Party Organization and Satisfaction with Democracy:
Inside the Blackbox of Linkage

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Party Organization and Satisfaction with Democracy: Inside the Blackbox of Linkage

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Abstract

This article investigates the way in which party organizational resources and processes may affect perceptions of democracy, looking at the impact of parties' top-down communication mechanisms and bottom-up internal processes. Our examination breaks new ground by pairing party organizational data from the Political Party Database (PPDB) with individual-level data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), and shows clear evidence of the link between parties' organizational resource capacity and their ability to inspire satisfaction with democracy (the 'top-down' path from party organization to democratic evaluations). However, it does not appear that the degree of intra-party democracy practised (the 'bottom-up' path) has a similar impact. Overall, these results provide substantial evidence for the importance of party organization and agency in fostering the popular legitimacy of democratic political systems.

Party Organization and Satisfaction with Democracy: Introduction

Political parties (in aggregate) are often given some or even much of the blame for today's democratic malaise. Some researchers portray the policies and behavior of "established" parties as the source of their own unpopularity, either because their policy collusion deprives voters of electoral choices (cf. Ignazi 2017; Katz and Mair 1995), or because changes in their financing and internal organization make parties much less reliant on support from party members and other partisans (Scarrow, Webb & Poguntke 2017). These and other changes in party priorities are said to result in "linkage failure", with rising distrust of parties and declining satisfaction with democracy seen as evidence that parties are getting worse at providing the linkage that once was fundamental to their democratic contribution (Lawson and Merkl 2014). While such diagnoses are plausible, for the most part they remain at a fairly general level: specific parties and their activities are largely absent from both theoretical and empirical research on satisfaction with democracy. Even those who have questioned the "linkage failure" narrative have most often done so in terms of country-level factors rather than by disaggregating the impact of various party practices (cf. Dalton, Farrell & McAllister 2011); this is true even though contemporary parties

are evidently experimenting with new organizational styles to try to capture public support, including introducing various forms of of multispeed membership using social media channels to tie individuals to their parties (Gauja 2015; Scarrow 2015). As a result, while party researchers have paid much attention to parties' putative linkage roles, we actually know very little about how parties as organizational actors help to shape citizens' attitudes towards the democracies in which they compete. Put differently, few studies have looked inside the black box of linkage to investigate specific mechanisms whereby party organizations do a better or worse job of generating positive connections with their potential voters. And without understanding the mechanisms of linkage, it is hard to devise effect prescriptions for strengthening such bonds.

This article contributes to filling this gap by investigating the way in which party organizational resources and processes may affect perceptions of democracy, looking in particular at the impact of parties' top-down communication mechanisms. The central objective is not so much to explain citizens' level of satisfaction with democracy, but rather to demonstrate that party organization is one of the factors that drives such attitudes. To do this, we pair party organizational data from the Political Party Database (PPDB) with individual-level data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), investigating the direct and indirect effects of party resources on supporters of 62 parties across 11 parliamentary democracies. Our results provide clear evidence of the link between parties' organizational resource capacity and their ability to influence voters' attitudes towards democracy. However, they do not provide evidence that popular attitudes towards wider democratic systems are affected by parties' internal systems of democracy. Even so, these results provide substantial evidence for the importance of party organization and agency in fostering the popular legitimacy of democratic political systems.

Sources of Democratic Satisfaction

The stability of liberal democracy depends in part on its popular legitimacy, which explains high academic interest in citizens' satisfaction with democracy (SWD). The extensive literature on the subject has uncovered an almost bewildering variety of explanations for levels of SWD. Institutional variables at the level of the political system feature prominently, such the contrast between consensus and majoritarian democracies, with the former widely seen as better for SWD than the latter; relatedly, the type of electoral system seems to matter, with proportional

representation apparently most conducive to SWD (Anderson & Guillory 1997; Aarts & Thomassen 2008; Bernauer & Vatter 2011). Another system-level explanation holds that 'the quality of governance' or 'procedural fairness' might impact on SWD (Magalhaes 2017); perceptions of corruption in the political system also may impact on SWD (Stockemer & Sundstrom 2013; Pellegati & Memoli 2018). System-level performance matters in other ways as well. A major part of the SWD story is the economic performance of countries or individuals, with many studies confirming a positive relation between such performance (or perceived performance) and SWD (Clarke et al 1993; Anderson and Guillory 1997; Waldron-Moore 1999; Farrell and McAllister 2006; Blais and Gélineau 2007; Henderson 2008; Kim 2009; Wagner et al. 2009; Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; Bernauer & Vatter 2012; Schäfer 2013). More specifically, it is claimed that certain governmental outputs such as the degree of social protection offered to citizens by a regime can covary significantly with SWD (Luhiste 2014).

Factors endogenous to party and electoral politics also feature prominently in the literature. One frequently investigated (and confirmed) explanation is that election 'winners' (however they might be defined) are more likely to be satisfied with democratic performance than election 'losers' (Anderson & Guillory 1997; Singh, Karakoc & Blais 2012), while a variant on this suggests that the composition of government plays a part – that is, the greater the share of cabinet portfolios enjoyed by the party a voter supports, the higher that voter's SWD is likely to be (Kestila-Kekkonen & Soderlund 2017; Christmann & Torcal 2018). It is equally well-established that the ideological congruence of voters with winning parties fosters SWD (Henderson 2008; Ezrow & Xezonakis 2011). Most pertinently to our focus in this article, Shomer et al (2016) uncovered some evidence to suggest supporters of parties that use more inclusive candidate-selection methods tend to be more satisfied with democracy than supporters of parties which do not.

As this brief review suggests, there is a large and growing literature investigating the factors which contribute to—or undermine—democratic satisfaction. Somewhat surprisingly, parties themselves have been largely absent from such analyses (with a few notable exceptions which we detail below). Thus, in this paper we seek to remedy that omission. We explore whether party organization plays a role in helping to legitimize democracy, directly or indirectly, looking specifically at differences in how parties' organizational resources and internal decision-making

processes impact on citizen attitude towards democracy. We begin by reviewing what past studies reveal about how party organization facilitates democratic linkage. We then present our hypotheses, data and measurement strategies. Finally, we report our results.

Linking Party Organization with Democratic Satisfaction

Can parties' organizational features affect citizens' attachments to the political order? While there is relatively sparse empirical research on this issue, scholarship on parties and linkage provides important theoretical clues. It starts from the assumption that parties can (and should) use their organizations to strengthen democracy by providing "linkage", which is generally defined in terms of two-way communication. Where party-based linkage works well, parties present voters with policy options, and citizens have opportunities to influence (though not necessarily to *decide*) these options, including parties' candidate slates and their programmes (Sartori, 1976; Lawson 1980; Poguntke 2002; Römmele, Farrell & Ignazi, 2005; Dalton, Farrell & McAllister 2011; Allern & Bale 2012). Party-based linkage can be viewed as both a systemic property (in the sense that parties can combine to offer choice and accountability in a system) and a party-specific one. Thus, a party which does a bad job of providing linkage is likely to experience electoral difficulties, and may even disappear – party failure is linkage failure (Lawson & Merkl 2014). If parties collectively do a bad job of linkage, this can lead to citizen disillusionment and de-stabilize the political system as a whole in the long run.

The literature on linkage is generally not explicit or prescriptive about *how* parties need to organize to provide such linkage, but its association with two-way communication gives strong hints about what organizational characteristics could potentially affect a party's linkage capacity. On the one hand, if parties are to communicate key messages to supporters and potential supporters in a top-down way, they need organizational *resources* that help them spread these messages. On the other hand, parties' internal *processes* may matter for bottom-up communication: this type of linkage should be stronger where party procedures facilitate citizen voice and party responsiveness.

Research on campaign effects provides mounting evidence about which resources may enhance parties' electoral communications (cf Andre and Depauw 2016; Bhatti et al. 2019; Carty and Eagles 1999; Denver et al 2003; Fisher et al 2014; Gerber and Green 2000; Tavits 2012; Whiteley

and Seyd 1992). These studies, from an array of political systems, all provide evidence of the importance of party organizational resources in communicating with voters and mobilizing electoral support – with the key resources being money (and the professional staff that money can pay for), and the party members and other volunteers who engage in door-to-door canvassing and other types of grassroots campaigns. These resource types are not necessarily fungible and may have independent effects, particularly if there are restrictions on how and how much parties or candidates may spend on a campaign (Tavits 2012; Fisher et al 2014). Moreover, even if members *may* help parties to communicate their messages, their help could come in different forms, depending in part on how parties seek to employ them. Thus, some parties may be more interested in enrolling members and other supporters because of their potential financial contributions (so-called "cheque-book members") than because of their potential help with canvassing.

While these studies are focused on how parties' organizational resources affect electoral behavior, they suggest that such resources could potentially have direct or indirect effects on citizens' attitudes towards their political systems more generally. Indeed, Rohrschneider and Whitefield (2012) found some such effects in one of the few studies to investigate how party efforts may affect how citizens think about politics. They asked whether party organizational capacity affected congruence between party and voter positions, positing that parties with what they call mass party characteristics – "significant" memberships, strong central organizations, and links with civic organizations -- would be better able to communicate their messages, and would be more in tune with the preferences of potential voters. They find evidence that organizational strength is related to party-voter congruence in Western Europe; in contrast, they find no relationship (or even a negative relationship) in Central and Eastern Europe (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2012: 128-131). These findings suggest that under some circumstances parties' organizational resources may matter for their communication, but they do not settle the question of whether some types of resources are more or less important to this process.

Scholars and politicians have been more divided about the ways in which party structures and processes can best deliver bottom-up linkage, though many have firmly believed that parties' organizational choices affect democratic quality. For instance, inspired by experiences of 1920s Europe, Sigmund Neumann praised what he called "parties of democratic integration" (1956),

which were similar to what Duverger and others called mass parties. For Neumann, this integration occurred because the parties provided some decision-making roles for members; they also provided programmatic representation of supporters. Yet a long line of studies of mass parties raised doubts about these parties' effectiveness in providing linkage, whether because of entrenched and isolated party elites (Michels 1911), the distorting priorities of party activists (May 1973), or the short time horizons of election-oriented politicians (Panebianco 1988). Indeed, these complaints were so prevalent in discussions about democratic failures that in the 1970s and 1980s New Politics parties entered the political scene with the intention of radically improving and democratizing political linkage through grassroots democracy (Poguntke 1987; Kitschelt 1988). More recently, both new and established parties have experimented with more plebiscitary forms of decision making that are claimed to make the parties more responsive to their supporters; these include giving members and/or registered supporters a say in picking party leaders, and—less frequently-- the on-line decision forums of parties such as the Italian Five Star Movement, or German parties like the Greens, The Alternative for Germany, and the Pirate Party. Despite the long-running debates, these ideas about how parties facilitate linkage tended to be asserted more than the foundational mechanisms were empirically tested, a few counter-examples excepted (cf. Poguntke 2000; Allern 2010, Allern & Bale 2012). Recent studies of the impact of member/supporter ballots for leadership selection have suggested that their use has at least a short-term and positive effect on public attitudes towards the party that uses them (Shomer et al 2018), but that more inclusive party decision processes for candidate or leadership selection do not necessarily produce longer-term attitudinal effects, and may actually have dampening effects in areas such as levels of partisan campaign engagement (Kernell 2015) or voter-party congruence (Spies & Kaiser 2014). Thus, while party theory provides strong reasons to think that member-based party decision-making might strengthen bottom-up linkage, and therefore might lead to more democratic satisfaction, the empirical evidence provides little basis to think that this is the case.

In short, previous research gives us some hints about how party efforts and party communication opportunities may affect the way that citizens think about their political systems, but for the most part we lack studies focused directly on these relationships. In this study we therefore seek more evidence for the mechanisms whereby party organizational capacity and processes can serve to increase "linkage" that is reflected in levels of satisfaction with the performance of democratic

systems. By looking more closely at how party linkage mechanisms may work, we hope to gain insights into the democratic implications of parties' organizational choices, the consequences of which may go beyond winning or losing votes. We set out our specific hypotheses in the following section.

The paths from party organisation to democratic satisfaction: Hypotheses

Our first hypothesis is the most basic one: it simply posits a direct relation between party organizational resources and individual-level satisfaction with democracy. Here and elsewhere our hypotheses focus on relations between specific parties and the attitudes of their supporters because we expect supporters to be most aware of, and most impacted by, the activities of "their" parties. Other citizens may also be affected, but if a relationship exists, it should be most strongly evident between a party and its supporters. We expect that the stronger a party's resources, the more likely it will be able to 'reach' its supporters both during election campaigns and between them. 'Reach' might be direct, which is to say through personal, postal or electronic communication, or indirect - that is, through a party's capacity to generate a strong presence via the national and local media. In brief, the stronger a party's resources, the more likely it is to be able to communicate in one way or another with voters, and thereby mobilize enthusiasm and support, which should in turn generate positive feelings about the democratic process among the party's supporters. Thus:

H1: The greater a party's organizational resources, the more likely that its voters will be satisfied with democratic performance in their country.

Based on past studies of party communication during campaigns, we conceptualize these resources as having two main components: funding (which can be used to hire staff and to pay for professional publicity of various sorts), and members (who may contribute labour and/or funds to promote party communication efforts). While we have no *a priori* hypotheses about which of these aspects of organizational strength should be most important for parties' efforts to connect with citizens, disaggregating these different aspects of party organizational strength will provide better clues about the mechanisms underlying any relationships that we do discover. Assuming that this hypothesis is confirmed for either or both measures of party resources, we must then seek

to deconstruct the process. If party organizational resources are important to generating electoral support, they should implicitly also foster feelings of general partisan attachment among at least a subset of each party's voters. This is significant because previous research suggests that partisan affinity is a positive predictor of SWD. This generates the following two hypotheses:

H2: The greater a party's organizational resources, the stronger its voters' sense of partisan affinity[1] is likely to be.

H3: Those with higher levels of partisan affinity will express higher levels of satisfaction with democratic performance in their country.

Finally, it is also quite possible that organizational resources indirectly affect supporters' political attitudes if these resources increase the party's chances of electoral success: we know from previous research that those who support 'winning' parties are more likely to express satisfaction with democracy in their country. Therefore:

H4: The greater a party's organizational resources, the more likely its supporters will be on the side of a winning party in any given election.

H5: The supporters of parties that 'win' elections are more likely to express satisfaction with democratic performance in their country than those who do not.

Moreover, it is also possible that there is a causal relationship between different types of party organizational resource: as we explain below, we draw on two such indicators in this paper, party members and party income, and it seems plausible that the latter might well be significantly driven by former. For many parties, it remains the case that members are a non-trivial source of party income (Scarrow 1996; van Biezen & Kopecky 2017: 87-89). This gives rise to a further hypothesis that we can test:

[1] Note that we use the terms partisan attachment and partisan affinity interchangeably throughout his article.

H6: The number of members a party has will be a positive predictor of its national income.

These hypotheses describe the paths by which party organizational resources might impact positively on SWD; as such, they emphasize top-down linkage. Clearly, party organizational resources *per se* do not only directly impact on SWD; it is just as likely that resources increase parties' ability to communicate their messages and mobilize support, thereby impacting on voters' partisan attachments and the ability to win elections. Through these paths they send a general message, implicitly or explicitly, that they care what voters think. Such communication can reinforce attachments to specific parties as well as boosting positive ties to the democratic system as a whole. In addition to these top-down mechanisms that might flow from organizational resources, we have also seen that parts of the previous literature point to the potential impact of parties' internal processes. That is to say, the more democratic rights grassroots members have over questions of intra-party decision-making, the more we might expect supporters of such parties to feel generally positive about the functioning of democracy in their country (Shomer et al 2016). In principle, we could imagine that the putative impact of intra-party democracy might flow directly from party processes to SWD, or indirectly through its positive impact on partisan affinity, thus giving rise to our last two hypotheses:

H7: The more internally democratic a party is, the more likely its voters are to express satisfaction with democratic performance in their country,

and:

H8: The more internally democratic a party is, the stronger its voters' sense of partisan affinity is likely to be.

To summarise, then, our hypotheses suggest a set of mechanisms whereby party organization can affect "linkage" in the sense of democratic legitimacy. These relationships are depicted in Figure 1. What then do the data reveal?[2]

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Data and Measures

Our strategy for assessing these hypotheses involves combining individual-level data from the CSES (Module 4) with organizational from the PPDB Round 1a. The PPDB is a cross-national database on party organizational resources and structures, collected by a team of country experts (Poguntke, Scarrow, Webb et al 2016; Scarrow, Webb and Pogunkte 2017), which provides information on party resources (especially members and funding). Round 1a data come from the period 2011-15, which closely approximates the same period as the elections in CSES Module 4 (2011-16). There are 11 countries which are common to these PPDB and CSES datasets, and on which we can therefore focus our analysis: Australia, Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Norway, Poland, Portugal and Britain. The merged dataset includes 14335 individual respondents and 62 parties. For each country, the party organizational data from the PPDB were gathered in the same year, or a year or two prior, to the attitudinal data from the CSES, which reinforces the point that causality is likely to flow from party organization to satisfaction with democracy.[3] The basic unit of analysis is the individual respondent of the CSES; for each respondent, the PPDB variable score (eg, membership per or income per voter) for whichever party they voted for in the most recent national legislative election (lower house) has been added. In this way, we can gauge the party organizational resource strength of their preferred parties.

Satisfaction with democracy – our key dependent variable – is a Likert scale response to the question 'On the whole, are you very satisfied, quite satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all

[2] Note that it is possible to imagine some non-recursive relationships between these variables: for instance, SWD might lead to partisan affinity (with individuals who are generally more satisfied with democracy being more likely to select a party on which to focus their identity and support). However, no variant of the basic model set out in Figure 1 which included such terms produced any significant non-recursive effects. We therefore only present results of the more parsimonious recursive model here.

[3] In the minority of cases for which PPDB provides more than one year of data for the membership or money variables, we use the mean of the observations. See Webb & Keith 2017 for more information on cross-party and cross-national differences in resource distribution.

satisfied with the way democracy works in your country?'; 1 represents 'not at all satisfied', 2 represents 'not very satisfied, 3 'quite satisfied' and 4 'very satisfied'. Note that this indicator is best regarded as a measure of support for regime performance rather than for regime principles. Building on foundations first laid by David Easton, Pippa Norris (1999: Chapter 1) has pointed out that the concept of political support is multidimensional, distinguishing five aspects – support for the political community, regime principles, regime performance, regime institutions and political actors. As Linde and Ekman (2003: 391) point out, the variable used in the CSES dataset '…is not an indicator of support for the principles of democracy, but…taps the level of support for the way the democratic regime works in practice.' For instance, a respondent could be a convinced democrat, rejecting non-democratic alternatives, but nonetheless be dissatisfied with the way democracy works in his or her country at a given moment in time. Thus, a low score on this variable does not imply hostility to democratic principles per se, but simply that a respondent is disappointed with its current operation in a specific national context. But it should be noted that such evaluations relate to the political system as a whole rather than to the particular performance of the incumbent government of the day.

In keeping with our conceptualization of party resources as having two main components, we use two measures of party organizational strength: membership size (standardized by the pool of eligible voters as the Membership/Electorate ratio), and national party income (measured in euros at constant prices and also standardized relative to the number of electors in a country). In Figure 1 we refer to these as 'members per voter' and 'income per voter', respectively. In effect, these two indicators embrace two forms of labour that are potentially vital to a party's campaigning and communication capacity, voluntary and paid. For many parties, the members provide the unpaid labour that is central to campaigning and mobilizational efforts, especially in local districts or regions, while money is what enables paid professional input (eg, by marketing, polling and advertising specialists), especially although not exclusively at national level. Money can pay for important things beyond the salaries of personnel, of course, such as advertising space, election broadcasts, travel and accommodation for campaign team members, and so on. So, we would argue that these two PPDB indicators – members per elector and party income per elector – capture much that it is implied by the term 'organisational resources'.

The degree of internal democracy attributable to each party is measured by the 'Plebiscitary Intra-Party Democracy' (PIPD) index. This was first formulated by von dem Berge and Poguntke (2017) as a single measure designed to capture the extent to which political parties accorded a vote to grassroots members in a range of key decision-making procedures, including candidate-selection, leadership-election and policy-making. It is a standardized index ranging from 0-1, with higher scores indicating greater capacity for this plebiscitary mode of intra-party democracy. We have also added information to the merged dataset on whether or not respondents voted for winning or losing parties (the former being taken to mean any party that enjoyed governmental office during the period under analysis), this being relevant to H4 and H5. The dataset also contains variables taken from CSES on SWD, partisan affinity, and a number of controls.

Partisan affinity is coded 1 for respondents declaring no attachment to any party, 2 for those who say they are 'not very close' to a party, 4 for those claiming to be 'quite close' to a party and 4 for those who are 'very close' to a particular party. The control variables in the model include factors known to be important for SWD, including prospective and retrospective evaluations of economic performance, with Gallagher's Least-Squares index (which gauges the proportionality of electoral outcomes) deployed as a proxy for electoral system effects, along with several standard demographic factors. Our model also includes a measure of each party's ideological position. Our assumption here is that more ideologically radical parties – whether far right or far left – will be more critical of the functioning of democracy in their respective countries. Using the Comparative Manifesto Project's 'RILE' measure as an indicator of each party's right-left ideological orientation, we have distinguished between those parties that are more than one standard deviation from the mean position of all parties in the dataset, and all other parties, the former being designated as 'radical' for the purposes of our analysis. Full details on the variables used in this paper are provided in the Appendix.

Analysis and results: **Does party organization influence citizens' satisfaction with democracy?**

Hypotheses 1-6 set out above prescribe a series of paths from our two organizational resource measures to SWD, some of them direct, but some indirect, while hypotheses 7 and 8 account for the possible paths from intra-party democracy to SWD. Figure 1 shows the various paths set out

in these hypotheses, including the mediating variables (partisan affinity and supporting a winning party). A set of causal relationships such as that implied by these hypotheses requires a form of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) that will tease out the various empirical relationships. Such an approach allows us, among other things, to treat some variables in the chain of causation as both dependent and independent variables. The most appropriate statistical technique is path analysis, which we conduct here, using robust standard errors clustered by country in order to account for country-level effects in each model. Of course, no statistical approach is beyond criticism, and path analysis is susceptible to a more general problem with quantitative models, which is that they can be underspecified; that is, the effect of mediating variables in causal paths can be under- or overestimated if key variables are omitted from models (Green et al 2010: 203). However, as is apparent from the above discussion (and Figure 1), we have sought to minimize such risks through the inclusion of a wide array of control variables that are known predictors of satisfaction with democracy.

Figure 2 portrays the results of this path analysis. Standardized regression coefficients are shown adjacent to each path arrow, with asterisks indicating whether or not relationships are significant at $p<.10$ or better. Table 1, to which we shall return shortly, provides more detail, including direct, indirect and total effects for each predictor, and overall goodness of fit for the four endogenous variables in the models (party income, partisan affinity, Winner and SWD). Starting on the left side of the diagram, we find confirmation of H6, that the size of a party's membership does indeed contribute positively to its income, albeit only significant at $p<.10$. This is not so surprising, since there are other sources of party income, of course – not least the state itself (van Biezen & Kopecky 2017). Nevertheless, the membership still makes a difference, overall. We also see that party income is a positive predictor of SWD, this time significant at $p<.001$. However, a party's membership size is not in itself a significant direct influence on SWD. In so far as H1 ('The greater a party's organizational resources, the more likely that its voters will be satisfied with democracy') holds, then, this is mainly down to the impact of party income; party membership only seems to play an indirect role by contributing to the party's financial resources.

FIGURE 2 & TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

With respect to H2 ('The greater a party's organizational resources, the stronger its voters' sense of partisan affinity is likely to be'), we find once again that party income matters, while party membership does not. The former is a positive predictor of partisan affinity, significant at $p<.10$, while the latter is non-significant (and indeed, negatively signed). There is clear confirmation of H3 ('Those with higher levels of partisan affinity will express higher levels of satisfaction with democracy'), with partisan affinity a positive predictor of SWD ($p<.001$). H4 ('The greater a party's organizational resources, the more likely its supporters will be on the side of a winning party in any given election') is similarly confirmed, but only with respect to party income, the effect of which on 'Winner' is positive and significant ($p<.05$); once again, however, there is no significant effect from membership per voter to Winner. H5 ('The supporters of parties that 'win' elections are more likely to express satisfaction with democracy than those who do not'), is clearly confirmed, with 'Winner' being a positive predictor of SWD ($p<.001$).

All this serves to show that a party's organizational resources – especially its finances - do matter for a typical citizen's degree of satisfaction with democracy in their country. Thus, the top-down channel of political linkage clearly weighs significantly in the balance. However, the same cannot be said for bottom-up linkage; intra-party democracy simply carries no weight for SWD. Neither of the relevant paths – either the direct one from PIPD to SWD, or the indirect one via partisan affinity – proves to be significant. This is a strikingly different finding from the previous research reported by Shomer and her colleagues (2016). By its nature, however, the PIPD Index is much broader in content than the candidate-selection indicator employed in their study of the effects of intra-party democracy on satisfaction with democracy; while Shomer et al focused solely on candidate-selection, PIPD also takes into account leadership selection and policy-making. Also, PIPD measures only a specific variant of intra-party democracy, namely plebiscitary decision-making. These factors (and the difference between samples) most likely explain the rather different findings between that study and this one.

In terms of the control variables entered into the equation, we see that economic evaluations (prospective expectations of future personal standards of living and retrospective assessments of recent national economic performance) have the expected positive significant effects on SWD ($p<.001$ in both cases), along with education ($p>.05$); graduates are a little more likely to express

satisfaction with democracy than non-graduates. We also find confirmation that people who support more radical parties, be they well to the left or to the right of the the ideological centre-ground, are less likely to express satsifaction with democracy. However, neither the extent to which a country's electoral system produces proportional representative outcomes in the national legislature, nor the age, gender or socio-economic status of a respondent have any significant impact.

If we examine the information on indirect and total effects reported in Table 1, we discover additional evidence of the importance of party organization for SWD. Although the effects are only significant at $p<.10$, it can be seen that party income and membership both have positive indirect effects on SWD. They each achieve this via the path that goes through support for a winning party. This becomes clearest when we focus on the total effects results: in particular, it now becomes evident that the total effect of party membership on SWD is positive, producing a standardized coefficient of .05 ($p=.013$), while that for party income is .15 ($p=.000$). So, to summarize, the route from party organizational resources to satisfaction with democracy seems to go like this: the membership helps to provide funding, and party income is then significant in boosting SWD, both directly, and through its capacity to enhance partisan affinity and to contribute to electoral success (ie, being a 'winner'). By contrast, plebiscitary intra-party democracy does not appear to carry any significance for people's attitudes towards the democratic performance of their country – which is at odds with the growing popularity of plebiscitary decision-making among parties in modern democracies, and at odds with arguments often made in favour of this shift.

One question that arises from this is whether party income might simply be a proxy for the size of a party. Is it the case that those who vote for parties with large incomes are more satisfied with the democratic system in their country simply because they have chosen to support the biggest parties that tend to fare well under it? There may be an element of this behind our findings, but two things should be borne in mind. First, the effect of party income on SWD (and partisan affinity) remains significant even when we control for whether or not a party is a 'winner'. Second, when we add a further control for the share of the vote gained by a party in national lower house elections, none of our results change in substance: again, party income retains its significant and positive effect on

partisan affinity and SWD. So, party organisational resources seem to play an independent role in fostering and sustaining support for democracy.

Discussion

Taken as a whole, our findings provide evidence that party organization matters for overall satisfaction with democracy, and that it has both direct and indirect effects on the ways that citizens perceive their systems, and in how they engage with politics. More specifically, these findings clearly show that well-resourced parties are not only best placed to sustain electoral support, but also to enhance the popular legitimacy of democratic systems. They also provide more tentative support for the continued value of the subscriber-democracy model of party organization – that is to say, of parties based on formal dues-paying membership (or at least, the modern 'multispeed membership' variant of this classic model [Scarrow 2015]). Such parties can still help to generate resources, and members still represent one channel of communication with voters, even if not necessarily the principal one. This model was traditionally associated with cleavage-based mass parties, but it has also endured into the era of more catch-all and professionally oriented parties, albeit with often declining membership numbers. In response to these changes, some party scholars and party elites have been eager to write off this model in favour of new alternatives, be these non-partisan citizen juries, digital discussion boards, or social media-led movements. While some or all of these democratic innovations may have their advantages, our findings here point in the direction of a chain of causal relations whereby organizationally stronger parties are more effective in communicating with voters and sustaining their partisan affinity, and in promoting satisfaction with democratic processes in general. In this sense, they provide an original and important insight into the power of party organizations as something that must be viewed as integral to our understanding of how electoral democracies maintain the support and consent of their citizens. How parties organize is therefore not just a matter of internal concern for the parties themselves, nor is it just a contributor to parties' short-term electoral success. Rather, parties' organizational choices and capacities have the potential to play a much larger and longer-term role in promoting (or otherwise) the general stability of democratic systems.

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Tables & Figures

Figure 1: Hypothetical Paths from Party Organizational Resources to Satisfaction with Democracy

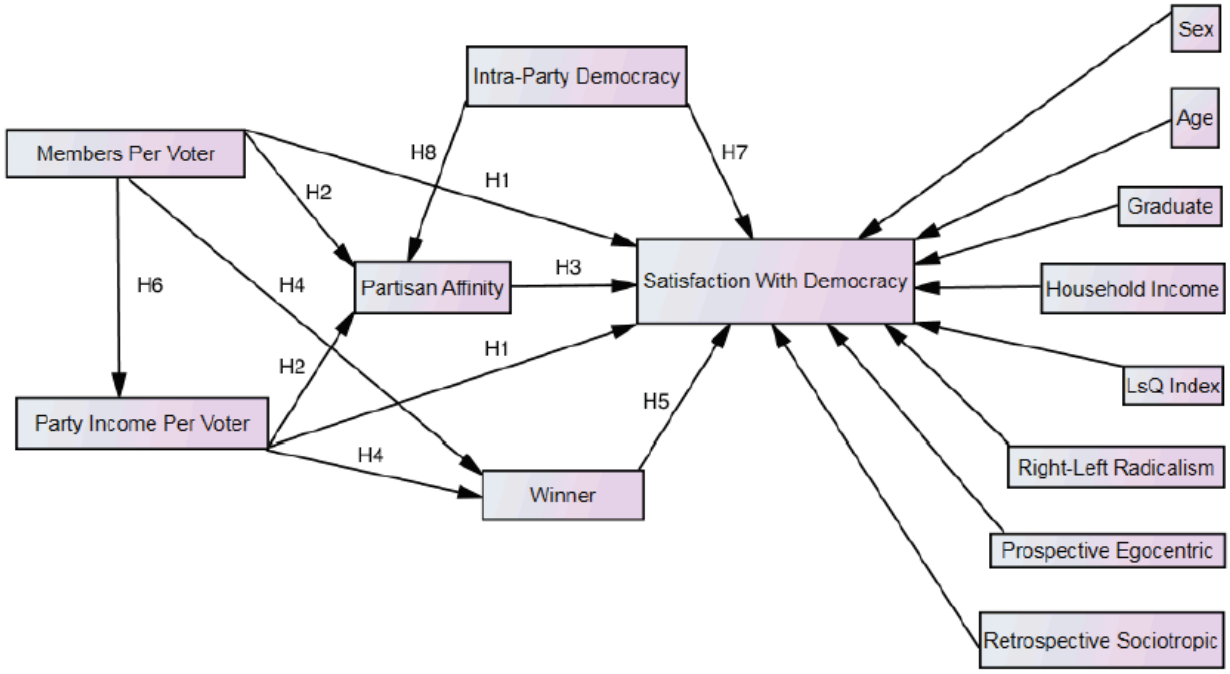

Figure 2: Path Analysis of Party Organizational Effects on Satisfaction with Democracy
(All figures = standardized coefficients; ****p<.001, *** p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10, n=14206)

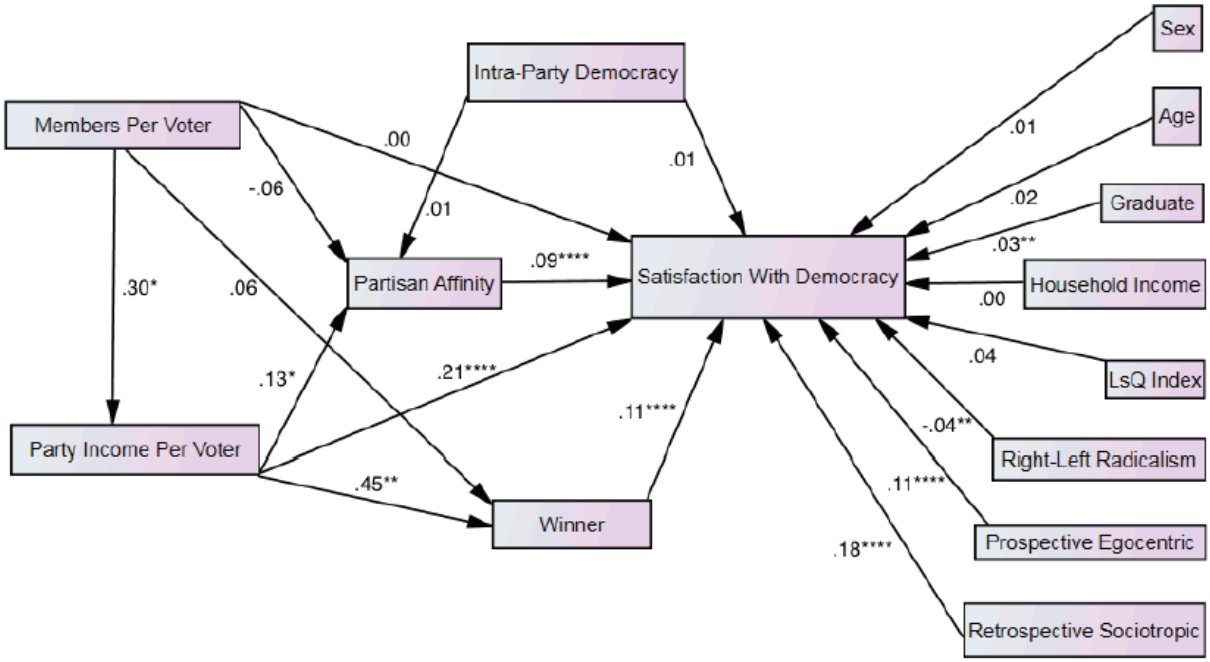

Table 1: Direct, Indirect and Total Effects (n=14206, all standard errors clustered by 11 countries)

DIRECT EFFECTS (dependent variable in italics)				
	Unstandardized Estimate	Robust Standard Error	Significance	Standardized Estimate
Income per voter				
Members per voter	.34	.20	.085	.30
Partisan Affinity				
Income per voter	.11	.06	.062	.13
Members per voter	-.06	.05	.280	-.06
PIPD	.00	.00	.688	.01
Winner				
Income per voter	.15	.07	.027	.45
Members per voter	.02	.02	.229	.06
Satisfaction with Democracy				
Income per voter	.12	.02	.000	.21
Partisan affinity	.06	.01	.000	.09
Winner	.18	.05	.000	.11
Members per voter	.00	.01	.875	.00
Least Squares Index	.01	.01	.485	.04
Age	.00	.00	.108	.02
Graduate	.05	.03	.048	.03
Right-Left Radicalism	-.06	.03	.023	-.04
Sex	.01	.01	.547	.01
Household Income Quartile	.00	.01	.873	.00
Prospective economic evaluations	.10	.02	.000	.11
Retrospective economic evaluations	.19	.02	.000	.18
PIPD	.00	.00	.606	.01

INDIRECT EFFECTS (dependent variable in italics)				
	Unstandardized Estimate	Robust Standard Error	Significance	Standardized Estimate
Partisan Affinity				
Members per voter	.04	.02	.131	.04
Winner				
Members per voter	.05	.03	.065	.13
Satisfaction with Democracy				
Income per voter	.03	.02	.052	.06
Members per voter	.05	.03	.064	.08
PIPD	.00	.00	.701	.00

TOTAL EFFECTS (dependent variable in italics)				
	Unstandardized Estimate	Robust Standard Error	Significance	Standardized Estimate
Income per voter				
Members per voter	.34	.20	.085	.30
Partisan Affinity				
Income per voter	.11	.06	.062	.13
Members per voter	-.02	.04	.617	-.02
PIPD	.00	.00	.688	.01
Winner				
Income per voter	.15	.07	.027	.45
Members per voter	.07	.03	.029	.20
Satisfaction with Democracy				
Income per voter	.15	.03	.000	.27
Partisan affinity	.06	.01	.000	.09
Winner	.18	.05	.000	.11
Members per voter	.05	.02	.013	.08
Least Squares Index	.01	.01	.485	.04
Age	.00	.00	.108	.02
Graduate	.05	.03	.048	.03
Right-Left Radicalism	-.06	.03	.023	-.04
Sex	.01	.01	.547	.01
Household Income Quartile	.00	.01	.873	.00
Prospective economic evaluations	.10	.02	.000	.11
Retrospective economic evaluations	.19	.02	.000	.18
PIPD	.00	.00	.571	.01

Goodness of fit statistics (R2) for endogenous variables in model

Income per voter	.088

Partisan affinity	.016
Winner	.226
Satisfaction with democracy	.143