<td>2621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others with the Title Director/Boss</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6209</td>
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164 Women and Men in the Nordic Countries; Facts and Figures 1994: 36.
enterprises also conducted by the Nordic Council, showed that the largest private enterprises offered almost no part time employment, and that women constituted 27 per cent of the employees. Women constitute 39 per cent of all employed in the private sector as a whole. Thus, the percentage of females is lower in the largest enterprises than the average of the private sector.\textsuperscript{165}

Why is there such a discrepancy between the gains that Norwegian women have made in the political arena and their under-representation in other powerful arenas, in particular in the private sector? What are the barriers which women must overcome to enter leading positions in the labour market? The contrast between high representation of women in politics and low representation of women in other leadership positions is all the more striking in a country which has an egalitarian tradition, high female labour force participation, and high wage equality. As noted earlier, more than 70 per cent of Norwegian women are in the labour force, as are 70 per cent of women with small children. More than half of the students in Norwegian universities are women, which means that an increasing number of women are obtaining higher education. About 80 per cent of women with higher education are in the labour force.\textsuperscript{166}

Nonetheless, despite high labour market participation by Norwegian women, Norway’s labour market remains extremely gender segmented, with women in traditional caring professions or performing routine office work and men in technical or economic professions.\textsuperscript{167} There are few professions in Norway where men and women are found in equal numbers, hence it is rare that women and men compete for the same jobs. The educational structure reflects the labour market structure and vice versa. One result of this gender segmented labour market is that

\textsuperscript{165} Kjeldstad: 5.
\textsuperscript{167} Skjeie, "The Uneven Advance of Norwegian Women": 80-1. According to numbers from the Equal Status Council, 53 per cent of working women were in 1991 employed in occupations that were 90-100 per cent dominated by women, and 32 per cent in occupations that were 60-90 per cent dominated by women.
Women in the Economic/Corporatist Sphere

men are generally found in higher paying and more prestigious jobs than women. Despite an even gender distribution in the labour market as a whole, women are under-represented in all elite positions, especially in private sector managerial levels, but also in the higher levels in the public sector. The Norwegian employment structure is similar to the Swedish which, according to Esping-Andersen, is increasingly professional as well as "severely gender segmented along the public-private sector axis," where men dominate the private sector, and women are over-represented in the public sector, although not in leading positions.

This situation is reflected in the various labour market organizations, where women constitute almost half of the members but are far from being equally represented on their boards and committees. Even though the Labour Party has embraced and formalized female political representation, the other half of the labour movement, the LO, has not been as willing to include women in its leadership ranks. This is surprising since both the party and the union confederation are governed by the same principles of equality and solidarity. In general, the number of female representatives or workers increases the further down the hierarchy one goes.

This chapter will first discuss the high female labour force participation in relation to the Norwegian social democratic welfare state. Secondly, it will look at the under-representation of women in the peak labour market organizations, since these organizations represent a powerful elite in Norwegian society. The focus of this discussion will be on the LO. Why are women under-represented in the union confederation but not in the party? Thirdly, a general review of factors considered to hinder women's entry into leadership positions will be presented. Finally, this anomaly, that women are represented at the top political level but are almost invisible in other leading positions, invites the question whether or not politics is losing its prestige and

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power. Have women been ‘allowed’ into politics because power has moved elsewhere? Is it still true that where power is, women are not?

5.1 THE NORWEGIAN WELFARE STATE AND WOMEN

The extensive social democratic welfare state in Norway has facilitated and encouraged female labour force participation. First of all, one of the goals of a social democratic welfare state is full employment for women and men. Secondly, and as a result of the commitment to full employment, the welfare state had to be expanded in order for women to be able to work. Functions that previously were carried out at home are now done by the public sector. Hence, the welfare state has provided child care facilities and other services so that women with small children can work. Thirdly, the provision of such services has provided women, in particular, with jobs. In general, almost half of all employed women work in the public sector, and many of them work part time. Finally, the high number of women in the job market is a consequence of highly progressive income-tax schedules, which are favourable to two income families. In the Nordic countries, the level of taxation as well as the structure of the tax system creates incentives for women to work.169 There is a greater incentive for women to work in countries where tax returns are filed separately, as they are in the Nordic and Anglo-Saxon countries, as opposed to joint income tax returns as is the case in most German-speaking nations. According to Schmidt, taxation policies which create incentives for women to work are generally found in countries with strong unions and with left-wing governments which have incorporated their more radical family policy stance into the taxation structure. In sum, the social democratic welfare state encourages and facilitates women’s participation in the labour market.

However, as Table 2.2 shows, most Anglo-Saxon countries also have a relatively high level of women in the labour force, although they are not considered social democratic welfare

169 Schmidt: 201-2.
states. Siaroff has also attempted to measure women's incentives and disincentives to work across the OECD democracies. According to his measurements, the incentives for women to work are highest in the Nordic nations as well as in certain Anglo-Saxon nations, most notably the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. In fact, his findings suggest that both the United States and Canada score higher than the Nordic nations with respect to his measure of female elites, suggesting that North American women are more successful than Nordic women at getting to the top positions. On the other hand, the two North American nations are at the bottom in terms of wage levels in industry whereas the Nordic nations are at the top. In summary, what Siaroff has termed 'female work desirability', is higher in the Nordic and Anglo-Saxon nations than in the rest of the 23 OECD countries included in his study. Women's desirability to work is also indirectly affected by the type of welfare state. A more generous welfare state is likely to benefit women in particular, since certain benefits are targeted at women such as maternity benefits and child or family allowances. However it is critical for high female welfare that it is the mother who is the recipient of these benefits. Only when this is the case do women have a real choice between working or staying at home to look after children without becoming dependent on a male breadwinner. In the Nordic and Anglo-Saxon countries benefits are universal and thus paid to all mothers, as opposed to many Central and Southern European nations as well as Japan where family benefits are paid to the father. Siaroff finds a high correlation between female work desirability and family benefits going to the mother.

Furthermore, there is a strong causal relationship between female work desirability and Protestantism, which confirms Schmidt's earlier findings of a positive relationship between

170 Siaroff: 82-100.
171 That is, whether in an OECD democracy it is relatively attractive for women to work or whether women are discriminated against 'more than average'. Ibid.: 90.
172 Ibid.: 94.
173 Ibid.: 94-5.
Protestantism and high female labour participation. The Nordic countries and most Anglo-Saxon countries (with the exception of Ireland) are Protestant and also have high female labour force participation. In both instances, family benefits are paid to the mother. In the social democratic Nordic nations family benefits are high, and the public sector provides ample job opportunities for women. In the English speaking nations, on the other hand, family benefits are often inadequate, and as a result female employment is even more desirable. Women in the Anglo-Saxon nations are generally found in the large private and public service sector. By contrast, in most Catholic or mixed religion countries the stress is on the family and women are discouraged from working. The facilitating factors are absent because there was never a political commitment to make it easier for women to participate in the labour force through public policies. To repeat, female labour force participation is influenced by religious traditions and political institutions as well as by public policies such as family benefits and taxation policies.

5.2 Female Representation in Norwegian Labour Market Organizations

In 1992, women constituted 41 per cent of the members in the LO (The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions), 41 per cent of the members in AF (Federation of Norwegian Professional Associations) and 65 per cent of the members of YS (Confederation of Vocational Organizations). Since 45 per cent of all employed persons are women, these numbers indicate that men and women are organized to the same degree. However, as a result of the gender segmented labour market, women and men organize in different organizations. Despite almost equal membership participation, women's representation on the boards of the large employees' associations does not reflect women's representation in the parliamentary arena. (See Table 5.2)

174 Specifically, Siaroff distinguishes between Protestant social democratic welfare states such as Norway where there is a true 'work-welfare' choice for women, and Protestant liberal welfare states such as Australia where there is a strong incentive for women to work in terms of the nature of employment, in addition to commodified welfare benefits paid to the mother. Siaroff: 95.
175 Kjeldstad: 3.
The only exception is AF where the percentage of women among the leadership is larger than the percentage of women members (56 vs. 41 per cent). Even in YS where women members are in majority, there are few female board members according to Table 5.2. YS is currently headed by a female leader, and one of its two deputy leaders is a woman.

Table 5.2 Percentage of Women among Members and Boards in the Large Labour Market Federations in Norway.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female Members</th>
<th>Female Board Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LO</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YS</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AF</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kjeldstad: 3.

Furthermore, NHO (Confederation of Norwegian Business and Trade) which represents most employers in the private sector, has only six women on their 84 member board (7 per cent), and in their working group there is but one woman out of nine representatives.\(^{176}\) The low female score in NHO is both a reflection of the lower number of women employed in the private sector, as well as a reflection of the fact that NHO differs from the unions in that membership is not individually based but is based on company. Thus it is harder to say how representative the leadership is in terms of gender.

As mentioned above, the LO has so far not made the same commitment to equality and equal representation as has the Labour party. In spite of the fact that women constitute almost half of LO’s membership, the union leadership has traditionally remained a bastion of men. Is this about to change, or are there facilitating factors present in the party arena that are not present in the union confederation?

Although the party and the union confederation both represent the labour movement, they represent different constituencies. The party represents the voters on a broad range of social and political issues, and has an obligation to reflect its broad voter base. The union, on the other

\(^{176}\) Ibid.: 4.
hand, is a members’ organization which represents narrow members’ interests. Yet both the party and the union are constantly looking for new supporters or members. The party is seeking to attract the undecided or voters from other parties, whereas the union until recently has enjoyed hegemonic control as an umbrella organization. Hence, competition for members did not occur until AF and YS were established at the end of the 1970s. It is only recently that LO has attempted to attract unorganized workers or workers organized in other unions in order to increase its membership. LO’s negotiating power depends on the size of its membership.

Another reason the union has been less responsive to women’s demands for representation lies in the strategy of the women’s movement which focused on political integration via the political parties, rather than women’s representation in the labour market and in the union confederation. Last but not least, quotas are obviously a critical factor when considering the number of women in politics. The political parties, in particular the parties of the left and centre, have made gender part of their criteria for nomination of new candidates. Even parties which do not agree in principle with quotas have increased their number of female candidates in fear of losing their female voters. The competition for votes or ‘peer pressure’ among the political parties is perhaps the main motivation behind the various parties’ willingness to include more women on their ballots. In the trade union movement the situation has traditionally been quite different, according to Skjeie.

Since the Labour party introduced quotas in 1983, new records in terms of female representation have been set at every election. Leading up to the LO Congress of 1985, the adoption of quotas in the union was one of the most important demands from the women’s group within the union. Actually, quotas were approved for LO’s internal committees at the 1985 congress.

179 Skjeie, “Rapport fra en siste skanse: Kvinnerepresentasjon i fagbevegelsen”, 87-98.
congress, but a similar proposal to institute quotas for higher positions within the LO was not passed. The arguments were similar to the arguments used in order to increase women representatives in the Labour Party, namely that the representation of women is crucial for the consideration of women's interests, and that only women can truly represent women's interests. Women should be represented on equal footing with men since they constitute almost half of the LO membership.

In a pro-contra argument Skjeie shows the rationale behind left-wing political parties' decision to integrate more women, as well as the reasoning behind LO's resistance to implement similar integration policies in LO.\(^{180}\) The Labour Party's decision to increase female representation was mainly influenced by its competition for votes on the left, especially from the Socialist Left Party, as well as a wish to strengthen the credibility of the left as more women-friendly than the right-wing parties. Moreover, integration of women was believed to attract more young voters, especially among women, as well as to attract the undecided. In general, Skjeie points out, the Labour Party had little to lose in introducing quotas as a means to increase female representation. Since few men were likely to leave the party due to the decision to introduce quotas, such a decision was only likely to attract more women and thereby strengthen the party. By contrast, the resistance to introduce quotas in the LO leadership has to do with the fact that LO is a membership organization where membership is based on occupation as well as the organizational structure at the workplace. Therefore, to increase female representation is not believed to have the same positive effect with respect to mobilizing new members. In LO, demands for increased female representation represents an internal conflict between the associations in the public versus the private sector.\(^{181}\) Basically, the conflict is between private and public sector, where the private sector is against the implementation of quotas for women

\(^{180}\) Ibid.: 84-5.
\(^{181}\) Ibid.: 85, 87.
and the public sector is for quotas, because more women are employed in the public sector. Not surprisingly, it is mainly the associations with high female percentages which have been in favour of quotas. Consequently, to choose to give in to the public sector’s demands for quotas may make it more difficult to recruit new members in the more male dominated private sector. Finally, the ‘incumbency’ practices within the union have made it more difficult to increase female representation. Election to executive positions within LO is usually until retirement, which means that those who presently hold those positions would be forced to resign or take early retirement. The only other way to increase the percentage of women, according to Skjeie, would be to increase the total number of representatives in the main executive bodies. In short, the demand for increased female representation is perceived more as a threat against established power structures in the union than it is in the party. To institute quotas is therefore a strategically difficult choice, especially if it means losing support that is already there.

As pointed out earlier, however, the market situation for LO has changed considerably since the end of the 1970s and incentives to include more women in leadership positions are growing. First of all, LO has lost its monopoly as a worker’s organization, and faces competition in terms of recruiting new members, especially in the public sector and in sectors such as bank and insurance in which women are in majority. Secondly, the growth in employment during the 1970s and 1980s was largely a result of women’s increased labour force participation. Thus, increases in LO’s membership has to a large extent been due to the employment of women. There are still lots of part-time workers, most of whom are women, who remain unorganized and therefore represent potential membership growth in LO. In fact, there are indications that the LO will make equal wage very central to this years wage negotiations.
Although the official LO rationale behind promoting equal wage or female wage is because it is fair, the fact that this might attract more female dominated organizations to join the LO should not be ignored.

To sum up, in the party arena, the combination of moral obligation and competitive pressure to promote women have resulted in record high numbers of women in parliament. Although it could be argued that the LO has a moral obligation to increase the number of women in leadership positions as their number of female members increase, LO is not under similar competitive pressure to promote women as are political parties of the left, in particular. In Skjeie’s words, arguments on the political relevance of difference have not been sufficient to change old recruitment patterns in the LO.\footnote{Skjeie, “The Uneven Advance of Norwegian Women”; 88-9.} However, as competition for new members grow, the labour market organizations may experience similar competition to include more women in the higher ranks. In fact, at the 1989 national convention a woman was elected deputy leader of the LO.

5.3 BARRIERS TO WOMEN

In general, there are three sets of barriers facing women who want to advance to higher positions in the private sector.\footnote{Interview with Sissel Hagedorn and Arny Floden in Kvinner og Ledelse, (Women and Leadership) Likestillsrådet og Lederopplæringsrådet i Norge, Oslo, 1987: 35; and Kjeldstad.} The first set of barriers relates to the traditional organization of the family and society, and are based on the biological differences between men and women. Women’s and men’s different roles with respect to childbirth and child rearing mean that ambitious women often have to work twice as hard as their male colleagues. Whereas aspiring male leaders generally have a wife or partner who is mostly responsible for the home sphere, ambitious women struggle with the traditional expectation that they should share their time between work and the private sphere, and that the latter should always come first. It is very
typical for working women that it is the private sphere, meaning husband and children, which determine their career, whereas for a man it is his career which will control his private life, in terms of where the family settles as well as his wife’s career.\textsuperscript{187} In short, women belong in the private sphere whereas men are in the public sphere. The fact that today’s women are “double-working” mothers is often used as an explanation why men still are preferred as leaders. Whereas a stable family life is considered a plus with respect to hiring a man, it is almost considered a minus for a woman, since it implies that she has to leave work on time to pick up her children from day care or that she has to stay at home when the children are sick. Moreover, the fact that women leave the labour market for periods of time in order to have children also works in favour of hiring men.\textsuperscript{188} In Norway, parental leave is currently 39 weeks with full wage compensation, or up to a year with 80 per cent wage compensation.\textsuperscript{189}

One common explanation from men who recruit new leaders is that there are not enough qualified women to choose from, and that those who are qualified are often not willing to assume that much power and responsibility. Women have different priorities, and they tend to choose the private sphere before their careers. Although most men have nothing against women in leading positions, according to this line of argument it is the women themselves who do not want to be in powerful positions. Thus, the reason that there are so many male leaders is a consequence of the fact that women choose to be subordinated, because they have other interests than those associated with influence. It is probably true for many women that they do not want more responsibilities than what they already have since time use studies show that it is women who


\textsuperscript{188} Interview with Lise Vidnes in ibid.: 14-15.

\textsuperscript{189} The parental leave can be shared between the parents, but a minimum of four weeks are reserved for the father.
perform most unpaid work such as housework and care for children. However, it is hard to believe that so few women are interested in influence. Obviously, there must be other hindrances that women have to overcome in order to make it to the top.

The second set of barriers facing potential women leaders are structurally related and have to do with the internal life of any organization, business or work place. The organization’s flexibility in terms of work hours, hiring procedures, and its unwritten rules and norms, can either encourage or discourage women from advancing. Moreover, hierarchically organized organizations impede women’s opportunities for advancement. Hierarchical organizations are dominated by a so-called male culture which is not open to female values. The less flexible organizations are likely to have more traditional expectations of their leadership. Twelve hour days and meetings that go on into the late hours of the night are not easy to combine with family life. In addition, men and women speak different ‘languages’ and often have different leadership styles and strategies. Men leaders are more likely to choose other men as their colleagues, as they speak the same ‘language’, and often are intimidated by highly qualified women and hence feel more comfortable among men.

The third set of barriers facing women are culturally related and often originate with the women themselves. Women often tend to underestimate themselves, and do not think that they are suitable or qualified for a leadership position. According to Pernille Lønne Mørkhagen, “many women maintain such strict standards regarding the quality of their work that they do not consider themselves qualified for promotion, even though they are objectively at par with the men who advance.” Another common feeling among women is that they have to work twice

190 Women and Men in the Nordic Countries: Facts and Figures 1994: 32. In the Nordic countries, two-thirds of the unpaid work is performed by women, one-third by men. See also “Minifacts on Equal Status”, Norway Gender Equality Council 1995.

191 Kjeldstad: 7; and “Sjefer i Skjort” (Bosses in Skirts), Ny Tid, nr. 6, February 12, 1993.

as hard as men in order to advance. Often a woman’s career starts later than a man’s, or she
works part-time. As a result, her job is generally not considered as important as her husband’s,
and does not pay as well, which highlights her feelings that her job is of less importance.
Furthermore, competent female leaders are usually regarded as exceptions from other women
rather than representatives of other women\textsuperscript{193}, which suggests to potential women leaders that
they have to be exceptional in order to advance. Even in sectors or occupations that are female
dominated such as the municipal sector, there are few women at the top. So not only does
Norway have a gender segmented labour market, but the iron law of power “the more power the
less women” is certainly true with respect to the Norwegian labour market. In summary, there is
little encouragement and there are many barriers to overcome for women who want leading
positions in the private sector.

However, there is reason to believe that women who have advanced in the political arena
also have had to get through similar struggles on their way to the top. For example, many female
politicians also have to combine child care with a heavy work load. Moreover, since politics has
traditionally been a male domain, female politicians have had to deal with a typical male
environment, and have had to prove that they can do the job as well as a man, albeit differently.
Thus, although the barriers mentioned above are important explanations, there has to be
additional factors why women have advanced politically but not economically. According to
Randi Kjeldstad, the ‘grassroots’ exercises more influence over the political arena than it does
over private sector businesses and organizations who are not responsible to the electorate. By
virtue of its nature the political arena has to be more responsive to public opinion than do other
organizations in society. The public debate for equal status has thus opened the doors for

\textsuperscript{193} Johannessen: 28.
increased political participation and representation by women since their demand could not be ignored, whereas the private sector businesses could choose to ignore such demands.

The institution of quotas constitutes a second and critical reason for women's increased political representation as opposed to their low representation in other positions of power. There are no rules, regulations or quotas with respect to female representation in the private sector or in the unions as there are in the political parties and in other political positions. In Norway, quotas are one of the most critical explanations for women's high political representation. However, as the relatively low representation of women among the top leaders in the government administration indicates, quotas are not enough. Thirdly, the competitive nature of the party system has favoured the advancement of women in the political arena. In the private sector, on the other hand, there is no real competition or 'peer pressure' among companies to increase the representation of women in their leadership. Furthermore, not only are companies not responsible to an electorate, they are responsible to their shareholders who most likely care more about profits than they do about the equal status policies of a company. Hence they are not likely to make demands similar to those made in the political arena with respect to representation of women. In short, the lack of moral obligation and competitive pressure is critical in order to explain the low numbers of women in leadership positions outside the realm of politics. Last but not least, the gender segmented labour market and education structure may be part of the reason women are under-represented in the economic sphere. Nevertheless, women's success in entering top positions outside the political arena will depend on whether or not the obstacles women are facing in the labour market today will be eliminated. As long as these barriers remain intact it will continue to be more difficult for women than for men to climb to the top in the private sector.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS

"Women and Men Shall be Given Equal Opportunities for Education, Employment and Cultural and Professional Advancement"
Equal Status Act - §1

6. THE EQUAL STATUS ACT

The Equal Status Act was adopted by the Storting in 1978 and is a key pillar of Norway’s official equal status policy. The main purpose of the Act is to prevent discrimination against women in working life with respect to job appointments and wages, but its broader objective is to promote equality between sexes in all spheres of society, in particular improving the situation of women. In fact, the Norwegian Equal Status Act is the only legislation of its kind which is not neutral according to gender. The first paragraph of the Act reads: “This Act shall promote equal status between the sexes and aims particularly at improving the position of women”. Furthermore, it is the duty of the public authorities to facilitate equality of status between the sexes in all sectors of society. Women and men are to be given equal opportunities with respect to education, work and cultural and professional development. The Act also acknowledges that it is not possible to achieve equal status between men and women merely by prohibiting discrimination, hence measures which provide one sex with certain advantages are considered necessary to rectify the discrepancies. It is interesting to note that the framing of this legislation led to direct confrontation between LO and the Labour government at the time.

196 See Skjeie, “The Uneven Advance of Norwegian Women”, 1992: 77-9, for more details. In short, the LO argued that the equal pay legislation was too broad in scope, and disagreed with the principle of ‘equal pay for work of equal value’. 

93
Conclusions

Measures employed to grant women equal access to education and paid employment include special grants to employers who recruit women (or men) for non-traditional jobs, positive-discrimination legislation in order to ease women’s access to civil service positions and to higher education in particular with respect to non-traditional educational choices. The objective has been to desegregate the gender divided labour market and thereby address the wage differentials between work mainly performed by women and work mainly performed by men.\(^{197}\) In 1988, a new provision was added to the Act, requiring a 40 per cent representation of both sexes on all public boards, councils and committees, and in 1992 the “40 per cent rule” was also incorporated in the Local Government Act. The objective of this provision was not only to increase the percentage of women in public life in general, but also to redress the gender imbalance between the various councils and committees. As in the labour market, men tend to dominate the so-called ‘heavy-weight’ areas of economics, agriculture, communications and technology, whereas women are dominant in health care, child and family affairs and education.

The Norwegian government’s plan for equality for the 1990s has as its primary goal that women and men are to have the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities in all spheres of society. Formal equality is not enough. The strategy for achieving this goal is threefold: (1) Equality in basic rights and responsibilities; (2) Special measures for one of the sexes in order to accelerate the achievement of real equality; (3) Critical review of the society’s organization and use of resources.\(^{198}\) Child care and equal pay are identified as the two most important areas for Norway’s future equality policy. The focus will be on the division of work between women and men and a more equality oriented care policy will be based on equal rights and responsibilities of both parents. Two objectives are critical in this respect. First of all, the protection of women as employees. Secondly, a guarantee for men’s responsibilities and rights as fathers. One example is the recent

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\(^{197}\) Ibid.: 80-1.
expansion of the right to minimum four weeks parental leave for fathers upon childbirth. In addition, working hours for parents of small children have recently been made more flexible through a time account system which allows parents to take portions of their paid leave in combination with part-time resumption of work, without the loss of pay. However, the extent to which this system will be used is largely dependent on employers. Finally, the government intends to reach the goal of full day-care coverage for all parents who want it, by the end of the 1990s.

As more women have entered positions of power over the past two decades there has been a growing responsiveness on the part of the Norwegian government to so-called women’s concerns and issues. The high number of female politicians have changed the content of the political agenda, influencing legislation as well as the climate in government. The issues mentioned above are examples of women’s impact on public policies. In a recent survey Norwegian politicians have identified three main areas in which women representatives have had a major effect on public policies: (i) social and welfare policies; (ii) environmental policy; and (iii) policy regarding child care and measures to make it easier for parents with small children to reconcile work outside the home with their family responsibilities. This confirms Skjeie’s earlier point that women politicians have a mandate of ‘difference’. Represented in large enough numbers, women politicians will transform and broaden the political agenda. The belief in the political relevance of difference has thus provided women with access to political positions. Similarly, Bystydzienksi’s research on Norway concludes that the strategy of increasing the number of women in public offices influenced public policies once women reached a representation of 15 per cent. Women have different political priorities as a result of their different values and experience and have been able to put their concerns on the political agenda mainly due to their increasing numbers. Bystydzienksi warns, however, that it can be difficult for women in other countries to follow the example of Norwegian

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women activists who were able to operate in and take advantage of a favourable political environment with an egalitarian and receptive political culture and a principle of group representation, in addition to other facilitating political factors such as a PR electoral system and a multi party system.

This case study of Norway and comparisons with Australia have confirmed the theories outlined earlier with respect to high female representation in parliament with the exception of the importance of localized candidate selection procedures. As this study shows, the formality of the candidate selection procedures is far more significant to female parliamentary representation than the localized-centralized dimension. Candidate selection takes place locally in both Norway and Australia, but in Norway procedures are formalized whereas they are informal in Australia. As long as there are formal rules or quotas in place, the localized-centralized dimension is of little significance to the number of women in parliament.

This thesis has also confirmed Schmidt's and Siaroff's point about a strong positive relationship between Protestantism and high female labour force participation. However, high labour force participation alone is not sufficient to increase the number of women in parliament. The road to increased political representation for Australian women, for example, has so far not been as successful mainly because the above mentioned facilitating political factors are missing. It has been largely successful in the other Nordic countries, on the other hand, where contextual factors are similar to Norway's. Despite the fact that Australia is presently governed by a labour government and that women's labour force participation is fairly high, Australian women's political representation lags far behind the Nordic countries. In Australia, women have had to pursue other strategies of empowerment, and have focused mainly on entering the bureaucracy rather than the legislature.
Nonetheless, in spite of Norwegian women’s advance in the political arena, their high labour force participation and increasing education, Norwegian women are still far from being equal participants in the important and powerful economic/corporatist arena. Women are hardly represented on the boards and committees of the peak labour market organizations, and are few and far between in other leading positions in the private sector. This discrepancy in women’s representation has led to headlines in Norwegian newspapers that parliament is losing its power and prestige as more women enter. There is a suspicion that power has moved outside the political arena and that men are still in power.

To claim that politics is losing its power and prestige merely because of increased female participation is to undermine the political achievements of Norwegian women. Skjeie argues that Norwegian women are not in fact being integrated into shrinking political institutions and that decisions are still made in the political arena. Moreover, Damgaard’s recent analysis of the Nordic parliaments concluded that the Storting continues to play an important role and is not a rubber-stamping institution. Nevertheless, one question that has to be asked is whether or not it is possible to have gender equality politically when there is no gender equality economically. The fact that so few women are found in the powerful economic/corporatist arena has greater political consequences than it would in other, less corporatist systems, and actually questions women’s real political power. To determine and define degrees of power is no simple task. However, it is probably fair to say that as long as women remain under-represented in the economic/corporatist sector, their political power will be somewhat limited.

Gender inequality remains very visible in the gender segmented Norwegian labour market where men are found in the more powerful and prestigious positions, and women in lower-paying routine jobs. Women are dominant in the public sector and men in the private sector, however men

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are the elite in both sectors. Traditional gender roles are even reflected in the political arena, where women cabinet ministers largely head the “soft” departments and their male colleagues lead the “hard” departments. Then again, what is wrong with a “soft” department? And who defines which departments are “soft”? Are they “soft” because women are in control, or are women in control because they are “soft”? Claims of marginalization of women’s achievements and positions whether in politics or in the economic arena are problematic. First of all, because the gender differences can also reflect preferences. Secondly, there are different perceptions as to which positions are more attractive and important. However, Skjeie’s research found little ground for the marginalization claim in the Norwegian case since established status hierarchies have largely survived women’s entry into politics, combined with the fact that Norway currently has a female Prime Minister, the most prestigious political position, as well as women heading other important ministries.

Obviously, even Norway has a way to go before gender equality in all spheres of society is achieved. To change women’s unfavourable conditions in the private sector is likely to be a slow process, since there are few favourable factors that women can take advantage of in this respect. Many of the barriers to women listed earlier remain intact. According to Helga Hernes, of all the channels of access to decision-making, the economic/corporatist arena is the least participative and the most hierarchical, oligarchical, and elitist\textsuperscript{202}, which at the outset will discourage many qualified women. Furthermore, the corporate sector is not governed by the same representational principles as the political parties and consequently does not have the same moral obligation, willingness or competition to recruit women or promote women’s issues. Moreover, quotas are not accepted to the same extent as in the public sector and in the political parties. Hence, it will take time before Norwegian women achieve equal status in this sphere. Although many qualified women are able to compete with men on the basis of merit, men are still found in most top positions. However, the

\textsuperscript{202} Ibid.
influx of women into universities and colleges implies it might be only a matter of time before more women will compete for higher and more prestigious positions.

In spite of these barriers, Norway and the other Nordic countries have come further than most countries with respect to increasing gender equality in society. In Hernes' words: "There is considerable difference between being powerless and having little power, the difference of being outside the forums of decision-making and being part of them. People with little power may lose most battles, yet they do at least participate and dictate some terms." Nordic women are currently at this stage in their political history; they participate in certain forums of decision-making, but not all. To participate in some channels of decision-making is certainly a first critical step to become equal participants. By achieving almost equal political representation women at least have the power to make legislation that will improve the lives of women in general and ease the path for women in the future.

Many of the issues raised in this thesis are complex and have no simple answer or solution. Yet it has been shown that gender is a relevant analytical category with respect to political representation and power. Although gender and power distribution between the sexes have not been considered essential to representational theories within traditional political science, it certainly has been and continues to be a central issue for women's research.

\footnote{Ibid: 9.}
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