

This article appeared originally in the Summer 1995 issue of the British journal *Democratization*. It obviously could not include (nor did it predict) the increase in the number of women in the Maltese parliament as a result of the 1996, 1998 and 2003 elections. An updated version of this paper may be written some day.

The Election of Women under Proportional Representation: The Case of Malta

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ABSTRACT: It has often been noted that women's opportunities for a legislative career are enhanced in countries using proportional representation. But in Malta, which uses a variant of proportional representation, there are fewer women in parliament than in any other Western democracy. A detailed analysis of voting data shows that what accounts for the paucity of women legislators in Malta is not a shortage of ballot positions; nor a lack of qualified women candidates; nor significant voter prejudice against female candidates. Rather, Malta's exceptional performance results from the unwillingness or inability of party elites to recruit a substantial number of women candidates, even though voting patterns create an incentive for political parties to maximize the number of candidates. Since the cause of this failure to mobilize more women candidates cannot be ascribed to the workings of the electoral system nor to voter behavior, it will have to be sought in contextual factors that still work to stifle women's political careers. Malta's experience serves as a caution against optimistic expectations that the adoption of proportional representation will lead to greater legislative opportunities for women.

The under-representation of women in national legislatures is pervasive and well known, and a number of explanations for this phenomenon have been advanced in the political science literature. One of the frequently mentioned factors is a country's choice of an electoral formula. In particular, it has been argued that the use of proportional representation (PR) is more likely to promote the nomination and election of women than the use of the Anglo-American, single-member plurality system. Thus, the comprehensive cross-national analysis by Rule (1987) concluded that the 'type of electoral system is still the most significant predictor [of women's parliamentary recruitment]. Specifically, the party list/proportional representation system provides the most political opportunity for women.' Similar conclusions have been drawn in numerous other works (e.g., Duverger, 1955; Castles, 1981; Rule, 1981; Bogdanor, 1984; Norris, 1985 and 1987; Welch and Studlar, 1990). Although these studies neither ignored nor dismissed other factors, their impressive findings have occasionally led to explicit or implicit advocacy of adopting PR in order to improve the prospects of electing women (Darcy, Welch and Clark, 1987; Lakeman, 1970 and 1976; Welch and Studlar, 1986).

Fig.1: Women in West European and North American Legislatures,
By Country and Electoral System

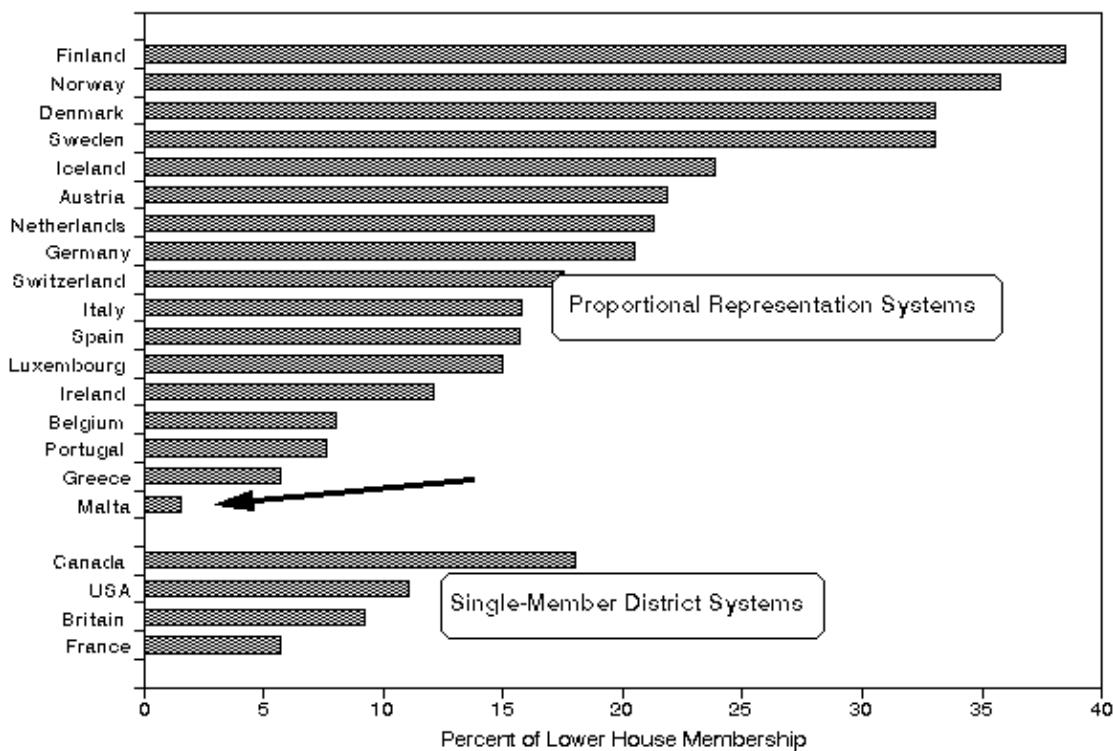


Figure 1 shows that most countries using PR have indeed substantially larger percentages of female legislators than most countries with single-member legislative districts. But there are a number of countries, mainly in Europe's southern tier, where the use of PR is not accompanied by a strong presence of women legislators. Malta ranks even below countries which use the generally less favorable single-member plurality system. There is currently only one woman in the 65-member legislature and it has a smaller percentage of women legislators (1.5%) than all the other Western countries surveyed. The case of Malta demonstrates that use of a proportional representation formula is no assurance of a reasonably high degree of representation of women.

Beckwith (1992) has urged caution about attributing too much significance to the impact of PR on women's electoral chances, arguing that 'the claim that proportional representation systems are more advantageous to women's candidacies has support, in comparative context, in aggregate data.' Her detailed examination of French and Italian election data cast doubt on the significance of the electoral system variable and she noted that 'studies concerning the actual workings of particular proportional representation systems and their impact on female candidacies are rare.' Malta is a country which lends itself to such detailed study for a number of reasons. First, it offers an unambiguous case of a country where the use of proportional representation has consistently been associated with a paucity of women legislators. Second, Malta uses the single-transferable-vote (STV) variant of proportional representation under which voters rank-order their preferences among candidates. This provides more detailed information on voter choices than is usually available from electoral data. Moreover, Maltese voters are presented with a ballot that lists the parties' numerous candidates in alphabetical order. Thus it does not present the recurrent problem of women being nominated in unwinnable or marginal constituencies and, in PR systems, of being placed so low on the party list that the candidacies become merely 'ornamental' (Darcy et al., 1987)

Malta is a small, highly urbanized island nation located just south of Sicily, with a population roughly the same size as Luxembourg's. It is a developed country, culturally and ethnically Western and staunchly Catholic. Its economy is loosely linked with the European Community and generates a per capita GNP comparable to that of Greece. Even before achieving independence from Britain in 1964 Malta had a Westminster-style parliamentary democracy with a unicameral legislature. It has conducted competitive elections since 1921 and has moved from multi-party to two-party competition in the years since World War II. Maltese politics have often been tumultuous but infrequently violent and there have been no anti-regime parties. Freedom of speech and of the press are constitutionally assured and vigorously exercised. From the beginning, Malta (like the Irish Republic) has used a variant of PR, namely, the single-transferable-vote (STV). Footnote (1) Although scholars often classify STV systems differently from party-list systems of PR, the difference between them,

particularly in respect to party control of nominations and district magnitude, is not significant in the Maltese context.
 Footnote (2)

The paucity of women candidates

PR systems necessarily have multi-member constituencies and it is this feature which is widely considered to be favorable to women candidacies. Enid Lakeman, a long-time advocate of proportional representation and of STV in particular, put the argument this way:

The reason why women fare better in multi-member constituencies is that a party which is reluctant to select a woman as its only candidate may be much more willing to include her as one of a list with several men.

Refusal to select a woman as sole candidate may be due to a real prejudice or to a belief that the electors are prejudiced -- that a woman candidate is likely to win fewer votes for the party than a man would. But if several candidates have to be selected the pressure is in the opposite direction -- not to offend either sex by excluding it but to widen the party's appeal by including both. (Lakeman, 1976)

Constituencies of five members and large slates of candidates are the norm in Malta, yet Maltese political parties have never nominated a sizable number of women. Footnote (3) Table 1 illustrates how consistently low the women's share of candidacies has been in Malta. Only two women were nominated in 1947, which was the first election in which they were eligible to compete. A high point was the 1951 election when 6.2 per cent of all candidates were women; but the following years saw stagnation and even decline in their numbers. Increases in the size of the legislature occurring in 1962, 1971 and 1976 were not matched by increases in the number of women candidates.

Table 1: Women's Shares of Candidacies, 1947 - 1992

Year	1947	1950	1951	1953	1955	1962	1966	1971	1976	1981	1987	1992	All
All Candidacies	124	187	130	172	142	302	264	199	226	231	242	246	2465
Women Candidates	2	11	8	8	8	13	6	5	8	11	12	8	100
Percent Women	1.61	5.88	6.01	4.65	5.63	4.30	2.27	2.51	3.54	4.76	4.96	3.25	4.06

SOURCE: This Table, and all subsequent Tables and Figures, are based on the author's machine-readable database of Maltese elections, compiled from the official "Results of Poll" published by the government of Malta.

There are differences in the recruitment of women candidates both between political parties and over time, as shown in Table 2. In the earlier period (1945 - 1971) the Nationalist Party had one of the poorest record of all political parties in nominating women candidates while a number of smaller parties of that period did considerably better in this respect. In the later period, which corresponds with the emergence of a two-party system in Malta, the contribution of the occasionally competing smaller parties almost vanished but the Nationalist Party dramatically increased its share of women candidacies whereas the Labour Party failed to improve its percentage. However, the overall share of women's candidacies is a constant 4.1 per cent for both time periods.

Table 2: Male and Female Candidacies, By Party

	1947 - 1971			1976 - 1992		
	Men Women Women			Men Women Women		
	(N)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(N)	(%)
Major Parties:						
Labour	436	20	4.4	426	17	3.8
Nationalist	428	6	1.4	422	19	4.3
Minor Parties:						
Dem. Constitutional	11	2	15.4			

Constitutionalist	189	20	9.6	1
Dem. Nationalist	79	4	4.8	1
Maltese Workers	97	4	4.0	1
Democratic Action	63	2	3.1	1
Christian Workers	109	3	2.7	1
Gozo	7	0	0.0	1
Jones	15	0	0.0	1
Communist			10	2 16.7
Democrats			8	0 0.0
Alternattiva Demokr.			27	0 0.0
+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+				
All Parties:	1434	61	4.1	893 38 4.1
+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+				

Independent candidacies are excluded

The differences between the political parties cannot be explained on the basis of ideological differences. Footnote (4) Both the Labour Party and the Alternattiva have been reformist and egalitarian parties, yet the former has had a declining percentage of women candidates and the latter had none. The Nationalists, on the other hand, conservative and closely aligned with the Catholic Church's traditional social teachings, have tended to do marginally better than Labour in the more recent elections. The right-of-center Constitutional parties had the best record of fielding women candidates but this because their leader, and a recurrent candidate, was a woman.

What can account, then, for the remarkably low number of women candidates? Some obvious questions come to mind: Has there been a scarcity of ballot positions? Have most women lacked the requisite qualifications for becoming candidates? Have women been electoral liabilities because of voter prejudice against them? Each of these possibilities will be examined in turn, using the fairly detailed evidence that an STV electoral system can provide.

No room on the ballot?

It is not difficult to determine whether the entry of more women was hampered because Maltese political parties lacked room on their slates of candidates to accommodate them. If ballot positions were scarce it could account for resistance to new entrants; but there has not been any such scarcity. For one, there are no legal limits on the number of candidates a political party can place on the ballot. Footnote (5) Moreover, and in contrast to single-member district systems, under a STV system the votes of a candidate who will ultimately fail to win a seat remain nevertheless available for transfer to other candidates on the party's slate. It is important to note that the parties have an incentive to maximize the number of candidates they present rather than to limit them. This is because Maltese voters overwhelmingly restrict their preference rankings (which determine the transfer of their unused votes) to candidates of the same party, with the result that even the votes for weak candidates are rarely lost to the party nor do they detract from the chances of other candidates. Footnote (6) Any additional candidacy, whether of a male or a female, is therefore a likely asset to a political party's electoral chances and it is so considered by the parties.

There has been considerable variation, from party to party and from district to district, in the number of candidates they have actually fielded in individual constituencies. The average number of candidacies per seat in all elections has been four; this average has ranged from a high of six per seat (in 1962) to a low of three (in 1947). It is noteworthy that the number of nominees bears no relation to the number of seats which a party can reasonably expect to win in a district. While one of the major parties usually wins three of the five seats, they have nominated ten or more candidates in some 20 per cent of the constituencies but fewer than five candidates in only a handful of constituencies. As Table 3 shows, five party candidates for each seat have become the effective minimum even though no party has ever won, or could reasonably have hoped to win, five seats in a district. Furthermore, there is no consistent pattern in such over-nomination, indicating that party elites have considerable discretion and flexibility in accommodating individuals who wish to pursue a candidacy.

Table 3: Size of Candidate Slates for the Major Parties

Years	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
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There is an almost inverse relationship between the size of the candidate slates and the magnitude of female representation among the candidates: On average, the two major parties fielded an average of 7.3 candidates in 244 contests and the minor parties 3.7 candidates in 175 contests while the respective averages of women candidates were 3.5 per cent for the major parties and 5.7 per cent for the minor parties. Although Maltese political parties have been almost profligate in fielding candidates, this tendency has obviously not accrued to the benefit of women. The quite plausible argument presented by Lakeman, namely, that there will be pressure to nominate women when there are multi-member districts, thus does not find support in Malta's experience, least of all for the large parties which have dominated Maltese legislative politics since the 1960s. Since the conspicuous rarity of women candidates therefore cannot be attributed to a shortage of ballot positions, an explanation must be sought elsewhere. We turn next to the possibility that women lacked the qualifications necessary or desirable for nomination.

Lacking Qualifications?

Maltese women as a group are not politically apathetic. Their voter turnout has exceeded 90 per cent in all recent elections; nearly half of the major parties' registered members are women; and the parties have extensive local women's associations (Bestler, 1991) But these involvements remain essentially marginal and fail to serve as a springboard for political careers. Also, service in local elective offices, so often a way in other countries to demonstrate qualifications and provide an apprenticeship for future politicians at the national level, is not available in Malta because the country has no elective positions other than the seats in the national legislature. Footnote (7)

Maltese women obviously do not lack the few formal qualifications that the law sets down, such as citizenship and adulthood. But what of informal qualifications? The parties have consistently favored nominees who are members of the professions, especially those who have built up a local clientele and reputation through personal services. Doctors, lawyers and pharmacists have provided almost half of all nominees (and 70 per cent of the winners). Few women, however, have as yet entered these professions, as gender inequalities in higher education have only recently lessened ; and most of the recently trained female physicians and lawyers have yet to achieve professional eminence. Another common route of entry is nepotism. Many candidates have been sons, brothers or nephews of established politicians; a much smaller number of wives, daughters or nieces have been beneficiaries of such arrangements. (Bestler, 1991, provides some examples.)

Nevertheless, Maltese political parties have not restricted themselves to professionals or to the socially and economically powerful when assembling slates of candidates. Local activists, trade unionists, journalists, economists, clerks and the like regularly appear among the candidates. The parties tend to look for candidates who have a core of local supporters whose votes they are likely to attract for themselves, at least on the first count. Even if these votes prove too few to elect the particular person they still, as explained earlier, benefit the party's remaining slate of candidates. One can reasonably assume that a much larger number of Maltese women would match the flexible criteria which have hitherto been used for the nomination of mostly male candidates and it would seem, then, that in Malta the most significant qualification women have lacked was being males.

Voter Prejudice?

If there has been neither a lack of ballot positions nor an absence of qualified women, can the failure to nominate them be attributed to the possibility that Maltese voters exhibit prejudice against women candidates? If this proves to be the case, then a failure to nominate women would be understandable and plausible, and this possibility therefore deserves particular scrutiny. The answer to this question need not rely on the fragile supports of speculation, anecdotal evidence or survey data. It can be explored through an examination of the actual choices made by Maltese voters when presented with both male and female candidates on the ballot. An STV system provides data not only on the voters' first choices among political parties and individual candidates (on the first count); it also provides detailed data on the voters' preference rankings among the various candidates (on the transfer counts). Such data can yield answers not just on how well Maltese women have fared in winning election but also on whether Maltese voters, given a chance to rank their preferences among males and female candidates, have exhibited prejudice toward women candidates. The evidence will be examined at some length; it will show that if voters have in fact harbored prejudice against women candidates then such prejudice has been reflected weakly, at most, in their voting choices.

(a) Winning Candidacies

In the twelve elections since 1947 women secured 3.89 per cent of all candidacies and 3.74 per cent of all electoral victories. The 100 candidacies undertaken by women in the twelve elections since 1947 resulted in 23 victories at the polls. This 23 per cent success rate for women candidates compares to an only slightly larger success rate (25 per cent) for male candidates. These figures indicate that once on the ballot, women as a group -- over time and on average -- have had just about the same chance of being elected as their male counterparts.

However, these aggregate data hide some noteworthy aspects. For instance, the successes of women do not show an increase over time, as has been the case in Western Europe generally in recent years. Indeed, as Table 4 demonstrates, the share of seats won by women in Malta has shrunk even as the number of legislative seats was increased. In the election of 1992 only one woman gained a seat in parliament, just as there was only one at the very beginning in 1947.

Table 4: Women's Shares of Legislative Seats

Years	1947	1950	1951	1953	1955	1962	1966	1971	1976	1981	1987	1992
Total Seats	40	40	40	40	40	50	50	55	65	65	69	65
Women's Share:												
Number	1	3	4	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	1
Percentage	2.5	7.5	10.0	2.5	2.5	4.0	4.0	3.6	4.6	3.1	2.9	1.5

Some differences between the winning females and males are also worth noting. First, only a handful of women has contributed to the female electoral successes. No more than seven different women have ever been elected; three of the women account for 16 of their 23 victories; and one woman won ten of all the seats ever held by women. Still, among the men the number of individuals who won election is also greatly exceeded by the number of unsuccessful ones. While only 7 of 38 individual women (18.4 per cent) were victorious, the comparable data for males are pyramidal as well: 195 of 784 individuals (24.9 per cent) account for all of the males' victories.

Second, more of the winning males have emerged as exceptionally successful vote-getters, as measured by their ability to obtain more than the district's quota of votes (i.e., sufficient to win a seat) on the first count. Twenty-two percent of the winning men polled first-preference votes in excess the quota, compared with only nine percent of the women. However, these first-count triumphs may be attributable not to gender but to incumbency. Footnote (8) Of the men who exceeded the quota on the first count, 94.3 per cent were incumbents, as were two of the three women who were similarly successful. Indeed, incumbency is strongly related to electoral success generally: seventy percent of the male winners were incumbents, as were sixty-four percent of the successful women. Here it might be added in passing that the slow pace of elite circulation in Malta is likely to add delays to the success of any newly emerging women candidacies. Studlar and McAlister (1991) argue that 'incumbency is at the heart of the problem of women's electoral disadvantages,' citing a considerable literature.

(b) Intra-Party Vote Distributions

The won-and-lost data discussed above are in part dependent, of course, on the particular parties' more general electoral fortunes. The minor parties, it will be recalled, had a higher share of women candidacies but won fewer seats for any of their candidates. Some additional light can be shed on the success of women candidates by examining their share of the votes within political parties and thus irrespective of a party's overall success. Two aspects will be examined: How women candidates fared in garnering first-preference votes, and how successful they were in the preference rankings which come into play during the subsequent vote transfer process.

In analyzing the success of women in obtaining first-preference votes, the measure of a 'standard vote share' is employed. This is defined as an equal share, for all candidates of a given party, of the total number of first-preference votes which the party obtained. With two candidates on a party's slate, the 'standard' share of first-preference votes would be 50 per cent, with three candidates 33 per cent, and so on. It is then possible to measure and display each case, to determine how much a candidate's actual vote share deviated from the 'standard' vote share. This analysis ignores all attributes other than gender and thus excludes some differences among candidates which might have been significant; but it should be noted that some presumably favorable attributes (e.g., incumbency or professional status) are less frequently found among women candidates and their chances of obtaining at least a 'standard' vote share would on that account be diminished.

Fig. 2: Deviations From the "Standard" Share of First-Count Votes

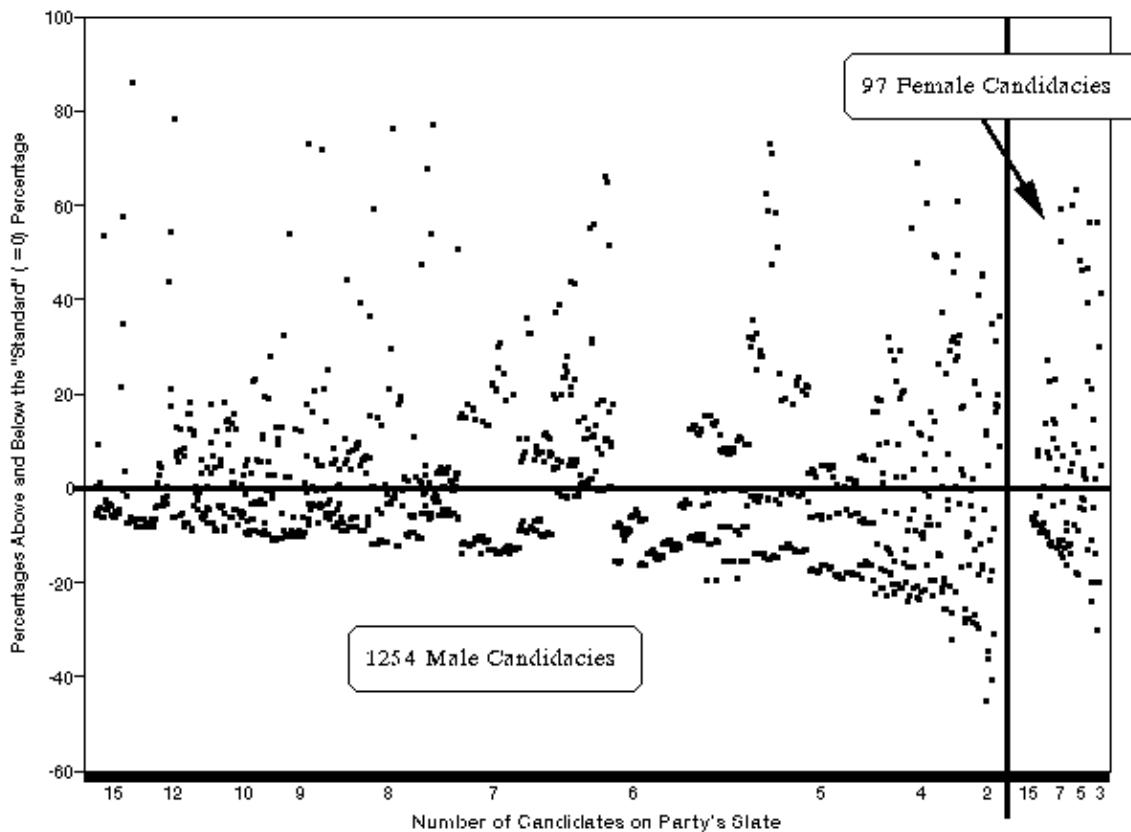


Figure 2 plots the results for all districts in which a woman candidate competed (but excludes independents and one-candidate party slates). It records for each of the 1,342 candidacies the extent to which a candidate's vote shares fell either above or below the 'standard' vote share. The resulting pattern reveals an essential similarity for male and female candidacies. If there were significant voter discrimination against women candidates then their vote shares would tend to concentrate below the 'standard' vote share; but for both groups the majority of the cases are clustered near the 'standard' vote share. 37 per cent of the male and 43 per cent of the female cases are above the 'standard' vote share. More of the male candidates, to be sure, achieved actual vote shares that were 60 per cent or more above the 'standard'; yet more of them also obtained the very lowest vote shares. A comparison-of-means test of all female and male candidacies shows that only a trivial percentage of the variance is associated with gender ($\eta^2 = 0.0105$; η^2 squared = 0.0001). Footnote (9) It seems appropriate to conclude that in Malta gender does not have a significant effect on the distribution of first-preference choices among a party's candidates.

The inquiry can go beyond an analysis of the first-preference choices of voters because an STV system also permits an examination of how voters made preference ranking of candidates. As votes are transferred on a particular count (i.e., the votes no longer needed by an already elected or an eliminated candidate) there are three possibilities: The votes are transferred to a candidate of the same party, or to a candidate of a different party, or become non-transferable for lack of any further preference. As previously noted, the first of these possibilities is so overwhelmingly prevalent in practice that the following analysis examines only transfers among candidates of the same party.

In every contest where a woman candidate competed with one or more males of her own party and where a vote transfer occurred because a candidate of the same party was elected or eliminated, the transferred votes were examined to see how voters allocated their preferences among the candidates still available to receive them. The measure of a 'standard vote share' is again employed and defined as an equal percentage of the transferred votes for each candidate of the same party who was still eligible to receive such votes. For instance, if a party slate had four candidates (the female and three males) who were still available to receive transferred votes on a particular count, then the 'standard' share for each of the four candidate is 25 per cent of those votes.

Figure 3: Deviations From The "Standard" Shares Of Transfer Votes
For Female Candidates on 162 Counts

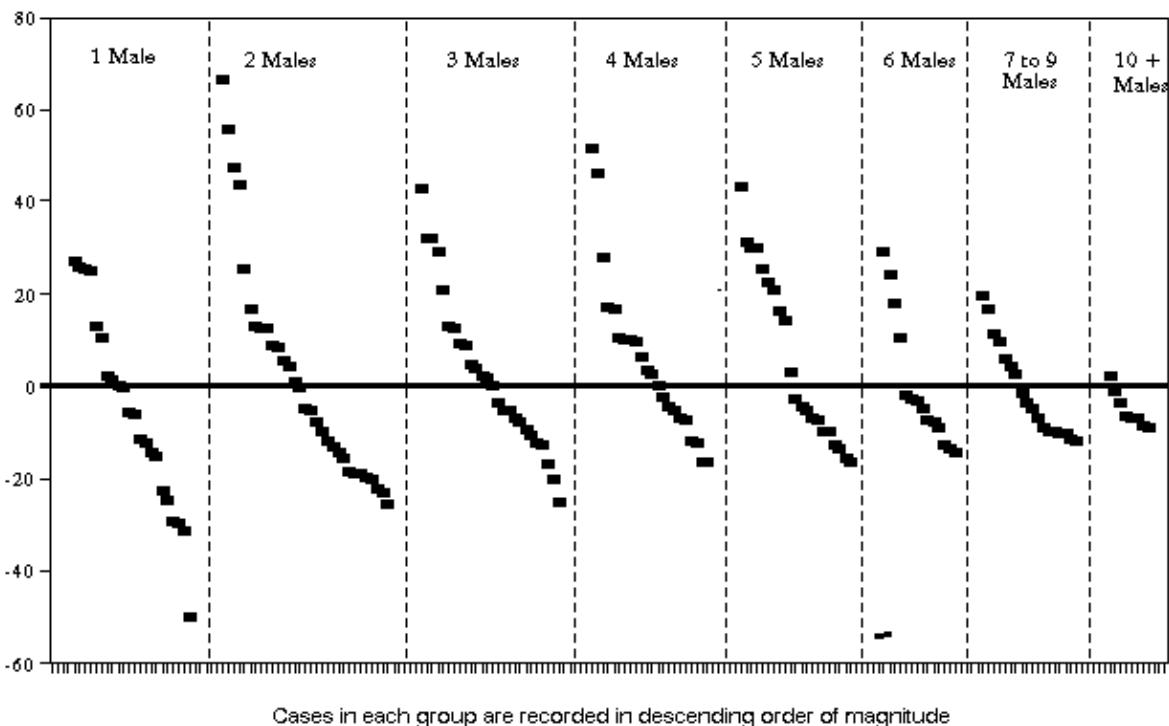


Figure 3 shows the extent to which the women's actual vote shares were distributed above and below the 'standard vote shares.' The 162 cases are grouped according to the number of males of the same party who were available to receive transferred votes. If there had been prejudice against women candidates generally, their vote shares would consistently and substantially have been below the 'standard' vote share because transferred votes would then have gone to other, male candidates or would have become non-transferable votes. But there is no such pattern. To be sure, their actual vote shares were below the 'standard' share in 104 of the cases, but they were higher in 69 cases (and identical in three); and they tend to cluster fairly closely around the 'standard' share. The mean percentage of actual vote shares is slightly below the 'standard' share (-0.468), yet this deficit must at least in part be attributed to the votes which, in the case of both male and female candidates, go to candidates of other parties or become non-transferable. When one examines these explicitly expressed voter preferences it therefore seems reasonable to conclude that evidence of an 'anti-women' vote is decidedly weak.

This finding might be surprising for a Mediterranean country where traditional social values have been dominant over the years. But in countries like Malta where the party loyalties of voters are stable and strong such loyalties probably will, not surprisingly, outweigh any biases against women still present in the electorate. Other studies have also shown that bias

against woman candidates is either absent or minimal (Darcy et al., 1987; in the U.S., Darcy and Schramm, 1977, Deber, 1982; in Britain, Hills, 1981, Welch and Studlar, 1988, Rasmussen, 1983a and 1983b; in Australia, Kelley and McAllister, 1983 and Studlar and McAllister, 1991; in Ireland, Darcy, 1988; but cf. Marsh, 1987). Further research in Maltese electoral politics might well match the conclusion reached by Kelley and McAllister (1983) writing about Australian elections and reflected in other studies cited above: 'Significantly, in some sense the largest disadvantage women face is not from the voters, but from the party selection committees.'

Conclusions and Speculations

We have seen that once they are nominated, female candidates fare about as well as their male counterparts. Simply put, the sparseness of their number in the Maltese legislature stems not from their collective failure as candidates; it results from the failure of party elites to recruit them in greater numbers. Remarkably, this has persisted even though, as the preceding analysis has shown, it cannot be attributed to either the workings of the electoral system or the behavior of the voters: First, there has been no shortage of ballot positions that women could occupy, even without replacing men on the ballot, since the parties actually have an incentive to maximize the number of their candidacies. Second, Maltese women have not lacked qualifications that are common among male candidates (except that there have as yet been few women with particularly valued attributes, namely, high visibility in the medical or legal profession and high-level positions in business). Finally, there is no evidence that Maltese voters have significantly or consistently favored male over female candidates when they cast their votes and ranked their preferences among candidates of their party. Thus, the experience of Malta serves as a caution against drawing the overly optimistic conclusion from the literature that adoption of proportional representation will necessarily create greater legislative opportunities for women. Any such hope clearly remains unfulfilled in Malta after almost fifty years.

An obvious question remains: What might explain the failure to nominate a reasonable number of women candidates? A search for this explanation will need to explore factors that are beyond the scope of the present analysis; the electoral data on which this paper has relied cannot account for candidacies that were never launched. The crucial nominating stage still remains hidden from view in what Gallagher and Marsh (1988) aptly labeled the 'secret garden of politics' and awaits future investigation. At this stage, it must suffice to offer some speculative comments on contextual factors that are likely to inhibit the mobilization of women as parliamentary candidates, by producing bias against women among nominating bodies or working as a deterrent to potential woman candidates.

The oft-described obstacles to women's political participation -- ranging from political socialization to the demands of domestic and parenting obligations -- are surely at work in Malta (Boissevain 1972). Recent survey data indicate that the Maltese still hold some of the most conservative views on the role of women in all of Europe (Abela 1991). Most Maltese have long considered the role of women to be primarily and properly confined to that of wife, mother and housekeeper, and Bestler (1991) observed that 'perhaps it is not an accident that many successful women in politics in Malta were or are not married.' The life of women outside the home has mainly focused on contacts with other women and with members of their extended family. These life patterns, of home-bound activities and the social separation of the sexes, obviously provide few opportunities for the efforts required to pursue political careers. The still potent influence of the Catholic Church tends to promote and reinforce traditional role assignments for women; and this has been mirrored in legal system until very recently (Xuereb, 1975).

The subordinate social roles assigned to women are matched by organizational patterns that fail to serve the political advancement of women. Bestler (1991) found that the activities of women in the party organizations "are more or less restricted to auxiliary and support roles." The largest women's organization, the National Council of Women, is close to the Church, focuses on good works and is scarcely militant. To the extent that women join political parties (and they do so in considerable numbers), their purpose is not so much to promote changes in the position of women or to promote their political careers but mainly to enjoy social interactions and to use such membership to advance individual and family interests in the typically clientelist relationships with politicians. These observations suggests that Maltese cultural values and social conditions have made most Maltese women effectively invisible as potential candidates to party elites (Sciberras, 1975). At the same time, it seems plausible that such persistent and pervasive conditions are likely to make women feel disinclined to pursue political opportunities. It is noteworthy that while there are no reported instances of women who wished to become candidates being denied a place on the ballot, there is some anecdotal evidence of women refusing to become politically active. Footnote (10) Quite possibly it has been the parties' inability, and not just their unwillingness, to recruit more female candidates that has largely been responsible for the meagerness of their numbers.

Recent years have seen changes in Malta that may well affect the future entry of women into active political careers. For instance, the birth rate has fallen precipitously since 1947; a growing economy has led to the entry of many more women into labour market; the university student population has become more than 40% female; and recent reforms of property, marriage and employment laws have dismantled legal discrimination against women. The effects of these changes have yet to be seen in the political realm. The exclusion and probable self-exclusion of Maltese women from legislative careers is still the norm, despite the structure of opportunity which the electoral system has always provided.

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Footnote (1) Under STV, voters have a single vote and are asked to give a preference ranking to as many candidates on the ballot as they wish, in numerical order: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, etc.. These preferences may include candidates of different political parties.

In order to win a seat, a candidate must receive a specified 'quota' of votes in the district. The quota amounts to the number of valid votes, divided by the number of seats plus one. On the first count, the first preferences on all ballots are examined, and any candidate who received enough first preference votes to meet the quota will be declared elected. Any votes received in excess of the needed quota are declared surplus votes and transferred to the candidate who was indicated on the ballot as the voter's next-ranked choice.

Furthermore, on successive counts where no candidate meets the quota, the candidate with the fewest number of votes is eliminated and his or her votes are transferred to the candidate who is the next-ranked choice on the ballot paper. (If a ballot paper no longer indicates a preference for a remaining candidate, then the vote becomes 'non-transferable' and

remains unused.) These transfers of votes, from candidates who have either been elected or eliminated, continue through successive counts until all seats have been filled.

Footnote (2) The aspects of the party-list system which are usually singled out as distinctive and significant are (a) the control that parties have over nominations and (b) the typically high district magnitudes. First, Maltese political parties also manage the nominating process, even though the legal code maintains the fiction that nomination is an undertaking by individuals. Because of narrow majorities and the strict party discipline prevailing in parliament, parties could ill afford potentially dissident candidates. The ballot papers present the voter with separate slates of candidates prepared by the political parties. (Truly independent candidacies are rare and attract negligible voter support.) Second, although the average district magnitude of five is low by the standards of party-list systems, Maltese parties typically present slates of candidates much larger than 5-member constituencies would require, as will be shown below.

Footnote (3) There were, in an exceptional and transitional arrangement for the 1971 election, five constituencies with six seats each.

Footnote (5) The anthropologist Jeremy Boissevain also discounted ideology as an explanation and pointed instead to organizational differences between the parties. Specifically, he argued that the Nationalist Party, unlike the Labour Party, relied mainly on recruiting candidates from the professional classes who were 'at the apex of a well organized political clientele' and therefore had no felt need to organize the women's vote. It is not made clear, however, how such differences in voter mobilization would account for differences in candidate recruitment. Boissevain (1972), pp. 208-209.

Footnote (5) There can be practical limitations, however: An unduly large slate of candidates could crowd the ballot paper to such an extent that it confuses voters and thereby leads to their making inadvertent candidate rankings. But there is no evidence that Maltese voters are thus confused even when a party presents a dozen candidates. For a discussion of this matter in the Irish context, see Katz (1980), pp. 117-122.

Footnote (6) Zanella (1987) reports that in 1987 a mere 0.6 per cent of the transferred votes went to candidates of another party. When the percentages for all elections since 1947 are taken into account, however, the percentages are somewhat higher. It is useful to restrict the data to those vote transfers where another candidate of the same party was still eligible to receive any transfer votes, i.e., when there was no inherent necessity for a candidate's votes either to accrue to the benefit of another party or to become non-transferable. It turns out that 1.2 per cent of Labour Party votes were 'lost' to other parties in the transfer process; for the Nationalist Party the figure was 2.0 per cent. The rate of cross-party transfers has tended to decrease over the years.

Footnote (7) This may change in the future, as elected local councils were instituted in 1993. The Nationalist Party made a particularly determined effort to increase the number of women candidates for these elections.

Footnote (8) It is obviously possible that factors other than incumbency itself explain the incumbents' success, but there is a strong argument for the significance of incumbency. It not only confers great visibility in a very small country like Malta; it is also bound to a strong clientelist culture where constituency service is strongly valued and assiduously practiced. Such service looms particularly large in an economy where nearly half of the work force is employed in government service or para-statal enterprises and where there is pervasive government regulation of nearly all aspects of industrial and commercial activity. Boissevain (1977) describes the workings of Maltese clientelism and offers what would appear to be a premature obituary for it.

Footnote (9) The limitations of the Maltese data inevitably put limitations on the available statistical analyses. Marsh (1987) used multiple regression analysis for his study of voting patterns in another country which employs STV, viz., Ireland. He found that, other things being equal, incumbent females received 1,144 fewer votes than males (whereas the cost of being female was 595 votes for non-incumbents). Unfortunately, the range of appropriate variables needed for multiple regression analysis, such as data on employment, family links and prior local government service of candidates, are unavailable for Malta.

Footnote (10) To give two examples: A professional woman wrote to the author that the national leader of her party personally urged her to become a candidate but she refused to do so. Bestler (1991) p. 61, reports an analogous story of a woman who, having agreed to serve in a political leadership position, withdrew because of her husband's disapproval. It might also be noted here that in a recent interview (The Malta Independent, 27 February, 1994, p. 8) the country's most

successful woman parliamentarian, who won the first of her ten elections in 1947, declared that "it was men who encouraged [me] to go for politics."