

Inside Parties

While extensive research examines electoral systems and institutions at the country level, few studies investigate rules within parties. *Inside Parties* changes the research landscape by systematically examining sixty-five parties in twenty parliamentary democracies around the world. Georgia Kernell develops a formal model of party membership and tests the hypotheses using cross-national surveys, member studies, experiments, and computer simulations of projected vote shares. She finds that a party's level of decentralization – that is, the degree to which it incorporates rank and file members into decision making – determines which voters it best represents. Decentralized parties may attract more members to campaign for the party, but they do so at the cost of adopting more extreme positions that pull them away from moderate voters. *Inside Parties* is an indispensable study of how parties select candidates, nominate leaders, and set policy goals.

Georgia Kernell is an associate professor in the Departments of Communication and Political Science at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics

General Editors

Anna Grzymala-Busse, *Stanford University*
 Dan Slater, *University of Michigan*

Associate Editors

Lisa Blaydes, *Stanford University*
 Catherine Boone, *London School of Economics and Political Science*
 Thad Dunning, *University of California, Berkeley*
 Anna Grzymala-Busse, *Stanford University*
 Torben Iversen, *Harvard University*
 Stathis Kalyvas, *University of Oxford*
 Melanie Manion, *Duke University*
 Perna Singh, *Brown University*
 Dan Slater, *University of Michigan*
 Susan Stokes, *Yale University*
 Tariq Thachil, *University of Pennsylvania*
 Erik Wibbels, *University of Pennsylvania*

Series Founder

Peter Lange, *Duke University*

Editors Emeritus

Margaret Levi, *Stanford University*
 Kathleen Thelen, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

Other Books in the Series

Luis Schiumerini, *Incumbency Bias: Why Political Office is a Blessing and a Curse in Latin America*
 Alexander Reisenbichler, *Through the Roof: Housing, Capitalism, and the State in America and Germany*
 Raúl L. Madrid, *The Birth of Democracy in South America*
 Nicholas Kuipers, *States against Nations: Meritocracy, Patronage, and the Challenges of Bureaucratic Selection*
 Nicholas Barnes, *Inside Criminalized Governance: How and Why Gangs Rule the Streets of Rio de Janeiro*
 Isabel M. Perera, *The Welfare Workforce: Why Mental Health Care Varies Across Affluent Democracies*
 Graeme Blair, Fotini Christia, and Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Crime, Insecurity, and Community Policing: Experiments on Building Trust*
 Georgia Kernell, *Inside Parties: How Party Rules Shape Membership and Responsiveness*
 Volha Charnysh, *Uprooted: How post-WWII Population Transfers Remade Europe*
 Catherine Boone, *Inequality and Political Cleavage in Africa: Regionalism by Design*

(continued after the index)

Inside Parties

How Party Rules Shape Membership and Responsiveness

GEORGIA KERNELL

University of California, Los Angeles



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
 978-1-009-51465-1 — Inside Parties
 Georgia Kernell
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
 New Delhi – 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
 a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009514651

DOI: 10.1017/9781009514705

© Georgia Kernell 2025

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
 of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
 place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

When citing this work, please include a reference to the
 DOI 10.1017/9781009514705

First published 2025

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Kernell, Georgia, 1979– author.

TITLE: Inside parties : *how party rules shape membership
 and responsiveness* / Georgia Kernell.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge
 University Press, 2025. | Series: Cambridge studies in comparative
 politics | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2024002789 (print) | LCCN 2024002790 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781009514651 (hardback) | ISBN 9781009514705 (ebook)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Political party organization. | Political leadership. |

Politics, Practical. | Political party organization – Great Britain. |

Political leadership – Great Britain. | Politics, Practical – Great Britain. |

Labour Party (Great Britain) | Conservative Party (Great Britain)

CLASSIFICATION: LCC JF2051 .K39 2025 (print) | LCC JF2051 (ebook) |

DDC 324.241–dc23/eng/20240326

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024002789>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024002790>

ISBN 978-1-009-51465-1 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-009-51469-9 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
 or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
 publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
 remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-51465-1 — Inside Parties
Georgia Kernell
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

For my parents

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> xi
<i>List of Tables</i>	xiii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xv
1 Introduction	I
The Importance of Party Rules	5
Inside Parties: The Tradeoff to Decentralization	7
Competing Perspectives on Party Organization	9
Data, Case Selection, and Methodology	12
Plan of the Book	13
2 A Model of Party Membership	16
Why Join?	20
A Model of Party Membership	24
Selective Benefits of Membership	25
Instrumental Benefits of Membership	27
Extensions	37
Mobilization	37
Party Weights and Majoritarian Systems	39
The Role of Party Size	41
Discussion	42
3 Comparing Party Organizations	46
An Overview of the Data	47
Definitions	47
Case Selection	48
Case Characteristics	49
Data Sources: Statutes and Interviews	55
Party Constitutions and Statutes	55
Interviews	58

	Varieties of Parties	60
	Candidate Selection	61
	Leadership Selection	71
	Platforms and Policy	76
	Other Organizational Rules	79
	Alternative Data Sources	79
	Discussion	81
4	Party Members: Motivations, Attitudes, and Behaviors	83
	A Brief Overview of Party Members	85
	Party Membership Data	90
	Party-Reported Membership Levels	91
	Cross-national Surveys	92
	Single Country or Party Surveys	93
	Party Organization and Aggregate Membership Levels	94
	Variables	95
	Results	99
	Individual-Level Determinants of Membership	104
	European Social Survey	105
	World Values Survey	118
	International Social Survey Programme	120
	Member Behavior in Canada	121
	Study of Canadian Political Party Members (2000)	121
	Canadian Election Study (2015)	124
	Discussion	125
5	A Causal Connection? A Survey Experiment of British Labour Voters	128
	Party Membership in the UK	129
	Screening Study	131
	Experimental Design	131
	Selective Incentives: Fees	132
	Instrumental Incentives: Party Organization	133
	Manipulation Checks	135
	Results	136
	Fees	137
	Party Organization	140
	Discussion	145
6	Party Responsiveness	148
	Decentralization and Responsiveness: Expectations	150
	Electoral Success	151

Contents ix

Measurement	153
Locating a Party’s Vote-Maximizing Position in the Electorate	154
Relating Party Organization to Responsiveness	161
Interior and Exterior Parties	162
Regression Results	165
Discussion	166
7 Conclusion	169
Revisiting the Argument and Findings	170
Causes of (De)centralization	171
Candidate Quality and Insights from American Primaries	174
Future Research on Party Rules in Comparative Democratic Politics	177
Government Formation and Duration	177
Legislative Behavior and Candidate Heterogeneity	178
Partisanship and Participation	178
Concluding Example: Australia’s Labor Party	179

APPENDICES

<i>Appendix A Proofs</i>	185
<i>Appendix B List of Interviews</i>	189
<i>Appendix C List of Party Statutes</i>	197
<i>Appendix D Chapter 4 Supplementary Tables</i>	206
D.1 Regression Results for the World Values Survey	206
D.2 Regression Results for the International Social Survey Programme	212
D.3 Canadian Election Study (2015)	213
<i>Appendix E Chapter 6 Supplementary Information</i>	214
E.1 Decentralization and Representation: Theoretical Predictions	214
E.2 Party Responsiveness: <i>Members Approve Policy</i>	218
<i>References</i>	219
<i>Index</i>	235

Figures

2.1	Probability of joining when membership affects the party position	page 31
2.2	Probability of joining when membership affects the government	34
2.3	Probability of joining with high membership influence	35
3.1	Observations by vote share, age, and left–right position	55
3.2	Excerpt from Fine Gael (2010) statutes	56
3.3	The values of <i>Members Control Candidate Selection</i> for various parties	70
4.1	Membership, as a percentage of the electorate (1950–2010)	87
4.2	“Become a member” page on the CD&V website	89
4.3	Distribution of parties’ annual membership fees	98
4.4	Mean party member and voter locations	106
4.5	Individual-level determinants of party membership, European Social Survey (2002–2011)	109
4.6	Predicted probabilities of joining a party	110
5.1	Membership fees and average interest	137
5.2	The effect of party organization on average interest	141
5.3	Member interest as a function of relative position to Labour	143
5.4	Average membership interest by centralized and decentralized treatments	144
6.1	Vote-maximizing positions in eight elections	159
6.2	Vote share at vote-maximizing position versus initial position	160
6.3	Average distance from vote-maximizing positions	161

xii	<i>List of Figures</i>	
6.4	Interactive effects of <i>Members Control Leadership Selection</i> and <i>Interior</i>	166
E.1	Equilibrium and vote-maximizing positions	216
E.2	Stable limit cycle	217

Tables

2.1	Canadian members’ motivations for joining	page 22
3.1	List of parties in the IPD	50
3.2	Average Pedersen volatility index, turnout, ENPP, and ENPP, by country	53
3.3	Distribution of cases by electoral system, federalism, and British legacy	54
3.4	<i>Members Control Candidate Selection</i> coding	68
3.5	<i>Members Control Leadership Selection</i> coding	75
4.1	<i>Member-Voter Percent</i> as a function of party fees and decentralization	100
4.2	Membership as a function of various individual-level attributes and fees, European Social Survey (2002–2011)	108
4.3	Party distance and membership in centralized parties, European Social Survey (2002–2011)	112
4.4	Membership as a function of various measures of member influence, European Social Survey (2002–2011)	116
4.5	Membership motivations and behaviors, Study of Canadian Political Party Members (2000)	123
5.1	Fee experiment: three conditions	132
5.2	Decentralization experiment: three conditions	134
5.3	The conditional effect of fees and income on membership interest and investment	139
5.4	<i>Membership Interest</i> as a function of Distance in the centralized treatment	145
6.1	Vote shares by party decentralization	152

6.2	Multinomial logit estimates of vote choice in Germany’s 2009 election	156
6.3	Party distance from vote-maximizing position	164
D.1	Membership as a function of individual-level attributes and fees, World Values Survey (2005–2020)	206
D.2	Party distance and membership in centralized parties, World Values Survey (2005–2020)	208
D.3	Membership as a function of various measures of member influence, World Values Survey (2005–2020)	210
D.4	Membership as a function of individual-level attributes and fees, International Social Survey Programme (2004)	212
D.5	Members’ motivations and behaviors, Canadian Election Study (2015)	213
E.1	Party responsiveness to vote-maximizing position	218

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the support of many scholars, mentors, and friends who supported this endeavor. Numerous colleagues read and commented on earlier drafts and gave feedback at conference presentations. Others provided translation assistance, put me in touch with political party leaders, or shed light on the nuances of different party dynamics. My dissertation advisor, John Huber, was an outstanding academic and personal role model. I am incredibly thankful to Jim Adams, Kate Baldwin, Jamie Druckman, Dan Galvin, Andrew Gelman, Lucy Goodhart, Ken Greene, Zac Greene, Tim Groeling, Laurel Harbridge-Yong, Indriði Indriðason, Ken Janda, Dick Johnston, John Kastellec, Ozge Kemahlioglu, Ken Kollman, Eduardo Leoni, Wolfgang Müller, Jack Nagel, Monika Nalepa, Yoshi Ono, Christine Percheski, Bing Powell, Eleanor Neff Powell, Rachel Reidl, Andrew Roberts, Frances Rosenbluth, Annie Shapero, Jason Seawright, Stuart Soroka, Dan Smith, Rogers Smith, Jae-Jae Spoon, Piero Stanig, Xin Sun, Josh Tucker, Alex Weisiger, Rebecca Weitz-Shapiro, Amy Widsten, and Matt Winters for their comments at different stages in the project. In addition, I thank Sascha Bang and Thomas Hallier for providing a place to stay while conducting interviews and Mark Schkolnik and Jayne Westerlund for helping me with childcare while writing during the pandemic.

I worked with a wonderful group of undergraduate research assistants on this book, including Zerxes Bhadha, Emily Erickson, Alexander Ferrer, Kate Gabrielson, Brett Hu, Pete Huang, Min-kyu Hwang, Georges Ip, Gaurav Lalsinghani, Susan Li, Xiaofeng Lin, Judy Ly, Lawrence Myung, Ruhee Patel, Danielle Singer, Raine Spentzos, and Pei Yin Teo. They scoured the web for party statutes and performed the often tedious

task of transcribing interviews. Graduate RAs helped write and check code, organize data, and support undergraduate RAs. These essential students include Guadalupe Bastos, Sebastian Karcher, Galen Murray, Imil Nurutdinov, and Kathryn Wainfan.

I am thankful to the National Science Foundation for a Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant (award number 0518509) that kickstarted my field research. Northwestern's Political Science Department and UCLA's Communication Department both supported hiring research assistants. I also received generous funding from the Hellman Foundation.

The book's arguments were developed based on interviews with party officials around the world. I list these invaluable contributors in the appendix. I also want to thank those who chose to remain anonymous, as well as the support staff in numerous political parties who helped secure interviews in the first place.

Lastly, I thank my family. More than anyone, I cannot thank my partner, PJ, enough for his support. It is because of PJ that I fell back in love with math in graduate school. He read more drafts of this manuscript than I can count. My parents-in-law, Mary, Bill, and Laura, provided unwavering support and childcare. My children, Desiree and Guy, always kept me grounded with love, humor, and endless distractions. And my parents, Dianne and Sam, allowed me to explore how rules shape behavior at a young age. They are the best writers I know, and I dedicate this book to them.