

**“Not All Quotas Are Created Equal: Trajectories of Reform  
to Increase Women’s Political Representation”**

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**Abstract:** In comparative terms, few political phenomena are as universal as women’s minority status among political representatives. Despite dramatic changes in women’s social and economic position, the world average of women in parliament has remained relatively stable since 1960. In recent years this disjuncture has prompted the emergence of campaigns to increase women’s political presence in countries around the world, with candidate gender quotas becoming an increasingly prominent solution to women’s chronic under-representation. These quotas vary, however, in the degree to which they actually increase the number of women in parliament. I propose a framework for understanding these variations based on three types of institutions bearing on political recruitment: systemic, practical, and normative institutions. A particular configuration of institutions constitutes the existing dynamics of political recruitment, which refract proposals for candidate gender quotas as they enter national and partisan debates concerning women’s representation. The effects and reforms of single institutions cannot be isolated because a broad array of institutions operate simultaneously, variously supporting or blocking the effects and reforms of other institutions. I suggest a possible research strategy for gauging institutional effects, as well as the importance of institutional configurations, based on the analysis of iterated sequences of reforms to increase women’s parliamentary representation.

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In comparative terms, few political phenomena are as universal as women's minority status among political representatives. Despite dramatic changes in women's social and economic position, the world average of women in parliament has remained relatively stable since 1960, fluctuating between ten and fifteen percent.<sup>1</sup> In recent years this disjuncture has prompted the emergence of campaigns to increase women's political presence in countries around the world. While special measures to promote women in politics first emerged in Pakistan and the Soviet Union in the 1950s, and in a handful of other countries in the 1970s and 1980s, their use grew exponentially in the 1990s with the rapid adoption of new representation laws around the globe. These measures include reserved seats, constitutionally mandated quotas, electoral law quotas, and political party quotas and targets aimed at increasing the proportion of women among political candidates and representatives. By one account, at least 103 countries today have experienced the proposal, the adoption, or the repeal of candidate gender quotas to increase the number of women in parliament, with the majority of these quotas being proposed after 1995.<sup>2</sup>

Candidate gender quotas thus have now been adopted by numerous political parties and national legislatures around the world. While research on quotas for women in politics has grown exponentially in the past few years,<sup>3</sup> most of this work examines only one or two cases, viewed largely in isolation from developments elsewhere. The few 'larger-*n*' studies that do exist look at only specific types of quotas and their rapid diffusion across countries in particular world regions: Caul tracks the emergence of political party quotas in selected countries in Western Europe,<sup>4</sup> while Htun and Jones survey national legislative quotas in Latin America.<sup>5</sup> Candidate gender quotas have, in fact, taken on a variety of different forms across countries in every major region worldwide. Table 1 lists these countries and the types of measures which have been adopted or repealed in each case. It does

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<sup>1</sup>Inter-Parliamentary Union 1997. The figures I use throughout refer to the percentage of women in the lower house of parliament. The 14.9% record of female parliamentarians worldwide, attained in 1988, was not surpassed until 2002. The current world average is 14.9% (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2003).

<sup>2</sup>Details on these policies are available on-line in the Global Database of Quotas for Women at <http://www.idea.int/quota>. <http://www.idea.int>.

<sup>3</sup>Arioli 1996; Arioli 1998; Bonder and Nari 1995; Caul 2001b; Gidengil 1996; Htun and Jones 2002; Jones 1996; Kolinsky 1991; Meier 2000; Sgier 2001; Squires 1996.

<sup>4</sup>Caul 2001b.

<sup>5</sup>Htun and Jones 2002.

not include measures which have been discussed, but not passed, and thus underestimates the degree of discussion both across and within countries regarding the introduction of candidate gender quotas. Nonetheless, the table clearly demonstrates that quotas have gained visibility as a solution to women's chronic under-representation in parliament.

–Table 1 about here–

To what extent, however, do quotas actually increase women's political representation? Scholars have noted that the adoption of candidate gender quotas rarely generates expected increases in the number of women in parliament. Many point out, for example, that a requirement for a certain percentage of female candidates on party electoral lists typically does not specify *where* on the list these candidates ought to be placed. When required to include women, party elites often put female candidates at the bottom of their lists or, more generally, in positions where they are unlikely to be elected. Nonetheless, a number of countries have witnessed dramatic changes in the number of women elected to parliament. The countries which have seen the most stunning shifts are those whose level of representation now exceeds 25%. In some cases, these changes are the result of formal legal reforms; in others, they are due to extensive use of informal quotas and targets to increase the proportion of women among elected representatives. As Table 2 indicates, these countries form a diverse group, suggesting no obvious points of commonality on factors that scholars have traditionally found to be important in explaining cross-national variations in women's political representation (see chapter 1).

–Table 2 about here–

Viewing the broader universe of cases, a number of empirical puzzles emerge. First, ostensibly similar measures often achieve quite distinct outcomes across national and political party contexts. While an electoral law quota of 30% has increased women's parliamentary representation in Argentina to 30.7%, the same measure has increased women's representation to 18.5% in Bolivia, 6.8% in Brazil, 12% in Colombia, 20% in Guyana, 9.9% in Panama, 17.5% in Peru, and 9.7% in Venezuela. Second, ostensibly different measures sometimes accomplish similar results across cases. While extensive use of political party quotas has helped increase women's representation to 36.7% in the Netherlands, 36.4% in Norway, and 32.2% in Germany, explicit disavowal of quotas in favor of political party targets have increased women's representation to 45.3% in Sweden, 38% in Denmark, and 36.5% in Finland. Third, just as candidate gender quotas in general do not always generate similar outcomes, candidate gender quotas of the same subtype do not always experience the same results. Some have suggested, for example, that political party quotas are more effective than

national legislative quotas, because the former are voluntary and the latter are imposed by law. This relationship, however, does not hold across all cases. While the French Socialist Party adopted a 30% quota for party lists in 1990, this measure has not led to greater female representation in France, because party elites have simply not followed the quota regulation.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, a 40% electoral law quota in Costa Rica has spurred widespread compliance among the major political parties, raising female parliamentary representation to 35.1%.<sup>7</sup>

Understanding these variations, I argue, requires revisiting the larger question of why women are under-represented in electoral politics. Assumptions informing quota reforms offer an important clue: candidate gender quotas are proposed as a means for countering gender biases in the distribution of political positions. The extent to which reforms succeed or fail, then, relates to their impact on the dynamics of distribution or, more specifically, on the *institutions of political recruitment*. Adopting a broad definition, I identify three types of institutions bearing on patterns of candidate recruitment. *Systemic institutions* are formal features of a political system, like electoral rules, ballot structures, district sizes, and number of political parties. *Practical institutions* comprise formal and informal party practices guiding political recruitment, namely *de jure* requirements for candidacy and *de facto* requirements that reflect a party's demands and preferences regarding candidate selection. *Normative institutions*, finally, are formal and informal principles that define the moral bases and goals of recruitment or, more specifically, the definitions of political equality and political representation enshrined formally in constitutions, legal codes, electoral laws, and party statutes, as well as more informally in party platforms, political ideologies, and voter opinions and values.

A particular configuration of systemic, practical, and normative institutions constitutes the existing dynamics of political recruitment within a certain country or political party and, as such, refract proposals for candidate gender quotas as they enter national and partisan debates concerning women's representation. This mediating function provides insight into why similar provisions for reform may be refracted differently across contexts, while dissimilar provisions for reform may be refracted in similar ways. To disaggregate the precise causal processes at work, I suggest reframing the issue of candidate gender quotas as a question of *institutional reform*. To what extent does a particular candidate gender quota bind the process of political recruitment? Which institutions does

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<sup>6</sup>Appleton and Mazur 1993; Jenson and Sineau 1994.

<sup>7</sup>All figures are from Inter-Parliamentary Union 2003.

the quota specifically seek to change? Do other institutions facilitate adoption or implementation of the quota, or are they employed by opponents as a means to block or to undo the reform?

In the sections which follow, I elaborate this theoretical framework and its implications for the study of women in politics in four parts. First, I review the literature on institutions, paying special attention to insights on institutional stability and change and the importance of institutional configurations. Second, I relate these concepts to processes of political recruitment, outlining the ways in which my analysis differs from more traditional studies of candidate selection. Third, I expand what I mean by systemic, practical, and normative institutions, drawing on existing research on women in politics to flesh out these definitions and to give examples of systemic, practical, and normative reforms. Fourth, I suggest a possible research strategy for gauging institutional effects, as well as the importance of institutional configurations, based on the analysis of iterated sequences of reforms to increase women's parliamentary representation. I conclude with some brief examples of iterated sequences in campaigns for reserved seats in Pakistan and India, political party quotas and targets in Sweden and the United Kingdom, and national legislative quotas in France and Argentina.

### **Institutions and institutional change in the study of politics and political structure**

Institutions are a central organizing concept in the study of politics. Conventional ways of defining institutions, however, often fail to capture the full variety of institutions that structure political behavior. More specifically, existing studies on women in politics most often use the term *institution* to refer to formal features of the political system, like electoral rules, ballot structures, district sizes, and number of political parties. While these institutions have all been shown to have some effect on women's political representation,<sup>8</sup> scholars outside the field of women in politics have identified a number of other kinds of institutions which may also structure the relationship between gender and politics, namely procedures, routines, conventions, norms, and cognitive scripts.

Hall and Taylor describe three possible approaches to the study of institutions: historical institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism, and sociological institutionalism.<sup>9</sup> Historical institutionalists understand institutions as formal or informal procedures, routines, norms, and conventions embedded in the organization of politics, society, and the economy. They stress asymmetries of power associated with institutions, and they view institutional change in terms of

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<sup>8</sup>Caul 1999; Matland 1995; Rule 1981; Rule 1987; Rule and Zimmerman 1994.

<sup>9</sup>Hall and Taylor 1996.

path dependence and unintended consequences. Rational choice institutionalists, in contrast, view institutions as conventions of actors seeking to solve collective action dilemmas. They argue that institutions survive when they provide more benefits to the relevant actors than alternative institutional forms. Sociological institutionalists, finally, define institutions to include not just formal rules, procedures, and norms, but the symbol systems, cognitive scripts, and moral templates that provide the 'frames of meaning' guiding human action. They emphasize the interactive and mutually constitutive character of the relationship between institutions and individual actions and view change as an attempt to enhance the social legitimacy of the institution.

While they differ on their specific definitions of institutions, all three schools of thought concur that institutions encompass various organizations and rules, as well as certain practices and ideas. Considering all four elements, they argue, is necessary to comprehend why events occur as they do, especially when outcomes appear sub-optimal. Although employing distinct theoretical frameworks, the three approaches also converge on basic aspects of institutional creation and institutional effects on individuals. First, they all stress the *historical nature* of institutions as conventions created intentionally or unintentionally by individuals in the past, typically through a process of conflict and contestation.<sup>10</sup> They thus highlight the human origins of many institutions that appear today to be 'natural' principles of social organization, "part of the order of the universe and...ready to stand as the grounds of argument."<sup>11</sup> Once established, however, institutions reduce the scope of human agency to activity or choice within constraints.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, when facts are highly institutionalized, it is sufficient for one person simply to tell another how things are done: individuals are motivated to comply because otherwise their actions and those of others in the system cannot be understood.<sup>13</sup> At that point, "one enacts institutions; one takes action by departing from them, not by participating in them."<sup>14</sup>

Second, all institutionalists note in some way the *relational nature* of institutions as conventions that are constituted by individuals at the same time that they constitute these same

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<sup>10</sup>DiMaggio and Powell 1991.

<sup>11</sup>Douglas 1986, 52.

<sup>12</sup>Jepperson 1991; Meyer and Rowan 1991; Nee 1998.

<sup>13</sup>Zucker 1991.

<sup>14</sup>Jepperson 1991, 149.

individuals. Institutions affect relations between individuals and institutions, as well as relations among individuals themselves. The first effect pertains to the constitution of individual interests and social incentives. While institutions may be the logical extension of common cultural beliefs or norms, the institution may give rise over time to a set of socially structured interests and an organized system of social incentives which may outlast the moral imperatives that generated the initial social convention.<sup>15</sup> Thelen describes this dynamic as an *incentive structure or coordination effect*: once a set of institutions is in place, actors adapt their strategies in ways that reflect but also reinforce the logic of the system.<sup>16</sup> The second effect of institutions refers to the ways in which institutions structure power relations among groups of individuals. In shaping political interactions, state and societal institutions intentionally or unintentionally privilege some groups while disadvantaging others.<sup>17</sup> Thelen labels this dynamic the *distributional effect*: institutions are not neutral coordinating mechanisms but actually reflect, reproduce, and magnify particular patterns of power distribution in politics, thus affecting the capabilities of various groups to achieve self-consciousness, to organize, and to make alliances.<sup>18</sup>

A great deal of research on institutions is thus concerned with explaining the durable quality of institutions, a feature which Pierson argues is even more characteristic of political institutions than economic ones.<sup>19</sup> While market mechanisms may potentially interrupt dynamics of increasing returns in the economy, various features of politics make increasing returns more likely, namely the central role of collective action, the possibilities for employing political authority to magnify power asymmetries, and the absence or weakness of efficiency-enhancing mechanisms of competition and learning. Nonetheless, a number of scholars have sought to illuminate potential sources of institutional change. Thelen offers the most proactive strategy when she notes that understanding how institutions were constructed provides insights into how they might come apart.<sup>20</sup> The task is to

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<sup>15</sup>Parsons 1937.

<sup>16</sup>Thelen 1999.

<sup>17</sup>Thelen and Steinmo 1992.

<sup>18</sup>Thelen 1999.

<sup>19</sup>Pierson 2000.

<sup>20</sup>Thelen 1999.

identify which interventions have the potential to disrupt the feedback mechanisms that reproduce stable patterns over time. The process of dismantling an institution, however, may require a different set of tools than those used to erect it, because institutionalization creates new constituencies of actors with a stake in maintaining the institution.<sup>21</sup> Further, the process may be wrought with unintended consequences:

“institutional change rarely satisfies the prior intentions of those who initiate it. Change cannot be controlled precisely....Understanding the transformation of political institutions requires recognizing that there are frequently multiple, not necessarily consistent, intentions, that intentions are often ambiguous, that intentions are part of a system of values, goals, and attitudes that embeds intention in a structure of other beliefs and aspirations, and that this structure of values and intentions is shaped, interpreted, and created during the course of change of the institution.”<sup>22</sup>

Environmental changes offer a second possibility for institutional reform or replacement. Thelen and Steinmo distinguish four type of environmental shifts: (1) when changes in the broader socioeconomic or political context produce a situation in which previously latent institutions suddenly become salient, (2) when changes in the broader socioeconomic or political context produce a situation in which old institutions are put in the service of different ends, (3) when exogenous changes produce a shift in the goals or strategies being pursued within existing institutions, and (4) when political actors adjust their strategies to accommodate changes in the institutions themselves.<sup>23</sup> All four of these shifts correspond to Weir’s notion of ‘bounded innovation,’ a process by which existing institutional arrangements create opportunities for some kinds of innovation but also set boundaries on the types of innovation that are possible.<sup>24</sup>

A third, slightly less intentional and directed source of change is the institutional order itself. Jepperson argues that a given institution is less likely to be vulnerable to intervention if it is embedded in a framework of institutions to the extent that other practices in the framework have

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<sup>21</sup>Pierson 1996.

<sup>22</sup>March and Olsen 1989, 65-66.

<sup>23</sup>Thelen and Steinmo 1992.

<sup>24</sup>Weir 1992.

adapted to it, to the extent that it is centrally located within the framework, and to the extent that it is integrated within the framework by unifying accounts based on common principles and rules.<sup>25</sup>

When a number of different institutional orders exist in a society, however, interactions and encounters among these orders may create 'friction' between mismatched institutional patterns.<sup>26</sup>

Tension or complementarity among these orders may thus drive the process of political development:

"When stable patterns of politics clash, purposive political actors will often find themselves at an impasse, unable to proceed according to the 'normal' patterns and processes that had hitherto governed their behavior....Political actors in such circumstances will often be induced to find new ways to define and advance their aims, whether by finding a new institutional forum that is more receptive to their ideas or by adapting ideas to take advantage of new institutional opportunities."<sup>27</sup>

This perspective presents politics as a process that may have stable elements but contains within itself an inadvertent potential for change.

Despite important insights into the historical and relational aspects of institutions, the literature in this field has been less explicit on the causal role of institutional configurations, as well as on the hegemonic tendencies of existing institutions. Both have crucial implications for understanding institutional stability and change, particularly in terms of sorting through why institutional reforms can have a number of possible outcomes, and why reform often requires sticking close to reigning rules, practices, and ideas. When scholars stress that institutions "do not necessarily fit together in a coherent, self-reinforcing, let alone functional, whole,"<sup>28</sup> and institutional orders need to be decomposed into their overlapping and conflicting component parts,<sup>29</sup> they acknowledge at some level that political outcomes are the result of these mismatches and contradictions. That is, the effects of single institutions cannot be isolated because a broad array of institutions operate simultaneously, variously supporting or blocking the effects of other institutions.

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<sup>25</sup>Jepperson 1991.

<sup>26</sup>Orren and Skowronek 1994; Thelen 1999.

<sup>27</sup>Lieberman 2002, 704.

<sup>28</sup>Thelen 1999, 382.

<sup>29</sup>Lieberman 2002.

An attempt to reform one institution, consequently, may be greatly facilitated or hindered by the operation or reform of other institutions. Political outcomes, therefore, spring from a particular *configuration of institutions*: “[t]he effect of any particular causal combination may depend on the presence or absence of other conditions, and several different conditions may satisfy a general causal requirement – that is, they may be causally equivalent at a more abstract level.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, similar institutional reforms may unfold quite differently across contexts, while dissimilar reforms may lead to comparable outcomes. Importantly, one difference may constitute a qualitative distinction among cases, although not every difference will merit such a distinction.

In a related vein, students of institutions often describe processes of institutional reform in terms of ‘bounded innovation.’<sup>31</sup> Even though individuals hold different and conflicting views on matters of common concern, reforms typically reproduce or redefine existing rules, practices, and ideas. While such an outcome may appear to be the default option, and thus a failure of reform, it may sometimes be the result of a strategic choice, and thus an adroit political accomplishment. Control over official definitions of political institutions may have enormous policy consequences, because these affect what is legitimately construed as a ‘problem’<sup>32</sup> and what sorts of instruments may be lawfully employed to resolve a given issue. Recognizing such boundaries, social movements typically invoke already existing values and ideas and draw on familiar action tactics to legitimate and motivate collective action.<sup>33</sup> At the most basic level, ‘framing processes’ involve reducing complex issues into evocative phrases to condense the “amount of cognitive processing required to deal with it...to package...issues simply and in ways that are consistent with the ideals and contemporary themes of civic life.”<sup>34</sup> While institutions limit the options for reformers, they also present potentially powerful means for change.

## **Institutions of political recruitment and women’s political representation**

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<sup>30</sup>Ragin 2000, 40.

<sup>31</sup>Weir 1992.

<sup>32</sup>Bacchi 1999.

<sup>33</sup>Benford and Snow 2000; McAdam 1988; Snow and Benford 1988; Tarrow 1994.

<sup>34</sup>McCarthy, Smith, and Zald 1996, 309.

Traditional studies of political recruitment focus on a rather uncontroversial set of factors shaping processes of candidate selection. Norris organizes these according to four levels of analysis: the *political system*, including legal regulations, the party system, and the electoral system; the *recruitment process*, including the degree of internal democracy within party organizations and the rules governing candidate selection; the *supply of candidates* willing to pursue elected office, determined by individual motivation and political capital; and the *demands of gatekeepers*, who may include voters, party members, financial supporters, or political leaders, depending on the particular method of selection.<sup>35</sup> These levels are nested in a “‘funnel of causality,’ so that supply and demand works within party recruitment processes, which are in turn shaped by the broader political system.”<sup>36</sup>

While all these factors are clearly important for understanding political recruitment, disaggregating them in this particular way obscures rather than clarifies the causal processes at work. The demands of gatekeepers, for example, largely shape the supply of candidates, in the sense that potential candidates often self-select themselves into or out of the recruitment process on the basis of perceived criteria for selection. Similarly, characteristics of the political system tend to mold the recruitment process, with legal regulations and the electoral system largely defining the parameters for candidate selection. Finally, a number of these factors – particularly the party system and the degree of internal party democracy – have demonstrated a complex, non-linear relationship with patterns of female recruitment.<sup>37</sup> Simply listing them as factors does not help in discriminating which features facilitate or hinder the actual recruitment of women. More generally, the multiple directions of causality in this model offer few clues as to how a particular model of recruitment might refract reforms like candidate gender quotas.

The institutions literature suggests a means for shuffling roughly these same elements around into more precise causal categories. *Organizations and rules*, or systemic institutions, set the formal boundaries for political recruitment. These include the party system, including the degree of internal party democracy, and the electoral system. *Practices* or practical institutions, reflect the actual rules governing political recruitment by revealing what criteria gatekeepers in fact use when selecting candidates. These practices indirectly affect the supply of candidates willing to pursue elected office

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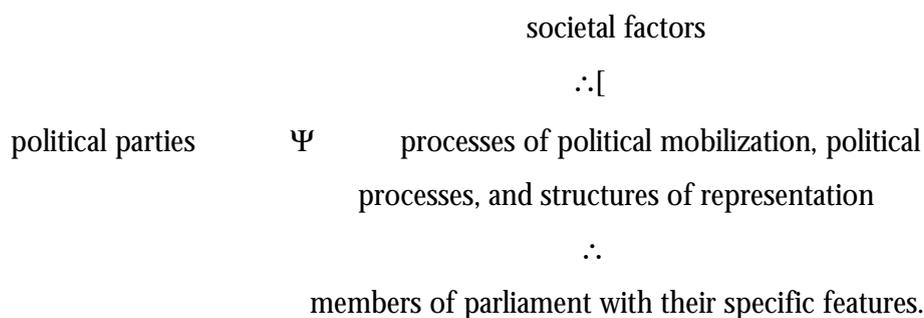
<sup>35</sup>Norris 1997b.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid, 1.

<sup>37</sup>Caul 2001a; Paskeviciute 2001.

who infer criteria for selection based on these practices. *Ideas*, or normative institutions, constitute the moral bases of political recruitment. These include legal regulations, as well as uncodified opinions and values, regarding equality and political representation. Taken together, these institutions exert individual and collective effects on patterns of political recruitment.

Rather than representing objective means for candidate selection, institutions of political recruitment reflect decisions and compromises that have emerged over time and created not only vested interests in their preservation, but also a set of easily identifiable in- and out-groups. These institutions thus constitute the nexus linking diffuse social and economic processes with concrete political choices regarding candidate selection. In a model proposed by Best and Cotta,<sup>38</sup> the effect of societal factors on the composition of parliamentary elites is mediated by processes of political mobilization, political processes, and structures of representation, which are in turn influenced by the actions of political parties:



While these authors do not use the language of institutions, the model captures the dynamic I have described as the ‘relative autonomy of politics’ in chapter two. Institutions of political recruitment do not integrate, but rather mitigate broader social and economic changes, providing insight into why improvements in women’s social and economic status have typically not been reflected in patterns of parliamentary representation. At the same time, the filtering function of institutions sheds light on why reforms targeting the form and content of the nexus may have strong and immediate effects.

### **Disaggregating political recruitment: systemic, practical, and normative institutions**

Systemic, practical, and normative institutions constitute three interlocking dimensions of political recruitment. As such, attempts to reform one type of institution may be facilitated or

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<sup>38</sup>Best and Cotta 2000, 10.

hindered by the state of the other two institutions. While it does not use this language, the existing literature on women in politics has generated a number of insights on the types of systemic, practical, and normative institutions that appear to disadvantage and to favor women's political recruitment. These studies reveal that while existing institutions often do not explicitly discriminate against women, certain features embody implicit gender biases that reproduce inequalities in patterns of political representation. Curiously, institutional silence on gender may simultaneously work for and against demands for increased female presence: politicians may seek to 'gender' these institutions in order to more truly realize commitments to equality and representation, or they may dismiss such calls as derogations of these very principles.

### *Systemic institutions*

Systemic institutions are formal features of a political system, like electoral rules, ballot structures, district sizes, and number of political parties. Their effects on patterns of political representation are perhaps the most thoroughly studied in the field of women in politics. Indeed, the electoral system is considered one of the most important – if not *the* most important – factors explaining cross-national variation in women's political representation.<sup>39</sup> These studies find that proportional representation (PR) electoral systems, especially those with closed party lists and higher district magnitudes, tend to have much higher proportions of women in parliament than majoritarian, or first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral systems, which do not use party lists and have single member districts. Scholars explain these disparities by arguing that PR systems offer more opportunities to women, because political parties feel compelled to nominate at least a few women in order to balance their lists or their slate of district candidates.<sup>40</sup> This argument is validated empirically by the fact that nearly all countries with high levels of female representation have some form of PR electoral arrangement.<sup>41</sup> This account, however, cannot explain why many states with PR electoral arrangements do not have high levels of female representation, as well as why some countries with FPTP systems have made great strides in recent years.<sup>42</sup> A closer look at the cases

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<sup>39</sup>Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Norris 1993; Rule 1981; Rule 1987; Rule and Zimmerman 1994.

<sup>40</sup>Matland 1995.

<sup>41</sup>European Parliament Directorate-General for Research 1997.

<sup>42</sup>Two notable cases include Canada and the United Kingdom.

sampled reveals that an overwhelming number of studies have focused exclusively on the period after 1970 in advanced, industrial democracies. Before 1970 women's representation was roughly the same in PR and FPTP systems across advanced, industrial democracies,<sup>43</sup> while the electoral system continues to play little or no role in explaining women's representation in developing countries.<sup>44</sup>

These findings do not suggest that the electoral system is causally insignificant, but rather that the electoral system is an institution that may be more or less responsive to demands for increased representation. The specific features of each system structure opportunities and constraints for candidacy by designating the total number of candidates that may be nominated, the number of candidates that may run in each district, the method for listing candidates, and the procedure voters must use to elect a particular candidate. Indirectly, the electoral system affects the number and types of parties contesting elections, the frequency of elections, and the rate of incumbency across elections. None of these features, however, are causal *per se*, but rather *in interaction* with ideas and practices regarding candidate recruitment. A country with a PR electoral system, at some level, has already acknowledged or accepted the goal of proportional representation by enshrining this principle in the electoral law. Nevertheless, the groups or ideas to be represented proportionally may or may not include women, but rather region, class, age, occupation, ethnicity, or religion. Groups deemed to 'deserve' representation vary over time and across political parties, depending on which issues appear most salient at particular times and which sectors parties view or seek to capture as primary constituencies. Consciously or not, parties devise formal and informal criteria for selection that favor certain groups over others.

This discussion suggests that other factors may be working *in conjunction with* the electoral system to produce changes in female representation. Proportional representation systems facilitate the adoption and implementation of candidate gender quotas to the extent that they are based on party lists, multi-member districts, and a concern to actually elect more women. Party lists and multi-member districts enable parties to nominate several candidates, which allows them to designate – if they wish – a certain proportion for women and other groups. With closed party lists, proportion and placement matter: these lists increase female representation if women are placed near the top, but not if they are placed near the bottom of the list. With open party lists, proportion and voter choice are crucial: these lists increase female representation if many voters select women, but not if

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<sup>43</sup>Matland 1998a; Sainsbury 1993.

<sup>44</sup>Matland 1998b, Moore and Shackman 1996, Oakes and Almquist 1993; but see Paxton 1997.

voters systematically choose men over women.<sup>45</sup> PR systems, therefore, do not automatically translate into higher levels of female representation, but are mediated by party recruitment practices and broader commitments to equality in representation. Conversely, first-past-the-post systems do not necessarily preclude the election of more women. Because the structures associated with these systems imply a zero-sum game (if a woman is selected, a man is not), the chance to ‘balance’ nominations is all but impossible. Nonetheless, if a party is determined to elect more women, it may devise new practices and criteria of selection to accomplish this goal, like all-women shortlists that guarantee that whichever candidate is chosen in a district will be female. To pursue such a controversial policy, however, requires justifying it by appealing to more widespread notions of justice and equality.

Systemic institutions constitute the formal rules and procedures that provide the basic framework for political recruitment. They shape practical institutions, or criteria for candidate selection, by establishing how many candidates may be selected per constituency, thus making each seat more or less scarce and determining the latitude for practical reform. They influence normative institutions to the extent that they inform or embody specific notions of political representation, whether this be proportional versus majoritarian or descriptive versus ideational representation. Systemic reforms include adopting a new electoral system and passing national legislation regarding female recruitment, including constitutionally mandated quotas, electoral law quotas, and reserved seats. A slightly less direct type of systemic reform is founding a new, electable political party, to the extent that this creates shifts in the party system that redefine the constraints and opportunities that other parties experience during the process of political recruitment. Attempts to reform the electoral system are extremely rare, and although women’s activists have been involved in efforts to change the national electoral system in countries like France and New Zealand, and the system for electing representatives to the European Parliament in the United Kingdom, reasons for these reforms did not issue primarily from a desire to increase the percentage of women in national parliaments. Proposals for candidate gender quotas, on the other hand, have proliferated in recent years, appearing on the legislative agenda in countries around the world. Similarly, a number of political parties have emerged in recent decades to contest ‘old’ ways of doing politics by, among other

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<sup>45</sup>Closed party lists enable parties to rank candidates, and this ranking determines in which order candidates will accede to office. Open party lists simply contain the names of all the candidates, and voters select individual names from this list.

things, promoting women's participation in electoral politics. These include Green parties around Europe, as well as various women's parties worldwide.<sup>46</sup>

### *Practical institutions*

Practical institutions comprise formal and informal political party practices guiding candidate recruitment. More specifically, they include *de jure* requirements for candidacy – like age, party affiliation, collection of signatures, and financial resources – as well as *de facto* requirements – like party service, formal qualifications, legislative experience, speaking abilities, financial resources, political connections, kinship, name-recognition, group networks, organizational skills, and ambition for office or incumbency status<sup>47</sup> – that together reflect a party's demands and preferences regarding candidate selection. Political parties are the ultimate gatekeepers to political office,<sup>48</sup> although party selection procedures vary widely across countries, and sometimes even across political parties in the same country, to the degree that they involve local party organizations, groups organized within the party, party members, and citizens who are not members of the party. While specific criteria for selection may also differ, the selection process itself invariably produces distortions between characteristics of the candidates and characteristics of the electorate. More specifically, legislatures worldwide tend to include a larger share of affluent, male, middle-aged, and white-collar members than exist proportionally in the electorate.<sup>49</sup> While often couched in neutral terms, then, selection practices clearly tend to privilege certain categories of prospective candidates over others.

Variations in candidate requirements derive, to a great extent, from the fact that politics is a career like no other: unlike in other professions, there are no standard and internationally recognized qualifications to be a politician.<sup>50</sup> Two criteria that weigh heavily on the 'demand' side include party

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<sup>46</sup>Green parties have long espoused gender equality as one of their core ideological pillars, and in 1986 the German Greens changed their federal party charter to require sexual parity on candidate lists as part of a broader reform to advocate full equality for women (Frankland 1989). The most well-known women's party worldwide is perhaps the Women's Alliance in Iceland, but other women's parties that have won seats in parliament include Women of Russia, Shamiram in Armenia, and the Democratic Party of Women of Kyrgyzstan.

<sup>47</sup>Rahat and Hazan 2001.

<sup>48</sup>Lovenduski and Norris 1993.

<sup>49</sup>Norris 1997b.

<sup>50</sup>Norris 1997b; Phillips 1995.

service and financial resources, both of which have been found to prejudice women's chances of being selected. Many parties unofficially require that prospective candidates work hard over the course of many years within the party, serving a sort of political apprenticeship before they can be nominated to the party's slate.<sup>51</sup> Others directly or indirectly require that prospective candidates raise a certain amount of money in order to be considered for nomination. These demands strongly shape the 'supply' of potential candidates, particularly along the lines of gender. Women often interrupt their careers when they have children, making it difficult to begin, sustain, or resume active party engagement until they are much older.<sup>52</sup> Unsurprisingly, many women who do follow a political career are single or divorced with no children. Raising money has also proven a great obstacle for many women, who are less likely than men to have the financial assets or political connections to raise the type of money required to become a candidate. Dynamics of demand and supply, therefore, work together to shape patterns of political representation: "in many systems women have not been nominated because they do not have appropriate 'qualifications.' [In turn,] inhibitions about the appropriateness of their qualifications may stop women from seeking candidacy."<sup>53</sup>

Debate has waged, however, over whether supply or demand side factors are more important in explaining patterns of political recruitment. Some scholars argue that supply side factors seem to play the major role in political recruitment,<sup>54</sup> while many party elites justify their selection practices by arguing that "there are just not enough qualified women." Both perspectives assume, however, that demand side criteria are simply neutral qualifications that create no distortions beyond discriminating between good and bad candidates. They do not consider the extent to which judgments regarding 'good' and 'bad' map onto stereotypes of male and female and, subsequently, onto individual men and women seeking political office. In a study of elite recruiter attitudes and the treatment of potential candidates for state and national office in the United States, Niven tests whether predominantly male party elites recruit fewer women than men because of an out-group or a distribution effect.<sup>55</sup> When the out-group effect operates, elites identify women as an

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<sup>51</sup> Kolinsky 1993.

<sup>52</sup> Randall 1982.

<sup>53</sup> Lovenduski 1993, 12.

<sup>54</sup> Norris and Lovenduski 1993.

<sup>55</sup> Niven 1998.

out-group and base their evaluations on stereotypes about women as a whole, leading them to judge women as less politically capable than men. Meanwhile, they identify men as an in-group and base their judgments on each man's individual qualities, although surface similarities with themselves lead them to assume political competence. When the distribution effect is at work, party elites subconsciously assume that, because women in politics are comparatively rare, men are more likely to succeed in politics. Niven's surveys find strong support for the out-group effect, but little evidence for the distribution effect. With the distribution effect, increasing the number of women would make it progressively easier for women to pursue political office; with the out-group effect, however, bias will continue even as the out-group strengthens itself politically.<sup>56</sup>

The particular criteria that parties require of their candidates, however, is largely a function of its ideology and its organization.<sup>57</sup> If parties are strongly committed to the goal of gender equality, for example, they may adopt special measures to privilege female candidates during the selection process. The possibility to adopt and apply such measures are profoundly influenced by the way selection procedures are structured, as well as the distribution of authority within the party with regard to candidate selection. The degree of transparency in selection procedures varies enormously across political parties. In some instances the nomination procedure is relatively open. Party documents outline detailed, explicit, and standardized rules for selection, including the procedures for applying to become a candidate, the relative importance of different party bodies in deciding on candidates, and the specific voting mechanisms for choosing the final slate of candidates. In these parties, applicants have access to formal procedures of appeal if they wish to challenge violations of these rules. In other parties the nomination procedure is relatively closed. Applicants may be aware of the steps in the application process, but these are rarely made explicit and open, and the procedure may vary from one selection to another. Being less bureaucratic, the process is much more open to the influence of personal patronage, and because formal rules are not implemented, applicants have little recourse to appeal.<sup>58</sup> Regardless of the degree of transparency, parties also vary

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<sup>56</sup>Tremblay and Pelletier (2001) apply Niven's arguments to a study of female elites in Canada, but they find only weak support for the argument that female elites are more likely to recruit women than men. However, gender stereotypes associate men with political competence, so if female elites use stereotypes to judge potential male candidates (as male elites were found to do with potential female candidates), they are likely to deem men to be more competent than women.

<sup>57</sup>Lovenduski 1993.

<sup>58</sup>Norris 1993.

with regard to the distribution of control over decision-making within the party hierarchy. Some parties employ highly centralized procedures, with national party leaders making most of the decisions regarding policies of candidate selection, while others utilize highly decentralized procedures, in which local party members do most of the selecting. Although scholars anticipate that highly institutionalized and highly centralized parties are more likely to recruit women,<sup>59</sup> the empirical evidence is mixed. Strict adherence to rules may make these rules seem inviolable, while a system based on personal discretion may open doors for some women.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, party leaders in highly centralized parties may have no interest in promoting women, while women may be more active in local party organizations that can, in turn, promote them to higher office.<sup>61</sup>

Practical institutions represent the formal and informal judgments and procedures that transform the universe of potential applicants into a slate of party candidates. They affect systemic institutions by determining how candidates are selected for each party list, each electoral ballot, and each voting district. They shape normative institutions in a less direct way, by establishing practices that may then serve as the basis for new political norms of equality and representation. Practical reforms include instituting political party quotas or targets, as well as adopting other party-specific measures aimed at facilitating and encouraging female parliamentary participation. Party quotas involve establishing a specific percentage, proportion, or numeric range for the recruitment of female candidates, although the actual wording of the reform may be gender neutral and simply establish minimum or maximum representation of either sex. Party targets are closely related to party quotas, but they differ in that they merely establish a goal for the increased recruitment of women. Sometimes this entails specifying a particular percentage, proportion, or numeric range – making them very much like quotas, although less binding – but sometimes it simply involves a vague commitment to recruiting more female candidates. Party targets are in many ways functionally equivalent to party quotas, and they are often, but not always, preferred by parties who are ideologically opposed to the notion of quotas, but who are otherwise committed to the goal of increasing female parliamentary presence. Other measures to promote women’s representation include special funds for female candidates’ campaigns, political training for prospective female

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<sup>59</sup>Matland and Studlar 1996; Norris and Lovenduski 1995.

<sup>60</sup>Beckwith 1989.

<sup>61</sup>Caul 1999; Sainsbury 1993.

candidates, provision of childcare, and changes in scheduling and/or the adoption of more flexible meeting times.<sup>62</sup> Quotas and targets have long been important in certain political parties, but in recent years they have diffused across party systems, as well as across countries in various regions.<sup>63</sup> In some instances, these have dramatically altered traditional criteria for candidate selection: in the German Social Democratic Party, for example, quotas have transformed the nature of political apprenticeship (*Ochsentou*) by shortening dramatically the amount of party service required to qualify as a candidate.<sup>64</sup> Other measures have not been subject to systematic data collection, but today many parties and non-party organizations raise money and run training programs for prospective female candidates.<sup>65</sup> Childcare and schedule changes have been less common, but have become the subject of debate in countries like Norway and the United Kingdom.

### *Normative institutions*

Normative institutions are formal and informal principles that define the moral bases and goals of political recruitment. More specifically, they include the definitions of political equality and political representation enshrined formally in constitutions, legal codes, electoral laws, and party statutes, as well as more informally in party platforms, political ideologies, and voter opinions and values. These institutions are not the same as ‘culture,’ although they represent the institutional location where culture intersects most openly with processes of political recruitment. Whether or not they are written down, they embody the hegemonic interpretations of equality and representation that enlarge or constrict the potential to adopt candidate gender quotas. Reigning notions of equality tend, first, to privilege either equality of opportunities or equality of results and, second, to remain silent on or to designate specifically which types of groups are subject to equal treatment. Dominant ideas of representation, similarly, tend to embrace either a politics of ideas or a

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<sup>62</sup>Inter-Parliamentary Union 1992, especially 81-83.

<sup>63</sup>Caul 2001b; Krook 2002.

<sup>64</sup>Kolinsky 1993.

<sup>65</sup>The most well-known fundraising organization for female candidates is EMILY’s List, which started in the United States but now has branches in Australia, Italy, and the United Kingdom. Training seminars have been organized by organizations as diverse as the Center for American Women and Politics, the Center for Women and Democracy at the University of Washington, the National Democratic Institute, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

politics of presence.<sup>66</sup> The first position argues that the substance of representation matters and that the personal traits of the representatives are irrelevant, while the second contends that the descriptive characteristics of representatives are important because they affect the substance of the policies those representatives produce.

Notions of equality and representation vary across countries, as well as across political parties. Feminist political theorists identify numerous ways in which gender inequalities inhere in these concepts as they have traditionally been defined.<sup>67</sup> The empirical literature, however, finds that countries with more egalitarian political cultures and parties on the left of the political spectrum are more likely to promote women in politics.<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, these findings exhibit the same post-1970-advanced-industrial-democracies bias as much of the large-*n* literature on women in politics. Ongoing research on Latin America reveals, for example, that right-wing parties are more likely than left-wing parties to identify women as one of their primary constituencies, and therefore to take steps to promote female representation. Further, new research on Western Europe notes that the gap between left-wing and right-wing has closed significantly in recent years.<sup>69</sup> More revealing, in terms of obstacles and opportunities presented by normative institutions more generally, are the rising number of case studies that examine national campaigns for candidate gender quotas. At one end, scholars trace the ways in which supporters in some cases have redefined existing conceptions of equality and representation in order to gain acceptance for special measures to promote women.<sup>70</sup> At the other end, they note the irony that similar measures have been declared illegal in other countries on the grounds that they contravened established principles of equality or legislation prohibiting sex discrimination.<sup>71</sup>

Candidate gender quotas are often highly controversial, largely because they embody a seemingly paradoxical demand:

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<sup>66</sup>Phillips 1995.

<sup>67</sup>Pateman 1988; Okin 1979; Phillips 1995; Young 1990b; Young 2000.

<sup>68</sup>Caul 2001a; Norris and Inglehart 2001; Rule 1981; Siaroff 2000.

<sup>69</sup>Kaiser 2001.

<sup>70</sup>Scott 1998; Sgier 2001; Skjeie 1992.

<sup>71</sup>Guadagnini 1998; Mossuz-Lavau 1998; Norris 1997a.

“It means asking in the name of equality for genuine equality among equals, thus presuming an inequality that has to be adjusted; inevitably this demand comes up against the implicit consensus that equality already exists, laid down as it is in the constitution. At the same time it is obvious that true equality between men and women who are unequal is neither possible nor really desirable. This is a horrific state for any politics of equality, as nothing approaching hegemonic consent to such a politics is likely to be gained, either among men or among women.”<sup>72</sup>

In responding to such debates, many feminists have sought to deconstruct the ‘equality versus difference’ debate, noting that the opposite of equality is not difference, but inequality, and the opposite of difference is not equality, but similarity. As such, promoting equality does not preclude acknowledging differences.<sup>73</sup> However, slippage between these concepts is quite common. Some conservatives oppose quotas because they support strict equality of opportunities, while others defend quotas because they believe that women and men are essentially different. Similarly, some progressives oppose quotas because they fear these essentialize gender differences, while other defend quotas because they favor equality of results. Arguments for and against quotas, therefore, combine beliefs about equality with norms about gender in a variety of different, and sometimes unpredictable, ways. These ambiguities come together in a particularly intractable form in the most common objection to quotas of any kind, the position that political positions should be distributed solely on the basis of merit. Two assumptions underwrite this argument: the belief that in a particular society positions really are awarded by achievement, and the prejudice that women really do accomplish less than men.<sup>74</sup> As Young has argued, however, criteria based on ‘merit’ are never impartial, value-neutral, or scientific, but rather represent normative and cultural judgments that are inherently political.<sup>75</sup> Thus, the goals of justice and equality are sometimes better served through programs of affirmative action that apply differential treatment to favor certain disadvantaged groups.

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<sup>72</sup>Haug 1995, 137.

<sup>73</sup>Bock and James 1992; Gatens 1991; Scott 1988.

<sup>74</sup>Haug 1995.

<sup>75</sup>Young 1990a.

Proposals for candidate gender quotas also interact closely existing notions of political representation. Representative government, importantly, is not necessarily the same as democratic government.<sup>76</sup> In fact, the earliest quotas for women were adopted in non-democratic one-party regimes, countries which subsequently witnessed dramatic decreases in women's representation after initiating transitions to democracy.<sup>77</sup> The forms and goals of political representation, therefore, may vary greatly across national and party contexts. Even in rubber-stamp assemblies, however, representatives serve the purpose of legitimating the regime in power. The four most common arguments for increasing women's representation address both the legitimacy and the efficacy of parliaments that exclude women. The justice argument frames women's access to politics as an issue of fairness and democracy: because women constitute half of the population, they should occupy half of the seats in parliament. The interests argument claims that women have certain interests that cannot be represented by men, so women need to be present in order to represent women. The resources argument maintains that women have certain resources – namely values, experiences, and expertise – that differentiate them from men, resources which if included in the political arena would improve political life. The democracy argument, finally, contends that the inclusion of women will improve the quality of democratic deliberation.<sup>78</sup> Campaigns to increase women's political presence have combined many of these arguments, although they have often stuck close to existing notions of gender and political representation. Inhetveen, for example, finds that in Norway arguments for political party quotas drew on conventional gender stereotypes, while in Germany these arguments emphasized the need to combat existing structural discrimination against women.<sup>79</sup> Comparing political parties in Norway, Skjeie discovers that conservatives justified quotas based on the different experiences of women and men, believing that women's participation would represent a valuable contribution to political decision-making, while leftists claimed that the conflicting interests of women and men require balanced representation of both in order to make the struggle over the distribution of scarce resources more equitable.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Manin 1997.

<sup>77</sup>Waylen 1994; Yoon 2001.

<sup>78</sup>Hernes 1987; Phillips 1995; Phillips 1998.

<sup>79</sup>Inhetveen 1999.

<sup>80</sup>Skjeie 1990.

Normative institutions embody the formal and informal principles that define the moral bases and goals of political recruitment. They affect systemic institutions by providing the theoretical motivations and justifications for choosing certain electoral rules, ballot structures, and district sizes. They shape practical institutions by defining the goals of the selection process, as well as by drawing limits around the ways in which recruitment criteria can be conceived and redefined. Normative reforms include amending constitutions, legal codes, and party statutes to recognize equality of results, as well as legalizing the means necessary to achieve such equality. These affect representation to the extent that they move beyond a call for token presence and recognize that a 'critical mass'<sup>81</sup> of female legislators may be required before women can really be said to be 'represented.' At a more informal level, normative reforms entail popularizing arguments for positive action and descriptive representation. An example of the first type is the recent reform of the Sex Discrimination Act in the United Kingdom. In 1996 the Labour Party's policy of all-women shortlists was declared illegal because it was said to contravene the Act, which protected against sex discrimination when seeking employment. In this case, two male members sued their own party when they were overlooked in selection procedures favoring women. After a decrease in the number of women elected in 2001, parliamentarians initiated the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Bill in 2002, which now allows political parties to introduce sex-based positive action in the selection of candidates if they so desire.<sup>82</sup> An example of the second type – which subsequently became an example of the second type – is the parity movement in France, which drew on the new concept of *parité* to argue that representative assemblies be composed of as many women as men. They linked *parité* to the French ideal of universalism and carefully separated it from the notion of quotas. After several years of public debate, the movement achieved constitutional reform to inscribe equal representation in the Constitution in 1999 and electoral reform to compel political party compliance with the new measure in 2000.

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<sup>81</sup>The debate over the existence and the importance of a 'critical mass' of female legislators is one of the most enduring controversies in the literature on women's political representation. Key contributions include Dahlerup 1988, Kanter 1977, and Thomas 1994. For a critical, but problematic, review of this literature, see Studlar and McAllister 2002.

<sup>82</sup>Childs 2002a; Childs 2002b.

### **Sequences of institutional reforms to increase women's parliamentary presence**

The existing literature on women in politics reveals that systemic, practical, and normative institutions of political recruitment help explain cross-national and cross-party variations in women's political representation. The evidence also suggests that the precise causal effects of one type of institution may depend on the causal effects of the other two institutions. Scholars have not made this link explicitly, however, because of the traditional social scientific methods employed in existing analyses. These methods assume causal competition and causal homogeneity: they infer that variables exert independent effects on outcomes, with the goal of research being to determine which variable exerts the greatest effect in relative terms, and that causal factors operate in the same way for all cases. The evidence suggests, in contrast, that cases demonstrate causal combination and causal heterogeneity: causation occurs conjuncturally, in combinations of conditions, and the same causal factors do not always operate in the same way in all contexts and all cases.<sup>83</sup> To explore institutional effects, as well as the importance of causal configurations, I analyze *iterated sequences of reforms* to increase women's parliamentary representation. Iterated sequences offer a unique opportunity not only to trace specific reform attempts and outcomes, but also to gain insight into actors' own interpretations of why certain reforms succeeded or failed. More than other cases, these countries illuminate the intended and unintended consequences of reforms and the extent to which existing institutions are reinforced, partially reformed, or fully transformed during the course of campaigns. As I have not completed this part of my analysis, I conclude with some brief examples of iterated sequences in campaigns for reserved seats in Pakistan and India, political party quotas and targets in Sweden and the United Kingdom, and national legislative quotas in France and Argentina.

#### *Reserved seats for women: Pakistan and India*

A number of countries around the world have designated reserved seats for women in parliament and other political bodies.<sup>84</sup> Provisions for reserved seats, however, have often been temporary measures and thus subject to renewal after certain periods of time. Pakistan is probably the first country to reserve seats for women in parliament. In 1954 a 3% quota for women was

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<sup>83</sup>Ragin 1987; Ragin 2000.

<sup>84</sup>These include Bangladesh, Egypt, Eritrea, Jordan, India, Morocco, Nepal, Philippines, Sudan, Taiwan, Uganda, and Zanzibar.

approved, and the 1956 Constitution provided for the reservation of ten seats for a period of ten years for women equally divided between East and West Pakistan. No elections, however, were held under this constitution. General Ayub Khan's Constitution of 1962 reserved six seats for women in the National Assembly and five in each Provincial Assembly. The 1970 Legal Framework Order increased the reservation to thirteen seats in the National Assembly, and the 1973 Constitution increased women's reserved seats to five percent for ten years, or two general elections, whichever was later. In 1981 General Zia-ul-Haq introduced a new legislative council, to which he appointed twenty women. This was replaced in 1985 by a National Assembly elected under Martial Law Ordinance 1984, which doubled the percentage of reserved seats for women to 10%. These provisions expired in 1989, when a new bill on reserved seats was proposed but never implemented. Despite intense debate, no new measures were passed before the 1997 election. In 1999 a military coup removed the civilian government, but the military government pledged to hold an election by October 2002. The January 2002 election package reserved sixty seats for women in parliament, as well as 33% of all seats for women in local bodies. Women won a total of 72 seats, bringing their representation in parliament to 21.1%.<sup>85</sup>

India has also had a long history of reserved seats for women, primarily in individual villages and urban municipalities. The issue came to the national agenda in 1992, when the Indian parliament passed the Constitution (73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup>) Amendment Acts. These amendments strengthened local councils, known as Panchayati Raj Institutions, as well as reserved one-third of all the seats on these councils for women. When the 1996 parliamentary elections returned fewer women than the previous three parliaments, the coalition which entered government pledged to introduce legislation in the first session of the new parliament to ensure a one-third quota for women in future Indian parliaments. All parties, irrespective of their ideology, initially agreed to support this legislation. The 81<sup>st</sup> Constitution Amendment Bill, however, was referred to a Joint Select Committee due to differences among the parties as to the details of the proposed bill. The two parties most opposed to the amendment argue that the women's reservation bill must reflect caste distinctions and, therefore, that the 33% quota be differentiated by a fixed quota for women belonging to Other Backward

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<sup>85</sup>Inter-Parliamentary Union 2003. Sources on Pakistan include Afzal 1999; "Correcting gender imbalance" 2002; Ikramullah 1998; Mumtaz and Shaheed 1987; "Musharraf gives nod" 2002; "Participation of Women" 2002; Report of the Commission of Inquiry for Women 1997; Sarwar 1997; Shaheed, Zia, and Warraich 1998; Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Center 1998.

Castes and minorities. The bill is still discussed, but it has not yet passed. Women's representation in the Indian parliament is currently 8.8%.<sup>86</sup>

*Political party quotas and targets: Sweden and the United Kingdom*

Political parties in countries all over the world have adopted political party quotas or targets to guarantee women a certain percentage of slots on party ballots. Parties in Sweden first began to introduce measures to promote women in 1972, when the Center and Social Democratic Parties sought to define themselves as parties sympathetic to women's concerns.<sup>87</sup> Over the course of the 1970s competition between the two party blocs increased, which made it possible for women to exploit the gains made by women in other parties by constant comparison with their own parties.<sup>88</sup> By the 1980s, women in the political parties succeeded in getting most parties to introduce a 40/60 principle for candidates at national, county, and municipal levels. The government set up a commission to study women's political representation, which authored a report in 1987 entitled *Every Other Seat for a Woman*, which suggested a new principle for alternating between male and female candidates on party ballots.<sup>89</sup> The 1991 election resulted in the first setback in women's representation since 1928 and sent shockwaves because until then people had believed the upward trend in women's representation was irreversible. Women activists responded by meeting in closed and secret circles to discuss issues of concern to women and to organizing a series of networks of women across the country. They threatened to form a women's party unless the established parties took steps to recruit more women. In 1992 the Social Democratic Party initiated a party wide discussion that culminated in six bills requiring, not just recommending, that all lists used in the election conform to the principle of *varannan damernas*, with every other seat reserved for a woman.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Inter-Parliamentary Union 2003. Sources on India include Hoskyns and Rai 1998; Jenkins 1999; Kasturi 1998; Keating 2002; Rai 1999; Rai and Sharma 2000.

<sup>87</sup>Karlsson 1998; Wängnerud 2002.

<sup>88</sup>Sainsbury 1993.

<sup>89</sup>*Varannan damernas* 1987.

<sup>90</sup>Maillé and Wängnerud 1999, 196.

Four other parties subsequently decided to support a policy of alternation, with the result that women today constitute 45.3% of the Swedish parliament.<sup>91</sup>

Parties in the United Kingdom first turned attention to women's political representation in the 1980s and 1990s. In the early 1980s the newly-formed Social Democratic Party introduced the first initiatives to increase women's representation with special measures to promote women candidates. Party resolutions mandated that women be included on every shortlist (at least two of a total of nine candidates) and that four of the eight members of party's National Steering Committee be women. These measures generated pressures inside the much-larger Labour Party to nominate more women candidates, but only after the 1992 elections did the party institute a wide range of new strategies to promote women's rights and women's visibility within the party, including a Shadow Ministry for Women, quotas for women on party bodies, and a target of 50% women in the Parliamentary Labour Party within three general elections.<sup>92</sup> To implement this last goal, in 1993 Labour adopted a policy of all-women shortlists for 50% of all 'winnable' and 'inheritor' seats. This policy was challenged in 1995 and repealed in 1996 when the party was taken to court by two male members who claimed sex discrimination because they had not been allowed to stand for election. The court accepted the argument that the selection procedure by a political party facilitates access to employment and is therefore subject to the Sex Discrimination Act. The party leadership accepted the decision but refused to redo selections in districts where candidates had already been chosen. The Labour landslide in 1997, combined with the all-women shortlist system, brought a record 120 women into the House of Commons, 101 of them for the Labour Party. This effectively doubled the number of women parliamentarians to 18%. Despite some discussion about challenging the court's decision on the all-women shortlist policy, no special measures were adopted before the 2001 election, which resulted in the first decrease in women's representation ever in the UK. In 2002 parliamentarians initiated the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Bill, which now allows political parties to introduced sex-based positive action for the selection of political candidates. Women's parliamentary representation in the UK is currently 17.9%.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>Inter-Parliamentary Union 2003. Other sources on Sweden include Bergqvist 1994; Eduards 1981; Eduards 1992; Gustafsson, Eduards, and Rönnblom 1997; Wängnerud 1998.

<sup>92</sup>Lovenduski 1997.

<sup>93</sup>Inter-Parliamentary Union 2003. Other sources on the UK include Childs 2000; Hacli 1996; Lovenduski and Randall 1993; Perrigo 1996.

### *National legislative quotas: France and Argentina*

In recent years an increasing number of countries have adopted national legislative quotas, either by reforming the constitution or the electoral law, to require that political parties nominate a certain percentage of women among their candidates. France was one of the first countries to initiate this type of legislation. In 1982 the National Assembly passed a bill stating that the lists of candidates could not comprise more than 75% of persons of the same sex. Soon after passage, however, the law with the quota article attached was submitted to the Constitutional Court for appeal by the opposition, which contested several of its articles but not the quota provision itself. One judge, however, decided to take it up and the Court subsequently declared the article unconstitutional on the pretext that Article 3 of the Constitution of 1958 and Article 6 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789 together pronounced principles that “were opposed to all types of division of voters and candidates into categories...for all types of political voting, including the election of municipal councillors.”<sup>94</sup> Despite party quotas adopted by the Socialist Party in 1990, as well as a brief experiment with proportional representation in 1986, women’s representation in France remained extremely low. In 1992 a second campaign for national legislative quotas was launched with the goal of inscribing ‘parity’<sup>95</sup> into the French Constitution. After widespread public debate, in 1999 both houses of parliament approved a constitutional amendment to Article 3, the section “On sovereignty,” stating that “the law favors the equal access of women and men to electoral mandates and elective functions.” The bill also amended Article 4 on the role of political parties, adding that they “will contribute to the execution of the principle set forth in the last section of Article 3 under the conditions determined by the law.”<sup>96</sup> A new electoral law was promulgated on 6 June 2000 specifying the types of elections to which the parity principle would be applied, the moments when (non-)compliance would be monitored, and the sanctions that would be imposed on political parties for not fully complying with these requirements. The bill also created a financial penalty for parties or political groupings that did not respect a balance between

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<sup>94</sup>Constitutional Court decision no. 82-148, cited in Mossuz-Lavau 1998.

<sup>95</sup>While the demand for parity reaches back as far as 1885, when Hubertine Auclert demanded that “assemblies be composed of as many women as men” (Helft-Malz and Lévy 2000, 99), the term ‘parity’ *per se* was first used in the 1980s by alternative movements, notably the Greens in West Germany. It gained international recognition in a 1989 seminar organized by the Council of Europe (Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men 1992).

<sup>96</sup>Constitutional law no. 99-569 of 8 July 1999.

the number of women and men among their candidates in national legislative elections, which are majoritarian elections. The reform was applied for the first time during the 2001 municipal elections for towns with more than 3500 inhabitants, with notable success: these local assemblies are now composed of 47% women.<sup>97</sup> However, women's parliamentary representation increased only two points to 12.2% after national elections in 2002.<sup>98</sup>

Despite earlier French initiatives, the first country to official adopt and implement a national legislative quota was Argentina. Between 1983 and 1991 women's representation averaged only 4% in the lower house of parliament. In 1991, however, a Quota Law (*Ley de Cupos* or *Ley de Cuotas*) was passed requiring, first, that a minimum of 30% of all candidates on party lists in all the country's 24 electoral districts be women and, second, that these women be placed in electable positions on the party lists, not only in slots where they would have no chance of being elected. Party lists that did not comply with the law would be rejected. Although certain legislators had opposed the law all along, some of the most intense opposition surfaced when party lists had to be formulated before the 1993 election. Women from all parties initiated a campaign to publicize the law in all the provinces, but many parties presented lists that did not comply with the law, resulting in more than 30 lawsuits. In the end only five of 72 electoral lists failed to comply with the law. In 1993 Decree 379 fixed a minimal number of seats that would have to be accorded to women: at least 1 post when 2-4 were available, at least 2 posts when 5-8 were available, at least 3 when 9-11 were available, at least 4 when 12-14 were available, at least 5 when 15-18 were available, and at least 6 when 19-20 were available.<sup>99</sup> The 1994 reform of the Argentine Constitution incorporated articles promoting women's political representation, which advocates sought to turn into laws. As a result, an affiliate of a party in a district has the right to contest his or her party's list, while the National Women's Council has the right to contest any party list in the country that it considered not to comply with the quota law. Supporters were also able to achieve explicit support from the Attorney General, who instructed all federal prosecutors to take all actions necessary to guarantee that the law was not violated.<sup>100</sup> By

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<sup>97</sup>Sgier 2001, 6.

<sup>98</sup>Inter-Parliamentary Union 2003. Other sources on France include Agacinski 2001; Amar 1999; Gaspard 1994; Gaspard, Servan-Schreiber, and Le Gall 1992; Martin 1998; Ozouf 1995; Varikas 1995.

<sup>99</sup>Gomez 2001.

<sup>100</sup>Much of the account above follows Jones 1996.

1997, 22 of 24 Argentine provinces had adopted quotas rules to the state legislature and to most municipal councils. In 2001 the Ley de Cupos was extended to elections to the Senate. Additionally, new rules require all political parties to head their parliamentary lists in each province with two candidates, a man and a woman. These measures have raised the percentage of women in parliament from 4% in 1991 to 21% in 1993, 28% in 1995, and 30.7% in 2001.

**Table 1: Candidate gender quotas worldwide**

**Africa:**

Angola *party quota*  
Botswana *national legislative quota, party quota*  
Burkina Faso *national legislative quota, party quota*  
Cameroon *party quota*  
Cape Verde *party quota*  
Egypt *reserved seats*  
Equatorial Guinea *party quota*  
Eritrea *reserved seats*  
Gabon *national legislative quota*  
Ghana *national legislative quota*  
Ivory Coast *party quota*  
Mali *party quota*  
Morocco *party quota, reserved seats*  
Mozambique *party quota*  
Namibia *national legislative quota, party quota*  
Niger *party quota, national legislative quota*  
Senegal *national legislative quota, party quota*  
Seychelles *national legislative quota*  
South Africa *party quota*  
Sudan *reserved seats*  
Uganda *reserved seats*  
Tunisia *party quota, national legislative quota*  
Yemen *national legislative quota*  
Zambia *national legislative quota*  
Zanzibar *reserved seats*

## **The Americas**

### **North America:**

Canada *party quota*

### **Latin America and the Caribbean:**

Argentina *national legislative quota, party quota*

Bolivia *national legislative quota, party quota*

Brazil *national legislative quota, party quota*

Chile *party quota*

Colombia *national legislative quota*

Costa Rica *national legislative quota, party quota*

Dominican Republic *national legislative quota, party quota*

Ecuador *national legislative quota, party quota*

El Salvador *party quota*

Guyana *national legislative quota*

Haiti *party quota*

Mexico *national legislative quota, party quota*

Nicaragua *party quota*

Panama *national legislative quota*

Paraguay *national legislative quota, party quota*

Peru *national legislative quota*

Uruguay *party quota*

Venezuela *national legislative quota, party quota*

### **Asia and the Pacific:**

Australia *party quota*

Bangladesh *reserved seats*

China *national legislative quota*

Cyprus *party quota*

Fiji *party quota*

India *party quota, reserved seats*

Israel *party quota*

Jordan *reserved seats*

Nepal *reserved seats*

North Korea *national legislative quota*

Pakistan *reserved seats*

Philippines *party quota, national legislative quota, reserved seats*

South Korea *national legislative quota, party quota*

Taiwan *reserved seats, party quota*

Turkey *party quota*

## **Europe**

### **Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union:**

Armenia *national legislative quota, party quota*

Bosnia *national legislative quota, party quota*

Croatia *party quota*

Czech Republic *party quota*

Estonia *party quota*

Hungary *party quota*

Kosovo *national legislative quota*

Kyrgyzstan *party quota*

Lithuania *party quota*

FYR Macedonia *party quota*

Romania *party quota*

Slovakia *party quota*

Slovenia *party quota*

Uzbekistan *national legislative quota*

### **Western Europe:**

Austria *party quota*

Belgium *national legislative quota, party quota*

Denmark *party quota*

France *national legislative quota, party quota*

Germany *party quota*

Greece *national legislative quota, party quota*

Iceland *party quota*

Ireland *party quota*

Italy *national legislative quota, party quota*

Luxembourg *party quota*

Malta *party quota*

Netherlands *party quota*

Norway *party quota*

Portugal *party quota*

Spain *party quota*

Switzerland *party quota*

United Kingdom *party quota*

**Table 2: Countries with more than 25% women in parliament**

<b>More than 40%:</b> Sweden 45.3%
<b>More than 35%:</b> Denmark 38.0% Netherlands 36.7% Finland 36.5% Norway 36.4% Costa Rica 35.1%
<b>More than 30%:</b> Iceland 34.9% Austria 33.9% Germany 32.2% Argentina 30.7% Mozambique 30.0%
<b>More than 25%:</b> South Africa 29.8% Seychelles 29.4% New Zealand 29.2% Spain 28.3% Vietnam 27.3% Grenada 26.7% Namibia 26.4% Bulgaria 26.2% East Timor 26.1% Turkmenistan 26.0% Rwanda 25.7% Australia 25.3%

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (2003).

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