Competitive advertising strategies for programmatic television

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Challenges of political participation and intra-party democracy: Bittersweet symphony from party membership and primary elections in Italy

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Introduction

This article aims at assessing the organizational consequences on party membership of intra-party democracy procedures such as the use of open primary elections. This is a crucial issue for understanding the recent organizational developments of political parties. Parties in Western Europe have been facing three significant declining trends that have altered their relationship with the grassroots: voter loyalty, party membership and the importance of cleavage politics. Several authors pointed out that it is the 'party on the ground' dimension that is facing a real crisis (Cross and Katz, 2013, p. 65). The two main organizational responses that parties have recently elaborated to cope with such challenges are the expansion of intra-party democracy and the introduction of new forms of party membership. In particular, several parties have adopted a wide range of internal organizational reforms that, at least formally, give members more say over outcomes. Direct democracy is now used in several intra-party decision-making procedures such as candidate and leadership selection, and formulation of policy positions (Cross and Pilet, 2013). Several European parties have adopted open primaries, meaning party internal elections for selecting political leaders or candidates for office (either for parliamentary elections or for chief executive mandates, at all levels) that entail votes by members, sympathizers and registered voters.

These two responses trigger significant modifications in the role and power of grassroots activists, while party organizational change generates, in general, potential conflicts among traditional party delegates, activists and supporters. As argued by Scarrow (2014) and Gauja (2014), internal democratization processes are often accompanied by the creation of more diverse affiliation options (or 'membership types') for citizens (Gauja, 2014, p. 9). These organizational reforms implement more individualized participatory opportunities that blur the distinction between party members and non-members (namely, supporters). The creation of different types of membership by parties – such as the development of formalized supporters'

networks or the creation of participatory opportunities for non-members – clearly affects the role and powers of traditional affiliated members.

The main research questions we address are the following: How do enrolled members perceive internal democratization and primaries? Which factors contribute to explaining grassroots members' opinion on primaries? This article explores, with original survey data on Italy, the relationship between primaries and party members, and how the former are perceived by the latter.

The Italian Democratic Party (*Partito Democratico*, PD) is well suited for exploring these questions, as it has used open primaries for more than a decade, and they involve both party supporters and enrolled members in internal decision making (Seddone and Venturino, 2013b). Also, PD is the only Italian party that adopted both democratization reforms and primary elections during the past few years. The PD was created in 2007 with the merger of the leftist, post-communist party 'Democrats of the Left' (*Democratici di Sinistra*, DS, previously called 'PDS') and the center-left party 'The Daisy' (*La Margherita*). What makes the PD case particularly interesting for the purposes of this article is the fact that the party is the heir of both the Catholic and communist political cultures and of their mass-based organizational settings. However, since 2007 the new party reformed the structures of the two founding organizations by making them more open, flexible, transparent and democratic.

Several PD members were previously enrolled in the DS, the Daisy, the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and/or the Italian Christian Democrats (DC), which were mass-based parties. Other members joined the party – a new, flexible and inclusive organization – only after its creation in 2007. This means that PD integrates two distinct categories of enrolled members: those who joined after 2007 and those who were previously enrolled in the founding parties. The two groups experience partisan engagement in dissimilar ways. They were, in fact, politically socialized into the party internal life through different patterns and structure their relationship with the party in a varying fashion. Their 'style' of involvement in the party varies because they have been politically socialized within diverse organizational settings. While, by creating different types of membership (full member, supporter, cyber-member and so on), political parties now provide multi-speed membership opportunities (Scarrow, 2014), in parties resulting from the merger of two previously mass-based parties but adopting new organizational models after the merger, members enrolled before or after the merger are characterized by different 'styles' of membership. While the 'type of membership' concerns the modes of partisan affiliation, the 'style of membership' concerns the socialization into and the adaptation to party organizational models. This article is about the latter.

Yet, since open primaries have been around for 12 years now, it is important to explore whether PD members, who are socialized to at least two different styles of partisan engagement, evaluate and react to inclusive decision-making procedures, which allow both members and non-enrolled supporters to select candidates for elections at all levels and/or the party leader. In addition, we need to assess to what extent party members agree to share rights and powers with non-enrolled supporters. How do members who are socialized into traditional forms of mobilization within

mass-based parties react to the adoption of such inclusive procedures of internal decision making as open primaries?

The central proposition of this article is that members of the Italian PD have different attitudes toward primary elections depending on their style of membership and depending on their levels of activism. The article is therefore relevant to research on the influence of the expansion of intra-party democracy as a response to party decline, especially the 'party on the ground' dimension.

The article is structured as follows. In the first section, we offer an overview of the literature on intra-party democracy and its influence on party membership; the second section provides a brief discussion of party politics in Italy as well as of the PD's experience with intra-party democracy and outlines our theoretical expectations; the third section discusses the main methodological issues concerning data and the analytical approach developed in this article; the fourth section presents and discusses our main findings. Conclusions follow.

Party Membership and Intra-Party Democracy

The meaning and nature of party membership has significantly evolved in the last decades across Western democracies. Political parties have changed their organizational structures by weakening the relationship with members and voters. This is, for instance, supported by data on membership size, whose figures are evidently declining in several contemporary democracies (van Biezen *et al*, 2012). Nowadays, parties are less linked to their grassroots; they are less *on the ground* and more in *public office* (Dalton *et al*, 2011). If compared with mass parties, they have little in common. Indeed, the recent process of party organizational change has reshaped the relationship between the party and its members and supporters (Young, 2013, p. 75), and the old mass-party organizational structures, rooted in grassroots membership and ideologically distinctive, are being replaced by organizational permeability and mobilization of party supporters.

Intra-party democracy is often used in the scholarly literature as a very broad term that refers to an ample range of methods for 'including party members in intra-party deliberation and decision-making' (Scarrow, 2005, p. 3). Though aware of the theoretical tension between participatory and representative conceptions of democracy within parties (Hazan and Rahat, 2010), in line with Scarrow (2005), we define intra-party democracy on the basis of the inclusive and unmediated nature of internal party decision-making processes. The concept is mostly operationalized on the basis of the degree of inclusiveness of leadership and candidate selection processes, but also by looking at the procedures allowing members to have a say in the formation of the party program. In this article, we focus on the adoption of primaries for selecting candidates and leaders as a measure of intra-party democracy.

The adoption of primary elections can be seen as an example of a party reaction to a crisis of legitimacy. The increasing diffusion of inclusive procedures for selecting candidates and leaders empirically underlines a change in party strategies for

electoral and political mobilization. The rationale is therefore more tactical than ideological. Primary elections are becoming quite popular among European parties, which have adapted the US model, adjusting it to the particular political and institutional contexts in their countries (Hazan and Rahat, 2010; Cross and Blais, 2011; Sandri *et al*, 2015). The inclusiveness of these procedures influences the relationship among parties, members and supporters. In many European parties, an internal debate has been recently launched on whether to adopt open primaries for the selection of their candidates. Also, several parties in France, Italy and Greece are led by leaders chosen under primary elections, which are designed to increase internal democracy by broadening the circle of individuals empowered to choose the party head. Thus, if Italy and France have launched this process of internal democratization by adopting open primaries for selecting leaders and candidates, the same trend is now affecting also the Labour Party in the United Kingdom and the Spanish PSOE.[1]

Inclusiveness leads to a reorganization of collective and selective incentives, which classically determine the participation within political parties (Clark and Wilson, 1961). Allowing participation of supporters not formally enrolled in the party implies that those selectors can participate in a very important moment of party life, without any real or structured involvement in the party. Though the allocation of these new incentives can also trigger distortions in internal power distribution, members and non-members thus share, with different engagement in internal activism, the same participative selective incentives.

However, a closer look reveals that the high degree of inclusiveness of open primaries is aimed at mobilizing supporters as well as regularly affiliated members. In fact, primary elections promote a new image of political parties, much more democratic and transparent, open to all members who are finally admitted into the smoke-filled rooms (Hopkin, 2001, p. 344). Yet the real targets of this mobilizing strategy are the voters (Cross and Katz, 2013, p. 10). Inclusiveness of open primaries means that both members and supporters without any formal affiliation take part in core decision-making processes, such as the selection of candidates and party leaders. This is bound to affect party organization. However, this also means that these two categories of selectors are very different from a political standpoint. If enrolled members might be easily considered to be strongly involved and interested in internal party life, this is not necessarily true for supporters, who remain external to party structures. Incentives for intra-party mobilization are very different, and they could bring to different outcomes in terms of the internal organizational relationship.

Italian-Style Primaries

The adoption of open primaries for selecting candidates for public office and party leaders can be considered as one of the main developments in Italian party politics in the last 10 years.[2] In Italy, the very first open primaries at national level were held in 2005 for selecting the candidate of the center-left coalition for the 2006 general

elections. Since then, the use of primaries has spread, especially at the local level, where several center-left parties (often in coalitions led by the PD) used them to select their candidates for municipal elections (Pasquino and Venturino, 2009; Seddone and Valbruzzi, 2012).[3] Open primaries worked as a foundation myth and a crucial element of party identification for the PD. The creation of this party[4] coincided with the organization of an open primary election for selecting the new party leader, which in the intentions of the founding parties' elites would serve as a celebratory event necessary to finalize a long and troubled merging process.[5] The PD's internal regulations recognize these inclusive procedures as an instrument of intra-party democracy and define open primaries as the main instrument for selecting candidates for public office at local, regional and national level, as well as candidates for party offices such as party leader.[6] Thus, primaries have become a distinctive feature of the PD which, in a party system strongly characterized by personalization of politics and personal parties, is the only party offering an alternative organizational model.

The Italian party system provides an appropriate case study as several parties have adopted open or closed (entailing a full membership vote) primary elections during the past few years. In fact, if primaries are usually associated with the PD, Italian party members have familiarized themselves with the instrument and elaborated informed opinions on the topic since the increased use of primary elections at different levels since 2005. The participative success of PD's primary elections and the good impact on public debate (Bobba and De Luca, 2016) triggered a process of contagion.

Recently, in fact, other Italian parties, also from the right side of the political spectrum, have sporadically resorted to (or are currently discussing the adoption of) primary elections for selecting their candidates or party leaders. The Northern League, for example, selected its party leader through a closed primary election in 2013 (Porcellato and Rombi, 2014). The Five Star Movement selected candidates for the 2013 general election through closed legislative primaries (Rombi and Seddone, 2015). The niche party Italy of Values also resorted to inclusive procedures for choosing its party leader. The rapid spread of such inclusive selection methods in the Italian political system requires an in-depth understanding of their real impact at organizational level concerning, specifically, the relationship with party members. Within the Italian party system, the PD constitutes the most useful case study, because of the varied nature of its membership and the institutionalized use of primaries, and can provide valuable insights on the consequences of internal democratization processes, as discussed below.

The party model adopted by the PD in 2007 constitutes a relevant organizational innovation from the membership side, where members and voters are called to select not only candidates but also the party leader, sharing the same right to participate and decide. Such an innovation, influential for other Italian parties[7] and several other post-mass, mainstream center-left, social-democratic parties in Europe, is even more significant when considering the long history of the predecessors of the two main founding parties of the PD. The PCI and DC can be fairly considered as ideal types of

the mass parties described by the literature on political parties, with a crucial role for activists and members in party life. Although some smaller parties have also used primaries, the PD is the only large nationwide party that employs them. Also, in terms of party competition, PD is one of the biggest Italian political parties – having the broadest membership base in Italy (Sandri *et al*, 2015) – being in government at national level since 2011, currently holding 301 seats in the lower chamber and governing 17 over 20 Italian regions, alone or in coalition.

In light of this discussion, our first hypothesis relies on the difference in the style of party membership. We categorize PD grassroots members on the basis of their 'membership style'. It relates to the relationship that individual members have with the party's organizational structures and depends on the varying patterns of socialization into specific organizational models: mass-party model (characterized by a continuous and stable activity in party internal life) and post-mass (organizationally permeable) party model that provide different visions of the role of members in the organization (Young, 2013). The distinction between 'old-style' and 'new-style' members is made on the basis of the year of enrollment: we distinguish simply between members that joined before (and who were previously members of one of the founding parties) or after 2007. The distinction assumes that the two groups can be categorized on the basis of the type of partisan socialization they have experienced within the party, which determines the nature of their engagement.

So, we distinguish between: (i) old-style members, who were previously enrolled in one of the founding parties, and thus are socialized into mass membership parties' organizational settings. They are used to more traditional and stable forms of partisan affiliation and party-members linkage; (ii) new-style members, who enrolled in the party after the creation of the PD in 2007, and thus are socialized into more flexible forms of partisan engagement. They are used to a supporter-based, organizationally permeable party and to a less traditional and inclusive model of relationship with the party.[8] If old-style members come from a tradition of activism within membership-oriented parties, new-style members are enrolled in a new kind of party, where the differences between enrolled and non-enrolled activists are less defined and more blurred.

We argue that old-style and new-style members show distinct evaluations of such inclusive methods of candidate and party leader selection, reacting in a different way to the inclusiveness of open primary elections. Primaries provide an ambivalent opportunity of internal mobilization, perceived quite differently by the two types of members. For those PD members who already experienced party activism within the old mass parties, primaries constitute a new opportunity of participation that follows patterns of involvement similar to those present in mass parties but with even more powers granted to them. Members are deeply involved in the organization of the primary competition, both during the electoral campaign and on the election-day with their presence at the polls. Therefore, we argue that old-style members' engagement in primaries replicates the traditional mass party internal activities. This engagement entails a positive evaluation of primaries and their inclusive features. However, primaries entail also a new distribution of collective and selective incentives.

Members now share power and rights with external supporters who are not involved in the party organization: a different degree of activism corresponds to a similar role in the decision process (Heidar and Saglie, 2003). It can be the case, in fact, that old-style members may oppose primaries because they consider them to be 'red herrings' that divert the membership from other types of internal activism that contributes to and promotes intra-party democracy and this could negatively affect their participatory attitude in such events.

Compared with old-style members, new-style members have not been previously politically socialized to intra-party activities. They joined the new party adopting a more inclusive concept of party membership. Those members are probably less inclined to a continuous and stable participation within the party and more used to cognitive mobilization. This means that they share a very high interest in politics, but a lower level of mobilization. Their opinion about primaries will be more positive than the one of old-style members. In particular, they would be attracted by the possibility of participating in intra-party activities in a less structured way, which has the advantage of the collective incentives provided by primaries, without the cost of intense activism as in the traditional mass parties (Scarrow *et al*, 2000; Aylott *et al*, 2012; Seddone and Venturino, 2013b). We then expect a different attitude toward primaries depending on membership style in the following way:

Hypothesis 1: New-style members show a more positive opinion of primary elections than old-style members.

Our second hypothesis argues that a positive evaluation of primary elections might be related to the degree of activism. The literature is not uncontroversial. On the one hand, some studies suggest a beneficial effect of primaries for promoting participation. For instance, Heidar and Saglie (2003) say that primaries enhance participation of new supporters who are not traditionally interested in intra-party participation, whereas for other scholars the introduction of primaries strengthens the degree of participation of members who are already highly mobilized (Cross and Blais, 2011; Young, 2013; Wauters, 2014). We argue that open primary elections give both to external supporters, who are not formally enrolled in the party, and to party members, who are more active in party internal life, the same rights to affect processes of intra-party decision making. In other words, open primaries allow the participation of individuals characterized by different degrees of involvement in party activities, and thus by very different material and immaterial resources associated with political involvement. External supporters and party members are characterized by different types and degrees of engagement in party activities, but they share similar rights and powers with regard to important internal decision-making areas. Active party members may therefore perceive open primaries as an internal procedure that could limit and weaken their role within the party by recognizing a new central role to external supporters, who in turn are not equally involved in party activities. Therefore, more active members will thus perceive such inclusive selection methods less positively compared with the perception of less active members (Sandri and Pauwels, 2011). On the other hand, other studies are, instead, more concerned with negative consequences. In fact, Katz and Mair (1995)

argue that primaries would weaken the mobilizing potential of rank-and-file members

by diminishing their power of control on party leadership, while other studies show that (open) primaries can negatively affect the candidate loyalty to the party because the nomination is legitimated outside the party, directly by primary voters (Hopkin, 2001; Ansolabehere *et al*, 2006).

Although we do not line up with any of these standpoints, we recognize that, given that more active members would want to hold on to the greater power their participation produces, we would expect that they would have a less positive opinion of primaries than less active members have.

Hypothesis 2: The higher the degree of members' participation within the party, the less positive is their opinion of primary elections.

Data, Measurement and Method

We test our hypotheses using original data from a 2013 Web survey on PD enrolled members realized right after the center-left coalition primaries for selecting the Prime Ministerial candidate for the 2013 general elections (data are from the Candidate & Leader Selection Standing Group: www.cals.it). The survey has been realized on the basis of CAWI methodology and includes all PD members who provided their email address ($N = 100\,000$). The Web survey has been available from 25 March to 14 April.[9] At the end of 2011, the PD had 763 783 members nationwide, and during the 3 weeks of the survey a total of 13 666 responses have been collected (26 of whom were members living abroad). The figure represents 1.8 per cent of the overall PD membership. However, we note that as the questionnaire has been submitted only to those members who had previously provided their email address and the authorization to be contacted, the sample is inevitably biased for the sake of limiting the cost of data collection and non-sampling errors (see Groves, 1989, pp. 246–247).[10]

Our dependent variable represents the opinion of party members of primary elections. To operationalize members' general opinion of primaries, we use a dummy variable (1 meaning positive opinions and 0 meaning negative opinions) constructed by creating a cumulative index using a battery of four items on the basis of the question 'How much do you agree with the following statements?': (1) primaries increase divisiveness within the party; (2) primaries improve my evaluation of the party; (3) primaries reduce members' power; and (4) primaries promote the renewal of the political class. Respondents were asked to score these items on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 'strongly disagree' to 4 'strongly agree'. We recoded them into dichotomous variables indicating negative (strongly disagree, disagree) and positive (strongly agree, agree) opinions on the items proposed (Figure 1). The items 1 and 2 were reverted in order to allocate higher scores to the answers that were taken to represent a positive opinion on primaries. The four dichotomous variables have been then added into a cumulative index (Figure 2).

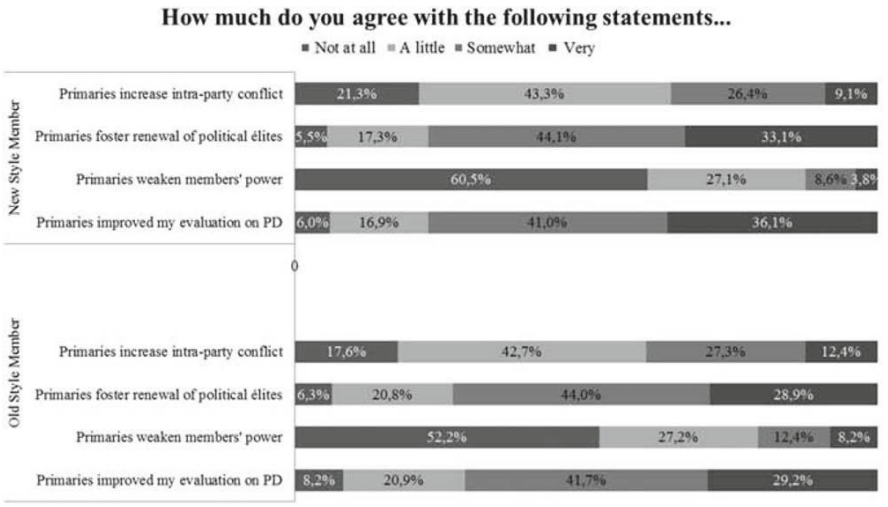

Figure 1: General opinion on primary elections (percentages).

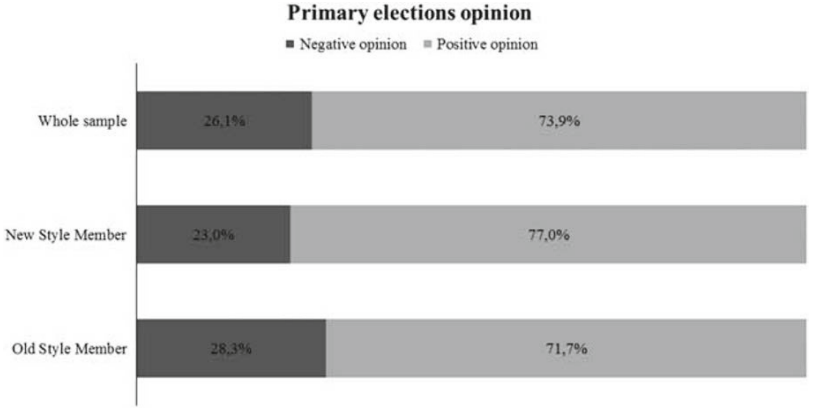

Figure 2: Index measuring the general opinion on primary elections (percentages).

Our two main independent variables are membership style and party activism. Membership style is a dummy variable that takes value 1 for new-style members and 0 for old-style members. Old-style and new-style members' profiles appear to be quite different. In terms of socio-demographic characteristics (online Table SI3), the two types of members are quite distinct regarding both gender and age distribution. Among new-style members there is a higher presence of women than in both the whole sample and old-style member subgroup. Besides, new-style members are also

younger than both the whole sample and old-style member subgroup. The differences in age distribution between the two groups correspond to different political socialization patterns and thus to different experience of political activism; and these differences influence their perceptions and attitudes toward intra-party activities and participation in general. Yet the two groups are less differentiated in terms of educational attainment, which is generally high.

In terms of political profile (online Table SI4), when looking into previous party affiliation of old-style members, we find a clear prevalence (68.1 per cent) of old-style members coming from communist or post-communists parties (PCI, PDS, DS), whereas old-style members coming from Catholic parties (DC and the Daisy) are only 22 per cent. This distribution is also reflected in the ideological self-placement declared by PD members on a left-right scale: 51 per cent of old-style members position themselves on the left side of the scale, while new-style members show a slightly more differentiated pattern: there is a higher identification with the center-left category (45.5 versus 41.3 per cent among the general sample, and 38.3 per cent among old-style members).

We measure the level of party activism by members' weekly activity in terms of hours of engagement within the party (Figure 3). What clearly emerges is that, in general, members seem to be little involved in party life activities. Indeed, 28.2 per cent of them declares not to participate at all in any party activity during the week and 30 per cent devotes less than 2 hours per week to militant engagement, which is the dominant category considering the whole sample. Conversely, only 4.1 per cent are involved more than 20 hours per week, a figure that goes up to 9 per cent including also those who spend between 10 and 20 hours in the party. Yet, though the general pattern is similar between membership styles, old-style members are more committed and engaged than new-style members are committed. More than one-third of new-style members seems to be very distant from the party; whereas, if we consider those who have been enrolled in the predecessor parties, the picture is slightly different. Our argument suggests, in fact, that activists participate in a different way according to their membership style. While old-style members show a more assiduous and consistent level of participation, new-style members seem to be quite distant from party activity and this distance could be related to a different kind of political socialization.

We test our arguments using a simple logistic regression model:

$$MOP = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 * MEMBSTYLE] + \beta_2 * ACTIVISM] + \beta_3 * CONTROLS] + \varepsilon;$$

where

MOP = Party members' general opinion on primary elections (1 if positive, 0 if negative)

MEMBSTYLE = Membership style (1 if new style, 0 if old style)

ACTIVISM = Party members' activism (hours of engagement within the party)

α_0 is the intercept and ε is the error term.

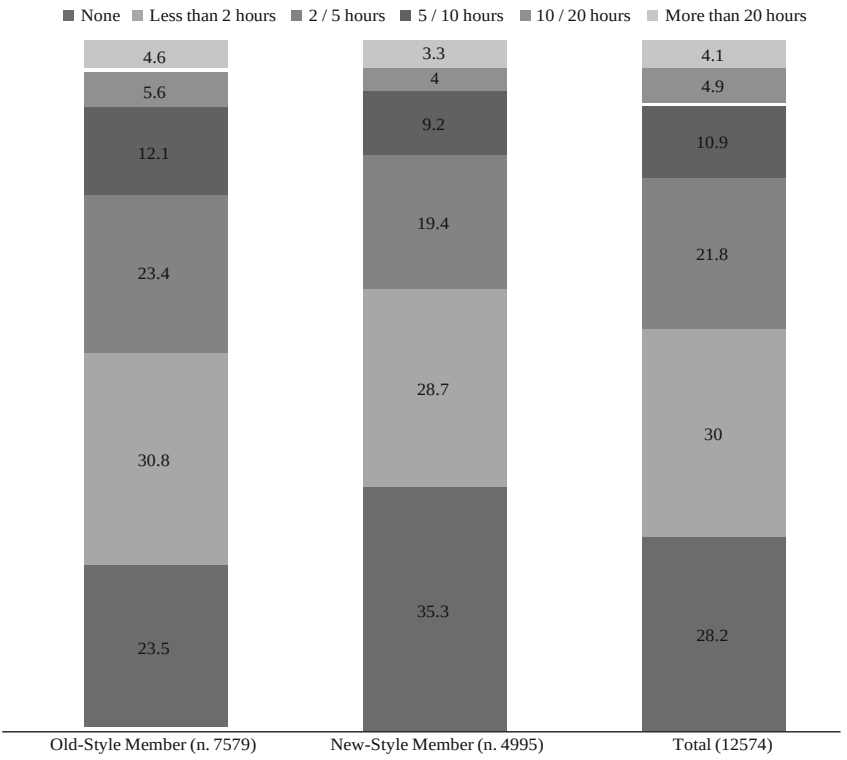

Figure 3: Weekly activity within the party by membership style (percentages).

We also include several controls in our analysis. As the US literature on divisiveness (for example, Wichowsky and Niebler, 2010) and negativity (for example, Peterson and Djupe, 2005) of primary elections campaigns suggests, the evaluation of primary elections can also be related to the final result of the contest or to the primary competition itself. We control for this possibility by using the last coalition primaries held in 2012 for selecting the Prime Ministerial candidate of the center-left coalition for the 2013 general election – which were different than the 2007 primaries for selecting the party leader.[11] To understand the assessment of the selectors enrolled in PD in the aftermath of such a divisive and publicly debated primary, we have created an additive index of satisfaction with the 2012 primaries, summing up the items of Figure 4 and dividing the measure into three categories of satisfaction (low, medium and high). Eight items were proposed to the respondents as Likert scales (in which respondents could fully agree, partly agree, partly disagree or fully disagree with). Highest scores went to the respondents who strongly agreed. After performing a principal component analysis (online Table SI5), we saw that all

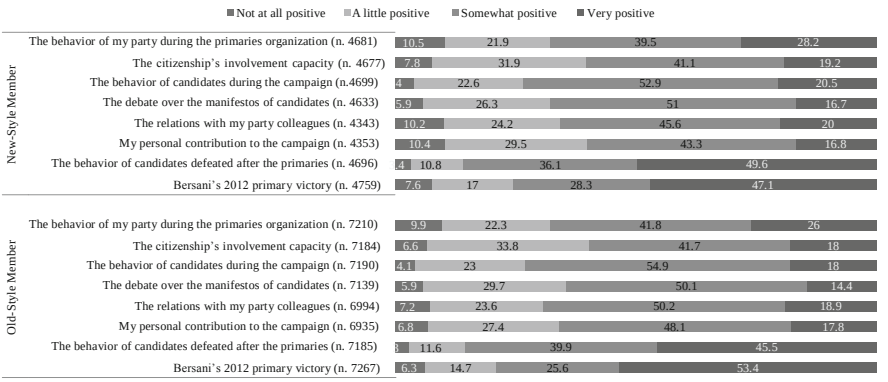

Figure 4: Evaluation of 2012 primaries by membership style (percentages).

items (but one) loaded significantly on one individual factor, dealing with the satisfaction with intra-party democracy. The eight items were thus merged in a cumulative scale (Cronbach's α: 0.67).

In general, both types are quite satisfied and there seems not to be a large variation between membership styles. However, old-style members are more satisfied with the former secretary's victory, their personal contribution to the primary campaign and the relationship with their party colleagues compared with new-style members, proving the existence of a different vision of party life between the two of them. Among the most positive assessments, the dominant categories are party leader's success for old-style members and the behavior of the defeated candidates for new-style members, revealing somehow the preferences of members. In fact, the former seem to be more connected to the secretary than the latter, implying not only a different conception of the party but also suggesting a different participative attitude. Although it is the least chosen category, it is curious to notice that the ones not at all satisfied are the new-style members, registering slightly higher levels of dissatisfaction compared with the others.

As a positive view of the last primary might be driven by the fact that the candidate voted for the winner of the competition (and, conversely, a negative view might be influenced by the fact that the candidate voted for who lost the contest), in our model we also account for this possibility including a dummy variable for winners and losers in the first round of the 2012 primaries (1 if the candidate voted won the nomination, 0 otherwise). Our model also controls for standard socio-demographic characteristics (age, education, frequency of reading newspapers both in print and online, frequency of watching the news on TV, and frequency of following political debate on Websites and social networks), as well as members' political characteristics (left-right self-placement and interest in politics). The indicators for these variables were integrated in the questionnaire we use in this survey. The source is

thus the same than for the independent and dependent variables. More details on these variables (response categories and descriptive statistics) can be found in the online Appendix (Tables SI1, SI3 and SI4).

Results

Results are presented in Table 1. We have estimated three different logistic regressions with PD members' opinion about primaries as a dependent variable (a dummy in which 1 includes the positive opinions, and 0 the negative opinions). Results from the baseline model (Model 1) are consistent and stable in Models 2 and 3, where we control for members' satisfaction with 2012 primaries and for standard socio-graphic and political characteristics, respectively.

From a preliminary overview of the results, membership style is positive and significant, meaning that new-style members are more likely to have a more positive opinion on primaries than old-style members have (Hypothesis 1). Party activism also matters in the direction expected in Hypothesis 2. In fact, results seem to confirm a negative relationship between opinion on primaries and party activism, that is, the more one participates, the less happy with primaries one is. More precisely, the

Table 1: Primary elections and PD membership

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
	Dependent variable: PD members' general opinion of primaries		
Membership style	0.24*** (0.05)	0.26*** (0.05)	0.33*** (0.05)
Activity within the party	−0.13*** (0.02)	−0.20*** (0.02)	−0.17*** (0.02)
2012 primary satisfaction	—	0.85*** (0.04)	0.85*** (0.05)
Winner first round 2012	—	—	−0.24*** (0.06)
Age	—	—	0.11*** (0.02)
Education	—	—	0.01 (0.04)
L-R self-placement	—	—	−0.10** (0.04)
Interest in politics	—	—	−0.03 (0.06)
Newspapers (freq)	—	—	−0.03 (0.04)
TV news (freq)	—	—	−0.05 (0.04)
Websites (freq)	—	—	0.01 (0.02)
Constant	1.04*** (0.08)	−0.88*** (0.13)	−0.71 (0.40)
LR χ^2	LR χ^2 (2) 106.09	LR χ^2 (3) 468.99	LR χ^2 (11) 484.43
Prob>χ^2	0.00	0.00	0.00
Psuedo R^2	0.01	0.04	0.05
Log-likelihood	−6178.01	−5255.24	−5075.04
N	10 846	9541	9312

Notes: Models 1, 2 and 3 are logistic regressions (standard errors in parentheses). *<0.10, **<0.05, ***<0.01.

higher the number of hours spent for the party, the less positive the opinion of primaries. These findings support our reflections about the influence of inclusiveness on collective and selective incentives. Indeed, among those members more engaged and involved in party life, the evaluation of primaries and their inclusiveness seem to be less positive. This finding is coherent with the idea that primaries, somehow, redefine the logic of political participation within the party, because – at the end of the day – the activist members draw near the external supporters, who participate from time to time without any formal enrollment and real commitment to the party.

However, we are very cautious in the interpretation of our results and prefer not to talk in terms of causal relationship, for we only have one data point; hence, no time dimension can be taken into account.[12] At any rate, on the basis of the χ^2 associated with the Log-likelihood, we can see that all three models are significant and that the third model containing all the predictors provides the most satisfactory fit to the data.

Note that satisfaction with 2012 primaries is positively associated with our dependent variable and remains significant when controlling for the candidate who won the first round of the competition. Nonetheless, we recall that given the clear endogeneity problem with this variable, no convincing hypothesis can be proposed. We would rather need individual-level data collected on the basis of panel surveys in order to identify changes in members' attitudes before and after primary elections are held. Panel data would give us the chance to solve the endogeneity problem and track members over time to build a new research hypothesis linking the two variables. Model 3 tests the stability of our theoretical design with the inclusion of some socio-graphic variables (age, education, frequency of reading newspapers both on paper and online, frequency of watching the news on TV, and frequency of following political debate on Websites and social networks) and political controls (left-right self-placement and interest in politics). The only controls that seem to matter are age, which is positive and significant, meaning that the youngest (16–34 age classes) are the least happy with primaries (though most of the observations lie in the 45–64 age classes), and left-right self-placement, which is negative and as well significant. Yet this is not surprising as PD is a center-left party and its members are essentially split into the left and center-left categories of the continuum.

As the coefficients of the logistic regression might be tricky and not as easy to interpret as coefficients of simple OLS regressions, we consider the predicted probability of each main independent variable on the dependent variable using margins at means. These predict the effect of each variable of interest on the probability that the dependent variable equals 1, holding all the independent variables at their sample means, except for the dummy variables held at their mode. Figures 5 and 6 show the results for Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2, respectively. New-style members were expected to have a more positive opinion of primary elections and this finds confirmation plotting the margins at means of membership styles on the dependent variable. However, a closer look suggests that if, on the one side, it seems confirmed that old-style members have a less positive opinion of primaries than

Figure 5: Predicted probability of membership style on general opinion about primary elections (margins at means).
Notes: Results based on Model 3. Sticks are 95 per cent confidence intervals.

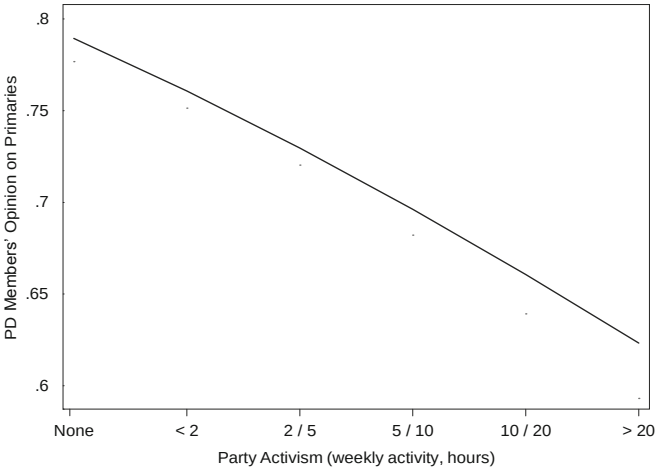

Figure 6: Predicted probability of involvement within the party on general opinion about primary elections (margins at means).
Notes: Results based on Model 3. Sticks are 95 per cent confidence intervals.

new-style members have, on the other side, the former are quite happy as well with the primary tool. In other words, both types of members have a positive judgment of primary elections, but new-style members are a bit more satisfied.[13]

Figure 6 shows the predicted probability of the influence of activism within the party on the general opinion of primaries. The graph suggests that the more time members spend for the party, the less positive is their evaluation of primaries (most of the observations are concentrated in the second and third category from the left, where the sticks of the 95 per cent confidence intervals are smaller). This is also consistent with what we have found previously: as old-style members are more active within and spend more time in the party than new-style members spend (Figure 3) and the former share a less positive opinion of primaries than the latter share (Figure 6), then the ones more engaged and involved in the party are also the ones with a less positive conception of primaries.

We have conducted additional analyses (online Tables SI7–SI9) to assess whether our general findings are also consistent across PD members and we have found that such findings hold for the large majority of our sample. Specifically, we have split our sample across age, education and interest in politics. Although, as we have already noted, despite their membership style, PD members are in general educated individuals and very interested in politics, it is worth checking whether there are substantial differences across members. Our results apply accurately to both younger and mature members, medium–high educated members, and among those who are very interested in and passionate for politics. Probably because of the very low number of cases, our hypotheses are not consistent across the youngest, less educated and less interested in politics.

Conclusion and Discussion

How do members of the Italian Democratic Party perceive primary elections? This is the core question addressed in this article aiming to give an explorative evaluation of the state of the art of primary elections in Italy, given that such measures of intra-party democracy have been operating for a decade. As such competitions imply the adoption of more inclusive procedures for candidate and leader selection, inclusiveness leads to a redefinition of collective and selective incentives, which classically determine the participation within political parties.

Our analysis focuses on two major aspects: party members themselves, namely, their membership style, and party activism. Through the quantitative analysis of an original data set from a Web survey distributed to PD members, two major elements emerge.

In relation to the first point, given that the PD was created from the ashes of the former Christian Democratic Party and the Italian Communist Party and that many other activists joined it without belonging to any of the previous parties, substantial differences do exist across PD members. For this reason, we have coined two labels that help us distinguish these two diverse groups: old-style members and new-style members. Because of their previous enrollment in other parties (with mainly

communist and Catholic roots) before joining PD, the former come from a militant experience within hierarchical mass-party structures, oriented toward members as important players in the party. This situation is completely absent for new-style members, who joined a party for the very first time and were familiarized with more open and inclusive party structures. Given these distinct political socialization patterns, we can see that the perception of primaries changes according to membership style.

Our first result is that membership style matters: old-style members react to the adoption of primary elections differently than new-style members react. Though both membership styles understand primaries as an opportunity for participating and assign a positive opinion to primaries, the premises are quite different. In fact, old-style members relate primaries to the 'good old days' of the mass parties, in which members were a vibrant and essential element of the party, whereas for new-style members primaries give the opportunity for a new mode of participation. Thus, although we register a little involvement in party activities (van Biezen *et al*, 2012), the former experience a more assiduous and consistent participation within the party compared with the latter who seem to be more distant and less engaged. However, both types give quite a positive opinion of primaries as a reliable tool for participation, though new-style members are happier than old-style members.

The fact that both old-style and new-style members overall approve and positively assess the adoption of new procedures of intra-party democracy is quite relevant. This aspect might have strong theoretical implications. Although party elites often disagree on the potential benefits and effectiveness of primaries, in Italy the party base still perceives this instrument quite positively (the contrary of what happens in France, for instance). Primaries serve the linkage role of parties by developing crucial participatory instruments for citizens and activists, rather than constituting a threat to party organizational strength and consistency as previous studies argued (for a review, see Cross and Katz, 2013).

In relation to party activism, our results are strongly in line with previous research on the negative consequences of intra-party democracy (see, for example, Katz and Mair, 1995; Hopkin, 2001; Ansolabehere *et al*, 2006). In fact, we find that party activism is negatively associated with members' general opinion of primaries. In this sense, primaries are also perceived as a lighter way of participating in party life, as the members' positive opinion declines when the level of involvement in party activities increases. Our findings show important implications of these differing attitudes for parties as participatory organizations: internal democratization might have actually stripped activists of some important responsibilities and this has led to an increase of their frustration and dissatisfaction. Our study suggests that this phenomenon is not limited to party activists' reactions to organizational changes, but affects also the attitudes of less mobilized grassroots members.

Our study has also important implications for the relationship between party membership and intra-party democracy beyond the Italian case. Given that this constitutes mainly a first, empirical exploratory study, we can only speculate about how our results might extend to primaries elsewhere. However, what clearly emerges from our findings is the fact that party members perceive these organizational changes and are affected by them with regard to both their attitudes and behaviors. This is particularly relevant for parties' ability to mobilize and for their claims to democratic legitimacy in a context, such as the Italian or Western European ones, of increasing public distrust toward parties and their linkage role in society.

Our findings can be, in fact, applied to several other parties (within Italy and elsewhere) given that many European or Western parties have socialized their members and supporters to the use of the same type of open primaries for selecting candidates and/or leaders during the last decade. Although Italy (or the PD) should not be overstated as a generalizable example of primaries or party membership, this case fits the general trend that is emerging in Western Europe: for instance, the French PS and EELV, most Finnish and Icelandic parties, as well as the Spanish PSOE and UPyD have been increasingly using open primaries to select candidates for party and/or public offices at various territorial levels during the same time frame. While the effects of primaries might depend on the organizational traditions of each party, there is little reason to believe that the influence on membership would be any different in other post-mass parties in Europe from those in Italy.

The applicability of the results on the Italian PD to the broader Italian and European context is related to its potential to be an example of the functioning of other parties concerning the adoption of primary elections and their understanding by their members, in particular under the variables concerning the party organization model, given the general trend of internal democratization spreading across European party systems. Also, PD's particular position in the Italian competition context and its ideological features explain how the adoption of the primary elections by one of the main Italian parties can be of some importance in the broader Italian and European landscape.

Our study shows that, in the long run, these organizational innovations could prove useful for parties in order to adapt to changing social settings, but also that intra-party democracy is not a value *per se*, but its effectiveness depends on its actual implementation and on the disposition of members and supporters to get onboard.

Notes

1 For instance, the Catalan Socialists have held primaries for selecting the mayoral candidate for Barcelona in 2015: www.primariesobertes2015.cat/.

2 Following Hazan and Rahat (2010), we argue that candidate selection and leader election are two different political processes, but in the article we use the term 'primary elections' for identifying both

processes interchangeably. Also, a primary election is an election that narrows the field of candidates before an election for office. Strictly speaking, the term 'primary elections' refers only to the selection of a party's (or party coalition's) candidates for public office, not to the selection of candidates for public office and the selection of a party's leaders. We are using the term 'primaries' in an unusually broad sense, which refers to the concept of 'primary and leadership elections'. Moreover, the same type of open primary elections is used in all intra-party elections in the PD, and the process does not differ by level of government or region.

3 The phenomenon has become very relevant: since 2004, nearly 960 primary elections for selecting candidates for public office have been organized at local, regional, provincial and national level (Seddone and Venturino, 2013a). Moreover, the PD has also organized open primary elections to select: the party leader in 2007, 2009 and 2013, the chief executive candidate in 2005 and 2012, and candidates at national elections in 2012. This means that such inclusive procedures have significantly affected the party on the ground, involving (and socializing) members and supporters into this new mode of political participation.

4 The new party is the result of the merger between the Democrats of the Left (heir of PCI) and the Daisy/ Democracy is Freedom (heir of the leftist faction of DC).

5 For space reasons, we cannot discuss at length here the process that brought to the creation of PD, that is, the merging of the two main political parties and their political cultures. For more details, we refer to Bordandini *et al* (2008).

6 Since then, the party has organized almost 80 per cent of all primaries held in Italy (alone or in coalition with smaller leftist parties). At least at the local level, a 'contagion effect' can be recently seen: of over 952 local primaries (for selecting the mayoral candidate) held between 2004 and 2015, at least 37 have been organized by right wing parties (mainly by Berlusconi's former PDL) or center-right coalitions (Seddone and Valbruzzi, 2013; Sandri and Venturino, 2016).

7 The ideological nature of PD within the current Italian party system can be described as 'center-left', meaning that the ideological stances of the party (in terms of manifesto, policies and average positions of its affiliates and elected officials) are similar to those of an average European mainstream social-democratic party, and, while being more moderate, especially on ethical and socio-economic issues, than those of the far left (for example, SEL), PD's positions are clearly more leftist than the positions of the main center and rightist parties (UDC, IDV, FI, FDI, NDC, LN and so on).

8 The crucial concept of 'political culture' could also be helpful in explaining the different characteristics of new- and old-style members, in particular in the cases of members previously enrolled to the former PCI and DC. We cannot discuss this at length here for space reasons, but for the specific literature on the Italian parties' culture and participation models (see mainly Pizzorno, 1966; Panebianco, 1982; Raniolo, 2007).

9 Members agreed to be contacted by the party. The original plan was to keep the survey available for 30 days, but the resignation of the PD leader, related to the troubled election of the President of the Republic, forced us to close the survey before the deadline.

10 We note that the regional distribution presents some distortions. The most over-represented region is Lombardia (+9.3 per cent): here respondents are in fact 17.7 per cent of the sample, though they are only 8.4 per cent of enrolled. Conversely, Campania (−7.2 per cent) is the most under-represented region with only 1 per cent of interviewed (see online Table SI2). Another source of distortion might be given by the over-representation of new-style members and under-representation of old-style members, given the stronger propensity for younger citizens to be online. As robustness checks, we re-estimate our model by splitting the sample by age and by omitting one region at a time. These analyses, reported in the online Appendix, do not alter the robustness of our results. Therefore, also considering the large number of respondents (and the high frame population coverage), we are reassured that our data can be used for conducting explorative analyses on the relationship between intra-party democracy and party members. However, we emphasize that the validity of our results is only guaranteed by the large *N* and that any generalization of the results to the general population of party members should be elaborated very cautiously.

11 The two main candidates, Pier Luigi Bersani – leader of the party previously selected by primaries in the 2009 – and Matteo Renzi – his young challenger, now PM, and former mayor of Florence – represent two extremely different ideas of party mobilization: the former expresses an old-style idea of party organization, very close to local branches and deeply rooted on the ground; the latter, instead, represents a catch-all approach, more oriented to mobilize external supporters and perceived as a breakaway figure from the consolidated establishment of the party.

12 To account for the issue of regional over- and under-representation above mentioned, we have re-estimated the baseline model omitting one region at a time and this did not affect the significance and direction of the coefficients of our main explanatory variables. This analysis is available upon request.

13 For this reason, we have decided to omit from the analysis interaction terms between membership style and other independent variables, as both types of members evaluate positively the participative practice. We have also run separate models with interaction terms, but none of them was statistically significant.

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