

1 Introduction

Patterns and practice in the parliamentary representation of women

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'Women in parliament' became the object of increased international attention in the 1990s. In the United States the entry of an unprecedented number of women into Congress led 1992 to be dubbed the 'year of the woman'. In New Zealand, one woman Prime Minister replaced another at the end of the decade, leading to the view that 'women were on top' in that country. In the United Kingdom, 'Blair's Babes' brought colour to the House of Commons and controversy over what difference they made to politics. Women's presence in the new Scottish parliament and the Welsh Assembly reached levels previously associated only with the Nordic countries. In Australia, Labor Party quotas continued to increase women's presence in parliaments around the country. In Canada, progress was stalling, but Canada continued to boast more elected women than its neighbour to the south.

The representation of women was a priority issue for the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action adopted by 189 countries at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women. It was promoted by a range of multilateral bodies, including the United Nations, the European Union, the Inter-parliamentary Union and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). The underrepresentation of women has become widely associated with problems of 'democratic deficit' and donor agencies have focused attention on it as part of strategies to strengthen democratic accountability and good governance. It is also a cause that has been taken up by new and existing non-government organisations, including those operating at regional or international levels.

The increased salience of the issue of women's parliamentary presence has generated a wealth of research on the factors that facilitate women's legislative recruitment. It has also stimulated exciting theoretical work on when and why we should expect the presence of women to make a difference to the substance of politics. This book draws on this new scholarship to explore the causes and meaning of women's increased presence in parliamentary politics in four Westminster regimes – the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It also looks at the opportunities that

2 *Marian Sawyer et al.*

have been created by the changing architecture of politics, including devolution in the United Kingdom and the creation of Nunavut in Canada. American experience and research is drawn on to provide a complementary non-Westminster perspective.

The United Kingdom left its former colonies, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, with a legacy of 'Westminster' institutions, providing a family resemblance between our four countries. The variations that have evolved within this Westminster legacy help explain some of the differences in women's political recruitment. It is the combination of commonalities and variations that makes the comparison so useful – comparing apples and crab-apples, perhaps, rather than apples and pears. To date much analysis of women's political recruitment and representation has been either of the single-country type or of the global type although regional studies do exist.¹ There have also been a number of studies of the Nordic countries, which share a family resemblance like the Westminster countries.²

Our study similarly focuses on four countries with much in common in terms of political institutions, democratic traditions and level of socio-economic development. The common features provided by Westminster make it easier to focus on the variations that may explain the differing patterns in the representation of women. The differences in party and electoral systems, the path taken by women's mobilisations and the political opportunity structure provided by federalism or devolution provide some initial explanatory variables.

The patterns revealed by the four Westminster nations are further explored by means of comparison with the United States in the Introduction and Conclusion. The United States has some of the features of the nations explored in this volume – but it is marked by institutional arrangements that depart from the Westminster model. The separation of powers in the presidential system dilutes authority and renders political parties less cohesive, and the congressional system allows legislators considerable autonomy in their representative roles. The dilution of authority and the relative autonomy of legislators provide greater opportunities for lobbyists than in Westminster-based regimes.³ Of course it is not only feminist advocacy organisations that take advantage of this opportunity structure, but also powerful and well funded pro-life and pro-business organisations.

The Westminster inheritance

Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom have shared the Westminster legacy of representative democracy, responsible parliamentary government and strong party discipline. In the past they also shared the British preference for plurality rule, and the kind of two-party political system and majority governments that flows from this. They are all constitutional monarchies, sharing the same monarch and, in the case of Aus-

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Introduction 3

1 tralia, Canada and New Zealand, appointing Governors General who rep-
2 resent the monarch and act as head of state. The latter three countries are
3 'settler societies' that have unresolved issues relating to their Indigenous
4 populations; this in turn has influenced both Indigenous and non-
5 Indigenous women's political activism over time.

6 While all four countries have drawn on the British experience of
7 responsible government, they have evolved in different ways from the
8 nineteenth century. The two countries with a large land-mass, Australia
9 and Canada, superimposed federal systems on that of responsible govern-
10 ment, requiring a written Constitution and judicial interpretations of the
11 division of powers and the constitutionality of legislation. As a result, the
12 concept of parliamentary sovereignty was significantly modified in these
13 two countries. The two small countries retain unitary political systems but
14 in the case of the United Kingdom there are now federalising tendencies
15 caused by its relationship with the European Union in one direction, and
16 by devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the other direc-
17 tion. Again parliamentary sovereignty has been modified by the jurisdic-
18 tion of, for example, the European Court of Human Rights.

People and place

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22 These four countries vary significantly in population as well as geography.
23 In population the four countries range from the United Kingdom with
24 some 60 million people to New Zealand with around four million. Canada
25 and Australia are in the middle with 31 million and 19 million respec-
26 tively. The proportion of women in parliament seems to have a negative
27 relationship to population size in our group, with women doing best in
28 the smallest country, New Zealand, and worst in the largest, the United
29 Kingdom.

30 Australia, Canada and New Zealand share the unresolved conflicts,
31 characteristic of settler societies, over past dispossession and the present
32 status and rights of Indigenous peoples. New Zealand has a large Indigen-
33 ous population with treaty rights dating from the Waitangi Treaty of 1840
34 and has official biculturalism based on the Maori/Pakeha (European-
35 derived) populations. Australia and Canada have much smaller Indigen-
36 ous populations although in both cases there are concentrations in
37 northern territories. The United Kingdom does not have an Indigenous
38 population in the same sense, although it has experienced Celtic minority
39 parties.

40 Although Maori women obtained political rights in step with Pakeha
41 women in New Zealand, Indigenous women in Australia and Canada had
42 to wait much longer. The existence of Maori seats also facilitated the elec-
43 tion of the first Maori women to parliament long before Indigenous
44 women were elected in Canada or Australia. Canada has official bilingual-
45 ism based on Anglophone and Francophone settler populations, while

4 *Marian Sawyer et al.*

New Zealand has Maori and English as its official languages. Australia and Canada have multicultural policies covering their diverse immigrant populations. In all four countries women parliamentarians have become more representative of ethnic diversity in recent years, but it has been a slow process.

Pluses and minuses of Westminster for women

As we have seen, the 'Westminster model' of representative democracy includes features such as strong political parties and single-member electoral systems that result in majority governments and executive dominance over parliament. This model stands in stark contrast to the American congressional system, which fragments power among the presidency, the Congress and the Senate, including powerful congressional committees, and features less cohesive political parties.

One advantage of the strong party discipline associated with Westminster is that once a party includes women's rights in its platform parliamentarians are largely bound to uphold them, regardless of personal views. It provides a different context for women's political representation from that of weak party systems, such as that of the United States, where legislators are not subject to a party whip and are exposed to a great deal of lobbying as to how they will cast their votes. In Westminster party systems, however, traditionally there is a free vote on issues such as abortion, so the same kind of cross-pressures occur on these issues as in candidate-centred systems.

Another advantage of strong party systems is that the cost of campaigning is carried by the party rather than by the candidate and there is not the barrier for women of having to raise large amounts of campaign finance, as in candidate-centred political systems. For instance, in the United States, where state law regulates political parties and electoral systems, rules governing electoral financing constrain the ability of parties to assist candidates financially.⁴ In the United States, and to a lesser extent in Canada, the candidate has borne a large portion of the costs associated with contesting nominations and elections, a financial burden that many female political aspirants have found onerous. In Canada political finance reforms at the national level now cap nomination expenditures and provide assistance with election expenses; the government reimburses 60 per cent of the amount spent by those candidates who win at least 10 per cent of the vote in their constituencies. In Australia there are also public funding regimes at the national level and in the three largest states (and one territory). At the national level public funding is restricted to parties or independents who obtain at least 4 per cent of the vote and in 2005 each vote was worth about A\$2.00. In New Zealand and the United Kingdom expenditure is limited both by overall caps and by the restriction of electronic advertising.

Introduction 5

1 One of the disadvantages for women associated with Westminster is the
2 tradition of single-member electorates. It is clear from international evi-
3 dence that multimember electorates facilitate women's and minority
4 representation – giving parties an incentive to construct tickets appealing
5 to all sections of the community and satisfying all sections of the party.
6 Another disadvantage for women of systems based on single-member elec-
7 torates is that they militate against the representation of non-regionally
8 based minority parties. Most notably in Australia and New Zealand, post-
9 materialist minor parties like the Australian Democrats and the Greens
10 have fielded the highest proportion of women candidates and have given
11 significant leadership opportunities to women. In Canada the New Demo-
12 cratic Party (NDP), which has given unrivalled leadership opportunities to
13 women, has also been disadvantaged by the electoral system.

14 The single-member electorate system is also the cornerstone of what
15 political scientist Arend Lijphart identified as the 'majoritarian' model of
16 democracy.⁵ Under this model we get strong Cabinet government and
17 classic Westminster parliaments, with government on one side and the
18 opposition on the other, engaged in ritualised warfare. This model can be
19 contrasted with electoral systems based on proportional representation,
20 such as those in European countries, where parties gain representation in
21 proportion to their support in the community. A multi-party system
22 emerges, and governments are formed through a process of bargaining
23 and coalition-building between parties. Lijphart terms this the 'consensus'
24 model of democracy.

25 The highly confrontational game played out on the floor of the
26 chamber in Westminster parliaments is a game at which few women MPs
27 believe they excel: they are subject to adverse judgements on their femi-
28 ninity (transgressing gender codes) if they adopt the existing rules of
29 engagement and adverse judgements on their effectiveness if they do not.
30 When reinforced by strong party discipline, this confrontational game
31 makes co-operation across the floor on issues of special concern to women
32 very difficult. Committee work, on the other hand, provides some scope
33 for cross-party co-operation.⁶

34 Sometimes the confrontational game played out in public masks agree-
35 ment between the major parties on issues of economic ideology. In both
36 New Zealand and the United Kingdom there has been significant discon-
37 tent with the Westminster model of untrammelled executive power and
38 women have been active in campaigning for more inclusive and consultative
39 political institutions. In the United Kingdom devolution has led to signifi-
40 cant gains for women in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland,⁷ while in
41 New Zealand the adoption of MMP, supported by groups such as Women's
42 Electoral Lobby, has also modified Westminster majoritarianism.

6 *Marian Sawyer et al.*

For and against federalism

The advantages and disadvantages of federalism for women's political representation are complex.⁸ Federalism can be seen as providing more opportunities for women's political participation and opportunities that are closer to home. On the other hand, federal systems may enshrine the power of state or provincial government at the expense of local government. Where local government has had broad responsibilities for areas such as housing and education, as in the United Kingdom, it has been an important forum for women's political participation.

In both Canada and Australia the original process of federation was one that largely excluded women, although federation did provide a window of opportunity in Australia for the extension of women's political rights, across the country. Where federalising tendencies are more recent, they can provide important opportunities for women's participation in the design of new political institutions. The creation of the new Scottish parliament and associated processes for community consultation is a good example.

The framework for the federal division of power in Australia and Canada is laid down in written constitutions. In Australia, there are no significant human rights provisions in the Constitution but in Canada the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982 has greatly expanded the opportunity structure for the pursuit of women's claims. In 2001 the Charter underpinned a case claiming that the existing Canadian electoral system is unconstitutional because it limits or impedes the election of women.⁹

In Australia and Canada neo-liberalism in recent times has been associated with attempts to shed federal responsibilities for funding or service delivery in various areas of social provision and hand back responsibility to the sub-national level. Women's organisations in Australia and Anglophone Canada have mobilised against such a retreat, seeing it as a threat to equal levels of access across the country to services such as health, child care and women's services. Yet in Québec francophone women have had more confidence in the Québec government than in the federal government to provide access to such services.

Women's mobilisation

In the four Westminster countries, as in the United States, it is customary to talk of two main waves of the women's movement, the first expressed in the suffrage, temperance and social reform movements of the late nineteenth century and the second gaining momentum in the 1970s. This is an oversimplification, as women's political activity continued between the waves and patterns were also different in Anglophone and Francophone Canada. Nevertheless, definite upswings in parliamentary representation

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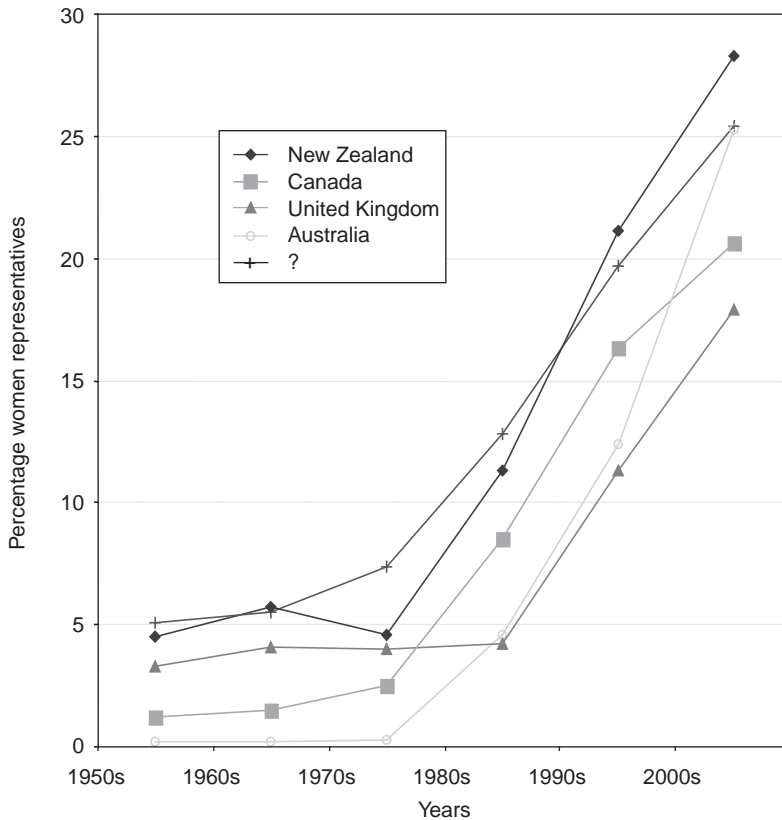


Figure 1.1 Women's parliamentary representation, 1950–2004.

can be charted for three of the countries from the 1980s as the impact of the new mobilisation flowed through to political institutions. This upswing took place significantly later in the United Kingdom, where the political opportunity structure was particularly unfavourable in the Thatcher period and where the women's movement was particularly distrustful of patriarchal institutions.

In both waves, the women's movement successfully mobilised gender identity as a basis for political action. This mobilisation of identity required a discursive strategy that played down differences between women, and played up common experiences of subordination, in order to activate a constituency for change. A 'strategic essentialism' helped create a political base for claims for gender equality. In recent years such essentialism has been much contested by postmodernist theorists who perceive the category 'woman' as privileging a white, middle-class and heterosexual identity and imposing a rigid construct on fluid and intersecting identities. An even more important source of the demobilising of gender

8 *Marian Sawyer et al.*

identity has been the increased dominance of neo-liberal discourse. The latter replaces collective identities with the construct of the individual who is author of their own choices, unconstrained by inequalities of power or expectations.

To go back to the first wave, one puzzle is why women achieved political rights much earlier in Australia and New Zealand than in Canada or the United Kingdom. We might expect that if innovation generally occurs on the periphery, this rule would apply as much to Canada as to the other colonies. While the timing of federation in Australia presented particular opportunities at the national level (which flowed through to the remaining states), it does not explain why none of the Canadian prairie provinces achieved the early breakthroughs of New Zealand and South Australia. As for the United Kingdom, its panoply of aristocratic power and imperial status presented particular barriers to women's suffrage, and it would be true to say that electoral reform in general took much longer in the metropole than in the colonies.

The Crown. As we have seen, our four countries share the same monarch. Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is also Queen of Australia and of fourteen other Commonwealth countries, including Canada and New Zealand. Is there any advantage for women in the fact that the head of state for over 50 years has been a woman? Queen Elizabeth II is not on record like her predecessor, Queen Victoria, as thinking that women's rights are madness; on the other hand she has not been outspoken in her support for women's aspirations. The institution of the constitutional monarchy has, however, provided opportunities for women who are self-declared feminists to fill positions such as Governor General, Governor and Lieutenant Governor. While such positions do not involve the direct exercise of executive power, they are important in symbolic terms, giving scope to women to represent the nation, state or province, and to encourage the aspirations of other women. Current Governors General include prominent legal feminist, Dame Silvia Cartwright in New Zealand and Hong Kong-born Adrienne Clarkson in Canada.

The Commonwealth of Nations

The women's movement has always been international in character and, for example, enfranchised Australian and New Zealand women played a significant role in the struggle for women's suffrage in the United Kingdom before the First World War. The Commonwealth of Nations has provided one of a number of multilateral forums through which feminists have sought to advance issues of gender equality. The Commonwealth Secretariat has been particularly important in disseminating the principles and methods of analysing government budgets for their gender effects, and producing handbooks for this purpose. Gender budgeting was a topic for the 2002 meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers.

Introduction 9

Historically the networking of women's international non-government organisations was also facilitated by the development of multilateral bodies such as the League of Nations and subsequently the United Nations (UN). Women from all four countries have played a significant role in the development of status of women agencies in such bodies. Australian, Canadian and New Zealand governments have all seen multilateral diplomacy as an important means of extending their influence as comparatively small powers, often taking lead roles, sometimes in partnership, in human rights and status of women issues. For example, Australia, and Canada were co-sponsors of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, while New Zealand worked closely with them. Both government and non-government representatives from these countries have helped strengthen international norms regarding the representation of women in public decision-making and mainstreaming of gender analysis into the policy process, whether through the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) or through instruments such as the Beijing Platform for Action.¹⁰

The reporting required under such international conventions and agreements provides leverage for claims made at the domestic level. The Inter-parliamentary Union has played its role in monitoring the presence of women in parliaments worldwide as well as sharing best practice in relation to matters such as CEDAW reporting.¹¹ Having said this, until 1997 the United Kingdom was the outlier among these four countries both in terms of developing machinery of government to ensure gender-based analysis within government – the so-called femocrat phenomenon found

Table 1.1 Political rights and representation at the national level

<i>Event</i>	<i>Australia</i>	<i>Canada</i>	<i>New Zealand</i>	<i>UK</i>
Right to vote: most women	1902	1918	1893	1918/1928
Right to stand: most women	1902	1919	1919	1918/1928
Right to vote: all Indigenous women	1962	Inuit 1950; Status Indians 1960	1893	n.a.
First woman elected	1943	1921	1933	1918
First Indigenous woman elected	–	1988	1949	n.a.
First woman cabinet minister	1949	1957	1947	1929
First woman party leader	1986	1989	1993	1975
First woman prime minister	–	1993	1997	1979

10 *Marian Sawyer et al.*

in the other three countries – and in terms of disseminating models for gender mainstreaming through multilateral institutions. British women, however, have benefited from the normative regime imposed by the European Union in relation to women's rights and social standards. During the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher more than 40 per cent of policy decisions favourable to women's movement demands came about as a result of pressure from Europe.¹²

Part I: explaining differences in parliamentary representation

International research has generally found that where we can assume a high level of women's education and workforce participation, as in our particular Westminster family, factors that are significant in explaining variations in women's political representation include the electoral system, the existence of quotas, a 'contagion' effect where one party significantly increased its women candidates, the nature of political parties and the party system and background factors such as religion and the nature of women's movement strategies.¹³ We briefly outline here how these factors intersect with the Westminster system. The chapters in Part I of the book take these issues further in analysing the influences on women's descriptive representation in the parliaments of the four Westminster countries.

Supply and demand factors

Before we examine specific factors affecting women's legislative recruitment we need to look at the supply side of the supply and demand equation. Although candidate figures are not a pure indication of willingness of women to stand for parliament, because of the gatekeeping role of political parties discussed below and their historical disinclination to field women candidates, they do tell us something. For example, prior to the Second World War, 99.3 per cent of candidates for the Australian federal parliament were male, while between the Second World War and 1969 about 96 per cent of candidates were male. Similarly in New Zealand nearly 93 per cent of all candidates between 1946 and 1975 were male.¹⁴ In all four Westminster countries there were strong social expectations that women would marry and that married women would not pursue careers outside the home. Indeed, in the Westminster countries, as in the United States, early women parliamentarians were often 'standing in' for a husband, whether deceased or otherwise.¹⁵

In addition to the small number of women standing as candidates, another reason for the failure of women to be elected was the decision by many to remain outside the existing political parties, by choice as well as by necessity. In the period up to 1940 in Australia, 75 per cent of women

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1 candidates ran as independents or for minor parties, a remarkable figure
2 given high levels of stable party identification and voting. A number of
3 women also stood as independent or minor-party candidates in the United
4 Kingdom in 1918 although not in the subsequent period.¹⁶ A distrust of
5 the existing party system was a common legacy of the suffrage struggle.

6 It was the arrival of the 'second wave' of the women's movement that
7 led to a sudden jump in the number of women candidates. Several factors
8 combined in the 1970s to enhance the willingness of women to enter poli-
9 tics, including increased participation in higher education; economic
10 changes resulting in increased workforce participation; and political
11 mobilisation of women through the women's movement and other new
12 social movements. Women exerted increased pressure on the political
13 parties to become more women-friendly, for instance Labour women
14 demonstrated outside their own party conference in New Zealand in 1974.

15 Supply factors continue to be important and need further exploration
16 in the four Westminster countries under study here. Turning to the
17 United States, research has found that women who run are as likely to win
18 as their male counterparts, but women are still less likely to run.¹⁷ Indeed,
19 the primary reason for women's underrepresentation in the United States
20 is that women do not seek elected office in sufficient numbers to achieve
21 gender parity. Determining why women eschew political careers is key to
22 understanding why the supply of women candidates remains low. Prelimi-
23 nary results from American studies show that gender role socialisation,
24 lack of political efficacy and absence of high-profile role models deter
25 women from seeking political candidacy.¹⁸

26 27 **Electoral system**

28 The four countries mostly began the twentieth century with the Westmin-
29 ster model of plurality rule (first past the post) in single-member con-
30 stituencies. As we have seen, such a system exaggerates majorities –
31 meaning the winning party usually gains a much higher proportion of
32 seats than of votes – and usually leads to the alternation of two parties in
33 government. Such an electoral system makes it very difficult for minor
34 parties to gain political representation unless they are regionally based.

35 Of the four countries in our study, Australia has historically been the most
36 prone to electoral experimentation, being the first country (apart from
37 Denmark) where proportional representation was used for parliamentary
38 elections and developing the distinctive single transferable vote form of PR
39 as well as adopting majority preferential voting where single-member con-
40 stituencies are used. Australia now generally uses PR for one chamber of its
41 bicameral parliaments and majority preferential for the other. Women have
42 generally done better in houses of parliament elected by PR than in those
43 elected from single-member constituencies. This effect, however, has been
44 blurred by the implementation of quotas by the Labor Party.
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12 *Marian Sawyer et al.*

New Zealand has shifted away much more belatedly from first-past-the-post, but in a more dramatic way. There had been drastic policy experiments in the 1980s, undertaken by governments untrammelled by the kind of brakes found in the other countries, such as upper houses, multi-party governments, federal division of powers or constitutional challenges. There was wide disillusion in the community over the electoral system that had enabled this to happen. Two referendums were held and the popular choice was for a shift to the Mixed-Member Proportional form of proportional representation. Each voter would be able to vote both for a constituency member and for a party, and party representation within the parliament would be proportionate to the party vote, through a process of topping up from the party lists. MMP was introduced in 1996 and resulted in an increase in women parliamentarians from 21 per cent to 29 per cent. Its effect on the election of women is not as clear, however, as its effect on increasing the ethnic and political diversity of both male and female parliamentarians. More women were elected from constituency than from list seats in 2002, almost half the women in parliament being elected from Labour-held constituencies. Because Labour did so well in the constituencies it was allocated only a handful of the party-list seats used to achieve proportionality.

Canada has so far resisted reform of its electoral system although it is of increasing interest at the provincial level, with several provinces giving serious consideration to proportional or mixed electoral systems. A proposal for a multi-member single transferable vote system was narrowly defeated in a May 2005 referendum in British Columbia and the government has promised to keep electoral reform on the legislative agenda. As mentioned above, a constitutional challenge was mounted in 2001 on the grounds that first-the-post voting systematically discriminates against women. On the other hand, the Canadian party system is highly regionalised – a different kind of departure from the two-party model. A new party system was generated in 1993 when five parties, two of them regionally based, won representation in the House of Commons. Canada does not have the kind of strong bicameralism found in Australian parliaments, having an appointed Senate and no upper houses at provincial level. So there is not the kind of electoral architecture found in Australia, where more often a lower house will be elected using single-member constituencies (and in the expectation that one party will be able to form government with a clear majority of seats) while in the other house PR enables a broader representation of opinion within the community and a clearer mirroring of social and cultural diversity.

The United Kingdom has adopted electoral reform, but so far only for its devolved Scottish Parliament and Welsh, Northern Ireland and London Assemblies, and for European elections rather than for the House of Commons (see ‘Basic Political Data on the United Kingdom’). As we shall see below, the combination of the MMP electoral system and

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1 of quota systems such as zipping and twinning has led to very high propor-
2 tions of women in the Welsh Assembly (50 per cent from 2003) and the
3 Scottish Parliament (39.5 per cent). Representation remains at a much
4 lower level in the House of Commons (20 per cent from 2005).

6 *Parties*

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8 As political parties effectively control legislative recruitment in the Westmin-
9 ster countries, the attitudes and ideology of political parties are a key factor
10 in determining the political representation of women. The existence of a
11 left-progressive labour party distinguishes the four Westminster nations
12 from the United States and provides a partial explanation for their higher
13 levels of female political representation. Australia, New Zealand and the
14 United Kingdom all have labour parties, while Canada also has a labour
15 party in the sense of a party with affiliated trade unions – the New Demo-
16 cratic Party. While the NDP has formed government at the provincial and
17 territorial level, it is unlike the labour parties of the other countries in that it
18 has never constituted either government or official opposition at the
19 national level. The blue-collar unions that created the labour parties had
20 their own fraternal traditions that emphasised the achievement of the
21 ‘family wage’ sufficient to keep wives at home. In Australia these traditions
22 were reinforced by the influence of Irish Catholicism with its conservative
23 gender ideology and traditions of machine politics.

24 On the other hand, the labour parties also have historic goals of social
25 justice, preparedness to acknowledge structural barriers and to take
26 collective action to pursue such goals. In three of the countries they have
27 adopted quotas for women’s representation. It is in New Zealand,
28 however, that the Labour Party has proved most effective as a conduit for
29 the political representation of women and in this case without quotas. The
30 party became ‘feminised’ in the 1980s, with women becoming the majority
31 of party membership by the 1990s and supporting a significant increase in
32 Labour women candidates.

33 By the time its new electoral system was introduced in the 1990s, New
34 Zealand had a higher percentage of women in parliament than any other
35 country with single-member electorates. Almost half the women in the
36 parliament in 2004 had still entered via the Labour Party’s constituency
37 seats. The fact that the New Zealand Labour Party did not require quotas
38 to achieve such a high level of women’s parliamentary representation,
39 despite the adverse nature of the electoral system, is a key part of the story
40 of this book.

41 In all four Westminster countries the proportion of women in left
42 parliamentary parties is much higher than the proportion of women in
43 conservative parliamentary parties. This effect has been exacerbated as
44 competition from populist parties in Australia, Canada and New Zealand
45 pulls conservative and even centrist parties to the right.

14 *Marian Sawyer et al.*

Changes in the party system, such as a shift from a two-party (Westminster) system to the multi-party systems associated with PR, may significantly increase the opportunities for women's representation and leadership. In Australia and New Zealand, post-materialist parties created after the arrival of the new social movements of the 1960s and benefiting from the existence of PR have the highest proportion of women in their parliamentary parties and are most likely to have women in leadership positions. The Greens are a good example of this, while the Green Party of Canada has also had a woman leader.

Quotas

Worldwide, there has been a dramatic increase in the 1990s in the use of quotas to increase women's parliamentary representation. Quotas may be inscribed in constitutions, in ordinary statute law or in the rules of political parties. In the four Westminster countries quotas are of the latter sort and, as elsewhere, they are more likely to be adopted by parties of the left than of the right. The pattern has been as follows. In Australia the Labor Party adopted enforceable quotas in 1994 and reinforced them in 2002. An independent feminist fund-raising trust, EMILY's List, also claimed credit for helping Labor women into Australian parliaments.

In Canada the NDP adopted a target in 1985 of 50 per cent women for its federal candidates and has also adopted a policy whereby there must be at least one woman in the running at the nomination stage in each riding. While this policy has boosted the number of women candidates for the party, the fact that the goal has not yet been reached reflects the non-mandatory nature of the policy and the strength of local riding association autonomy in Canadian electoral politics. The Liberal Party of Canada also has an informal and unambitious target of 25 per cent women candidates, a goal which has been met on a couple of occasions in small part because of a rule allowing the party leader to bypass the nomination process to directly appoint candidates.

In New Zealand, as we have seen, the increasingly feminised Labour Party did not need to introduce quotas to achieve substantially increased levels of women's parliamentary representation. Provision was made, however, for women to be represented on the panels that select parliamentary candidates.

In the United Kingdom the mechanism of all-women short lists for target seats was adopted by the Labour Party in 1993. After women had been selected for 35 such seats the process was challenged under the United Kingdom Sex Discrimination Act and temporarily abandoned. In 2002 the Labour government passed the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act to ensure the future legality of such measures by political parties.

For the 1999 elections to the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assem-

1 bly Labour used a strategy apparently less vulnerable to legal challenge,
2 that of 'twinning', devised by political scientist Alice Brown. Twinning
3 meant that constituencies were matched in terms of location and
4 winnability and party preselectors had two votes, one for a man and one
5 for a woman. The man with the highest vote was allocated one con-
6 stituency and the woman with the highest vote the other. In Wales Plaid
7 Cymru adopted the 'zipping principle' for its party list, with women in first
8 and third positions. Northern Ireland differed from Scotland and Wales
9 in so far as the political parties did not adopt positive measures to increase
10 women's political representation. None the less the mobilising of women
11 to have a greater voice in the peace process and the formation of the
12 Northern Ireland Women's Coalition has had a catalytic effect. The intro-
13 duction of the single transferable vote form of PR for the election of the
14 Northern Ireland Assembly in 1998 enabled the election of Coalition
15 candidates and raised the salience of gender issues. In Nunavut in
16 Canada, a proposal to introduce two-member electorates for the new
17 Assembly, each with a male and female representative, was defeated at ref-
18 erendum in 1997.

19 The use of party tactics ranging from active recruitment through affir-
20 mative action to quotas underlines the importance of political parties to
21 the electoral project for women. The era of parties recruiting women
22 merely to stand-in for deceased husbands or to serve as partisan 'sacrificial
23 lambs' has given way to a new sensitivity to gender-based representation.

24 Turning to the United States, there seems to be no discernible partisan
25 bias in fund-raising efforts for men and women candidates, and some
26 studies suggest considerable efforts by both Democrats and Republicans to
27 boost the presence of women in Congress and state legislatures.¹⁹ Yet
28 refusal by American political parties to adopt firm affirmative action strat-
29 egies, coupled with evidence of discrimination against women candidates
30 by male party chairs and the press, suggests the impact of party and media
31 elites on women's representation requires further examination. The inter-
32 section of such factors with party competition and electoral system design
33 demands similar attention. It is clear that the numbers game is complex,
34 multi-faceted, and irreducible to a single feature of institutional design or
35 political will.

36 37 **Part II: beyond numbers**

38 The second part of the book is devoted to issues of the 'substantive
39 representation' of women, going beyond the mere presence of women
40 (descriptive representation) to ask what difference women make in parlia-
41 ment and by what methods this difference can be established. Political
42 scientist Hannah Pitkin was the first to distinguish systematically between
43 forms of representation in terms of 'standing for' (descriptive or symbolic
44 representation) or 'acting for' (substantive representation).²⁰
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16 *Marian Sawyer et al.*

The demand for the presence of women may rest simply on justice arguments, that women have equal rights and talents to men and should have equal opportunity to participate in public decision-making. The absence of women from such decision-making is ascribed to forms of direct and indirect discrimination, such as the nature of the electoral system (discussed in Part I), the failure to accommodate family responsibilities within the structure of public life or the privileging of gladiatorial parliamentary styles.

The right of women to participate in public life on an equal basis with men is inscribed in international human rights law such as Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The justice argument does not require women to 'make a difference' to the content or style of politics.

More usually, however, justice arguments are buttressed by other kinds of argument, including those which will have greater appeal to the powerful, like partisan utility or increasing the electoral appeal of political parties. Women can provide a 'new look' for parties beset by scandal or associated with harsh economic policies. Electoral competition may be brought into play (the 'contagion' effect discussed in Part I) where one party has already significantly increased its female parliamentary representation. Some may even talk up the more general advantages of doubling the pool of talent from which to draw the nation's legislators.

Deliberative arguments

In recent years theorists such as Anne Phillips, Jane Mansbridge and Iris Marion Young have written forcefully of the need for the presence of women and minorities in legislatures, to ensure that a diverse range of life experiences, including experiences of group-based discrimination, are brought to bear on public issues.²¹ These theorists stress the contribution of diversity of background and experience to the kind of inclusive deliberative process, which many now regard as a central defining feature of democracy.

However, it is not unmediated personal experience that serves to broaden debate in this way – rather it is the process of giving new collective meanings to such experience. Gender identity is not something pre-given that will automatically be brought by women into parliament. Social movements such as the women's movement mobilise new ways of interpreting everyday life, new 'cognitive frames' through which to view the world. It is the access of representatives to these collectively generated and oppositional political meanings that enables them to bring new perspectives into the political process.

It is also often assumed that women's presence will have a 'civilising' effect on parliamentary culture for two reasons. First, that the presence of

1 those who are different will elicit at least a veneer of civility rather than
2 the dynamics of an all-male group. Second, that women themselves will
3 bring a less confrontational approach as a consequence of their gender
4 socialisation and family roles. The strength of existing norms of conduct
5 in Westminster parliaments makes it difficult, however, for women to have
6 this desired effect. In New Zealand the increased presence of women in
7 parliament coincided with an increase rather than a decrease in aggres-
8 sion, as measured by personal attacks and interjections, including those by
9 women.²²

11 *Symbolic arguments*

12 Different from either the justice, utility or the deliberative democracy
13 arguments are the symbolic arguments for increasing women's representa-
14 tion. These are themselves of different kinds – one stressing effects of the
15 presence of women inside parliament on the status of women outside,
16 another stressing the significance of representativeness for the legitimacy
17 of political institutions, and yet another highlighting the cultural signific-
18 ance of the public performance of gender.

19 The first symbolic argument is that the presence of women in parlia-
20 ment increases respect for women in society and is a form of recognition
21 of the equal status of women, whether or not this is associated with recog-
22 nition of 'difference'. This symbolic argument is also associated with a
23 motivational or role-model argument – that the visible presence of women
24 in public life serves to raise the aspirations of other women, the 'girls can
25 do anything' effect. Some have suggested this is one of the most important
26 functions that women legislators can perform.²³

27 The second and very different symbolic argument wrapped up in the
28 slogan of underrepresentation is that of institutional legitimacy – the idea
29 that the legitimacy of political institutions will be undermined if signifi-
30 cant sections of the community appear to be locked out of them. It assumes
31 political mobilisation of a group identity, in this case gender identity, and
32 a refusal to acknowledge the authority of an institution that does not
33 reflect this identity.

34 The third symbolic argument is less an argument for increasing the
35 number of women in parliament than an argument for increasing the
36 public representation of different ways of performing gender. It is sug-
37 gested that the representation of such alternatives in top-level politics
38 increases the cultural choices available to women – they too may see that
39 female identity does not have to be bound up with domesticity, and that
40 women in public life do not have to emphasise the priority of wife/mother
41 identities, although they may choose to do so.

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18 *Marian Sawer et al.*

Agency argument

Another kind of argument, different from and even more difficult than the justice, utility, deliberative democracy or symbolic arguments is the argument that the interests of women differ from those of men and that the presence of women is required for them to be taken into account. The reason this is a difficult argument is twofold. First, there is the disputed nature of 'women's interests' and the argument that intersecting identities will overpower even a collective interest in contesting gender subordination. Political ideology and affiliation, class, race or ethnicity may be better predictors of political attitudes than gender, and even where gender is significant, as on questions of equal opportunity for women, age may be a complicating factor.²⁴

Second, even if we agree that shared experience of subordination does give rise to shared interests and collectively articulated demands for gender equality, the representation of such interests requires commitment and action, rather than simply presence. When trying to measure whether such substantive representation of women is occurring, we might find that men from a political party committed to women's rights are more likely actively to support such demands than are conservative women. Or we might find that, even where women politicians express their commitment to representing women and to promoting gender equality, the cross-cutting pressures and norms of parliamentary life and party and constituency responsibilities prevent their doing so. Or we might suggest that women are inhibited from identifying with feminist demands while they are only a small minority in a legislative body and are trying to earn the trust of the dominant group by not rocking the boat. Or we might try to separate the descriptive and substantive representation of women altogether and say that if we tie the substantive representation of women too closely to the physical presence of women, that lets male legislators off the hook: that it absolves them from responsibility for representing women's interests or from considering the gender implications of policy.

The different kinds of argument introduced here are summarised in Table 1.2.

Critical mass

It is sometimes argued that it is exceptionally difficult for women to engage in the critical acts required for substantive representation while they are present only in very small numbers in parliaments or other organisations. This theory was first set out by Rosabeth Moss Kanter in her classic work *Men and Women of the Corporation*.²⁵ Kanter explored the effects of relative proportions on group behaviour and found that enormous pressures were imposed on those who were 'tokens', or part of a very small

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Table 1.2 Arguments for increasing women's political representation

<i>Representation</i>	<i>Argument</i>
Equal right to represent (justice arguments)	Right to participate in public decision making Right not to be discriminated against by structure of public life
Utilitarianism (utility arguments)	Increase pool of talent Partisan advantage
Improving deliberation (deliberative democracy arguments)	Debate needs to be enriched by women's perspectives or collectively mediated experience Civilising effect on debate
Representativeness (symbolic argument)	Effects on status of group Effects on aspirations Legitimacy of institution Widening cultural choices
Protection of interests (agency arguments)	Women have different interests and/or values from men that need protection

minority. There was a need to overcome the distrust associated with being visibly 'different' and to survive the additional scrutiny involved. Such pressures arising from visibility could lead to the over-assimilation of small minorities to dominant norms in the desperate attempt to be accepted as one of the group. Kanter suggested such pressures diminished as minorities grew larger, as they became useful allies for political players and able to exercise some leverage.

Danish political scientist Drude Dahlerup was the first to explore the relevance of Kanter's work to the role of women in politics. She concluded by querying the relevance of the critical mass concept, taken from physics, to the social sciences and suggesting that the willingness and ability of members of minority groups to engage in critical acts was perhaps more important than critical mass.²⁶ Her criticisms have been taken up by others, who have emphasised the contextual nature of gender identity and the ways in which gendered norms and expectations are reshaped over time and place, regardless of relative numbers.²⁷ None the less, the idea became popularised that when women moved from being a small to a large minority in parliament constraints would be lessened and they would find it easier to engage in acts of substantive representation. Some, however, found evidence of the reverse, that a perception that women were 'taking over' generated backlash and hostility.²⁸

American political scientist Karen Beckwith argues that newness, defined as the 'substantial increase in the numbers and proportions of women elected for the first time', may be as important as numbers in prompting a substantive response to the presence of women.²⁹ Yet the evidence of the chapters comprising Part II of this volume suggests the

20 *Marian Sawyer et al.*

novelty value of newly elected women may have less impact in Westminster systems than in congressional systems like that of the United States.

Others have pursued different lines of inquiry from that of numbers to try to answer the question of when we can expect women representatives to take up issues of gender equality. What political backgrounds or orientations make it more likely that women parliamentarians will engage in 'critical acts' and act as advocates for women as a group? What kinds of structure within parliament or parliamentary parties make it more likely that they will do so? How important is the mobilisation of women's organisations outside parliament and linkages with them?

Factors identified by researchers as influencing the likelihood of legislators acting as advocates for women include: the compatibility of party ideology with feminism,³⁰ self-identification of legislators as feminists or acknowledgement by them of a special responsibility to represent the interests of women,³¹ existence of women's caucuses within parliamentary parties or within parliament,³² links of such caucuses to strong women's councils within the organisational wing of the party,³³ membership of and association with women's movement organisations, or simply the strength of women's movement mobilisation in society at large.³⁴ These are not, of course, factors independent of each other and clearly the strength of women's political mobilisation in society at large influences the propensity of women parliamentarians to identify as feminists or to acknowledge a special responsibility to represent women. It is sometimes argued that such 'surrogate' representation, or acknowledgement of the responsibility to represent a group beyond a territorial constituency, is stronger when there are relatively few members of the group in question in parliament – the opposite of the critical mass argument.³⁵

Some of this research also grapples with the issue of accountability. As women parliamentarians are generally elected to represent territorial constituencies rather than gender constituencies, there is an issue of how they can be held accountable for claims to be representing women as a group.³⁶ There may be a nexus of accountability in the relationship between parliamentarians and institutions that audit the gender impact of policy. Such institutions include women's non-government organisations that monitor performance of both men and women in advancing issues of gender equality. They also include feminist organisations that provide support for women candidates but expect some return in the form of equality initiatives.

These are the kinds of matters explored in Part II of the book. After identifying factors that might facilitate substantive representation, the authors seek to establish whether women indeed are making a difference in the four countries. Various methods are used, such as examining what women legislators are contributing to parliamentary debate and whether they are broadening the scope of deliberation to include issues identified as of special concern to women in the community.

Part III: new institutions, new opportunities

The third part of the book is devoted to the opportunities provided by 'being in at the beginning' of the development of new political institutions. New institutionalist theory suggests that timing is extremely important in explaining the trajectory of institutions. Once institutions have been established, 'path dependence' and the costs of changing direction ensure that the ideas and expectations built into them have long-term effects.³⁷ In the United Kingdom the timing of devolution, following the effective mobilisation of women, particularly in Scotland, provided the opportunity to design institutions that were far more gender-inclusive than those of the old Westminster parliament. Indeed, there were deliberate departures to reduce the adversarialism associated with the Westminster model and to ensure more participatory and inclusive political processes.

The case studies of institution-building in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland highlight the different ways in which women have organised to build their concerns into the foundations of new political institutions. They also assess the outcomes in terms of both the presence of women and the operation of new structures and processes. These new structures have been designed to create greater accountability for equality outcomes, both through formal auditing of executive proposals and through the creation of new channels for community engagement in the work of legislative bodies and government agencies.

New structures for gender equality have been established in each of the three jurisdictions, but in Northern Ireland women's political participation continues to be overshadowed by sectarian conflict. In Wales women have achieved parity in terms of political presence and in Scotland they constitute around 40 per cent of parliamentarians – leading to a new centrality for issues such as child care and domestic violence.

In Canada the development of a new legislative assembly in Nunavut produced less favourable results. A proposal for two-member seats with gender parity did not receive the support of the population at referendum. Several factors may help explain this failure, notably poor timing, regional tensions and the weak mobilisation of the women's movement on the issue of electoral politics.

This book shows that the parliamentary representation of women is an issue that has been successfully politicised within and beyond the world of Westminster. It has become a measure of democracy of universal application. The representation of women is now on the public agenda, and the creation of new political structures opens up possibilities to institutionalise gender equity in various ways. Yet although the issue is now on global agendas, the examples of Northern Ireland and Nunavut show that the development of new institutions does not guarantee the increased political representation of women. Success or otherwise in increasing the

22 Marian Sawyer et al.

political presence of women is inextricably linked with the nature of civil society and with effective women's movement mobilisation and electoral engagement.

Notes

- 1 Single-country accounts of political recruitment and representation have been produced for all four Westminster countries in the present study. For examples of global comparisons see Matland, 'Women's Representation in National Legislatures'; Reynolds, 'Women in the Legislatures and Executives of the World'; Paxton, 'Women in National Legislatures'. For examples of regional studies see Craske and Molyneux, *Gender and the Politics of Rights and Democracy in Latin America*, Lee and Clark, *Democracy and the Status of Women in East Asia*.
- 2 See Haavio-Mannila and Skard, *Unfinished Democracy*; Bergqvist et al., *Equal Democracies?*
- 3 Young, *Feminists and Party Politics*, 184–5; Costain and Costain, 'Strategy and Tactics of the Women's Movement in the United States'.
- 4 See Alexander, *Financing Politics*; Ballington, 'Gender Equality in Political Party Funding'.
- 5 See Lijphart, *Democracies*.
- 6 See, for example, Young, 'Fulfilling the Mandate of Difference'.
- 7 See Brown et al., 'Women and Constitutional Change in Scotland and Northern Ireland'; Dobrowolsky, 'Crossing Boundaries'.
- 8 See Vickers, *Reinventing Political Science*.
- 9 Joan Russow and the Green Party of Canada v. The Attorney General of Canada, The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada and HM The Queen in Right of Canada, 2001.
- 10 See True and Mintrom, 'Transnational Networks and Policy Diffusion'.
- 11 United Nations and the Inter-parliamentary Union, *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol*. This Handbook was produced with financial support from Canada and Sweden.
- 12 Bashevkin, *Women on the Defensive*, 89.
- 13 See for example, Rule and Zimmerman, *Electoral Systems in Comparative Perspective*; Matland and Studlar, 'The Contagion of Women Candidates in Single-member District and Proportional Representation Electoral Systems'; Caul, 'Political Parties and the Adoption of Candidate Gender Quotas'.
- 14 See Grey and Sawyer, 'Australia and New Zealand'.
- 15 See Kincaid, 'Over his Dead Body'.
- 16 Sainsbury, 'Rights without Seats', 73.
- 17 See Elder, 'Why Women Don't Run'; Swers, 'Research on Women in Legislatures'.
- 18 See Elder, 'Why Women Don't Run'.
- 19 See Swers, 'Research on Women in Legislatures'.
- 20 See Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*.
- 21 See Phillips, *The Politics of Presence*; Mansbridge, 'Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women?'; Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*.
- 22 Grey, 'Does Size Matter?', 24.
- 23 Burrell, *A Woman's Place is in the House*, 173.
- 24 See Erickson, 'Might More Women Make a Difference?'.
- 25 See Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation*.
- 26 See Dahlerup, 'From a Small to a Large Minority'.
- 27 See Towns, 'Understanding the Effects of Larger Ratios of Women in National

Introduction 23

- 1 Legislatures'. See also Beckwith, 'Number and Newness'; Mackay, 'Gender and
2 Political Representation in the UK'.
3 28 See Yoder, 'Rethinking Tokenism'.
4 29 See Beckwith, 'Number and Newness'.
5 30 See Tremblay and Pelletier, 'Feminist Women in Canadian Politics'.
6 31 See Wängnerud, 'Testing the Politics of Presence'; Waring, *Politics: Women's
7 Insight*.
8 32 See Sawer, 'Parliamentary Representation of Women'; Tremblay, 'Do Female
9 MPs Substantively Represent Women?'; Burt *et al.*, 'Women in the Ontario New
10 Democratic Government'.
11 33 See Grey and Sawer, 'Australia and New Zealand'.
12 34 See Carroll, 'Have Women Legislators in the United States Become More
13 Conservative?'.
14 35 See Mansbridge, 'The Many Faces of Representation'.
15 36 See Phillips, *The Politics of Presence*.
16 37 See Pierson, 'Increasing Returns, Path Dependence and the Study of Politics'.
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