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Windows of Political Opportunity

Institutional Instability and Gender Inequality in the World's National Legislatures

ABSTRACT: *Although women remain underrepresented in national politics throughout the world, they have also made significant progress toward equality in recent decades. Yet, for the almost 2 billion women living under regimes with limited political rights and civil liberties, we know little about the processes that facilitate their entry into politics. One broad mechanism that may impact women under both democratic and closed systems is elite turnover. In this article, I compare two routes to elite turnover, elections and legislative interruptions, and assess their impact on women's parliamentary representation. Legislative interruptions refer to any undemocratic or unconstitutional break in a country's legislature lasting at least six months. I explore the effects of elections and legislative interruptions on women's parliamentary representation using data from the Women in Parliaments Longitudinal Project, which covers more than 150 countries. Analyzing the likelihood that women will achieve 10 percent in parliament between 1950 and 2000, I find that the effect of legislative interruptions is similar in magnitude to the effect of democratic elections. Although breaks lasting three to ten years increase the likelihood that women will reach the 10 percent threshold, the effect of the longest legislative breaks is negative. Interruptions are also less effective*

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vehicles for representation when considering more significant barriers—15 percent and 20 percent women in parliament. Across each of these outcomes, frequent interruptions hinder women's political progress. In sum, nondemocratic routes to elite turnover can foster real gains in women's representation, but only when legislative breaks are rare. Furthermore, nondemocratic routes to elite turnover are ultimately less effective than regular democratic elections at facilitating high levels of women in politics.

Women remain underrepresented in national politics throughout the world. As of July 2007, women occupied only about 18 percent of the seats in national legislatures (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2005). In fact, in most countries more men take office in a single year than the sum total of women who have held legislative positions throughout the country's entire history. Yet women have also made significant progress toward equality in recent decades. In 2003, for example, women were elected to nearly half the seats in the lower house of Rwanda's national legislature—48.8 percent. Such developments are consequential because the political representation of women by women may have profound effects. Because women focus their efforts on different types of legislation than their male counterparts, women's underrepresentation in politics may mean that issues such as sexual harassment, maternity leave, reproductive rights, and female health care receive little attention (Dodson 1991; O'Regan 2000; Swers 2002). And even in countries where legislatures have less power or influence, women's formal representation impacts both men's assessment of women's capacities and the aspirations and self-esteem of women (Johnson, Kabuchu, and Vusiya 2003).

Although attention to women's political representation has increased in recent years, our understanding of the factors that impact women's political ascension is limited. First, the vast majority of quantitative research involving women in politics has been cross-sectional.¹ Although several important case studies have furthered understanding about women's entry and rise in national politics, cross-national studies often focus on single and recent time points, limiting the ability of past research to explore the more dynamic processes that could affect women's access to political power (Paxton, Hughes, and Green 2006). Second, cross-national research tends to focus on women's representation in Western industrialized democracies (e.g., Caul 2001; Kohn 1980; Norris 1985; Rule 1987, 1994; Siaroff 2000; Studlar and McAllister 2002). Thus, for the almost 2 billion women living under authoritarian or semidemocratic regimes with limited political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House 2005), we know little about the varied mechanisms that facilitate their entry into politics across time and across vastly different contexts. Several studies have expanded research on women's political representation by using broader, worldwide samples (e.g., Kenworthy and Malami 1999; Kunovich and Paxton 2003; Norris and Inglehardt 2001). But recent research has also demonstrated the limits of applying standard models for Western industrialized democracies to other regions and levels of development (Hughes 2004; Matland 1998).

Across the world and over time, one broad process by which women are likely to rise to power is through *elite turnover*. Political theorists have long asserted that elite turnover offers increased chances for women and minorities to gain representation (Putnam 1976). Yet the route to elite turnover and its frequency varies depending on a country's political, economic, and cultural circumstances. In democratic and semidemocratic systems, turnover may be facilitated by specific electoral configurations which maximize party competition and minimize incumbent advantage. For example, a flood of research has confirmed that party-list proportional representation systems result in larger numbers of female legislators than other types of electoral systems (Kenworthy and Malami 1999; Matland and Studlar 1996; Norris 1985; Paxton 1997; Paxton and Kunovich 2003; Reynolds 1999; Rule 1994; Rule and Zimmerman 1994; Siaroff 2000).

On the other hand, in closed systems, less democratic routes to elite turnover may also provide women with windows of opportunity for entering politics. For example, recent research suggests that certain types of civil wars may generate political openings through which women can make substantial gains in political representation (Hughes 2004). But, not all forms of regime instability increase women's representation. For example, case studies from Eastern Europe and Africa have found that democratic transitions often decrease women's formal representation (Matland and Montgomery 2003; Yoon 2001). Here, I investigate one broad nondemocratic route to elite turnover, the legislative interruption. I define legislative interruptions as any undemocratic or unconstitutional break in a country's legislature lasting a minimum of six months. Legislative interruptions may be initiated by ruling elites (e.g., by declaring a national emergency), by oppositional forces inside a country (e.g., coups), or by international intervention.

In this article, I compare the effects of democratic and nondemocratic routes to political representation by investigating both elections and legislative interruptions. While electoral routes to legislative turnover have been studied in research on electoral systems, incumbency, and term limits (e.g., Andersen and Thorson 1984; Carroll and Jenkins 2001a; Nechemias 1987; Thompson and Moncrief 1993; Schwindt-Bayer 2005), the effect of legislative interruptions on women's acquisition of power has not been assessed. On the one hand, the dissolution of a nation's parliament may create opportunities for women to contest seats upon the legislature's reconstitution. On the other hand, an interruption may signify the presence or ascendance of a regime that is hostile to female representation. Further, repeated unconstitutional seizure of governmental control or long periods of interruption may have negative cumulative effects on the ability of women to generate gains in representation.

To assess the effects of elections and interruptions on women in politics, I take an approach that explicitly accounts for time, event history analysis. Specifically, I analyze the effects of elections and legislative interruptions on the odds of women gaining 10 percent, 15 percent, and 20 percent of the seats in parliament for 153 countries from 1950 to 2000.² Although the selection of these thresholds is somewhat arbitrary, scholars, policy analysts and activists often use these cut points to

assess levels of women's representation worldwide (see Paxton, Hughes, and Green 2006). Furthermore, drawing on seminal work by Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977), some scholars argue that reaching thresholds like 15 percent women in parliament may constitute a "critical mass" of women that, once reached, improves women's ability to shape the legislative process.³ Further, by modeling multiple successive outcomes, I am able to determine how elections and legislative interruptions influence country's attainments of different levels of representation over time. Data are drawn from the Women in Parliaments Longitudinal Project, a newly available data set that includes information on women's representation as well as common measures used in cross-national research on women in national legislatures (Paxton, Hughes, and Green 2005).

Overall, I extend knowledge about women's political representation in two ways: first, by considering the impact of mechanisms that are fundamentally non-democratic; and second, by employing longitudinal analysis across a large number of time points. Before turning to the analysis, I briefly summarize prior research on women's parliamentary representation worldwide and then consider how elite turnover broadly impacts women in politics.

Cross-National Variation in Women's Political Representation

Varying levels of female participation in parliament are thought to result from differences in both the "supply" of and the "demand" for female candidates (Kunovich and Paxton 2005; Norris 1997; Paxton 1997; Paxton and Hughes 2007; Paxton and Kunovich 2003; Randall 1987). "Supply" is determined by socioeconomic or structural factors. Because political elites are often highly educated and are concentrated in certain professions such as law, women's access to educational and professional opportunities may affect their ability to stand for office (Paxton and Kunovich 2003; Putnam 1976). Moreover, gender stratification theorists suggest that women's appearance in highly valued or indispensable positions in the labor force is a precursor to political equality (Blumberg 1984; Chafetz 1984). Despite the theoretical strength of supply-side arguments, however, empirical evidence supporting this perspective is mixed (Paxton, Kunovich, and Hughes 2007). Variables such as the percentage of women in education or the labor force often do not reach statistical significance in cross-national research (e.g., Kenworthy and Malami 1999; Kunovich and Paxton 2005; Paxton 1997).

Institutional differences in political systems may also create a different "demand" for women (Kunovich and Paxton 2005). Political parties and electoral systems may be structured such that they enhance or limit the ability of groups in government to promote their own interests, and, therefore, they may be crucial factors in allowing women equal access (Caul 1999, 2001; Gallagher 1988; Kohn 1980). For example, compared with plurality-majority electoral systems, proportional representation (PR) systems have a positive and statistically significant effect on female parliamentary representation (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Matland

1993; Norris 1997; Rule 1981, 1987).⁴ Research also suggests that the dominance of leftist political parties (Kenworthy and Malami 1999; Matland 1993; Reynolds 1999) and the presence of gender quotas (Caul 2001; Dahlerup 2006b; Krook 2007) also facilitate higher levels of women's representation. Generally, political factors find more support in cross-national empirical research than do socioeconomic or structural factors (Paxton, Kunovich, and Hughes 2007).⁵

One political factor that is not well understood in research on women's political representation is the role of democracy. Normatively, democracies often advance ideas about equality and fairness, while authoritarian regimes often rely on traditional ideas about masculinity and femininity that confine women to traditional roles (Waylen 1996: 114). Further, democracies operate under clear, consistent, and transparent rules, which may allow women to learn over time how to better compete against men for political power (Paxton 1997). Thus, we might expect that higher numbers of women should be found in the national legislatures of established democracies than of fledgling democracies or authoritarian regimes. But an alternative perspective suggests that democracy may not always be a positive force for women's political representation. In the absence of democratic institutions, autocratic regimes may place women into power without popular support (Howell 2002; Matland and Montgomery 2003). And, across the world, many semidemocratic and autocratic regimes have adopted gender quotas that have fueled large-scale gains in women's political representation (Tripp 2003). Therefore, autocracies may, in fact, have higher levels of women in politics than their democratic counterparts.

Overall, empirical research provides greater support for the latter perspective. In many worldwide studies that include broad samples of democracies, semidemocracies, and autocratic regimes, level of democracy is often statistically insignificant (Kenworthy and Malami 1999; Paxton and Kunovich 2003; Reynolds 1999) or has a negative effect (Paxton 1997). And when authoritarian regimes transition to democracy, the political representation of women often declines precipitously (Matland and Montgomery 2003; Waylen 1994; Yoon 2001). Generally, however, little is understood about the processes that facilitate women's representation across less democratic systems.⁶

Ideological beliefs form a third important explanation for levels of female participation in parliament, affecting both the supply of and demand for women in politics. While favorable institutional rules may be present alongside an adequate supply of qualified female candidates, cultural norms may still hinder women's opportunities to participate in politics (Norris and Inglehart 2001; Paxton and Kunovich 2003; Rule and Zimmerman 1994). The effects of gender ideology on women's political representation are difficult to capture in cross-national research. But two recent studies use measures from the World Values Survey to demonstrate the importance of ideology in shaping women's legislative representation across countries (Norris and Inglehart 2001; Paxton and Kunovich 2003). Both theory and research suggest that societal values and beliefs strongly influence women's access to political power throughout the world.

Elite Turnover and Women's Political Representation

One broad set of factors theorized to influence the political representation of women includes those that facilitate or impede elite turnover. Although not often explicitly theorized or measured in cross-national empirical research on women in politics, political theorists have long suggested that elite turnover strongly influences women's political ascension (Putnam 1976). Elite turnover—also called legislative turnover, elite circulation, or conceptualized as its inverse, legislative retention—has fairly straightforward theoretical effects on women's political representation. Since political institutions have historically been dominated by men, a slow rate of change in the composition of a legislature is expected to further male domination, even in the presence of normative support for female candidates. In contrast, higher rates of elite turnover, while not guaranteeing that women will be elected or appointed in greater numbers, provide more opportunities for women to enter politics. While both structural and ideological forces may contribute to the frequency and type of elite turnover across countries, elite turnover is largely conceptualized as a political, or demand-side, explanation. In countries where elite turnover is higher, there is greater demand for politicians to replace the old guard, and this greater demand may benefit women.

One of the most widely studied explanations for differences in elite turnover across countries is the varied choice of electoral systems (Matland and Studlar 2004; UNDP 2007). Compared to plurality–majority systems, proportional representation systems have higher rates of legislator turnover within parties (Matland and Studlar 2004). In plurality–majority systems such as in the United States, incumbents rarely lose their seats to a member of their own party. But in proportional representation systems, parties may select different candidates or change their order on party lists over time to attract voters, and these changes produce higher rates of elite turnover. Therefore, one explanation for why PR systems benefit women politically is that they generate higher elite turnover.

The effect of elite turnover on women in politics has received more direct attention in studies of incumbency. In the United States, for example, research emphasizes the role of incumbency in slowing the growth of women's political representation (Andersen and Thorson 1984; Darcy and Choike 1986; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Palmer and Simon 2006). Indeed, U.S. states with higher turnover rates elect greater numbers of women. Across nonsouthern state legislatures in the 1980s, for example, a 10 percent increase in legislator turnover increased women's share of seats by 2.7 percent (Nechemias 1987). Similarly, research on women's representation in the United Kingdom suggests that high rates of incumbent reelection have led to low levels of female legislative representation (Norris 1993). Although the bulk of research on incumbency centers on the United States and to a lesser extent the United Kingdom, emerging research suggests that incumbency rates matter for women across a wider range of institutional and socioeconomic contexts (Schwindt-Bayer 2005). Analyzing a sample of thirty-three democratic

countries from 1978 to 1998, Schwandt-Bayer (2005) finds that countries with higher incumbency rates elect fewer women to national legislatures. Thus, across advanced industrial democracies, higher elite turnover appears to facilitate higher levels of women's representation.

Partly as a response to strong incumbency effects, some state and national legislatures have adopted term limits (Carroll and Jenkins 2001a, 2001b; Schwandt-Bayer 2005; Thompson and Moncrief 1993). The specific institutional rules of term limits vary widely across states and countries, but generally, these measures all increase elite turnover. Therefore, scholars and policy analysts expect to find that term limits benefit women's legislative representation. However, empirical studies of the effects of term limits on women in politics have shown mixed results. For instance, focusing on term limits in California, Caress (1999) finds that they may initially fuel increases in women's political representation, but that over time, term limits may actually decrease women's numbers. Comparing across U.S. states with term limits, Carroll and Jenkins (2001a) observe that these policies are generally associated with *lower* levels of women's representation. But not all research finds this negative effect. In some countries in Latin America, for example, term limits appear to increase women's representation in national legislatures (Schwandt-Bayer 2005).

Overall, research on electoral systems, incumbency, and term limits suggests that higher rates of elite turnover benefit women politically. But, not all routes to elite turnover have the same effects. Especially high rates of turnover, such as those generated by term limits, may actually inhibit women's ability to consolidate gains in political representation.

Legislative Interruptions and Women in Politics

Existing research exploring the effects of electoral systems, incumbency, and term limits on women's political representation tends to focus on one broad mechanism for change—elections. But across countries, political theorists enumerate a wide range of circumstances—apart from electoral defeats—that contribute to elite turnover. Examples include loss of key factional support, coups d'état, assassinations, and foreign interventions (Putnam 1976). Each of these circumstances undermines the stability of a political system, generating political openings and elite turnover. But the effect of institutional instability on women's political representation is not well understood. A few studies have begun to consider the role of armed conflict and regime change in fostering women's legislative gains (e.g., Bauer and Britton 2006; Hughes 2004). But again, the effects of these less democratic routes to increasing women's presence in national legislatures remain underexplored.

In this article, I evaluate two events that facilitate elite turnover—elections and legislative interruptions, the latter defined as any undemocratic or unconstitutional break in a country's legislature lasting at least six months. Interruptions are broadly conceptualized to include the reconstitution of a legislature following a wide range of phenomena, including national emergencies, coups, and wars. Thus, I investigate

the effects of a common democratic route to political change, elections, as well as processes more common in less democratic or transitional regimes, legislative interruptions. By broadly comparing the effects of elections and legislative interruptions, I hope to improve our understanding of the processes that influence women's differential levels of political representation across a wide range of democratic, semidemocratic, autocratic, and transitional contexts.

First, I evaluate the effect of elections on women's political representation. Of course, not all elections alter the political status quo. Therefore, it is possible that elections may not contribute to significant gains in women's political representation. Women may enter politics through other means, such as when they are appointed to replace male candidates who vacate a seat midterm. In some countries, structural, political, or ideological barriers may also prevent elections from benefiting women. However, research suggests that global norms about proper levels of women's political incorporation have ratcheted up over time (Paxton, Hughes, and Green 2005). Thus, across the majority of countries, elections—and the turnover in political elites that results—should advance women's political representation. This leads to my first hypothesis:

H1: I expect that elections will increase the chance that women will reach significant thresholds of representation.

Next, I consider the effects of legislative interruptions. At first glance, it is difficult to see how periods of national emergency, coups, and wars might benefit women politically. But, a wide range of research suggests that periods of instability may provide windows of opportunity for women to organize politically and push for change (Ferree 1994; Hughes 2004; Tamale 1999; Urdang 1989). As legislatures are reconstituted following a period of crisis, women may experience new opportunities to run for political office, opportunities that were perhaps lacking during stable authoritarian rule. Even if the ruling regime is left in power, ruling elites may place women into visible political positions to improve their country's image on the international stage. Alternatively, women may appear less threatening to controlling elites during a time of chaos and uncertainty. For a number of reasons, therefore, instability and legislative interruptions may offer women new opportunities for access to political positions. My second hypothesis is as follows:

H2: I hypothesize that legislative interruptions will increase the chance that women will reach significant thresholds of representation.

But, I also suggest that not all legislative interruptions will have the same impact on women's political representation. Research on the effects of internal armed conflict on women's political representation finds that only large-scale and lengthy wars have a sizable positive impact on women's presence in the postwar government (Hughes 2004). Similarly, the length of the legislative break likely affects the degree of elite turnover and the result for women's political representation. Short parliamentary breaks—those shorter than a typical election cycle of four to five

years—may indicate that the postinterruption legislative body changes only slightly in composition, while longer periods of crisis may facilitate greater turnover.

H3: I hypothesize a positive linear relationship between interruption length and the likelihood that women will reach significant thresholds of representation.

However, it is also possible that an especially lengthy absence of a national legislature may limit women's opportunities to pursue political office. Extended breaks, such as those greater than ten years (roughly equivalent to more than two democratic election cycles), may suggest extreme levels of repression that prevent women and other marginalized groups from banding together. As legislatures are reconstituted after especially long breaks, women may not be well positioned to press for political representation. Thus, I present an alternative hypothesis, suggesting that the relationship between interruption length and women's political representation may be nonlinear.

H3b: I expect the relationship between interruption length and reaching higher levels of women's political representation to be reverse u-shaped.

Multiple interruptions may also negatively affect women's political representation by preventing women from institutionalizing postinterruption gains. As discussed above, the literature on term limits suggests that not all routes to elite turnover benefit women's political representation. Women may initially be pulled into office, but subject to term limits, qualified women (like qualified men) must leave office over time. Multiple or frequent interruptions may function like term limits, such that women initially enter political office following an interruption, but continued instability reduces women's chances at consolidating gains. Therefore, I suggest the following:

H4: I expect frequency of interruptions to be negatively associated with the ability to reach significant thresholds of women's political representation.

Overall, these latter two hypotheses follow from existing research on democratic routes to elite turnover, which suggest that turnover may benefit women in politics, but especially high rates of turnover may actually inhibit women's progress.

Data and Methods

To explore the effects of elections and legislative interruptions over time, I analyze yearly data on the percentage of women in a country's lower house, obtained from the Women in Parliaments Longitudinal Project (Paxton, Hughes, and Green 2005). This new data set compiles information on women in parliament from numerous sources—the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the CIA *World Factbook*, U.S. State Department's Background Notes, and governmental and national legislature Web sites—and includes data on women in politics as well as common variables used

in cross-national analyses. The data span more than 200 countries and more than fifty years.

Of the available cases, I analyze 153 countries that had reached a population of 1,000,000 by the year 2000, according to the United Nations Statistics Division estimates (2004).⁷ While these countries span the world map, the size restriction causes the Pacific Islands and the Caribbean to be underrepresented.⁸ Several countries no longer in existence are included in the analyses, such as Czechoslovakia, North and South Yemen, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union.⁹

I begin analyses in 1950, a time in which notions about including women in the political arena had improved substantially from the prewar period. For the first time, many countries were recognizing women as voting citizens, and newly independent countries were expected to extend suffrage to women (Paxton, Hughes, and Green 2006; Ramirez, Soysal, and Shanahan 1997). It is also during this period that the first countries began to reach substantial levels of women's political representation.

I estimate statistical models for two primary outcomes: reaching 10 percent women and reaching 15 percent women in parliament. Ten percent women in the legislature indicates that women have gained at least nominal representation in a country's legislature, while 15 percent may bring women closer to the "critical mass" necessary to influence legislation.¹⁰ The five countries that reached 10 percent women in parliament prior to 1950 are included in the analysis, coded as reaching 10 percent in the first year.¹¹ In auxiliary analyses, I also investigate the effects of elections and legislative interruptions on reaching 20 percent women in parliament.¹²

I analyze the threshold variables for 10 percent, 15 percent, and 20 percent using event history analysis, an ideal method for cross-national data over significant periods of time. Specifically, I employ a multivariate discrete logit model with time-varying covariates, appropriate when events occur at regular, discrete points in time (Allison 1995). The logit model estimates the probability P_{ct} that a country c reaches a threshold at time t , given that the country has not already achieved that threshold. P_{ct} is related to the covariates by the following logistic regression equation (Allison 1995):

$$\log\left(\frac{P_{ct}}{1-P_{ct}}\right) = \alpha_t + \beta_1 x_{ct1} + \dots + \beta_k \lambda$$

To support the analysis, I constructed two event history files, where each country contributes one file record for each year from 1950 or the country's first parliament until 10 percent or 15 percent women is reached in the legislature, until the country is dissolved (e.g., Yemen Arab Republic), or until the year 2000. For each of the event history files, the dependent variable is coded 0 in each country-year until the specified threshold of women's political representation is reached, when the dependent variable is coded 1. Country-years in which legislatures are not convening are excluded. The final analyses files comprise 2,946 and 3,530 complete observations for reaching 10

percent and 15 percent, respectively;¹³ 101 countries reach the 10 percent threshold, while only 66 countries reach 15 percent women by the millennium.

Table 1 lists the independent variables used to predict whether a country reaches either threshold in a given year. First, I use a dummy variable, Election, to indicate any year in which elections took place that did *not* follow a significant legislative interruption. When a legislature reconvenes or is newly elected following a break, a second dummy variable, Interruption, is coded. For both elections and interruptions, the absence of the event is the reference group (coded 0). I also consider whether additional interruptions, beyond the first, help or hinder women's acquisition of seats through a time-invariant variable measuring the number of interruptions between the first legislature and 2000 or the year the threshold was reached. I investigate whether the effect of the legislative interruption varies by interruption length, which varies from one to twenty-seven years. In addition, I examine whether the effect of interruption length is nonlinear through a squared term. For a list of all countries experiencing an interruption, see Appendix A. To account for duration dependency, I also include a linear term coded to follow calendar time.¹⁴

To test effects of legislative interruptions, I incorporate a number of control measures often used in prior research. First, because specific measures of gender ideology such as those found in the *World Values Survey* are not available from 1950, I follow the practice employed by past researchers and use region and religion as cultural proxies (e.g., Kenworthy and Malami 1999; Moore and Shackman 1996; Paxton 1997). I also include two variables to measure each country's political system over time. First, I code Marxist-Leninist in a country through a dummy variable indicating that such a regime was in power in the given year. Second, level of democracy and autocracy is measured as the POLITY IV score, an additive fifteen-point scale (-7 to 7) (Marshall and Jaggers 2002). I use the polity2 variable, which assesses democracy scores even during periods of interruption or transition. Finally, the Penn World Tables provide a trusted source for cross-national indicators of gross domestic product (GDP) from 1950 onward.¹⁵

Results

Table 2 presents the results of the discrete time models predicting 10 percent women in parliament. Model 1 includes the baseline model: region and religion dummies, the polity score, Marxist-Leninist, GDP per capita, and time. Countries in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe have higher log-odds of reaching 10 percent women in parliament in a given year, while predominantly Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, or mixed religion countries perform poorly when compared with their Protestant counterparts. Similar to previous research, level of democracy and industrialization are statistically insignificant in predicting women's political representation, while Marxist-Leninist has a strong positive effect. The linear term for calendar time is also statistically significant with each additional year of time increasing the hazard of reaching 10 percent women in parliament by about 9 percent. In simpler terms, each decade

Table 1

Variables, Operationalization, and Data Sources

Variable name	Operationalization	Data source
<i>Dependent variables</i>		
Thresh10	Dummy variable coded 1 in the year a country reaches 10 percent women in politics	Paxton, Hughes, and Green (2005)
Thresh15	Dummy variable coded 1 in the year a country reaches 15 percent women in politics	Paxton, Hughes, and Green (2005)
Thresh20	Dummy variable coded 1 in the year a country reaches 20 percent women in politics	Paxton, Hughes, and Green (2005)
<i>Theoretical variables</i>		
Election	Dummy variable indicating the presence of an election in the year, excluding elections following breaks	Paxton, Hughes, and Green (2005)
Interruption	Dummy variable indicating the return of the legislature following a legislative interruption	
Number breaks	The number of breaks measured from the country's first parliament until experiencing the event or censoring	
Length Break	The number of years the country was without a parliament, coded for each interruption	
Length Break ²	Squared term for the Length Break variable	
<i>Control variables</i>		
Polity Score	Index ranging from -7 to +7, with higher values indicating higher levels of democracy	POLITY IV
Region	7 time-invariant dummy variables--Asia and the Pacific Islands, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Middle East and North Africa, Scandinavia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Western Industrialized (reference category)	<i>World Almanac</i> (1996)
Religion	4 time-invariant dummy variables indicating a country's dominant religion—Catholic, Muslim, Other (including Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, and mixed), and Protestant (reference category)	Paxton, Hughes, and Green (2005)
Marxist-Leninist	Dummy variable indicating rule by Marxist-Leninist central government in a given year	CIA <i>World Factbook</i> (2004), the <i>New Book of World Rankings</i> (1984), and various country-specific Web sites
GDP Per Capita	Logged GDP per capita	Penn World Tables 6.1

Sources: Pamela Paxton, Melanie M. Hughes, and Jennifer Green, *Women in Parliaments Longitudinal Project* [DataFile], Ohio State University, 2005; idem, "The Impact of the Growth and Discourse of the International Women's Movement on Women's Political Representation," *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 6 (2006): 898–920.

Table 2

Parameter Estimates, Significance Levels, and Odds Ratios Predicting the Log-Odds of Reaching 10 Percent Women in Parliament for 153 countries, 1950-2000

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Estimate	Odds ratio	Estimate	Odds ratio	Estimate	Odds ratio	Estimate	Odds ratio
Intercept	-7.35***	0.00	-9.91***	0.00	-9.44***	0.00	-9.87***	0.00
Year	0.09*** (0.01)	1.10	0.11*** (0.02)	1.11	0.11*** (0.02)	1.11	0.11*** (0.02)	1.11
Eastern Europe	1.84** (0.65)	6.30	2.06** (0.76)	7.86	1.98** (0.75)	7.27	1.96** (0.76)	7.10
Asia	-0.08 (0.63)	0.93	0.26 (0.69)	1.29	0.16 (0.69)	1.18	0.20 (0.69)	1.23
Latin America	0.49 (0.57)	1.63	0.82 (0.59)	2.27	0.72 (0.59)	2.06	0.85 (0.59)	2.35
Scandinavia	3.31*** (0.75)	27.30	3.92*** (0.84)	50.56	3.83*** (0.83)	46.11	3.95*** (0.84)	51.77
Middle East	-0.68 (0.82)	0.51	0.03 (0.90)	1.03	-0.22 (0.89)	0.80	-0.10 (0.90)	0.90
Africa	0.56 (0.69)	1.75	1.06 (0.74)	2.89	0.96 (0.73)	2.60	1.03 (0.73)	2.81
Muslim	-0.13 (0.42)	0.88	-0.25 (0.47)	0.78	-0.18 (0.47)	0.83	-0.13 (0.47)	0.88
Catholic	0.14 (0.42)	1.15	0.49 (0.46)	1.63	0.46 (0.46)	1.59	0.49 (0.46)	1.64

Other	-1.26** (0.46)	0.28	-1.33** (0.51)	0.26	-1.34** (0.50)	0.26	-1.28* (0.51)	0.28
Polity Score	-0.02 (0.02)	0.98	-0.03 (0.03)	0.97	-0.03 (0.03)	0.97	-0.02 (0.03)	0.98
Marxist-Leninist	1.89** (0.70)	6.64	2.03* (0.80)	7.60	2.00* (0.79)	7.42	2.17** (0.81)	8.72
GDP per capita	0.0001* (0.00)	1.00	0.0001 (0.00)	1.00	0.0000 (0.00)	1.00	0.0001 (0.00)	1.00
Election			3.40*** (0.38)	29.84	3.03*** (0.32)	20.73	3.31*** (0.36)	27.33
Interruption			3.69*** (0.63)	40.12				
Number Breaks			-0.61** (0.21)	0.54	-0.47* (0.19)	0.62	-0.63** (0.21)	0.53
Length Break					0.20*** (0.05)	1.22	1.38*** (0.32)	3.96
Length Break ²							-0.09** (0.03)	0.91
Log likelihood	-314.72		-236.42		-244.97		-236.12	
Country-years	2,932		2,927		2,927		2,926	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

that passes increases the odds of reaching 10 percent by a factor of about 2.5.

Model 2 adds three of the theoretical variables of interest. First, as expected, elections have a strong effect on the likelihood women will achieve 10 percent women in parliament. Indeed, countries are almost thirty times more likely to reach 10 percent women during election years than during nonelection years. Perhaps surprisingly, however, the effect of a legislative interruption is even larger than the effect of an election. In years following interruptions, countries are more than forty times more likely to reach 10 percent women in parliament, compared with all other years. Thus, as Putnam (1976) suggested, periods of instability can serve as gates toward female representation, at least nominally. Yet, higher numbers of interruptions over the time period decrease the likelihood that women will reach 10 percent women in parliament, and the effect is quite large. Moving from a single interruption to two legislative breaks decreases the hazard of reaching 10 percent women by 54 percent.

Model 3 substitutes the dummy variable indicating that an interruption has taken place for an ordinal variable measuring interruption length. As expected, longer interruptions are associated with higher log-odds of reaching the 10 percent threshold of women in parliament. But Model 4 further investigates the effects of interruption length by including a squared term, and the analysis suggests that the effect of break length is, in fact, nonlinear. Figure 1 plots the change in the effect of break length over the range of the variable. Interruptions that last seven years have the maximum positive effect, while breaks longer than fourteen years have a negative effect on the odds of reaching 10 percent women in a country's national legislature. In sum, the results suggest that both elections and legislative interruptions increase a country's chances of reaching 10 percent women in parliament, but multiple interruptions as well as interruptions longer than fourteen years can hinder women's progress in the political arena.

Table 3 presents the results of the models predicting 15 percent women in parliament. Moving to a higher threshold, I find quite similar results. However, the effect sizes are substantially weaker. For example, countries are only thirteen times more likely to reach 15 percent women in election years than nonelection years. Interestingly, however, the effect of interruptions on reaching 15 percent women in parliament is slightly weaker than the effect of elections. When predicting the log-odds of reaching 15 percent women, break length is no longer statistically significant when included as a linear term. When controlling for nonlinearity, however, break length again has statistically significant effects.

Overall, the 15 percent models suggest a similar story about how elections and interruptions affect women's representation. But it appears that the positive effects of legislative interruptions are weaker, both in absolute and relative terms, at higher thresholds of women's representation. This finding is supported by looking at an even higher threshold—20 percent women in parliament. Out of ninety-two legislative interruptions, only one, in Cuba, led immediately to 20 percent women in the legislature. Clearly, legislative interruptions are less effective vehicles for change when considering more substantial levels of women's inclusion.

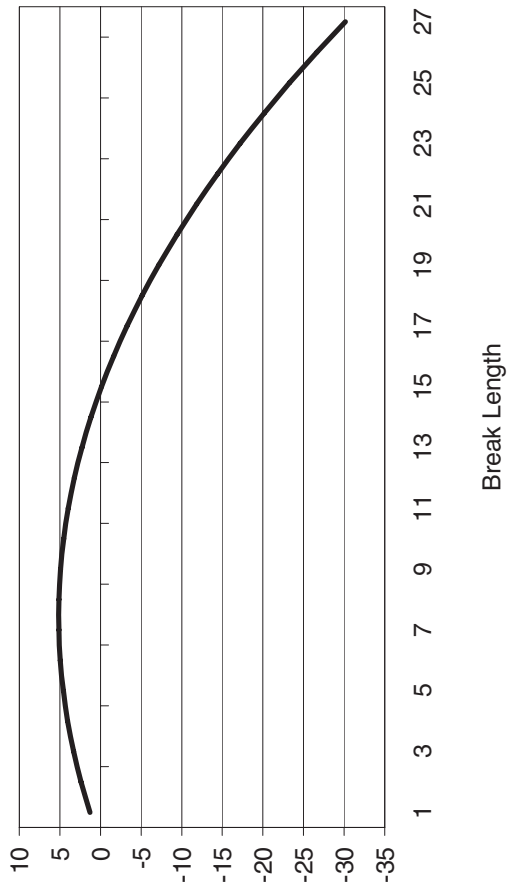


Figure 1. The Effect of Break Length on Reaching 10 Percent Women in Parliament

Table 3

Parameter Estimates, Significance Levels, and Odds Ratios for Models Predicting Log-Odds of Reaching 15 Percent Women in Parliament for 153 countries, 1950–2000

	Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8	
	Estimate	Ratio	Estimate	Ratio	Estimate	Ratio	Estimate	Ratio
Intercept	-8.91*** (0.72)	0.00	-10.73*** (0.78)	0.00	-10.63*** (0.77)	0.00	-10.76*** (0.78)	0.00
Year	0.11*** (0.02)	1.12	0.12*** (0.02)	1.13	0.12*** (0.02)	1.13	0.12*** (0.02)	1.13
Eastern Europe	0.86 (0.72)	2.36	0.83 (0.78)	2.29	0.82 (0.77)	2.27	0.84 (0.78)	2.32
Asia	-0.28 (0.84)	0.76	0.00 (0.89)	1.00	-0.04 (0.89)	0.96	0.01 (0.89)	1.01
Latin America	-0.31 (0.73)	0.73	0.06 (0.73)	1.06	0.02 (0.73)	1.02	0.05 (0.74)	1.05
Scandinavia	3.68*** (0.87)	39.78	4.10*** (0.92)	60.38	4.10*** (0.93)	60.41	4.10*** (0.92)	60.42
Middle East	-0.80 (1.26)	0.45	-0.13 (1.29)	0.88	-0.23 (1.30)	0.80	-0.09 (1.29)	0.91
Africa	0.47 (0.86)	1.60	1.03 (0.90)	2.80	1.02 (0.90)	2.78	1.04 (0.91)	2.83
Muslim	-0.59 (0.64)	0.56	-0.41 (0.68)	0.66	-0.36 (0.67)	0.70	-0.45 (0.68)	0.64
Catholic	0.37 (0.47)	1.44	0.85 ^t (0.51)	2.34	0.87 ^t (0.52)	2.38	0.85 ^t (0.52)	2.34

Other	-0.97 [†] (0.57)	0.38	-1.01 (0.62)	0.36	-0.98 (0.62)	0.37	-1.03 [†] (0.62)	0.36
Polity Score	0.03 (0.04)	1.03	0.03 (0.04)	1.03	0.02 (0.04)	1.02	0.03 (0.04)	1.03
Marxist-Leninist	2.18 ^{**} (0.80)	8.81	2.81 ^{**} (0.88)	16.64	2.70 ^{**} (0.87)	14.83	2.82 ^{**} (0.88)	16.83
GDP per capita	0.0001 (0.00)	1.00	0.0001 (0.00)	1.00	0.0001 (0.00)	1.00	0.0001 (0.00)	1.00
Election			2.58 ^{***} (0.39)	13.17	2.49 ^{***} (0.37)	12.11	2.60 ^{***} (0.39)	13.46
Interruption			2.49 [*] (1.16)	12.09				
Number Breaks			-0.81 ^{**} (0.30)	0.44	-0.73 [*] (0.29)	0.48	-0.83 ^{**} (0.30)	0.44
Length Break					0.09 (0.19)	1.10	4.04 [*] (1.73)	56.71
Length Break ²							-0.98 (0.67)	0.38
Log likelihood	-210.50		-171.70		-173.06		-170.31	
Country-years	3,516	3,505	3,505		3,505		3,504	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; [†] $p < 0.10$.

Conclusions

While they are still vastly underrepresented in the halls of political power, women have made gains, especially over the past few decades. One factor affecting the ability of women to make these gains is legislative interruptions. This research suggests that when interruptions occur, women do not always lose out. In fact, institutional breaks may create elite turnover, offering windows of political opportunity and aiding women's efforts in gaining low levels of representation. This may especially be the case when breaks are five to ten years in length, perhaps because a new group of legislators is likely to assume power.

Elite turnover through legislative interruptions does, however, have significant limitations for increasing women's political representation. One consistent finding is that frequent interruptions clearly hinder women's progress. Legislative breaks longer than fifteen years may also prevent any group from obtaining significant political representation. Thus, for nondemocratic forms of turnover to equate to the effect of democratic elections, interruptions must be significant, but not too lengthy or too frequent.

As the threshold of women's representation increases, however, the success of interruptions in benefiting women declines. But this research only tests the effects of interruptions in years directly following interruptions. Therefore, future research should consider how the effects of these varied paths affect women's representation in subsequent years. Overall, however, this research suggests that nondemocratic routes to elite turnover are ultimately less effective than regular democratic elections at facilitating high levels of women in politics.

Notes

1. With the exception of two articles (Paxton 1997; Paxton, Hughes, and Green 2006), the few studies that employ longitudinal analysis limit their samples to Western industrial countries (Caul 2001; Studlar and McAllister 2002).

2. The selection of 1950 as a start date is primarily driven by the availability of data on the percentage of women in parliament. But, since the first countries reached 10 percent and 20 percent women around this time, starting in 1950 ensures that I am able to analyze the greatest number of cases.

3. See Childs and Krook (2006), Dahlerup (2006a), and Grey (2006) for a debate on the merits of the critical mass concept and key issues in the debate.

4. In PR systems, the parties publish lists of candidates and are therefore more conscious of balancing their tickets to attract support from different constituencies. Moreover, powerful men may remain on party lists, so the appearance of female candidates is less threatening than in a single-member district system (like that in the United States), where parties nominate only a single candidate.

5. The mixed results of cross-national analyses of structural factors may be a product of measurement. Simply accounting for the percentage of women in the labor force or in tertiary education does not necessarily capture the ideas theorized by stratification scholars. Further, these measures may have little to do with the structural forces that facilitate or limit women's political representation outside of the industrialized West. It is not surprising,

therefore, that structural arguments often find greater support in case study research that can account for important contextual differences.

6. There are several excellent case studies about women's political representation in semidemocratic and authoritarian countries. See, for example, Tamale (1999) or Bauer and Britton's (2006) edited volume on women in African parliaments.

7. Most cross-national analyses exclude the smallest countries from analyses. These countries often have extremely small legislatures, so adding a single woman to the fold can substantially affect the percentage of women in parliament. Further, some researchers argue that small island countries with small populations should not be given the same weight as countries like the United States, Russia, China, and Algeria.

8. Only Papua New Guinea is included from the Pacific Islands.

9. North and South Yemen are censored in 1990, when the two combined to form the Republic of Yemen, because neither reached 10 percent women in parliament.

10. While 25 percent or 30 percent may be a more appropriate threshold for signifying when women have gained real power (Grey 2002), there are too few of these countries outside of Scandinavia to constitute sufficient variation in a worldwide sample.

11. The results of the 20 percent models are available from the author upon request.

12. I performed auxiliary analyses excluding these cases, but there were no substantive changes in the results.

13. Because countries often took several more years to reach 15 percent women in parliament than to reach 10 percent, the models predicting 15 percent analyze a greater number of country-years.

14. The chances of reaching any threshold for women's representation are expected to increase with time. Research has demonstrated that both indigenous and international women's movement actors and organizations have increasingly placed pressure on countries to increase female representation, and this pressure should be captured in the time variable. In auxiliary analysis, I also plotted the baseline hazard to determine duration dependence, and the pattern observed is generally linear and increasing.

15. I include the log of constant gross domestic product per capita chain series (Heston, Summers, and Aten 2002). Using the constant growth rate minimizes the impact of temporary fluctuations in the measure. However, for 13 countries of the 168 available through the Penn World Tables, data are only available for 1996: Bahrain, Bahamas, Bermuda, Bhutan, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kuwait, Laos, Mongolia, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan. When analyzing the 10 percent threshold, adding GDP per capita creates 816 missing observations. Because the inclusion of GDP creates missing data, I also analyzed models including controls for GDP. Excluding GDP did not significantly alter the findings in any way.

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Appendix A

Characteristics of Legislative Interruptions, 1950 to 2000

Country	Year following	Length break	Women at reentry, %	Attainment		
				10% women	15% women	20% women
Afghanistan	1988	14	3.7	.	.	.
Algeria	1977	12	3.8	1992	.	.
Bangladesh	1979	3	9.1	1988	1988	1988
Bangladesh	1986	4	9.1	1988	.	.
Benin	1979	14	8.3	.	.	.
Benin	1991	1	6.3	.	.	.
Bolivia	1956	6	1.8	1993	2002	.
Bolivia	1982	12	0.7	1993	2002	.
Brazil	1970	1	0.3	.	.	.
Burkina Faso	1978	4	1.8	2002	.	.
Burkina Faso	1992	11	5.6	2002	.	.
Burundi	1982	15	9.2	1998	2002	.
Burundi	1998	10	14.4	1998	2002	.
Cambodia	1972	2	3.2	1976	1976	1987
Cambodia	1976	1	18.4	1976	1976	1987
Cambodia	1981	2	18.8	1976	1976	1987
Central African Rep.	1987	21	3.8	.	.	.
Chad	1990	27	2.4	1993	1993	.
Chad	1993	2	16.4	1993	1993	.
Chile	1990	16	5.8	1997	.	.
China	1954	4	12.0	1954	1964	1975
Congo	1970	1	2.9	1989	.	.
Congo	1998	1	12.0	1990	.	.
Cuba	1958	6	2.3	1976	1976	1976
Cuba	1976	17	22.2	1976	1976	1976
Dem. Rep. of Congo	1970	9	2.8	1975	1975	.
Dominican Republic	1966	3	4.1	1974	1998	.
Ecuador	1966	2	1.3	1998	1998	.
Ecuador	1979	9	0.0	1998	1998	.
Egypt	1957	5	0.6	.	.	.
Egypt	1964	2	2.2	.	.	.
El Salvador	1982	2	13.3	1966	1997	.

(Appendix continues)

Appendix (continued)

Country	Year following	Length break	Women at reentry, %	Attainment		
				10% women	15% women	20% women
Ethiopia	1957	7	1.0	.	.	.
Ethiopia	1987	12	0.1	.	.	.
Ethiopia	1994	2	2.3	.	.	.
Gabon	1967	3	0.0	1980	.	.
Gambia	1997	2	2.0	.	.	.
Ghana	1969	3	1.4	.	.	.
Ghana	1979	7	3.6	.	.	.
Ghana	1992	10	8.0	.	.	.
Greece	1974	7	2.0	.	.	.
Guatemala	1964	1	0.0	1995	.	.
Guatemala	1984	2	3.4	1995	.	.
Guinea-Bissau	1984	3	14.7	1976	1989	1989
Haiti	1991	3	3.6	.	.	.
Honduras	1957	1	5.2	1989	.	.
Honduras	1965	2	3.1	1989	.	.
Honduras	1980	7	5.6	1989	.	.
Honduras	1985	1	7.5	1989	.	.
Iran	1963	2	3.0	.	.	.
Iran	1980	1	1.5	.	.	.
Iraq	1955	1	0.0	1984	.	.
Iraq	1980	22	6.4	1984	.	.
Jordan	1978	3	0.0	.	.	.
Jordan	1984	5	0.0	.	.	.
Kazakhstan	1996	1	13.4	1994	.	.
Kuwait	1981	4	0.0	.	.	.
Kuwait	1990	3	0.0	.	.	.
Lesotho	1973	7	6.5	2002	.	.
Lesotho	1990	4	7.3	2002	.	.
Madagascar	1977	5	2.9	.	.	.
Madagascar	1993	1	3.7	.	.	.
Mali	1979	11	3.7	1997	.	.
Mali	1992	1	2.3	1997	.	.
Mauritania	1992	13	0.0	.	.	.
Myanmar	1974	10	2.0	.	.	.
Nepal	1991	1	3.4	.	.	.
Niger	1989	15	5.4	.	.	.
Nigeria	1999	5	3.4	.	.	.
Panama	1952	1	1.9	.	.	.

Country	Year following	Length break	Women at reentry, %	Attainment		
				10% women	15% women	20% women
Panama	1990	1	7.5	.	.	.
Paraguay	1958	4	0.0	.	.	.
Peru	1978	9	2.0	1995	2001	.
Peru	1993	1	8.8	1995	2001	.
Republic of Korea	1963	2	1.1	.	.	.
Rwanda	1981	9	6.3	1983	1988	2000
Sierra Leone	1996	4	6.3	2002	.	.
Sierra Leone	1998	1	6.3	2002	.	.
Somalia	1979	9	10.2	1979	.	.
Sudan	1965	6	0.4	.	.	.
Sudan	1972	2	5.5	.	.	.
Sudan	1974	1	6.0	.	.	.
Sudan	1986	1	0.8	.	.	.
Sudan	1992	2	8.2	.	.	.
Swaziland	1978	5	5.5	.	.	.
Syrian Arab Republic	1973	7	2.7	1998	.	.
Tajikistan	2000	4	12.7	2000	.	.
Thailand	1975	1	1.1	.	.	.
Thailand	1979	1	3.0	.	.	.
Thailand	1983	2	4.0	.	.	.
Togo	1979	12	10.4	1979	.	.
Turkey	1961	1	0.7	.	.	.
Turkey	1983	2	3.0	.	.	.
Uganda	1980	14	0.8	1989	1994	2001
Uganda	1989	3	12.2	1989	1994	2001
Uruguay	1984	10	4.0	1999	.	.
Yemen Arab Republic	1978	3	0.0	.	.	.

Note: Periods indicate that the outcome was never attained.

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