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*Political Research Quarterly* 2010 63: 707 originally published online 17 June 2009

DOI: 10.1177/1065912909336275

The online version of this article can be found at:

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# Beyond Supply and Demand: A Feminist-institutionalist Theory of Candidate Selection

Political Research Quarterly  
63(4) 707–720  
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sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav  
DOI: 10.1177/1065912909336275  
http://prq.sagepub.com



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## Abstract

Dynamics of candidate selection are central to political representation. The dominant model used to study the case of women focuses on the supply of and demand for female aspirants. This article develops a critique of this approach, by drawing on two sets of theoretical tools: institutionalism and feminism. It subsequently elaborates an alternative perspective on candidate selection based on configurations of three kinds of gendered institutions: systemic, practical, and normative. The utility of this approach is then explored through three paired comparisons of cases in which quota policies have been introduced, disrupting some but not necessarily all aspects of gendered institutional configurations.

## Keywords

gender, race or identity, women and politics, representation and electoral systems

In political science, theorizing about political representation has focused on three main questions: what representation is (Manin 1997; Saward 2006), how and when representation occurs (Rehfeld 2006; Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson 1995), and who representatives are (Dovi 2002; Phillips 1995). Yet, a fourth question bearing centrally on all these theoretical concerns is, what determines access to political office? Given that there are few legal barriers blocking citizens from putting themselves forward as political candidates, the issue of who is—and who is not—selected as a candidate has crucial implications for all the other meanings and phases of political representation. Women offer perhaps the most vivid example in this regard: although they form more than half the population, they constitute only a small minority of all members of parliament worldwide, just over 18 percent (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2009b).

The dominant metaphor for explaining this pattern is the supply and demand model of candidate selection. This theory proposes that the number of women elected is the combined result of (1) the qualifications of women as a group to run for political office and (2) the desire or willingness of elites to select female aspirants (Randall 1982; Norris and Lovenduski 1993; Norris and Lovenduski 1995). While it continues to organize the findings of many recent case studies (Franceschet 2005; Kittilson 2006; Lawless and Fox 2005), the main difficulty with this model is that on its own it cannot account for why women are underrepresented numerically in every country. Without a theory of

gender, it is difficult to explain the pervasiveness of this pattern if women's access, like men's access, is simply a question of supply and demand. At the same time, attention to global averages masks substantial cross-national variations: Rwanda and Sweden have roughly equal numbers of women and men in their national assemblies, while countries like Belize and Saudi Arabia have no female members at all (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2009a). These differences suggest that dynamics of supply and demand may be distorted in positive and negative directions by structural conditions as well as by the rise of new and sometimes unforeseen political opportunities.

Drawing on these parallels and variations, this article reexamines—and ultimately elaborates a critique of—how scholars have traditionally conceptualized dynamics of candidate selection. A closer look at explanatory accounts reveals, crucially, that few employ the market analogy in a literal sense: nearly all recognize the role of gendered norms and practices and the intervening effects of political parties and electoral systems. As such, the argument developed here does not seek to push aside previous work; rather, it aims to build on, synthesize, and reformulate elements

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that remain largely implicit in existing accounts. The goal of this exercise is thus to better capture the full range of intuitions present in earlier studies. In the process, it aims to lend greater analytical leverage to attempts to understand patterns of continuity and change in the selection of candidates to political office.

To set up the argument, and thereby illustrate the “added value” of this account, the first section begins by outlining the basic contours of the model of supply and demand. The second section assesses this metaphor using two sets of theoretical tools: institutionalism, which raises questions about the appropriateness of the market analogy, and feminism, which provides a lens for analyzing the gendered dimensions of the “political market.” These critiques form the starting point of the third section, which draws on prior literature to develop a revised theory of candidate selection focused on configurations of three categories of gendered institutions. After making the assumptions of these studies more explicit, the fourth section probes the utility of this synthesis by illustrating how this lens offers greater leverage for analyzing patterns of stability and change in political recruitment. Via three sets of paired comparisons, it examines how the introduction of gender quotas—policies adopted to increase the number of female candidates—may alter, or not alter, existing dynamics of candidate selection. The article concludes with a discussion of what a “feminist institutionalism” might look like more broadly and how it might inform future research on gender and institutions in political life.

### Analyzing Candidate Selection: The Supply and Demand Model

Scholars of candidate selection often start with a four-stage model of political recruitment that moves from (1) the large number of citizens who are *eligible* to run for political office to (2) the smaller pool of citizens who *aspire* to run for political office to (3) the small group of citizens who are *nominated* to run for political office to (4) the smallest band of citizens who are *elected* to political office (Lovenduski and Norris 1993). If no mechanisms of distortion operate, the characteristics of the individuals present at each of these four stages should be the same. Yet, as research has shown, this is often far from the case: “legislatures worldwide include more of the affluent than the less well-off, more men than women, more middle-aged than young, and more white-collar professionals than blue-collar workers” (Norris 1997, 6). These patterns lead scholars to point to various types of qualifications that may set some aspirants apart from others, including their levels of education, party service, legislative experience, speaking abilities, financial resources, political connections, kinship,

name recognition, group membership, and organizational skills (Rahat and Hazan 2001).

Seeking to elucidate where women might “fall away,” many feminist researchers break down the selection process to explore what might shape the transition from stage 1 to stage 2, or the *supply* of available aspirants; the move from stage 2 to stage 3, or the *demand* for certain types of candidates; and the shift from stage 3 to stage 4, or the *outcome* of elections. They ask whether women’s underrepresentation stems from gender differences in political ambition that cause fewer women than men to consider running for political office, biases in the recruitment practices of political elites that lead them to select fewer female candidates than male candidates, or prejudices on the part of voters who prefer to elect men over women. Evidence from a wide range of countries largely debunks the third explanation: although some early work found that the public was reluctant to vote for female candidates, most studies find that voters not only vote for male and female candidates at equal rates (Norris, Vallance, and Lovenduski 1992) but may also express a preference for women over men, controlling for other influences (Black and Erickson 2003; Murray 2008). Most subsequent research has thus focused on the relative role of supply- and demand-side factors, as well as possible interactions between them, in explaining why women are underrepresented in electoral politics.

### Supply-side Explanations

Although earlier scholars employed the concepts of supply and demand to explain patterns of female representation, this metaphor is perhaps most closely associated with Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski’s (1995) pioneering study, *Political Recruitment: Gender, Race, and Class in the British Parliament*. According to these authors, the two key factors that shape the supply of aspirants are (1) resources, like time, money, and experience, and (2) motivation, such as drive, ambition, and interest in politics. This explanation thus centers largely on the strategic calculations of potential candidates, in terms of whether or not they feel they are equipped to run for office. In some countries, especially the United States, women’s groups tend to interpret this belief in relation to resources: arguing that “when women run, women win,” they concentrate their efforts on raising money, talent spotting, and training women to wage effective political campaigns. In contrast, party leaders around the world frequently justify their recruitment patterns with reference to motivation, by claiming that they would personally like to select more women, but too few women come forward (Dahlerup 2001).

An example of this argument can be seen in the work of Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox (2005), who

argue that women are less politically ambitious than men. They base this assertion on the work they did for the Citizen Political Ambition Study, which combined an original survey in the United States of nearly 3,800 eligible candidates—roughly equal numbers of “successful women and men who occupy the four professions that most often precede a career in politics” (Lawless and Fox 2005, 4), law, business, education, and political activism—with in-depth interviews of a representative sample of 200 of these respondents. They hypothesize that this gender gap results from long-standing patterns of traditional socialization that associate men with the public realm and women with the private. This divide manifests itself in at least three ways: (1) gender-specific family roles and expectations, related to tasks like housework and child care; (2) ideas of masculinity that permeate existing political institutions; and (3) the “gendered psyche,” a “deeply embedded imprint that propels men into politics, but relegates women to the electoral arena’s periphery” (Lawless and Fox 2005, 11). All three lead to differences among women and men in terms of their levels of confidence, desire for achievement, and inclination to self-promote. The upshot of this account is that the number of female officeholders is unlikely to increase without significant shifts in the resources and motivations of women to wage effective political campaigns.

### *Demand-side Explanations*

Once applicants come forward, their selection as candidates largely hinges on evaluations of their abilities, qualifications, and experience. However, as Norris and Lovenduski (1995) point out, these assessments are strongly shaped by the preferences and opinions of political elites. While elites may justify their decisions as based on “merit,” the fact that it is generally impossible for selectors to know all aspirants on a personal level means that many will look to “background characteristics as a proxy measure of abilities and character” (Norris and Lovenduski 1995, 14). These “information shortcuts” may take the form of direct discrimination, in which aspirants are judged positively or negatively on the basis of characteristics associated with their group, or imputed discrimination, in which aspirants are passed over by selectors who would otherwise favor those candidacies but fear that their party might lose votes as a result. Evidence suggests that these appraisals may also be influenced by the descriptive characteristics of elites themselves. In a study of local party elites, David Niven (1998) asks whether the low numbers of women might be due to an out-group effect, whereby negative evaluations of female candidates are based on their lack of surface similarity with the mainly male party elite, or a distribution effect, whereby negative evaluations are based on the

relative scarcity of women in high-status positions more generally. Finding strong confirmation for the out-group effect, he concludes that as long as men constitute the vast majority of party elites, it will be difficult to achieve any substantial gains in the numbers of women elected to political office.

Given that parties play a larger role in candidate selection processes outside the United States, most comparative scholars acknowledge the importance of supply-side factors, but tend to place greater emphasis on demand-side explanations. Susan Franceschet (2005) offers a typical example of this approach. In her work on Chile, she recognizes that women are generally skeptical of the value of engaging in party politics but argues that parties remain the primary barrier to increased female representation. Parties have resisted the adoption of a quota law that could raise the number of viable female candidates; their meetings are characterized by an “exaggerated aggressiveness and . . . a patronizing attitude toward women, especially toward young women” (Franceschet 2005, 86); and they have largely monopolized formal politics in the post-transition period, undermining attempts by women to participate in politics outside the existing party organizations. These dynamics of exclusion are exacerbated by the bargaining among parties that often occurs in Chile in the run-up to elections: although each party may have clear rules for candidate selection, the practice of conferring with coalition partners may lead one party to withdraw its candidate in favor of one nominated by the other party. It is at this stage, Franceschet notes, that women are the most disadvantaged: even if a woman succeeds in winning her party’s support, her party may later bargain away her candidacy in its negotiations. In this “intense competition for political posts” (Franceschet 2005, 88), the support of the party president is crucial for getting nominated *and* for being elected. In emphasizing the enormous power and discretion that parties exercise over candidate selection procedures, this perspective suggests that the onus for change lies not with women but with political elites.

### **Rethinking Candidate Selection: Critiques of Supply and Demand**

The model of supply and demand thus provides the dominant framework for analyzing women’s access to political office in countries around the world. However, there are several reasons to question its appropriateness for theorizing the dynamics of candidate selection. First, while few scholars who use this metaphor believe that the “political market” operates efficiently, employing this terminology imports—implicitly, if not explicitly—a core assumption underlying the economic model, namely, that interactions between the forces of supply and demand will eventually

produce an equilibrium solution. Yet, many economists remain doubtful of the validity of this model in explaining markets, pointing to a host of possible distortions that may be introduced through the many formal and informal rules and norms that govern individual and collective behavior (Hodgson 1998; North 1990). Second, in the case of female candidates, the theory of supply and demand cannot in itself account for why women are underrepresented in every country in the world. Without a theory of gender, the metaphor on its own cannot explain the pervasiveness of this pattern if access to political office is simply a question of resources and motivations, on one hand, and abilities and qualifications, on the other. Third, speaking in general terms about the role of supply-side and demand-side factors overlooks crucial variations across countries and political parties. These variations suggest the need to develop a more differentiated model of candidate selection that captures the role of market inefficiencies and gender effects within a broader comparative framework.

### *The Institutionalist Critique of Supply and Demand*

In economics, the model of supply and demand is used to describe relations between sellers and buyers of a given product. Assuming perfect competition and complete information, it predicts that as prices rise, supply of the good will increase at the same time that demand for it will decrease. As prices equalize the quantity supplied by producers and the quantity demanded by consumers, an efficient equilibrium will eventually be reached. Although this model forms the basis of many other economic theories, it has been criticized by proponents of “institutional economics,” who note that there is always some degree of market imperfection, as competition is frequently flawed at the same time that information is often incomplete. For these scholars, prices are not abstract forces, but social conventions. These are embedded in institutions and act as the “subjective mental constructs that individuals use to interpret the world around them and make choices” (North 1990, 111). However, they may also be deliberately designed to regulate or mitigate the dynamics and consequences of markets. Crucially, they are often associated with dynamics of “increasing returns,” which introduce inefficiencies as institutions create groups and organizations with a stake in the status quo.

Taking on board these insights, political science has witnessed a proliferation of institutional perspectives (cf. Hall and Taylor 1996). Despite their differences, the common feature uniting these approaches is their attention to the role of institutions in structuring the dynamics of political life. These represent “the rules of the game in a society or . . . the humanly devised constraints the

shape human interaction,” or more specifically, “formal constraints—such as the rules that human beings devise—and informal constraints—such as conventions and codes of behavior” (North 1990, 3-4). As such, *institutions* may span a continuum from “such intangible phenomena as ideas, meanings, signifiers, beliefs, identities, attitudes, worldviews, discourses, and values to such tangible entities as states, constitutions, bureaucracies, churches, schools, armies, parties, and groups” (Ethington and McDonagh 1995, 470). Most of this work focuses on institutional stability to explain how and why institutions lock the expectations and behavior of individuals into relatively predictable, self-reinforcing patterns, even in the face of major changes in background conditions (Pierson 2000). This perspective suggests that dynamics of candidate selection are not likely to reflect efficient solutions with instantaneous adjustments of supply and demand. Rather, they are liable to entail distortions due to structures and “information shortcuts” that are slow to change and exist in contradiction to other broader trends.

### *The Feminist Critique of Supply and Demand*

Feminist economists have long been skeptical of mainstream economic modeling on the grounds that it assumes actors who are interchangeable and thus devoid of context: “Economic man interacts in society without being influenced by society: his mode of interaction is through an ideal market in which prices form the only, and only necessary, form of communication” (Nelson 1995, 135). For this reason, some identify similarities between feminist theory and institutional economics (Jennings 1993). Yet, many also argue that institutional approaches fall short of providing persuasive explanations of economic phenomena because they fail to recognize the gendered nature of many types of economic interactions (Ferber and Nelson 1993). This critique lends leverage to the question of why women form only a small minority of all political representatives, even when they are a majority of the world’s population. This fact alone suggests that norms and practices of gender operate to lower both the supply of and demand for female aspirants. Crucially, this possibility is acknowledged by many women in politics scholars, despite their use of the market metaphor. Norris and Lovenduski (1995), for example, observe that the supply of female candidates is shaped strongly by ideologies of gender, which lead women to have fewer resources of time and money and lower levels of political ambition and confidence. They also provide direct evidence of the gendered nature of demand, which causes selectors to evaluate female aspirants as less competent or pass them over for selection due to unsubstantiated concerns about voter bias. Paralleling the literature on institutions, these

**Table 1.** Examples of Systemic, Practical, and Normative Institutions

## Systemic Institutions

Electoral system: Majoritarian or proportional, candidate- or list-based vote, open- or closed-party lists, single- or multimember districts

Party system: One-, two-, or multiparty system

## Practical Institutions

Formal criteria: Age, citizenship, party membership, term limits

Informal criteria: Ticket-balancing, skills, experience, prominence, party activism, family ties, money, insider or outsider status

Method of ballot composition: Centralized or decentralized, group rights to nominate or veto, primaries or nominations, secret or open ballots

## Normative Institutions

Norms of equality: Equality of opportunity or equality of results (system or party level)

Norms of representation: Politics of ideas or politics of presence (system or party level)

patterns indicate that *sex*, understood as biological differences between women and men, and *gender*, the social meanings given to these biological differences, distort the operation of the “political market” in ways that exclude women, regardless of their actual desires and qualifications to come forward as political candidates.

### Reframing Candidate Selection: A Feminist-Institutionalist Theory

These two sets of critiques suggest that a more persuasive account of candidate selection might be forged through a synthesis of institutional and feminist approaches, building on the work that has been done using the supply and demand framework. Despite some overlaps in their concerns, there has been little explicit theorizing on points of intersection between feminism and institutionalism (Kenny 2007; Mackay 2008).<sup>1</sup> Instead, only a handful of institutionalists study topics related to women and gender (Berkovitch 1999; Harvey 1998). In contrast, many feminist projects recognize the importance of political institutions. Yet, they largely restrict their focus to the gendered nature of formal institutions (Chappell 2006; Hawkesworth 2003; Kenney 1996), although some discuss gendered practices and norms in ways consistent with definitions of informal institutions (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995). Few feminists, however, explicitly make use of institutionalist theory (but see contributions in “Critical Perspectives on Gender and Politics” 2009).<sup>2</sup> The approach developed here thus begins by combining a broader definition of *institutions* with attention to the role of gender in structuring institutional content and effects.

Working from the model of supply and demand, it becomes clear that devising a revised theory requires recasting the candidate selection process in terms of the gendered institutions that may inform the calculations of potential candidates and political elites. In addition to the studies discussed earlier, which point to the role of gender

norms in assessments of potential candidates, further research by Pippa Norris (1997) argues that dynamics of supply and demand are nested within two other levels of analysis: the political system and the recruitment process. Together, these arguments point to three sources of structure—enacted by agents—in the dynamics of political recruitment: rules, practices, and norms. Much of the literature on women in politics emphasizes the importance of one of these categories but in fact elaborates their impact with reference to the other two (Krook 2007). A similar approach to explaining causal effects can be seen among institutionalists, who allude to the presence of multiple institutions but generally restrict their focus to the origins and impact of a single institution (cf. Greif and Laitin 2004; Orren and Skowronek 2004). A close reading of both literatures thus suggests that the effects of one institution may depend on the shape of others operating within the same context. Yet, few scholars overtly explore how institutions fit together in reinforcing and conflicting ways.

Merging these various intuitions, a feminist-institutionalist theory of candidate selection would involve attending to configurations of three categories of gendered institutions: systemic, practical, and normative (see Table 1). In addition to formalizing the intuitions of existing work, thereby enabling application of a common framework in future research,<sup>3</sup> the advantage of this approach is that it confers roughly equivalent causal status to these three sets of effects, rather than privileging one over the other a priori. Furthermore, treating them as three types of institutions permits these effects to be separated in theory, even as they overlap in practice. At the same time, emphasizing configurations bestows analytical importance on the ways in which rules, practices, and norms combine to influence outcomes. This in turn makes it possible to better identify and analyze the factors that shape access to political office, by calling attention to how the effects of a given institution may depend on the presence or absence of other institutions (cf. Ragin 2000). Such a perspective

helps explain why moments of institutional reform may or may not produce major shifts in political outcomes, in light of stability and change in other relevant institutions. However, unraveling these effects with accuracy requires recognizing that distinct institutional configurations may operate not only across but also within countries, producing variations across parties as well potential conflicts between national and party level rules, practices, and norms.

### *Systemic Institutions*

Formal features of political systems encompass the laws and organizations that officially structure political life. For this reason, they can be thought of as a group of systemic institutions. Their gendered effects are among the most studied in the field of women in politics. Among these, the electoral system has been identified as one of the most important factors explaining cross-national variations in women's representation. This is because proportional representation (PR) electoral systems, especially when combined with closed party lists and higher district magnitudes, tend to be associated with higher numbers of women in parliament than first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral systems, which involve the direct election of candidates in single-member districts (Caul 1999). Yet, 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, scholars typically speculate that PR offers more opportunities to women, because the presence of party lists and multimember districts means that parties are able, and may even feel pressed, to nominate at least a few women in order to “balance” their lists (Matland 1995). However, this does not mean that FPTP systems preclude the election of more women. While opportunities to balance nominations are impossible, parties that resolve to elect more women may devise new practices to accomplish this goal, like all-women short lists to guarantee that the candidate chosen in a particular district will be female. Such policies will often be controversial, however, unless they are justified in relation to accepted party practices or through appeals to broader notions of equality.

### *Practical Institutions*

Formal and informal practices of elites, in the case of political recruitment, include the procedures and criteria that parties employ to select their candidates. They can thus be viewed as practical institutions that shape perceptions as to who is a “qualified” or “desirable” candidate, a set

of beliefs that can be gendered to varying degrees. Credentials set down in the law include age, citizenship, country of birth, and party membership. Informal criteria are more numerous and may comprise a wide range of qualifications related to background, experience, and skills (Rahat and Hazan 2001). These criteria may be influenced by the degree of centralization in selection, groups entitled to suggest or to veto candidates, method of ballot composition, and presence of a secret or open ballot (Caul 1999; Norris 1997). Many accounts, however, explain specific selection practices in terms of party characteristics and underlying popular beliefs about the political qualifications of women—in other words, structures and norms that influence how selectors and voters perceive female candidates. For example, numerous studies find 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). Yet, decentralized parties may 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 (Kittilson 2006), shifting existing party practices and norms.

### *Normative Institutions*

Formal and informal principles, finally, set forth the values informing the means and goals of political life. As such, they can be conceptualized as normative institutions that shape beliefs about “equality” and “representation” in the context of candidate selection. These ideas may be enshrined formally in constitutions, legal codes, electoral laws, and party statutes as well as more informally in public speeches, political ideologies, and voter opinions. As principles, they are gendered to the extent that they sustain, and indeed justify, ongoing differences among women and men, despite their outward rhetoric of neutrality and inclusion. Competing views on equality generally involve a contrast between “equality of opportunities,” focused on inputs, and “equality of results,” focused on outputs (cf. Dahlerup 2007). Political representation, in turn, can be understood in terms of a “politics of ideas,” a belief that policy positions are important and thus the personal traits of representatives are irrelevant, or a “politics of presence,” an assertion that the personal features of representatives are crucial, as they may influence the substance of public policies (Phillips 1995). The importance of an equality of results for higher numbers of female candidates can be seen in the fact that countries with more egalitarian political cultures, as well as parties on the left, are more likely to promote women (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Kittilson 2006). As already noted, the need for a politics of presence is evident in research on electoral

systems, which suggests that parties in PR systems feel pressed to balance their lists of candidates, given broader goals of fostering the participation of many different groups. In these explanations, the role of norms is largely embedded within discussions of rules and party practices. All the same, distinct concepts of equality and representation may lead to similar strategies of inclusion: although some conservatives oppose quotas because they support equal opportunities, others defend such measures on the grounds that men and women are different (Inhetveen 1999). Similar trends can be observed as well with norms of representation, as parties shift their views as to which groups “deserve” representation depending on the sectors they view or seek to capture as primary constituencies.

### **Reforming Candidate Selection: Gender Quotas and Political Recruitment**

Dynamics of candidate selection can thus be reconceptualized in terms of configurations of three categories of gendered institutions, thereby refocusing the supply and demand approach in a manner more consistent with the actual findings of women in politics research. Consequently, the number of women elected depends on how systemic, practical, and normative institutions combine in ways that facilitate or hinder the selection of female candidates. To illustrate the analytical leverage of this framework, three paired comparisons are now undertaken to explore how the introduction of gender quotas alters the content and effects of existing institutions, illustrating the respective and combined roles of rules, practices, and norms in shaping women’s access to political office. Gender quotas have been adopted in more than a hundred countries worldwide and appear in three guises: reserved seats, which set aside seats for women that men are not eligible to contest; party quotas, which entail pledges by individual parties to increase the proportion of women among their candidates; and legislative quotas, which require all parties to nominate a certain percentage of women. These policies have many sources: the mobilization of women’s groups, the calculations of political elites, the connections between quotas and reigning political norms, and the pressures exerted by international and transnational actors (Krook 2009). These measures also have a range of effects on the numbers of women elected: some have resulted in dramatic increases in the proportion of female officeholders, while others have produced more modest changes and even setbacks in the numbers of women elected. Providing evidence for the importance of both structure and agency, these variations imply that quota provisions, despite their ostensibly similar goals, may in fact entail distinct processes of reform,

both at the level of individual institutions and in terms of broader institutional configurations.

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

Reserved seats appeared as early as the 1930s and are concentrated geographically in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. These reforms revise the mechanisms of election to mandate a minimum number of female representatives and, as such, target systemic institutions. Yet, their focus on systemic institutions may not always be matched by the presence or reform of practical and normative institutions that support the election of women. Pakistan and India offer a useful contrast in this regard. Their shared colonial past included attempts by the British in the 1930s to reserve seats for women in politics, in line with reservations for a range of other groups based on race, religion, education, and occupation. After independence, however, the two countries took opposite approaches to the issue of reserved seats: measures for women were introduced in Pakistan in the early 1950s, while similar proposals were pushed aside in India until the late 1980s. Today, both have a one-third quota for women in local government, but only Pakistan has reserved seats for women in the national parliament. As a result, women occupy 21 percent of the seats in parliament in Pakistan but only 8 percent of these seats in India (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2009a).

Seats have been reserved for women in Pakistan almost continuously since the time of British rule. After independence, both democratic and nondemocratic regimes alike established provisions for women in 1954, 1956, 1962, 1967, 1970, 1973, 1980, and 1984. These policies were solely responsible for women’s representation in parliament until 1977 and accounted for the election of the overwhelming majority of female members of parliament (MPs) through 1988 (Shaheed, Zia, and Warraich 1998, 22). Systemic reforms thus largely sustained women’s representation from the 1950s to the 1980s. In contrast, reigning practical and normative institutions prevented women from contesting and winning nonreserved seats. Party elites did not identify women as desirable candidates, and while recognizing the need for women’s presence, they did not recognize women as a category deserving equal representation. As a result, when the policy expired after elections in 1988, women’s representation dropped from 10 percent to less than 1 percent, although all major parties had pledged to restore and even extend the number of seats reserved for women. No democratic government succeeded in fulfilling this promise, and with rules, practices, and norms working against the selection of female candidates, the proportion of women in parliament remained below 3 percent (Gulrez and Warraich 1998).

Although democratic governments failed to restore reserved seats, these measures remained on the agenda and were eventually revived following a military coup in 1999. The new government did not simply introduce the same provisions as before, but doubled the proportion of seats reserved for women in the national and provincial assemblies and extended reservations to local and Senate elections for the first time. Yet, in the course of clarifying the procedures for parliamentary elections, a series of controversial constitutional amendments were issued that restricted candidacy to those who had a university degree and did not possess a criminal record (Talbot 2003). The first set of policies deliberately reformed systemic institutions by setting up separate elections for the sixty reserved seats for women. However, the second group of reforms inadvertently shifted 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. Many nominated their female relatives who were better educated and had not been accused of a crime (Rizvi 2002). Combined with reserved seats, these decisions contributed to an increased scope for positive action and greater acceptance of women as vehicles of political representation. In this way, attempts to reform the mechanisms of election spilled over into a certain degree of practical and normative reform. As a result, more women were elected directly than ever before, bringing the proportion of women in the National Assembly to just over 21 percent (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2009a).

Reserved seats for women first appeared in India in the 1930s, as the British moved to include women among a list of groups that were guaranteed representation in the colonial regime. The nationalist movement, however, condemned this solution as a “divide-and-rule” strategy that sought to undermine the common identity of all Indians. After independence, therefore, the newly drafted constitution abolished special seats for women in the interest of recognizing fundamental equality between women and men. Nonetheless, practices at the local level introduced a custom of co-opting women into local councils when no women were elected directly. By the 1980s, several states had formalized these policies by reserving seats for women at various levels of local government (Manikyamba 1989). As such, a variety of systemic and practical solutions mitigated the effects of normative institutions in local politics. In contrast, the effects of systemic, practical, and normative institutions at the national level worked against the selection of female candidates, with the result that at this time, women formed only about 6 percent of all representatives in the Lok Sabha (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1995, 141).

Experiments at the local level caught the eye of national leaders, who extended these policies across all states as

part of decentralization package. After this bill passed in 1992, women’s groups began to demand similar measures for state and national assemblies. Parties responded by including a commitment to reserved seats in their party manifestos in the run-up to the 1996 elections (Nath 1996). However, when the government sought to introduce a bill at the end of that year, a large number of MPs voiced normative opposition, primarily on the grounds that the bill would promote upper-caste Hindu women if it was not revised to incorporate subquotas for Other Backward Castes and Muslims. Although many women’s groups suggested that subreservations were simply a convenient excuse for male leaders who did not want to lose their seats, they rejected normative reforms that would establish subreservations or practical reforms that would create quotas within their own parties. Insisting that women should not be divided (Kishwar 1998), they continued to pursue systemic reform to the exclusion of practical and normative change. As a result, systemic, practical, and normative institutions have shifted little, and women’s representation in parliament remains at only 8 percent (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2009a). Interestingly, however, these patterns may soon begin to move in new directions, as more and more groups call for practical and normative reforms in the shape of party and legislative quotas (Krook 2009).

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

Party quotas first emerged in the early 1970s in socialist parties in Western Europe, but have now spread to parties across the political spectrum and all regions of the world. Usually adopted via reform of individual party statutes, these measures revise practical institutions by establishing new criteria for candidate selection that compel elites to recognize existing biases and consider alternative spheres of political recruitment. All the same, their attempts to target practical institutions may not be supported by features of systemic and normative institutions encouraging their implementation. In Sweden and the United Kingdom, campaigns for party quotas emerged as early as the 1960s but gained their greatest momentum in the 1990s. Both countries had relatively similar percentages of women in parliament before the first quota policies were adopted: women occupied 14 percent of the seats in the Swedish Parliament in 1970 and 9 percent of the seats in the British House of Commons in 1992 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1995, 236, 254). By 2008, however, these proportions had increased to 47 percent in Sweden and 20 percent in the United Kingdom (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2009a).

Efforts in Sweden can be traced back to the 1920s, although until the 1980s, most parties—and most women—rejected gender quotas as a measure to improve women’s

access to political office. Many preferred more informal policies, like goals or targets, with the threat of instituting formal quotas if these goals and targets were not met (Karlsson 1996). Thus, when formal quotas were adopted by some parties in the 1980s and 1990s, they served more to consolidate women's gains than to motivate them. As a result, in this period, systemic institutions did not change but practical institutions shifted dramatically, as women politicized "sex" as a central criteria for candidate selection. Women's groups also succeeded in reshaping normative institutions to a certain degree by increasing the proportion of women considered necessary for women to be adequately represented, from one woman per list to at least 40 percent (Sainsbury 2004). However, they struggled with reigning normative perceptions regarding quotas, which many continued to view as undemocratic and implying the selection of unqualified women (Freidenvall 2006). All the same, the combination of favorable systemic institutions with new practical institutions and partially reformed normative institutions led to an increase in women's representation from 1 percent in 1921 to 38 percent in 1988 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1995, 236).

A small decline in the number of women elected to parliament after elections in 1991, however, led women across the political spectrum to organize in new ways to pressure parties to place more female candidates in safe seats on party lists. 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; the term itself referred to a custom at countryside dances where every other song was women's turn to invite the men. Parties made varying degrees of commitment to the principle of *varannan damernas* during elections in 1994, 1998, 2002, and 2006. While some were more successful than others in meeting their stated goals, most elected equal numbers of women and men by 2006, with the only major exceptions being various right-wing parties that continue to resist strict gender quotas (Freidenvall 2006). These patterns point to 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 shifts have enabled most parties to make similar progress in promoting women's representation, such that women now make up more than 47 percent of the Swedish parliament (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2009a).

Proposals to institute gender quotas were first voiced in the United Kingdom in the late 1980s, but the only party to adopt formal quotas was the Labour Party. In light of the FPTP electoral system organized around single-member

constituencies, this policy took the form of all-women short lists (AWS): in certain districts, only women would be considered for nomination. At the time, all institutions of candidate selection militated strongly against the selection of women: unfavorable systemic institutions combined with practices and norms that did not view women as desirable candidates or as a category deserving equal representation. As a consequence, the percentage of women in the House of Commons remained far below the world average, around 6 percent in the late 1980s (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1995, 254). Through the Socialist International, however, Labour women grew familiar with quota measures elsewhere in Europe. While they achieved mandatory inclusion of women on candidate short lists in the late 1980s, they were initially unable to gain any concrete practical reforms, given strong normative resistance within certain sectors of the party (Perrigo 1996). However, electoral defeats in the early 1990s led the party to rethink its approach, eventually culminating in the adoption of AWS in half of all vacant seats that the party was likely to win. Once passed, the policy became controversial on both practical and normative grounds, leading some local organizations to resist AWS and other party members to challenge the policy in court. When AWS were deemed a violation of the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA), Labour party leaders decided to discontinue the policy, leading to reversals in both practical and normative institutions.

The successful legal challenge led supporters to identify the interpretation of certain articles of the SDA as the main barrier to positive action in candidate selection, and by extension, to further increases in the number of women elected to the House of Commons. The government considered amending the SDA as early as 1998, but doubts over the legality of affirmative action ultimately persuaded it to abandon these plans (Russell 2000). However, a decrease in the number of women elected to parliament in 2001, combined with new legal arguments, convinced the government to introduce a new bill that would allow, but not compel, parties to adopt measures to reduce inequalities in representation (Childs 2003). 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. At the same time, the debate bracketed the issue of systemic and practical reform, opening the way for parties to react as they saw fit to the new provision. As such, the three major parties responded in distinct ways: Labour engaged in full practical reform by reintroducing AWS, Liberal Democrats pursued partial practical reform by establishing targets for electing women, and Conservatives initially avoided but have now begun to implement limited practical reforms

by requiring equal numbers of men and women on candidate short lists. As a result, women now constitute 20 percent of all MPs, with large differences among political parties (Childs, Lovenduski, and Campbell 2005, 19).

### *Legislative Quotas in Argentina and France*

Legislative quotas appeared first only in the 1990s and tend to be found in Latin America, Europe, and Africa. They entail reforming electoral laws and sometimes constitutions to require that all parties nominate a certain percentage of women among their candidates. As such, they alter normative institutions by revising the meanings of equality and representation underlying processes of candidate selection to permit positive action and recognize sex as a political identity. However, their attention to normative institutions may not intersect with systemic and practical institutions that enable them to increase the election of female candidates. In Argentina and France, campaigns for legislative quotas began in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1990s, before quota laws were adopted, these two countries had almost identical proportions of women in parliament: women constituted 6 percent of the Argentine Chamber of Deputies and 7 percent of the French National Assembly (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1995, 58, 121). Today, these percentages have grown to 40 percent in Argentina but only 19 percent in France (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2009a).

A legislative quota was adopted in Argentina in 1991, stipulating that lists of candidates must include 30 percent women. Before this law, the only institution of candidate selection favorable to women was the PR-list electoral system. However, because existing practical and normative institutions did not view women as central category of political representation, the proportion of women remained below 6 percent in both houses of parliament (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1995, 58). Looking to alter the status quo, feminist organizations and women inside the parties became familiar with attempts to institute quotas elsewhere and decided to press for a national quota law (Lubertino Beltrán 1992). In approving this bill, deputies reformed normative institutions, and to a certain degree systemic institutions, by amending an article of the electoral law to redefine the existing principle of representation. The statement that all lists must include a minimum of 30 percent women, however, did not specify how parties should translate this provision in their selection practices, leaving practical institutions largely untouched.

The lack of a specific placement mandate for female candidates sparked an almost decade-long battle among women to ensure that the law translated into the election of at least 30 percent female representatives. An executive decree in 1993 stressed that the 30 percent contained in the law referred to a minimum quantity. It also introduced

the first practical reforms by indicating the number of women that parties had to include among their total number of candidates up for reelection. Despite these efforts, party elites continued to apply varied interpretations of the law to avoid placing women in spots where they were likely to be elected. Women's groups initiated a legal campaign to ensure compliance, and in addition to some limited practical change, they managed to clarify various systemic and normative aspects of the quota law, including its application to all parliamentary elections and its consistency with constitutional principles of equality (Durrieu 1999). The latter was further clarified in 1994, when during discussions over constitutional reform several new articles were approved that legitimated the use of positive action in efforts to increase women's representation. Despite these changes in systemic and normative institutions, parties continued to undermine the goals of quota law in their selection practices. These concerns led the president to issue a new presidential decree at the end of 2000, which offered the final word on the placement of female candidates in absolutely all situations and required judges to rectify lists if parties did not do so themselves. This solidified the reform of party selection practices and, consequently, perfect implementation of the quota law beginning in 2001 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2009a).

A 50 percent quota was passed in France via a constitutional amendment in 1999 and a change to the electoral law in 2000. This measure emerged in the context of ineffective party quotas adopted by the Socialist Party in the 1970s, as well as a legal decision in the early 1980s that had deemed a 25 percent quota for municipal elections to be a violation of fundamental principles of the French constitution (Mossuz-Lavau 1998). Before the parity reforms, therefore, all three institutions of candidate selection were highly unfavorable to women: two-round majoritarian elections provided few opportunities for women to run, party practices worked against the selection of female candidates, and legal precedents enforced interpretations of equality and representation that precluded the application of statutory quotas to improve women's access to political office. As a consequence, women's representation in France remained below 7 percent in both houses of parliament in the 1980s and early 1990s (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1995, 121). At this time, activists in France drew inspiration from new domestic actors, as well as discussions within the Council of Europe, and began to mobilize increasingly around the concept of *parité*. They recognized that normative reform was central, because the Constitutional Council had rejected earlier quotas on the grounds that the law precluded the division of voters and candidates into categories. Advocates thus carefully distinguished parity from quotas, arguing that while quotas entailed special representation rights, parity simply called for equitable sharing of power between women and men (Gaspard 1994).

Concerns with normative reform, however, were not matched by changes in systemic and practical institutions. Indeed, the major parties stood against any change in the two-round system for legislative elections. At the same time, legislators devised loose regulations for implementing parity in these elections, imposing no placement requirements and only weak financial penalties for parties that did not conform to the parity provision. Thus, adoption of the parity law entailed normative reform but no systemic reform and very little practical reform. This stood in contrast with the provisions made for local councils. In these elections, which are governed by PR, parties must conform to specific placement mandates for female candidates or else risk having their lists rejected. Parity at the local level thus combines favorable systemic institutions with practical and normative reforms that compel the selection of female candidates and establish women as a central category of political representation. As a result of these reforms, the proportion of women jumped from 26 percent in 1995 to 48 percent in 2001 (Sineau 2002, 3).<sup>4</sup> In legislative elections, however, women's representation increased only marginally, from 11 percent in 1997 to 12 percent in 2002 and 18 percent in 2007 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2009a). In these elections, parties compete in a two-round majoritarian vote. The law requires them to nominate equal numbers of women and men, but does not specify placement, enabling parties to continue to nominate women in districts where they are unlikely to be elected. While the law imposes a financial penalty on parties that deviate from its requirements, the cost is greater for smaller parties, which rely more heavily on state funding, than for larger parties, which can better "afford" to select fewer women (Murray 2007). At the national level, therefore, the law reforms only normative institutions, leaving existing systemic and practical institutions largely intact. In 2007, however, a new provision was passed extending the reach of the law and increasing financial penalties by an additional 50 percent. At the same time, a number of parties made commitments to select more women to winnable seats in the run-up to the most recent elections. While uneven, these developments point to attempts to further shift systemic and practical institutions at the national and party levels.

### **Toward a Feminist Institutionalism: Candidate Selection and Beyond**

Dynamics of candidate selection affect who gains access to political office, and thus how the process of political representation begins to unfold. This article examines, then attempts to reconceptualize, how scholars understand patterns of representation around the globe. Using the example of women, it develops a critique of the supply and demand model, which proposes that the number of female representatives is the combined result of the supply of

qualified women and the demand for female aspirants on the part of elites. Revising this approach with the help of intuitions present in the existing literature, it then elaborates a feminist-institutionalist theory of candidate selection combining the insights of institutionalism, which seeks to explain distortions in the operation of various types of markets, and feminism, which calls attention to the gendered dimensions of market interactions. On this basis, the article outlines three categories of gendered institutions—systemic, practical, and normative—that work together to shape the characteristics of who is selected and not selected as political candidates. The utility of this framework is then explored through three sets of paired comparisons of cases where gender quota policies have been introduced, with mixed effects. The analysis reveals that quotas may reform gendered institutions in various ways and degrees, at the same time that they may shift and interact with the effects of the other two types of institutions. These comparisons thus demonstrate the crucial importance of configurations of gendered institutions.

In the process of merging feminism and institutionalism, this framework also generates a series of new insights for research on gender and politics and the role of institutions in political life. In relation to the former, it signals the potential of institutionalism for understanding how gender operates in relation to a wide range of political phenomena. While feminist scholars often use the concept of "institution" in their work, they rarely use it in its broadest sense, despite many points of intersection with institutionalist concerns. Institutionalism may thus offer new tools for capturing dynamics of continuity and change and, in the process, help structure feminist findings in a way that better highlights their contributions to mainstream political science. By the same token, this discussion indicates that feminist insights may enrich institutionalist analysis. More specifically, in introducing gender as an analytic category, feminism may contribute to better theorizing about the gendered nature of formal institutions, the operation and importance of informal institutions, and the relations of power within and across institutions. Thus, while elaborated in relation to candidate selection, the feminist-institutionalist approach developed here can be adapted to study a wide range of other political trends, as ideas about formal and informal institutions can be expanded to encompass a variety of gendered rules, practices, and norms.

### **Author's Note**

Earlier versions of this article were presented at the European Consortium for Political Research, Joint Sessions of Workshops, in Edinburgh, Scotland, March 28 to April 2, 2003; the First Workshop of the Feminism and Institutionalism International Network at University of Edinburgh, Scotland, December 8–9, 2006;

the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association in Chicago, April 12–15, 2007; and the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Chicago, August 30 to September 2, 2007. In addition to panel participants, I would like to thank Drude Dahlerup, Lenita Freidenvall, Meryl Kenny, Miki Caul Kittilson, Fiona Mackay, Marjolein Paantjens, and Pamela Paxton for their comments on these drafts.

## Notes

1. An important exception to this is the recently formed Feminism and Institutionalism International Network, at <http://www.femfiin.com>. Other cross-national networks, such as the Research Network on Gender Politics and the State, have addressed political institutions like women's policy agencies, but this work is not explicitly cast in an institutionalist framework.
2. This symposium addresses potential intersections between feminism and four types of institutionalism—rational choice, historical, sociological, and discursive—and includes a fifth piece more skeptical regarding the need for a combined approach. It is based on contributions to a workshop titled “Gender, Politics, and Institutions: Towards a Feminist Institutionalism,” organized by Fiona Mackay and Mona Lena Krook as part of the European Consortium for Political Research Joint Sessions of Workshops in Rennes, France, in April 2008.
3. Many thanks to an anonymous reviewer for helping to clarify this point.
4. However, it is also important to note that parity applies only to local elections in towns with more than 3,500 inhabitants. Smaller towns are governed by an electoral system that would have made parity difficult to apply, because it allows voters to strike candidates' names, change the order of candidates, and add new names to the list.

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