

PROSPECTUS

The Gendered Effects of Electoral Institutions: Political Engagement and Participation

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Overview

Equality in political involvement poses an enduring challenge for democracies around the world. Substantial gender gaps persist in political activities and attitudes. Men express more political interest than women in every nation of the 2002-09 World Values Survey. At the same time, the size of those gaps varies considerably across countries—from 30 percentage points in India to only one percentage point in Argentina. Similarly, men outpace women in political discussion by nearly 20 percentage points in the UK, but men and women discuss politics at nearly equal rates in Israel and the Czech Republic.

Women's levels of education and workforce participation have increased in many established democracies and the international women's movement has made great strides ingratiating gender inequality into patriarchic cultures. So, socioeconomic influences and resources are certainly important to understanding gender differences in democratic participation, but do not fully account for the cross-national variation in men's and women's political involvement, nor the persistence of the gender gap in mass participation.

This book argues that to fully explain political attitudes and behavior we must also consider the ideational effects of political institutions. Drawing on established theories of democratic institutions, we build a theory of institutions as symbols of the importance of inclusiveness to the democratic process. Where institutions promote power-sharing, citizens will be more likely to participate in the political process than in systems where electoral institutions concentrate power in the hands of the majority. This effect should be particularly strong for women because they have traditionally been excluded from the political process in much larger numbers than men.

Scholars have long-viewed institutions as important determinants of political outcomes. Yet, only recently has research linked institutions to mass attitudes and behavior and most of it has done so by emphasizing the rational incentives that institutions provide for behavior. By examining the symbolic cues that institutions send to citizens about the importance of their participation in the democratic process, we articulate a fresh theoretical perspective on the effects of political institutions.

¹ Authors listed in alphabetical order, making equal contributions to book project.

We test this theory empirically with a multi-method approach. Systematic examination of cross-national survey data for 34 democracies allows us to generalize our theory to a broad and diverse set of countries. In addition, four select country studies based on long-running survey data series allow us to examine longitudinal trends in men and women's participation politics.

Major Arguments of the Book

This book makes two specific arguments. First, we argue that power-sharing political institutions invite participation for all citizens, regardless of gender. We theorize that this process occurs through the symbolic cues that institutions send to citizens during elections about the ideals and priorities of their democracy. Broadly, some election rules are based on principles of power-sharing for the sake of inclusion and consensus, while other institutions prioritize the concentration of power in the interest of efficiency, stability, and governability.

Specifically, power-sharing institutions include proportional electoral rules (PR), parliamentarism, federalism and candidate gender quotas. Proportionality enhances political engagement through its message of inclusion and broad representation of a diversity of parties and groups in elections. Parliamentary systems also represent shared governance and compromise among the executive and legislature. Federal systems disperse power to sub-national governments, as opposed to unitary governments that concentrate power. Finally, candidate gender quotas distribute policy-making power to women, solely on the basis of gender. A relatively recent phenomenon, gender quotas elucidate the fact that women are under-represented in the political process, and show that governments are willing to take formal action to rectify this inequality. In this way, gender quotas send a signal to men and women that the political arena is a place for both, and may foster fewer gender differences in political participation.

Each institution carries messages about power-sharing in different ways: proportional electoral rules symbolize social group inclusion, parliamentary systems symbolize power-sharing across branches of government, federalism symbolizes geographic power-sharing, and candidate quotas symbolize inclusion based exclusively on gender. We argue that it is necessary to examine each institution's effect on citizen engagement separately to determine which power-sharing institutions provide the strongest signals for citizen engagement. This allows us to determine whether the participatory cues sent by power-sharing institutions rely only on one mechanism or whether the link applies to all power-sharing institutions.

Second, we maintain that the effect of power-sharing institutions on participation is more pronounced among women, relative to men. Women have long been excluded from the political process. In nearly all democracies, they were enfranchised much later than most men, and even after winning the right to vote and run for office, they continued to be marginalized socially and politically. In the 1960s and 1970s, women's movements emerged in many democracies, bringing ideologically diverse women together through a common call for greater gender equality in both social and political life (Gelb 1989; Jenson 1995; Stetson and Mazur 1995). As a result, women in many countries have developed a common social group identity rooted in their shared histories of marginalization (Mansbridge 1999).

Power-sharing electoral rules signal the political environment is open to representation and inclusion of women, among other new contenders. These signals of inclusion are more pronounced among women because, comparatively, most men have not been politically excluded. Even if women have not yet made their way into high levels of political power, the use of electoral institutions that symbolize power-sharing among diverse social groups can send signals to women in society that encourage them to get more involved in politics.

The effects of proportional representation (PR) electoral rules and gender quotas may be especially salient for women because these rules emphasize broad inclusion based upon social groups. This is particularly true for quotas because they focus specifically on gender equality. The effects of parliamentarism and federalism are less gender-specific because they promote power-sharing based on horizontal and vertical “checks and balances” among branches of government. Given that women are not a geographically concentrated group, the symbolic effects of federalism are less pronounced among women, and affect men and women alike.

Unique Contribution to Recent Debates

This book contributes to major debates in the fields of comparative political institutions, women and politics, political behavior and political participation across democracies more generally.

Prominent theories envision two major categories of democratic systems – power-sharing and power-concentrating, terms coined by Pippa Norris in *Driving Democracy* (Cambridge University Press: 2008), and grounded in seminal works, including Arend Lijphart’s *Patterns of Democracy* (Yale University Press: 1999) and Bingham Powell’s *Elections as Instruments of Democracy* (Yale University Press: 2000).

How do these two visions of democracy condition individual citizens’ orientations toward politics? Recent research links electoral institutions to a broad range of attitudes towards democracy. A particularly illuminating set of findings is found in *Losers’ Consent* (Oxford University Press: 2005) in which Christopher Anderson and colleagues link power-sharing democratic designs to a narrower gap between winners and losers for evaluations of performance of the political system, responsiveness, fairness and support for democratic principles overall.

Although a burgeoning literature has focused on the ways in which political institutions condition individual attributes (Anderson and Singer 2008 provide an insightful review), less attention has been paid to the role of institutions in encouraging political equality, especially among men and women. Further, ours is the first to go beyond the rational incentives and mobilization effects of institutions to articulate a theory of the symbolic effects of institutions on mass behavior. We argue that (1) democratic institutions provide symbolic cues to citizens about a country’s most important democratic ideals – cues that can alter the way they perceive the system and respond to it; and (2) where electoral institutions signal and mobilize broad representation and inclusion in the political process, citizen involvement is more extensive.

We also contribute to the growing literature on gender inequality in politics. In their groundbreaking book, *Rising Tide*, Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris (Cambridge University Press: 2003) demonstrate that, around the world, more economically developed and secular countries

are associated with more egalitarian gender attitudes. Focusing on the U.S., the widely cited book, *The Private Roots of Public Action* by Nancy Burns, Kay Schlozman and Sidney Verba (Harvard University Press: 2001) attributes the gender gap in political activity to women's disadvantages in resources.

Taken together, these cultural and socio-economic explanations of past research have not fully accounted for differences across countries. Many economically developed countries still have large disparities between men's and women's political engagement that cannot be explained with current theories of political behavior. We contribute to these debates by adding that electoral institutions are an important, but overlooked, component to explaining gender differences in political behavior. By encouraging inclusion, a more proportional vision of democracy hastens change in enduring cultural legacies of the role of men and women in politics.

In addition, we add to the cutting edge literature on gender quotas. Recent books by Drude Dahlerup, *Women Quotas and Politics* (Routledge: 2006) and Mona Lena Krook, *Quotas for Women in Politics* (Oxford University Press: 2009) take up the adoption of gender quotas. Over one hundred countries have experimented with gender quotas, most within the last twenty years. Yet, these books and many of the recent journal articles on quotas overlook the impact of quotas on the electorate more generally. Just as quotas provide a means for women to win more seats in legislatures, they also carry important symbols about the government's acceptance of women in politics which may make women in society more willing to participate in politics.

The Evidence

First, we examine these questions using a large number of cases and systematic cross-national survey data from three large-scale surveys: The World Values Survey (WVS), Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), and the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). The WVS includes questions on political interest, discussion and following the news, and attitudes towards women's role in the political arena. There have been five waves of the World Values Survey dating back to 1981, and the most recent runs up to 2008, generating three decades of information on attitudes towards politics and democracy. The CSES allows us to explore differences in satisfaction with democracy and political trust and political activities such as voting, working on campaigns and persuading others on who to vote for. The first module of the CSES surveys began in 1996 and the second module covers election surveys from 2001-6. Thus, in addition to providing us with breadth in the number of countries covered, these surveys also allow us to consider the dynamics of engagement over time. The 2004 module of the ISSP probes a number of democratic values, including orientations towards citizen duties and rights in a democracy (eg., government respects minority rights, equal treatment).

Second, we draw out the processes underlying changes in political attitudes and behaviors with evidence from four countries: New Zealand, France, Mexico and Costa Rica. All four countries have altered their electoral institutions, allowing us to examine patterns of political involvement pre- and post-reform. The "natural experiments" within these case studies improve the foundations for our causal inferences. Based on the national election study series in New Zealand, we can compare the gender gap in involvement before and after the implementation of proportionality (PR). France offers a glimpse into political engagement before and after a constitutional mandate for

gender quotas in elections. The Eurobarometer data offer a lengthy series of consistent surveys in France. Drawing on the Latinobarometer studies, we will trace the dynamics of involvement in both Costa Rica and Mexico before and after the introduction of candidate gender quotas.

Potential Appeal of the Book

This book will appeal to a wide audience of political scientists, sociologists, and women's studies scholars. Because the book offers a fresh theoretical perspective on the effects of electoral institutions, it will be widely read among comparative political scientists. Comparative institutions scholars should be interested in our theory about the symbolic effects of institutions. Those in the field of political behavior will be interested in the book's focus on how political context affects attitudes and activity across democracies. Women in politics scholars are likely to appreciate the efforts to explain the lingering gender inequality in the attitudes and behavior of citizens and the fresh institutional approach we offer to this puzzle. In addition, political sociologists who study comparative institutions, citizen responses to government, and women in politics should find the book of interest. Those in the interdisciplinary field of women's studies may also be interested in the book's emphasis on women in politics.

The book's multi-method approach and accessible statistical analyses will make it ideal for use in advanced undergraduate and graduate courses on Comparative Politics and Women in Politics. Further, it is relevant to the large community of international organizations working to promote democratic elections and gender equality around the world, such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union, International IDEA, and U.N. agencies. Although we use advanced statistical methodologies such as cross-section time-series analyses and hierarchical linear modeling, these technical aspects will be in an appendix, and we will present the substantive results in easily interpreted tables and graphs. We will describe the more sophisticated statistical analyses in simple terms such that those unfamiliar with the statistics will still be able to understand the book's powerful findings.

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Chapter Outline

Chapter 1: Men, Women and Political Involvement Across Democracies: The Puzzle. This chapter sets up the puzzle on why the gender gap in political involvement persists, despite women's strides in education and paid employment. It also introduces the substantial cross-national variation in the gender gap in the aspects of involvement on which this project focuses—attitudes towards democratic institutions and women's role in the political arena, political interest, discussion, following politics, persuading others on how to vote, campaign work and voting. This chapter points out some deficiencies in previous comparative research on gender differences political engagement. We set the foundations upon which our fresh theoretical insights may enhance our understanding of how citizens come to be engaged with politics, and how the political context may differentially shape men and women's orientations toward and activities in politics and elections.

Chapter 2: A Symbolic Theory of Institutions. This chapter discusses the political institutions literature, and the division among power-sharing and power-concentrating visions of democracy. It introduces the idea that democratic institutions provide symbolic cues to citizens about a country's most important democratic ideals – cues that can alter the way they perceive the system and respond to it. Where electoral institutions signal and mobilize broad representation and inclusion in the political process, citizen engagement is more extensive. The chapter also introduces each of the power-sharing institutions separately. It provides the theoretical foundations for why we expect proportionality, parliamentarism, federalism and gender quotas to work in different ways to influence political engagement, and how each might differentially affect men and women.

Chapter 3: Attitudes Towards Politics. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 expands our coverage to 34 democracies, and rely on cross-national survey data. Chapter 3 presents statistical analyses using the WVS, CSES and ISSP survey data to show that particular power-sharing institutions generate more egalitarian attitudes towards women in politics, greater satisfaction with democracy and confidence in the legislature.

Chapter 4: Political Engagement. We examine the influence of power-sharing institutions on levels of political interest, discussion and following politics in the news. In addition, we explore the interaction between these institutions and gender. We find that proportionality has a pronounced effect among women, and boosts their engagement, relative to men.

Chapter 5: Electoral Activity. This chapter extends our large, cross-national analyses to electoral activities, including voting, persuading and campaigning. Select power-sharing institutions facilitate participation, regardless of gender. And a more limited set of institutions are especially salient for women's participation, relative to men's.

Chapter 6: The Dynamics of the Gender Gap in Engagement: New Zealand, France, Mexico and Costa Rica. This chapter continues the empirical tests of our theoretical framework, and focuses on four countries over time. We examine gender differences in political attitudes and activity over time in New Zealand, France, Mexico and Costa Rica. All four witnessed a change in their electoral institutions in the 1990s, allowing us to trace the dynamics of political involvement pre-

and post- electoral reforms. New Zealand moved from a single-member district system to a mixed system that combines overall proportionality with a set of seats based on single-member districts. France, Mexico and Costa Rica adopted candidate gender quotas. We expect heightened political involvement, especially among women, after the introduction of proportionality and the adoption of gender quotas.

Chapter 7: Democratic Ideals: Institutions, Gender and Political Engagement. This concluding chapter highlights the major findings, weaving together findings from the country studies and cross-national analyses. Sorting through the possible explanations for gender gaps in political involvement, we argue that the results support a combination of factors that include electoral institutions. We discuss the relevance of the theoretical framework of symbolic effects of political institutions for scholars studying other under-represented groups, such as ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities. We conclude by speculating on the implications of our findings for representative democracy

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Miki Caul Kittilson is Associate Professor of Political Science at Arizona State University. Her research focuses on women and politics, political parties and political participation in long-established industrialized democracies, especially Western Europe. She is the author of *Challenging Parties, Changing Parliaments: Women in Elected Office in Contemporary Western Europe* (2006: Ohio State University Press, Parliaments and Legislatures Series). In addition, she has written numerous articles and book chapters in such venues as *American Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*, *Party Politics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Perspectives on Politics*, *International Organizations and Politics & Gender*. In addition, she contributed a chapter to the *Oxford Handbook on Political Behavior*. Recently, she received a postdoctoral fellowship from the American Association of University Women, and has won the Carrie Chapman Catt Prize for Research in Women and Politics.

Leslie Schwindt-Bayer is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Missouri. Her research focuses on comparative political institutions, legislatures and representation, and women and politics, particularly in Latin America. She is the author of *Political Power and Women's Representation in Latin America* (Forthcoming 2010 at Oxford University Press) and has written numerous articles in journals including the *American Journal of Political Science*, *The Journal of Politics*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *Electoral Studies*, and *Perspectives on Politics*. She recently was a Visiting Fellow at the Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame and her 2005 co-authored article in *The Journal of Politics* won the award for the Best Article published in the journal during that year.

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