

**CANDIDATE GENDER AND ELECTORAL SUCCESS IN PARTY  
LIST PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION (PR LIST) SYSTEMS**

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Maarja Luhiste

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis studies women politicians' journey along the path from candidates to elected representatives in party list proportional representation (PR list) systems. While past literature provides sufficient evidence that more women are elected in proportional electoral systems than in majority / plurality systems, there is limited research explaining the differences in women's representation across varying types of PR list systems. This thesis aims to fill that gap, by focusing primarily on the election of women across preferential (open and ordered list systems) and non-preferential (closed list systems) PR list voting systems. Moreover, unlike the vast majority of previous research, which has relied on aggregate level data only, this research investigates the election of women at the individual candidate level. Such an approach allows the present thesis to consider, next to traditional aggregate level predictors, how party gatekeepers and the news media may either support or hinder women in progressing from candidates to elected representatives. Since the focus is set on the 2009 European Parliament elections, this thesis investigates the process of electing women cross-nationally. The results show that female candidates have a higher likelihood of being elected in non-preferential closed list voting systems than in preferential ordered list voting systems. The results suggest that this is the case because, first, party gatekeepers in ordered list systems place women in less viable electoral list positions than party gatekeepers in closed list systems; second, media cover female candidates less in ordered list systems compared to closed list systems; and finally, female candidates in ordered list systems fail to make up their less competitive starting position with preference votes because preference votes in ordered list systems do not significantly alter the initial party list rankings.

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