Barriers beyond the quota: The gender power dynamics of candidate selection in Latin America

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In Latin America, 20 years after the quota was applied for the first time in Argentina, and following the adoption of quota laws in another 11 Latin American countries (and more recently the adoption of parity in four), the positive impact of affirmative action measures is undeniable: countries with quota laws have on average increased their representation rate of women in parliament by 13.5 percent. However, studies have also shown that quota laws have not had the same positive effect across all the countries in Latin America where they have been adopted (for example, Brazil, Panama, and Paraguay). This is because their effectiveness depends, on the one hand, on the specific terms in which the quota is formulated (in particular inclusion of a placement mandate and sanctions for non-compliance) and on the other hand, on the characteristics of the electoral system in which the quota is applied (they have proved to be more effective in PR systems that use closed and blocked lists. In other words, in cases where the institutional setting does not guarantee that the spirit of the law translates into an effective practice, parliamentary politics remains a male domain, no different from those countries which have not passed (or yet applied) quota laws for their parliamentary elections (for example, Chile, Guatemala, and Uruguay). In these cases, it appears that without effective mechanisms in place that intervene directly reserving electable candidacies for women, their access to elected posts remains—and will continue to remain—basically random and subject to the filters that operate within political parties.

Furthermore, even in those countries where quotas have had a positive effect in quantitative terms, it is worth asking whether politics has in fact been transformed into the “natural” domain of women or whether their presence in political spheres can now be considered “normal”. The pertinence of these questions stems from the nature of the mechanism of the quota itself. As Franceschet (2008: 62) has stated:

It is significant that gender quotas tend to be recommended as temporary or transitory measures. In consequence, their proponents must be implicitly assuming that the adoption of gender quotas will generate substantial changes. If gender quotas did no more than increase the number of women elected, without empowering them in the political arena, then they would have to be permanent mechanisms to help women’s access to electoral politics. [...] Therefore, in order for quota requirements to be of a temporary nature, it must be assumed that as more women enter politics, their power in political parties will also increase, so that, when quotas are abandoned, they can compete on an equal footing for candidacies.

Similarly, Marx et al. (2008:113) hypothesize that "given how much time has gone by since the [Argentine quota] law came into force, there should be underway a process of transformation of the practices that determine the inclusion of women on electoral lists". However, is it in fact true that quotas have effectively transformed the gendered power structures and dynamics inside parties, allowing women not only to access but also to participate on an equal footing with their male counterparts?

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2 Figure calculated on the basis of Llanos and Sample (2008) and data from the Interparliamentary Union’s World Classification of Women in Parliaments, http://ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm.
3 For example, despite the adoption of quota laws in 1997, women’s parliamentary representation rates remain markedly low in Brasil (8.6%) and Panamá (8.5%). See Archenti and Tula (2008), Ríos Tobar (2008 and Piatti-Crocker (2010) for analyses of the limitations on the numerical impact of quotas.
The starting point for this paper, then, is the need to subject to an in-depth critical analysis the processes of legislative recruitment and candidate selection used by Latin American political parties, both in countries with quotas and in those without, in order to identify the critical nodes where the interplay between systemic, practical and normative institutions (Krook 2009) intersects with gendered power relations to facilitate or hinder not only women’s access to elective posts, but the terms of their access.

Here I offer a first approximation to the proposed analysis based on the findings of my own qualitative research on the process of drawing up electoral lists in the 2009 parliamentary elections in Uruguay (Johnson 2010), which I compare and contrast with the results of –as yet few– other specific studies of gender and candidate selection in Latin America: Baldez (2007), Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson (2008), Borner et al. (2009, chapter 1), Roza (2010) and Hinojosa (2012). I also make reference at times to other studies in which the analysis is not specifically centred on candidate selection, but rather on the processes of women’s political representation more generally, or on the impact of quotas in different institutional settings, but which provide interesting data and reflections for the discussion of candidate selection procedures in the region (Franceschet 2001; Piscopo 2006; Archenti and Tula 2007, 2008 and 2012; Archenti et al. 2009; Franceschet and Piscopo 2013; Borner et al. 2009; Jones 2004 and 2007).

While these six main studies considered aim to contribute to our understanding of the relationship between different types of candidate selection processes (or aspects of these) and the political representation of women, they adopt a diversity of methodological approaches and analyze a wide variety of institutional contexts. Only two are large-n quantitative studies that seek to compare the impact on women’s access to candidacies or posts that varied selection procedures have in different parties and in different countries (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2008; Roza 2010). In order to undertake aggregate analyses one sine qua non is the access to party-level data, which is where selection procedures operate. However, one of the biggest challenges that this kind of study presents is precisely the difficulty of accessing reliable and comparable data relating to a process that has been described as the “secret garden” of politics (Gallagher 1988). Other research, therefore, seeks to reflect that complexity through a case-study approach, comparing the candidate selection processes of different parties in one or more countries for a single level of government, adopting a qualitative approach based on documentary analysis and in-depth interviews (Borner et al. 2009; Johnson 2010; Hinojosa 2012). This set of studies covers a range of countries in the region, which have diverse institutional arrangements, in terms of both their electoral and party systems; the cases also vary in respect of the level of government (national or local) or the status of the representative body (senate, municipal or national-level legislature) studied. In addition we find a great diversity in the political culture and degree of stability of the political systems in the countries covered.

Given this great variety, this revision of the literature on gender and candidate selection in Latin America and the identification of the critical nodes associated with how gender power dynamics interact with selection processes, is organized according to a series of analytical dimensions that have been widely used in both mainstream and gender studies literature on legislative recruitment: the degree of inclusion, centralization and formality of the procedures used; the comparative effects of bureaucratic systems or patronage
practices; the use of elite-controlled direct nomination or open/closed voting systems; the specific criteria used to evaluate candidates’ relative merits; and how gender quotas are adapted to existing selection systems. While the diversity of cases and analytical approaches used in the literature reviewed here means that their findings cannot be considered directly comparable, they can be regarded as a critical mass of studies that is sufficiently broad to allow certain general reflections of a methodological or conceptual nature to be made which might be relevant for designing future empirical studies within the Latin American region or as more theoretical contributions to this topic of study.

**Candidate selection and gender quotas: mechanical and formal application**

As mentioned above, quota laws have been responsible for a considerable increase in female parliamentary representation rates in several countries in the region. The normative logic that underpins the application of quotas has been summarized by Krook, Lovenduski and Squires (2008: 7) as follows: “these reforms take important steps to legitimize positive action and recognize ‘gender’ as a political identity, altering the basic meanings of equality and representation that inform candidate selection processes”. While it is clear that this is the intention of quotas, it is important to ask, however, whether in fact they achieve this effect in practice. Do quotas make women full political subjects, enabling them to operate on equal terms with their male counterparts? Do they reconfigure the meaning of equality and representation in the region?

According to the evidence from various studies that analyze the gender composition of electoral lists in election systems with quotas, their impact tends to be restricted to the purely numerical dimension. For example, Archenti and Tula (2007 and 2008) and Archenti et al. (2009: 20) have shown that in the Argentinean case political parties “adopt a minimalist interpretation of the quota law, which results in merely bureaucratic compliance”, which in turn “transforms the legal minimum into a maximum ceiling”. Similarly, Borner et al. (2009: 38-39) claim that the application of the quota in Argentina is based on a criterion of “formal rationality” which implies “correctly applying the quota in order to avoid sanctions” and not on a criterion of “substantive rationality” which would imply “conviction and commitment to the end values that are pursued by the measure, as well as the recognition of the particular identities of specific people”. In the words of interviewees from their study:

> The women’s quota [...] is a simple mathematical exercise [...] it is the position that corresponds to women and it is not an issue that is discussed. (Male MP interviewed in ibid.: 39)

> In general the men say: “Oh... this place is for a woman. Who shall we put there?” That’s what I see in all the parties. (Female MP interviewed in ibid.: 37)

The analysis of the application of the quota for the first time in the internal elections in Uruguay in 2009 reached similar conclusions (see Johnson and Pérez 2010, chapter 3). Taking as our universe of analysis what could be considered electable positions –the first 9
places on winning lists– in the great majority of cases we observed that only the minimum number of women required by law (one every three places) were included: more than 90% of the winning lists of the two largest political parties, the Frente Amplio (FA) and the Partido Nacional (PN), and more than 80% of the lists of the Partido Colorado (PC). In addition, almost two thirds of the PN’s and PC’s lists applied the quota in a minimalist manner, that is to say, not only did they only include one female candidate every three places, but they also always placed her in the third place of the three. The non- incorporation by parties of the normative principles that underpin the use of the quota was also reflected in the fact that, following the internal elections, parties went about the process of drawing up their electoral lists for the parliamentary elections (for which the quota was not required by law) in the same way as ever, leaving female candidates marginalized from both the negotiations surrounding the selection process and the final composition of the lists. In short, the Uruguayan party factions generally applied the quota mechanically, with there being any kind of debate or internal reflection around how and why this mechanism was to be used.

Archenti and Tula (2012: 34) reach a similar conclusion in their analysis of the application of the quota in Argentina’s provincial legislatures: “political parties have not perceived the quota law as a path towards renovation, a means to improve internal democracy, guided by the values of equality and equity”. In fact, the comments made by Argentinean legislators interviewed by Borner et al. (2009) clearly show how the mechanism of the quota is twisted when it is applied during candidate selection processes:

There is a typical phrase that you hear in political parties. Whichever faction has done worst in the internal elections is told, “Ok, you have to pay the price of the woman”. In other words, it is that faction that has to provide the female candidate [to comply with the quota], and it is expressed in those terms: “You have to pay the price of the woman”. (Male MP quoted in ibid.: 37)

Therefore, rather than being regarded as a positive mechanism that fulfils a democratizing function in party politics, the quota is transformed into an irritating obligation for the the party “bosses” and a signifier of inferiority for the women who “get in on the quota”. In this regard Piscopo (2006: 36) identifies three strategies used by party gatekeepers in the Argentine case to delegitimize the quota even while complying with the letter of the law:

First, they rhetorically capitalize on positive and negative imagery of female politicians to argue that women must win on their own merit and not on partisan coattails. Second, parties adopting internal primaries claim that elections within the party are more democratic than, and are antithetical to, nomination quotas. Third, parties elevate inexperienced outsiders known as mujeres de (literally, wives or lovers) rather than experienced elites.

In this way, male party leaders make strategic use of certain normative and practical institutions to discredit in advance women’s potential for participating in politics on equal

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4 Uruguay’s voting system uses closed and blocked party lists.
5 The Uruguayan quota law was passed in April 2009, a mere month before the start of the 2009/2010 electoral cycle, which includes internal/primary, parliamentary and presidential, and departmental and municipal elections over the space of a year. It is unique in that it requires political parties to include candidates of both sexes every three places on their electoral lists, but established that for internal elections the quota would be applied from 2009 and remain as a permanent electoral norm, while for national and departmental elections—in other words, the positions of greatest power and status in the Uruguayan political system—the law would not come into force until 2014-2015 and would only apply to that single electoral cycle.
terms, while simultaneously reaffirming, simply by omission, their own “inherent” right to occupy the best list positions and elected posts.

**Male power monopolies**

The consolidation and reproduction of men’s undisputed right to be candidates is sustained on the fact that the candidate selection process in the Argentine case takes place at provincial level where male local leaders who are already established in positions of power negotiate electoral alliances to draw up what are referred to as “unity lists”. As one legislator interviewed by Borner et al. (2009: 33) commented: “Each time [the selection process] is different, but the decision-makers are first of all men, and generally occupy political posts”. In other words, this decentralized selection process is in the hands of what Hinojosa (2012) identifies as local level “male power monopolies”, comprised of provincial governors and “intendentes”, while the selection process can be characterized by being an informal (there are no written rules and procedures vary from one election to another) and based on patronage practices. Jones (2009: 47-48) explains how these male power monopolies are structured and operate, with intra-party power centralized in “a single dominant figure” or “a small group of influential party leaders”, who maintain their dominance through a layered structure of local leaders (called “punteros”) and through clientelistic practices which “help party leaders at all levels to maintain a solid base of support”.

From the testimonies gathered from female and male MPs, Borner et al. (2009: 31) conclude that:

> the candidate selection processes take place in a political web impregnated with male cultural codes, in which the main resources of power are generally in male hands. In this way, the channels of access to the electoral lists –and therefore to Congress– establish inequalities anchored in gendered criteria.

Hinojosa (2012: 169) similarly points out that, in spite of the apparent impact of quotas on legislative recruitment, “it is possible that quotas operate to cover up the gendered effects of different candidate selection procedures”. It is precisely the monopolies of power at local level, that-as in the Argentine case- operate through decentralized and exclusive procedures, that this author identifies as one of the major obstacles to the selection of women candidates. Although they are “invaluable for political mobilization and financing campaigns”, they tend to be dominated by men and to select candidates from among their members (ibid.: 49), thus operating as practical institutions that exclude women.

In contrast, Hinojosa argues from her in-depth research on selection procedures used in eight municipalities in Chile and Mexico, if selection procedures are centralized, even though they are exclusive, they can benefit women. For example, the data she provides from the Chilean municipal elections in 2000 show that under centralized-exclusive selection systems women had a 55% greater chance of being selected than under decentralized-inclusive systems and a 37% greater chance than in decentralized-exclusive systems (Hinojosa 2012: 109). In this author’s opinion, the advantages of centralized-

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6 Further reference will be made below to Hinojosa’s study of candidate selection at local level in Chile and Mexico.
exclusive procedures for selecting women resides in the fact that they bypass the need for women to self-select (which women are less likely to do) and neutralize local level power monopolies.

Her conclusions coincide to some extent with the tentative findings presented by Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson (2008) in their study which sets out to evaluate whether any correlation exists between women’s representation levels and the four “ideal types” of legislator proposed in the analytical model formulated by Siavelis and Morgenstern (2008). Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson’s analysis finds a higher percentage of women legislators in those countries where the “party-loyalist” type predominates, which according to Siavelis and Morgenstern’s model (2008: 20), “will tend to emerge where candidate selection is centralized, dominated by elites and bureaucratized”.

In contrast, these conclusions contradict the findings of the quantitative comparative analysis undertaken by Miki Caul (1999) of 68 parties in 12 advanced industrial democracies between 1975-1989, which found that “centralized control over nomination is not conducive to women’s representation” (ibid.: 85, original emphasis). Nor does it coincide with the evidence from the Uruguayan case. Table 2 in the appendix shows that in five cases the lists for the Uruguayan 2009 elections were drawn up using centralized exclusive procedures, that is, selection was controlled by a single or few party faction leaders who decided on both the procedures to be followed and the final result of the process. Of these, three (which won 3, 4 and 5 seats respectively) did not elect a single woman. In the other two cases where selection was centralized and exclusive (both involving as majority faction Asamblea Uruguay-FA), one woman was elected among the 5 successful candidates. However, it should be noted that in neither case was the woman candidate placed in a secure position, both of them occupying the last position on the list to be elected.

Why are the Uruguayan and Chilean cases so different? In the first, centralized and exclusive selection procedures did not favour women’s access to secure candidacies, while in the second case they did. The answer can be found in the fact that, beyond the identical characterization of these selection procedures in these two dimensions – (de)centralization and in/exclusivity–, there are evident differences between the institutions that operate on different levels in the two cases. Thus, in the case of the Chilean Unión Demócrata Independiente party (UDI) these were the procedures used to nominate candidates at municipal level, while in the Uruguayan case party factions were nominating their parliamentary (Senate and House of Representatives) candidates. Furthermore, Hinojosa’s description (2012: 106-107) of the procedures used by the UDI suggests a centralized and exclusive but also highly bureaucratized system; in Uruguay, in contrast, the power to decide nominations is based on the patronage of an “all-powerful” figure or elite group, who determine nominations according to subjective and non-explicit criteria. In addition to these characteristics of the systemic and practical institutions particular to each case, we can also identify differences with respect to normative institutions. In the case of the UDI in Chile the normative ideal underpinning the selection procedure was the rationalist goal of maximizing votes in contexts in which the party not

It should be noted that in Caul’s study “centralization” includes both the level in the party structure at which the nomination is decided and of the degree of exclusivity of the process.
only did not have incumbents, but not even a strong party base and therefore a woman candidate who could bring in votes was as valuable and low-risk as a man. In contrast, the Uruguayan party factions were sharing out a limited number of electable candidacies among a group of aspirants in all cases more numerous than the seats that could be won, and where the values at stake had as much to do with the payment of political debts, the buying of future party loyalty, or the negotiation of complex systems of internal power-sharing as with vote-winning capacity. In this context choosing a woman candidate meant leaving out a man, which could have costs not measurable in terms of votes.

In part, for this reason, various authors have claimed that in theory parties whose selection processes are institutionalized and bureaucratic—that is, that follow written and clear rules—should tend to select more women candidates (see Norris and Lovenduski 1995; Matland 2004). This claim, furthermore, proved to be correct in the case of the advanced industrial democracies studied by Caul (1999: 85), who concludes that “more highly institutionalized parties are in fact more likely to elect women to office at each time point”. However, in contrast—and contrary to her own hypothesis—Roza finds for Latin America that “rule-oriented parties result in 7 percent fewer female candidates than parties that are not rule-oriented” and concludes that “less rule-oriented parties may be more flexible and provide women with more opportunities to negotiate their candidacies” and that “rule-oriented parties are constrained by their formal processes, and are therefore, less responsive and adaptable to women’s demands for inclusion” (Roza 2010: 152, 168, 170).

Two factors should be taken into consideration when trying to understand these divergent findings: on the one hand, the nature of the political system and of the political culture in which the parties function; and on the other hand, the extent to which the bureaucratic selection rules are truly institutionalized. In this sense, the parties of the advanced industrial democracies studied by Caul undoubtedly have a longer tradition of institutionalization than the majority of Latin American political parties, where the move to adopt more formal and transparent internal practices or more democratic and open candidate selection processes is much more recent (see Alcántara 2002; Freidenberg 2003; Freidenberg and Alcántara 2009). Furthermore, the apparent commitment to formalize selection processes often proves to be purely rhetorical. As Hinojosa (2012: 88) points out: “these processes frequently differ in practice from what is claimed on paper throughout Latin America”.

These caveats can be clearly exemplified with reference to parties in the Uruguayan case. The official statutes of Asamblea Uruguay (AU, faction of the FA) establishes that the list for elections to the lower house in the district of Montevideo\(^8\) the National Political Counsel (CPN) of AU should draw up a proposed list based on the maximum of three nominations presented by each grassroots level AU party activist committee; this list should then be put to the vote in AU’s National Assembly, which has the power to modify or approve it unchanged. In theory, then, AU has a formal and bureaucratic selection procedure, which includes the participation of decentralized party organs and combines instances of nomination with a closed vote in its highest decision-making body. However,

\(^8\) This is the only large constituency in the lower house, with 44 seats.
in practice, the candidacies presented by the grassroots committees are only considered for place 12 and below on the list, which have no chance whatsoever of being elected. Furthermore, the final approval of the list by the National Assembly is a mere formality. In contrast, the first 11 places on the list are directly nominated, under a centralized and exclusive procedure, by the faction leader and his right-hand man. As we have already seen above, although in 2009 AU elected one female senator and one female representative in Montevideo, both occupied “precarious” positions on the list.

In stark contrast to AU, is the case of the Uruguayan Partido Socialista (PSU). Its selection procedures for both the Senate and the lower chamber are highly institutionalized, based on bureaucratic rules that are established in the party statutes and –more importantly– respected and monitored in practice. And, as can be observed from Table 2 in the appendix, it is also the faction that has the greatest percentage of women, both among its candidacies and among its elected representatives.

The use of “meritocratic” selection criteria

As has already been mentioned, in contexts where selection procedures are dominated by male power monopolies, quotas create “a negative feedback mechanism, where all politically-active women face an additional barrier to acceptance: proving they are deserving of power and are not merely tokens” (Piscopo 2006: 37).

The “meritocratic” discourse is one of the normative institutions most used to generate doubts about the legitimacy of the quota, not only by male gatekeepers, but in some cases by women aspirants themselves. The interiorization by women of the permanent suspicion regarding why and how they came to occupy political posts makes them, means that often in their own evaluation of the criteria that influenced their nomination, they tend to stress particularly their political ability, expressed in their track-record in the posts they have occupied (see Borner et al. 2009: 43-44). In contrast, their male counterparts put much greater emphasis on the exercise of power in the positions they have held, without entering into details regarding their actual performance. Thus, for men, their merits as potential candidates derive from who they are and how far they have come in their political career, while for women, their merits are associated not with who they are, but with what they have actually done.

When their respective merits are compared, women appear destined to lose out. This can be illustrated with reference to a case from Uruguay. The selection of candidates for Vamos Uruguay’s (PC) list to the Senate was decided exclusively by the undisputed faction leader, Pedro Bordaberry. Given that the faction expected to win a maximum of four

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9 Although Montevideo has 44 seats in dispute, the system of the “double simultaneous vote” (voters vote for a faction list within a party) means that they are distributed between a high number of party factions. In the 2009 elections the 41 seats were shared between 14 faction lists from 4 parties; the greatest number of seats won by a single list was 10, and only 4 obtained 3 or more seats.

10 The case of the PSU is discussed in more detail in the final section of the paper.

11 It is worth noting that Bordaberry himself had never held an elected political post before competing for the presidential candidacy of the Partido Colorado, which had governed for most of the 20th century but suffered an unprecedented defeat in the 2004 elections that brought the left-
seats, the placement of their first female candidate in sixth place on the list was a merely symbolic gesture (see Table 1).

Table 1: Candidate placement on Vamos Uruguay’s list to the Senate, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place on the list</th>
<th>Principal candidates</th>
<th>Deputy candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pedro Bordaberry</td>
<td>(1) Germán Cardoso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Germán Coutinho</td>
<td>(1) Alfredo Solari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ope Pasquet*</td>
<td>(1) Martha Montaner (2) Yeanneth Puñales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Max Sapolinski</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Germán Rama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Graciela Matiaude</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Last candidate elected.

The only female candidates that might end up eventually occupying a seat in the Senate, albeit as deputies to the principal seatholder, were Martha Montaner and Yeanneth Puñales, first and second deputies respectively of the third—and last—principal candidate elected. According to Bordaberry, in drawing up the list, he “took into consideration the election results but also the job to be done. [...] Great importance was placed on the function that these candidates would fulfil in the Senate and their ability to do the job”; referring to the people who occupied the first principal and deputy candidacies on the list, Bordaberry explained that he included a combination of “technical experts”, candidates “with a long history of legislative experience” and others “with good vote-winning capacity”.13

The means of measuring this last criterion was the share of the vote won by the aspirants in the internal elections of June 2009. Although the share of the vote won by Coutinho, Pasquet and Cardoso in the internal elections exceeded that of Montaner and Puñales, the candidacies of Solari and Sapolinski could not have been assessed according to this criterion since they did not present lists in the internal elections, but rather appeared as candidates on other VU leaders’ lists. Rama, for his part, had not stood on any list in the internal elections, but his nomination was justified by the “importance that the issue of education had in our electoral platform” (he had been Minister of Education from 1995-2000) and by his “personal prestige”.

Montaner and Puñales, on the other hand, were the two candidates with the greatest legislative experience of all the principal and deputy candidates that appear in the first four places on the list, since both had been principal seatholders in the Chamber of Representatives during two consecutive legislatures (1995-2000 and 2000-2005). In fact, the only other two candidates on the VU Senate list who had previously occupied seats in either house were Pasquet (representative for Montevideo, 1985-1990) and Cardoso.

12 Personal e-mail communication from Pedro Bordaberry, 24/05/2010.
13 Ibid.
(representative for Maldonado, 2005-2010). Coutinho, Sapolsinski and Solari, in contrast, had no parliamentary experience whatsoever, although they had occupied at some point executive posts (Solari as Minister for Health in 1995-2000 and Coutinho solely at departmental level).

Moreover, both Montaner and Puñales were members of the PC’s National Executive Committee, just as Coutinho, Pasquet, Sapolsinski and Cardoso were. In other words, if the VU leader had actively sought to promote greater gender diversity among the elective positions on the list to the Senate, a favourable placement of Montaner and Puñales could equally have been justified in terms of their political record. However, the “weighting” of different criteria considered by the faction leader to be relevant in each case meant that the two strongest female candidates were relegated to deputy candidacies.

In the same way, the existence of family ties with some powerful male politician tends to undermine the potential personal merits of women candidates, who in addition are frequently considered to be the “puppets” of their male relatives (Piscopo 2006). Although there is certainly evidence in this respect, the issue of family ties merits more complex reflection.

On the one hand, because these ties are also recognized –although not systematically studied and analyzed– to be a facilitating factor in male candidates’ access to positions of power. As Marx et al. (2008: 114) point out: “it is remarkable that only women are questioned because of these ties and that it is not considered that possible analogous practices exist in the case of male aspirants”. In other words, what changes is the normative value given to the family tie, depending on whether the aspirant is a man or a woman. In the case of a male candidate, family ties (in particular being the son, nephew or brother) are viewed positively, he is automatically assumed to have inherited the political capital and/or personal attributes and abilities of his relative. In contrast, in the case of a woman candidate (in particular being the daughter or wife) her family ties are most often assumed to be the determining –and often exclusive– factor in her access to a candidacy or post, the “orthopaedic” mechanism without which she surely would not have been successful, thus effectively erasing any consideration of her own merits.

On the other hand, not all “mujeres de…” are “puppets” of their male relatives. And even when a woman’s initial access to a post appears to follow this pattern, it is also possible that she may subsequently become a political actor in her own right. This is the case of the already mentioned VU candidate, Martha Montaner. Her entry into politics was made directly at the level of representative in the Chamber of Representatives for the constituency of Tacuarembó in 1995. She had not previously occupied any public or party political posts, and her candidacy was promoted personally by her father, the then main local leader of the Foro Batllista faction of the PC: “there came a time when my father wanted a change of image for his party faction, a new face, he wanted to modernize”. Although Montaner recognized that initially “I didn’t want to run for parliament”, she began to get more involved, a process facilitated by the fact that “from when I was a small

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14 From 1993-1999 he was also secretary to a PC legislator who held seats first in the Chamber of Representatives and then in the Senate.
15 Personal interview with Montaner, 08/05/1997.
16 Ibid.
girl I lived politics at home”.\textsuperscript{17} So, “one way or another I became more and more committed”,\textsuperscript{18} and the death of her father soon after she took office meant she was on her own. By 2000 her initial doubts were long gone, and she ran for re-election and won, an achievement that she herself describes as the “ratification by popular vote” of her own merits as a political actor, and she also ran for the post of departmental governor – without success – in the same year.

In 2010, now within the orbit of the VU faction, she re-entered parliament as representative for Tacuarembó and in March 2012 was voted Secretary-General of the PC by the National Executive Committee (NEC). In an interview on radio in which she discussed why she had been elected Secretary-General, she placed particular emphasis on her ability to do the job and her own desire and conviction to occupy the post. However, it is interesting to note that at the same time she refers to the male dominance in the process of her nomination and clarifies that her leadership of the party will not be individualistic, and will therefore not challenge that male hegemony:

\begin{quote}
The men (sic) of the PC have placed their confidence in this, in having a woman heading the party, a woman with a career, with some experience, as can be seen from the years that I have served the party and been a representative in parliament. The men of the PC have taken the decision to have a woman leading, and I am ready to lead, jointly with the NEC.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

Notwithstanding this apparently conciliatory attitude towards the male party “bosses”, we can also observe a more defiant approach towards that same power front if we trace the shift in her positioning as a \textbf{woman} politician and in particular her attitude towards the quota. During her first term in parliament she did not participate in the cross-party Political Women’s Network (Red de Mujeres Políticas)\textsuperscript{20} and when interviewed voiced her opposition to the quota, stating that she believed that women could get on their own merits, even while recognizing that this family tradition of politics [...] without which perhaps in the interior of the country it would have been difficult to break with cultural stereotypes and for a woman to appear running as first place candidate and speaking her mind.\textsuperscript{21}

However, when she was re-elected in 2000 she began participating in the cross-party Women’s Bench (Bancada Femenina) and voted in favour of the quota bill in 2003. Finally, after becoming Secretary-General of the PC in 2012, among the priorities that she set for her year-long mandate was a proposal that clearly questioned the male power monopoly, presenting a bill in parliament to extend the quota in national and departmental elections beyond the limit of the one-time application in 2014/2015 provided for by Law No. 18.476.

\textsuperscript{17} Montaner interviewed by the journalist Emiliano Cotelo, on Radio El Espectador, 12/03/2012; access: http://www.espectador.com/noticias/234688/martha-montaner-pc-los-hombres-del-pc-apostaron-a-que-una-mujer-liderara-y-yo-estoy-dispuesta-a-liderar
\textsuperscript{18} Personal interview with Montaner, 08/05/1997.
\textsuperscript{19} Montaner interviewed by Cotelo, 12/03/2012.
\textsuperscript{20} The Political Women’s Network is a multiparty coordination between women politicians, activists and office holders, created in 1992 with the aim of training and strengthening women as political actors, instilling in them gender-awareness and encouraging their support for the collective promotion of a gender agenda within their parties and in the legislative and executive spheres of government.
\textsuperscript{21} Montaner’s foundation of her negative vote in the plenary discussion of the quota bill (CRR 2280/2002), Diario de Sesiones of the Chamber of Representatives, no. 3141: 65 (12/08/2003).
Montaner’s case illustrates how the chances women have first to enter and then to progress once they occupy a top post, depend on the interaction between normative, systemic and practical institutions and the political capital they possess. Her entry into politics was made possible by her family ties to a local power monopoly, headed by her father. As a result, she not only did not need to self-select, but also had access to the political capital of that local network to support her candidacy. However, in the context of the party renewal under the leadership of Bordaberry, Montaner’s significant prior career path did not seem to advantage her in the competition for electable candidacies on the Senate list. Given what can been seen as her veiled attack on male privilege in candidate selection processes by presenting a bill to extend the quota law, and assuming that the procedure for candidate nominations in the VU will remain centralized and exclusive, it will be interesting to see what place she is given on the list in the 2014 elections.

The use of primaries

As mentioned above, one of the criteria used to define positions on the VU Senate list was vote-winning ability, gauged by aspirants’ performance in internal elections. This is becoming an increasingly popular mechanism for candidate selection in Latin America, and as Piscopo has (2006: 36) stated about the Argentinian case ("parties adopting internal primaries claim that elections within the party are more democratic than, and are antithetical to, nomination quotas"), the contrast between the “democratic” nature of primaries and the “unfair” nature of quotas is a discourse present in the voices of male monopolies throughout the region.

In Mexico article 175-C of the Federal Code of Electoral Institutions and Procedures establishes that those parties that elect their candidates by “direct vote”, that is, in primary elections, will not be penalized for not applying the minimum quota established in articles 175-A and B of the same Code (Baldez 2007: 77). On the one hand, therefore, Mexican electoral law formally establishes that a practical institution of candidate nomination –the direct vote in primary elections– is normatively superior to another –the quota– for achieving enhanced conditions of democracy.

However, what actually happens in practice? Huerta and Magar (2006) found that in 2003 and 2006 nominations by primaries tended to favour male candidates over female candidates. Thus, in 2003, in the case of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), out of the 184 districts where its candidates were registered as having been selected by direct vote, in 74 only a single aspirant had been presented, who had therefore won the nomination by default, without any primary election actually taking place. Given that out of these 74 single aspirant cases, 69 were men and only 5 women, “could give rise to the suspicion that these candidates [...] were registered as selected by direct vote (and not directly nominated) in order to avoid applying the gender quota” (ibid.: 259-260). In the same year, the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN) registered internal elections to determine candidacies in 141 districts, but once again, primaries were actually only held in 45, the rest showing only single aspirants, of which 78 were men (ibid.: 263, table 35). As Lisa Baldez (2007: 86) comments, “if a party claimed to have relied on voto directo to select a candidate in a given district, the IFE [Federal Electoral Institute] accepted that
claim without further inquiry”, which means that article 175-C of the Electoral Code ends up being an “escape clause” that exempts parties from applying the quota.

Mark Jones writes about a similar case in Costa Rica, where, in order to distance itself from the traditional decentralized but highly exclusive selection processes, the Partido de Liberación Nacional selected its candidates in 2002 via direct primaries. However, as Jones (2004: 1207) points out, “even this competition was between lists drafted by elites”. These constitute, then, cases where behind the façade of a new formal, and supposedly more democratic, institutional practice, in fact there persist traditional informal practices for candidate selection.

What is more, primaries and quotas often come into direct conflict. Thus, for Argentina Piscopo (2006: 40-42) states that since compulsory primary elections were introduced for selection to legislative candidacies, parties frequently find they must alter the order that emerges from these elections in order to apply the quota. This “less transparent (and sub-optimal) method” of combining primaries and quotas is condemned by Jones (2010: 292-294) who provides a series of examples to show that “it is perfectly simple to design party primaries in such a way that the internal process of candidate selection is compatible with the use of quotas in the general election”.

In Uruguay the process of candidate selection to the Senate used by the Uruguayan Partido Socialista (PS) illustrates how the use of closed primaries, combined with application of a quota, does not necessarily lead to tension between these two institutions. Since 1992 the PS has adopted a gender quota applicable to all its internal decision-making bodies and electoral lists. The quota is based on the criterion of “mirror-representation”, whereby “for the nomination of candidates to electoral lists at different levels, a quota should be applied during the internal party primaries in order to elect a percentage of women equal to the proportion of women members of the Partido Socialista in the corresponding electoral body” (PS Statutes, art. 67). Since in the case of nomination of candidates to the Senate the “corresponding electoral body” is the Congress, the final list should include a percentage of women candidates equivalent to the female membership of the PS.

In order to facilitate the correct application of the quota by Congress delegates (who must vote for a minimum/maximum number of candidates) they are given two separate lists of female and male candidates (originally nominated by grassroots committees) together with a table that shows for each successive place on the list (which they must complete with the names of their preferred candidates) what is the minimum number of women candidates that should be included. It should be noted that the quota is applied only at the voting stage, there is no requirement that the nominees originally proposed by the party grassroots include a certain proportion of women; if there were a restricted supply of female aspirants this would complicate compliance at the ballot stage in the Congress. However, “in recent years more female aspirants are nominated than male”. The computing system used to control the voting automatically checks whether the ballot paper complies or not with the quota and those which do not are rejected. According to the PS’s statutes, although the quota is applied during the ballot stage, it should be reflected in the final composition of the lists, which could mean having to move a woman

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22 Interview with Walter Giménez, member of the PS’ Electoral Commission, July 2007.
candidate up a place or two if she does not win sufficient votes to occupy a quota place by her own right. However, this has never happened in the nomination of the first places on the lists.\textsuperscript{23} In fact, not only is the quota filled without altering the direct results of the ballot, but the minimum quota requirements are exceeded: thus, the PS's Senate list in 2009 had five women among its first 10 candidates (in places 2, 4, 7, 8 and 10), which thus exceeded the minimum quota of 40%.

But, what happens in those countries where there are no quotas applied to parliamentary lists and where open or closed primary elections have been installed as the mechanism for selecting candidates? Do primaries weaken women's chances of occupying electable candidacies on national-election lists? The literature tends to affirm that the logic of selection by primaries, centred on vote-winning through election campaigns, means that “success depends almost entirely on the deployment of financial and material resources” (Jones 2008: 51), and that this precondition has a gender bias since primaries “favour established candidates who have resources, most of whom tend to be men” (Htun 2004: 116). This hypothesis is confirmed by numerous empirical sources, among them the Chilean legislator, Adriana Munoz (cited in Franceschet 2001: 216):

\begin{quote}
[B]eing a candidate is difficult for a woman because you need to have a lot of money. We have little help economically. Men have access to circles or networks where money is lent – they are friends with bank managers. But we are not supported this way. For us, it's pretty complicated, this arena of power and money.
\end{quote}

In fact, all the studies that analyze candidate selection procedures in Latin American countries concur with this claim. Roza (2010: 193) concludes that “women fare worse in primaries compared to all other types of selection processes”, and Hinojosa (2012: 79) also states that in both Chile and Mexico “inclusive-decentralized systems of candidate selection prove problematic for women since they require self-selection and increase the influence of local power monopolies”.

In Uruguay, several party factions have begun to require that aspirants to legislative candidacies “mark their votes” in the internal elections. These were installed as the initial phase of the electoral cycle in the electoral reform of 1996, and were first held in 1999; they are the only elections in the cycle where voting is not compulsory and they function with a system of closed lists and proportional representation identical to the one used in national elections.\textsuperscript{24}

In interviews with women candidates, especially from the Partido Nacional, they signalled difficulties similar to those mentioned by Muñoz, the legislator from Chile quoted above. On the one hand, as a result of their exclusion from internal decision-making party organs and their limited presence in public office, women have a more limited projection as key party figures both in the eyes of the media and the electorate in general. Nor do they generally enjoy access to political capital on the same level as men, either in terms of support from the party apparatus, or direct association party leadership figures. Another factor is the difficulty women have to access the financial

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} It should be noted that the original objective of these elections was the selection of single presidential candidates and election of national and departmental party convention members, not the selection of candidates for the parliamentary elections.
support needed to launch an effective election campaign. According to Da Rosa, a male faction leader from the PN, neither the party nor the faction provides financial support for election campaigns in the primaries stage, which means that unless candidates have private sources of income to finance their campaigns, they must go out fundraising. However, as the ex-MP Beatriz Argimón (PN) points out, many of the policy issues on which women tend to focus—women's and children's rights, poverty, violence, among others—“are not attractive for potential campaign funders”. Given this reality, it is worth asking to what extent

On the other hand, the case of Verónica Alonso (another PN legislator, elected in 2009 on list 33) shows that if women have access to sufficient resources, primaries may not necessarily be an obstacle to their selection. Although Alonso had been active in a group of young party activists, she was not a publicly known figure, nor did she hold any visible internal party post when she launched her election campaign towards the internal elections of June 2009. As she herself publicly admitted, the key to her success was the investment of some 175 thousand dollars in her campaign, which came from the sale of an apartment that belonged to her. In the internal elections her list to the departmental party convention in Montevideo won the most votes of all the lists presented under the umbrella of the Correntada Wilsonista faction. This in turn guaranteed her second place on the CW list to the Chamber of Representatives in Montevideo in October of the same year. First place on the list was reserved for the faction leader, who thus covered his chances were his candidacy to the Senate unsuccessful (in the end he was elected senator), demonstrating how the male monopoly continues to function even in this case when the woman candidate had her own financial resources to fund her campaign.

Some final reflections

What conclusions can be made from such a variety of often contradictory findings? One conclusion that can be drawn is that reached by Borner et al. (2009: 45): "gender relations do not operate as ‘yet another dimension’ of candidate selection processes, but rather are constitutive of them”. This means that the gender-based segregation which previously excluded women from even entering the spheres of political power appears to continue function in a myriad of ways through legislative recruitment processes to allow them to pass, on a temporary and strictly controlled basis, through those same spheres. One shared conclusion of the research reviewed here is that the candidate selection procedures used by political parties in Latin American countries have a decisive effect on women’s political representation, whether quotas are in place or not. And not only is this true for the numerical dimension of the descriptive representation of women, but also in the case of the profile of those women who make it. On the other hand, there is no clear consensus on what kind of procedures favour an increased female presence in electable

positions on the lists, or allow the access of women with more autonomous profiles, which could in turn affect the substantive representation of women’s gender interests.

In fact, it appears that any attempt to identify specific selection procedures as more or less favourable to women is doomed to fail a priori given that the impact that the same mechanism may have in two different countries or even within two parties in the same country appears to be so contingent on the specific institutional setting and historical political moment. The challenge presented by the complexity of the processes themselves, where there are so many potential intervening variables in each case (candidate-party-election) makes it appear impossible to create a model that can account for such multicausality. In addition to this, transnational quantitative studies confront the “inability to adequately control for a host of potentially confounding country-specific factors” (Jones 2004: 1204; see also Norris and Lovenduski 1995: 198). If, therefore, no generalizable conclusions can be drawn about what types of candidate selection procedures facilitate women’s access, what might be the objectives of feminist studies in this area? Something that more qualitative studies, both country specific and comparative, can do is offer insights into what kinds of institutions –systemic, practical and normative– and the interaction between the three constitute obstacles to women’s access or favour male privilege in spatially- and temporally-specific contexts.

In this sense it is also evident that gender-specific studies of candidate selection processes need to pay more attention to the structures and dynamics of male privilege. While the dispute around the mechanism of the quota has placed under the microscope the political career paths, personal abilities and access channels of women candidates and office holders, male candidates have not been subjected to the same scrutiny, and both in political practice and in research on candidate selection appear to enjoy a certain “impunity” which derives from their supposedly inherently political nature, a legacy from Aristotelian times. In view of the double criteria used to assess men’s and women’s aptitude for holding political posts, and of the evident persistence of male control over politics even in those countries where the spaces of politics have become notably more feminized, some researchers have stressed the need for feminist academics to pay more attention not to what keeps women out, but to what keeps men in. Thus Elin Bjarnégård’s study (2013) explores how in Thailand “homonuclear capital” associated with male clientelistic networks translate into parliamentary seats mainly for men, and Dahlerup and Leyenaar’s book (2013) sets out to analyze the dynamics that underpin “male dominance” in Europe’s old democracies. The findings of the few studies that have been made of candidate selection in Latin American countries would seem to indicate that it would be an important next step to incorporate this new focus on futures studies in the region.

Finally, gender studies of candidate selection processes can make contributions to normative debates around the meaning and nature of democratic practices. In this sense, of particular relevance is the issue of how the confrontation of primaries and quotas is formulated in terms of a normative dispute over the meaning of “democracy”. The male discourse that privileges primaries appears to prioritize a univocal notion of democracy, that considers “more democratic” to mean “more inclusive” and understands inclusion exclusively in terms of absolute numbers: the more people who are permitted to take part in the selection process, the more democratic –and therefore better– it must be. However, if democracy is conceived of in terms of plurality of representation, where the structures
that guarantee the substantive representation of shared political ideas—that is, political parties—should also guarantee the descriptive representation of the diverse citizen body that they claim to represent, the quota emerges as a highly democratizing mechanism. In other words, while the defence of each of these systemic-practical institutions—primaries and quotas—bases its claim on its “democratic” nature, they do not appeal to the same meaning of democracy.

While male dominance of politics remains strong (see Dahlerup and Leyenaar 2013), it seems almost inevitable that the discourse that claims, at best, that primaries are “more democratic”, and at worst that quotas are “anti-democratic”, will come out on top. However, as Jones (2010) has argued, it is possible to find ways to accommodate the combined use of primaries and quotas so that their practical effects do not come into contradiction, and instead of generating a normative conflict, produce a new, more complex and richer normative foundation to sustain the articulation between these two sets of systemic and practical institutions. What is more, these rather simplistic notions of democracy can also be found underpinning some of the analytical models that have been developed in the mainstream literature, which feminist research would do well to engage with and challenge.

Bibliography


27 See, for example, the inclusion/exclusion continuum proposed by Hazan and Rahat (2009) to determine how restrictive (and therefore how “democratic”) are the requirements for determining the composition of the selectorate.


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Appendix: Table 2. Characterization of the candidate selection procedures and their impact on the levels of female representation, by party faction, Uruguay, 2009 elections

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Faction</th>
<th>List</th>
<th>In/formal</th>
<th>Institutionalization</th>
<th>Selectorate</th>
<th>De/centralized</th>
<th>Nomination system</th>
<th>Quota</th>
<th>% women candidates</th>
<th>Women elected as % of seats won</th>
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<td>Senate</td>
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