CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	Will legislative gender quotas increase female representation in Ireland? A feminist institutionalism analysis
Authors	Buckley, Fiona;Mariani, Mack;White, Timothy J.
Publication date	2014-12-13
Original Citation	Buckley, F., Mariani, M. and White, T. J. (2014) 'Will legislative gender quotas increase female representation in Ireland? A feminist institutionalism analysis', Representation, 50(4), pp. 471-484. doi: 10.1080/00344893.2014.988743
Type of publication	Article (peer-reviewed)
Link to publisher's version	10.1080/00344893.2014.988743
Rights	© 2014, McDougall Trust, London. Published by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC. All rights reserved. This is an Accepted Manuscript of an item published by Taylor & Francis in Representation on 13 December 2014, available online: https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2014.988743. It is deposited under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. - https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/
Download date	2026-11-16 09:32:17
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/10122

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Will legislative gender quotas increase female representation in Ireland? A feminist institutionalism analysis.

Reference Fiona Buckley, Mack Mariani & Timothy J. White (2014) Will legislative gender quotas increase female representation in Ireland? A feminist institutionalism analysis, *Representation*, 50:4, 471-484

Informed by insights from feminist institutionalism, this article considers the effect of various aspects of the Irish political system on women's candidate selection and election, and discusses the extent to which the new gender quota law will be facilitated by these processes. In studying Ireland the article highlights a relatively under-studied case in the comparative literature on gender and politics. It also contributes to the burgeoning field of feminist institutionalism research by examining the mechanisms surrounding female candidate recruitment, selection and election to assess the likely impact of gender quotas on women's political representation in Ireland. Taking Ireland's relatively unique PR-STV electoral system as the primary institutional context, we argue that the electoral system interacts with cultural factors to determine female candidacy opportunities and suggest that the biggest challenge to the effective implementation of legislative gender quotas in Ireland are informal mechanisms such as masculinised party cultures, societal gendered legacies and pre-existing informal rules surrounding incumbency and localism. However, we advise if party leaders and selectorates are willing to fully embrace gender quotas and integrate them into their candidate nomination processes, there is evidence to suggest that this will have a positive effect on increasing women's political representation in Ireland.

Keywords: Gender Quotas; Candidate Selection; PR-STV; Ireland

Introduction

The passage of the *Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012* represents the first major effort by the Irish government to ameliorate the historically low rates of female representation in Dáil Éireann, the lower house of the Irish Parliament. Women's political representation in the Dáil has never exceeded 16.5 per cent. The Act requires that political parties select at least 30 per cent women candidates in the next general election (which is due to take place in 2016). The threshold for women candidates rises to 40 per cent seven years thereafter. Political parties that fail to meet their gender quota obligations will lose half of their State funding for the duration of the following legislative term.

Ireland is the seventh member state of the European Union to introduce legislative gender quotas, following Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal, Poland and Slovenia. Since the 1990s, over 100 countries have adopted or debated the possibility of adopting gender quotas for candidate selection and national parliamentary elections (Krook 2009). Quotas can be imposed voluntarily by political parties or legally by a country's parliament or constitution. In the past, Irish political parties have experimented with voluntary strategies such as gender targets to advance women's candidacies, but a lack of political will and leadership served to undermine the effectiveness of such measures (Buckley 2013).

Gender quotas have been an effective means of increasing women's descriptive representation in national parliaments worldwide. Geissel and Hust (2005) found that quotas increase women's political ambitions, and encourage more women to run for election. Once introduced, quotas also have the effect of permanently increasing women's chances of being elected, even after the elimination of quotas (Bhavnani 2009). Nonetheless, the extent to which gender quotas increase the percentage of women elected to national legislatures varies across nation-states. There is no steadfast guarantee that gender quotas will dramatically increase the percentage of women elected to parliament (Hughes 2011; Paxton et al. 2010). Feminist institutionalism advises that it is the institutional context that determines the impact of electoral reforms like gender quotas. While the *Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012* reshapes the playing field

for parties in a way that will expand electoral opportunities for women, the new rules will be implemented within the context of a broader structure of political opportunities in Ireland. Increasing the number of women candidates is a necessary step towards greater gender equality, but the degree to which the Act is successful at increasing the number of women representatives depends on the extent that parties take full advantage of this historic opportunity, as well as the institutional "fit" of gender quotas in the broader Irish electoral system.

Informed by insights from feminist institutionalism and reviews of existing research on women and elections, this article considers the effect of various aspects of the Irish political system on women's candidate selection and election and discusses the extent to which the new gender quota law will be facilitated by these processes. The primary institutional context we explore is the effect of Ireland's relatively unique electoral system.

The Irish electoral system, which is based on proportional representation by means of the single-transferable vote (PR-STV), is modestly conducive to the election of greater numbers of women. However, the PR-STV electoral system does not lend itself as easily as PR List systems to the integration of gender quotas in candidate selection processes. This is significant as studies on the effectiveness of gender quotas stress that "electoral institutional fit" is critically important to secure major increases in women's political representation (Franceshet et al. 2012). Nonetheless, we expect most parties will reach the threshold required by the law because of the financial penalties associated with noncompliance.

We argue that the biggest challenges to the effective implementation of the quota system in Ireland are the informal mechanisms that surround candidate selection procedures, including the informal masculinised culture of political parties, which has traditionally limited opportunities for women to develop the skills, resources and community contacts needed to run successfully for the Dáil. Despite this limitation, if party leaders and selectorates fully embrace gender quotas and integrate them into their candidate nomination processes, we argue that the new quota law will have a positive effect on

women's political representation in Ireland. We draw on evidence from the 2014 local government elections in Ireland in making this claim.

Feminist Institutionalism

As an approach to the study of politics, feminist institutionalism maps the "formal architecture and informal networks, connections, conventions, rules and norms of institutions" (Childs 2013: 130; Krook and Mackay 2011). Political institutions are imbued with a masculinised gender, reflecting their establishment by and for men. Jillson and Wilson (1994) observe that political institutions remain "remarkably sticky" to their past, while Duerst-Lahti (2005: 231-232) argues that masculine frames of preference and "domination" are embedded in and associated with politics. As a result, women enter politics as outsiders and operate in contrast to the male established norm.

Candidate selection is an institution which reveals a great deal about the "complex and gendered dynamics of institutional design, continuity and change in the political recruitment process" (Kenny 2013a:). Viewing selection processes through the lens of feminist institutionalism highlights the difficulties of reforming candidate recruitment in the face of powerful institutional and gendered legacies. "Informal party practices or conventions may undermine formal party rules, working to blunt the reformist potential of equality measures such as gender quotas" (Kenny 2013b:). Writing about gender recruitment in post-devolution Scotland, Kenny (2013b) found that despite new formal rules, including gender quotas, the political parties in Scotland reverted to informal practices that stressed "localness", patronage, and privileging "favourite sons" that reduced women's access and presence in political positions.

The Scottish case is a cautionary tale for Ireland and suggests that the longevity and legacy of institutional and gendered rules may serve to undermine the effectiveness of electoral rules such as gender quotas. Heeding this advice and drawing from existing research on gender and Irish elections, we examine the mechanisms surrounding female candidate recruitment, selection and election in Ireland to assess the likely impact of gender quotas.

We begin our investigation by examining the Irish electoral system and exploring its impact on female candidate electoral success.

PR-STV and Female Candidate Success

The effect of Ireland's gender quota law on the percentage of women who will be elected depends, in part, on its electoral system. Previous research has found that quotas in single-member district systems reinforce incumbent male advantages (Murray 2008; Fréchette et al. 2008). In contrast, proportional representation (PR) systems are associated with higher levels of female representation, largely as a result of the successful integration of gender quotas in PR-List systems. In a PR-List system, elected candidates are drawn systematically from official lists prepared by the parties in advance of the election. Some PR-List systems have placement mandates specifying where on the party list women candidates are positioned. These mechanisms have worked to increase the number of women elected (Franceschet et al. 2012: 6; Htun and Jones 2002). However, as Curtin (2013) highlights, PR systems vary in terms of institutional design, electoral outcome and the political and cultural context in which they are embedded, "and may, as a result, have very different consequences for women's representation" (McGing 2013: 324).

Ireland's single-transferrable vote (STV) system differs significantly from both single member district and PR-List systems. There is no national list or closed party list into which a gender quota or placement mandate can easily be integrated. While several studies suggest that STV systems have the potential to increase women's representation compared to single-member district election systems and single-non-transferable vote (SNTV) systems (Hickman, 1997; Kaminsky and White, 2007; Lijphart 1999) arguing that they create additional opportunities for women and other under-represented groups to win election (Caul Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer, 2012: 13 & 127-128; Matland and Taylor, 1997), the number of seats available in any given constituency in Ireland is limited, ranging from three to five. Though multi-seat districts generally enhance the prospect that women will be elected, how female candidates are distributed across various districts is a key factor

in electoral success. Consider, for example, the observations of Senator Cáit Keane, who noted that

> [t]he PR-STV system presents more difficulties for the election of women because of the small number of seats in each constituency. This is borne out by the fact that there is a tendency for there to be higher levels of female candidates in larger constituencies. [In the 2011 general election w]omen accounted for 13.8% of the candidates in three seat constituencies, 15.4% in four seat constituencies and 16.2% in five seat constituencies in the 2011 election (Clancy, et al. 2012: 22).

Scholars have come to different conclusions with regard to the overall effect of the STV system on women's electoral chances in Ireland. Galligan (2008: 159) concludes that the effect of the electoral system is negative with a "small but notable bias against women". In contrast, White (2006) contends that the STV system in Ireland has an overall positive effect despite other cultural and institutional obstacles to women's election. Likewise, an analysis of the effect of STV on the election of women to the Dáil by McGing (2013) concludes that incumbency and party recruitment practices – not the STV system – are responsible for the continuing problems that women face being elected in Ireland. Thus, the existing literature points to the fact that increasing the number of women running for the Dáil in a given constituency can improve the odds that a woman is elected but the success of any particular candidate depends heavily on individual and local factors, including party strength in the area, incumbency and the level of support that competing candidates have in that constituency.

Women's Candidate Selection and Gender Quotas

Historically, party selection processes have been a key obstacle to the nomination and election of women (Elgood et. al. 2002). As the gate-keepers to political office, political

parties can facilitate or frustrate women's candidacies. The level of support that parties provide for female candidates depends on the party's culture, ideology and the emphasis that party leaders place on advancing female representation. Gender quotas are a direct response to parties that have consistently failed to identify, recruit and nominate a significant number of female candidates for political offices. As Senator Ivana Bacik (2010) noted, "At least 60 per cent of constituencies had no women candidates from either of the two largest political parties" during the 2007 general election in Ireland. Though some political parties have been more proactive than others when it comes to nominating women candidates, the overall proportion of female candidacy in Irish elections is low. In the most recent general elections (2007 and 2011) the percentage of women nominated by parties ranged from 13.2 per cent (Fianna Fáil in 2007) to a high of just 26.5 per cent (Labour in 2011) (see Table 1).

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

As currently established, the Irish quota law establishes a clear and significant incentive for parties to achieve greater gender equity in the nomination process. Parties that fail to nominate women to at least 30 per cent of their candidacies for the Dáil (rising to 40 per cent after seven years) are penalised with the loss of 50 per cent of the funding support they receive from the State for general party activities. Given that tight restrictions on corporate donations were also introduced by the Act, the gender quota provisions are a significant financial incentive "to encourage political parties to apply a more equal gender balance in the selection of candidates" (Hogan 2012). Previous research shows that quotas are far more likely to result in an increase in women's representation if they include a substantial incentive for compliance or, conversely, a penalty for non-compliance (European Parliament 2008; Dahlerup 2005). In the case of Ireland, the penalties are severe enough that we foresee most, if not all, parties will comply with the goals established by the quota.

Though we are likely to see more female candidates as a result of the quota, whether that translates into more women elected depends in large part on how parties in Ireland approach the nomination process. Will party leaders embrace the quota as a means to

achieve party gains through the election of women to office, or will they go through the motions by nominating new female candidates to unwinnable seats or in non-traditional party heartlands? In other national contexts, there is evidence that parties have nominated women candidates as "sacrificial lambs" for seats they had little chance of winning due to the strength of the opposing candidates or the characteristics or partisanship of voters in the district (Carroll 1985; Esteve-Volart and Bagues 2011; Gertzog and Simard 1981; Murray 2008; Stambough and Regan 2007). In fact, there is nothing in the Irish quota law to prevent political parties from meeting the gender quota by nominating female candidates with little experience and local support and therefore little chance of election. .

The emphasis that political parties place on winning elections means that parties are unlikely to be ideologically committed to increasing women's representation for its own sake (Murray et al. 2012). At the same time, parties may see support for quotas as an opportunity to recruit female candidates who might otherwise be overlooked. Parties might also embrace quotas as a means of attracting support from female voters, or, to think of it more negatively, to avoid a backlash from voters who would be upset that the party did not select enough women. Political parties are also likely to face pressure from women's groups and organisations like the *National Women's Council of Ireland*, *Women for Election*, and the *5050 Group* that view quotas as a means to achieve gender equity in Irish politics (Franceschet et al. 2012: 6). Thus, there are important electoral and political incentives for parties to take advantage of the new gender quota law to identify and nominate female candidates. Evidence from the 2014 local government elections also shows that when women are nominated in greater numbers it can translate into a proportionate increase in female representation. In those elections there was a 4.2 percentage point increase in women candidates since the previous local election held in 2009. Following the 2014 election women's political representation at the local level stands at 20.8 per cent, a 4.3 percentage point increase on the 2009 election.

Women's Candidate Selection: Gaining Political Experience

Women officeholders in Ireland are, by definition, quality candidates. In the 2007 and 2011 general elections, nearly all women candidates held third level or higher education qualifications while many were members of a profession. Traditionally, a high percentage of women candidates and TDs came from political families (Galligan 2010: 278).[1] However, the 2011 general election was the first time in which none of the women elected were related to a former TD.[2] Women candidates also achieve high levels of local recognition and support. This is important as research on Irish elections finds that local experience is critically important to candidate success in Dáil elections (Gallagher 1980; Reidy 2011; McGraw 2008; Weeks 2007). The importance of local office-holding is not surprising given that research finds name recognition key to voter support (Kam and Zechmeister 2013). Irish traditions, political culture and modestly-sized districts make it important for candidates to get to know voters on a more localised and personal level. Indeed, a 2010 survey found that Irish TDs spend more than one-half of their workweek on constituency service and other constituency-based activities (Oireachtas 2013). In addition, evidence from outside of Ireland suggests that political experience can provide women with added confidence, as well as fundraising experience, contacts, and other key political resources that are ordinarily more widely available to men (see, for example, Darcy et al. 1994; Gaddie and Bullock 1995; LaCour et al. 1997).

However, the supply of women candidates with local experience is limited. In Ireland, just one-in-five local councillors are women, placing Ireland below the EU average of 32 per cent for women's representation in local politics. Unlike the quota systems set up in France, Belgium and Spain, Ireland's quota legislation does not apply to sub-national elections (Oireachtas Report 2009: 25-28). The under-representation of women in local councils raises the same questions about fairness and equity which led to the passage of the gender quota for Dáil elections in the first place. In addition, the lack of a local gender quota raises the concern that the number of women with local experience will not keep

[1] TD - Teachta Dála – a Gaelic term for Member of Dáil Éireann

[2] Since the February 2011 general election there have been four by-elections, three of which came about as a result of the deaths of sitting TDs. In three of these by-elections, women were elected, two of whom are related to the deceased TDs. In March 2013 Helen McEntee was elected to the seat previously held by her father Seán McEntee until his death in December 2012. In May 2014 Gabrielle McFadden was elected to the seat previously held by her sister Nicky McFadden until her death in March 2014.

pace with the number of nomination opportunities available to women at the national level. This is a key issue for women's representation because women candidates without local experience are far less likely to win. As Galligan noted in her testimony to the Sub-Committee on Women's Participation in Politics, local politics is "the pool from which national candidates can come. It is only exceptional candidates who come through any other route" (Oireachtas Report 2009: 562). Moreover, research in other national contexts finds that not all women local officer-holders wish to seek election to national legislative bodies. Allen (2013) found that women in sub-national offices were more likely than similarly situated men to pass on opportunities to run in national contests while Mariani (2008) found that women are often not as well-positioned as their male colleagues with regard to family circumstances, resources and experience.

However, there is evidence that the gender quota adopted for Dáil elections is having a "trickle-down" effect on candidate selections for local government elections. At the 2014 local elections, there were 127 more women candidates contesting the election than in 2009 as parties used these elections to identify, recruit, train, promote and run women candidates with a view to having these women "election-ready" come the next general election. The four main political parties of Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin and Labour set informal gender targets ranging between 25 and 33 per cent for women's candidacy and there was a significant rise in the percentage of women candidates contesting the election on behalf of smaller parties and amongst Independent candidates (see Table 2).

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

A review of the candidate profile of the four main parties at the 2014 local elections reveals varying rates of women's candidacy across the parties. Sinn Féin met and exceeded its informal gender target of 30 per cent while the Labour party came close to meeting its target, also 30 per cent. With 22.8 per cent women candidates, Fine Gael fell short of its 25 per cent gender target. However, Fianna Fáil was the worst performer by far. With just 17.1 per cent women candidates, the party fell well short of its self-imposed gender target of 33 per cent but most revealingly, the party recorded only a slight increase on the

percentage of women candidates it selected in 2009. The variations in female candidacy rates across the parties beg the question: is there something peculiar to parties that either precludes or encourages the selection of women candidates? We argue that party cultures are a main contributing factor to the level of women candidates selected in Irish elections.

Women's Candidate Selection: Party Culture and Recruitment

It is well established that Irish voters do not discriminate against female candidates based on their gender (McElroy and Marsh 2010 and 2011). Nevertheless, women face a difficult challenge in getting selected to be on the ballot paper. Political parties at the local level have tended to favour male candidates (Fawcett 1992; Galligan 1993; Randall and Smyth 1987). Given the discretion usually allocated to local selectors and the historic localism associated with successful Dáil candidacies (Farrell 1985; Gallagher 1980), national party leaders in Ireland have less control over who is nominated in comparison to their counterparts in countries where PR list electoral systems are in operation. This reality inhibits the ability of any political party to promote more women candidates without accounting for the need for candidates to be attractive to the local party selectorate (and later voters) in a specific constituency. Selectors tend to nominate those with the most political experience, highest name recognition, and strongest local profile (Weeks 2007; Reidy 2011). Indeed, Weeks (2007: 61) found that in the 2007 general election, party strategists dismissed both gender and age in determining who would be successful candidates but stressed the importance of electability which was solely defined in terms of local recognition and reputation.

Another of the challenges women face in gaining nomination and election is differential access to capital such as time and funding. Historically, women have been the primary care givers in Irish society and as data from the Central Statistics Office illustrates, the gender-based division of care remains. In 2013, close to half million women were looking after home and/or family compared to 8700 men in Ireland (CSO 2014). The time women spend on domestic responsibilities minimises their professional opportunities outside of the home. As a result, women, on average, earn 73 per cent of men's income (CSO, 2012: 28).

Many women therefore find themselves with less time and funds available to devote to developing the political networks, skills and local profile necessary for a political career in Ireland.

In Ireland like in many other democracies, incumbency can be an important asset for candidates (Benoit and Marsh 2008), and women candidates are at a disadvantage in political systems which advantage incumbents over challengers (Shugart 1994: 38). Several scholars have emphasized the fact that since most incumbents are men, women candidates who run against male incumbents are likely to suffer from lower name recognition, fewer resources and less political support (Galligan 2008: 155-156; Schwindt-Bayer 2005; Schwindt-Bayer et al. 2010: 707). The fact that few women have served in the Dáil means that many men, but few women, are able to use their profile as a TD to gain local support and recognition. Furthermore, at the candidate selection stage, incumbents, most of whom are male, can rely on their local party followers for support, perpetuating the masculine nature of representation and party politics in Ireland (McGing and White 2012).

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Caul-Kittilson's (2006) cross-national study of women and party activity illustrates that women's achievement of high party office tends to increase their ambition and likelihood to stand for election. In Ireland, Galligan (2010: 271) has found that achieving leadership positions within the party is critical because it socialises candidates into the norms of the party. It also provides potential candidates with the local profile necessary to gain nomination by the local party selectorate. Women, however, have tended to occupy supporting rather than leadership roles within local and national party organisations (see Table 3). Galligan (2010: 272) contends that there is a persistent bias towards traditional gender roles in internal party structures and parties discourage the ambitions of women party members by continuing long-established patterns of male recruitment to local and national candidacies and leadership positions. Masculinised party cultures and traditional stereotyping of women's and men's roles in political parties leads to a situation where

women party members remain less likely to be seen – by themselves and their political parties – as potential candidates.

Political Culture and Gender Quotas in Ireland

It is important to note that gender quotas in Ireland, as well as its PR-STV electoral process, occurs within the context of a political culture that shapes how these political institutions work. Positively, there is an abundance of evidence that Irish *voters* do not evaluate candidates based on sex. In their comprehensive analyses of the 2002 Irish elections McElroy and Marsh (2010 and 2011) found that there is little discrimination by the public against female candidates. McElroy and Marsh incorporated a variety of data sources, including aggregate data from the Irish National Election Study and individual voting results from electronic voting in three election constituencies. They found that women candidates do not fare significantly worse than male candidates in the aggregate, even when one controls for just gender. Likewise, an analysis of the 2007 and 2011 elections found that female candidates were no less likely to receive first preference votes than male candidates when controlling for incumbency, experience, funding and other attributes (Buckley et al. forthcoming). The conclusion that candidate sex does not affect voters' preferences is also supported by experimental research (Buckley et al. 2007; Campbell and Cowley 2014).

Given the evidence, the prospects of increased female representation in Ireland in the gender quota era are positive. However, women TDs contend that the campaign process and governing system in Ireland needs to accommodate and adapt to family life and suggest that family-friendly reforms would encourage more women to seek and maintain seats in the Dáil (Knight et al. 2004). Like many other professions and institutions that historically were dominated by men, the patterns of work and expectations in Irish politics conforms to a masculine preference. While gender quotas will serve to blunt the masculinised cultures of political parties and political institutions resulting in more women candidates, the long term outlook for female representation in Ireland will also be shaped by the

political opportunity structure and on the level of support, encouragement, and resources that women receive in the larger political environment.

Discussion

Krook (2009) and Kenny (2013a) stress the critical role that the political institutional environment plays in determining the effects of equality measures such as gender quotas. Although the Irish gender quota reforms provide a mechanism to increase the number of female candidates nominated by the parties, advocates for reform hope that gender quotas will ultimately lead to increases in the percentage of women elected to the Dáil. At the same time, parties and political elites are likely to remain focused on the goal of maximising the number of seats won by their party. From the perspective of party selectorates, the gender quota will simply be one part or layer of the candidate selection process.

As highlighted in this article, informal rules surrounding incumbency and localism, and informal gendered legacies such as the masculinised cultures of Irish political parties play a significant role in candidate recruitment and selection processes. The challenge ahead for the effective implementation of gender quotas in Ireland is that pre-existing rules surrounding candidate selection, in particular informal ones, do not have an undermining effect. If parties act cynically and refuse to nominate women candidates or choose to nominate women to non-winnable seats, they risk alienating voters who would like to see more women in the Dáil, while at the same time wasting opportunities and resources to nominate female candidates who could actually win election. Conversely, parties that take advantage of the opportunity to recruit and run female candidates could see benefits at the ballot box. Research shows that Irish voters do not discriminate against women candidates. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that increased numbers of women candidates will result in higher numbers of women elected at future elections.

If parties fully embrace the quota, increased female representation may change the nature of Irish politics more significantly than we might now anticipate. In this new environment,

parties will likely have to re-evaluate who are the "best" candidates. Party leaders may also have to rethink how they recruit and develop candidates, which could transform the "rule-boundedness" or "institutionalisation" (Zetterberg 2013: 317) of candidate selection processes in Ireland.

Conclusion

This article contributes to the development of feminist institutionalism by revealing 1) the informal rules at play in candidate selection processes in Ireland and 2) the gendered nature of those informal rules. It highlights the power of informal mechanisms to shape and determine institutional processes and outcomes. It also shows how informal gender norms and practices can integrate with institutional procedures to influence opportunities for institutional actors. By surveying existing literature on women and elections in Ireland it illustrates that in the Irish case, masculinised party cultures and societal gendered legacies have traditionally combined to limit opportunities for women seeking political office.

The passage of the *Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012* is a significant effort to redress the historic gender imbalance in the Irish parliament. It represents an awareness of the embedded institutional and cultural practices that have kept Irish politics male-dominated for so long. At this point in time, a general election under the new candidate selection rules has yet to take place. As a result, it is difficult to conclude with certainty the impact of gender quotas on women's political representation. However, evidence from the 2014 local government elections in Ireland indicate that when more women appear on the ballot paper, more women get elected. When the gender quota is implemented, future research should examine political party compliance with the new candidate selection rule and the impact of quotas on candidate recruitment and selection processes. As predicted here, it is likely that all parties will comply with the rule to avoid severe financial penalty. However, the extent to which parties fully embrace the *spirit* of the law by promoting and supporting female candidacy, and selecting women to contest winnable seats, will be a key test of the effectiveness of gender quotas. Nevertheless, the gender quota law represents an important opportunity to confront the masculine status quo

of candidate selection processes in Irish elections and address the historical under-representation of women in Irish politics.

Tables

Table 1: Percentage of women candidates in the five main parties for Dáil elections, 2007 and 2011

Party	2007	2011
	%	%
Fianna Fáil	13.2	14.7
Fine Gael	16.5	15.4
Labour	22.0	26.5
Green Party	25.0	18.6
Sinn Féin	24.4	19.5

Source: Compiled by authors

Table 2: Women candidates as a percentage of the total number of candidates across parties/groupings in the 2009 and 2014 Local Elections

Local Election	Fine Gael (%)	Fianna Fáil (%)	Labour (%)	Sinn Féin (%)	Greens (%)	Others (%)
2009	18.1	16.9	23.1	22.8	22.1	10.8
2014	22.8	17.1	29.1	31.6	32.6	18.3

Source: Compiled by authors

Table 3: Women Constituency Officeholders in Fine Gael, Labour and Fianna Fáil in 2013

	Fine Gael (%)	Labour (%)	Fianna Fáil (%)
Chair	9.3	13.3	7.0
Vice-Chair	18.6	32.0	6.0
Secretary	18.6	35.0	46.0
Treasurer	32.5	23.0	25.0

Source: Buckley (2013). Sinn Féin data unavailable.

References

ALLEN, PETER. 2013. Gendered Candidate Emergence in Britain: Why are More Women Councillors Not Becoming MPs? Politics 23 (3): 147-59.

BACIK, IVANA. 2010. Idea for "Quotas" for Women in Politics, National Women's Council of Ireland, 6 August: Available at http://www.nwci.ie/news/2010/08/06/idea-of-quotas-for-women-in-politics/, accessed 23 June 2013.

BENOIT, KEN and MICHAEL MARSH. 2008. The Campaign Value of Incumbency: A New Solution to the Puzzle of Less Effective Incumbent Spending. American Journal of Political Science 52 (4): 874–90.

BHAVNANI, RIKHIL. R. 2009. Do Electoral Quotas Work after They Are Withdrawn? Evidence from a Natural Experiment in India. American Political Science Review 103 (1): 23-35.

BUCKLEY, FIONA. 2013. Women and Politics in the Republic of Ireland: The Road to Sex Quotas. Irish Political Studies 28 (3): 341-59.

BUCKLEY, FIONA, NEIL COLLINS, and THERESA REIDY. 2007. Ballot Paper Photographs and Low-Information Elections in Ireland. Politics 27 (3): 174–81.

BUCKLEY, FIONA, MACK MARIANI, CLAIRE MCGING and TIMOTHY J. WHITE. Forthcoming. Is Local Office a Springboard for Women to Dáil Éireann? Journal of Women, Politics and Policy.

CAMPBELL, ROSIE and PHILIP COWLEY. 2014. What Voters Want: Reactions to Candidate Characteristics in a Survey Experiment. Political Studies 62 (4): 745-65.

CARROLL, SUSAN J. 1985. Women as Candidates in American Politics. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

CAUL-KITTILSON, MIKI. 2006. Challenging Parties, Changing Parliaments: Women and Elected Office in Contemporary Western Europe. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

CAUL KITTILSON, MIKI AND SCHWINDT-BAYER, LESLIE A. 2012. The Gendered Effects of Electoral Institutions: Political Engagement and Participation. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

CSO – CENTRAL STATISTICS OFFICE 2012. Women and Men in Ireland 2011. Available at http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/otherreleases/2011/Women%20and%20Men%20in%20Ireland%202011.pdf, accessed 4 August 2013.

CSO – CENTRAL STATISTICS OFFICE 2014. Women and Men in Ireland 2013. Available at http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-wamii/womenandmeninireland2013/ accessed 11 November 2014.

CHILDS, SARAH. 2013. Negotiating Gendered Institutions: Women's Parliamentary Friendships. Politics & Gender 9 (2): 127-51.

CLANCY, EDEL, FIONA BUCKLEY, COLLETTE FINN, and MARGARET O'KEEFFE. 2012. The Road to 50/50 Gender Quotas for Ireland: Seanad & Dáil Debates 2012. Cork: 5050 Group Publishing.

CURTIN, JENNIFER. 2013. Reassessing the gendered effects of STV in Australia and New Zealand. Paper presented at the 3rd European Conference on Politics and Gender, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, 21-23 March 2013.

DAHLERUP, DRUDE. 2005. Increasing Women's Political Representation: New Trends in Gender Quotas. In Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers (Revised Edition), edited by Julie Ballington and Azza Karam. Stockholm: International IDEA, pp. 141-53.

DARCY, ROBERT, SUSAN WELCH, and JANET CLARK. 1994. Women, Elections, and Representation (2nd edition). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

DUERST-LAHTI, GEORGIA. 2005. Institutional Gendering: Theoretical Insights into the Environment of Women Officeholders. In Women and Elective Office: Past, Present, and Future (2nd edition), edited by Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 230–43.

ELGOOD, JESSICA, LOUISE VINTER, and RACHEL WILLIAMS. 2002. Man Enough for the Job? A Study of Parliamentary Candidates. Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.

ESTEVE-VOLART, BERTA and MANUEL BAGUES. 2012. Are Women Pawns in the Political Game? Evidence from Elections to the Spanish Senate. Journal of Public Economics 96 (3-4): 387-99.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. 2008. Electoral Gender Quota Systems and their Implementation in Europe. Directorate-General for Internal Policies, PE 408.309 (September).

FARRELL, BRIAN. 1985. Ireland: From Friends and Neighbours to Clients and Partisans: Some Dimensions of Parliamentary Representation under PR-STV. In Representatives of the People? Parliamentarians and Constituents in Western Democracies, edited by Vernon Bogdanor. Aldershot: Gower, pp. 237-64.

FAWCETT, LIZ. 1992. The Recruitment of Women to Local Politics in Ireland: A Case Study. *Irish Political Studies* 7: 41–55.

FRANCESCHET, SUSAN, MONA LENA KROOK, and JENNIFER M. PISCOPO. 2012. Conceptualizing the Impact of Gender Quotas. In The Impact of Gender Quotas, edited by Susan Franceschet, Mona Lena Krook, and Jennifer M. Piscopo. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 3-26.

FRÉCHETTE, GUILLAUME R., FRANCOIS MANIQUET, and MASSIMO MORELLI. 2008. Incumbents' Interests and Gender Quotas. American Journal of Political Science 52 (4): 891-907.

GADDIE, RONALD KEITH and CHARLES S. BULLOCK III. 1995. Congressional Elections and the Year of the Woman: Structural and Elite Influences on Female Candidacies. Social Science Quarterly 76 (4): 749-62.

GALLAGHER, MICHAEL. 1980. Candidate Selection in Ireland: The Impact of Localism and the Electoral System. British Journal of Political Science 10 (4): 489–503.

GALLIGAN, YVONNE. 1993. Party Politics and Gender in the Republic of Ireland. In Gender and Party Politics, edited by Joni Lovenduski and Pippa Norris. London: Sage, pp. 147-67.

GALLIGAN, YVONNE. 2008. STV: A Gender-Proportional System? In Women and Legislative Representation: Electoral Systems, Political Parties, and Sex Quotas, edited by Manon Trembly. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 149-60.

GALLIGAN, YVONNE. 2010. Women in Politics. In Politics in the Republic of Ireland (5th edition), edited by John Coakley and Michael Gallagher. New York: PSAI Press/Routledge, pp. 263-91.

GEISSE, BRIGITTE and EVELIN HUST. 2005. Democratic Mobilisation through Quotas: Experiences in India and Germany. Commonwealth & Comparative Politics 43 (2): 393-425.

GERTZOG, IRWIN N. and M. MICHELE SIMARD. 1981. Women and "Hopeless" Congressional Candidacies: Nomination Frequency, 1916-1978. American Politics Quarterly 9 (4): 449-66.

HICKMAN, JOHN C. 1997. The Candidacy and Election of Women in Japanese SNTV Electoral System. Women and Politics 18 (2): 1-26.

HOGAN, PHIL. 2012 Hogan brings Groundbreaking Legislation before Seanad, Press Release (2 February). Available at http://www.environ.ie/en/LocalGovernment/Voting/News/MainBody,29339,en.htm, accessed 8 August 2013.

HTUN, MALA N. and MARK P. JONES. 2002. Engendering the Right to Participate in Decision-Making. In Gender and the Politics of Rights and Democracy in Latin America, edited by Nikke Craske and Maxine Molyneux. New York: Palgrave, pp. 32-56.

HUGHES, MELANIE H. 2011. Intersectionality, Quotas, and Minority Women's Political Representation Worldwide. American Political Science Review 105 (3): 604-20.

JILLSON, CALVIN and RICK K. WILSON. 1994. Congressional Dynamics: Structure, Coordination and Choice in the First American Congress, 1774–1789. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

KAM, CINDY. D. and ELIZABETH J. ZECHMEISTER. 2013. Name Recognition and Candidate Support. American Journal of Political Science 57 (4): 971-86

KAMINSKY, JACKIE and TIMOTHY J. WHITE. 2007. Electoral Systems and Women's Representation in Australia. Commonwealth & Comparative Politics 45 (2): 185-201.

KENNY, MERYL. 2013a. Gender and Political Recruitment: Theorizing Institutional Change. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

KENNY, MERYL. 2013b. Gender, Institutions and Political Recruitment: A Research Agenda. Available at http://genderpoliticsatedinburgh.wordpress.com/2013/06/18/gender-institutions-and-political-recruitment-a-research-agenda/, accessed 24 July 2013.

KNIGHT, KATHLEEN, YVONNE GALLIGAN, and UNA NIC GIOLLLA CHOILLE. 2004. Equalizing Opportunities for Women in Electoral Politics in Ireland: The Views of Women Members of Parliament. Women and Politics 26 (1): 1-20.

KROOK, MONA LENA. 2009. Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

KROOK, MONA LENA and FIONA MACKAY. 2011. Gender, Politics and Institutions**:** Towards a Feminist Institutionalism. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

LA COUR DABELKO, KIRSTEN and PAUL S. HERRNSON. 1997. Women's and Men's Campaigns for the U.S. House of Representatives. Political Research Quarterly 50 (1): 121-35.

LIJPHART, AREND. 1999. Australian Democracy: Modifying Majoritarianism? Australian Journal of Political Science 34 (3): 313-26.

MARIANI, MACK. 2008. A Gendered Pipeline? The Advancement of State Legislators to Congress in Five States. Politics & Gender 4 (2): 285-308.

MATLAND, RICHARD E. and MICHELE M. TAYLOR. 1997. Electoral System Effects on Women's Representation. Comparative Political Studies 30 (2): 186-210.

MCELROY, GAIL and MICHAEL MARSH. 2010. Candidate Gender and Voter Choice: Analysis from a Multimember Preferential Voting System. Political Research Quarterly 63 (4): 822-33.

MCELROY, GAIL and MICHAEL MARSH. 2011. Electing Women to the Dáil: Gender Cues and the Irish Voter. Irish Political Studies 26 (4): 521-34.

MCGING, CLAIRE. 2013. The Single Transferable Vote (STV) and Women's Representation in Ireland. Irish Political Studies 28 (3): 322-40.

MCGING, CLAIRE and TIMOTHY J. WHITE. 2012. Gender and Electoral Representation in Ireland. Études Irlandaisies 37 (2): 33-48

MCGRAW, SEAN. 2008. Managing Change: Party Competition in the New Ireland. Irish Political Studies 23 (4): 627-48.

MURRAY, RAINBOW. 2008. The Power of Sex and Incumbency: A Longitudinal Study of Electoral Performance in France. Party Politics 14 (5): 539-54.

MURRAY, RAINBOW, MONA LENA KROOK, and KATHERINE A. R. OPELLO. 2012. Why are Gender Quotas Adopted? Party Pragmatism and Parity in France. Political Research Quarterly 65 (3): 529-43.

NWCI-National Women's Council of Ireland. 2009. Who Cares? Available at http://www.nwci.ie/download/pdf/who_cares_october_2009.pdf, accessed 7 July 2013.

OIREACHTAS. 2009. Women's Participation in Politics. Joint Committee on Justice, Equality, Defense and Women's Rights. Second Report (October).

OIREACHTAS. 2013. Localism in Irish politics and local government reform. Oireachtas Library & Research Service, Spotlight, No. 2.

PAXTON, PAMELA, MELANIE M. HUGHES, and MATTHEW A. PAINTER. 2010. Growth in Women's Political Representation: A Longitudinal Exploration of Democracy, Electoral System and Gender Quotas. European Journal of Political Research 49 (1): 25-52.

RANDALL, VICKY and AIBHE SMYTH. 1987. Bishops and Bailiwicks: Obstacles to Women's Political Participation in Ireland. Economic and Social Review 18 (3): 189–214.

REIDY, THERESA. 2011. Candidate Selection. In How Ireland Voted 2011: The Full Story of Ireland's Earthquake Election, edited by Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 47-67.

SHUGART, MATTHEW S. 1994. Minorities Represented and Unrepresented. In Electoral Systems in Comparative Perspective: Their Impact on Women and Minorities, edited by Wilma Rule and Joseph F. Zimmerman. London: Greenwood Press, pp. 31-41.

SCHWINDT-BAYER, LESLIE A. 2005. The Incumbency Disadvantage and Women's Election to Legislative Office. Electoral Studies 24 (2): 227–44.

SCHWINDT-BAYER, LESLIE A., MICHAEL MALECKI, and BRIAN F. CRISP. 2010. Candidate Gender and Electoral Success in Single Transferable Vote Systems. British Journal of Political Science 40 (3): 693-709.

STAMBOUGH, STEPHEN. J. and VALERIE R. O'REGAN. 2007. Republican Lambs and the Democratic Pipeline: Differences in the Nomination of Female Gubernatorial Candidates. Politics & Gender 3 (3): 349-68.

WEEKS, LIAM. 2007. Candidate Selection: Democratic Centralism or Managed Democracy? In How Ireland Voted 2007: The Full Story of Ireland's General Election, edited by Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 48-64.

WHITE, TIMOTHY J. 2006. Why So Few Women in Dáil Éireann? The Effects of the Single Transferable Vote Election System. New Hibernia Review 10 (4): 71-83.

ZETTERBERG, PÄR. 2013. The Dynamic Relationship between Gender Quotas and Political Institutions. Politics & Gender 9 (3): 316-21.