

How Women Become Political Actors: Female Candidates in Finnish Elections

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In Finland women gained universal suffrage in national elections simultaneously with men in 1906, as the first in Europe, after some individual states in the United States, New Zealand (1893), and Australia (1902). The relatively high proportion of women in the Finnish parliament throughout this century (Table 2) can be explained in several ways. The success of women in Finnish politics can be accounted for by the lack of deeply-rooted political traditions among men which had been established in those European countries which had developed along democratic lines earlier than Finland. Before 1906 only a limited proportion of Finnish men had the right to elect representatives into the four-chamber Diet. Men did

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Table 1. Women in Parliaments in Western Europe and the USA

Country	Parliament	Year of female suffrage	Percentage of women elected	Year of election
Austria	Senate	1920	7.7	1976
	House of Rep.		19.0	
Belgium	Senate	1948	11.3	1978
	House of Rep.		7.5	
Denmark	Parliament	1917	16.8	1977
Fed. German Republic		1919	7.1	1976
Finland	Parliament	1906	26.0	1979
France	Nat. Assembly	1945	1.7	
				1977
	Senate		3.7	
				1978
Greece	Parliament	1952	2.3	1974
Ireland	Senate	1922	10.0	1977
	House of Rep.		4.1	
Iceland	Parliament	1915	5.0	1978
Italy	Senate	1945	3.5	1976
	House of Rep.		7.5	
Luxembourg	Parliament	1918	4.3	1974
Netherlands	Senate	1919	5.3	1977
	House of Rep.		12.0	
Norway	Parliament	1913	23.9	1977
Sweden	Parliament	1919	26.6	1979
Switzerland	Senate	1960	-	1975
	House of Rep.		7.0	
United Kingdom	House of Commons	1928	4.3	1974
USA	Senate	1920	-	1976
	House of Rep.		4.1	

Sources: Data collected by Karin Ahrlund for the International Alliance of Women, October 1977; Boulding et al. 1976, 250-251; Skard 1978, Tabell 3.

not gain access to political power in large numbers before women, as was the case in many other countries. After universal suffrage both men and women had to learn political practices almost from scratch.

A proportional electoral system is in general more favourable for women than a majority system (Krauss 1974). Elections are proportional in all the Nordic countries. In Denmark, Norway, and Sweden votes are cast for a list of candidates, nominated and arranged on the ticket by the parties. The candidates are elected in the order they appear on the list. Parties can thus manipulate the success of candidates by placing them higher or lower on the ticket. In Finland the voters may choose an

Table 2. Percentage of Women of Those Elected to Parliament in the Nordic Countries

Denmark		Finland		Iceland		Norway		Sweden	
Year	%	Year	%	Year	%	Year	%	Year	%
1918	2.9	1907	9.5	1916	–	1915	–	1922	1.3
1920	2.1	1908	12.5	1919	–	1918	–	1925	1.6
1924	2.0	1909	10.5	1923	2.4	1921	0.7	1929	1.1
1926	2.0	1910	8.5	1927	–	1924	–	1933	1.6
1929	2.7	1911	7.0	1931	–	1927	0.7	1937	2.6
1932	2.7	1913	10.5	1933	–	1930	1.3	1941	4.7
1935	2.0	1916	12.0	1934	2.0	1933	2.0	1945	5.3
1939	2.0	1917	9.0	1937	–	1936	0.7	1949	7.4
1943	1.3	1919	8.5	1942	–	1945	4.7	1953	8.9
1945	5.4	1922	10.0	1946	3.8	1949	4.7	1957	10.2
1947	8.7	1924	8.5	1949	–	1953	4.7	1959	11.0
1950	7.9	1927	8.5	1956	1.9	1957	6.7	1961	11.2
1953	9.3	1929	8.0	1959	1.7	1961	8.7	1965	11.5
1953	9.5	1930	5.5	1963	–	1965	8.0	1969	13.8
1957	8.4	1933	7.0	1967	–	1969	9.3	1971	14.0
1960	9.5	1936	8.0	1971	5.0	1973	15.5	1974	21.1
1964	9.5	1939	8.0	1974	–	1977	23.9	1977	22.9
1966	10.6	1945	8.5	1978	5.0				
1968	10.6	1948	12.0						
1971	16.8	1951	14.5						
1973	15.1	1954	15.0						
1975	15.6	1958	14.0						
1977	16.6	1962	13.5						
		1966	16.5						
		1970	21.5						
		1972	21.5						
		1975	23.0						
		1979	26.0						

Sources: *Denmark*: data provided by Drude Dahlerup

Finland: Statistical Yearbook .

Iceland: data provided by Audur Styrkarsdotter

Norway: Skard 1978

Sweden: Eduards 1977: 28

individual candidate on the party list for which they cast their vote. This gives the voters some freedom to make their decision upon the basis of the personal characteristics of the candidates: for example, they are able to pay attention to the sex of the candidate. The individual voting system does not, however, explain totally the relative success of women in Finnish politics. The present voting system was first adopted in 1954. But the proportion of women in parliament had also been high previously, when votes could be cast only for party lists.

Because the electoral system alone cannot explain the support given to

women in politics in Finland, additional explanations have to be sought from other sources outside the political system. According to a world-wide factor analytical study based on United Nations statistics, the early suffrage of women is connected with high female life-expectancy, low birth rate, and high proportions of women in all types of educational institutions and in clerical, professional, and service occupations (Haavio-Mannila 1978b). Political rights have thus been attained first by women in those countries which are economically developed and in which women are educated and working in, according to western standards, typically feminine occupations.

Compared with men (but not with women in other countries) the educational level and the economic activity of women are exceptionally high in Finland, in comparison with the other Nordic countries (Allardt 1975), though not with the socialist countries where female economic activity is higher. Women in Finland are thus not a group which, considerably more so than men, lacks access to information about the relevance of politics. According to Lipset et al. (1954, 1131), such access includes occupational training and experience for general insight: 'The housewife is at a great disadvantage in this respect, a fact that may help to account for the lower voting rate of women in general'. The proportion of wives staying at home has been low in Finland throughout this century, and Finnish women have received more than primary general education to a larger extent than men since the 1930s. These facts may account for some of the differences in political activity between women in Finland and in other countries. An additional historical explanation for the relative success of Finnish women in public elections may be the loss of men in the wars of 1918 and 1939–44. This fact may also account for the higher proportion of women in the socialist than in the bourgeois parties until the 1960s (see Table 4 below), even though that is an international phenomenon.

In local councils, however, the proportion of women is higher in Sweden than in Finland (Table 3). In local elections rural communes weigh more than in parliamentary elections. There are more women elected to urban than rural communal councils, both in Sweden (Eduards 1977, 34) and Finland (see Figure 3 below). The higher urbanization level of Sweden may explain the difference between these two countries. In Denmark and Norway the proportion of women in local councils is lower than in both Sweden and Finland.

Despite the relative success of Finnish women in politics in a cross-national perspective, the highest proportion of women in parliament was only 26 percent in 1979, and 18 percent in the communal councils in 1977.

Table 3. Percentage of Women of All Those Elected to Communal Councils in the Nordic Countries 1945–1977

Year	Denmark %	Year	Finland %	Year	Norway %	Year	Sweden %
1946	3.0	1945	4.7	1945	3.4	1950	7.7
1950	3.5	1947	5.1	1947	4.8	1954	10.1
1954	3.7	1950	6.8	1951	5.8	1958	11.0
1958	4.1	1953	7.4	1955	6.4	1962	10.9
1962	5.7	1956	7.3	1959	6.0	1966	12.0
1966	9.7	1960	7.6	1963	6.3	1970	14.0
1970	10.5	1964	7.9	1967	9.5	1973	17.1
		1968	10.7	1971	14.8	1976	22.0
		1972	14.9	1975	15.4		
		1976	18.2				

Sources: *Norway*: Albrektsen 1976

Denmark: Benzon 1974:11

Sweden: Eduards 1977: 35; The Swedish Institute 1968:102; Statistical Abstract of Sweden

Finland: Statistical Yearbooks

In addition, some researchers are worried about the even lower proportion of women in committees and formal and informal working groups, into which members are recruited through the so-called corporate channel rather than by public elections (Sinkkonen 1977; also Hernes & Voje 1977). These smaller bodies make the really important political decisions. The relative success of women in general elections thus becomes annulled by the moving of important decisions over to agencies and groups that happen to be staffed more or less entirely by men. However, it is still important for women to be elected to parliament and local councils, because membership in these is one of the main channels through which they are able to attain higher positions of political and economic power (Sinkkonen 1977).

The theme of this article is the nomination, support, and success of female candidates in parliamentary and local elections on the basis of statistics and survey data from Finland. It is divided into four parts: 1) a comparison of the proportions of women among candidates, votes for female candidates, and women among those elected to parliament and local councils; 2) support for female candidates in different parties and according to the urban-rural dimension; 3) support for female candidates in different areas according to the division of labour and pressure toward uniformity; and 4) support for female candidates in communal elections according to the demographic, social, and regional characteristics of the individual voters. The objective is to describe the electoral support that

women candidates for public office secure in their efforts to become political actors. The nature of this support is studied by analysing different political and social groups. The aim is also to find out which changes have taken place in the variation of the support given to female candidates. The trend towards increasing participation in politics by women is an international phenomenon. For political scientists and others interested in the mechanisms of political process it may be useful to know which groups in one society, Finland, are most 'avant garde' in this respect.

1. Women as Political Candidates, Vote Receivers, and Elected Representatives

In parliamentary elections differences in the proportions of female candidates, the votes they receive, and those elected are small (Table 4). In four of the eight elections since 1954 women were elected in smaller proportions than they were represented among the candidates and the vote receivers. In the other four elections (1966, 1970, 1972, 1979) they were elected into parliament in a higher proportion than one could have predicted on the basis of their share of candidates and votes. During these years the discussion of sex roles was most lively in Finland. In this period of an eager fight for equality, votes for women candidates were concentrated upon some well-known female candidates, even though there was no conscious effort in this direction.

Table 4. Votes Cast for Female Candidates as a Percentage of All Votes Cast in Parliamentary Elections in Finland 1954–1975, by Party and by Percentage of Women Elected and Female Candidates in All Parties.

Party	1954	1958	1962	1966	1970	1972	1975
Communist	23.3	23.1	22.0	18.2	22.7	23.5	28.3
Social Democratic Union of Workers and Small Farmers	–	49.7	26.8	37.4	41.0	19.9	–
Social Democrat	19.3	17.6	16.7	14.9	22.6	23.5	25.9
Smallholders	–	–	5.3	5.9	8.1	12.4	12.5
Agrarian (Centre)	8.4	8.8	8.9	10.9	15.2	17.1	20.6
Liberal	21.0	20.5	18.2	18.6	27.6	35.6	47.8
Conservative	19.7	18.4	16.2	16.6	21.7	23.5	26.6
Swedish People's	9.8	4.8	4.2	8.2	10.9	8.4	16.0
Christian League	–	–	–	–	2.6	12.1	21.8
Others	16.1	3.9	4.6	0.8	20.2	–	14.2
All parties	17.1	16.7	15.5	15.3	19.3	20.9	24.9
Percentage of women elected	15.0	14.0	13.5	16.5	21.5	21.5	23.0
Percentage of female candidates	15.7	15.1	14.5	16.0	17.3	21.1	24.2

In communal elections since 1964, on the contrary, the proportion of votes cast for female candidates has consistently been higher than the proportion of women among those elected (Table 5). For example, in 1976 female candidates received 26 percent of the total votes cast, but the percentage of women among those elected to communal councils was only 18. This may be related to the lower visibility of the individual candidate in local election campaigns compared with the parliamentary level. In the latter the parties probably advertise widely for some of their favourite candidates, and often include at least some women among them. This hypothesis of the importance of the visibility of female candidates is supported by looking at the success of women in communal elections in the capital city, Helsinki: in 1976 female candidates received 36 percent of the votes, and the percentage of women of those elected was 35. In Helsinki the visibility of female candidates was more prominent than in smaller communities, where by tradition votes concentrate on well-known local leaders: the latter, almost without exception, are men. In small communes the relatively numerous but less well-known women candidates together win a lot of votes, but these are dispersed among them.

Table 5. Percentage of Votes Cast for Female Candidates of All Votes Cast and Percentage of Women Elected in Communal Elections in Finland, 1964–1976

Year of election	Votes for female candidates	Women elected
1964	13.4	7.9
1968	16.3	10.7
1972	21.7	14.9
1976	25.7	18.2

Source: Official Statistics of Finland XXIX B

2. Support for Women as Political Candidates by Party and Type of Commune

Traditionally, female candidates have been nominated, supported, and elected more in the socialist than in the non-socialist parties (see Table 4). Women have been particularly successful in the Communist party. However, the difference between the Communist and Social Democrat parties is small when compared with the differences between these and other parties. That is why in the subsequent analysis Communists and Social Democrats are treated together.

In Finland the number of parties is large. In order to obtain some general insight on the influence of party ideology on the success of women in politics, the parties were grouped into four broad categories. These (and the major parties in each category) are: 1) Socialist parties (Communist, Social Democrat, Social Democratic League); 2) Rural Centre (Centre, Smallholders, National Unity, Christian League, and the Swedish People's party outside Helsinki); 3) Urban Centre (Liberal People's Party, the Swedish People's Party in Helsinki); and 4) Conservative parties (National Coalition, Constitutional People's party).

Figure 1 shows that the support of female candidates in parliamentary elections does not differ very much between the socialist, urban centre, and conservative parties (only the urban centre differed markedly from the others in the elections of 1972 and 1975). The constant, marked difference lies between these three 'urban' groups and the rural centre parties. In the rural centre the proportion of votes cast for women candidates is considerably lower. The socialist parties were clearly 'ahead' of the urban centre and conservative parties in the support for female candidates until the 1962 election. Since then the difference between socialist and conservative has been minimal. Between 1970 and 1975 the female candidates of the Liberal

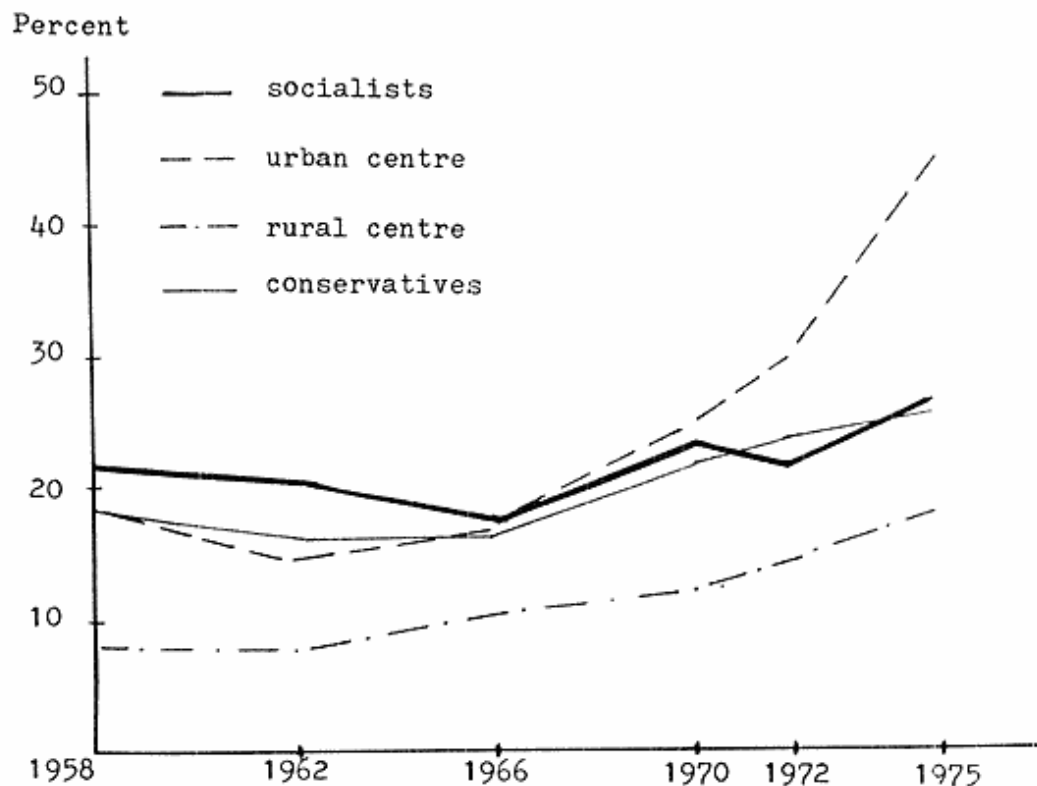


Figure 1. Proportion of votes cast for female candidates in parliamentary elections in 1958-75, by type of party.

party received a very high proportion of votes, and so the support of women in the urban centre rose above that of all other party groups.

These results can be compared with those available from other countries. According to Maud Eduards, there are studies which show that women are excluded more often from conservative than from social democrat and communist parties. In Britain most female MPs have belonged to the Labour party. In France too women are nominated more often by the leftist than the bourgeois parties. In Italy three-quarters of the female deputies are communists. Eduards (1977, 44) refers to Finland as still another example of this phenomenon: 'It is first of all the communist party which has nominated female candidates and which has had the largest proportion of women in parliament'. As Table 4 shows, this generalization is no longer entirely valid in Finland: women candidates are elected in the Social Democrat, Liberal, and Conservative parties to approximately the same extent as in the Communist party. In Sweden too the proportion of women in parliament has in the 1970s been high both in the socialist and the centre parties. Only the Conservative party has had a lower proportion of women in its parliamentary group. Earlier, the percentage of women was higher in the socialist than in the centre and right-wing parties (Eduards 1977, 30).

A change is seemingly taking place in the Nordic countries. Whereas previously women candidates were nominated and supported mainly by the socialist parties and their voters, in the 1970s party officials and voters of the bourgeois parties began to trust women as politicians. This may be related to the prominence of the sex role discussion, or women's liberation movement, and to the official policy towards equality of women and men in Sweden and Finland since the 1960s. This debate and policy, initiated by the supporters of the socialist parties, found acceptance amongst bourgeois (educated) women who found the competition between the sexes and the discrimination of women in the labour market most distressful.

The rapid increase in the employment of women in the 1960s was related to the expansion of the service sector. Most women who joined the labour market in the 1960s and 1970s became professional, clerical, or service workers. Many of them probably voted for the bourgeois parties. In Finland they were able to cast their votes directly for female candidates (who received most of their votes from women voters). In Sweden an increase in the non-socialist vote in recent elections has favoured some women candidates who had been marginally placed on the ticket. They were elected because the parties as a whole received more votes than expected.

In the communal elections in Finland, voters of the socialist parties between 1964 and 1976 (for which time-series data are available) cast more votes for female candidates than voters of non-socialist parties (Figure 2). On the basis of published statistics it has not been possible to distinguish between the parties in more detail. The low proportion of votes for women in non-socialist parties is related to the combination of the votes for the conservative and centre parties in one category. As was shown earlier, the rural centre differs from both conservatives and urban centre in its lower support of female candidates. If one could have distinguished centre votes from the other non-socialist votes, the results would probably have been similar to those shown in Figure 1 for parliamentary elections. This conclusion is supported by Figure 3, which presents the percentages of women elected to communal councils in rural and urban communes since 1945. In urban communes there are considerably more female communal councillors than in rural communes. The differences between urban and rural communes have decreased somewhat, particularly since 1968 when the sex equality movement helped to increase the support for female candidates all over the country. If one compares the difference between non-socialist and socialist parties (Figure 2) with that between urban and rural communes (Figure 3), it is easy to conclude that the urban-rural cleavage is greater than the political one.

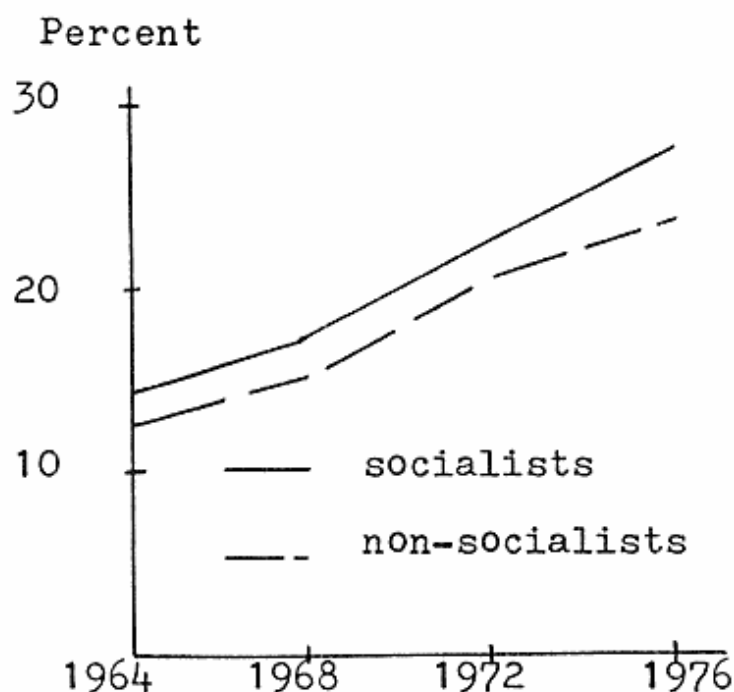


Figure 2. Proportion of votes cast for female candidates in communal elections in 1964-76 in socialist and non-socialist parties.

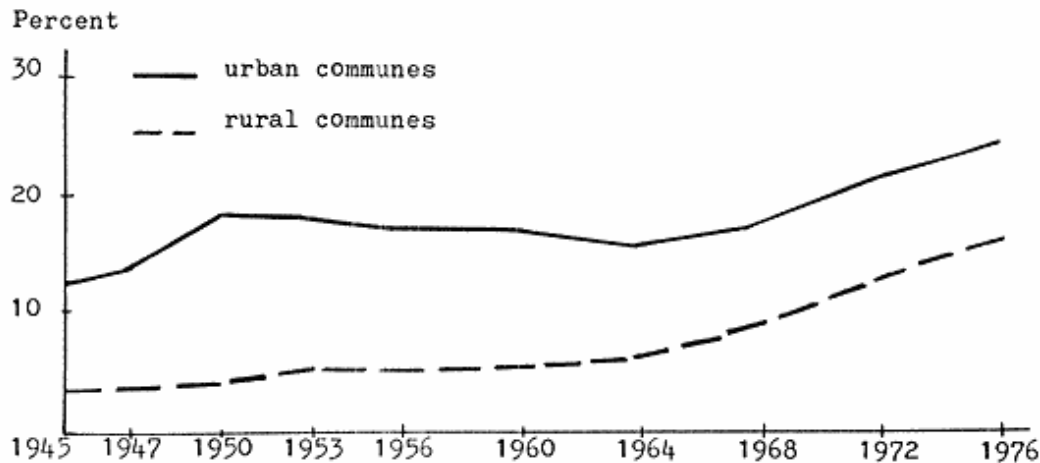


Figure 3. Proportion of women elected into communal councils in rural and urban communes.

But the urban-rural difference is also diminishing in parliamentary elections. The proportion of votes cast for female candidates has increased more rapidly in the centre parties than in the socialist and conservative parties. In 1958 the percentage of votes cast for women candidates in the socialist parties was 21, in the conservative parties 18, and in the rural centre only 8. In 1975 the corresponding percentages were 27, 26, and 18. This means that the proportion of women rose by 26, 42, and 138 percent respectively. A convergence is taking place in the relative support of female candidates, both between the parties and between rural and urban communes. This may be partly due to the circumstances that it is probably easier to increase the support of female politicians in those parties and areas where it is lower than average than where it is already high.

3. Support for Women as Political Candidates, by Division of Labour and Pressure towards Uniformity

Women function as political actors to varying degrees in different geographical areas. There have traditionally been more female politicians in Eastern than in Western Finland, even though the voting activity of Eastern Finnish women (and men) has been lower than that in the western parts of the country. The low voting rate of Eastern Finland may indicate a low value given to politics. Lack of political competition has perhaps made it relatively easy for women to enter political positions of trust.

In addition to a possible lack of hard political competition, other factors may also explain the relative success of Eastern Finnish women in politics. Even though the social and economic development of Eastern Fin-

land is low, traditional norms towards uniformity in general, and towards patriarchal behaviour in particular, are weak. Western Finland has probably been affected more than Eastern Finland by Western and Central European patriarchal traditions. Elsewhere I have shown that the east-west difference is losing importance in explaining the success of women in politics (Haavio-Mannila 1978a). The development of the electoral constituency, its voting activity, and the support of socialist parties nowadays account mainly for the regional differences in voting for female candidates. Women win more votes in the developed, politically active, socialist-oriented areas.

Here the development of the success of female candidates in parliamentary elections is examined by using two characteristics of the electoral constituencies ($N = 12$) as independent variables: pressure towards uniformity (for example, patriarchal norms), and division of labour, or economic development. The fourfold table developed by Erik Allardt (1970) functions as the frame of reference. Allardt based his scheme upon Emile Durkheim's ideas about mechanical and organic solidarity. He added two deviant situations to Durkheim's dichotomy. He was particularly interested in explaining political reactions emerging from unbalanced situations in the development of division of labour and pressure towards uniformity. Allardt distinguished two kinds of unbalanced situations: first, the case of low division of labour and weak pressure towards uniformity, which creates an *anomic* situation, and second, the case of high division of labour and strong pressure towards uniformity, which gives grounds for *aggressive* reactions. In the balanced situations *solidarity* prevails: it is *mechanical* when pressure for uniformity is strong and division of labour low (for example, primitive societies), and *organic* when pressure towards uniformity is low and division of labour high (for example, industrial pluralistic societies).

The electoral constituencies have been classified according to division of labour and pressure towards uniformity on the basis of studies by Riihinen (1965) and Sandström (1971). Division of labour is measured by using indicators of development and urbanization. Pressure towards uniformity is operationalized by a low proportion of votes cast for socialist parties, of people living in rented dwellings or on social welfare, of industrial population, few divorces, and low in-migration (Riihinen 1965). In those electoral regions where, according to Riihinen, pressure towards uniformity is weak, the general voting activity is low, and women's voting rate is even lower than that of men.

In Table 6 the proportion of votes cast for female candidates is shown

Table 6. Percentage of Votes Cast for Female Candidates in Parliamentary Elections in Finland 1958-1975, according to Division of Labour and Pressure toward Uniformity in the Constituencies.

	Year	Division of labour										
		Low					High					
		socialists	urban	centre rural	con-servatives	total	socialists	urban	centre rural	con-servatives	total	
Strong		Cell 1					Cell 3					
	1958	12	6	5	7	8	23	22	5	16	19	
	1962	12	9	4	8	7	21	23	6	14	16	
	1966	8	14	8	9	9	19	18	9	13	16	
	1970	14	19	10	19	13	28	26	13	19	22	
	1972	13	37	10	22	14	28	27	14	20	23	
	1975	15	63	13	19	15	33	57	20	24	29	
	1958-1975	12	25	9	15	11	25	28	12	18	21	
	Weak		Cell 2					Cell 4				
		1958	17	17	14	21	16	28	19	7	27	23
1962		16	1	16	18	16	28	18	10	24	22	
1966		18	6	16	24	18	20	19	11	23	19	
1970		19	26	15	35	20	23	25	12	22	21	
1972		17	54	22	31	23	26	26	15	26	24	
1975		22	41	19	29	23	28	34	25	31	28	
1958-1975		18	31	17	27	19	26	23	14	26	23	

Source: Official Statistics of Finland XXIX A.

according to party type across the four cells of Allardt's scheme: 1) mechanical solidarity (constituencies of Vaasa, Oulu, and Lappi in North-Western Finland); 2) anomie (Mikkeli, Kuopio, and North-Carelia in Eastern Finland); 3) aggression (Turku and Pori, Häme and Middle-Finland in South-Western and Central Finland); and 4) organic solidarity (Helsinki, Uusimaa, and Kymi in Southern Finland). The proportion of votes cast for women candidates in parliamentary elections between 1958 and 1975 was on average 11 percent in the first cell, 19 percent in the second, 21 percent in the third, and 24 percent in the fourth. Moving away from the situation of mechanic solidarity (Cell 1), where division of labour is low and pressure towards uniformity strong, seems to increase greatly the support for women as political actors. Differences between the other cells are smaller.

One interesting result from Table 6 is that the support of women varies in different parties in the cells of anomie (2) and aggression (3). In the anomic situation the traditionally strong support of female candidates in the socialist parties is overshadowed by the support of women in the conservative parties, in which women candidates secure proportionally more votes than anywhere else in the country. In addition, the female candidates of rural centre parties in these areas are supported to almost as large an extent as women in the socialist parties. In all other areas the share of votes cast for women is much larger among socialists than the rural centre. Lack of pressure towards uniformity seems to be particularly influential upon voting for female candidates not only in the conservative parties, but also in the centre parties. Bourgeois women are not affected by patriarchal tradition in those areas where pressure towards uniformity is weak, but they follow it when the pressure is strong. In the leftist parties the anomic situation does not encourage voters to support female candidates. In the anomic areas socialist voters are not as feministic as socialist voters in areas with high division of labour. However, socialists in the areas of anomie support female candidates more than socialists in areas of mechanical solidarity.

In the aggression cell (3) where the pressure towards uniformity is strong but the division of labour high (the latter implying that a high proportion of women are economically active outside the home), voters for the socialist and urban centre parties seem to be aggressive towards the prevailing male-dominated political system, and vote for women candidates. They do not mind the patriarchal norms of the area because they are no longer part of the traditional patriarchal agrarian society. They are rebellious; they want to change the system. By voting in an unconventio-

nal way by supporting female candidates, they may as a group achieve status in society: they are not married to high status men who can give them status as wives. The proportion of votes cast for female candidates in socialist and urban centre parties in the areas of aggression is about the same as in the areas of organic solidarity – in recent years even higher. Conservative and rural voters in the areas of aggression are supporters of the *status quo*, following the traditional patriarchal norms. It is probable that many of the voters of rural centre and conservative parties in these areas represent families with homebased wives. The proportion of these families is higher in aggression areas than in the areas of organic solidarity.

The most developed areas of organic solidarity in Southern Finland (Cell 4) differ from the areas of aggression only in the higher proportion of votes cast for female candidates by conservative voters. This proportion has constantly been large in these areas. In other respects Southern Finland resembles South-Western and Central Finland. Here again one can see the strong influence of norm pressures on the behaviour of conservative voters: they vote in large numbers for female candidates only when pressure towards uniformity is low.

For bourgeois voters norms seem to be more important than for socialist voters who have detached themselves from the bourgeois patriarchal ideology. Working class women have never been able to stay at home without being economically active. Why should they stay outside political activity? For socialist voters regional characteristics count more than norm pressure. Socialists are active in supporting female candidates in areas where the division of labour is high, and where many women are employed outside the home. In the underdeveloped areas socialist voting is often 'backwoods' rebellion, a symptom of dissatisfaction. It is not yet directed towards equality of the sexes, perhaps because the socialist voters there have not internalized the socialist ideology of equality, perhaps because they have neither educational nor occupational resources for voting in an unconventional way.

4. Support for Women Candidates, by Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Women as political actors gain support more from other women than from men. In the 1970 election, according to a nation-wide Gallup poll, 40 percent of Finnish women and 7 percent of men voted for a female candidate. In the 1976 communal elections, 44 percent of women and 10 percent of men cast their votes for women candidates (again reported by a

Gallup poll). The social background of the 'unconventional' voters for female candidates is presented in Table 7, by sex of the respondent. The discrepancy between male and female interviewees is shown by the sex ratio – women/men – of percentages of voters for women candidates. In the total sample of one thousand respondents the sex ratio was 4.40. The sex ratio is calculated by dividing the percentage of women voting for women (44) by the percentage of men doing the same (10). The higher the sex ratio, the more women, compared with men, support female candidates. The average sex ratio, 4.40, means that in the total sample the support of women political candidates is more than four times as common among women than among men.

Among both sexes female candidates are supported mostly by younger adults, those between 22 and 34 years of age. The discrepancy between

Table 7. Voting for Female Candidates in Communal Elections 1976, by Socio-Demographic Factors, with Sex Controlled.

	Men percent (N)	Women	Sex Ratio
<i>Total</i>	10 (488)	44 (518)	4.40
1. <i>Demographical status</i>			
<i>Age, years</i>			
18–21 *	3 (32)	16 (37)	5.33
22–24	14 (35)	56 (36)	4.00
25–34	18 (102)	55 (126)	3.06
35–49	9 (130)	48 (137)	5.33
50–64	9 (115)	46 (104)	5.11
65+	10 (51)	29 (56)	2.90
<i>Marital status</i>			
married	11 (336)	46 (316)	4.18
cohabiting*	14 (21)	46 (24)	3.29
not married*	9 (128)	40 (176)	4.44
2. <i>Social status</i>			
<i>Education</i>			
primary	13 (270)	37 (288)	2.85
middle school	5 (123)	45 (150)	9.00
second level vocational or gymnasium	7 (67)	59 (58)	8.43
academic	21 (28)	86 (22)	4.10
<i>Employment</i>			
full-time employment	13 (283)	54 (218)	4.15
part-time employment	8 (12)	53 (30)	6.63
unemployed*	8 (36)	14 (14)	1.75
pensioned	5 (97)	35 (83)	7.00
homestaying	– (13)	41 (123)	
student*	5 (40)	22 (45)	4.40

Table 7. (cont.)

	Men percent (N)	Women	Sex Ratio
<i>Own occupation</i>			
farmer	7 (67)	30 (76)	4.29
unskilled worker	11 (44)	42 (115)	3.82
skilled worker	13 (195)	46 (93)	3.54
employee	8 (107)	56 (108)	7.00
leading position	16 (25)	86 (14)	5.38
<i>Family income</i>			
less than 24,000 Fmk per year	9 (100)	36 (128)	4.00
24,000–42,000	9 (174)	46 (190)	5.11
more than 42,000	12 (170)	50 (152)	4.17
3. <i>Regional status</i>			
<i>Type of commune</i>			
cities: Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Turku, Tampere	9 (69)	59 (73)	6.56
towns	14 (36)	58 (40)	4.14
towns	15 (184)	45 (191)	3.00
rural communities	7 (199)	35 (214)	5.00
<i>Region</i>			
Southern Finland*	9 (123)	49 (124)	5.44
Southwestern Finland	14 (178)	45 (199)	3.22
Eastern Finland	15 (72)	44 (81)	2.93
Northwestern Finland	4 (115)	33 (114)	8.25

Note

* The proportion of nonvoters was exceptionally large in the following groups

- 1) ages 18–21: 59 percent of men and 54 percent of women did not vote
- 2) cohabiting: 60 percent of men and 69 percent of women did not vote
- 3) not married: 33 percent of men and 28 percent of women did not vote
- 4) unemployed: 33 percent of men and 57 percent of women did not vote
- 5) students: 60 percent of men and 69 percent of women did not vote
- 6) province of Kymi in Southern Finland 29 percent of men and 26 percent of women did not vote

In the total sample 15 percent of both men and women did not vote.

Source: Data collected by Finnish Gallup, November–December 1977

men and women is smallest in the 25–34 age group, where the sex ratio is only 3.06. In this group 18 percent of men compared with 55 percent of women voted for female candidates in the 1976 communal elections. Middle-aged women, those between 35 and 64 years of age, also vote relatively often for women candidates, but their male equivalents do so only seldom: thus the sex ratio is higher than average, more than five. Very young and very old women rarely vote for female candidates. Marital status is not a very important determinant of the choice of the sex of one's political candidate. Married and cohabiting persons of both sexes support

female candidates somewhat more than nonmarried persons, who include both (young) unmarried and (old) widowed or divorced people.

Looking at the educational, occupational, and income level of men voting for female candidates reveals a curvilinear pattern: support of women politicians is stronger in the low and high status groups than in the middle status groups. Middle status men may be afraid of successful women. They may be threatened by the educated, active women with whom they are competing for status and power in society. Men with academic degrees, in leading positions, and with high income are not likely to lose to female contestants, because of the high status of the male sex in society. But it is not so certain which has a higher rank in society: a woman with a high educational and occupational status, or a man with middle level educational and occupational status. Middle status men, who are not sure of their own value, may not want to fail in their search for status and power. They are particularly sexist in their voting behaviour, strongly favouring their own sex. The insecurity of men who are not full-time employed may also prevent them from voting for women.

Among women, a unilinear trend can be seen in the support of female candidates. The higher the education, occupational status, and family income of a woman, the more likely she is to vote for a woman candidate. More than fifty percent of women in the highest positions voted for women candidates. In addition a majority of both full- and part-time employed women voted for female candidates whereas non-employed women were more reluctant to do so.

The struggle between the sexes is thus most fierce between middle status men and high and middle status women. High status men are seemingly not threatened by women and can afford to be liberal. The discrepancy between men and women voters in voting for women candidates is greatest in the middle status groups. Sex ratios in the middle level educational groups are very high (9.00 and 8.43), and the women/men ratio is high also in the white-collar employee group (7.00). The sex ratio is higher in the groups with academic education and leading occupational positions (where women are very feministic) than among persons with only primary education and belonging to either the working class or to the farming population. Among workers, men vote for female candidates more than average, and women at about the average rate. Among farmers, both sexes trust female political candidates less than average.

Men in the middle-sized cities and towns vote for female candidates more than men living in the capital region and in the rural communes. The competition of the sexes may be most pronounced in the Helsinki metro-

politan area, where there are plenty of well-educated women and high and middle status men. In the rural areas traditional patriarchal behaviour patterns may explain the low proportion of male votes for women. Among women, the larger the community, the more support is given to female political candidates. In the Helsinki area and in the two next largest cities, Turku and Tampere, more than 50 percent of women vote for women candidates. The percentage declines steadily as one moves to towns and to rural communes. The sex ratio is high in both the Helsinki area and rural communes.

Support for women in communal elections is lowest in North-Western Finland, among both men and women. Men vote for women most often in South-Western Finland and in Eastern Finland. The percentage of women voting for women is relatively even in all areas except North-Western Finland, where it is lower. The sex ratio is high on the one hand in Southern Finland, on the other in North-Western Finland. In the South the rivalry between men and women may be one of the reasons, in the North the patriarchal rural traditions, particularly among men.

Women politicians are thus supported most commonly by women, particularly by well-educated and high status women. Women as political actors gain least support from two groups of men: (1) those with middle range educational and occupational status and those living in the Helsinki metropolitan area, and (2) farmers in rural areas, especially in North-Western Finland. The former group may feel itself threatened by the emancipation of women, the latter is behaving in a traditional patriarchal way. Among both sexes, however, young adults in the age category 22–34 years are most strongly in favour of women as political actors. Young people are effective agents of change for the future. On the basis of their voting behaviour, it seems likely that women will in the future win an even greater share of votes in public elections.

5. Conclusion

This paper has tried to show how women are becoming political actors through public elections in Finland, where women attained universal suffrage simultaneously with men in 1906. Since then, the proportion of women in parliament has been relatively high compared with that in other countries, but low compared with men. The proportional voting system, according to which votes are cast directly for individual candidates inside the party list, makes it possible for the Finnish voters to select the sex of the candidate for whom they cast their vote. By studying the sources of the

votes cast for female candidates one can learn which groups in society are most in favour of women as political actors.

The proportions of votes cast for female candidates, of women nominated and of women elected, do not differ from each other systematically in parliamentary elections. However, in communal elections, votes cast for female candidates have, at least between 1964 and 1976, been dispersed, so that fewer women have been elected than one could have expected on the basis of the number of votes cast for all women candidates. This difference in the success of women in national and local elections, in both of which women nowadays win about one-quarter of all votes, may be related to the lower visibility of individual candidates in local elections. Further studies are needed before this difference between the two types of elections is explained.

According to election statistics since 1907, women were until the 1960's nominated, voted for, and elected more in the socialist, particularly in the Communist, parties than in the bourgeois parties. In the 1960's and 1970's, however, conservative and urban centre voters became as 'feministic' as socialist voters in their voting behaviour. Only the rural centre parties lagged behind the others, which were mostly oriented toward the urban population. In the 1970's the difference between the rural and urban areas has similarly diminished.

The influence of the prevailing economic and normative factors in an area upon voting for female candidates was examined by using Erik Allardt's four-fold table on division of labour and pressure toward uniformity as a frame of reference. In the socialist parties, the economic development of an area, that is, its division of labour, explained voting for female candidates more effectively than in the non-socialist parties, where normative factors, that is, pressure toward uniformity, counted more.

According to survey results, support given to female candidates in communal elections in 1976 was most pronounced in the younger age groups, particularly between the ages 22 and 35. This shows promise of increasing support in the future for women as political actors. Women support female politicians considerably more often than men. Among women, the most educated, the employed, the white collar workers, and especially those in leading positions vote most frequently for female candidates. They are in a way already somewhat sexist in their voting behaviour: more than fifty percent of them voted for women. Men in all groups, however, are clearly sexist in their own direction: a large majority cast their votes for male candidates. Among men, those with highest and lowest education, those in leading positions, and those belonging to the

working class most often vote for female candidates. Women politicians gain least support from men in the middle level educational and occupational groups, and from farmers. Middle status men may be most afraid of losing status if more women become political actors. The fight for political power is harsh – when new groups are winning ground, somebody is losing it. However, the sexual division of the political decision-making bodies is still very biased. Equalization of the sexes in political life is a typical trend in modern society. In Finland, a large proportion of all women as well as some liberal high status men and some equality oriented working class men nowadays function as agents of this change.

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