

**GENDER AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS:  
IMPLEMENTING QUOTAS FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS**

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## **GENDER AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS: IMPLEMENTING QUOTAS FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS**

Women form slightly more than fifty percent of the population, but constitute only seventeen percent of all elected parliamentarians worldwide. While far short of gender parity, this represents the highest global average ever recorded (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2007b), and masks enormous variations across countries: Rwanda and Sweden have nearly equal proportions of women and men in parliament, while Kyrgyzstan and Qatar have no women at all (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2007a). A key reason for these differences among states, as well as for recent growth in the world average, has been the adoption of candidate gender quotas. Over the past decade, the number of countries with quota policies has grown from about twenty to more than one hundred, as political parties and national legislatures have altered constitutions, party statutes, and electoral laws to require the increased selection of female candidates to national political office.<sup>1</sup> The rapid diffusion of gender quotas around the globe has been followed by a proliferation of studies on this topic, making it one of the fastest growing sub-fields in research on women and politics.

To date, most of this work has focused on features of these reforms and reasons for their adoption in diverse countries around the globe. In relation to the former, scholars point to three basic categories of gender quota policies. Reserved seats involve changes to national constitutions that set aside places for women in political assemblies that men are not eligible to contest. These measures are most common in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Political party quotas entail voluntary reforms of party statutes, whereby individual parties pledge to nominate a specific percentage of women among their candidates. These policies appear in all regions of the world, but are the main measure employed in Western Europe. Legislative quotas, finally, comprise changes to electoral laws and sometimes national constitutions to require that all parties put forward a certain proportion of female candidates. These policies prevail in Latin America and many post-conflict societies in Africa and Southeast Europe (Dahlerup 2006; Krook 2005; cf. Matland 2006). Turning to reasons for quota adoption, research has converged around four accounts. Many authors argue that quotas appear on the

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<sup>1</sup> Quota policies have also been adopted for local, regional, and European Parliament elections (Holli et al 2006; Lovenduski 2005; Rai 1999; Tripp et al 2006). However, the focus in this paper will be measures aimed at national parliaments, which are more directly comparable across countries and over time.

political agenda after women's groups – and sometimes individual women – identify quotas as an effective and perhaps the only means for increasing women's political representation (Bruhn 2003; Kittilson 2006). However, most agree that quotas are taken up when women's campaigns intersect with one of three other trends: political elites perceive strategic benefits in adopting quotas (Davidson-Schmich 2006; Meier 2004), quotas mesh with existing or emerging notions of equality and representation (Meier 2000; Opello 2006), and quotas are supported by international organizations and transnational advocacy networks (Krook 2006b).

Given the relative newness of this phenomenon, much less research has addressed quota implementation. This question demands attention because the mere advent of gender quotas has not resulted in uniform increases in the numbers of women elected worldwide. Rather, some countries have experienced dramatic increases following the adoption of quota regulations (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005), while others have seen more modest changes (Htun and Jones 2002; Murray 2004) and even setbacks in women's representation (Araújo 2003). In this paper, I begin by exploring reasons for variations in quota implementation, drawing on a wide range of existing case studies. I find that this work unites around one of three broad accounts: the impact of quotas is linked to details of the measures themselves, the impact of quotas depends on the institutional framework in which they are introduced, and the impact of quotas stems from the balance of actors for and against quotas. Weighing the evidence, I argue for reconciling these accounts by considering how structures, practices, and norms work together to produce the effects of quota policies. To this end, I develop an alternative perspective on candidate selection based on configurations of three categories of gendered institutions. Proposing that the three types of quotas – reserved seats, party quotas, and legislative quotas – reform different kinds of political institutions, I elaborate a framework for analyzing how quotas affect existing institutional configurations in ways that facilitate or undermine changes in women's political representation. I illustrate this approach through three sets of paired comparisons, which reveal why some quotas are more successful than others in altering women's access to political office. I conclude with the implications of this approach for research on gender and politics, as well as a series of questions that remain for future consideration.

## Mapping the Field: Current Perspectives on Quota Implementation

Recent work offers a variety of insights into dynamics behind quota implementation. Much of this research focuses on single countries – and sometimes regions – in an effort to understand why some quota policies are more effective than others in increasing women’s political representation. Although most scholars base their arguments on the details of individual cases – and thus rarely reflect on how their conclusions might ‘speak’ to the findings of another case – their studies converge on three basic accounts related to the details of quota measures, their ‘fit’ with existing institutional frameworks, and their support among actors in positions to guarantee or undermine quota impact. As such, these ‘stories’ produce a list of details, institutions, and actors that are favorable to the implementation of quota policies. However, all three of these narratives are challenged by evidence from other cases, suggesting that none of these factors has generalizable effects.

### *Details of Quota Policies*

A large group of studies analyzes quota implementation through the details of quota measures themselves. Initial surveys focused on types of quotas: most agreed that reserved seats tended to produce only small changes in women’s representation (Chowdhury 2002), but debated whether party quotas or legislative quotas were ultimately more effective. The former are voluntary, apply to single parties, and are usually adopted from concerns about electoral advantage (Leijenaar 1997), while the latter are enforced by states, bind all parties, and are framed mainly in terms of normative change (Jones 1998; cf. Krook 2006b). More recent work delves deeper into variations within and across types. These scholars argue that the impact of gender quotas stems from the wording of the quota, i.e., whether the language used in the policy introduces or reduces ambiguity regarding the process of implementation (Chama 2001; Schmidt and Saunders 2004); the requirements of the quota, i.e., whether the policy specifies where female candidates should be placed and to which elections the policy applies (Jones 2004; Murray 2004); the sanctions of the quota, i.e., whether the policy establishes organs for reviewing and enforcing quota requirements and procedures for punishing or rectifying non-compliance (Baldez 2004; Guldvik 2003); and the perceived

legitimacy of the quota, i.e., whether the policy is viewed as legal or constitutional from the point of view of national and international law (Mossuz-Lavau 1998; Russell 2000).

The details of individual quota provisions clearly shape implementation, as they set out the means and goals of specific quota policies. At the same time, however, measures that are otherwise similar sometimes produce distinct effects on women's representation, at the same time that provisions that are otherwise dissimilar experience comparable results. For example, all three quota types have relatively similar ranges in terms of their impact: reserved seats produce between 5.5 per cent and 48.8 per cent women in parliament, party quotas between 5 per cent and 47.3 per cent, and legislative quotas between 4.6 per cent and 38.6 per cent (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2007a). Further, delving into the dynamics of particular cases reveals a number of unanticipated consequences related to the wording, requirements, sanctions, and legitimacy of quota measures. Strong wording inadvertently establishes a ceiling for women's representation if elites interpret positions not designated for women as seats or districts reserved for men (Huang 2002; Nanivadekar 2006), while requirements – however strict – are sometimes less important to outcomes than related pieces of legislation passed at later moments in time (Chama 2001; Meier 2004). Similarly, sanctions do not always suffice for gaining elite compliance if they are not applied consistently by oversight bodies (Jones 1996; Schmidt and Saunders 2004), while their absence does not preclude compliance if parties respond to other normative or strategic incentives for implementing quota provisions (Leijenaar 1997; Opello 2006). Finally, measures viewed as illegitimate by the population can result in dramatic increases in women's representation (Nechemias 1994; Yoon 2001), while those seen as legitimate can lose their effect over time, leading to stagnation in the number of women elected (Dahlerup 2001).

### *Institutional Frameworks and Quota Policies*

A second common thread in research on quota implementation relates their impact to the 'fit' between quota measures and existing institutional frameworks. Most studies focus on characteristics of the electoral system, examining how electoral rules facilitate or hinder the potentially positive effect of quotas on women's representation. Scholars observe that quotas have the greatest impact in proportional representation electoral systems with closed lists and high district magnitudes (Caul 1999; Htun and Jones 2002; Matland 2006). Some

also identify more idiosyncratic features of particular electoral systems that negatively affect quota implementation, including the possibility for parties to run more than one list in each district (Costa Benavides 2003), the existence of distinct electoral systems for different types of elections (Jones 1998), and the chance for parties to nominate more candidates than the number of seats available (Htun 2002). Other work considers features of the party system, as well as the parties themselves, to discern partisan dynamics that might aid or subvert quota implementation. These authors find that quotas have stronger effects in party systems where several parties co-exist and larger parties respond to policy innovations initiated by smaller parties (Kittilson 2006), as well as in parties with left-wing ideologies where the leadership is able to enforce party or national regulations (Caul 1999; Davidson-Schmich 2006). Still others point to higher rates of implementation across all parties in states where the political culture emphasizes sexual difference and group representation (Meier 2004), and lower rates in countries where the political culture stresses sexual equality and individual representation (Inheteen 1999).

These accounts are persuasive in connecting quota effectiveness to the presence of certain electoral, partisan, and normative characteristics. Nonetheless, other studies suggest that quotas may succeed in a variety of different institutional contexts. Most notably, quotas can have a strong impact on the proportion of women elected to parliament in countries with first-past-the-post and mixed electoral systems (Russell et al 2002; Tripp et al 2006). In other cases, open lists and low district magnitudes magnify the effects of quotas through the dynamics of preferential voting, the distance between legislated and ‘effective quotas,’ and the relative magnitude of the largest political party (Schmidt and Saunders 2004).<sup>2</sup> As for the party system, the presence of several parties is not always necessary for quotas to have an impact: some of the most effective quotas are those applied by single-party regimes as a form of political patronage or as a means for establishing social legitimacy (Goetz and Hassim 2003; Nechemias 1994). By the same token, right-wing parties sometimes implement quotas at a greater rate than left-wing parties (Murray 2004), while more decentralized parties occasionally have better implementation records than more centralized parties (Kolinsky 1991). Finally, arguments centered on sexual equality and individual representation may be

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<sup>2</sup> Low district magnitudes raise the ‘effective quota’ when the laws of arithmetic necessitate rounding up the number of seats in order to meet the quota requirement, transforming a 25% quota into a 50% quota when two seats are available, a 30% quota when three seats are available, and a 25% quota when four seats are available (Schmidt 2003).

extremely effective in increasing women's representation (Dahlerup 2001). At the same time, quota campaigns frequently transform beliefs in the course of arguing for quotas, suggesting that variations in quota implementation are related as much to new and emerging norms as to more traditional ideas about gender and politics (Sgier 2004; Squires 1996).

### *Actor Support and Quota Policies*

A third set of explanations centers on the actors who support and oppose quotas and their respective roles in guaranteeing or undermining quota implementation. Much of this literature focuses on party elites, as the effective application of quotas largely hinges on elites' willingness to recruit female candidates. Most accounts expose the ways that elites seek to mitigate quota impact through passive refusal to enforce quotas to more active efforts to subvert their intended effects (Araújo 2003; Holli et al 2006; Murray 2004), including large-scale electoral fraud and widespread intimidation of female candidates (Delgadillo 2000; Human Rights Watch 2004). Many also mention other actors who play a direct or indirect role in enforcing quota provisions, including women's organizations inside and outside the parties who pressure elites to comply with quota provisions, distribute information on quota regulations both to elites and voters, and train female candidates to negotiate better positions on their respective party lists (Durrieu 1999; Lokar 2003; Sainsbury 1993); national and international courts who provide an arena to challenge non-compliance and require parties to redo lists that do not comply with the law (Chama 2001; Jones 2004);<sup>3</sup> and ordinary citizens who engage in public scrutiny of parties' selection practices through reports and reprimands that lead elites to honor and even exceed quota commitments (Baldez 2004; Kolinsky 1991).

Evidence indicates that many party elites oppose quotas and take steps to reduce their impact, while various other state and social movement actors support quotas and pressure elites to ensure their implementation. Nonetheless, several studies find that these

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<sup>3</sup> In unusual cases, citizens exhaust domestic remedies and appeal to international authorities to gain compliance with quota measures. Citizens in Argentina and Peru, for example, have lodged complaints with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). In Argentina, the IACHR decision to admit the case pushed President Fernando de la Rúa to support a new presidential decree specifying how quotas were to be implemented (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2001). In Peru, the appeal to the IACHR led the National Elections Tribunal to correctly calculate the minimum quota for the 2002 local elections (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2002).

same groups may in fact play several distinct roles vis-à-vis quota regulations. For example, some elites implement quotas despite public opposition: they introduce quotas gradually over the course of several elections to reduce resistance among incumbents, voters, and local party organizations (Dahlerup 1988; Steininger 2000), or simply embrace these measures as a convenient pretext for eliminating male rivals in favor of less-experienced female candidates (Bird 2003). At the same time, some women's groups actively seek to undermine existing quota provisions, although in many of these cases they aim to gain the passage of more radical measures to increase women's representation (Chowdhury 2002; Huang 2002). Similarly, some judges dismiss allegations of non-compliance, issue erroneous decisions regarding the applicability of quota laws, and reduce their judicial activism over time, leading to decreases in quota effectiveness (Chama 2001; Schmidt 2003). Many citizens, finally, are not even aware of the existence of quota provisions, much less variations in their impact, thus diminishing the possibility for public oversight of the implementation process (Htun and Jones 2002).

### **Towards a New Framework: Quotas and Institutions of Candidate Selection**

The existing literature thus offers no single definitive factor that explains all variations in quota implementation. Much of this work, however, points to the need to consider the combined role of details, institutions, and actors, in terms of the ways in which conditions come together to shape how quotas influence women's access to political office. In other words, the effects of individual factors may be contingent upon the presence or absence of other conditions (cf. Ragin 2000). In order to incorporate this intuition into an analysis of quota impact, it is necessary to revisit explanations for cross-national variations in women's representation. This is because – although it is rarely noted – quotas are introduced when differences already exist among countries with regard to women's access to political office. Understanding the effects of quotas thus requires separating out analytically: (1) the factors that influence women's representation before quotas are adopted, and (2) the ways and degrees to which quotas alter these dynamics. Upon closer inspection, most research on cross-national variations speaks implicitly to the importance of combinations of causal factors, even as it purports to discuss the distinct and relative effects of individual conditions. This revised perspective suggests that a more fruitful approach to the study of

quota impact should begin with these causal configurations, with an eye to how quotas may shift their various parts over the course of quota reforms.

### *Institutions of Candidate Selection*

The factors that scholars analyze with respect to explaining variations in women's representation can be organized into three broad categories: the formal features of political systems, the formal and informal practices of political elites, and the formal and informal principles of equality and representation. To explore continuities between these groups of factors – as well as how they may relate to one another – it is useful to think of them as three kinds of 'institutions,' understood in the broadest sense as structures, practices, and norms that guide political action as if they were formal rules (Hall and Taylor 1996; Thelen and Steinmo 1992). Systemic institutions include the laws and organizations that officially structure the conduct of political life. Their effects on patterns of political representation are among the most studied in the field of women and politics. Among these variables, scholars have focused on the electoral system as one of the most important – if not *the* most important factor – explaining cross-national variations in women's political representation. In particular, they note that proportional representation (PR) electoral systems, especially when combined with closed party lists and higher district magnitudes, tend to have much higher numbers of women in parliament than first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral systems, which involve direct election of candidates in single-member districts (Caul 1999; Kunovich and Paxton 2005). However, a closer look reveals that PR systems promote women to the extent that their structural features combine with concerns to actually select more women – that is, practices and norms that support and even compel the recruitment of female candidates. More specifically, in their causal explanations scholars speculate that PR systems offer more opportunities to women, because the presence of party lists and multi-member districts means that parties are able – and may even feel pressed – to nominate at least a few women in order to 'balance' their lists (Caul 1999; Matland 1995). By the same token, FPTP systems do not necessarily preclude the election of more women. Although opportunities to 'balance' nominations are impossible, given single-member districts, parties that resolve to elect more women may devise new practices of candidate selection to accomplish this goal, like all-women shortlists that guarantee whichever candidate is chosen in a district will be

female. Implementing such a controversial policy, however, may require justifying it through appeals to broader notions of justice and equality.

Practical institutions refer to the procedures and criteria that parties employ to select their candidates. Qualifications set down in the law include age, citizenship, country of birth, party membership, and – in some cases – the collection of a certain number of signatures or the payment of a fee to register the candidacy. Informal criteria are more numerous and may encompass qualifications like education, party service, legislative experience, speaking abilities, financial resources, political connections, kinship, name-recognition, membership group networks, and organizational skills (Rahat and Hazan 2001). These requirements are influenced by the location of candidate selection, the groups in the party who are entitled to suggest or to veto candidates, the method of ballot composition, and the presence of a secret or open ballot during candidate selection. These various selection processes invariably produce distortions between the features of candidates and the characteristics of voters, as legislatures worldwide contain a larger share of affluent, male, middle-aged, and white-collar members than exist proportionally in the electorate (Norris 1997). A great deal of research debates whether supply or demand side factors play a greater role in fostering inequalities in political recruitment. However, in many of their accounts scholars explain party selection practices in terms of characteristics of political parties and underlying popular beliefs about the political qualifications of women – that is, structures and norms that influence how party selectors and voters perceive female candidates. Numerous studies find, for example, that the criteria that a party requires of candidates are largely a function of its organization and its ideology, with centralized left-wing parties being more likely to recruit women (Matland and Studlar 1996; Norris and Lovenduski 1995). All the same, decentralized parties provide opportunities for women to become more active in local party organizations that can, in turn, offer a crucial stepping stone for attaining higher political office (Caul 1999), shifting party practices and norms.

Normative institutions, finally, comprise the principles that set forth the values that inform the means and goals of political life. Enshrined formally in constitutions, legal codes, electoral laws, and party statutes – as well as more informally in public speeches, political ideologies, and voter opinions – they embody in this case the hegemonic interpretations of equality and representation that shape patterns of candidate selection, including beliefs about the legitimacy of elite intervention to promote equal representation. Norms of equality are

generally divided between an equality of opportunities and an equality of results. Principles of representation are split between a ‘politics of ideas,’ the belief that ideas are important and thus the personal traits of representatives are irrelevant, and a ‘politics of presence,’ the assertion that the personal features of representatives are crucial because they influence the substance of public policies (cf. Phillips 1995). Signaling the importance of an equality of results, most scholars find that countries with more egalitarian political cultures, as well as parties on the left end of the political spectrum, are more likely to promote women in politics (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Kittilson 2006). Supporting the need for a ‘politics of presence,’ research on electoral systems suggests that parties in PR systems feel pressed to nominate at least a few women in order to ‘balance’ their lists of candidates, in line with broader goals of fostering the participation of many different groups (Matland 1995). In these explanations, consequently, the role of norms is largely embedded within discussions of structures and party practices. All the same, a more comprehensive review reveals that concepts of equality and representation may take a number of different forms as they interact with party ideologies regarding gender. While some conservatives oppose quotas because they support strict equality of opportunities, others defend such measures because they believe that men and women are essentially different. Conversely, some progressives oppose quotas because they fear these essentialize gender differences, while others defend such policies because they favor equality of results (Inheteen 1999; Skjeie 1992). Similar trends occur with notions of representation, with many parties shifting their views on which groups ‘deserve’ representation depending on which sectors parties view or seek to capture as primary constituencies (Krook 2005; Sgier 2003).

### *Quotas as Institutional Reforms*

Studies that emphasize individual institutions, therefore, almost invariably include references to the two other types of institutions when seeking to explain their causal effects. This insight is crucial for theorizing the impact of gender quotas, as these policies affect not only single institutions, but also entire institutional configurations. As it were, the three categories of quota measures seek to reform these configurations in distinct ways: reserved seats revise systemic institutions, party quotas rework practical institutions, and legislative quotas redefine normative institutions. Reserved seats entail systemic reform because they

alter the mechanisms of election to mandate a minimum number of female representatives. They are usually enacted through constitutional reforms that establish separate electoral rolls for women, designate separate districts for female candidates, or allocate women's seats to political parties based on their proportion of the popular vote. Initial provisions for reserved seats in Pakistan in the 1950s, for example, involved a separate ballot whereby only women could vote for the women who would fill the reserved seats (Afzal 1999). Reserved seats in Uganda, in contrast, require that women run in specially designated electoral districts, which overlap with a number of individual constituencies, in a vote that takes place as many as two weeks after the general elections (Goetz and Hassim 2003; Tripp 2000). The most common arrangement, however, is one where women's seats are distributed to political parties based on their share of the vote. In some countries, like Pakistan today, several parties have the right to fill the reserved seats (Krook 2005). In others, like Bangladesh, the party that wins the most votes earns the right to designate all the seats, such that they can pack the seats with their own supporters or, alternatively, utilize the seats as a tool for gaining coalition partners (Chowdhury 2002).

Party quotas, in contrast, involve practical reform because they establish new standards for candidate selection that require elites to include a certain percentage of women among their parties' candidates. They are typically introduced through changes to individual party statutes that encourage – or force – party elites to recognize existing biases and to consider alternative spheres of political recruitment (Krook 2006a). In many cases, this compels elites to devise new ways of locating possible female candidates and persuading them to run for political office, thus overcoming important biases that result in fewer women standing forward and being chosen as party candidates (cf. Lawless and Fox 2005). This dynamic plays itself out in similar ways across many political parties. To take one instance, the Social Democratic Party in Germany introduced a twenty-five percent quota in 1988, which they raised to thirty-three percent in 1994 and forty percent in 1998. In order to implement this quota, party elites had to relax traditional expectations regarding candidate nomination, which had earlier required that prospective candidates spend years working inside the party as political apprentices. Having adopted the quota, elites were compelled to recognize that this 'qualification' tended to exclude women, who had less time than men to devote to party work, even though they were competent at many other levels to run for political office. The quota thus forced the party to uncover other ways of finding candidates,

like tapping activists in the party's youth organization, organizing training sessions for possible female candidates, and encouraging talented women to consider running (Kolinsky 1991; McKay 2004).

Legislative quotas, finally, engage in normative reform as they revise definitions of equality and representation to require all parties to nominate a greater proportion of female candidates. They generally involve amending the constitution or the electoral law to legitimize affirmative action and recognize 'sex' as a political identity. In France, for example, a fifty percent quota was introduced following constitutional reform in 1999 and changes to the electoral law in 2000. Parties must now nominate fifty percent male and fifty percent female candidates to almost all political offices, suffering various sorts of financial and political penalties if they do not comply (Krook 2005; Murray 2004). In comparison, the quota law approved in Argentina in 1991 entailed reforms to the electoral code that stated that parties must present thirty percent female candidates in positions where they are likely to be elected. Combined with other decisions and legislation, this law requires that parties not only present, but also elect, thirty percent women (Chama 2001; Jones 1996). One last illustration is Bosnia, where a law passed in 2000 established a thirty percent quota for women for local and national elections. This quota was refined in 2001 to specify the minimum positions on party lists where female candidates had to be placed: there had to be at least one woman among the first two candidates, two among the first five, and three among the first eight (Lokar 2003; Rukavina et al 2002).

### *Quotas and Institutional Configurational Change*

Gender quotas thus vary in terms of the kinds of reforms they initiate in candidate selection processes. To add a further layer of complexity, specific quota policies also achieve varying degrees of institutional reform, interact in numerous ways with existing institutional arrangements, and intersect – at the moment of reform or at a later point in time – with the reform and non-reform of other institutions. All of these dynamics – whether intended or unintended – play a central role in the impact of gender quota policies. As such, they offer crucial clues as to why efforts to reform the same institution may produce radically different outcomes across cases, at the same time that attempts to change distinct institutions may culminate in relatively similar results.

The most promising cases for exploring these dynamics are those in which actors undertake repeated attempts to institute and improve quota reforms. Because institutional effects are interdependent, these cases are preferable to single instances of reform, which do not enable analysts to gauge changes in the causal effects of institutional configurations as individual institutions take on new forms. While this lens can only be applied to the few cases where actors pursue multiple efforts at institutional reform, closer attention to these campaigns provides several crucial insights for the larger universe of cases. First, it clarifies the adoption and implementation dynamics at work across all campaigns by drawing on iterated reforms to highlight the part played by individual institutions within the context of broader institutional configurations. In contrast, comparing single attempts at reform simply uncovers contradictions regarding the causal function of individual institutions, offering much less – and even misleading – theoretical leverage on the importance of specific institutional forms for the adoption and implementation of specific policy innovations. Second, closer scrutiny of iterated reforms facilitates more detailed analysis of adoption and implementation dynamics across all campaigns by affording an unusually clear view into actors' own interpretations of why certain reforms fail or succeed, as well as into the particular role of intended and unintended consequences of individual campaigns for reform. In contrast, attention to single attempts at reform merely observes connections between inputs and outcomes, allowing little theoretical space for analyzing actors' reactions or intentions in the face of presumably expected or unexpected results.

A focus on iterated reforms, in turn, suggests two broad models of institutional configurational change that reflect the extent to which attempts to reform one institution intersect with the reform and non-reform of other institutions. In additive sequences of reform, actors begin by focusing on one institution: systemic institutions in the case of reserved seats, practical institutions in the case of party quotas, and normative institutions in the case of legislative quotas. Although some campaigns consider the links between these and other institutions before quotas are adopted – for example, by considering the features of the electoral systems before pursuing party quotas – most discover after one or more rounds of implementation that the policy has little or no effect on women's representation, because systemic reform is not matched by broader practical and normative reform, practical reform is thwarted by lack of systemic and normative reform, and normative reform is undone by the absence of systemic and practical reform. As a result, the number of women

remains relatively stable because elites treat reserved seats as a ceiling on women's recruitment, flout the party quota requirements, or misinterpret the legislative quota provisions. In the run-up to subsequent elections, therefore, advocates pursue reforms to improve quota implementation by matching the policy to features of the electoral system,<sup>4</sup> reducing lingering ambiguity regarding the details and scope of the policy and the sanctions for non-compliance, and establishing or confirming the legitimacy of the policy with regard to national or international law. As such, they increasingly recognize – implicitly or explicitly – that rules, practices, and norms work together to shape variations in women's political representation and work cumulatively to adjust institutions of candidate selection in mutually reinforcing ways. By complementing institutional reform with institutional configurational reform, these campaigns are likely to experience dramatic success with regard to the implementation and impact of gender quota provisions.

Extractive sequences of reform begin with a similar focus on single institutions, with campaigns for reserved seats centered on systemic institutions, campaigns for party quotas trained on practical institutions, and campaigns for legislative quotas focused on normative institutions. In contrast to additive sequences, however, these reforms generally inspire a backlash in which opponents challenge and successfully overturn the quota policy. This setback not only prevents reform of other institutions, but also strongly delegitimizes quotas themselves as a strategy for increasing women's representation. Quota advocates respond by identifying one pivotal institution of candidate selection – sometimes, but not always, the same institution as before – whose reform they believe is vital to the adoption of gender quotas. The effort to reject one institutional form in favor of another, however, requires supporters to justify radical change within a largely hostile environment to generate an entirely new path to reform. Waging an uphill battle, they focus on revising elements of the electoral system, enforcing an overhaul of political party selection procedures, or achieving a constitutional amendment to allow positive action. Privileging one type of institution over another, they ignore and even downplay the importance of other institutions, fostering competition – rather than mutual support – across their causal effects. By separating and literally extracting institutional reform from institutional configurational reform, these campaigns are likely to produce mixed results in terms of the adoption of gender quotas and

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<sup>4</sup> The case of electoral systems reveals that – given the importance of configuration of causal conditions – one institution can stay stable while its overall causal effect changes as other institutions evolve.

demonstrate limited success with regard to their implementation and impact. Some extractive sequences, however, eventually turn additive, as campaigners slowly realize the importance of institutional configurations, at the same time that additive and extractive sequences sometimes coexist across political parties or across levels of government.

### **Comparing Cases of Reform: Quotas and Shifts in Institutional Configurations**

These tools can now be applied to analyze and compare instances of iterated quota reform. While these cases encompass only a very small proportion of all quota campaigns, they enable – through within- and cross-case comparisons – systematic investigation into the causal effects associated with institutional reform and institutional configurational change. Surveying the broader universe of campaigns, I identify only nine cases of iterated reform: Argentina, Belgium, Costa Rica, France, India, Mexico, Pakistan, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Among these nine cases, I select six for closer observation on the grounds that they cover all three types of quota policies and – within these types – demonstrate additive and extractive sequences of reform. I eliminate Belgium, Costa Rica, and Mexico for the simple reason that they replicate the insights of Argentina, a case with substantially more empirical information given its status as a pioneering country with respect to legislative quotas. The resulting sample thus includes Argentina, France, India, Pakistan, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

With a broad array of political, social, and economic characteristics, this group reflects the diversity of countries that have witnessed quota campaigns. At the broadest and most obvious level, it includes countries in three world regions: Latin America, Western Europe, and South Asia. Although the sample does not incorporate any countries in Africa, Eastern Europe, or North America, it constitutes the first attempt to expand the study of gender quotas beyond the scope of a single region. In terms of more specific attributes, the six cases comprise democratic and non-democratic regimes; varying histories of political stability and instability; majoritarian and proportional electoral systems; no-party, two-party, and multi-party systems; and low, medium, and high levels of socioeconomic development. At the same time, their respective quota campaigns begin as early as the 1920s and as late as the 1980s, span periods from as little as fifteen to as many as seventy years, reflect both slow and incremental and quick and dramatic rates of change, and result in below average to

nearly equal proportions of women in parliament. A quick mapping of the impact of these quota policies corroborates the intuition that additive reforms may be more effective than extractive reforms in increasing women's political representation. To evaluate these arguments in greater depth – and thus assess the effects of differing degrees of institutional reform and institutional configurational change – I examine the actors, strategies, and contexts in each of these six cases. I draw on a variety of primary and secondary sources, including interviews, parliamentary debates, newspaper editorials, personal testimonials, on-line election reports, collections of newspaper articles, and scholarly analyses. Integrating these diverse materials, I consider the temporal location and duration of these campaigns, their broader causal antecedents, and the possibility for earlier events to shape later events. The resulting case studies are thus embedded in an explicitly comparative framework that combines attention to temporality and causal configurations.

#### *Reserved Seats and Systemic Reform in Pakistan and India*

Campaigns for reserved seats in Pakistan and India appeared first in the 1930s, in the context of a shared colonial past that witnessed attempts by the British Empire to set aside seats for women and other groups in various government bodies (Everett 1979). Following independence, however, the two countries took opposite approaches to the issue of reserved seats for women. In Pakistan, elites quickly established reserved seats for women and applied them continuously from 1935 to 1988 and then again from 2000 to the present day. These measures survived several cycles of military intervention and democratic restoration, with debates over reserved seats continuing throughout the period between 1988 and 2000. The literature on women and politics rarely addresses the case of Pakistan, but would anticipate relatively low levels of representation given the country's unstable democratic history, low levels of social and economic development, and strong identity as an Islamic republic. Current research on gender quotas would also predict low levels given that provisions in Pakistan have tended to set aside only a very small number of seats for women, generally between four and ten percent (Shaheed, Zia, and Warraich 1998, 22). A closer look at events in Pakistan, however, uncovers enduring attention to and acceptance of reserved seats, even in the face of religious challenges to women's political participation and growing restrictions in women's social and economic rights (Mumtaz and Shaheed 1987).

Proposals to establish reserved seats first emerged in Pakistan in the early 1930s, when the country was still part of India and ruled by the British Empire. Following independence, women's movement organizations and their female allies in parliament campaigned to maintain reserved seats and managed to convince various democratic and non-democratic regimes to adopt provisions along these lines in 1954, 1956, 1962, 1967, 1970, 1973, 1980, and 1984 (Afzal 1999). These policies produced the only women in parliament until 1977, when a woman first won a general seat, and accounted for the overwhelming majority of women in parliament through to 1988 (Mumtaz 1998). Systemic institutions in the form of reserved seats thus largely sustained women's representation from the 1950s to the 1980s, at the same time that practical and normative institutions – that did not view 'gender' as a central criteria for candidate selection or recognize 'women' as a category deserving equal representation – largely prevented women from contesting and winning non-reserved seats. When the final reserved seats policy expired following elections in 1988, therefore, women's representation dropped from more than 10% to less than 1% (Zafar 1996, 57), although all major political parties pledged to restore and even extend the number of seats reserved for women (Gulrez and Warraich 1998). No democratic government succeeded in fulfilling this promise, however, and with rules, practices, and norms working against the selection of female candidates, the proportion of women in parliament remained below 3%.

Although democratic governments failed to restore reserved seats, these policies remained on the political agenda and were eventually revived following a successful military coup in 1999. The new military government, however, did not simply introduce the same provisions as before: they doubled the proportion of seats reserved for women in the national and provincial assemblies and extended reservations to local and Senate elections for the very first time (Bari 2001). To clarify the procedures for parliamentary elections, the military leader further issued a series of controversial constitutional amendments that limited the activities of political parties and restricted candidacy to those who had attained a university degree and disqualified those who had been convicted of a crime, had defaulted on loans and utility bills, or had absconded from court proceedings (Human Rights Watch 2003). The first set of policies deliberately reformed systemic institutions by setting up separate elections for the reserved seats for women. The second set, however, inadvertently transformed practical and normative institutions in ways that benefited women, because the

new requirements disqualified many former and aspiring male politicians and thus forced elites to reconsider their pool of potential candidates.

The new election regulations took effect at the local level over the course of twenty months between December 2000 and August 2002 and came into force at the national and provincial levels in October 2002. Reservation policies at the local level inspired many women, workers, and peasants to run for political office for the very first time (Reyes 2002), but also sparked various acts of intimidation against women carried out primarily by conservative religious leaders, who threatened women's families with social boycotts and pressured local judges to invalidate women's candidacies (Human Rights Watch 2004). Despite attempts to thwart systemic reform with normative arguments, however, nearly all seats reserved for women were contested and filled by the end of 2002. Several months later, nearly three hundred women ran for the sixty seats reserved for women in the National Assembly ("Participation" 2002). While this guaranteed the election of at least sixty women to the assembly, the disqualification of many prominent political leaders – most of whom were men – inspired them to nominate their better-educated sisters and wives or, alternatively, their female relatives who unlike them did not possess criminal records (Talbot 2003). In this way, attempts to reform the mechanisms of election spilled over in a certain degree of practical and normative reform that acknowledged gender as a criteria for candidate selection and accepted women – perhaps begrudgingly – as a vehicle for political representation. As a result, more women were elected directly than ever before, bringing the combined proportion of women in the National Assembly to 21.6% (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2004).

In India, in contrast, the nationalist movement long viewed reserved seats for all groups, except the most disadvantaged groups in society, as a threat to national integration and thus did not reconsider reserved seats for women until the late 1980s (Jenkins 1999). All the same, the existing literature on women and politics would expect slightly higher levels of representation in India than in Pakistan, given the country's relatively stable democratic history and higher levels of social and economic development. Similarly, research on gender quotas would anticipate earlier quota adoption in India than in Pakistan, given the many groups that support reservation and the quick passage of the constitutional amendment for reservations at the local level. Tracing events in India, however, reveals a complicated relationship between coalitions of support and opposition and their stated and unstated

intentions in quota debates: some actors claim strong backing for reserved seats, but have not taken any steps to institute them, while others voice strong opposition on normative grounds, but have not behaved in ways consistent with these arguments.

Proposals to institute reserved seats first emerged in India in the early 1930s, when the country was still a part of the British Empire. The nationalist movement condemned this solution as a 'divide-and-rule' strategy that sought to undermine the common identity of all Indians (Jenkins 1999). Following independence, therefore, the newly drafted constitution abolished special seats for women in the interest of recognizing fundamental equality between women and men (Tawa Lama-Rewal 2001). Nonetheless, practices at the local level introduced a custom of co-opting one or two women per local council when no women were elected directly (Mandal 2003). By the 1980s, several states had formalized these policies by reserving seats for women at various levels of local government. These experiments caught the eye of national leaders, who proposed to extend these policies across all states (Kudva 2003). Although initially defeated in parliament, the reservation bill soon passed and inspired women's groups to demand similar reservations for state assemblies and the national parliament (Balasubrahmanyam 1998). At this time, systemic, practical, and normative institutions at the national level largely worked against the selection of female candidates, and women formed only about 6% of all representatives in the lower house of parliament.

Political parties quickly responded to women's demands by including a commitment to reservations in their party manifestos in the run up to the 1996 elections. When the new government sought to introduce a bill along these lines at the end of the same year, however, a large number of MP's voiced opposition, primarily on the grounds that the bill would promote upper caste Hindu women if the bill was not revised to incorporate sub-quotas for OBC's and Muslims (Jenkins 1999). Although many women suggested that sub-reservations were simply a convenient excuse for male leaders who did not want to lose their seats in parliament, they refused to consider normative reforms that would establish sub-reservations or to press for quotas within their own parties (Kishwar 1998), normative and practical reforms that would not only eliminate these objections, but also pave the way for more effective institutional configurational change. Insisting that women should not be divided, and pointing out that sub-quotas for SC's and ST's already existed in the provision, advocates have continued to pursue systemic reform to the exclusion of practical and

normative reform. As a result, systemic, practical, and normative institutions have shifted little and women's representation in parliament has remained at only 8%.

Although the reservation bill for the state and national levels has not yet been approved, evidence from its implementation at the local level reveals that systemic reforms alone can produce dramatic changes in the number of women elected to political office (Nanivadekar 2006), precisely because the mechanism of reserving seats literally means that seats are set aside for women. Insights from the local level, however, also cast light on the various ways that opponents still draw on existing practices and norms to delegitimize women as political actors and undermine their effectiveness as policy-makers. Indeed, men in several local councils have devised alternative strategies for excluding women by communicating the wrong meeting times and initiating motions of no-confidence, especially against women from under-privileged social backgrounds, to ensure that women are not present despite the fact that seats are specifically reserved for them (Balasubrahmanyam 1998; Ramesh and Ali 2001). These patterns suggest that systemic reforms may be extremely effective, but call attention to the need for accompanying practical and normative reforms to support the broader goal of systemic change.

#### *Party Quotas and Practical Reform in Sweden and the United Kingdom*

Campaigns for political party quotas in Sweden and the United Kingdom emerged as early as the 1960s in Sweden but gained their greatest momentum in both countries in the 1990s. In Sweden, women long mobilized inside and outside the political parties to pressure elites to select more female candidates. Their efforts resulted in the continuous adoption and implementation of political party measures – ranging from softer recommendations and targets to stricter party quotas – from 1972 to the present day, such that most parties presently alternate between male and female candidates on their party lists. These patterns largely confirm the conventional wisdom on women in politics, which would predict high levels of representation in this country given its PR electoral system and women's relatively high social and economic status. However, it is important to recognize that women began to mobilize for increased representation as early as the 1920s, when they enjoyed few of the benefits associated with the Swedish welfare state and, in fact, the state actively reinforced the distinction between public roles for men and private roles for women through public

policy (Hirdman 1990). Further, until the 1980s, most parties – and most women – rejected gender quotas as a measure to improve women’s access to political office. Many preferred instead to adopt more informal policies establishing goals or targets for the selection of female candidates, with the threat to institute formal quotas if these goals and targets were not met. When quotas were adopted by some parties in the 1980s and 1990s, consequently, they served more to consolidate women’s gains, rather than to motivate them (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005).

Proposals to institute a policy of alternation first appeared in Sweden in the early 1990s, as women inside and outside the political parties reacted to the first decrease in the number of women elected to parliament since 1928. Although women had mobilized for decades for increased representation, they had long hesitated to demand formal quotas out of the belief that such measures were unnecessary and even counterproductive (Karlsson 1996), while political party elites worried that a quota policy mandated by the central party might undermine the local organizations to choose their own candidates. For these reasons, many parties opted instead to adopt recommendations that local selection committees aim for no less than 40% of candidates of each sex (Wängnerud 2001). Systemic institutions thus did not change radically during this period – beyond the change from a bicameral to a unicameral legislature in 1970 – but practical institutions shifted dramatically, as women politicized ‘gender’ as an increasingly central criteria of candidate selection. While these campaigns also succeeded in reshaping normative institutions by increasing the proportion of women considered necessary for ‘women’ to be adequately ‘represented’ – from one woman per list or committee to at least 40% women – they continued to struggle with existing normative perceptions regarding the term ‘quota,’ which many parties continued to view as undemocratic and as implying the selection of unqualified women (Eduards 1977). Nonetheless, the combination of existing favorable systemic institutions with new practical institutions and partially reformed normative institutions led to a dramatic increase in women’s representation from 1.0% in 1921 to 38.4% in 1988 (Sveriges Riksdag 1999).

When the number of women elected to parliament declined in 1991, women across the political spectrum began to organize in new ways to influence the existing parties to place more female candidates in safe seats on party lists (Eduards 1992). Given the strong normative aversion to ‘quotas’ in all the parties, they pressed elites to adopt the principle of *varannan damernas*, which they stressed was not so much a quota as a method for achieving

gender balance by alternating between women and men on party lists. By the late 1990s, most parties applied alternation, but differed to the extent that they treated this policy as a recommendation or as a quota (Wängnerud 2001). These reforms refined existing practical institutions by designating 'gender' as a central organizing principle for the entire candidate list, above more traditional considerations like class, age, geography, and occupation. At the same time, they altered existing normative institutions by transforming calls for proportionate representation to demands for equal representation. Lingering ambivalence over the term 'quota,' nonetheless, reflected continued normative resistance among many elites to any sort of positive action that might create unfair advantages for one sex over the other. The light-hearted reference to a dance floor tradition, however, enabled supporters to frame a policy that was essentially a 50% quota as a measure aimed only at the equal division and sharing of political power, a more radical claim for equal representation but one more consistent with reigning normative institutions (cf. Freidenvall 2005).

Parties made varying degrees of commitment to the principle of *varannan damernas* during elections in 1994, 1998, and 2002. While some were more successful than others in meeting their stated goals during various elections, most parties elected equal numbers of women and men by 2002, with the only major exceptions being two right-wing parties who continued to resist gender quotas in any form (Krook 2005). A slight change in the electoral system to allow a limited degree of personal voting, however, enabled voters to compensate for some of these shortcomings by casting personal votes for women, resulting in their election despite being placed quite far down their respective party lists (Rundkvist 2002). These patterns indicate varying degrees of practical and normative reform across political formations, although all parties to a certain extent have revised their criteria for candidate selection and their willingness to intervene in local selection processes. In interaction with existing systemic institutions, these changes have enabled most parties to make relatively similar progress in promoting women's political representation such that women now make up more than 47% of the Swedish parliament (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2007a).

In the UK, the Labour Party instituted an all-women shortlists policy in 1993 that was overturned by the courts in 1996 on the grounds that it violated anti-discrimination law. Following a modest decrease in the number of women elected to parliament in 2002, this law was subsequently reformed to allow positive action in candidate selection (Childs 2004). Comparative research generally focuses on the electoral system as a primary reason for

women's under-representation in British politics, in part due to the complicated nature of applying positive action measures in single-member districts. However, these developments reveal that parties have nonetheless devised a series of creative solutions in light of these constraints in order to increase the number of women placed in winnable districts and safe seats on party lists. These tactics nonetheless sparked intense debates among various groups of actors, who supported or opposed gender quotas on a range of different grounds. At the UK level, a successful legal challenge to quotas led advocates to identify the normative definition of equality and equal treatment as the main barrier to change, causing them to overlook possibilities for systemic and practical reform. In Scotland and Wales, in contrast, debates over the legal status of quotas intersected with campaigns for devolution, which presented an opportunity for supporters to frame quota policies as a crucial element of democratic innovation. These distinct responses to normative ambiguity indicate the unpredictable nature of extractive sequences of reform, which typically entail competition and discord across institutions of candidate selection, but which sometimes prove to be a catalyst for subsequent institutional configurational change, explaining the relatively low numbers of women in the House of Commons and the relatively high numbers of women in the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales.

Proposals to establish a policy of all-women shortlists were first voiced in the British Labour Party in the late 1980s, as women's groups inside the party grew increasingly dissatisfied with the existing policy of one woman per shortlist and, through contacts with women in other socialist parties, gained knowledge of successful quota policies in countries across Western Europe (Short 1996). While they managed to get the party conference to agree in 1990 to a target of 50% women in the party's parliamentary delegation within ten years or three general elections, they were unable to secure any concrete recommendations, due partly to strong opposition from local parties towards any changes in the existing selection procedures (Lovenduski 1999). At this time, therefore, all institutions of candidate recruitment militated strongly against the selection of women, combining unfavorable systemic institutions – a first-past-the-post electoral system organized around single-member districts – with practices and norms that did not recognize 'gender' as a central category of political representation. Consequently, women's representation in the British House of Commons remained far below the world average, around 6% in the late 1980s (Squires 2004, 9).

A fourth consecutive electoral defeat in the early 1990s inspired the Labour Party to step up its efforts to appeal to women by, among other things, devising a new quota policy to promote the selection of female candidates (Perrigo 1999). Taking the details and dynamics of the British electoral system into account, senior women within the party suggested that all-women shortlists be used to select candidates in half of all vacant seats that the party was likely to win (Russell 2003). The proposal then became part of a broader package of proposed changes to the party constitution, passing largely unnoticed at the time due to heated debates over the introduction of one-member-one-vote. Once approved, however, it attracted substantial criticism from various sectors of the party and the public at large, prompting two male aspirants to sue the party on the grounds that all-women shortlists violated the terms of the Sex Discrimination Act (Squires 1996). Although a number of experts claimed that the court decision against all-women shortlists was based on an incorrect interpretation of the Act, the party leadership agreed to discontinue the policy in 1996 (Russell 2000). These events began with a proposal to reform practical institutions – with careful attention to the possibilities and constraints of existing systemic institutions – by establishing ‘gender’ as a criteria for candidate selection in winnable districts. This effort was foiled, however, by a particular interpretation of reigning normative institutions, which put an effective end to these policies at the same time that it cast serious doubts on the prospects for further practical reform.

The controversy over all-women shortlists continued to loom after the elections. Advocates sought to exempt the new assemblies in Scotland and Wales from the terms of the Sex Discrimination Act, while opponents aimed to maintain the status quo by repeatedly referring to select articles of British and international law (Russell 2000). Despite this atmosphere of legal uncertainty, both devolution campaigns had made commitments to equal representation in the early 1990s, which women drew on to persuade parties to adopt special measures to promote women’s representation in the first Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales. The Scottish and Welsh Labour Parties recognized that they would win most of their seats in single-member districts and decided to apply a ‘twinning’ strategy to ensure that equal numbers of women and men would be elected to constituency seats. The second largest parties in both regions, the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru, realized they would instead win most of their seats from party lists. Plaid Cymru required that the first and third positions on these lists be occupied by women, while the

Scottish National Party simply encouraged local parties to place women near the top of all party lists, after a ‘zipping’ proposal was rejected by the party conference (Russell et al 2002). These patterns reflected attempts to cater practices and norms of candidate selection to distinct elements of the electoral system, bringing systemic, practical, and normative institutions together in mutual reinforcing ways. The resulting institutional configurations thus explain why the election of women in both assemblies was significantly higher in single-member districts: the winner-take-all structure of these contests, combined with the electoral strength of Labour, enabled party selectors to predict with greater confidence which districts the party was likely to win, and thus better pinpoint where female candidates should be placed to meet the goal of equal representation. Regional list contests, in contrast, entailed some unanticipated victories or losses, leading smaller parties to under- or over-estimate the number of candidates they would elect, leading to greater or lesser degrees of gender imbalance despite firm policies of alternation.

At the UK level, in contrast, the successful legal challenge to quotas caused supporters to identify the interpretation of certain articles of the Sex Discrimination Act as the main barrier to positive action in candidate selection, and by extension, to further increases in the number of women elected to the British House of Commons (Childs 2004). The government considered amending the Act as early as 1998, but doubts over the legality of positive action ultimately persuaded it to abandon these plans. A decrease in the number of women elected to parliament in 2001, combined with a series of new legal arguments, however, convinced the government to introduce a new bill that would allow – but not compel – political parties to adopt measures to reduce inequalities in political representation. While the focus on normative reform stemmed from a desire to clarify the legal ambiguities informing discussions on positive action, the need to approve the bill in both houses of parliament forced advocates to settle for this more permissive formulation, in effect limiting the scope for normative change (Childs 2003). At the same time, the debate bracketed the issue of systemic and practical reform, opening the way for political parties to react as they saw fit to the new provision. As such, all three major political parties have responded in distinct ways to the new regulation: the Labour Party has engaged in full practical reform by reintroducing all-women shortlists; the Liberal Democrats have pursued partial practical reform by establishing a target for the election of women; and the Conservative Party has avoided any practical reform by refusing to undertake any change at all. These responses

indicate the presence of multiple institutional configurations within the British political party system, suggesting that patterns of candidate selection are likely to diverge strongly across the parties in subsequent elections. Driven mainly by the Labour Party policy, women's representation in the UK now stands at 19.7% (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2007a).

### *Legislative Quotas and Normative Reform in Argentina and France*

Campaigns for legislative quotas in Argentina and France, finally, began in both countries in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In Argentina, women mobilized inside and outside the political parties to gain the passage of a national quota law in 1991, which applied first to the lower house of parliament in 1993 and the upper house of parliament in 2001. These campaigns have resulted in perfect implementation of the 30% quota law, thus challenging the conventional literature on women in politics, which would expect higher levels of representation in France in light of its higher levels of socioeconomic development and its longer and more stable democratic history, as well as the existing research on gender quotas, which would anticipate higher rates of implementation and impact in France in light of its more radical and detailed quota requirements. Existing accounts attempt to explain this success by focusing on single actors and motivations, or specific details of quota policies and the contexts in which they operate, observed over relatively short periods of time. Taking a look at the policy history, however, reveals that this achievement evolved in steps over the course of fifteen years through a series of smaller institutional reforms, which were initiated by variable coalitions of actors supporting or opposing these changes for different, and often conflicting, reasons.

Proposals to institute a legislative quota first appeared in Argentina in the late 1980s, as women's movement organizations and women inside the political parties began to make contacts with women's groups around the world. Through exchanging information, they became familiar with attempts elsewhere to institute quotas inside political parties and in national law (Lubertino Beltrán 1992). Drawing on these experiences, as well as international documents establishing the normative legitimacy of quotas, they organized within and across party lines to gain support for a national quota law (Bonder and Nari 1995). At this time, the only institution of candidate selection favorable to women was the PR-list electoral system. Because existing practical and normative institutions did not treat 'gender' as a central

category for candidate selection, however, women's representation in Argentina remained below 6% in both houses of parliament.

Contacts among women across political parties, as well as through feminist conferences, revealed growing support for gender quotas and, by the end of 1989, women organized a cross-party network to press for the passage of a national quota law (Gómez 1998). Shortly thereafter, women in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies presented bills proposing to amend Article 60 of the National Electoral Code to require a minimum of 30% women on all candidate lists. Following relatively short debates, both houses of parliament approved the measure by overwhelming majorities and the quota passed into law in November 1991 (Gallo and Giacobone 2001). The new *Ley de Cupos* directly reformed normative institutions by redefining the principle of 'representation' enshrined in the electoral law, and in doing so, indirectly reformed systemic institutions by revising the regulations regarding candidate selection for all political parties. The statement that all lists must include a minimum of 30% women "in proportions which make their election possible," however, did not mandate in more specific terms how political parties should translate this provision in their selection procedures, thus leaving practical institutions largely untouched.

The new quota law first applied to parliamentary elections in 1993, but given the lack of a specific placement mandate, advocates and opponents engaged in an almost decade-long battle over the meaning of the term "in proportions which make their election possible." A presidential decree issued before these first elections sought to clarify this term by indicating the minimum number of female candidates that parties must include among their total number of candidates up for re-election (Jones 1996). Many party elites, however, continued to apply multiple normative interpretations of the law to avoid placing women in spots where they were likely to be elected. In response, women in the state and in the political parties initiated a legal campaign to ensure compliance with the quota law and eventually gained a series of favorable decisions that forced parties to redo their lists, established the quota as a public order law, and clarified that the quota did not contravene the constitutional principle of equality before the law (Chama 2001). Constitutional reform officially legitimated the use of positive action in candidate selection and began a series of debates on the application of the quota to Senate elections. Over the course of the 1990s, repeated court challenges further refined the regulations regarding the placement of female

candidates, gains cemented by a presidential decree in 2000 that offered the final word on the placement of female candidates in absolutely all situations – including the first direct elections to the Senate in 2001 – and that required judges to rectify lists if political parties did not do so themselves (Carrio 2002). These various reforms thus focused initially on revising practical institutions to compel political parties to apply ‘gender’ as an increasingly central criteria for candidate selection. As some parties continued nonetheless to circumvent the law, supporters pursued a series of more specific practical reforms that not only restricted the amount of discretion left to parties to implement the law, but that also spilled over into additional normative and systemic reform through amendments that established that quotas did not violate the principle of equality enshrined in the constitution and electoral reforms that extended the purview of the quota law to govern Senate elections for the very first time. These efforts thus solidified the reform of systemic, practical, and normative institutions to culminate in complete institutional configurational change and, consequently, perfect implementation of the quota law in the 2001 Chamber and Senate elections, such that today women’s representation is 35% in the Chamber and 43.1% in the Senate (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2007a).

In France, in contrast, both houses of parliament approved a quota law for local elections that was almost immediately declared unconstitutional in 1982. This setback inspired a new campaign for quotas organized around the concept of ‘parity’ that achieved constitutional reform in 1999 and electoral law reform in 2000. Campaigns to promote women’s political representation in France have proceeded in a more disjointed fashion than in Argentina, resulting in uneven quota implementation across political parties and across levels of government (Sineau 2002). Existing research on France generally acknowledges the diverse actors and motivations behind quota adoption and, almost invariably, traces attempts at reform over time to call attention to the constraints placed on present innovations by the failures of earlier policies. More careful attention to the connections between these events helps unravel the paradoxes of the current parity reform, which mobilized broad coalitions of support for a seemingly radical policy that has so far only had a marginal impact on the proportion of women elected to the National Assembly (Murray 2004).

Proposals for quotas first appeared in France in the early 1970s, as female activists sought to increase the proportion of women at all levels of the Socialist Party (Opello 2006). Due to the limited success of this policy, as well as continued hesitation among party leaders

to institute a quota for parliamentary elections, these women eventually joined right-wing women in parliament to support the adoption of gender quotas for local elections. The measure passed both houses of parliament in 1982, but was overturned several months later by the Constitutional Council on the grounds that quotas for women violated the principle of equality before the law by dividing voters and candidates into categories for political voting (Mossuz-Lavau 1998). This decision, although it concerned a quota for local elections, had crucial ramifications for efforts to increase women's parliamentary representation by forbidding the state to take positive action to compel the selection of female candidates. As a result, all three institutions of candidate selection were highly unfavorable to women: the two-round majoritarian electoral system provided few opportunities for women to run for office in winnable districts, political party practices excluded 'gender' as a central category of candidate selection, and legal precedents reinforced interpretations of equality and representation that precluded the application of quotas at the statutory level as a measure to improve women's access to political office. Although the PS had adopted gender quotas for various types of elections, as well as for a range of positions within the party, the Socialists were no different from the other political formations in this regard, in that they excluded legislative elections from the ambit of the party quota and in many ways facilitated the Constitutional Court decision that judged state-mandated quotas to be illegal (Bird 2003). As a consequence, women's representation in France remained below 7% in both houses of parliament in the 1980s and early 1990s (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1995).

Taking inspiration from new domestic political actors, as well as from discussions within the Council of Europe, women in France began to mobilize increasingly around the concept of 'parity' as a means for overcoming the effects of the 1982 Constitutional Council decision (Gaspard 1994). The campaign recognized that normative reform was central, given that the Council had rejected quotas for local elections on the grounds that such measures violated the principles of equality and representation set forth in the Constitution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. Carefully separating the demand for parity from the demand for quotas, advocates raised public awareness of the need to redefine these principles while stressing the continuities between the proposed reforms and the broader goals of French republicanism (Scott 2005). Gaining the support of diverse actors, they proposed and obtained changes to the constitution and the electoral law that not only permitted, but also promoted, the use of positive action to increase women's political

representation. The campaign's central concern with normative reform, however, was not matched by similar success in reforming systemic and practical institutions in legislative elections. Indeed, in the context of the parity reform, all the major political parties stood against any change in the two-round majoritarian system for National Assembly elections (Giraud and Jenson 2001). At the same time, legislators devised very loose regulations for the implementation of parity in these elections, imposing no placement requirements and only a weak financial penalty for parties that did not conform to the parity provision. Thus, the adoption of the parity law entailed normative reform, but no systemic reform and very little practical reform.

Adoption of the parity law met with mixed reactions from both supporters and opponents. The fears and aspirations of both groups were confirmed across the first three elections governed by parity in 2001 and 2002, which together produced stunning variations in the impact of the parity reform. While the proportion of women jumped from 25.7% to 47.5% in local councils governed by the parity provision (Sineau 2001), the percentage of women in the National Assembly increased only mildly from 10.9% to 12.2% (Murray 2004). A closer look reveals that the provisions of the law involve differing degrees of institutional configurational reform at the local and national levels. For local elections, which were governed by proportional representation, parties must conform to specific placement mandates for female candidates or else risked having their lists rejected. Parity at the local level thus combined favorable systemic institutions with practical and normative reforms that compelled the selection of female candidates and established 'gender' as a central category of political representation. The result was the election of nearly 50% women in local councils where the parity provision applied. For national elections, in contrast, parties competed in two-round majoritarian elections. The law required them to nominate equal numbers of women and men across all electoral districts, but did not mandate any sort of placement provision, enabling parties to continue to place women in districts where they were unlikely to be elected. While the law imposed a financial penalty on parties that deviated from the 50% requirement, the cost of non-compliance was greater for smaller parties, who were more reliant on state funding, than larger parties, who could better 'afford' to nominate fewer female candidates. Parity at the national level, therefore, reformed only normative institutions, leaving existing systemic and practical institutions largely intact. The

outcome was thus only a marginal increase in the number of women elected to the National Assembly.

### **Conclusions: Quotas, Candidate Selection, and Political Representation**

Analyzing variations in the effects of gender quota policies thus requires an approach sensitive to this substantial causal complexity. As indicated by the review of the literature, no single factor explains all variations in quota impact. Rather, multiple conditions combine to influence how quotas affect women's access to political office. In this paper, I seek to move research on this topic forward in two ways: (1) by offering a new framework for analyzing cross-national variations in women's representation, and (2) by exploring how quota adoption and implementation change and interact with these various factors. Although I illustrate these dynamics through cases of iterated reforms, which characterize a limited number of quota campaigns, I argue that these findings are more broadly applicable to various instances of quota adoption and implementation, in the sense that they reveal how anticipated policy effects may be magnified or thwarted through interactions with specific features of the broader context. This initial attempt to 'make sense' of puzzling patterns in quota impact suggests at least two avenues for future research. First, few studies theorize the significance of the reasons behind quota adoption for the eventual effects of quota policies on women's representation. However, the importance of practices and norms – even in cases of systemic reform – indicates that motivations for pursuing quotas may influence the degree to which they succeed in altering existing patterns of candidate selection. Second, most current research on quota implementation stops at the moment of election, measuring quota impact almost exclusively in terms of the numbers of women elected. Various case studies suggest, nonetheless, that it may be important to explore what kinds of women are elected through quota policies and what kinds of efforts they make – or not – to promote the substantive representation of women's concerns. Attention to all these topics will be crucial for moving toward a better understanding of the impact of quotas on women as a group.

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