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Is Everyone Enjoying the Party?

Examining ideological incongruence among 10.000 Swedish party members

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Abstract

Party members across European democracies exercise increasingly more influence on parties' policy platforms or personnel choices. Parties benefit most from the expansion of intra-party democracy if members hold similar views and if those views are largely in correspondence with the party elite. This paper investigates ideological (in)congruence on the left-right spectrum between members and the party as a whole by drawing on a party membership survey of more than 10,000 individuals across seven political parties in Sweden. In a two-step analysis, the paper shows that affective rather than cognitive factors correlate with ideological incongruence and that ideological incongruence might also matter for members' exit and voice behavior. Ideological incongruence is associated with a more negative evaluation of the party leader and with a higher probability to either vote for another party or even to leave the current one. The findings mean that ideological incongruence within parties is not a trivial matter but is substantial in size with potentially pivotal consequences for party competition.

Introduction

"Political parties are full of suicidally inclined activists and clearly some Labour members are suicidally inclined." – former Tony Blair aide John McTernan – July 23, 2015[1]

Political parties and their members are often seen as the political linkage between those in power and ordinary citizens (for example Dalton et al. 2011, Kitschelt 2000, Müller and Katz 1997). Parties' success in the electoral market hinges on these external relationships that require planning, strategy and a cohesive approach. However, controversy over personnel or policy is almost unavoidable within parties, and the literature acknowledges that 'factionalism is a fact of life within most political parties' (Harmel et al. 1995, 7). The study of ideological disagreement within parties has become more likely due to recent organizational trends within parties. With increasing demands of democratization within political parties, members have gained influence as suppliers of and veto players on policies, candidates and leaders (Krouwel 2012, Scarrow and Gezgor 2010, Scarrow et al. 2000). Party members in today's (primarily) internally democratic parties have a direct influence on policy output, which emphasizes their crucial role for the ideological profile of a party. However, despite the increasing impact and power granted to members, scholarly research on ideological congruence between party members and party positions is still scarce.

The competition for the leadership position of the British Labour Party emphasizes the relevance of questions about ideological congruence between party leadership, party members, and party voters. As the prospects of Jeremy Corbyn – the most left-wing of the contenders for the leadership post – continued to rise over the summer of 2015 New Labour centrists like Tony Blair and John McTernan attributed it, at least in part, to ideological extremity and rigidity within the party's rank-and-file membership.[2] The concern from this perspective is that a party with an ideological and strong membership base could produce a leader that would be less viable in a general election.

Scholars of party politics are only recently acquiring the information necessary to study this and related issues. For example, a survey of 1,180 Labour Party members conducted in May of 2015 found these members to be quite left-wing in their self-reported left-right placement[3], whereas earlier research had found that British sub-leaders are not extremists (Norris 1995). Our paper looks at the question of

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[1] Erlanger, Steven. (2015, July 23) After Defeat, Britain's Labour Party Argues Over Its New Leader. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/24/world/europe/britain-labour-leader.html?referrer=&_r=0

[2] Blair, Tony. (2015, July 22) In Conversation with…Tony Blair: Opening Remarks. *Progress*. Retrieved from: http://www.progressonline.org.uk/2015/07/22/in-conversation-with-tony-blair-opening-remarks/

[3] Bale, Tim and Paul Webb. (2015, July 23) Just who are these Labour Party members who will be choosing the new leader? *The Independent*. Retrieved from: http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/just-who-are-these-labour-party-members-who-will-be-choosing-the-new-leader-10409109.html

ideological congruence between party members and party positions within Sweden, providing information on this important political relationship in a multi-party, proportional electoral system, which could produce substantially different findings than those reported in the British party system. The analysis is based on a high-quality survey of more than 10,000 party members conducted with the support of seven Swedish political parties in May and June of 2015. This survey is the first academic project to target and focus its questions on the entirety of Swedish party membership lists and therefore allows us to overcome several methodological complications present in previous studies. The paper offers a theory-driven analysis of correlates in search for potential causes and consequences of ideological incongruence. We cannot and do not yet make any causal claims.

The results show that affective rather than cognitive factors correlate with ideological incongruence. Moreover, we find that ideological incongruence might matter for members' exit and voice behavior (Hirschman 1970). Ideological incongruence is associated with a more negative evaluation of the party leader and with a higher probability to either vote for another party or to even leave the current one.

The paper is organized as follows. The next section argues that ideological congruence within parties is important for the party's success in the electoral market and as a membership organization. It also reviews studies in the field to highlight the need for a deeper understanding of ideological congruence within parties. Leaning on existing studies, a number of hypotheses are derived pertaining to the causes and consequences of congruence. We then introduce the Swedish party membership survey as our primary source of data and describe the methods used. The third section presents initial results of studying ideological incongruence before a final section provides a short summary and conclusion.

Intraparty politics and ideological congruence

For years, many if not most studies in political science conceived of political parties as unitary actors, and it was not until Katz and Mair's (1992, 1993; Katz 2002, Mair 1994, 4) influential conceptual work that a more differentiated view of parties became widely accepted. These authors broke up the unitary actor assumption and argued that parties possess an internal organization and a dynamic of their own, suggesting that 'a party is itself a political system' (Katz and Mair 1992, 6). Acknowledging a difference between a party's output presented to the outside world, on the one hand, and the internal process leading up to it, on the other hand, allows a more nuanced and realistic view of party politics. Parties may be (or may strive to present themselves as) unitary actors to the electorate, yet the internal discourse over the party's plan of action is an important constitutive element.

This perspective holding that parties are composed of diverse views and preferences has been empirically validated in several settings, focusing on various units of observation and using different methods. Although existing studies use different terms, such as 'intraparty heterogeneity' (Greene and Haber 2015), 'cohesion' (Bowler et al. 1999), 'unity' (Panebianco 1988), 'factionalism' (Verge and Gómez 2012), 'ideological misfit' (van Haute and Carty 2011) or 'internal division' (van de Wardt 2014), they all refer to the same phenomenon of internal party (dis)agreement regarding a specific policy issue or ideology more broadly. To this end, previous

research has often focused on disagreement between parties and voters (Adams et al. 2006, Rohlfing 2015) or parties and their supporters (Ezrow et al. 2011, van der Wardt 2014). Within parties, studies have investigated disagreement through parliamentary roll calls (Bowler et al. 1999, Sieberer 2006) or national congress speeches (Greene and Haber 2015). Only some studies so far used party members as their units of observation (see Narud and Skare 1999, Scarrow and Gezgor 2010, van Haute and Carty 2011, Widfeldt 1999). The results of these studies indicate that internal party disagreement is frequent and that a party's official policy or ideological position is often the product of such internal competition.

With increasing demands for democratization within parties and more decision-making power transferred to ordinary members, questions of ideological congruence within parties have become more important. Partially in response to enduring membership decline, political parties nowadays grant their members more influence over policy and personnel decisions (Krouwel 2012, Scarrow and Gezgor 2010, Scarrow et al. 2000). In the traditional mass model of parties members were primarily considered foot soldiers that paid their fees and legitimized the existence of the party (Katz and Mair 1995, Kirchheimer 1965). However, in one of the most recent and influential conceptualizations – the cartel party (Katz and Mair 1995) – parties are heterogeneous actors with a smaller yet more influential or vocal membership base. The contemporary view of parties puts an emphasis on members as 'individuals rather than as an organised body' with 'heterogeneous preferences' (Bolleyer 2009, 561, 563). This internal heterogeneity or incongruence in preferences is not without consequences as research shows that 'intraparty divisions frequently constrain party leaders' (Greene and Haber 2015, 3).

However, it would be misleading to assume that ideological incongruence within parties is necessarily a disadvantage for a party's success in the electoral market or as a membership organization (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2012). After all, disagreement and a discourse over policy or ideology with and among party members can also be beneficial, as it provides the party with new input from the units of the party closest to the electorate: the members. In fact, one of the often-cited benefits of party membership for political parties is that members are the eyes and ears of the party in the electorate (Katz and Mair 1992, Rohlfing 2015, Scarrow 1994). They bring in new policy ideas that are close to what the electorate needs or wants. If, on the other hand, ideological incongruence is part of a larger disagreement within the party over the course of action, members' newly gained verbal and behavioral power might be a constraint for party leaders and party competition.

Due to data limitations, so far very little is known about the factors that potentially spur ideological incongruence among party members and what its implications might be for party leaders, party competition or the party as a membership organization. Yet a number of party- and individual-level factors seem plausible. For example, May's law of curvilinear disparity (May 1973) famously stated that members' levels of activism or rank within the party correlates with their ideological extremity where ordinary members and the party elite hold more moderate positions and the mid-level elite holds the more extreme views. Tests of the theory are generally mixed across parties and national contexts (see, for example, Kitschelt 1989, Narud and Skare 1999, Norris 1995, van Haute and Carty 2011, Widfeldt 1999). It should also be noted that data limitations often force studies to use a nationally representative sample with a

small number of party members instead of a party membership survey, which might explain some of the inconsistency in findings.

In a study of 'ideological misfits' among party members in Belgium and Canada van Haute and Carty (2011) found some support for May's Law. Yet, the authors also tested a number of other individual-level correlates of ideological incongruence, such as gender, religious belief, religious practice, age, education, employment, union membership, member-party linkage and members' reported reasons for initially joining. They find that 'none of the variables significantly identifies misfits' across all nine parties and that 'none is significant in more than four cases' (van Haute and Carty 2011, 892). The authors interpret this finding as confirmation for the diverse character of the members that do not see themselves as ideologically congruent with the party. However, it could also be the case that these are not the 'correct' individual-level factors to characterize members in ideological incongruence with the party.

In search for potential causes of individual-level congruence levels, we propose members' attitudes as important correlates of ideological incongruence. Specifically, their interest in politics, level of efficacy and attachment to their party should be positively correlated with ideological congruence. We consider an interest in politics as a proxy for political sophistication, and expect that more politically sophisticated and interested individuals will be better suited to the cognitive task of aligning themselves with the political party that most closely matches their policy preferences. Individuals that believe themselves to be more efficacious should also believe that their voice matters within the party. We therefore expect that more efficacious people will be more likely to think that their party takes positions that are similar to the views that they themselves hold. Finally, we expect that the more strongly an individual identifies with a party, the more likely that member is to see themselves as close to the chosen parties' ideological position.

Following the logic of May's law described above, the middle-elite could be particularly prone to ideological incongruence. Finally, we expect to find less ideological congruence among members that perceive their role within the party to be marginal. If a party member does not believe that she has a strong voice and/or role within her party, this member should be less likely to see herself as ideologically close to the party.

In addition to these individual-level factors, we expect that at least two party-level characteristics could characterize ideological incongruence among members. Firstly, existing research shows that more moderate ideological positions are characteristic for larger, mainstream parties rather than niche parties (Ezrow 2010). Ideological stability is more important for niche parties (van de Wardt 2014). Mainstream parties tend to adjust their positions in accordance with changes in the position of the mean voter, while communist, green or radical right parties are more responsive to shifts in the position of the mean *party* voter, i.e. their supporters (Ezrow et al. 2011). Therefore, it might be that mainstream parties are more likely to have ideologically incongruent members than niche parties.

Secondly, van Haute and Carty (2011) identified parties' left-right orientations as a distinguishing characteristic of ideological incongruence. More often, incongruence was found among parties on the political left. Additionally, in an analysis of party systems in eight Western European countries between 1976 and 1998, Adams, Haupt,

and Stoll (2009) found that parties of the left differ fundamentally from center and right parties in that their ideological positions did not change in response to public opinion in a systematic fashion, nor was the ideological positioning of left parties as responsive to global economic conditions as other types of parties. If parties on the left are less likely to respond to public opinion, they could be considered less mobile. This in turn may imply larger ideological incongruence within parties on the left.

As mentioned above, ideological incongruence does not necessarily pose a problem to the party leader, party competition or the party as a membership organization. In order to arrive at a more nuanced picture at the individual- and party-level, we also consider potential consequences of ideological incongruence. It is plausible that these might be found in particular in the members' satisfaction with the party and the party leadership, their propensity to vote for another party, to leave the party, and their view on the influence members should have within the party. Members who find themselves ideologically at odds with the party might be less satisfied with the party as a whole or with the leadership in particular. Moreover, ideological incongruence could also translate into exit behavior by either having voted for a different party or by contemplating the termination of membership.

Note that the proposed consequences could also be causes. For example, satisfaction with the party's ideology could also easily be a cause of ideological incongruence rather than a consequence. Our goal is first and foremost to offer a theory-driven analysis of correlates in search for potential causes and consequences of ideological incongruence with high-quality data. We cannot and do not seek to make any causal claims at this stage.

Party membership in Sweden and surveying party members

Party membership within the Swedish Social Democrats (S) and Moderates (M) declined substantially over the last several decades (Erlingsson et al. forthcoming), in line with trends among most other mainstream European political parties during this time period (van Biezen et al. 2012). Although dwindling membership in political parties has been the focus of substantial scholarship (van Biezen and Poguntke 2014), patterns of contemporary party membership actually vary more than it might first appear (Kölln 2014). Within Sweden, for example, the Sweden Democrats (SD) and the Feminist Initiative (F!) have made large gains in membership strength and organizational structure. Far from losing members, the Sweden Democrats doubled both its number of members and municipal branches between 2010 and 2014 (Aylott and Bolin 2015, 7).[4] Other parties, such as the Christian Democrats (KD), Green Party (MP) or the Left Party (V), have been able to maintain their membership levels on a rather stable level over decades. These examples illustrate the complexity of participation patterns in party politics in Sweden.

Sweden, like several other European countries, has high quality public opinion and election data. However, the surveys that these are based on do not ask detailed questions about party membership. Earlier empirical studies on Swedish party

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[4] Unfortunately the Sweden Democrats did not respond to repeated requests to participate in the membership survey and aret hus unrepresented within this study. The Centre Party declined to participate and is also not included in the data.

members were restricted to general surveys such as the National Election Study, the SOM Institute surveys or even European wide surveys such as the European Social Surveys or the Eurobarometer. All these surveys regularly asked respondents whether they were a party member or not; in rare cases respondents were also asked to which party they belonged. Further, because party members are not the focus of these public opinion and election data, existing studies that take party members as the unit of observation are limited to a small, and possibly non-representative group of people.[5]

In one of the most comprehensive studies on Swedish party members and their political attitudes, Widfeldt (1999) used data from National Election Studies in which respondents declared themselves a member. However, even with the large sample of Swedish citizens used it is difficult to sample enough party members. For example, the number of respondents that self-identified as a member of the largest political party in 1985 – the Social Democrats – only amounted to 130. In comparison, official records issued by the Social Democrats state a membership size of more than 1.1 million at the time. International scholarship is similarly constrained by the undersampling of party members in general surveys (Scarrow and Gezgor 2010, Widfeldt 1995). This raises pressing questions about the reliability and generalizability of contemporary membership studies.

In an attempt to overcome these problems, researchers have conducted surveys solely among party members (see Gauja and van Haute 2014, van Haute and Gauja 2015). As laudable as these endeavors are, party-level comparisons across countries are difficult due to differences in questions. Other large-scale comparative research has been conducted on young party members specifically (see Bruter and Harrison 2009). Yet, the study does not provide information on the attitudes, social characteristics and motivations of members older than 25 years. In general, previous research on party members has been severely constrained by data availability: general surveys lacked a sufficient amount of party members and fine-grained questions about party membership, while specialist surveys are rare and lacked a cross-country element. This limits the scope of testable hypotheses, which is important because the nature of political parties as membership organizations differs in meaningful ways by, for example, party family or country.

The 2015 Swedish Party Membership survey, our primary data source within this paper, begins to address some of these concerns. The next section describes the survey in more detail.

The 2015 Swedish Party Membership Survey

To test our expectations, we use the 2015 Swedish Party Membership survey. In the early part of 2015, the party secretaries of six of the eight Swedish Riksdag parties (plus the Feminist Initiative as the only other Swedish party represented in the European Parliament) agreed to take part in an online survey of their entire memberships, administered and conducted by the Laboratory of Opinion Research[6].

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[5] Van Biezen et al. (2012) validated the proportion of party members interviewed for the European Social Survey, yet only on a country-level. The authors used official party membership figures and found a strong correlation with the survey data on a country-level.

[6] For more information, see http://lore.gu.se/svenska

In May, these party secretaries received individualized links to an otherwise identical web-survey, which they then distributed to their members via email. All parties, except for the Social Democrats, sent out the survey to the entire membership list, which means that the full population of members with email addresses was invited to participate in the survey. The Social Democrats sent the survey to a large randomly drawn sample from their membership list. The Swedish membership survey is therefore based on an official sample of registered members as opposed to self-proclaimed party members in a general survey. When it was closed on July 3, a total of 10,392 Swedish party members had completed the survey. The data were weighted for gender. Since we cannot say to what extent non-respondents are missing at random, sampling design, process and result suggest limited generalizability of our results to the wider membership population. Table 1 provides an overview of the parties' total membership sizes and the number of completed interviews.

Table 1. Overview of survey populations and completed interviews per party.

	Fp	Mp	S	V	KD	M	Fi
total membership	15,283	20,660	100,000	19,151	21,054	52,260[7]	
with email addresses	11,807	18,772	---	16,009	9,797	20,007	
sample size	---	---	7,000	---	---	---	
completed questionnaires	1,173	2,198	1,231	2,239	933	2,451	167
response rate	9.93	11.70	17.59	13.99	9.52	12.25	

Note: 'Fp' Folkpartiet (Liberal Party); 'Mp' Miljöpartiet (Green Party); 'S' Socialdemokraterna (Social Democrats); 'V' Vänsterpartiet (Left Party); 'KD' Kristdemokraterna (Christian Democrats); 'M' Moderaterna (Moderate Party); 'Fi' Feministiskt Initiativ (Feminist Initiative).

The survey questions are grouped into six modules: socio-demographic, general political attitudes, reasons for and extent of enrolment, position within the party, activism, and perception of role and attitudes towards membership. The questions were developed in consultation with the Members and Activists of Political Parties (MAPP) research group[8], with the goal of facilitating the still nascent cross-national comparison of party members (see van Haute and Gauja 2015). The unique data generated from our survey of members of the parliamentary parties in Sweden thus allows us to probe much more specific and nuanced questions about party members than have been capable for studies that relied on nationally representative samples that only included one or two questions about party membership.

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[7] Includes the youth organization.
[8] For more information, see http://www.projectmapp.eu

In sum, the 2015 Swedish Party Membership Survey substantially improves the quality of information we have about this politically important and connected group of citizens by: expanding the number of observations, targeting the entire membership of the parties, including a more extensive range of questions specific to party membership, and structuring the survey to maximize comparability with similar surveys to be conducted in other economically advanced democracies.

Measures

To measure ideological incongruence we take the absolute distance between a party member's self-placement on a 0-10 general left-right scale (Q34) and that member's placement of the party on the same 0-10 general left-right scale (Q35).[9] Smaller values on this variable therefore represent more member-party congruence, and higher values equal more member-party incongruence. When the paper turns to look at the consequences of incongruence, this measure becomes the primary independent variable, making it particularly important for this analysis. The operationalization therefore requires further justification.

Our measure of incongruence depends entirely on party members' perceptions of parties' positions, which do not necessarily reflect the 'true' position of the party. Önnudóttir (2014) draws attention to the fact that mass survey-based placements of parties carry complications. In particular, projection or contrast effects, where respondents either move the parties' position closer or further from their own, may be a concern. However, the use of mass-based survey placements of parties in congruence scholarship is not without precedent (cf. Blais and Bodet 2006; Powell 2009; Golder and Stramski 2010)[10], and for now we are more interested in what makes individual members *believe* they are close or far from a party – and the consequences of this – rather than if they actually are as close or far from the position of the party as they think they are. Our operationalization therefore captures the difference respondents see between their own ideological position and the party's. This is also emphasized in the questionnaire through the ordering of the questions. They were asked in direct succession and thus prompted respondents to make a comparative assessment.

For the individual-level explanatory factors, we operationalize activism through a survey question asking respondents whether they are currently or have in the past held public office (Q67). Subsequently (Q67_TEXT) respondents that have or currently hold office are able to report their level of office, and this allows for a direct translation of the expectation laid out in May's Law, if the elite-level is excluded. We do this by coding individuals that are currently in office or have been in office (yet only on the city, local or municipal level) as 1 and everyone else as 0.

Respondents' interest in politics is directly measured on a four-point scale whose coding has been reversed to run from 'not at all interested' to 'very much interested' (Q48). We measure political efficacy with a survey item asking respondents to

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[9] Specific wording of these and other questions are included in the questionnaire for the survey, which is available at the Gothenburg Party Research Group website:
http://pol.gu.se/partiforskningsprogrammet/Forskning+om+partier/partimedlemsundersokning
[10] Mean left-right placements by experts and mass survey respondents also correlate rather highly with one another (Dalton and McAllister 2015, Bakker et al 2015).

indicate their level of agreement (five-point scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree') to the statement: 'I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues discussed in PARTY' (Q95_2). People were also asked about their strength of support for the party on a four-point scale from 'very strong' to 'not at all strong' (Q75). We reverse the coding and use the measure as an indicator of level of attachment. Members' perceptions about their own role in the party are measured with the survey item that asked respondents about their level of agreement (five-point scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree') to the following statement: 'My role as a member is to support decisions made by the party leadership' (Q93_5).

In addition to those potential causes of ideological incongruence, we also perform preliminary tests for five consequences. Firstly, we anticipate that ideological incongruence will be associated with lower levels of satisfaction, in particular for satisfaction with 'the ideological orientation/project of the party' (Q91_1) and 'with the leadership' (Q91_2). Both are measured on a five-point scale, where 1 refers to 'not at all satisfied' and 5 to 'very satisfied'. Secondly, incongruence could lead to a vote for another party. This is measured by asking respondents whether they voted in the last general election in September 2014 (Q79). Individuals that chose the response option 'Yes, and I voted for another party' are coded as 1, everyone else as 0. Equally but in a more extreme version, incongruence could also lead members to join another party. We test this with a survey item that asked respondents how frequently they have 'considered joining another party' (with response options 'never', 'seldom', 'sometimes', and 'often'; Q97_1). The descriptive statistics of all individual-level variables are summarized in Table 2 in the appendix.

We use two party-level factors for the analysis. Firstly, a dummy variable discriminating between the ideological left and right. For that, respondents from Feminist Initiative, the Left Party, the Green Party, and the Social Democrats were coded as 1, respondents to all other parties as 0. A second dummy variable that captures the mainstream/niche concept codes respondents from the Social Democrats and the Moderates as 1 and respondents to all other parties as 0.

Results

A substantial number of party members are not perfectly congruent with their party. Across parties, on average, only around 33 per cent of members reported the exact same ideological position for themselves as for their party. This means that two-thirds of Swedish party members reported some level of ideological incongruence with their parties. While perhaps a one-point difference on a ten-point scale is a conscious choice yet not a substantial difference, some party members also reported larger differences between themselves and their party. Figure 1 therefore shows the distribution of ideological incongruence across all parties.

Figure 1. Distribution of ideological incongruence among Swedish party members.
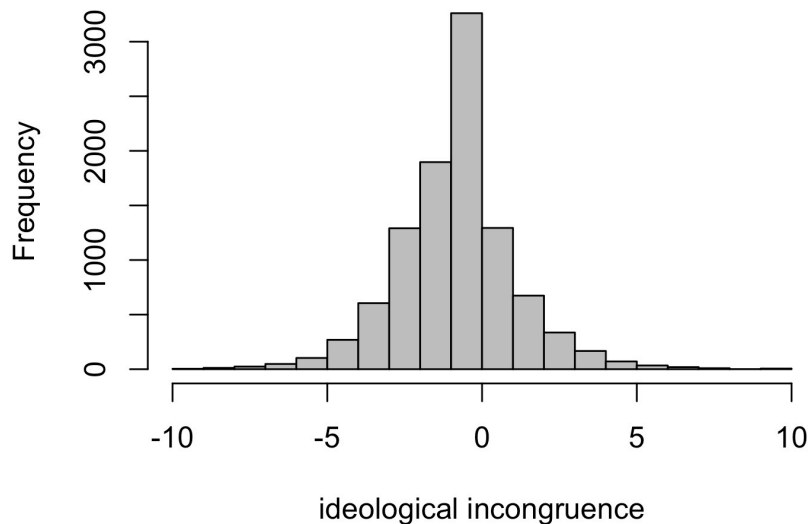
The figure illustrates considerable variation to the left and right of being ideological congruent. Even though most party members seem to be either congruent or only 1 point off to either side of the ideological spectrum, still around 36 percent of respondents report a dissonance of at least 2 points on the ten-point scale. We take this as further indication that ideological incongruence is not a trivial matter among Swedish members. Taking at least a one-point difference results in around two-thirds of members being incongruent; a two-point difference reduces the share to a little bit more than one-third. Defining the cut-off point for incongruence as beginning with either a 1- or 2-point difference remains an arbitrary one. However, since the questions were asked back-to-back we contend that even a one-point difference presented a conscious choice and continue our analysis with this definition.

Considering the party-level, the share of incongruent members is highest for the Social Democrats with 80 percent and lowest for the Christian Democrats with around 61 percent. Moreover, the data also show that ideological incongruence comes in degrees across political parties. Table 3 therefore summarizes the means in absolute incongruence, which is sensitive to the magnitude but not to the direction of incongruence.[11]

According to the results, the Social Democrats not only have the largest share of ideologically incongruent members, its members also report the largest differences on average compared to members of other parties. The average absolute distance for Social Democrat members is two on a ten-point scale. Members of the Left Party have

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[11] Our focus on absolute incongruence does not examine differences in the direction of incongruence. Although we believe that this information could be valuably integrated with the directional voting literature (Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989), this analysis lies beyond the scope of the present paper.

the smallest absolute distance. These figures illustrate that ideological incongruence within Swedish parties is the norm rather than the exception.

Table 3. Absolute ideological distance of party members to their own party on the left-right scale (0-10) for different parties.

	mean	sd	N
Fi	1.11	1.20	159
Fp	1.19	1.26	1143
KD	1.12	1.28	891
Mp	1.40	1.29	2104
M	1.31	1.49	2407
S	2.05	1.74	1198
V	1.07	1.19	2219

The relatively large mean incongruence score for Social Democrats appears to offer support for the party-level expectations that catchall and left parties would have larger incongruence scores than small parties or parties on the right. And indeed, the Green Party has the second largest mean score. However, the Left Party and the Feminist Initiative, in turn, have the lowest averages among the Swedish parties, indicating high levels of congruence. Simple correlations between the individual variables and absolute congruence by party type confirm the impression of a more complex relationship. Turning to these correlations in Table 4, it is clear that there are few major differences between large, small, left, and right parties.

Table 4. Correlations with absolute congruence

	all parties	left parties	right parties	small parties	large parties
interest in politics	0.05**	0.03**	0.08**	0.05**	0.05**
efficacy	0.02*	0.01	0.04	0.02	0.00
attachment	-0.19**	-0.18**	-0.23	-0.22**	-0.18
midlevel activism	-0.02**	-0.03**	-0.01**	-0.04**	0.02**
member role	-0.19**	-0.14**	-0.26**	-0.19**	-0.24**

Note: p-values '*' < 0.05, '*' < 0.1.

Staying with Table 4, these five variables are expected to be associated with changes in absolute congruence. Strength of attachment to the party and perception of membership role emerge as the variables most strongly correlated with congruence levels. As anticipated, the correlations on both variables are negative and this is true

across party types. This indicates that party members that are strongly attached to the party and those that see their role as primarily to support the decisions of leadership are more likely to perceive themselves as ideologically close to the party. Contrary to our expectations, efficacy and interest in politics are positively correlated with the dependent variable (more incongruence), but these correlations are very weak and even turn insignificant in the group-level analysis. Midlevel activism, our proxy for May's law correlates negatively with absolute congruence levels. Although correlation is not very large, it still provides no support for May's law of curvilinear disparity. Taken on the whole, these findings suggest that political sophistication and internal efficacy matter much less for ideological closeness to a party for members than a strong personal attachment to that party and strong support for decisions of party leadership.

Although we resist making claims of causality at this stage, we nevertheless present a number of multivariable regressions in which the absolute congruence level between the party member and the perceived position of the party is the dependent variable. Again, larger values in the dependent variable indicate *greater* distance between member and party, so negative coefficients mean that higher values of this independent variable are associated with *more congruence* between member and party. The first model of Table 5 displays a relatively simple model that includes demographic variables suggested by previous research (van Haute and Carty's 2011). For the education variable, the category 'elementary school not finished' is taken as the base. Age and gender are the only variables to achieve conventionally accepted levels of statistical significance in this model, where being older and female is associated with greater perceived member-party congruence.

Models 2-5 include an additional variable related to the hypotheses developed within this paper. Note that gender, unlike age, remains statistically significant across all models and it consistently indicates that women are more likely to see themselves as congruent with their party than men, a finding in line with previous research (van Haute and Carty's 2011). Model 2 suggests that more politically interested members are less likely to be congruent with their parties. The statistical significance and direction of the relationship holds across models and is in line with the findings of the simple correlations above. Models 3 and 4 also present a similar picture to the correlations in Table 4. Members with a strong attachment to the party and those that see their primary role as supporting the decisions of leadership are associated with more perceived member-party congruence. Finally, Model 5 does not provide support for the idea that mid-level party leaders are more likely to be incongruent than are rank-and-file members and high-level leadership, and thus does not offer empirical support for May's law within the Swedish Membership Survey data.

Table 5. Regression results for absolute congruence. Entries are unstandardized coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	1.366** (0.265)	0.901** (0.287)	1.818** (0.300)	1.922** (0.307)	1.820** (0.300)
age	-0.003** (0.001)	-0.003** (0.001)	-0.003** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.003** (0.001)
female	-0.218** (0.029)	-0.206** (0.029)	-0.156** (0.029)	-0.111** (0.029)	-0.156** (0.029)
married	0.019 (0.019)	0.021 (0.031)	0.022 (0.031)	0.026 (0.030)	0.022 (0.031)
elementary school	0.341 (0.341)	0.338 (0.284)	0.463 (0.296)	0.746** (0.305)	0.464 (0.296)
high-school not finished	0.070 (0.070)	0.069 (0.289)	0.124 (0.300)	0.336 (0.308)	0.124 (0.300)
high-school finished	0.219 (0.219)	0.213 (0.269)	0.290 (0.280)	0.514* (0.289)	0.290 (0.283)
vocational training	0,360 (0.360)	0.360 (0.271)	0.438 (0.283)	0.667** (0.291)	0.438 (0.279)
university not finished	0.230 (0.230)	0.207 (0.268)	0.241 (0.279)	0.401 (0.288)	0.241 (0.278)
university degree	0.141 (0.141)	0.120 (0.267)	0.138 (0.279)	0.317 (0.287)	0.138 (0.286)
Ph.D.	0.109 (0.109)	0.085 (0.275)	0.085 (0.286)	0.200 (0.294)	0.084 (0.286)
political interest		0.128** (0.027)	0.267** (0.028)	0.240** (0.028)	0.266** (0.028)
attachment			-0.443** (0.025)	-0.360** (0.025)	-0.443** (0.025)
midlevel				-0.017 (0.031)	0.007 (0.031)
member role				-0.197** (0.015)	
R square	0.01	0.013	0.058	0.078	0.058

Note: p-values '**' < 0.05, '*' < 0.1.

Table 6. Correlations with absolute congruence

|	all parties	left parties	right parties	small parties	large parties
satisfaction ideology	-0.40**	-0.41**	-0.41**	-0.36**	-0.41**
satisfaction leadership	-0.30**	-0.31**	-0.34**	-0.29**	-0.30**
vote for other party	0.15**	0.11**	0.21**	0.15**	0.16**
join other party	0.27**	0.26**	0.30**	0.26**	0.29**

Note: p-values '**' < 0.05, '*' < 0.1.

Table 6 reports the correlation coefficients for potential consequences of incongruence. The correlations for this collection of variables are stronger and in the direction anticipated. Perceived ideological incongruence between member and party is associated with decreased satisfaction with the ideological project of the party as well as with the party leadership. These negative correlations are the largest of all the variables and hold across the different party sub-groups. Moving on to more extreme forms of expressing dissatisfaction, i.e. exit options; ideological incongruence is positively associated with a party member having voted for a different party in the most recent election as well as with party members contemplating joining a different party. Although it is not shocking to see ideological incongruence associated with choosing exit rather than voice options within these political organizations, it should be noted that in party members we are discussing individuals with deep connections to a given political party that nevertheless vote for and sometimes consider joining a different organization.

Figure 2 displays the percentage of defecting votes by party. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of party members cast loyal votes in the previous election, but a non-trivial number defected. For example, just over 10 percent of Green Party voters defected in the September 2014 election. After receiving 15.4 percent of the vote in the 2014 European Parliament elections and polling over 10 percent in the run-up to the September general election, the party's 6.9 percent vote share was somewhat unexpected. Given the speculation about former Green Party voters switching to the Feminist Initiative, subsequently supported by exit poll data, the 10 percent defection rate among Green members is provocative.

Additionally, it is worth pointing out that the Social Democrats appear to have the most loyal members on Election Day. At the same time, the results above showed the highest share of incongruent members for this party. It suggests that even those members who are ideologically at odds feel sufficiently loyal to cast a vote for their party. Mild empirical support for this idea can be found in a weak negative correlation between the level of party attachment and levels of incongruence for the Social Democrats only: Members being closer to the Social Democrats tend to have lower ideological incongruence.

Figure 2. Shares of reported defecting votes in the Sept. 2014 elections, by party.
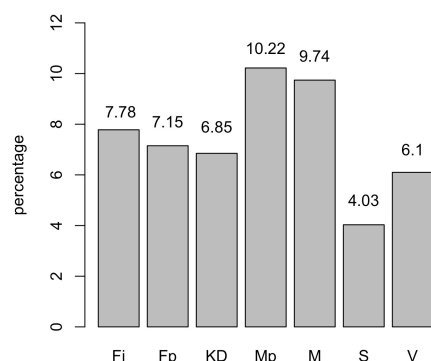
Note: 'Fi' = Feminist initiative; 'Fp' = Liberal Party; 'KD' = Christian Democrats; 'Mp' = Green Party; 'M' = Moderates; 'S' = Social Democrats; 'V' = Left Party.

On the other side of the ideological continuum, over 9 percent of Moderate members voted for another party in 2014. Having previously led the bourgeois Alliance coalition government, the Moderates lost 23 seats in the Riksdag and experienced a nearly 7 percent drop in total vote share between 2010 and 2014. What is more, this took place as the anti-immigration Sweden Democrats gained over 7 percent between the two elections. No doubt the Moderates lost voters to both the Social and Sweden Democrats, but probing the almost 10 percent of their party members that defected in 2014 will provide important information on the nature of these losses. These numbers stand in stark contrast to the Social Democrats, which regained governing status after two electoral cycles in opposition. Just over 4 percent of Social Democrat party members voted for a different party in September 2014, a considerably lower percentage than any other party.

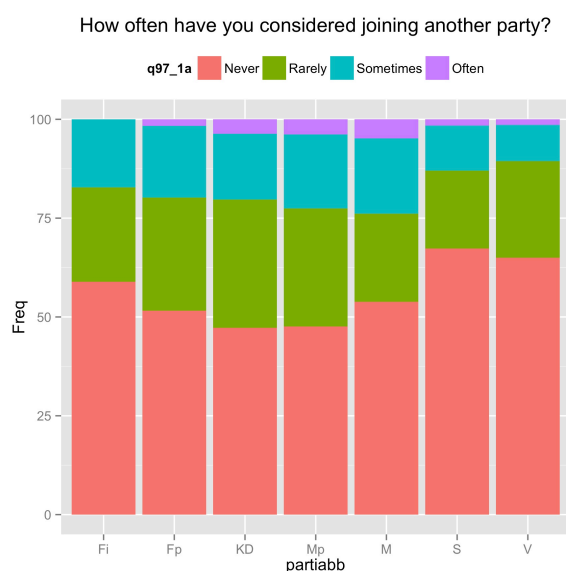Figure 3. Thoughts of joining another party, by party.

Figure 3 makes it clear that a substantial portion of party members in Sweden at least consider joining a different party. For two parties, the Christian Democrats and Greens, the number of their members that consider joining another party – at least rarely – is actually larger than the group of members that never consider leaving the parties. As discussed above, the Feminist Initiative represents a new left-liberal competitor for Green Party members and voters, particularly for the young.[12] Additionally, the Green Party is now part of the minority governing coalition with the Social Democrats and no longer defines itself as a party of opposition. It is likely that this transition would create tension and dissatisfaction within some Green Party members. The relatively large number of Christian Democrats that consider joining another party also makes sense. The party was dangerously close to falling below the four percent threshold necessary for parliamentary representation in the September 2014 election and went through a leadership change in the spring of 2015. It is reasonable to expect both events would destabilize members' commitment to the party. In contrast, the Social Democrat members appear to be the most loyal. Just over 66% of the party's members never consider joining another party, the largest percentage among all seven parties included in the survey.

Summary and conclusion

This paper set out to study ideological incongruence between party members and their parties more closely. Drawing on a high-quality survey of more than 10,000 party members in Sweden we found that some amount of ideological incongruence is not an exception but rather the norm. Across parties, on average, two-thirds of party members described themselves as ideologically at odds with their party. Although at times these differences can be rather small, it remains striking that well over half of party members perceive there to be at least some meaningful difference between their ideological preferences and the position of their chosen party. With expanding democratic structures and procedures within parties, these members have the potential to push their parties in new directions. Beyond potential consequences for voicing ideological differences, this large share of Swedish party members is also the group most likely to exit and to defect from the party – either temporarily through vote choice or more permanently through membership exit.

Derived from existing theories, we investigated important attitudinal correlates of ideological incongruence with the goal of getting closer to understanding some of its causes and consequences. While we found little support for party-level factors, such as left ideology or catchall parties, some individual-level factors provide first hints as to the roots and effects of ideological incongruence. The results showed above all that affective rather than cognitive elements correlated with ideological incongruence. Party members that are strongly attached to the party and those that see their role as primarily a 'foot soldier' are more likely to see themselves ideologically closer to their party. Moreover, and consistent with previous studies, female members appear to be more often ideologically congruent with their party than male members.

Our findings also suggest that ideological incongruence might matter for members' exit and voice behavior. Specifically, we found that ideological incongruence is

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[12] For more information, see: http://pejl.svt.se/val2014/valu-riksdag/valjarstrommar/

associated with a more negative evaluation of the party leader and with a higher probability to either vote for another party or to even leave the current one. Across Swedish parties between 4 and 10 percent of members defected in the last general election in 2014. This non-trivial share of members can potentially be pivotal for electoral victories, especially in Swedish elections of 'block politics'. It is also interesting from a perspective of party member benefit. Members are often cited as loyal voters and a multiplier of loyal voters (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). The above findings qualify this assumption.

These are first steps towards theorizing and testing potential causes and consequences of ideological incongruence among party members in a time when direct membership involvement is growing across Western democracies. In future work, we hope to more directly connect our findings with those of membership surveys in other Scandinavian countries (e.g., Pedersen et al. 2004, Pedersen and Saglie 2005). Another next step for this research will be to disaggregate ideological incongruence not only in its magnitude but also its direction. For, it might be that members being ideologically more extreme than their party differ in important ways from those that are ideologically more moderate.

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Appendix

Table 2. Summary of individual-level variables.

	min	max	mean	sd	N
left-right self	0	10	4.53	3.18	10,185
left-right party	0	10	4.88	2.58	10,164
incongruence (absolute distance)	0	10	1.33	1.51	10,125
incongruence (binary)	0	1	0.68	0.51	10,125
interest in politics	1	4	3.60	0.54	10,300
efficacy	1	5	4.08	0.74	10,222
attachment	1	4	3.35	0.75	10,295
activism	0	1	0.26	0.45	10,392
member role	1	5	3.06	1.18	10,138
satisfaction ideology	1	5	3.97	1.06	10,285
satisfaction leadership	1	5	3.69	1.20	10,179
vote for other party	0	1	0.08	0.26	10,297
join other party	1	4	1.65	0.92	10,184