

**Male Dominance in Political Recruitment:  
Gender, Power, and Institutions in the Republic of Ireland**

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# List of Abbreviations

<b>RoI</b>	The Republic of Ireland
<b>FF</b>	Fianna Fáil
<b>FG</b>	Fine Gael
<b>LAB</b>	The Irish Labour Party
<b>SF</b>	Sinn Féin
<b>IRA</b>	Irish Republican Army
<b>OMOV</b>	One Member One Vote
<b>FI</b>	Feminist Institutionalism
<b>R&amp;S</b>	Candidate Recruitment and Selection
<b>GAA</b>	Gaelic Athletic Association
<b>LEA</b>	Local Electoral Area
<b>PR-STV</b>	Proportional representation by the single transferable vote (The Irish electoral system)

# Glossary of Irish terms

Some Irish institutions are commonly referred to by their Irish name. Below is a brief summary of terms in the Irish language that are used in the thesis.

<b>Éire</b>	Ireland
<b>Bunreacht na hÉireann</b>	Constitution of Ireland
<b>Dáil Éireann</b>	Chamber of Deputies
<b>Seanad Éireann</b>	The Senate
<b>Oireachtas</b>	Parliament
<b>Teachta Dála (TD)</b>	Member of Parliament (MP)
<b>Taoiseach</b>	Prime Minister
<b>Táinaiste</b>	Deputy Prime Minister
<b>Cumann</b>	Local party branch



# Abstract

Political institutions remain male-dominated, both nominally and substantively. The problem of male dominance in parliamentary representation is increasingly recognised as a threat to democracy, with candidate recruitment and selection positioned as the key process that must be tackled in order to address this issue. Accordingly, attempts to reform legislatures have most commonly been made through new institutional rules that seek to challenge male dominance in recruitment and selection: gender quotas. Over the past two decades, over one hundred countries have adopted these measures in one form or another, with varying degrees of success. Unsurprisingly, this has produced a rich body of work on the impact of these mechanisms. While this work has provided fruitful insights, it has largely focused on the impact of new rules on the election of women to parliament. How these new rules interact with and challenge male dominance at the recruitment and selection stage remains largely unknown. A central question for feminist activists and scholars is, therefore, what is the impact on male dominance in political recruitment and selection of a new institutional rule designed to challenge it?

Through an in-depth case study of the implementation of legislative gender quotas in the Republic of Ireland, this thesis addresses this question. In July 2012, The Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act changed the criteria for state funding to political parties in the Republic of Ireland. The legislation obliged political parties to put forward no less than 30 per cent male and female candidates for the 2016 general election. For the first time in the history of the state, political parties were obliged to consider the sex of their candidates and examine their own internal practices. Using data collected through in-depth interviews with political actors, process tracing and document analysis, this thesis shows the impact of these rules on practices in the four main parties in the Republic of Ireland: Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, the Labour Party and Sinn Féin.

Using a feminist institutionalist approach, this thesis demonstrates how political parties challenge or facilitate male dominance following the introduction of gender quotas, mapping changes and continuities in political recruitment and selection. It points to the gendered nature of the pre-existing institutions, particularly localism,

showing the ways in which seemingly neutral formal and informal rules have traditionally bestowed power to men. Following the introduction of new institutional measures, it demonstrates continuities in the traditional rules and the gendered legacies of these processes, while also drawing attention to the active ways in which powerful political elites use existing formal and informal institutions to maintain political power and resist change. While the thesis finds that, although male dominance was challenged, it was simultaneously reproduced and reimagined in the new context. The Irish case demonstrates the difficulties in disrupting male dominance, while also highlighting the possibility of transformation.

# Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning

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# 1

## Challenging Male Dominance

### *Problems and Puzzles*

When you break everything down, ‘the barriers’, none of them are insoluble, none of them are rocket science, none of them are beyond the capacity of humanity to mitigate at least, or resolve them entirely and yet it’s never happened and the reason for that is that those in power do not willingly concede that position.

– National executive member and candidate, Sinn Féin<sup>1</sup>

At the heart of feminist scholarship is a desire for gendered change. In the past fifty years, there have been undeniable, although uneven, advances in gender equality, invalidating the assumption that gender orders are static and concrete. The political sphere, however, remains male-dominated, both nominally and substantively. Nominally, the historic and ongoing dominance of men within political organisations is self-evident. Men continue to populate and hold positions of power in parliaments, executives, political parties, and international organisations in greater numbers than women (Goetz, 2007; Chappell & Walyen, 2013). Male dominance is not only signified by the overwhelming presence of men within the public and political domain, but in the disproportionate power that men hold within these spaces and the ways in which this is maintained, legitimised and naturalised. In addition to numerical political representation, male dominance is further recognisable in ‘politics as a workplace, vertical and horizontal sex segregation, discourses on

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<sup>1</sup> Interview no. 28, Árd Comhairle (National Executive) member and candidate, female, Sinn Féin, March 2015

women's presence in politics, and gender equality policies' (Dahlerup & Leyenaar, 2013:1). In this way, male dominance is also substantive, insofar as the political realm is masculinised and continues to reflect and create gendered inequalities of power. This has not happened 'through a conscious strategy on behalf of all men to dominate all women, [...] nor through the exercise of brute force' but through the historical exclusion of women, which has allowed institutions to arise that are embedded with masculinised norms, rules and practices (Chappell & Waylen, 2013: 602). Political institutions have been defined in and by the absence of women (Acker, 1992: 567) and while women continue to enter political spaces in greater numbers than before, politics remains a male bastion, where men's access to power is maintained and legitimised through processes, rules and discourses which continue to privilege certain ways of operating and modes of being (Acker, 1992; 2006, Lovenduski, 2005; Chappell & Walyen, 2013).

Male over-representation is often taken as the key indicator or aspect of male political power. In almost all countries across the globe, men continue to be politically over-represented despite being a minority of the world's population (Inter-parliamentary Union, 2017). The degree to which men are over-represented within parliamentary politics differs significantly by country and region. However, on average, men hold 77 per cent of parliamentary seats across the globe, demonstrating a striking trend of inequality across contexts (Inter-parliamentary Union, 2017). There are only two countries in the world, Rwanda, and Bolivia, where there are fewer men than women holding parliamentary seats (Inter-parliamentary Union, 2017). Thus, despite the removal of formal barriers which prohibit universal access to political participation, the work of women's movements, and the trans-national spread of 'gender inclusive' norms, male over-representation still persists and continues to be a global phenomenon.

Male over-representation is a fundamental consequence of male dominance within political recruitment and selection and political parties more broadly. While traditional accounts have attempted to explain gendered patterns of representation through appeals to broader societal values, electoral bias and the position of women, a number of studies have shown that it is the selection of women as candidates by



political parties which is one of the greatest obstacles (Lovenduski & Norris, 1993; Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; Caul, 1999; Kittilson, 2006; Murray, 2010a; Hinojosa, 2012; Bjarnegård, 2013; Kenny, 2013). Candidate recruitment and selection has therefore been highlighted as a key process that must be examined if we are to understand global patterns of male parliamentary over-representation (Galligan, 1993; Lovenduski & Norris, 1995; Caul, 1999; Kittilson, 2006; Murray, 2010a; Hinojosa, 2012; McGing & White, 2012; Bjarnegård, 2013; Kenny, 2013; Culhane, 2017). This work has shown that political parties are gendered organisations in which men have greater access to resources and recognition, thus offering them a disproportionate advantage as both selectors and aspirants (Lovenduski, 2005; Verge, 2009; Verge & de la Fuente, 2014; Verge, 2015; Kenny & Verge, 2016). Moreover, it has shown how the complex matrix of informal and formal rules, practices and norms by which parties recruit and select their candidates are explicitly and implicitly gendered (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; Murray, 2010a; Kenny, 2013; Bjarnegård, 2013). Given that parties and the rules and processes by which they operate are seldom explicitly in favour of men, this work has crucially drawn attention to the informal ways in which these processes empower gendered actors in different ways.

To date, gender quotas have been the most important and direct institutional measures that have been used to challenge gendered patterns of representation (Dahlerup, 2006; Krook, 2009; Franceschet et al., 2012). The problem of women's under-representation has been increasingly acknowledged as a democratic deficit in the international arena, with nearly all countries making a commitment, at least rhetorically, to gender-balanced decision-making and power-sharing, particularly within parliaments (United Nations, 1995). While measures aimed at addressing gender imbalance first emerged in the 1930s, the use of quotas as a mechanism of reform grew exponentially in the 1990s (Krook, 2006a). Although taking different forms, gender quotas require that parties produce certain outcomes with regards to sex and thus attempt to address gender imbalance on party candidacies and within parliaments. In the last twenty-five years, over one hundred and thirty countries have

adopted these measures in the form of reserved seats, party quotas, or legislative quotas, making them somewhat of a political phenomenon (Krook, 2006a; 2010b).

These measures have produced undeniable changes in gendered patterns of representation across the globe and have proved that, under the right conditions, male over-representation can be challenged by new rules (Krook, 2009; Franceschet et al., 2012). Unsurprisingly, this has also produced a significant amount of work on the mechanisms of gender quotas. The existing literature on gender quotas has largely drawn on institutional factors in explaining quota effectiveness, proving that ‘institutions matter,’ in facilitating or hindering attempts at change (Larsrud & Taphorn, 2007; Jones, 2009; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009; Krook, 2009). As will be elaborated upon further in the subsequent chapters, much attention has been given to the ‘fit’ between the new rules and the existing context. The design of the quota and its interaction with the electoral system has been a central focus of existing studies, which conclude that quotas are most effective when working within a closed-list PR electoral system, where there are placement mandates and harsh sanctions (Larsrud & Taphorn, 2007; Jones, 2009; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009; Krook, 2009).

There is, however, surprisingly little written on how gender quotas impact political parties and by extension, male dominance in recruitment and selection. As will be elaborated upon in the coming chapters, a central reason for this is that the gender quota literature has been primarily concerned with understanding the success or failure of quotas, which has largely been measured in numerical shifts in representation within parliament. While quotas may or may not cause representational change, it remains unclear whether or how these new rules modify gendered power structures within political parties and the traditional ways in which male power is reproduced. An important, yet unexplored question for feminist scholars is, therefore, how male dominance in political recruitment and selection is challenged by new institutional rules that seek to undermine it.

This thesis seeks to explore this question, using the implementation of legislative gender quotas in the Republic of Ireland as a case study. The central question of this thesis is:

- What is the impact of gender quotas on male dominance in recruitment and selection in the Republic of Ireland?

If indeed male dominance is institutionally produced, it questions the enduring effects and gendered legacies of pre-existing institutions of recruitment and selection, and their role in shaping change. Correspondingly, it asks how political parties and the political elites that inhabit them use existing formal and informal institutions in new and old ways to constrain and facilitate women's inclusion in politics. These are the sub-questions that concern this research. Using new case study material, this thesis looks at how political parties responded to legislative gender quotas and examines how they sought to challenge or maintain dominance in political recruitment through the integration of new rules into existing gendered processes.

The remainder of this chapter elaborates on the key research question, laying out the importance and rationale of the study. First, it elaborates on the advantages of studying male dominance and then on the importance and added-value of focusing on male dominance in candidate recruitment and selection. Second, the chapter outlines how the study of male dominance was operationalised, specifying the methods and research design of the thesis. The chapter concludes by detailing the structure of the thesis, demonstrating how the proceeding chapters will answer the research question at hand.

## **1.1 Why male dominance?**

The study of women in politics is a well-established subfield within political science. While a focus on women in politics and gender and institutions has now become 'at least part of the ordinary landscape of political science' (Childs & Krook, 2006: 19), the study of male dominance in politics is only beginning to gain traction. Drawing on critical men's studies (Hanmer, 1990; Hearn, 2004) and masculinities studies (Connell, 1995; 2000; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), a growing number of scholars have begun to reverse the lens of traditional feminist political science and problematise male over-representation. Studying men is, of course, not new. As

Hearn remarks, ‘men have been studying men for a long time, and calling it “History” “Sociology”, or whatever’ (Hearn, 2004: 49). Given that political institutions have historically been, and remain male-dominated, men have also been the central subject of political science, a detail that has not been problematised by mainstream analysis (Bjarnegård, 2013; Murray, 2014; Bjarnegård & Murray, 2015; Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2017). Approaching male dominance from a feminist perspective seeks to do just this by challenging and making visible the male norm that is so often taken for granted (Bjarnegård, 2013; Murray, 2014; Bjarnegård & Murray, 2015; Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2017; Chiva, 2018).

Centrally, the study of male dominance is concerned with power, and more specifically the power of men (Hearn, 2004; Bjarnegård, 2013; Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2017; Chiva, 2018). Problematising male dominance calls into question ‘the persistent presence of accumulations of power and powerful resources by certain men, the doing of power and dominance in many men’s practices, and the pervasive association of the social category of men with power’ (Hearn, 2004:51). Of course, not all men have an advantage over all women, nor are all men powerful or in positions of power (Connell, 1995; 2002; Hearn, 2004; Weldon, 2006: 239; Chappell & Waylen, 2013). As is elaborated upon in Chapter two, intersectional analyses have shown how gender intersects with other axes of inequality including, but not limited to, ethnicity, sexuality and class (McCall, 2005; Weldon, 2006; Celis et al., 2014). Moreover, gender is culturally and temporally specific, playing out differently in different contexts (Weldon, 2006; Childs & Krook, 2006: 25). While acknowledging that gender is variable and operates in conjunction with other social categories, we must also acknowledge that gendered patterns of power exist across all regions of the world and that ‘entrenched gender stereotypes and control of political resources have worked to privilege (certain) men and disadvantage most women’ (Chappell & Waylen, 2013: 602; see also Chappell, 2002; Molyneux & Razavi, 2002; Waylen, 2007; McBride & Mazur, 2010). Thus, a focus on male dominance acknowledges that, although gender is a ‘continuous, variable, and tenacious process,’ which can be subject to challenge, resistance, and negotiation, it is a process that usually leads to men’s advantage and women’s disadvantage (Kenney, 1996: 463). Understanding

the 'hegemony of men' therefore 'seeks to address the double complexity that men are both a social category formed by the gender system and collective and individual agents, often dominant collective and individual agents, of social practices' (Hearn, 2004: 49). While attributing a shared identity or set of experiences to men (and women) is problematic, seeing these categories as 'sharing a structurally defined social position is not' (Weldon, 2006: 239).

Focusing on male dominance as opposed to women in politics crucially then shifts the focus from the powerlessness of women to the advantage and privilege of men (Bjarnegård, 2013; Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2017). The move from studying women's under-representation to male dominance is not an attempt to 're-create the wheel;' much of the existing scholarship is applicable and valuable to the study of male dominance. Rather, the shift to male dominance seeks to shed light on explanations that have previously been underdeveloped by placing those who have power at the centre of the analyses (Bjarnegård, 2013). This is an important and much needed shift in the field. As outlined above, male dominance in politics persists despite global trends which seek to challenge it (Dahlerup & Leyenaar, 2013). Without an understanding of how power is reproduced, maintained and invested in by political elites, an incomplete picture exists, providing a limited account of how and why the political realm remains male-dominated (Bjarnegård, 2013; Bjarnegård & Murray, 2015; Chiva, 2018). Thus, studying male dominance, both before and after gender quotas 'fundamentally alters the focus from the enabling agents which attempt to include women to the 'constraining factors' that actively block women's access to political power' (Bjarnegård, 2013: 2).

This thesis adopts a feminist institutionalist approach to the issue of male dominance, which draws attention to the ways in which gendered power relations are institutionally reproduced through the formal and informal rules, norms and practices of political processes. The central contention of a feminist institutionalist approach is that institutions, understood, here as the rules, norms and practices that shape behaviour, are gendered (Krook & Mackay, 2011). FI work is therefore interested in both 'the gendered character and the gendering effects' of political institutions (Mackay, 2011: 181). While a feminist institutionalist approach to male dominance

problematizes male power, it does not then necessarily position men as the problem. While undoubtedly a focus on male dominance draws attention to the ways in which men hold on to positions of power, it also draws attention to the institutional context, highlighting the institutional mechanisms and discourses which reproduce the ‘hegemony of men’ (Hearn, 2004: 49). Thus, male dominance is not solely the result of conservative attitudes towards women, or as is often called, ‘explicit’ or ‘direct’ discrimination, nor power holding strategies by male elites (Lovenduski, 1998; Mackay, 2004; Kenny, 2013). Rather, male dominance is legitimised and maintained through ‘seemingly neutral’ institutions that are normalised and naturalised as rational and just. These institutions shape the behaviour of both male and female actors who play in accordance with these rules of the games. With regards to reform, seemingly neutral institutions also shape the logics through which political parties, populated by both male and female actors understand their political environment and how and why they choose to resist or facilitate reform. Thus, both men and women are complicit in reproducing male dominance. As Krook (2016: 269) argues:

‘In the clash between new and old ways of doing things, in other words, members of dominant groups may draw on existing values and routines to impede transformation – dynamics often willingly supported by members of marginalized groups, who may not recognize their own disadvantage.’

We must therefore unpack the ways in which male dominance is reproduced, using what rules, norms and narratives, and to what effects.

## **1.2 Why candidate recruitment and selection?**

Candidate recruitment and selection (R&S), that is, the largely unregulated processes through which political parties cultivate and select candidates for elections, is a core activity in the life of political parties (Gallagher & Marsh, 1988). With regards to representation, candidate recruitment and selection is important as it is the primary way in which political parties determine who enters public office. Recruitment and selection operates as a filtering process through which political parties whittle down

the extremely large number of citizens who are eligible to run for political office in a population; to the smaller number of citizens who want to run; to the small number of people selected to run to the minuscule band of citizens who are elected as representatives (Norris, 1997b). This process is generally described in four stages as shown in figure 1-1 below (Norris, 1997b; Hinojosa, 2012).



**Figure 1-1. Process of becoming an officeholder**

While a core premise of representative democracy is that the electorate chooses who represents them, political parties then act as crucial intermediates in this process (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; Siavelis & Morgenstern, 2008b). In the case of ‘safe seats,’ where a party can predict an almost certain win, selectors essentially choose the representative (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; Rahat, 2007). Considering that these exist in some form in the majority of legislatures, the values and choices of the selectors, have a much greater effect on the composition of parliament than the electorate (Gallaher & Marsh, 1988; Rahat, 2007). Candidate recruitment and selection therefore represents ‘the choice before the choice’ (Rahat, 2007). Although parties espouse a commitment to democracy, how parties make this decision is often hidden from public view. Despite the importance of these processes for representative democracy, in most countries, there are few laws governing these processes, with political parties operating in accordance with their own internal rules and norms. Studies of legislative recruitment have therefore sought to unpack the ‘secret garden’ of recruitment and selection in order to understand who becomes a political representative and why (Gallagher, 1980; Ranney, 1981; Gallagher & Marsh, 1988; Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; Norris, 1997a; Siavelis & Morgenstern, 2008b).

If no mediating factors which privileged certain groups over others existed, political positions would be randomly distributed within any one society. Although this may

not result in an equal distribution, variation would not be expected to be stark. As is widely noticeable, however:

‘legislatures worldwide include more of the affluent than the less well-off, more men than women, more middle-aged than young and more white-collar professionals than blue-collar workers’ (Norris, 1997b: 6).

Significant distortion in favour of one particular group, whether determined by social class, ethnicity or sex suggests that there are ‘mechanisms of distortion’ (Krook, 2010c: 156) at play, whether unconscious or intentional, through which this structural discrimination persists.

Focusing then on the impact of gender quotas on male dominance in political recruitment and selection offers a number of advantages. First, it places a central role on political parties. It moves away from ‘the traditional focus on women’s shortcomings and alleged lack of qualifications and political interest’ and instead focuses on the “stickiness” of male-dominated institutions and the lack of inclusiveness on the part of the political parties, who are the real gatekeepers to elected positions’ (Dahlerup & Leyenaar, 2013: 2). While gender quotas have produced undeniable changes in gendered patterns of representation (Krook, 2009; Franceschet et al., 2012), male over-representation often persists. The impact of gender quotas has differed significantly across regions and across parties, proving effective in some cases while entirely failing to break the male monopoly over candidacies and legislative office in others (Krook, 2009; Franceschet et al., 2012; Dahlerup & Leyenaar, 2013). Moreover, institutional variations considered, the general trend has been a disparity between the design and outcome of new rules (Krook, 2016). In the majority of cases, elections produce much lower levels of women in parliament than specified in quota policies (Krook, 2016), showing a gap between the design and enactment. A central reason for this is that in the vast majority of cases, gender quotas are met with both individual and institutional resistance (Verge & Troupel, 2011; Krook, 2016). Often, the explicit goal of institutional reform, gender or otherwise, is to shift power relations (Lowndes, 2005). New rules try to alter traditional ways of doing things and challenge those



that have long benefited from the status quo. Following this, opposition to gender reform is common, within both the political sphere and elsewhere. New rules do not instantaneously create change in recruitment and selection because political actors subvert and challenge reforms (Lowndes, 2005). While institutionally, political parties are often faced with challenges following the introduction of new rules, particularly the persistence of old rules, norms and traditions, political elites also actively subvert gender quotas, resist women's inclusion and maintain male dominance in a variety of ways. The 'political will' of political elites and political parties is, therefore, crucial in shaping implementation processes (Krook, 2009; Murray, 2010a; Krook, 2016). Gender quotas can be effective, but political parties must embrace the quota, navigating the institutional context in whatever way necessary to ensure that male dominance is effectively challenged. Following this, it is political parties that we must examine as the unit of analysis responsible for change. Although perhaps no longer the 'missing variable' (Baer, 1993) in terms of explaining gendered patterns of representation, political parties have still received a comparably small amount of attention within the existing literature on gender quotas (cf. Murray, 2010a, Kenny, 2013; Verge & de la Fuente, 2014).

Second, this focus acknowledges that while shifts in numerical outcomes are one indicator of the persistence or diminution of male dominance in political recruitment and selection, they are only one aspect. While the shift from studying women's under-representation to male dominance in representation (Bjarnegård, 2013; Murray, 2014) is emerging within feminist institutionalist and political science research, a focus firmly on recruitment and selection contends that gender quotas may challenge gendered patterns of representation without subverting the mechanisms through which male power is reproduced or the overall dominance and privilege of men within political parties (Franceschet & Piscopo, 2013; Johnson, 2016) This has certain implications for the long-term and indeed more substantive impact of quotas. Legislative gender quotas are frequently conceptualised as temporary measures (Meier, 2004; Baldez, 2007; Rahat, 2009; Bjarnegård & Zetterberg, 2011) and often, as is the case in Ireland, contain clauses in their design that make them obsolete after a certain number of election cycles. As Bjarnegård and

Zetterberg (2011: 187) argue, ‘the implicit purpose of quotas is not only to increase the present representation of women in parliaments or change policy-making in a gender-equal way, but also to permanently break the barriers that women are encountering in political recruitment processes.’ While women may be selected through procedural changes, more embedded and hidden gendered power inequalities may remain (Verge & de la Fuente, 2014; Johnson, 2006), reproducing and reconfiguring male dominance in the new context in new and old ways.

Finally, studying male dominance as opposed to female under-representation circumvents the need to justify why women should be present in political spaces, an inherently gendered requirement. Normative questions such as why and how the under-representation of women matters have been given much attention (Phillips, 1995; Mansbridge, 1999). Advocates for gender quotas have argued that increasing the number of women in the legislature will lead to the inclusion of ‘women’s issues’ and legislation and policy beneficial to women as a group, transform or challenge the gendered nature of the public sphere and inspire other women to enter politics (Phillips, 1995). These justifications have been pivotal in identifying women’s descriptive under-representation as a problem which is worthy of being addressed and has informed arguments which have enabled the push for formal change. However, these arguments for women’s representation have also been critically interrogated by scholars who have questioned the link between women’s descriptive and substantive representation. As Childs and Krook (2006: 22) remark:

‘the impact of women’s presence is too often simply ‘read’ from women’s bodies in an essentialist and reductive manner. In so doing, it elides women’s bodies and feminist minds by uncritically inferring that the difference that female representatives will make is a feminist one.’

Thus, an argument against quotas as a mechanism for change could be posed from a feminist perspective given that they require women, not feminists to be included. Questions about why women should be present, however, presume that women’s inclusion should be based on certain criteria, be those feminist or otherwise. Justifications for inclusion are rarely, if ever, extended to men, whose presence,

qualifications or added-value within political spaces does not need to be rationalised, explained or defended (Murray, 2014). The need to justify women's inclusion within politics is reflective of that fact that power is and has been historically associated with men and masculinity, as something to which men naturally lay claim to. Women are still positioned as belonging outside positions of power. This is even embodied in how we, as gender scholars and feminists, articulate the problem of women's access to positions of power. As Beard (2017: 4) suggests:

‘The shared metaphors we use of female access to power – knocking on the door, storming the citadel, smashing the glass ceiling, or just giving them a leg up-underline female exteriority. Women in power are seen as breaking down barriers, or alternatively as taking something to which they are not quite entitled.’

Rather than being concerned with the added-value of women's presence, a focus on male dominance understands the advantage of men as an issue of injustice that must be remedied in and of itself. Acknowledging and problematising the disproportionate advantage and power of men reiterates that candidate recruitment and selection are both biased and unfair, a problem which gender quotas are explicitly diagnosed to alter (Childs, 2013: 93).

### **1.3 Why Ireland?**

To answer the proposed research questions, this thesis uses an in-depth case study analysis of quota implementation in the Republic of Ireland in the run-up to the 2016 general election. The Republic of Ireland is one part of the island of Ireland (Éire) which is politically divided into Ireland and ‘Northern Ireland,’ which remains part of the United Kingdom. The Irish case study is useful to answer the proposed research question and generate insights on male dominance for a number of reasons. First, the Republic of Ireland is a parliamentary representative democracy and the eighth most developed country in the world (United Nations Human Development Report, 2016); however, despite economic and social advances, male over-

representation remained high prior to the introduction of gender quotas, failing to fall below 84 per cent. Following from existing work, this can be taken as one indicator of male dominance in recruitment and selection.

Second, the Irish context is one in which a recent attempt has been made to challenge male dominance through the introduction of gender quotas. In July 2012, legislative gender quotas were established in the Republic of Ireland through the passing of The Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act. This new rule obliged political parties to put no less than 30 per cent male or female candidates on party tickets for the following general election, with this figure increasing to 40 per cent seven years after. The sanction for failing to do so was a 50 per cent cut in state funding, an amount which is annually allocated to parties in accordance with their percentage share of the national first-preference poll in the last general election. In 2013, a total of €5.5 million was provided to the four biggest political parties, divided on this basis. The quota also set a rising threshold, which is due to rise to 40 per cent from 2023 onwards. As will be elaborated upon further in the subsequent chapters, the results of the 2016 election show us that the new institutional measures challenged patterns of male over-representation. With each of the main parties fulfilling the quota requirements, the new legislation achieved its legislative purpose and almost doubled the number of women who ran for election. In the 2011 general election, only 86 of the 566 election candidates (15.2 per cent) were female. Following the new legislation, overall female candidacy levels rose to 29.6 per cent with a record number of 163 women contesting the election, almost double that of 2011. Moreover, this translated into a greater number of female TDs in Dáil Éireann, with the percentage of female TDs rising from 16 to 22.2 per cent. Despite this, the thirty per cent quota did not translate into thirty per cent female representation, signifying a gap between institutional design and institutional outcomes, between innovation and change. Ireland is, therefore, a particularly useful context to offer insights on the impact of gender quotas, where male dominance was challenged but also maintained.

Third, there are a number of institutional factors that make Ireland a particularly interesting case study to examine the ways in which ‘institutions matters’ with regards to the challenge and reproduction of male dominance. Ireland elects its

representatives through a system of PR-STV (proportional representation by the single transferable vote). This electoral system, which is elaborated on in the coming chapters, is quite unique. Ireland and Malta are the only countries that use PR-STV to elect representatives to their national parliament.<sup>2</sup> The role of electoral systems in shaping quota implementation is widely noted within the existing literature on gender quotas. Political parties are both constrained and enabled by the national context within which they work, and the electoral system impacts party selection strategies and the level of influence parties have on translating candidates into elected representatives. While this has been examined in other contexts, Ireland is the first country in the world that has introduced legislative gender quotas under a PR-STV electoral system. This case study offers new perspectives on the existing literature on institutional change with regards to how electoral institutions matter in shaping reform opportunities and in maintaining male dominance. Considering the first application of the quota only occurred in February 2016, there is little to no research on this topic in Ireland (for an exception see Buckley et al., 2016; Brennan & Buckley, 2017). The Irish context thus offers new case study material to a field where other contexts have already received much attention.

Perhaps the most prominent reason for the case study selection, however, is the extent to which Irish politics is governed by an informal institution. As will be elaborated upon throughout the thesis, feminist scholarship has given much attention to the importance of informal institutions in shaping the reproduction of political male dominance, during times of 'stability' and during times of explicit challenge (Kenny, 2013; Bjarnegård, 2013; Chappell & Waylen, 2013: 607; Mackay, 2014; Waylen, 2017a). Within the Republic of Ireland, localism, as a preference for and privileging of 'the local', is the defining political logic that guides political behaviour (Gallagher, 1980; Carty, 1981; Randall & Smyth, 1987; Chubb, 1992; Gallagher & Komito, 2010). Informal institutions are not specific to Ireland (Taylor-Robinson, 2006; Tsai, 2006; Grzymala-Busse, 2010; Azari, 2012; Waylen, 2014; 2017a) and localism has been identified in a number of other contexts (Randall & Smyth, 1987;

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<sup>2</sup> All together PR-STV is used for in Malta for elections to the national parliament, the Australian Senate and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Childs & Cowley, 2011; Evans, 2012; Kenny, 2013). While not unique to the Irish context, localism is particularly pronounced in Ireland, thus offering clear insights into its operation and effects. Localism has also, in its various guises, been shown to contribute to male dominance in political recruitment in other contexts (Evans, 2012; Kenny, 2013). Meryl Kenny's (2013) work on political recruitment in Scotland, for example, showed that a preference for local candidates translated into a preference for 'the local man' and was used as an exclusionary discourse to 'other' both female and ethnic minority aspirants. Elizabeth Evans (2012) similarly noted these dynamics in her work on political recruitment in British by-elections. The prevalence of localism in Ireland, therefore, brings together an FI perspective with male dominance, allowing us to see how formal and informal institutions interact to challenge or break male dominance within political recruitment and selection.

#### **1.4 Researching male dominance in recruitment and selection**

This research is centrally interested in understanding the impact of new rules on male dominance in recruitment and selection through a single-case in-depth qualitative research study of the implementation of quotas in the Republic of Ireland. In order to examine this, this thesis adopts a feminist institutionalist (FI) framework. Feminist institutionalism has been central in enhancing our knowledge about the relationship between gender, institutions, and change. Crucially, it has shown how gender is deeply implicated in institutions, while also providing the theoretical tools to understand how institutions facilitate or hinder reform (Mackay et al., 2010; Krook & Mackay, 2011; Bjarnegård, 2013; Chappell & Waylen, 2013; Kenny, 2013; Waylen, 2017a). As will be elaborated upon in Chapters two and three, feminist institutionalists are also interested in the gendered dimensions of institutional design and practices and offer a framework to examine how gender quotas, as new formal institutional rules, interact with existing formal and informal practices to challenge or maintain male dominance in political recruitment and selection.

Feminist institutionalist approaches have certain practical and methodological implications with regards to carrying out research. Given the diversity of debates

within feminist theory, the existence of a unified feminist methodology has largely been repudiated (Harding, 1987; Krook & Squires, 2006; Ackerly & True, 2013). This is indicative of the fact that feminism, as a broader political project, a research paradigm and an ideology is neither holistic nor homogenous and is marked by contestations and conflicting viewpoints. Acknowledging these convergences is not to argue that there is no coherent feminist thought. Rather, it reflects the reality that although there are commonalities and debates that characterise a variety of feminisms (Ackerly & True, 2013), there is no shared epistemological or ontological position (Hill Collins, 2000; Ackerly & True, 2013: 135). Considering that these inform methodological choices, feminists 'by definition cannot embrace a single methodology' (Krook & Squires, 2006: 45). Consequently, feminist political science has been marked by methodological pluralism, an inclination that has produced multidimensional research findings (Krook & Squires, 2006; Childs & Krook, 2006). Similarly, feminist institutionalism does not share a unified approach to methodology. Feminist institutionalist work, like feminist political science, is however, similar in its 'problem-driven' approach, seeking to identify trends across contexts and identifying 'lessons to be learned' which can be used to create strategies for future change (Kenny, 2013). As will be elaborated upon in Chapter two, FI scholars have ascribed to different variants of neo-institutionalism and the theoretical and methodological assumptions that go with them. Although theoretically FI scholars agree that 'institutions matter' with regards to gender, how they matter at different times and in different contexts is the subject of empirical analysis. Feminist institutionalism, as one variant of institutional theory, is not then a causal theory in the behavioural sense (cf Lowndes, 2010: 78) rather 'it provides a map of the subject and signposts to its central questions' (Rhodes, 1995: 49). A feminist institutionalist enquiry directs the researcher's attention towards certain questions that other approaches do not, namely the role of gendered institutions in empowering and privileging gendered actors.

Adopting an FI approach, this thesis focuses its attention on the institutions of political recruitment and selection. As previously outlined, it acknowledges that nominal male over-representation is only one aspect of male dominance and thus

shifts in gendered patterns of representation are only one indicator of change. In attempting to understand the impact of new rules on the more substantive aspects of male dominance, this research set about identifying shifts and continuities in the gendered institutions that traditionally governed these party processes. In order to do this, it was first necessary to characterise the most salient features of the pre-existing context. This was done through mapping the ‘formal architecture and informal networks, connections, conventions, rules, and norms of institutions’ (Lovenduski, 2011: x) that traditionally governed recruitment and selection as well as identifying the mechanisms through which power and male dominance were traditionally reproduced. To map the formal rules, a content analysis of the parties’ official guidelines relating to candidate selection was carried out. These were either available to the general public or were given upon request. In order to then track changes in party rules and formal candidate criteria over time, strategy reports were examined and contrasted with internal party constitutions and rules books. Tracking shifts and continuities in gendered informal rules required carrying out in-depth interviews with key political actors in order to understand how informal institutions distribute power to gendered actors and how following new rules, these dynamics changed or remained.

#### **1.4.1 Single-case study approach**

Although there are many ways in which feminist and indeed institutionalist research can be conducted, a single-case in-depth qualitative research study was most suited to understand the research question at hand. As will be elaborated upon in the rest of the thesis, ‘what matters’ in political recruitment is institutionally specific. Similarly, the interaction between gender and institutions is multifaceted and dynamic. As Lovenduski (1998: 350) argues, ‘the successful application of the concept of gender to the investigation of political institutions must acknowledge not only the complexity of gender but also the nature of the particular institution and the kinds of masculinities and femininities that are performed.’ These dynamics are not wholly transportable to other contexts, considering that gender operates differently across settings. Given this, in-depth single-case studies are needed in order to understand



and accurately represent the complex ‘cultural, spatial and temporal specificities of individual contexts’ (Childs & Krook, 2006: 25). The use of in-depth single case studies has therefore been advocated by both feminist and institutionalist scholars (see for example Collier, 1993; Lovenduski, 1998; Mahoney, 2000; Chappell, 2002; 2006; Pierson, 2000b; Pierson & Skocpol, 2002; Childs & Krook, 2006; Steinmo, 2008; Kenny, 2013).

While single case in-depth qualitative studies offer clear benefits for those studying the informal, power and gender, case study analysis has been the subject of criticism, much of which has been centred on issues of generalisability (Abbott, 2001; Hall, 2003; Mahoney, 1999; Pierson, 2004). The use of single-case study analysis in this thesis will therefore inevitably raise questions regarding the generalisability of the research. As Kenny (2013) asks, if we take seriously, and indeed praise, the commitment to representing the nuances of individual gendered institutional contexts, how then can we claim our insights are generalisable to other settings? Although a valid question in other contexts, the criticism that findings should be generalisable is to an extent misplaced here insofar as it is based upon the assumption that case study work is, and should be, judged on the same criteria as survey research (Yin, 2009:43; Kenny, 2013). Whereas statistical generalisation used in this kind of research expects sample findings to be applicable to a larger universe, the aim of analytical generalisation is to generalise a particular set of results to a broader theory (Yin, 2009: 43). A more appropriate approach to case study findings, indeed perhaps the only approach, is to recognise the specificities of individual contexts while: ‘translating them into language that is transferable across contexts, such that it is possible to draw conclusions that can inform analyses of other cases’ (Childs & Krook, 2006: 25).

This approach has been integral to feminist institutionalism, which, over the last decade, has developed as a body of work by drawing on individual case study material to generate broader transferable insights on gendered institutions and the dynamics of change. Krook and Mackay’s (2011) foundational edited collection, *Gender, Politics and Institutions*, for example, drew on a number of single-case and multi-case studies to establish the ways in which institutions and gender interact in

comparable and converging ways. Similarly, *Gender and Informal Institutions* (Waylen, 2017a) combined single-case and multi-case studies, which explicitly use the language of feminist institutionalism and concept of informal institutions to test and generate over-arching theory. Within this body of work, a comparative, yet qualitative, research agenda focusing on gender, political recruitment and institutions has also begun to emerge (Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2016). Using similar methods and conceptual tools, these single-case studies directly speak to one another on how institutions matter in political recruitment and in what ways. Acknowledging the complexity of individual cases, while also identifying transportable concepts and dynamics is not then incompatible. Following this, the data generated through the single-case study should not need to be directly generalisable to all other contexts; this is not the goal. Rather, by unpacking mechanisms through which male dominance is reproduced, single-case studies can contribute empirically to the specific context that they are situated within as well as analytically to broader feminist institutionalist theory building. The main aim, then, is to identify common mechanisms and understand their dynamics with gender quotas which can inform other analysis.

#### **1.4.2 The qualitative approach**

Understanding shifts and changes in male dominance also requires methods that are able to identify these processes and mechanisms. The choice of methods used by feminist researchers is, of course, dependent on their suitability to unearth the political and gendered dynamics that we wish to understand. Insofar as feminist institutionalists are interested in the ways in which institutions, both formal and informal, privilege specific gendered actors, they have employed a range of tools both to identify institutions and to understand how they are gendered. Similar to feminist perspectives on methodology, no method can be considered explicitly feminist. Rather, a variety of methods can be used to answer particular feminist inquiries, with each revealing gendered power dynamics in different ways that others may not (Krook & Squires, 2006; Ackerly & True, 2013). In posing questions previously unasked, feminist curiosity has led researchers to use a variety of methods

that are less frequently employed within mainstream political science (Tickner, 2005). Ethnographic, narrative, and cross-cultural methods have been employed in order to unearth new insights (Tickner, 2005). Indeed, part of the feminist critique of mainstream political science is that certain methods, namely more positivist-oriented ‘objective’ methods are deemed more valuable. However, feminist researchers have also used a variety of more ‘traditional’ methods to answer questions that relate to gender and power. Amongst these, quantitative methods have been employed such as statistical analysis, surveys and polls.

Although other approaches are useful to answer particular questions, or rather, to look at specific aspects of male dominance, they cannot account for the micro-processes that this study is interested in. Much of the existing literature on gender quotas focuses on change and stability in terms of shifts in numerical outcomes, using large-n quantitative studies to compare changes in the number of women in parliament. However, male over-representation is only one aspect of male dominance (Dahlerup & Leyenaar, 2013). Although decreases in male over-representation and male candidacies are an indicator of change, ‘counting’ both men and women can only do so much. The presence or absence of gendered bodies is important as a starting point but it fails to tell the story of how masculinised privilege and power persists and is challenged, through what institutional means and by what institutional mechanisms. In order to really understand this, methods are needed which go beyond numbers and which open up the ‘black box’ of political recruitment and selection both before and after institutional reforms targeting at creating gendered change.

Furthermore, qualitative methods are crucial for understanding ‘what really matters’ in political recruitment and selection and particularly for determining how informal institutions shape political behaviour. As will be elaborated upon in Chapter two, understanding the interactions between the formal and informal guises of institutions is central to understanding the continuity of male dominance and central to the findings of this thesis. Informal institutions, that is, the unwritten rules that shape political action, are, however, notoriously difficult to research. Whereas formal rules are identifiable as they are often codified in official documents, constitutions and

codes of conduct; informal institutions rules are, by their very nature, unwritten. Indeed, this raises the core methodological question of how we identify informal institutions and how we make sense of the work that they do. As Waylen (2017b: 4) notes: ‘informal institutions can often be difficult to perceive-somewhat like dark matter-but we know they are there because of the effects they have on other things.’ The invisibility of informal institutions has led some institutionalists to argue that, in order to clarify their existence and classify them as rules, informal institutions must be known to political actors themselves (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013: 47; Lowndes, 2014). As Lowndes and Roberts (2013: 47) argue, informal institutions are identifiable to the extent that they are ‘specific to a political or governmental setting, they are recognised by actors (if not always adhered to), [and] they have a collective (rather than personal) effect’ (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013: 47). Institutions both affect and are enacted by ‘real human individuals’ (Crouch, 2005: 19) and identifying informal institutions requires engaging with political actors in order to understand the political logics through which they themselves operate, within a particular setting. While the ‘tools of the lawyer and the historian’ (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013: 54) may be used to map formal institutional rules, different methods are needed to comprehend how the political world operates in practice. Identifying informal institutions and understanding how they structure political recruitment and selection, requires using techniques which provide an ‘inside view’ to the ‘hidden life of institutions’ (Rhodes & Noordegraaf, 2007; Chappell & Waylen, 2013; Lowndes, 2014). Most obviously interviews and ethnographic methods are crucial in revealing the feelings, logics, perspectives and experiences of institutional actors that other methods simply cannot (Simons, 2009; Chappell & Waylen, 2013). These techniques are often in-depth, detailed, time-consuming and field-intensive (Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2017), however, they are crucial in recognising the contextually specific ways in which the informal or unwritten influences political behaviour.

The empirical contributions of this research are largely informed by in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted in the Republic of Ireland between 2014 and 2016. Interviews are an important tool within case study research and process-tracing, particularly in order to determine the informal aspects of recruitment and selection

(Kenny, 2013; Piscopo, 2016). In total, sixty-seven interviews were carried out with male and female affiliates of the four main Irish political parties in the Republic of Ireland: Sinn Féin (14 interviews), Fianna Fáil (19 interviews), Fine Gael (15 interviews) and the Labour Party (13 interviews). Six further interviews were conducted with non-party actors due to the unique ‘insider’ knowledge these actors had with regards to political recruitment and selection in Ireland. These included academics, members of the 50/50 campaign and members of the Women for Election group. Interviews lasted between thirty and ninety minutes and were recorded and transcribed. Interviews were also anonymised so that actors could speak with ease about personal experiences and internal party procedures, without being identified. The fact that many participants requested this highlights the fact that political recruitment and selection remain sensitive processes, a ‘secret garden’ for political parties.

Interviews aimed to unpack ‘what matters’ in political recruitment and selection in each of the parties. While party rulebook, constitutions and formal strategy reports were analysed to understand the rules of the game on paper, the interviews sought to understand how they operated in practice and to explore what else influenced political behaviour on the ground, both before and after the quotas. Following on from other feminist neo-institutionalist scholars (Lowndes, 2014: 688 ; Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2014) I set about asking ‘how things are done around here’ and ‘why is X done, but not Y.’ Thus, while some of the questions related specifically to gender, many did not and rather focused on the personal background of the interviewee, their entry into politics, what is needed to succeed in politics, how recruitment and selection operates in the Irish context and crucially how new rules changed this (see Appendix 6 for sample interview questions). Each of the interviews was assigned a number, date, and description, which have been used in footnotes throughout the text. Following this, the interviews were transcribed and Nvivo software was used to code and unpack key re-occurring themes, which emerged from the data and which subsequently guided the structure of the thesis. While I went into the interviews with a map of what to look for, namely the role of institutions in shaping behaviour and creating gendered outcomes, the interview processes inevitably changed with every

bulk of interviews carried out as certain topics emerged which were not necessarily emphasised in the pre-existing literature. This was the benefit of using semi-structured interviews; respondents were able to let me know what mattered in the Irish context and this was then able to be explored in some depth. When new themes emerged, these were incorporated into further interviews.

Deciding on who to interview was informed by a review of existing research on recruitment and selection and an identification of the key actors and ‘gatekeepers’ in the process. Participants were classified primarily by their involvement at the local or national party level. From the central level category, each of the parties’ regional organisers and general secretaries was emailed to participate, in addition to the director of elections. Some snowballing techniques were also used as other central actors were recommended by these interviewees who were thought to have a particular insight into or responsibility for the implementation of gender quotas within each of the parties. Identifying candidates and aspirants was a more difficult job, considering that there is no centralised database in the Irish context. Using local media reports and political blogs, a database was created detailing the candidates and aspirants in each of Ireland’s 40 constituencies as they were nominated and selected. This list was then used to contact potential interviewees through email which detailed the aims of the research. In total, 227 people were contacted for interviews. Contacting participants and conducting interviews continued as conventions happened around the country until I felt I had conducted a sufficient number. Following this, only aspirants and candidates whose selection or non-selection received a large amount of media attention were contacted.

Selection bias was not, therefore, a major issue with regards to the selection of participants, considering that as many aspirants and candidates as possible were contacted. The aim here was to get as broad a scope as possible rather than concentrating on the stories of a select few who could be considered representative of the broader population of potential interviewees. The motivation for this was twofold. First, it reflected the inductive nature of the research. Second, the decision was strategic. Due to my own position as a PhD student with relatively few connections with the political elite in the Republic of Ireland, I predicted that access

to interviewees might be difficult. Casting a ‘broad net’ with regards to participants, at least initially, was also a practicality. This approach did, however, leave me with a skewed number of female respondents. Overall, the breakdown of interviewees by sex was 25 men and 43 women. Interestingly, a number of men who were contacted deferred me to a female colleague who they thought would be a more appropriate participant for the research. What is often missing from existing accounts is the fact that men are gendered subjects (Hearn & Collinson, 2006). The presumption that research on gender and politics and indeed ‘gender’ more broadly was not something that they knew much about therefore hindered a number of men agreeing to be interviewed. Furthermore, a disproportionate number of those interviewed did not get elected, something I could not control for given the timing of the research. Thus, the testimonies gathered reflect a larger number of ‘institutional losers’ than ‘institutional winners.’ Rural and urban differences were not significant amongst those that responded.

## **1.5 Structure of the thesis**

The starting point of this thesis is that recruitment and selection in the Republic of Ireland is male-dominated. Using an FI approach, this thesis understands the key mechanism of male dominance as the informal institution of localism and analyses the impact of a new institutional rule designed to undermine male dominance in recruitment and selection— a gender quota. The final section of this chapter sets out the structure of the thesis, outlining how the research question will be examined and explored in the subsequent chapters. The thesis consists of two main parts: Chapter two and Chapter three lay the theoretical foundations of a feminist institutionalist approach to male dominance in political recruitment and selection, while Chapters four, five, six and seven apply this to new case study material. Chapter two is the first of the theoretical chapters and sets out the key aspects of an FI framework, mapping the relationship between male dominance and institutions. It argues that central to an FI framework is a focus on gender, the informal and power, which are essential in order to understand the impact of new rules on male dominance. Having

outlined a feminist institutionalist approach in Chapter two, Chapter three applies the framework to the question of male dominance in political recruitment and selection. It begins by reviewing the existing work on the gendered dynamics of candidate recruitment and selection, outlining how the institutions that govern recruitment and selection matter. Following this, it outlines the existing literature on gender quotas, the most common institutional mechanism through which male dominance in political recruitment and selection has been challenged. It contends that this literature has provided fruitful insights; however, it has largely focused on numerical outcomes, looking at how gender quotas have affected male parliamentary over-representation. Thus, it has overlooked how these new measures interact with existing gendered rules, both formal and informal that have traditionally reproduced male dominance. Integrating insights from Chapter two, it concludes by arguing that in order to understand the impact of new rules on male dominance in political recruitment, we must focus on how these new rules interact with the pre-existing context, paying specific attention to informal, institutions, gender and power.

The subsequent four chapters provide the empirical data for the case study. Following the research question and the research agenda set out in Chapter three they aim to understand and explore:

- 1) How male dominance has been institutionally produced through traditional recruitment and selection processes (Chapters four and five).
- 2) How male dominance was challenged or maintained following the introduction of gender quotas (Chapters six and seven).

Chapter four situates the Irish context, setting out the rules of the game that shape political recruitment and selection. It starts by offering some context on the Irish political setting, including the development of the Irish state, the system of government and the Irish party system. Following this, the chapter details the system-level institutions that operate in the Republic of Ireland, namely, the electoral system and localism and elaborates on the role they play in electoral politics. The chapter then moves on to its main focus, that is to detail localism as the central political logic that permeates and shapes Irish politics and to show how it functions



as an informal institution which shapes political recruitment and selection. It therefore unpacks the practical operation of localism, revealing what a preference for ‘the local’ means and how exactly this shapes intra-party processes. The chapter shows that localism affects the process in two ways. First, it shapes concepts of electability, which serve as informal criteria or an informal rule for determining the recruitment of ‘good candidates.’ Second, localism manifests in the perceptions and practice of *who* should select the candidate. Although the formal rules give the national party power in terms of selection, in practice selection is largely localised and democratised with central influence often being perceived as ‘interference.’ The argument of Chapter four is that central to establishing both electability and selectability under a localised system is the need for large personal networks, both within the electorate and within the party. ‘What matters’ within political recruitment in the Republic of Ireland, under localism, is who and how many people you know.

Having set out localism as a key informal institution that shapes recruitment and selection in the Irish context, Chapter five contends that localism is a gendered informal institution. Drawing on the gender and institutions literature laid out in Chapter three, this chapter explains the role of informal localised candidate criteria and decentralised-inclusive selection in reproducing male dominance in the Republic of Ireland. It contends that the need for large networks, which both of these local tenets require, enables the maintenance of male political dominance in a number of ways. Most notably, the need for this informal requirement empowers those who have been there the longest, rewarding longevity and particularly incumbents. It shows that in privileging long-standing institutional actors, namely men, localism as an informal institution is central to reproducing and maintaining male dominance. However, it also draws attention to the ways in which localism has been reproduced through central intervention and thus critically evaluates the ‘central-local’ tension, which is often narrated as a conflict between the interests of the national and local party.

Having established localism as a central informal institution that shapes recruitment and selection in Chapter four, and its role in producing male dominance in Chapter five, Chapter six then shows the impact of institutional mechanisms designed to

undermine male dominance: electoral gender quotas. It demonstrates how political parties, as the key instigators of gender reform, enacted and implemented the new rules and the role of localism in shaping implementation. Drawing on official strategy documents, interview data and media reports it traces the internal processes of change, detailing what parties sought to challenge or maintain in recruitment and selection and how they sought to integrate it into existing procedures. The central argument of Chapter six is that gender quotas did incentivise political parties to change existing intra-party processes causing some shifts in male dominance.

While Chapter six outlines the positive impact of new rules on male dominance, Chapter seven argues that male dominance was also maintained and reimagined within political recruitment and selection. Centrally, it shows how the continuation and legacies of the informal rules of the game helped to reproduce male dominance in political recruitment and selection processes, outlining a number of resistance strategies, facilitated and shaped by localism which subverted attempts to get female aspirants selected at local conventions. However, it also highlights how the impact of the gender quota on central interests and intervention. It argues that gendered perceptions of electability meant that male incumbents continued to be privileged and protected, despite a corresponding push to have female aspirants selected. It, therefore, goes on to outline the ways in which the national party continued to maintain male dominance, using formal and informal institutions.

Chapter eight concludes the thesis with a summary and analysis of the findings. Drawing out the arguments in the previous chapters, it outlines how they fit within broader theoretical debates. Following this, it outlines the main contributions of the thesis to existing bodies of research including those on gender quotas, male dominance in political recruitment and political parties. It finishes by suggesting some further areas of research that these findings might inspire which could enhance a feminist understanding of male dominance within recruitment and selection and the political realm more broadly.

## 2

# Understanding Male Dominance

## *A Feminist Institutional Framework*

It is very much a man's world, organised by men and the political world certainly seems to be.

- Party member and aspirant, Fianna Fáil <sup>3</sup>

The underlying cultural assumption is that men do power, that it is a masculine value, a masculine pursuit and that's just not something subconsciously understood but actively promoted. Look around you, look at the world around you, it's actively promoted.

- National executive member and candidate, Sinn Féin <sup>4</sup>

This thesis is concerned with understanding the impact of gender quotas on male dominance in political recruitment and selection. In order to fully understand male

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<sup>3</sup> Interview no. 60, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

<sup>4</sup> Interview no. 28, Árd Comhairle (National Executive) member and candidate, female, Sinn Féin, March 2015

dominance in the political sphere and consequently attempts to change it, we must comprehend the historical origins and ongoing ways in which men are empowered and advantaged within public and political life. The central argument of this chapter, and indeed this thesis is that doing so requires unveiling the various ways in which political institutions are gendered. This thesis therefore adopts a feminist institutionalist approach to the issue of male dominance, which draws attention to the ways in which gendered inequalities of power are institutionally maintained and replicated through the formal and informal rules, norms and practices of political processes. This aim of this chapter is to set out the key features of a feminist institutionalist (FI) approach, outlining the relationship between male dominance and institutions and the possibilities for change. The chapter begins by outlining how institutions are conceptualised within neo-institutionalist literature. Following this, it demonstrates the ways in which institutions are gendered, working to empower some while disempowering others. Finally, the chapter outlines FI perspectives on change and continuity, giving particular attention to the ways in which male dominance can be challenged and maintained in the face of new institutional rules. It therefore sets the scene for the following chapter, which applies an FI approach to the impact of gender quotas on male dominance in recruitment and selection.

## **2.1 Defining institutions**

In order to understand how male dominance is institutionally produced, first it is necessary to understand how institutions are conceptualised within neo-institutionalist literature. Possibly the most rudimentary idea in new institutionalist theory (NI) is that ‘the organization of political life makes a difference’ (March & Olsen, 1984: 747) or put more bluntly, ‘institutions matter.’ Of course this is not necessarily a new concept in political science; until the 1950’s institutionalism and political science were practically one in the same with the latter focusing predominantly on the comparative and descriptive analysis of formal institutions such as executives, legislatures, political parties or electoral systems (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013). The emergence of behaviourism (and later rational choice theory),

however, resulted in a shift in focus towards actors and agency, challenging the dominance of structural analysis in the field (Lowndes, 2005; 2010). ‘New institutional’ analysis, which surfaced in the 1980’s, brought institutions back into the political picture while also offering a critique of its earlier predecessor through renewed perspectives on the definition and operation of institutions (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013). Despite differences in the variants of new institutionalist literature: ‘nearly all definitions of institutions treat them as relatively enduring features of political and social life (rules, norms and procedures) that structure behaviour and cannot be changed easily or instantaneously’ (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010b: 4). In contrast to earlier and some ongoing work within political science, neo-institutionalist work contends that institutions are not the same as organisations (Lowndes, 2005: 292). While political organisations matter, given that they shape and are shaped by institutions, organisations are ‘the players’ who operate within the broader institutional ‘rules of the game’ (Lowndes, 2005: 292).

Furthermore, neo-institutionalist work understands institutions as having both formal and informal guises. Indeed one of the key contributions of neo-institutionalist literature is its acceptance of a more expansive definition of institutions to include the informal aspects that work to constrain or enable actors (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004; Grzymala-Busse, 2010; Azari & Smith, 2012; Waylen, 2017a). As highlighted in the previous chapter, interest in the concept and role of informal institutions is growing, given that, much of that which influences political outcomes and behaviour may not be legally or formally codified (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004; Grzymala-Busse, 2010; Azari & Smith, 2012; Waylen, 2017a). As Leach and Lowndes (2007:185) highlight:

‘effective political institutions are those that are ‘lived’ by political actors: their strength does not rely upon pieces of paper or other physical artefacts – they find expression simply as the conventions or ‘unwritten rules’ of daily life.’

Although there is still a general agreement that institutions are the ‘rules of the game’ (North, 1990: 3) that shape human behaviour and interaction, these rules now include

formal and informal elements. The most frequently drawn upon definition of informal institutions is that put forward by Helmke and Levitsky (2004:727) who purport that informal institutions are: ‘socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside officially sanctioned channels.’ While formal institutions are codified, known and sanctioned by institutional designers, informal rules are more often punished through social ostracism or threats of violence, rather than through official means (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004).

The relationship between informal and formal institutions is an ongoing subject of debate. Informal institutions were traditionally seen ‘in negative ways - undermining good governance through particularism, clientelism, patronage, and nepotism, and often involving illegal practices - namely, subverting and undermining formal institutions’ (Waylen, 2014: 213). Although informal institutions can compete with formal institutions, weakening their effects, they can also work to fill gaps in formal institutions and can ‘coordinate the operation of overlapping (and perhaps clashing) institutions’ (Azari & Smith, 2012: 37; see also Helmke & Levitsky, 2004). Informal institutions can also operate parallel to formal rules to regulate political behaviour, or complement them by providing incentives to comply with formal institutions (Lauth, 2000; Helmke & Levitsky, 2004; Azari & Smith, 2012: 37). Furthermore, while informal institutions have traditionally been associated with ‘less developed’ countries, an increasing amount of work shows that they operate within established democracies to perform these functions (Azari & Smith, 2012; Culhane, 2017). Thus, it is now widely accepted that informal institutions exist and shape political behaviour in all kinds of societies and can have ‘complementary, accommodating, competing and substitutive’ interactions with formal institutions (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004: 725; Tsai, 2006; Azari & Smith, 2012; Waylen, 2014). Straying away from a separation between formal and informal rules, other scholars have paid attention to the difference between the ‘rules in form’ and the ‘rules in use’ (Ostrom, 1999; Lowndes, 2005; Lowndes et al., 2006; Leach & Lowndes, 2007), that is, the difference between the codified rules and how they play out in practice.

Institutions are also increasingly considered to have both normative and material elements (March & Olsen, 1989; 2006; 2011; Lowndes, 2010). Normative here

refers to the role of norms and values in shaping political behaviour as opposed to the promotion of normative values (Lowndes, 2010). This is reflected in March and Olsen's more expansive definition of institutions as:

'a relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing circumstances' (March & Olsen, 2006: 1).

Rules are embedded in resources and thus enable and constrain action by shaping 'organisational, financial and staff capabilities' (March & Olsen, 2011: 480). However, they also express and reflect structures of meaning 'that explain and justify behaviour- roles, identities and belongings, common purposes, and causal and normative beliefs' (March & Olsen, 2011: 480; See also: March & Olsen, 1989; 2006). Normative values inform the accepted rules of the game and are protected and maintained by them (cf Lovenduski, 2011: viii). In practice, these ideational and material aspects interrelate to make action possible. Understanding how these aspects interrelate, at times of 'stability' and times of change' is, however, an empirical matter (Thelen, 1999; Lowndes & Roberts, 2013).

There are, however, divergences within new institutionalist literature. Although all institutional approaches agree that 'institutions matter,' there are competing conceptions of how they matter and the nature of institutions. 'New institutionalism,' is itself comprised of four strands: rational choice, historical, sociological and most recently, discursive institutionalism (for overview see Hall & Taylor, 1996; Lowndes, 1996; Lowndes & Roberts, 2013). Rational choice institutionalism, which finds its roots in the field of economics, largely explains outcomes in terms of self-interested actors attempting to achieve their goals and maximise their personal utility (Ostrom, 1999; North, 1990; Weingast, 2002). Subsequently, institutions are often seen as external strategic structures that offer benefits to those within them and the result of voluntary cooperation between actors with a shared collective problem (Ostrom, 1999). The object of explanation for rational choice institutionalists is the calculated

behaviour of rational actors in an institutional context. Those who subscribe to a historical institutionalist (HI) framework, on the other hand, look to explain outcomes through a historical lens, arguing that decisions made in the past affect the future developments of structures and practices (Thelen, 1999, 2003; Steinmo, 2008; Pierson, 2004; 2015; 2016; Pierson & Skocpol, 2002). Tracing the origins of institutions, HI scholars seek to track their evolution drawing on the concept of path dependency to describe stability and constraint. Furthermore, actors are considered both self-interested and rule-abiding (Steinmo, 2008). Sociological institutionalists are primarily interested in the processes of organisational life from the perspective of social norms (Powell & DiMaggio 1991; March & Olsen, 1984; 1989; 2006). Institutions are conceptualised as the shared ‘values, norms, interests, identities and beliefs’ that shape human behaviour (March & Olsen, 1989: 17). The internalised and co-constitutive nature of the rules and norms is emphasised as actors both behave in accordance with and construct a ‘logic of appropriateness’ (March & Olsen, 2011). Finally, discursive institutionalism focuses on how institutions influence behaviour through frames of meaning (Schmidt, 2008; 2010). It focuses on the ideas and narratives that are used to ‘explain, deliberate, or legitimize political action’ (Lowndes, 2014: 688).

Although ‘institutions matter’ for all of the variants, it is clear that each has its own primary concern. For HI it is history that matters, for SI it is cultural and social templates, for DI it is ideas that are important and for RI it is incentives and actors’ self-interest. Although some scholars claim that each variant of institutionalism is ontologically distinct (Hay & Wincott, 1998: 953), thus rendering a more pluralist institutionalist approach impossible, others have claimed that variants in institutional theory may simply reflect the mixed motivations that political actors are subject to (Lowndes, 2010; Lowndes & Roberts, 2013: 50) and the various ways in which institutions influence behaviour. These ‘border crossers’ have blurred the lines between existing approaches, borrowing where they can to answer specific empirical questions (Thelen, 1999: 371).



## 2.2 Gendering institutions

The central contention of an FI approach is that institutions, understood, here as the rules, norms and practices that shape behaviour, are gendered (Krook & Mackay, 2011). Feminist institutionalism, as the most recent variant of NI, has drawn on theory and methodologies from sociological (Chappell, 2006; 2011; Mackay et al., 2009), rational choice (Driscoll & Krook, 2009), historical (Waylen, 2007a; 2009; Chappell, 2011; Kenny, 2013) and discursive (Kulawik, 2009; Freidenvall & Krook, 2011: 42-58) institutionalism in order to gender institutions and explain and predict the outcomes of gendered change. While some FI scholars have been wedded to particular variants other scholars have contended that a variety of neo-institutionalist tools are useful for answering feminist queries and have adopted a pluralist approach to gender and institutions. Feminist institutionalist approaches have, however, been consistently interested in both 'the gendered character and the gendering effects' of political institutions (Mackay, 2011:181). Following other institutionalists, the intention of FI scholars is not to assert that institutions can explain everything but that institutions matter in terms of explaining the creation and reproduction of gender inequalities in both the public and political sphere; the gendered organisation of political life makes a difference (cf Gains and Lowndes, 2014).

While feminist institutionalism, as a distinct neo-institutionalist framework is relatively new, concern with gender and institutions within political science is not. Over the last decade, the 'institutional turn' in feminist political science has inspired a range of literature which shows how political institutions reflect, structure and reproduce gendered patterns of power (Acker, 1992; Kenney, 1996: 455; Hawkesworth, 2003; 2005; Chappell & Waylen, 2013; Kenny, 2013). In a parallel field of political scholarship, 'new institutionalism' has sought to examine how institutions function, reproduce, change and shape behaviour (Thelen, 2003; Steinmo, 2008; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010a; Pierson, 2004; 2015; 2016). Although remarkable advances have been made into the operation and effects of institutions, this work has largely failed to understand how exactly 'institutions matter' with regards to gender, inequalities of power and reform. The relative dearth of research

surrounding this question led to the emergence of a feminist institutionalist framework, which has applied the distinct language and conceptual tools of neo-institutional analysis to issues of gender uniting these two bodies of thought, revealing previously undiscovered explanations (Mackay & Waylen, 2009; Mackay, et al., 2010; Krook & Mackay, 2011; 2014; Kenny, 2013; Chappell, 2010; 2011; Waylen, 2014; 2017a). The result of this has been the development of rich empirical material, which has uncovered the gendered dynamics of institutional resistance and limits of institutional change.

### **2.2.1 Gender**

In order to understand how institutions are ‘gendered’, first, we must examine the concept of gender more closely. Since its inception, the concept of gender has been used in strikingly different ways across disciplines (for an extensive summary of this see Hawkesworth, 2005; Beckwith, 2005) and has undergone ‘a metamorphosis within feminist political scholarship’ (Hawkesworth, 2005: 142). Although future work may diverge, feminist institutionalists have approached the concept of gender in a largely consistent way. Gender is understood here as:

‘a constitutive element of social relations based upon perceived (socially constructed and culturally variable) differences between women and men, and as a primary way of signifying (and naturalising) relationships of power and hierarchy’ (Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2017: 209; see also Scott, 1986; Acker, 1992; Mackay & Waylen, 2009; Mackay et al., 2010: 580; Kenny, 2013: 37).

Of course, this is not specific to an FI approach, gender has long been used to differentiate between the socio-culturally produced characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity from the ‘biological’ aspects of sex (sexual and reproductive organs, hormones). This decoupling of sex and gender is central to understanding that the existence of bodies with different physical characteristics does not inherently determine any particular behaviours or practices, nor does it lead inexorably to any particular structuring of social and political relations (Beckwith, 2005: 130). Gender then is a socially constructed category, which emerges from:

‘stereotypes about male and female behaviour; from characteristics and behaviours conventionally associated with women and men; from normative assumptions about appropriate behaviours of men and women; from assumptions about biological difference; and from social structures of power and difference’ (Beckwith 2010: 160).

While gender cannot then be viewed as a characteristic of an individual, nor as a category that directly corresponds to sex, the assignment of people to gendered categories, is a fundamental part of understanding the way in which gender operates to naturalise and signify power relations (Acker, 1992: 566). As Duerst-Lahti argues (2008: 734):

‘The power (dis)advantages of persons in particular bodies (white men, Native American women) play out precisely because every person embodies political categories and is embedded in power structures. In short, power relations play out through individuals and their bodies, which are located within social and political institutional arrangements and cultural meanings’ (Duerst-Lahti, 2008: 734).

Gender is also therefore a central organising principle of social, economic and political life and is integral to understanding that inequalities of power between men and women are politically and socially constructed, as opposed to biologically determined. This conceptualisation of gender has informed the ‘institutional turn’ within feminist research, shifting the focus from an individual to an institutional level of analysis (Kenney, 1996; Weldon, 2006; Kenny, 2013). Gender, then, is analysed as systemic, a feature of social structures, rather than a characteristic or individual trait of a given person, which operates in multiple fields and is ‘present in the processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life’ (Acker, 1992: 567; 2006). There has therefore been a shift away from examining ‘women in politics’ towards analysing the gendered nature of institutions themselves to illuminate ‘the systematic way that social norms, laws, practices and institutions advantage certain groups and forms of life and

disadvantage others' (Weldon, 2006: 236; see also Kenney, 1996; Weldon, 2006; Mackay & Waylen, 2009; Krook & Mackay, 2011; Kenny, 2013).

### **2.2.2 Power**

Following this, FI work has been concerned with showing how gender and gendered power inequalities are socially and politically constructed and reproduced through the 'rules of the game.' Political institutions do not solely reflect gendered patterns of power that exist in broader society, but also are central in creating and reproducing inequalities of power (Krook & Mackay, 2011). The idea that institutions distribute power is not uncommon within mainstream neo-institutionalist literature. While some variants of institutionalist literature, particularly rational choice institutionalism, have viewed political institutions as mutually beneficial structures of voluntary cooperation aimed at resolving collective action problems, others have shown how institutions embody values and reflect and reproduce power relations (Knight, 1992; Moe, 2005; Lowndes, 2005; 2014; Kenny, 2013). Although 'seemingly neutral', institutions are intrinsically political because rules, both formal and informal, create patterns of distributional advantage which are good for some and bad for others (Knight, 1992; Moe, 2005; Lowndes, 2005). As Mahoney and Thelen (2010b:8) argue:

'any given set of rules or expectations- formal or informal that patterns action will have unequal implications for resource allocation, and clearly many formal institutions are specifically intended to distribute resources to particular kinds of actors and not to others.'

While distributional perspectives on power highlight how institutions privilege some while disadvantaging others, FI perspectives have also stressed the need to go beyond distributional models of power (Kenny, 2007; 2013; Kenny & Mackay, 2009; Mackay & Mackay, 2011). Understanding gender as a pervasive ordering of human activities and social structures means that gender cannot be understood in isolation from power (Scott, 1986; Acker, 1992). To understand institutions as gendered means that gender is embedded within and reproduced by rules, norms and narratives

and ‘plays out within the ‘daily logic’ and practice of institutions’ (Kenney, 1996; Acker, 1992; 2006; Mackay & Krook, 2011). These ‘seemingly-neutral’ gendered processes constrain and enable gendered political actors by distributing resources and also recognition in different ways (cf Beckwith, 2005:132).

As was touched on the previous chapter, the political domain is intimately associated with men and masculinity. Political institutions are largely marked as masculine, insofar as they promote and reward masculinised ‘ways of valuing things, ways of behaving and ways of being’ (Duerst-Lahti & Kelly, 1995: 20). As Kenny (2013: 38) argues, ‘while constructions of femininity and masculinity are both present in political institutions, the masculine ideal underpins institutional structures, practices, and norms.’ Marta Htun (2005) further demonstrates this in her analysis of the political:

‘Men began to dominate politics long ago[...] People became accustomed to seeing men in power; masculine characteristics and roles became virtues of leadership; places men socialize with one another (poker halls and locker rooms) turned into sites of political negotiation and pact-making; norms of work accommodated individuals who could delegate child-rearing and other domestic tasks to caregiving partners; and formal arenas of power (such as Congress) adapted to male needs by installing urinals, weight rooms, spittoons and pool tables.’

Lovenduski (2005: 54) similarly highlights how the Westminster model of politics reflects and reproduces a masculinised way of operating by favouring and normalising a combative style of debate and ‘competitive one-upmanship’ rather than consensus-seeking and deliberation. Given the pervasive association between masculinity and the social category of men, these ‘cultural codes of masculinity’ which are built into institutions often serve to reproduce male dominance (Lovenduski 1998: 339). Operating within this ‘hegemonic normative code’, it is often men who ‘have been thought to possess the appropriate skills, knowledge, and temperament to design and maintain the institutions of the state’ (Chappell & Waylen, 2013: 601).

### **2.2.3 Identifying gendered institutions**

The interaction between gender and institutions is complex and multi-faceted, however, FI work has developed ways in which to understand and identify the ‘gendered character and effects of institutional formation’ (Gains & Lowndes, 2014: 524). Gains and Lowndes (2014) for example distinguish between (a) institutional rules about gender; (b) institutional rules which have gendered effects (but are not specifically about gender) and (c) gendered actors who work with rules. The most obvious way in which institutions are gendered is through the existence of rules that explicitly allocate different power, resources and access to men and women. For example, official rules that explicitly exclude or include men and women from participating in public or political life such as marriage bars that prevent the employment of married women. Contrastingly, rules about gender also work to explicitly include women. Most notably, different types of gender quotas require that women be formally included on party tickets and in parliament. Similarly, informal rules can be explicitly gendered such that they prescribe acceptable and appropriate masculine and feminine forms of behaviour, rules, and values for men and women within institutions (Chappell, 2006: 226). This may result in the segregation of women into specific jobs or ‘feminised sectors’ such as childcare or support roles. Informal rules often, therefore, set a ‘logic of appropriateness’ for male and female actors (Chappell, 2006).

Second, supposedly gender-neutral rules, which are not explicitly about sex have an unequal impact on women and men (Beckwith, 2005; Chappell, 2010). Political institutions do not operate in a vacuum but interact with other gendered institutions which are at play in broader society. The persistent and unequal division of domestic labour between men and women, for example, often results in men having more time, finances, professional experience and networking opportunities. Formal rules which set meetings at specific times or the informal rule that institutional actors must prioritise work above all else and be constantly accessible, something which Chappell and Galea (2017) refer to as ‘total availability’ is based on a masculinised perception of the institutional actor as someone with no caring

responsibilities. 'Going the extra mile' is an expectation which enables certain people, often men, to progress over others within organisational spaces, leading to gendered outcomes.

Third, institutions are enacted by gendered actors during times of 'stability' and times of institutional change (Acker, 1990; 1992; Kenney, 1996; Mackay, 2008; Kenny, 2013; Gains & Lowndes, 2014). Drawing on larger questions of structure and agency within neo-institutionalist work, institutions and actors are understood as mutually constitutive insofar as institutions are both the product of human agency and a constraint upon it (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013). Feminist perspectives have therefore drawn attention to the creation and adaptation of institutions by gendered actors. Institutions are further gendered insofar as they are enacted by 'real people' (Schmidt, 2010), each of whom has a sex and continuously performs gender (Lovenduski, 1998: 348; Kenny, 2013: 37). The 'seemingly trivial' internal dynamics of political spaces is also important, where the 'daily enactment of institutions and the 'doing' of gender' impacts on processes of continuity and change, innovation and resistance' (Mackay, 2008: 126).

While gendered power dynamics are present across institutions, they are also institutionally specific. Masculinity and femininity are not, rigid and unmoving categories. Acknowledging that gender is socially constructed also recognises that gender is socially and culturally variable (Scott, 1986; Acker; 1992; Kenney 1996). What attributes are considered masculine and feminine and the way in which these attributes are intimately associated with bodies varies across class, race, culture and time (Scott, 1986; Acker; 1992: 457; Hooper, 2001). Furthermore, what it is to be masculine and feminine and the ways in which this determines how and what resources are distributed is dependent on the institutional setting (Kenney, 1996; Chappell & Waylen, 2013: 602; Kenny, 2013: 37). Thus, although we can identify the ways in which institutions are gendered, how this plays out in practice varies in accordance with the specific rules, processes, logics and purpose of an institution. Drawing heavily on the work of Connell (2002; 2006), FI work has shown that institutions have individual 'gender regimes,' that is they produce and reproduce

gender differently (Kenney, 1996; Chappell & Waylen, 2013: 602; Kenny, 2013: 37).

### **2.3 Understanding institutional change and continuity**

Challenging male dominance is central to a feminist agenda. In addition to showing the ways in which institutions create and reproduce gendered power relations, feminist institutionalists are also interested in the gendered dynamics of institutional change and continuity (Lowndes, 2005; Mackay et al., 2011; Kenny, 2013; Waylen, 2013; Mackay, 2014). Understanding male dominance as the result of constantly repeated gendered processes, rules and practices suggests not only that institutions are gendered but also that they can be 're-gendered' (cf Beckwith, 2005: 133). Gender scholars have employed the concept of 'institutional dynamism' to explain this potential for gendered change (Chappell, 2010). This concept purports that although institutions are influenced by path dependencies and have a propensity toward permanence and constancy, they are not completely stable or set. Thus, although gendered norms and practices do exist, they shift geographically and temporally and are subject to alteration (Chappell, 2010).

While providing good accounts of how institutions reproduce and remain stable, institutional approaches have been criticised for offering an inadequate understanding of institutional change (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010a). Much of the traditional explanations for institutional change focus attention on moments of large ruptural transformations caused by exogenous shocks such as war, revolution or political transitions, arguing that such 'critical junctures' facilitate an opening for agency followed by further periods of stability (Collier & Collier, 1991). This 'punctuated equilibrium model' has tended to strictly separate the notion of institutional change from continuity and furthermore, has been a poor model for understanding how institutions are transformed (or continued) incrementally (Kenny, 2007; Thelen & Mahoney, 2010a). Following this, more complex perspectives have been sought to explore the dynamics of institutional change. Bridging the gap between continuity and change, Kathleen Thelen (2003; 2009) has been particularly



pivotal in influencing feminist institutionalist work. She identifies four variants of gradual transformation: conversion, drift, displacement and layering (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010b). The latter of the four, layering, involves a conscious effort to achieve change through the active implementation of modifications or additions to an existing institution (Streeck & Thelen, 2005: 24). By introducing new institutions on the fringe of an existing structure, proponents of change attempt to spur gradual change in the structure and status of the original institution through negotiation with the new. The concession between the two may ultimately lead to the demise of the old institution as the new body erodes former structures; however, the two are not in competition: this method of reform is more typical of displacement as opposed to layering.

Feminist institutionalist work has been particularly interested in understanding purposeful attempts at gendered change. Drawing on NI work, FI scholars have sought to understand the failures and successes of attempts to create new ‘gender-friendly’ institutions and change existing ones (Lowndes, 2005; Mackay et al., 2011; Kenny, 2013; Waylen, 2013; Mackay, 2014). Central to this has been the question of why new formal rules do, or do not, have the successes that institutional designers intend. In attempting to understand the persistence of male dominance in the face of explicit challenge, FI work has pointed to the ways in which institutional design is constrained by the ‘embeddedness’ of institutions within pre-existing gendered contexts (Chappell, 2011; Kenny, 2013; Mackay, 2014; Waylen, 2014; 2017a). Indeed, the stability of institutions has been a central feature of institutional analysis, with institutions perceived as relatively enduring rules, norms and practices that are difficult to alter (March & Olsen, 2006:1; Mahoney & Thelen, 2004:1). HI perspectives have shown that, once institutions are created they tend towards a specific path, and are self-reinforcing through positive feedback mechanisms and increasing returns (Pierson, 2000a; 2015). The concept of path dependency has been particularly useful for showing that institutional power relations are historically produced, making purposeful attempts at change difficult. Simply put, path-dependent perspectives purport that ‘history matters’ by showing that decisions made early on in an institution’s ‘life’ constrain or enable choices later on. Thus, ‘past

events influence future events' (Mahoney, 2000: 510). Indeed, historical institutionalism has been central to understanding structural inequalities, exploring how inequalities of power are built into the structures of modern societies and how these inequalities persist, becoming further embedded and reproduced over time (Pierson, 2015; 2016). Although institutions distribute power, powerful actors are not passive actors in this process, rather those who hold power actively engage in processes which 'anchor' their privileged positions while simultaneously attempting to weaken and exclude institutional rivals (Kenny, 2007; Pierson, 2016). Power is therefore about the institutionalisation of advantage as institutional 'winners' use and change the rules of the games to enhance their own capabilities and political positions (Moe, 2006; Pierson, 2016). Power is subject to feedback or re-enforcement and as power begets power, unequal power relations are reproduced and embedded over time (Pierson, 2015; 2016). As Pierson argues:

'political contestation is both a battle to gain control over political authority and a struggle to use political authority to institutionalize advantage – that is, to lay the groundwork for future victories. In short, it calls for an appreciation of how political influence is often invested. The exercise of authority is not just an exercise of power; it is potentially a way of generating power' (Pierson, 2016: 131; see also Moe, 2006).

In attempting to understand the persistence of male dominance, FI scholars have drawn on historical institutionalist perspectives to show the historicity of power relations between gendered actors (Kenny, 2007; 2013). Path-dependent perspectives on gender and institutions have shown that, as 'latecomers' to the political game, women, and indeed other social categories that have been historically excluded from political spaces are less advantaged (Kenny, 2013). New rules are often confronted by gendered 'legacies of the past.' These include material legacies from existing patterns of power distribution (Lowndes & Wilson, 2001: 643) but also cognitive and normative legacies, 'frames of mind' and 'habits of the heart' (Goodin, 1996). As such, new rules may not 'level the playing field' in the way institutional designers either hoped or intended (Kenny, 2013).

FI scholars have therefore drawn attention to the pre-existing context into which new rules are introduced, outlining ‘the gendered limits of change’ (Chappell, 2011; 2014; 2017; Kenny, 2013; Mackay, 2014). Fiona Mackay’s concept of ‘nested newness’ (Mackay, 2014) argues that we must be aware that institutions are not born out of nothing, rather they are embedded in existing social relations and marked by the past institutional interests which can inhibit reform. Thus, existing gendered institutions can impact either positively or negatively on attempts to create change (Waylen, 2014). Put simply, pre-existing institutions matter during times of change; new rules are constrained (and enabled) by existing institutional and gendered contexts. When institutional challenges are mounted against male dominance, reformers must not only implement and institutionalise new rules and practices, but must also deinstitutionalise old ones which may be implicitly or explicitly gendered (cf Lowndes & Wilson 2001: 64).

The role of informal institutions in shaping the transformative potential of formal gendered change has been of particular interest within this work (Waylen, 2014; 2017a; Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2015). While the formal is relatively easy to identify and target, informal institutions are more difficult to detect as they are generally (although not always) hidden from the public eye. Thus, they may not be subject to scrutiny from the public, women’s movements or institutional designers. Despite the introduction of new measures, which seek to erase inequalities between men and women, ‘earlier rules about gender can survive in an informal guise and continue to operate to enforce the same (old) expectations, relationships, and power structures’ (Chappell & Waylen, 2013: 607). Even if informal institutions are known by the public and by institutional designers, they may not be considered gendered and their ‘taken for granted nature’ may leave them bypassed as the object of reform. As outlined above, there is often a rather negative view of informal institutions ‘as a primordial hangover undermining good governance’ during times of ‘stability’ and during times of explicit institutional reform (Waylen, 2017b: 3; 2014; 2017a). Initial work on informal institutions was largely located in the transitions to democracy literature and examined the role of the informal institutions in hindering attempts at formal reform. FI work has produced a similar narrative, highlighting how the

continuation of gendered informal institutions such as patronage and clientelism undermine new formal rules aimed at challenging male dominance (Kenny, 2013; Waylen, 2014). Although generally viewed negatively within FI work, informal institutions perform a variety of functions and may reinforce or facilitate gendered change, bolstering compliance with new formal rules (Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2015: 750). For example, existing informal rules or gender targets within a political party have the potential to ensure formal legislative quotas are complied with within the party (Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2015: 750).

While institutional designers are often met with the ‘legacies’ of old institutions making gender reform difficult, FI work has also mapped the dynamics of resistance and backlash, highlighting the active ways in which actors counter and obstruct gendered institutional change through new formal rules (Kenny, 2013; Mackay, 2014; Krook, 2016). A central reason why rules do not instantaneously create change is that political actors subvert, challenge or neglect them, limiting their transformative potential (Lowndes, 2005). Given that institutions distribute power, institutional reform disrupts power settlements; in altering the traditional way of doing things, new rules explicitly challenge those that have long benefited from the status quo (Goodin, 1996; Lowndes & Wilson, 2001: 643; Lowndes, 2005). Indeed, shifting and disrupting the traditional distribution of power is often the overt goal of institutional reform, gendered or otherwise (Lowndes, 2005). Institutional design is therefore a process of contestation and opposition to institutional gender reform is common, both within the political sphere and elsewhere.

During times of reform, dominant actors can draw on material and normative resources to justify their privilege and re-assert the status quo (Lowndes, 2005; Krook, 2016). Existing institutions, both formal and informal act as resources that actors strategically use to resist, delegitimise or hinder gendered change (Lowndes, 2005; Campbell, 2010; Mackay, 2014; Krook, 2016). Given that institutions are both material and ideational (Thelen, 1999) normative institutions may be drawn on to legitimise political actions, justifying strategies of resistance and compliance. During formal moments of reform, normative elements also ‘provide the ‘compass’ for the assessments of attempts at change’ (Lovenduski, 2011: viii). Thus, some political

actions may be pursued as they are considered legitimate and in tune with existing normative institutions, while others may be avoided as they deviate from what is considered right and appropriate.

Drawing on neo-institutionalist work, specific attention has been given to the ways in which new rules which seek to create gendered change are enacted, institutionalised and interpreted by institutional actors in the post-design phase (Mackay, 2014; Hinojosa, 2017) Generally, there is a significant amount of ‘play’ in the meaning of rules and the ways in which they are instantiated in practice (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010b: 11). The implementation and interpretation of new rules therefore represent a struggle for power as institutional actors often seek to adapt or exploit ambiguities in ‘the rules of the game’ in order to respond to changing environments and to protect their own interests (Lowndes, 2005; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010b). While some institutional scholars contend that ambiguity in the rules may be countered by their formalisation, reducing the gap between intended and actual outcomes (Knight, 1992:76) others have argued that even when new rules are formal and codified, they are still subject to ‘interpretation, contestation and debate’ (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010b). Fiona Mackay’s (2014) work on the establishment of a ‘new’ Scottish parliament showed that institutional innovation was either actively resisted or passively neglected by institutional actors who engaged in ‘remembering the old’ rules and ‘forgetting the new’ (See also Lowndes, 2005.) Partial or non-compliance with new rules is also common (Chappell, 2011), in addition to rule-breaking (Kenny, 2013). These purposeful strategies show that the creation and introduction of new rules is only the first step ‘in a longer process of transition - marked by instability and uncertainty whereby an institutional blueprint is put into practice,’ contested, interpreted and enforced (Mackay, 2014: 550).

Further work has highlighted resistance to the greater inclusion and presence of women either following new reforms or without them. For example, scholars have begun to document physical and sexual attacks, intimidation, and harassment aimed at female politicians (Krook, 2017). These acts attempt to hinder women’s contributions to the political process, deter women’s electoral participation, and reinforce gender norms (Krook, 2016). Other work has paid attention to strategies

which attempt to de-legitimise or undermine women's inclusion, without resorting to such overt tactics. Although historical institutionalism has been useful in understanding power, continuity and change, it has been less useful for the study of micro-level behaviour and the 'everyday' ways in which gender and power inequalities are reproduced in 'seemingly trivial' ways. However, as feminist scholars have highlighted, that is not a terrain that can be overlooked (Kenny, 2013). For example, the use of more subtle 'domination techniques' such as invisibilising, ridiculing, exclusion, withholding information, shaming and double-punishing have also been tactically used to re-assert male authority and dominance following the incorporation of women into spaces where they have been previously excluded (Berit, 1978; Hawkesworth, 2003; Krook, 2017). Detailing the experiences of congresswomen of colour in the US, Hawkesworth (2003) detailed how racialised and gendered power hierarchies were created and reproduced through processes of stereotyping, exclusion, and marginalisation. Such strategies mark women as 'Other,' positioning them as 'perpetual outsiders' (Hawkesworth, 2003: 534; Puwar, 2004; Kenny, 2013:156) within masculinised organisations.

Acknowledging that male dominance is actively reproduced and renegotiated disassociates continuity with notions of static unmoving institutions. Rather, it points to the fact that there are processes at work that are continuously reproducing the status quo and which bestow privilege and power to certain institutional actors. Thus, as both feminist and mainstream institutionalists have highlighted 'institutions do not survive by standing still'; instead, power arrangements, are actively reproduced and maintained by institutional actors over time (Streeck & Thelen, 2005; 24; see also Kenny, 2013). As Mahoney and Thelen (2010b: 9; see also Thelen, 2004) argue:

'Those who benefit from existing arrangements may have an objective preference for continuity but ensuring such continuity requires the ongoing mobilization of political support as well as, often, active efforts to resolve institutional ambiguities in their favour.'

Male dominance is not an unfortunate hangover from the past, but rather it is reinscribed in institutions through active and ongoing processes which can co-exist with processes of change. Understanding the impact of new rules on male dominance therefore requires two things. First, it requires us to think about the ways in which traditional institutional processes unintentionally or explicitly empower certain actors, usually men. Secondly, it requires us to ask how the legacies of these processes facilitate elites following new rules. We must attempt to understand:

‘the ways in which new gendered institutions are enacted and instantiated in the post design phase by gendered actors using formal and informal rules and norms and to how the new and the old play out and with what effect for gender reform agendas’ (Mackay, 2014: 550).

This has been taken up by FI scholars. Understanding what aspects are challenged and what aspects remain, and how institutions are used in old and new ways to resist and facilitate change is central to understanding male dominance.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter argued that understanding and explaining male dominance within the political realm is a challenge that requires unveiling how political institutions bestow power and advantage to men. It contends that feminist institutionalist perspectives have been central in explaining inequalities in public and political life through a focus on formal and informal institutions, gender, power and change. In seeking to understand the impact of new institutional rules designed to undermine male dominance, it argue that feminist institutionalism offers compelling conceptual tools and concepts to explore the research question of this thesis. Having laid the foundations of a feminist institutionalist approach to male dominance, the next chapter will apply this approach to male dominance in recruitment and selection and outline an FI approach to the impact of gender quotas.

# 3

## Male Dominance in Political Recruitment and Selection

### *Applying an FI Framework*

If you have traditionally been all male, you see things from a male perspective, you see women as other and you do not see women as part of us. That's an issue that has to be gotten over, in my constituency as much as in any other.

- Party member and aspirant, Fianna Fáil <sup>5</sup>

As the previous chapter highlighted, FI work has been crucial in showing the ways in which institutional rules, in both formal and informal guises, work to reproduce gendered power inequalities in public and political life and has offered a conceptual framework within which we can understand the gendered dynamics of institutional change and continuity. Feminist institutionalist work has also been key to uncovering the gendered dynamics of recruitment and selection, highlighting the institutional mechanisms through which male dominance is reproduced. However, most of the traditional literature on gender quotas has largely overlooked how these new rules interact with these processes. This chapter aims to bridge these two bodies of work in order to outline an FI approach to understanding the impact of gender quotas. The chapter begins by demonstrating 'what matters' with regards to the

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<sup>5</sup> Interview no. 45, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil , July 2015



gendered dynamics of political recruitment and selection. Following this, it outlines the existing scholarship on gender quotas as the key institutional measure through which reformers have sought to challenge male dominance. It contends that, although this work has produced fruitful insights, the literature largely overlooks the question of male dominance in political recruitment and section, instead focusing on the impact of new rules on the election of women. Drawing on FI insights on institutional change, the chapter finishes by outlining an FI approach to understanding the impact of gender quotas in recruitment and selection.

### **3.1 Political parties and male dominance**

Political parties are the central organisations responsible for recruiting and selecting candidates and are therefore critical locations that we must examine in order to understand the continuation of male dominance (Lovenduski & Norris, 1993; Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; Caul, 1999; Kittilson, 2006; Murray, 2010a; Hinojosa, 2012; Bjarnegård, 2013; Kenny, 2013). Although political parties have been considered institutions in themselves, neo-institutionalists have been quick to distinguish political parties as organisations, who are the main ‘players’ operating within a complex web of formal and informal institutions (Lowndes, 2005; Lowndes et al., 2006). While political parties are distinct to institutions, they are the organisations where institutions operate and are ‘saturated with gender’ (Childs, 2008: xix; see also Lovenduski, 2005; Kenny & Verge, 2015). Drawing again on Dahlerup and Leyenaar’s (2013: 1) six dimensions of male dominance, which includes: ‘the numerical political representation of women, politics as a workplace, vertical and horizontal sex segregation, discourses on women’s presence in politics, and gender equality policies’, political parties in and of themselves can be considered male-dominated. Like many other political organisations, they have traditionally been populated by men, and, built around a masculine norm, they continue to operate as ‘institutionally sexist’ organisations, empowering and privileging men through institutional rules, norms, processes and narratives (Lovenduski, 2005: 52; See also Verge, 2013; 2015; Verge & de la Fuente, 2014; Kenny & Verge, 2015). While

political parties generally have female and male members, men tend to dominate positions of power both vertically and horizontally and are particularly over-represented in leadership positions and party officerships (Jennings & Farah, 1981; Galligan et al., 1999; Lovenduski, 2005: 58; Galligan, 2010; Buckley, 2013; Buckley et al., 2014). The distribution of power within political parties often therefore continues to be ‘ordered by traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity’ reflecting a gendered division of labour such that women are present within political parties but their roles may be disproportionately subordinate or facilitative to those of men, generally rendering them less visible (Lovenduski, 2005: 58; see also Verge, 2015). Men are also, however, more likely to be able to participate more fully within political parties and therefore gain more influence due to party structures which organise in ways that exasperate, reflect and create broader gender norms and inequalities (Franceschet, 2005; Verge, 2015; Kenny & Verge, 2015). For example, the structure of party activity, with long and late-night meetings, in typically masculinised spaces do not accommodate caring responsibilities and therefore reflect a masculinised party culture which disadvantage some who must operate within it (Franceschet, 2005; Buckley et al., 2014; Verge & de la Fuente, 2014; Verge, 2015; Kenny & Verge, 2016). As Verge (2015: 354) highlights, male dominance in political recruitment and selection is therefore facilitated first and foremost ‘by the everyday (gendered) functioning of political parties.’ In order to understand male dominance in recruitment and selection, it is therefore important to acknowledge the different ways in which women and men participate within and are integrated into political parties and its broader effects (cf Kenny & Verge, 2015).

Candidate selection and recruitment is one of the main tasks of political parties who in most contexts have significant control over who and who does not become a political candidate. The process functions ‘as an important means through which the party in public office reproduces itself, as a key arena for intra-party politics, and as a prominent reflection of the public face of the party’ (Katz, 2001: 280). Candidate recruitment and selection is, therefore, centrally about power and deciding who gains political power. This is a crucial point; politics is about getting into and staying in power (Downs, 1957). For mainstream political parties, the primary aim is

performing well in elections through maximising the number of seats gained (Downs, 1957; Murray, 2010a). Given its importance, candidate selection is also the epicentre of intra-party tension and internal power struggles within political parties (Gallagher, 1980; Ranney, 1981; Gallagher & Marsh, 1988). As Ranney (1981:103) is oft quoted: ‘the most vital and hotly contested factional disputes in any party are the struggles that take place over the choice of its candidates.’ Candidate recruitment and selection both reflects and sediments power structures and relations as competing groups and actors within the party vie to be selected and to have their candidate selected. Political parties are not therefore homogenous organisations with a unitary goal (Katz & Mair, 1994a; 1994b; Mair, 1994; Boucek, 2009). Political parties are often factional, made up of groups of actors whose interests and agendas both conflict and overlap on different issues and at different times (Harmel & Tan, 2003; Boucek, 2009). ‘Party interests’ may be defined differently within the party and may compete with those of individual aspirants, factions or levels. For example, there may be a tension between the collective electoral interests of political parties and the individual electoral interests of candidates who run under a party label, with the latter working to build a ‘personal vote’ within the electorate (Katz, 1980; Reed, 1994; Carey & Shugart, 1995). Similarly, partitions or ‘power blocs’ are common within local constituencies with each wanting their own candidate to be selected. Perhaps the most commonly noted tension is between the party in central office and the party on the ground (Katz & Mair, 1994b; Mair, 1994), a contestation that is particularly prevalent in the Irish context (Gallagher, 1980; Galligan, 2003; Weeks, 2008; Reidy, 2011). Katz and Mair (1994b; see also Mair, 1994) for example, disaggregate parties into three elements or faces: the party in public office (elected representatives), the party in central office (the national organisation of the party) and the party on the ground (the rank and file members of the party). Although these ‘faces’ or levels interact and often overlap, each has distinct ‘resources, constraints, opportunities, and patterns of motivation’ (Katz & Mair, 1994b: 594).

A central contention of neo-institutionalist scholars is that ‘the organisation of political life makes a difference’ (March & Olsen, 1984). This holds true in terms of candidate recruitment and selection with different selection processes shaping

behaviour, determining outcomes and distributing power in distinct ways (Gallagher & Marsh, 1988; Norris, 1997b; 2006; Hazan & Rahat, 2010). This is well established in the mainstream literature, with institutional approaches highlighting that different methods have varying and largely unintended effects on party participation, representation, competition and responsiveness (Hazan & Rahat, 2001; 2010). While the existing mainstream literature on political parties has been attentive to the issue of power, it has largely overlooked the issue of gender.

How recruitment and selection are organised, that is the way in which candidates are cultivated and chosen, is also central to the creation and sustenance of male dominance. A key aim of FI approaches is to show how the organisation of this specific aspect of political life makes a gendered difference (cf Gains & Lowndes, 2014). Feminist institutionalist work on male dominance in recruitment and selection draws heavily on pre-existing work on gender and political recruitment. The most common framework through which gendered recruitment and selection are understood is the Supply and Demand model. In their formative book *Political Recruitment: Gender, Race and Class in the British Parliament*, Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski (1995) contend that under-representation is an outcome of the interaction between the supply of aspirants wanting to become political candidates and the demands of parties for certain types of candidates (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995). Supply-side explanations detail the factors that inhibit under-represented groups putting themselves forward. Due to the gendered division of labour and gendered patterns of socialisation, women are less likely to have the same resources (time, finances or experience) or political ambition or confidence as men when pursuing political office (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; Lawless & Fox, 2005). Understanding ‘why women don’t run for office’ (Lawless & Fox, 2005; 2010) has therefore been central to explaining gendered patterns of representation with political parties often relying on the justification that they want a more diverse slate of candidates, but they simply cannot find the women to run. Demand-side factors largely focus on the attitudes and preferences of party gatekeepers, who either implicitly or explicitly discriminate against female candidates. Later work problematised this model highlighting the constitutive nature of supply and demand

(Krook, 2010a; Murray, 2010a; Kenny, 2013; Verge, 2015). Specifically, it has shown that supply factors are often shaped by the demand of political parties (Krook, 2010a; Kenny, 2013) and by the historical over-representation of men. Women are not then ‘less ambitious’ than men, but rather their evaluation of whether or not they are what the party are looking for, as informed by previous candidate selection, inhibits them from seeking a nomination (Krook, 2010a; Kenny, 2013).

While earlier work on gender and political recruitment provided valuable insights, feminist institutional approaches have explicitly sought to understand how institutions and institutional variations matter for understanding male dominance in political recruitment and selection. This work has shown the complex ways in which the formal and informal institutions of candidate recruitment and selection produce and reproduce gendered outcomes at various points in the process. Broadly speaking, candidate recruitment and selection operates within and is influenced by a matrix of systemic and intra-party rules, both formal and informal which enable some, while constraining others (Lovenduski & Norris, 1993; Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; Murray, 2010a; Kenny, 2013; Bjarnegård, 2013). Existing work on political recruitment highlights that gender plays out at the individual level through direct or indirect discrimination by party gatekeepers (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995). Those who select often work on gendered assumptions, attributing certain gendered characteristics to men and women. Leadership norms, which position power as a masculine pursuit lead to men being perceived as more suitable politicians. Women continue to be considered more communal, whereas men are perceived as more ‘agentic,’ that is assertive, controlling and confident (Eagly et al., 1992; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Individual gendered interactions, however, take place within a framework of both formal and informal party rules and practices, that are shaped and structured by gender norms (Lovenduski & Norris, 1989; Chapman, 1993). The actions of political elites are therefore constrained, enabled and shaped by party rules around selection which shape political logics and choices.

These intra-party rules and processes are also ‘nested’ within the broader electoral context and are shaped by institutions including the electoral and party systems (McAllister & Studlar, 2002; Norris, 2004; 2006; Krook, 2010a). As formal or

‘systemic institutions’, the role of electoral systems in shaping the behaviour of political parties, candidates and voters is widely speculated upon (Katz, 1980; Gallagher & Mitchell, 2005). Electoral systems have been widely regarded as the most important feature of the ‘rules of the game’ insofar as electoral systems constrain and condition the parties’ menu of choices concerning candidate selection (Katz, 1980). Electoral systems have been the key institutional feature that feminist scholars have looked at with regards to explaining gendered patterns of representation (Castles, 1981; Rule, 1987; Reynolds, 1999; Norris 2004; 2006; Matland, 2005; Schwindt-Bayer et al., 2010; McGing, 2013) and the implementation of gender quotas (McAllister & Studlar, 2002; Norris, 2004). Many studies note that female candidacy increases under PR systems as they are more ‘women-friendly’ than single-member districts (Matland & Studlar, 1996; Caul, 1999; Norris, 2004), which reinforce incumbent male advantages (Fréchette et al., 2008; Murray, 2008). Through shaping opportunity structures within parties and intra-party competition, electoral systems can impact men and women differently as institutional actors (McAllister & Studlar, 2002; Norris, 2004).

Unpacking the ways in which these different party and system-level institutions interact to shape male dominance in recruitment and selection at any one time is a complex process. Before moving on to show how institutions matter with regards to male dominance, it is important to acknowledge that studies often make a distinction between political recruitment and selection as being different things, which are both part of the broader process of legislative recruitment as highlighted by Fig 1-1 in Chapter one. Whereas political recruitment ‘can be defined as the way potential candidates are attracted to compete for political office,’ candidate selection is the process by which candidates are chosen from among the pool of potential candidates’ or ‘aspirants’ (Siavelis & Morgenstern, 2008c: 30). Explanations which seek to explain gendered patterns of representation have generally done so by looking at the process of becoming a political representative, uncovering how gender mediates access to each of these steps. However, as Siavelis and Morgenstern argue (2008c: 30), the ‘processes involved are so entangled that it is seldom possible to determine where recruitment ends and selection begins.’ While this is undoubtedly true, the

next section will highlight some of the institutional dynamics that are particularly pertinent at both these stages.

### **3.2 Gendering recruitment**

The recruitment of men by political parties is central to understanding and explaining the persistence of male power. Political recruitment can be defined as ‘the way potential candidates are attracted to compete for political office’ (Siavelis & Morgenstern, 2008c: 30). Prior to being selected, candidates must be willing to stand for political office and political parties have varying degrees of input in seeking out or encouraging potential candidates, which may or may not be codified in the formal party rules. With regards to the organisation of recruitment, a distinction can therefore be made between processes where aspirants are expected to put themselves forward and those where recruitment is carried out by ‘party individuals, political elites, informal groups or others’ (Hinojosa, 2012: 44). While self-nomination has been highlighted as disadvantageous to women given that women may be less likely to ‘throw their hat in the political ring’ than men (Hinojosa, 2012: 44), men are more likely to be recruited for political office (Fox & Lawless, 2004: 275; Lawless & Fox, 2010; Hinojosa, 2012: 47; Dittmar, 2015; Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2016: 11). While parties may contend that women need to put themselves forward to be selected, in practice asking or informally encouraging potential candidates, usually men, is commonplace (Bjarnegård, 2013; Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2016: 11).

Feminist institutionalists have shown that understanding the over-recruitment and indeed over-selection of men requires understanding the gendered nature and consequences of rules, about who is and is not suitable to become a candidate. Because the underlying rules, both formal and informal, were created by men, they ‘ensure that the qualifications of men [are] better valued and [lead] more reliably to power and rewards’ (Lovenduski, 1998: 347). Although both formal and informal criteria matter, the role of informal rules in shaping practices on the ground is particularly important. Studies have shown that party gatekeepers deem a wide range of informal criteria desirable and attractive, which are largely unwritten in party

rules or eligibility criteria. These include active party membership and service (Gallagher & Marsh, 1988; Murray 2010a; Verge, 2015) or active membership in a non-party organisation such as a union (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995) or the military (Bjarnegård, 2013), inter-party networks (Kenny, 2013), personal financial resources (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; Franceschet & Piscopo, 2013), political experience (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; Murray, 2010a) and party loyalty (Siavelis & Morgenstern, 2008c). While these informal perceptions of ‘the good candidate’ are rarely explicitly in favour of men, existing research has shown that they often advantage men indirectly (Lovenduski, 1998; Duerst-Lahti, 2008; Murray, 2010a; Kenny, 2013; Bjarnegård, 2013; Annesley, 2015). Thus, as Bjarnegård and Kenny (2015:750) argue: ‘understanding and explaining the persistence of male power in politics is [...] a challenge that requires unveiling the gendered expectations implicitly inherent in the different informal rules for recruitment.’

Although institutional rules often privilege criteria, traits and experience that men disproportionately hold, this interacts with broader gendered perceptions such that men are often assumed *a priori* to be more suitable politicians. In her study of the Labour Party in Scotland, for example, Meryl Kenny (2013) highlighted that the ‘ideal candidate’ as described by political elites had markedly masculine features. This association shapes perceptions of who would make a ‘good’ politician and filters into political recruitment and selection. Thus, whether women meet the criteria or not, they may not be perceived to be as valuable and do not translate into political capital in the same way. This is supported by studies on recruitment in the labour market which have shown that when qualifications are controlled for, gender plays a strong part in determining who will be considered appropriate for specific types of jobs (Levinson, 1975; Riach & Rich, 1987; 2002 Moss-Racusin et al., 2012). Political parties often then take ‘information shortcuts’ when deciding who is a more suitable candidate, taking sex as an indicator of one’s ability to perform as a politician (Bjarnegård, 2013). While institutional configurations distribute powers to different actors, as argued in Chapter two, distributional models are not always therefore sufficient in explaining male dominance within recruitment and selection. In party politics, that which is valued, power, competition and an aggressive



leadership style, all reflects dominant notions of masculinity, which are traditionally associated with and attributed to male bodies. Gender, in itself, then empowers men, positioning them as more suitable political candidates. These perceptions lead to a gender bias in recruitment such that men are often more likely to be informally encouraged or recruited to become candidates by party gatekeepers (Kenny, 2013; Kenny & Bjarnegård, 2017).

While informal candidate criteria are common across contexts and in many instances gendered, they must also be understood in relation to the broader electoral context in which they operate. Although numerous studies in different contexts have shown that the electorate rarely exercises a gender bias (Lovenduski, et al., 1992; Welch & Studlar, 1996; McElroy & Marsh 2010; 2011), political parties often think that men are more electable (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995, Bjarnegård, 2013) and thus are more likely to ask or informally encourage men as candidates. What is deemed desirable by political parties, particularly with regards to electability, is particularly shaped by broader institutions. Different electoral systems shape what resources are politically useful to get elected and thus formal and informal party criteria may differ with regards to what is a desirable and electable candidate. For example, electoral rules shape the extent to which individual politicians can benefit electorally by developing personal reputations distinct from those of their party (Shugart & Nielson, 1993; Carey & Shugart, 1995). In open-list systems, a personal reputation is more electorally valuable than in closed list systems (Sartori, 1976; Taagepera & Shugart, 1989; Ames, 1992). Informal institutions can also shape criteria in this regard. For example in her study of recruitment and selection in Thailand, Elin Bjarnegård (2013) showed how clientelism, as a strategy of vote-getting, shaped party perceptions of what determined a successful candidate. With regards to electability, incumbency is often highlighted as one of the key factors that reproduces male dominance (Welch & Studlar, 1996; Schwindt-Bayer, 2005). Considering that male over-representation persists in almost every country in the world, the majority of incumbents are male. If there is a successful incumbent, the opportunity for a new candidate to come forward is limited and favouring incumbents produces gendered outcomes (Welch & Studlar, 1996).

Informal networks, as one informal requirement for candidate recruitment and selection, has gained particular attention with regards to male dominance. Interest in informal networks has also burgeoned within FI analysis (Bjarnegård, 2013; Franceschet & Piscopo, 2013; Bjarnegård et al., 2016; Nazneen, 2017; Culhane, 2017; Chappell & Mackay, 2017:33; Piscopo, 2017; Verge & Claveria, 2017). Although the ‘old boys club’ has long been used to anecdotally describe male inclusion within politics, the importance of networks in determining both the recruitment and selection of men has become a conceptual and theoretical focal point for FI scholars (Verge, 2010; Hinojosa, 2012; Bjarnegård, 2013). In relation to political aspirants, the role of networks has also been highlighted as key to ensuring selection in many contexts (Kenny, 2013; Bjarnegård, 2013; Franceschet & Piscopo, 2013). Networks provide the necessary resources that are needed to be selected, be they human (Franceschet & Piscopo, 2013) or financial. Access to strong networks is an informal precondition for becoming a candidate and who you know, as opposed to what you know, is a key determinant for securing a nomination (Bjarnegård, 2013; Franceschet & Piscopo, 2013).

Gendering networks is integral to understanding male dominance. Conceptualising networks, FI scholars have been careful to distinguish them from informal institutions in themselves (Bjarnegård et al., 2016; Chappell & Mackay, 2017: 33). As Chappell and Mackay (2017) argue, networks should be viewed as groups of actors, which maintain, deploy or carry informal institutions as opposed to informal rules, norms and practices in themselves. Networks aim to protect the ‘in-group’ and thus are used to pass power from one person to another within the network; however, these political networks are often male-dominated and thus maintain the status quo, preserving the power of those who already have it (Guadagnini, 1993; Bjarnegård et al., 2016). Much of the work on gender and networks therefore looks at the entrance into political networks and women’s exclusion from male-dominated networks. Bjarnegård (2013) offers the concept of homosocial capital to explore the gendered nature of trust and networks, arguing that men, who disproportionately hold positions of political power, tend to recruit and include other men. Homosocial capital, she argues, ‘highlights both the fact that an interpersonal capital needs to be

built up before an individual is included in a political network and the fact that there are gendered aspects to this interpersonal capital: it is predominantly accessible for other men' (Bjarnegård, 2013:24; see also Verge & Claveria, 2017). Furthermore, due to the unequal distributions of power in the public sphere, men are more likely to be in positions of power and are a more valuable asset to a network. In Thailand (ibid) and Argentina (Franceschet & Piscopo, 2013), for example, this has shaped unequal access to clientelist networks which are necessary in order to become political power brokers. In Mexico, female aspirants face poor prospects in internal party primaries because male aspirants are better connected (Baldez, 2004: 239).

Although informal networks have been pinpointed as central to the advancement of men, informal networks can also work to advance women (Piscopo, 2016; Nazneen, 2017). Piscopo (2016) showed how female elites created informal cross-partisan networks, which, along with state regulators, worked to strengthen the impact of gender quotas in Mexico. This counteracted the informal practice of placing women in unwinnable seats, which was carried out by male party leaders. The importance of kinship ties with regards to gaining access to political positions has also been noted in a number of different contexts. As such, familial networks have enabled female aspirants to advance (Hinojosa, 2012; Bjarnegård, 2015). Political widows, wives and daughters are not only afforded name recognition but also access to pre-existing networks built and maintained by a male relative (Galligan, 1993; 1995; Hinojosa, 2012; Bjarnegård, 2015).

### **3.3 Gendering selection**

The organisation of selection is also of significant importance for understanding male dominance. Candidate selection is the process by which candidates are chosen from the pool of aspiring candidates (Siavelis & Morgenstern, 2008c: 30). The effects of varying selection methods are well-established. Indeed, much of the mainstream institutionalist work which focuses on selection deals specifically with variations in selection methods, as opposed to the broader concept of legislative recruitment (Gallagher & Marsh, 1988; Katz, 2001; Hazan & Rahat, 2010). Similarly,

FI has been interested in how various selection methods create gendered outcomes. Although candidate selection can take a variety of forms; processes vary along two main dimensions: exclusivity and centralisation (Ranney, 1981; Rahat & Hazan, 2001; Hinojosa, 2012). The first of these is concerned with the level of inclusiveness of the process, that is, how many people are involved in the decision to select the candidate (Rahat & Hazan, 2010). The greater number of people eligible to partake in the decision, the more inclusive the process whereas the smaller the selectorate becomes, the more exclusive the procedure is considered (Rahat & Hazan, 2010; Hinojosa, 2012). Levels of inclusiveness vary amongst parties. Highly inclusive selection processes, for example, open primaries in the United States, open participation to the entire electorate. More commonly in Europe, and particularly in Western Europe, eligibility to vote for candidates is restricted to party members. Although still primaries, these are often referred to as ‘closed party primaries.’ A highly exclusive selection process, on the other hand, might empower just one person to make the decision, for example, the party leader. The second aspect is the degree of centralisation of the selection methods, that is, at what level of the party the decision is made. If decisions regarding candidates take place at the national party level, the process is considered centralised and it becomes more decentralised or localised as the decision moves towards the regional and local party. Decentralisation and inclusivity are not interchangeable and selection methods vary with regards to the degree of both, and the combination of the two (Hinojosa, 2012). Selection can be exclusive-centralised, exclusive-decentralised, inclusive-decentralised or inclusive-centralised (Hinojosa, 2012).

### **3.3.1 Who selects? The gendered consequences of centralised and decentralised selection**

The power of the national organisation vis-a-vis local organisations and party members differs significantly across countries and across parties (Gallagher, 1980; Gallagher & Marsh, 1988). While in some countries ordinary members are relatively powerless, in others significant leverage is given to the rank and file members of the party (Gallagher, 1980; Gallagher & Marsh, 1988). The issue of *who* selects is a

crucial aspect in determining gendered outcomes (Hinojosa, 2012; Bjarnegård, 2013; Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2016). Different party rules and norms empower a different set of actors to make decisions about who the candidate is and it is widely theorised that varying selectorates will choose different kinds of parliamentary candidates, based on their own interests (Pennings & Hazan, 2001; Katz, 2001). Traditionally, the selection of candidates has been regarded as one of the essential prerogatives of local party organisations and the fitting role for the local and national organisation have been frequently revisited (Ranney, 1965; Obler, 1973; Gallagher, 1988: 245). Normative questions aside, FI work has unpacked the gendered consequences of localised selection and local influence (Hinojosa, 2012; Bjarnegård, 2013; Kenny, 2013; Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2016). Local selection fosters selection based on personal loyalties and patronage and thus tends to favour the nomination of well-networked and existing party members (Bjarnegård, 2013; Kenny, 2013). Drawing on gendered access to informal networks, patronage, and trust, local selection thus exasperates the gendered nature of power blocs, which frequently are dominated by men. These ‘male power monopolies’ (Hinojosa, 2012) frequently determine selection under decentralised systems and have been noted in a number of cases (Hinojosa, 2012; Franceschet & Piscopo, 2013; Johnson, 2016).

The negative gendered effects of centralised selection have been less explored. In contrast to its localised alternative, centralised selection carried out by the national party members is largely viewed as having a positive effect on female candidacy (Castles, 1981; Randall, 1987: 141; Beckwith, 1989; Norris & Lovenduski, 1995). Why centralised selection is more beneficial to female candidacies is, however, a subject of debate. A common argument is that the national party is more concerned with gender equity and balanced representation than local level actors (Leijenaar, 1993:222; Matland & Studlar, 1996:709; Schmidt, 2006). Other scholars have been more tentative in their conclusions arguing that centralised party selections are more inclusive of female candidates under certain conditions, that is, when many women and/or equality-conscious men are in the party leadership (Kittilson, 2006).

### **3.3.2 How many people select? The gendered effects of inclusive and exclusive selection**

Similarly, gender scholars have unearthed the gendered effects of inclusive or ‘democratic selection.’ The ‘paradox of primaries,’ is that although heralded as the most democratic of processes, they produce skewed outcomes in terms of gender (Hinojosa, 2012). There is often then a tension between system-level democracy, in terms of ensuring balanced gender representation within parliament and party-level democracy, the greater inclusiveness of members in the processes of candidate selection (Hazan & Rahat, 2010; Childs, 2013). Again, why inclusive decentralised selection produces a greater number of male candidates is contested. Hazan and Rahat (2010) argue that main reason for this is that vast selectorates are difficult to regulate, and thus they cannot be instructed to choose a socially representative slate of candidates (Rahat & Hazan, 2010). This still, however, tells us little about why local inclusive selectorates choose more men than women. Hinojosa (2012) on the other hand, offers an explanation that puts gender at the centre of the analysis arguing that centralised-exclusive selection is beneficial to female candidacies insofar as it circumvents the gendered problem of self-nomination and power monopolies, while decentralised and inclusive selection exasperates them. Moreover, gender scholars have highlighted how inclusive selectorates tend to benefit incumbents given that ‘citizens or party members typically vote for the most popular candidates, whose popularity cannot but reflect the vertical segregation within parties and institutions’ as well as asymmetrical access to party patronage networks (Kenny & Verge, 2016:362).

While selection methods are often considered the ‘formal rules’ by FI scholars, formally allocated powers within the party rules may not translate into practice (Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2016; 2017). For example, selection conventions or closed/open primaries may give the illusion of participation when they are little more than a ‘rubber-stamp’ exercise or centralised powers may be used much less in practice than is specified within the formal rules (Gallagher, 1988; Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2016 ; 2017).

### 3.3.3 Formalisation

Another dimension has also gained traction with regards to male dominance: formalisation (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995). Scholars who look at formalisation determine to what extent the process is governed by explicit rules as opposed to informal norms and also to what extent it is standardised across constituencies. Gender scholars have concluded that women do better when processes are formalised (Lovenduski & Norris, 1993; Escobar-Lemmon & Taylor- Robinson, 2008). Informal selection is generally considered to be largely patronage-based with career paths being determined through personal connections, as opposed to merit. The presence of formalised processes is thought to limit selection based on patronage. As political organisations and institutions advance, meritocratic progression, based on objective rules and qualifications are thought to replace favours, kinship, friendships and networks (Kopecký & Mair, 2012: 6). However, a number of studies have shown that these aspects are still very important to the advancement of political careers. Where formal rules exist which specify what exactly merit is and how to measure it, selection and recruitment are often mediated by more informal qualitative criteria on the part of selectors. Even in the most seemingly meritocratic systems, the personality of the candidate or their ability to ‘fit in’ comes into play such that ‘there is no process of admission or appointment that operates by a single quantifiable scale, and the numbers are always moderated by additional criteria’ (Phillips, 1995: 61).

Research on recruitment and selection in the corporate sphere has offered particularly interesting insights into the gendered dynamics of informality, highlighting that informality in recruitment contributes to the maintenance and reproduction of homogeneity (Fawcett & Pringle, 2000; Harris, 2002; Khurana, 2002). The underlying assumption here is that people are more likely to recruit and select others who they perceive to be ‘like them’ and that exhibit similar characteristics (Niven, 1998). Men are therefore more likely to promote, recruit and select men. Without strict, objective and enforceable criteria that determine how to recruit and select, an unconscious bias will shape the process instead. There has been optimism that formalised procedural guidelines with clearly defined and measurable

criteria and procedures can reduce (often unconscious) biases amongst selectors and combat the gendered aspects of personal connections and patronage (Fawcett & Pringle, 2000; Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2015:5). Where few formal regulations exist with regards to criteria, there is space for selection to be based on subjective criteria and personal preferences or loyalties, which are often gendered (Holgerrson, 2013). Furthermore, a lack of structure leads to a reliance on pre-existing and personal networks as sites for recruitment (Fawcett & Pringle, 2000).

Informality should not be confused with informal institutions. Informality can be identified when there is an absence of explicit internal party regulations relating to how a process should be carried out or where guidelines are very brief or serve a purely symbolic function. In the absence of such, informal institutions can emerge which determine political logics and outcomes. Informality does not determine that which appears in its absence, it is merely a descriptive term that denotes one of many spaces that offers an opportunity for one or more particularistic informal institutions to thrive. As FI scholars have highlighted, individual political arenas have distinct gender regimes, within which the different (although comparable) formal and informal institutions exist (Chappell, 2006; Lowndes & Roberts, 2013: 47). Furthermore, informality is not a pre-requisite for the existence of informal institutions; they often exist alongside formal institutions and interact with them to create specific political climates (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004). Thus, although informality may facilitate informal institutions, it can be argued that the latter is a more theoretically rich concept.

### **3.4 Gender quotas as a mechanism for change**

Having laid out how the organisation of recruitment and selection makes a difference in relation to male dominance, this section reviews the existing literature on gender quotas. Gender quotas have undoubtedly been the most frequently used and theorised institutional measures that have attempted to challenge male dominance (Dahlerup, 2006; Krook, 2009; Franceschet et al., 2012). Unsurprisingly, feminist political scientists have produced an extensive body of work on gender quotas. This work



broadly examines three areas: adoption, implementation and the impact of quotas on descriptive and substantive representation. The first of these areas specifically looks at how and why quotas get onto the political agenda with political scholars attempting to trace the processes, motives and actors involved. Through a comparison of single-country case studies, four explanations are generally identified as to why quotas are adopted (Krook, 2006a; 2009). Women's groups mobilise for quotas on the basis of equality and democracy (Lubertino, 2000; Chama, 2001; Hassim, 2002; Beckwith, 2003; Bruhn, 2003; Baldez, 2004), political elites adopt quotas due to the strategic advantages they provide (Driscoll & Krook, 2009; Baldez, 2004), quotas fit with pre-existing conceptions of equality and representation (Kolinsky, 1991; Hassim, 2002; Freidenvall & Krook, 2011), and quotas diffuse through international norms (Krook, 2006a; 2006b; 2009).

The second body of work has been concerned with how effective quotas have been at increasing women's representation and explaining why some contexts are more or less conducive to their success. Linking numerical outcomes to adoption and implementation processes, it has attempted to pinpoint explanations for cross-national variations. The first of these explanations draw on the individual design of the quota and the specific measures enshrined in policies (Htun, 2002). The role of sanctions in boosting quota effectiveness have been given due attention here with scholars arguing that their inclusion in quota policies discourage non-compliance depending on their strength and enforceability. The 'institutional fit' between the specific gender quota design and existing institutions has also received significant attention. Specifically, the electoral system has been the main variable used to explain the success of quotas with scholars noting that Proportional Representational (PR) electoral systems with large district magnitudes are most conducive to quota success (Caul, 1999; Htun & Jones, 2002). The implementation of a quota in a PR system, where numerous candidates are run, as opposed to a majoritarian system, where only one candidate is run, ensures that a male candidate does not have to be replaced by a female candidate, thus reducing intra-party competition and resistance (Caul, 1999). Large district magnitudes are also favourable as this increases the number of candidates run per district. The interaction between quotas and party

ballots has also been given attention. Closed-list systems are most successful when placement mandates are included, without which women can be placed at the end of party lists, without any realistic chances of being elected (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005). Thus, this work concludes that quotas can have the biggest impact when working within a closed-list PR electoral system, where there are placement mandates and harsh and measurable sanctions for non-compliance (Larserud & Taphorn, 2007; Jones, 2009; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009; Krook, 2009).

The third body of work similarly deals with the impact of quotas but from a different perspective. This research asks what difference the increase in female parliamentarians makes, once they have succeeded in being elected through quotas. The impact of quotas is therefore measured by changes to political institutions or policy through the addition of female bodies to the political sphere (Franceschet et al., 2012). Drawing on Pitkin's (1967) typology of representation, these debates are concerned not only with the link between quotas and women's formalistic and descriptive representation, but also between quotas and substantive and symbolic representation (Beckwith & Cowell-Meyers, 2007; Franceschet et al., 2012).

### **3.5 The impact of gender quotas on male dominance in recruitment and selection: An FI approach**

Having outlined 'what matters' with regards to the gendered organisation of political parties and recruitment and selection, and reviewed the existing literature on gender quotas, this section seeks to bring together these two bodies of work through an FI approach in order to address some of the unanswered questions with regards to how male dominance persists or is challenged by new institutional rules. Crucially, understanding the impact of new rules on male dominance in political recruitment and selection requires a focus on political parties, as the key bodies responsible for the enactment and implementation of new rules. While political parties and internal party dynamics have been central to an FI analysis of candidate recruitment and selection, they have received a comparably small amount of attention within the existing literature on gender quotas (for exceptions see Murray, 2010a; Kenny, 2013;

Kenny & Verge, 2013; Johnson, 2016). Political parties, made up of various actors (including aspirants, leaders, strategists, members) are ‘all responsible for developing strategies for action within the constraints and opportunities provided by changing rule sets’ (Lowndes, 2005: 293). Following the introduction of gender reforms, it is political actors who must enact the new rules, creating strategies for challenging or indeed maintaining male dominance.

A growing amount of work has begun to show how political parties have hindered the impact of gender quotas through ensuring that men continue to be both selected and elected. Although gender quotas require political parties to nominate and select a certain number of women, political parties and male political rivals attempt to protect and preserve their power, through a variety of creative tools and strategies (Krook, 2016). Following adoption, opposition to institutional rules that attempt to challenge male dominance in recruitment and selection has taken the form of explicit non-compliance. In France, for example, the main and wealthier political parties accepted losses in state funding rather than implement the law accordingly and challenge the power of male candidates and incumbents (Murray, 2010a). Most commonly, resistance occurs through more discreet subversion techniques where parties fulfil the obligation of the quota but do not uphold the ‘true spirit’ of the law. Women may be selected by political parties, but this may not translate into women being elected. For example, political parties have subverted the quota through exploiting loopholes in the law (Htun, 2002; Baldez, 2007; Hinojosa, 2012), placing women in unwinnable seats (Ryan et al., 2010; Langston & Aparici, 2011), running female relatives of incumbents (Hinojosa, 2012), pressuring or simply asking women to step down after election in favour of male alternates (Baldez, 2007; Hinojosa, 2017) and allocating preferred male candidates more resources (Sacchet, 2008). In Bolivia, parties even went so far as to enter male candidate names as female names in order to undermine the new rule (Albaine, 2009).

While these approaches have placed political parties centre stage and show the ways in which gender quotas may not live up to their transformative potential with regards to male dominance, they still largely overlook the role of existing institutions. Given that male dominance is reproduced through the formal and informal rules of

selection and recruitment, this is the key area where change and continuities must be examined. Quotas can be conceptualised as ‘layered’ (Thelen, 2003; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010b), insofar as they work on top of or alongside existing political institutions in order to elicit change. Viewing quotas as layered explicitly acknowledges that the new rules are not applied to a blank slate, rather they are influenced by and work within pre-existing institutional contexts which are marked by past institutional interests, decisions and rules which can inhibit reform (Chappell, 2011; Mackay, 2014). While quota literature has been attentive to the role of institutions, it has largely focused on the role of formal or systemic institutions in shaping the impact of new rules, paying attention to the role of the electoral system and the quota design itself (Jones, 2009; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009). Given, however, that male dominance is often produced and maintained through informal institutions, understanding the interaction between the unwritten rules and gender quotas is crucial. New formal rules can fail to target or impact informal institutions, which often remain following their adoption, continuing to inform the political behaviour and practices that reproduce male dominance, or correspondingly informal institutions can facilitate change.

As outlined in the previous chapter, it is becoming well established that institutions, both formal and informal, have gendered effects, which continue even after the introduction of gender quotas. Informal institutions have largely been viewed negatively by those interested in challenging male dominance (Kenny, 2013; Bjarnegård, 2013) with informal candidate criteria proving to be particularly ‘sticky’ following reforms, continuing to shape how parties perceive desirable candidates. Meryl Kenny’s (2013) work on gender and political recruitment in Scotland found that despite the introduction of gender quotas and other ‘gender inclusive’ rules, political parties drew on informal institutions which favoured ‘localness,’ patronage, and the privileging of ‘favourite sons.’ Similarly, Bjarnegård (2013) found that practices of clientelism maintained male dominance within two political parties in the Thai context. Thus, informal institutions have the potential to undermine gender quotas and blunt their reformist potential. If understanding male dominance in political recruitment and selection requires ‘unveiling the gendered expectations

implicitly inherent in the different informal rules for recruitment,' (Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2015:750) then understanding the impact of gender quotas requires exploring if and how new rules alter these gendered expectations and how this effects party recruitment.

Furthermore, while the existing quota literature largely analyses quotas as a success or a failure, comparing the institutional factors that explain variation, feminist and other neo-institutionalist work highlights that change and continuity can co-exist (Thelen & Mahoney, 2010a; 2010b; Kenny, 2013). Understanding exactly what institutional aspects are challenged and maintained and why, is also therefore central to understanding the impact of new rules (Thelen, 2004: 6; Kenny, 2013). As Bjarnegård & Zetterberg (2011) point out, the impact of gender quotas may be procedural or psychological. Similarly, quotas may impact different stages of the process or different aspects of male dominance while leaving others intact. It also recognises that change is not, a zero-sum game, but rather a process of renegotiation and compromise, where certain institutional elements are transformed while others remain (Lowndes, 2005; Verge & de la Fuente, 2014; Mackay, 2014). Legislative gender quotas do not dictate the means by which change is to be achieved. Thus, new formal rules are merely the instigators of potential change, defining the end point that parties must reach, but not the path. Quotas are rarely therefore 'critical junctures' for challenging male dominance but rather layering processes in which some parties alter some elements of the overall process while allowing others to persist (Verge & de la Fuente, 2014).

As one crucial element of the overall process, it is necessary to understand changes in existing gendered selection methods. A feminist approach to male dominance in political recruitment and selection seeks to understand changes and continuities in the selectorate as a key site of political contestation which has gendered effects. Gender quotas are often perceived or narrated as a mechanism that requires a certain amount of centralisation. Given that legislative quotas apply on a national level, instructing parties to select an overall number of men and/or women, decentralised selection presents a collective action problem (Murray, 2010a). In practice, it is argued that a certain degree of centralised power and authority is required to ensure

co-ordination and the meeting of the quota (Murray, 2010a). Gender quotas and democratised decentralised selection are, however, often considered in tension from a normative perspective, with scholars arguing that ‘theoretically, they are incompatible’ (Baldez, 2007:70). So embedded is this perspective, designers of the quota legislation in Mexico included an exemption for the parties that chose their candidates via party primaries. While this way of selection decentralises and democratises the candidate selection process, dispersing power from the few to the many, gender quotas reinforce the centralising tendencies of selection rules (Baldez, 2007: 72). Although perhaps necessary, gender quotas may pit advocates of gender equality against advocates of decentralisation and internal democratisation within the party (Baldez, 2007). While there is a large and growing body of work on the effects of democratising political parties and democratising selection (Katz, 2001; Rahat & Hazan, 2001; Pennings & Hazan, 2001; LeDuc, 2001; Hazan & Rahat, 2010; Hinojosa, 2012; Cross & Katz, 2013), the interaction between gender quotas and existing democratic inclusive selection in practice has not been given great attention (for exceptions see Baldez, 2007; Hinojosa, 2012) and where it has been examined, scholars have primarily focused on the Latin American context (Baldez, 2007; Hinojosa, 2012).

In overlooking the party as the key arena where quotas play out, existing accounts of gender quotas ultimately overlook intra-party dynamics and internal party power struggles during implementation, and the threat that gender quotas pose to male power. How political parties perceive power, or rather, how they can maximise it, is often gendered. As highlighted by the FI literature on recruitment and selection, influenced by formal and informal rules, political parties often consider men to be more electable and more predictable than their female counterparts, and these rationales influence the over-recruitment and selection of men. These rationales for maximising power often remain following the introduction of new rules, and ensuring gender balance within the legislature and on party tickets is rarely, if ever, the single concern of political parties (Murray, 2010a). Quotas provide political parties with new and distinct incentives and opportunities, however, they are layered onto gendered pre-existing contexts and the enactment of change and assessment of

new rules is based on a number of factors that traditionally shape the pursuit of power within political parties and determine recruitment and selection. Similarly, gender quotas threaten the power of individual male aspirants who want to either get or retain a seat (Baldez, 2006; Kenny & Bjarnegård, 2014; 2017) insofar as they require that fewer men and more women be chosen. Gender quotas, arguably, ‘kick men out and let women in’ (Baldez, 2006). As Kenny and Bjarnegård, (2014:3) argue: ‘the gendered power-struggle is therefore very real, and it is only rational for political actors to try to devise strategies to stay in power.’

Political actors often therefore employ power-holding tactics to maintain their positions, drawing on institutions in new and old ways remain in power following attempts at change. This is not necessarily gendered. As Bjarnegård (2013) highlights, the exclusion of one group may be the result of those within power attempting to retain it. Understanding the impact of gender quotas in political recruitment and selection is thus a challenge that requires unveiling how powerful political elites maintain male power and resist women’s inclusion in institutionally specific ways. Political parties often draw on formal and informal rules to actively maintain their positional power and maintain male dominance. Attention must also be paid to the complex forms that resistance and change may take. A continued focus on the unintentional gendered effects or ‘overhang’ of institutions threatens to create a level of abstraction by overshadowing the role of political actors during times of change. Institutions within FI literature on political recruitment are at risk of becoming ‘free-floating’, positioning male dominance as an unfortunate consequence of past institutional processes. While the past is important in showing path dependencies and gendered legacies, attention must be given to gendered actors working within the rules to actively re-assert male dominance (cf Gains & Lowndes, 2014). Although institutions matter, it is political actors who ‘do the work’ (Lowndes, 2005). Taking into account that parties are not homogenous, different actors within political parties may have distinct institutional opportunities, resources and incentives to enact and hinder change within political recruitment and selection. While the acknowledgement of this within the mainstream party and institutionalist literature is strong, its gendered implications are rarely considered. In contrast,

feminist perspectives have placed gender at the heart of power struggles but have not paid significant attention to the variations in motivations, mechanism and actors involved during processes of change.

While understanding change and continuities in existing institutional configurations are key, attention must also be given to the ways in which male power is re-created and re-inscribed following gender quotas, in both new and old ways. As was highlighted in the last chapter, political actors often draw on ideational or normative institutional resources to justify their privilege and re-assert the status quo (Lowndes, 2005; Krook, 2016). Male dominance in political recruitment and selection is often re-asserted through the evocation of gendered institutional narratives, which delegitimise the selection and election of women, and undermine their democratic right to participate in parliamentary politics. The legitimacy of gender quotas is often called into question, with opponents declaring them unmeritocratic, discriminatory, undemocratic or detrimental to the overall quality of candidates. These arguments are also invoked to justify legal challenges, which are often mounted against the introduction of gender quotas (Krook, 2016). However, they are powerful narratives and often serve to reconfigure the legitimacy of male power and to justify resistance. Meryl Kenny (2013) showed how institutional actors used discursive strategies of ‘othering’ to delegitimise potential female candidates, positioning them as ‘outsiders’ in order to re-assert the legitimacy of their male counterparts. Similarly, in her study of gender quotas in Uruguay, Niki Johnson (2016) showed how male hegemony was discursively reproduced through similar tactics. These discursive strategies may hinder the recruitment and selection of women but also have symbolic implications, crucially effecting ‘the terms of their access’ to political spaces (Johnson, 2016: 398).

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter set out an FI framework for understanding the impact of gender quotas on male dominance in recruitment and selection, bridging the gap between the two bodies of existing literature. Informed by FI approaches to institutional change, which were outlined in the previous chapter, it argued that in order to understand the



impact of new rules we must look at how they are enacted by political parties and how they impact the formal and informal rules of recruitment and selection to challenge or maintain male dominance. Having set out the analytical framework in Chapters two and three, the rest of this thesis moves on to the empirical material. The subsequent chapters draw on the insights developed here to understand how legislative gender quotas impacted male dominance in recruitment and selection in Ireland. The following chapter begins to answer this question, establishing the institutions of political recruitment in Ireland, preceding the new rules. Crucially for the rest of the analysis, it shows the impact of informal institutions on recruitment and selection, which takes the contextually specific form of localism in the Irish case.

# 4

## The Rules of the Game

### *Candidate Recruitment and Selection in the Republic of Ireland*

There are rules but the rules are so administrative that they're practically not rules.

National strategist, Fianna Fáil <sup>6</sup>

Having established the analytical framework in the previous two chapters, this chapter moves on to analyse the Irish case. In order to understand the impact of new rules on male dominance in recruitment and selection, it is necessary to understand the ways in which male dominance has traditionally been reproduced. This chapter is therefore the first of two that outlines the Irish context preceding the introduction of gender quotas. To recognise the relationship between male dominance and candidate recruitment and selection, first, we must appreciate how these processes operate in practice. As the previous chapter highlighted, understanding ‘the dark arts of candidate selection’<sup>7</sup> requires unearthing what really matters in recruitment and selection, mapping the formal and informal rules to understand how they interact to produce outcomes. The primary aim of this chapter is to outline the ‘rules of the

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<sup>6</sup> Interview no. 6, strategist for Fianna Fáil, national level, female, January 2015

<sup>7</sup> Interview no. 49, male candidate, Sinn Féin, October 2015

game' that have historically shaped the behaviour of political parties when recruiting and selecting candidates in the Republic of Ireland.

The chapter begins by offering some context on the Irish political setting, including the development of the Irish state, the Irish system of government and the Irish party system. Following this, the chapter details the system-level institutions that operate in the Republic of Ireland, namely, the electoral system and localism and elaborates on the role they play in electoral politics. The chapter then narrows its focus to recruitment and selection, detailing how localism impacts and shapes the political recruitment and selection of candidates in the Republic of Ireland. It demonstrates how localism, as a broader informal institution, shapes informal intra-party rules in recruitment and selection, which work together to form a coherent logic. First, it highlights how, despite a lack of formal criteria, localism has shaped informal candidate criteria, such that the perception of what makes an electable and therefore 'good' candidate is one who is locally recognised and personally known by constituents, as opposed to one who is party or policy-oriented. Second, it demonstrates how localism shapes perceptions of who should select candidates, a privilege that is principally attributed to local branch members as opposed to central strategy committees. Although the formal rules attribute quite a lot of power to the national party, choosing the candidate is considered the right of the local members and intervention from the national level is often contested.

#### **4.1 Situating the Irish case: government, the state and the party system**

In order to understand the broader rules of the game and their influence on political recruitment and selection, first it is necessary to offer some detail on the Irish political context and the historical evolution of the Irish state. Indeed, the origins and shape of existing Irish political parties cannot be considered without reference to the past. The evolution of Irish democracy and the development of the Irish state itself have been strongly shaped by Ireland's colonial relationship with Britain (Chubb, 1992; Girvin, 2002; Coakley, 2005). Ireland was officially and legally united with

Great Britain following the Act of Union in 1801 and remained so throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Throughout this period, nationalist agitation was consistent and a number of attempts were made to disrupt the unification through revolutionary and parliamentary means. In the latter half of the century the push for greater autonomy by parties and organisations grew. This was largely motivated by agrarian concerns and a desire for greater control over local issues. The political agendas of these groups diverged and an uneasy divide existed between those wanting devolution of sorts, known as Home Rule and those who demanded total separation and independence. Of the latter, the most notable was Sinn Féin ('We Ourselves'), a party founded in 1905 by Arthur Griffith which became a mass movement in 1917 and which spear-headed the struggle for Irish independence.

The 1916 'Easter Rising,' an insurrection aimed at overthrowing British rule and establishing Irish independence, was the event that transformed the opinion of the Irish public on the question of the union (Coakley, 2005). Although the rebels were defeated after six days of fighting, the British state responded violently to the uprising, executing most of the leaders and ordering wide-scale arrests of thousands across the country. While the Rising and arguably independence had only received support from a minority of the Irish people prior to this, the harsh retaliation from the British government resulted in a significant rise in support for complete separation from Britain (Coakley, 2005: 16). This was evident in the 1918 general election, where Sinn Féin, who had been heavily associated with the Rising, won a landslide victory, displacing the Irish Parliamentary Party who represented the more moderate agenda of 'Home Rule' (Coakley, 1994; 2005). Pursuing a policy of abstentionism, the elected MPs refused to take their seats in Westminster and in January 1919 established their own parliament, Dáil Éireann, declaring Ireland independent from Britain (Farrell, 1971; 1994). This contributed to the beginning of the two-year war of independence between the British forces and the military wing of Sinn Féin, the Irish Republican Army (IRA). In July 1921, a truce was called and a series of peace talks led to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December.

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<sup>8</sup> The union abolished the Irish Parliament and Ireland became directly governed by Westminster. The Irish people were given representation through 100 MPs in the House of Commons, around fifteen per cent of the total number (Chubb, 2005: 5).

The Anglo-Irish Treaty officially established the Irish Free State. The Treaty effectively partitioned the island of Ireland, granting Commonwealth status to 26 of the island's 32 counties, while leaving six of the northern counties within the United Kingdom. Partition was solidified in the following year when Northern Ireland was given its own system of government at Stormont, which was devolved from Westminster. Although the Treaty did not grant the twenty-six counties complete independence, it marked the beginning of a series of processes that eroded the colonial ties between Ireland and the United Kingdom, culminating in Ireland attaining full status as an independent Republic in 1948 (Garvin, 1996). The Irish state did not, however, come into existence peacefully. Post-independence, the country delved immediately into a short but violent civil war (1922- 1923) over the terms of the Treaty. The denial of full sovereignty, the continued presence of British forces in Ireland, and the dissolution of the Republic that was declared in 1919 led a significant portion of Sinn Féin and the IRA to reject the Treaty (Garvin, 1996).<sup>9</sup> This effectively split the party and the IRA into pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty factions, with the newly opposed sides of the IRA carrying out the majority of the fighting throughout the civil war. During this time, the pro-Treaty side formed the Provisional Government that oversaw the handover of power from the British state (Coakley, 2005). After a year of fighting, the civil war ended and the anti-Treaty side was defeated. Although the Irish Free State came into being in 1922, the political infrastructure and main lines of many public services that formed the basis of the new state had largely been laid down under the tutelage of British rule (Chubb, 1992; Coakley, 2005). The transition to domestic rule resembled more of a take-over than a transformation, with many of the systems and services continuing un-altered (Chubb, 1992:7; Coakley, 2005). Following independence, the rules and procedures of the House of Commons and the general parliamentary framework were adopted: a bicameral model comprised of a first and second chamber.

These foundations continue to form the basis of Irish government today. Legislative power in the Republic of Ireland is consigned to the Oireachtas (National Parliament) which consists of the President and two houses: Dáil Éireann (the Assembly) and

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<sup>9</sup> Following a vote, it was only narrowly passed by 64 votes to 57 (Gallagher, 1985).

Seanad Éireann (the Senate). Representatives for Dáil Éireann, the dominant of the two houses, are chosen every five years by the Irish electorate. Currently, there are 158 members of Dáil Éireann, known as TDs, representing 40 constituencies (See Appendix 1 for constituency divisions).<sup>10</sup> Although the President is the official head of state, the role is largely ceremonial, and in practice, the most important political position is the head of government, the Taoiseach (Prime Minister). The government is made up of no more than 15 cabinet ministers, including the Taoiseach and Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister). The Seanad is not directly elected but consists of sixty Senators chosen by university panels, vocational panels and the Taoiseach. Its powers are much weaker than those of the Dáil and it largely acts as an advisory body.

In addition to central government, Ireland also has sub-national government, responsible for delivering a broad range of local services including housing, roads, planning, development incentives, recreational facilities, environmental protection, education and water supply. The responsibilities of local government in Ireland are carried out by thirty-one local authorities known as City Councils, County Councils or City and County Councils. Local authorities have a combined total of 949 seats; the number of seats per council depends on the size of the population of the area. City and Council Councillors are chosen by the Irish electorate every five years in their local electoral areas (LEAs). These 137 LEAs essentially act as sub-constituencies for the purpose of local authority elections. In addition to local authorities, there are also municipal districts that act as area committees, a lower tier of organising again. Councillors are elected to both municipal districts and local authorities.

The shape of the Irish party system was unshakably moulded by the events of the civil war. Three parties have dominated parliamentary politics in the Republic of Ireland: Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Labour party, each of whom can trace their roots back to the mobilisation of nationalist politics in the years around the consolidation of the state (Coakley, 1986; Gallagher, 1995). Fianna Fáil ('Soldiers of

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<sup>10</sup> 157 representatives are elected, with the Ceann Comhairle (Speaker) returned automatically.

Destiny’) is a centre-right ‘catch-all’ party who has undoubtedly been the biggest player in Irish politics. The party originated from the anti-Treaty side of the split in Sinn Féin following the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Refusing to recognise the legitimacy of the Free State institutions, the anti-Treaty side did not take their seats until 1927, when they split once again over the issue of abstentionism (Coakley, 1986; Gallagher, 1995). Those who wanted to fight the pro-Treatyites on parliamentary grounds formed Fianna Fáil, and entered Dáil Éireann, forming their first government in 1932. Until recently, Fianna Fáil has been the largest and most popular party in Ireland, gaining on average over forty per cent of the vote (Murphy, 2011). Party competition in Ireland has often been described as a rivalry between Fianna Fáil and ‘the rest’ (Farrell, 1994: 216). Since it first came to power in 1932 until 1992, the party has been able to form a single-party government. In 2011, however, the party collapsed, following a catastrophic defeat, winning a mere 20 seats out of 166, and only 17 per cent of the first preference vote, a historic low for the party (Murphy, 2011).

Fine Gael (‘Family of the Irish’) has been Fianna Fáil’s main electoral competition, and following the demise of Fianna Fáil in 2011, it became the largest party in the state. Fine Gael similarly evolved from Sinn Féin, owing its roots to the pro-Treaty side of the split. The division evolved into a new party in 1923, Cumann na nGaedheal and a decade later merged with two other groups to become modern-day Fine Gael. Within Europe, Fine Gael belongs to the European People’s Party. The Labour Party has somewhat more distinct roots. A social democratic party of the centre-left, it was originally launched in 1912 as the political wing of the Irish Trade Union Congress. Compared to its European counterparts, the Irish Labour Party has been weak, failing to pose a serious threat to the two main parties (Gallagher, 1985).

In contrast to other party systems, a strong right-left divide does not characterise Irish political parties. Much to the dismay of comparative political scientists, it is extremely difficult to assess the difference in the two major parties along conventional lines (Gallagher, 1985). As previously outlined, both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael were established due to the position taken by Sinn Féin factions during the civil war. Although these divisions have long ceased to be important, the two parties

are often still distinguished in this way - as almost a century later- little else has come to significantly differentiate them. There is also little difference between each of the party's electoral base (Whyte, 1974; Gallagher, 1985; Marsh, 2010). Ireland is characterised, as is often quoted, as a system of 'politics without social bases' (Whyte, 1974). This is largely due to Fianna Fáil's popularity as a 'catch-all' populist party who appeals to a broad spectrum of the electorate (Gallagher, 1985). While Fine Gael and Labour attract a slightly larger middle-class vote than Fianna Fáil, class divisions do not influence voter behaviour in a significant way as in other contexts (Whyte, 1974; Gallagher, 1985; Marsh, 2010). Furthermore, parties in Ireland have competed on remarkably similar platforms (Marsh, 2010). Rather than appealing to the electorate on distinct ideological differences or social cleavages, political parties in Ireland have tended to coalesce near the centre of the political spectrum, competing on personalism and traditional loyalties (Crotty, 1998). 'Flexibility, pragmatism, parochialism and patronage' have characterised the politics of the Irish parties (Crotty, 1998:3).

Although traditionally a 'two-and-a-half-party system,' a number of smaller parties have emerged, some of which have shown a level of stability, while others now cease to exist. Most notably, Sinn Féin ('We Ourselves') has recently become a realistic challenger in the Republic of Ireland, where they previously resided on the sidelines of general elections. A centre-left republican party, Sinn Féin's primary agenda is to achieve a united and socially democratic Ireland and is the only party of the four that takes part in elections both in the Republic and the North of Ireland. Within the European parliament, it is aligned with the European United Left-Nordic Green Left group. Unsurprisingly, Sinn Féin also evolved from the party of the same name that was established in 1905 (Coakley, 1986; Gallagher, 1995). Following the entry of a number of anti-Treaty figures into parliament under the newly formed Fianna Fáil, the remnants of Sinn Féin stood by their policy of abstention. In 1970, the party split once again leading to the establishment of Provisional Sinn Féin and Official Sinn Féin (Chubb, 1992:93). While the latter went on to become the Workers Party, the former is now known only as Sinn Féin and in 1986 dropped its abstentionist position (Chubb, 1992:93). In addition to the four main parties outlined,



there are currently a number of other parties represented in parliament. These include the Social Democrats, the Green Party and the AAA-PbP (Anti-Austerity Alliance-People Before Profit). Furthermore, the Workers' Party, Republican Sinn Féin, the Workers and Unemployed Action Group, and United Left are all represented in local government. In addition to smaller parties, Ireland also has a comparatively large number of independent representatives, with Dáil Éireann generally containing more independents than other Western European countries combined (Gallagher, 2008). Following the 2016 election, 23 out of 157 TDs were independent candidates. Independents are also extremely popular amongst the electorate. In the 2016 election, independent TD Michael Healy-Rae, who was first elected in 2011, received the highest number of first preference votes of any candidate in the entire country (Weeks, 2017). This also stood as the fifth largest first preference vote in the country since independence (Weeks, 2017). Moreover, independents have significant influence in the Dáil. When a majority is not won, larger parties turn to independents to form a government. Independents often, therefore, hold the balance of power in their hands, acting as 'kingmakers' in parliament (Weeks, 2017).

## 4.2 Localism, PR-STV and the electorate

If you're not in their area they think you are an outsider.  
Geography does matter.<sup>11</sup>

Independents and political parties alike must operate and compete within the broader institutional environment. One of the most notable institutional features in the Irish context is the electoral system. Ireland has a system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote (PR-STV). This system is particularly unique. Ireland is one of only two countries in the world who use PR-STV to select candidates for the lower house of the national legislature. Ireland also uses PR-STV for local, European and Seanad elections as well as for the intra-party selection of

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<sup>11</sup> Interview no. 60, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

candidates at local selection conventions.<sup>12</sup> As mentioned in the previous section, for Dáil elections, Ireland is divided into 40 constituencies with district magnitudes ranging from three to five. Due to its uniqueness, it is necessary to briefly outline exactly how PR-STV works before moving on to the implications and consequences of the system. STV is a form of preference voting which enables voters to rank candidates in order of preference from 1-n. Candidates are listed on the ballot paper in alphabetical order, along with their photograph, party affiliation, occupation and place of residence (See Appendix 2 for sample ballot). The electorate is then free to number the candidates, writing '1' next to the person they would most like to win, '2' next to the second choice and continuing on until all the candidates are ranked. If they wish, voters may only specify their 'number one' choice, leaving the rest of the ballot blank. Once ballot papers are counted and sorted according to first preferences, the quota is calculated based on the number of votes cast and the number of seats in the constituency.<sup>13</sup>

Following the first count, candidates who have reached the quota are elected. During further counts, those who were elected are effectively eliminated and their votes are transferred to the second candidate on the ballot. Candidates who surpass the quota have their surplus votes distributed amongst the remaining candidates. If no candidate is elected at the first stage, the person with the lowest number of first preferences is eliminated and their votes are transferred to the remaining candidates. If all of the seats are not filled, a second count commences. This process is repeated

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<sup>12</sup> The adoption of PR-STV following independence, as opposed to the plurality system, was a reflection of the criticism that the British system was subject to at the time. At the turn of the 20th century, PR-STV was strongly advocated for by the British Electoral Reform Society, who highlighted the benefit that such a system offers in terms of fairness of outcomes and the representation of minorities (Galligan, 2005: 64). Influenced by British thinking, a Proportional Representation of Ireland Society was founded which supported PR-STV and the system was trialled in Ireland by the British government in the 1920 local elections and again in 1921 (Galligan, 2005: 64). Two attempts have been made to change the electoral system, in 1959 and in 1968 but both were rejected by the Irish public through referendum vote (Galligan, 2005: 64).

<sup>13</sup> The formula is known as the Droop quota and is calculated as follows:  $(\text{Total valid poll} / \text{Number of seats} + 1) + 1$ . For example, if there are 60,000 valid votes and 5 seats, the quota is calculated as follows:  $(60,000 / (5+1)+1)$ . A candidate would therefore need 10,001 votes in order to be elected. For a more detailed examination of PR-STV and how the surplus transfer works see Gallagher, 2008.

until all seats are filled. The system maximises voter choice, avoiding ‘waste votes,’ by allowing voters’ preferences to be realised at all times, even if it is not your number one candidate. However, only one preference on a ballot paper is active at any one point. The vote stays with the number one candidate unless that candidate does not need it because they have been elected or excluded from the count (for an in-depth example of a vote count and analysis of the mechanics of the system see Sinnott, 2005 or Gallagher, 2008).

Equally as important in the Irish context is the existence of localism, an informal institution that is widely recognised by both Irish scholars (Gallagher, 1980; Marsh, 1981; Carty, 1981; Chubb, 1992; Gallagher & Komito, 2010) and political actors<sup>14</sup> as central to Irish political culture. Localism, as a preference for and privileging of ‘the local’, is the defining political logic that guides Irish politics. The concept of localism is often used within political science and political geography to describe the desire for territorial representation from the electorate (Childs & Cowley, 2011). In most representative democracies, geographical representation is widely accepted and is ensured through the division of electoral districts along established geographical boundaries. Politicians are elected to represent the needs of a specific geographical boundary - their constituency. The claim that representation of the local area should be carried out by representatives from that area is, however, a different claim (Childs & Cowley, 2011). The desire for local representatives and the representation of local interests is at the core of electoral politics in Ireland (Marsh, 1981; Góreckia & Marsh, 2012; 2014). Irish TDs are expected to reside in the locality they live in and it is rarely the case that they do not (Gallagher, 1980; Góreckia & Marsh, 2012; Góreckia & Marsh, 2014). In the 2011 elections, for example, 551 out of 567 candidates, more than 90 per cent lived directly in their constituency (Góreckia & Marsh, 2014). Furthermore, voters have consistently remarked that ‘looking after the needs of the constituency’ is the most important determinant of how they will vote (Sinnott, 1995: 196; Marsh, 2010). Locality does then matter to the electorate with geography and personality often determining voter choice as opposed to ideology,

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<sup>14</sup> The existence of localism as a guiding principle in Irish politics and more specifically in recruitment and selection was mentioned by almost all of the interviewees in this research.

policy platforms or representation of social groups (Sinnott, 1995: 196; Marsh, 2010). This is reflected in the ‘friends and neighbour effect’ in Irish voting and on existing work which shows that the location of the candidates' houses within the constituency can affect their electoral performance (Gallagher, 1980; Parker, 1986; Weeks, 2008) and that contact with the electorate is important (Górecki & Marsh, 2012).

The localised and personalised nature of Irish politics has, however, been shaped by Ireland’s electoral system. As highlighted in the previous chapter, electoral systems, as formal institutions, are central in shaping the behaviour of political parties, candidates and voters in varying ways. Considering that STV systems require that voters rank candidates, not parties, they tend to foster personality-based, candidate-centred voting (Gallagher, 1980). Unlike other PR systems, candidates in Ireland are not grouped by party and it was not until 1963 that party labels were even listed on the ballot paper (Gallagher, 2008). Whereas some candidate-centred systems allow for a party-based decision and some party-based systems allow for the expression of some candidate preferences, PR-STV gives the voter a high level of choice. Unlike both single-member districts and PR-List systems, there is no party list. Due to the existence of multi-member constituencies that range from three to five seats, parties may run a number of candidates in any one district, a practice that is common, particularly in the larger parties. Distinguishing whether the electorate vote for candidates or parties is therefore difficult. In essence, they can do both; PR-STV is unique in the degree to which the electorate are subsequently able to express either candidate or party preferences or a combination of the two (Gallagher, 1980; 2008). Studies of electoral behaviour have shown that Irish voters are both candidate and party voters. In the Irish National Election Study, about forty per cent of voters said that they would support the same candidate even if that candidate belonged to a rival party (Laver, 2005).

Given that voters can vote across party lines and with no restraint from the parties themselves, intra-party competition is exceptionally fierce with candidates often fighting for the remaining seat in a constituency with a member of their own party. Unable to distinguish themselves on party lines, aspirants must compete on a

personal basis and must have or generate a significant personal vote in the local area (Gallagher, 1980; 1988; Carty, 1981). One such way of creating a personal vote is through extensive local constituency work and the creation of local brokerage networks, which further reproduces the expectation from the electorate. Many descriptions of Irish politics detail the ‘brokerage’ relationship between politician and voter whereby elected representatives are expected to act as a medium between local constituents and the state’s administrative apparatus (Carty, 1981; Chubb, 1963; Gallagher & Komito, 2005; 2010). Politicians engage in large amounts of constituency work, attending social and political functions, replying to letters and calls and holding ‘clinics’ where local constituents come to seek help (Gallagher & Komito, 2005; 2010).

This brokerage relationship between the politician and the constituent is often set apart from a client-patron relationship in the existing literature (Gallagher & Komito, 2005; 2010) and is worth exploring briefly. Clientelism is defined as the delivery of resources or favours in exchange for political support and is usually characterised by a didactic and unequal relationship between the two parties, where the client is subordinate to the patron and must rely on them for access to scarce resources (Komito, 1984; 1992: 31). Brokerage is considered distinct for three reasons (Gallagher & Komito, 2005; 2010). First, TDs do not directly control the allocation of state resources, and there is little scope for TDs to actually deliver resources to individual constituents or the constituency at large (Sacks, 1976; Gallagher & Komito, 2005: 246). While ‘pork-barrel’ spending was certainly a feature of Irish politics in the past, the ability for a TD or a local councillor to channel funds to their local constituency is limited. That is not to suggest that patronage and ‘pork-barrel’ spending does not happen, but rather that, it is ministers rather than TDs or local councillors who wield the power to channel ‘pork’ (Gallagher & Kimoto, 2005). Second, representatives rarely ‘distribute’ that which constituents are not entitled to; rather they use their influence and knowledge to facilitate access to state resources or information about said resources. Politicians are more akin to a ‘lawyer, who operates not by bribing the judge, but by ensuring that the case is presented better than the citizen would be able to present it’ (Gallagher & Komito, 2005: 140). When

politicians do help local constituents, then, there is little that is suspect or corrupt about the process. Third, clientelism suggests a lasting relationship with the patron and those in the electorate to whom services or resources have been rendered. Clienteles are therefore tied to a politician and can be called on to ensure election at the appropriate time. Brokerage relationships, both in Ireland and elsewhere, often end once the service has been provided and although politicians might want to build up local clienteles in the electorate, it is not generally possible (Gallagher & Komito, 2005).

While the distinction is an important one to make, from the perspective of party and candidate behaviour, there is significant overlap between the effects of these two systems. Whether politicians can deliver ‘pork’ or not has not diminished the expectation from the electorate. Although it may not produce returns in the Irish context, it does not reduce the need to engage in these acts in order to increase the predictability of election. Thus, politicians continue to ‘go through the motions’, carrying out constituency work to build connections and impress their constituents ‘rather than genuinely expecting to have a large impact on decisions about local and national resources that have already been reached by the civil service’ (Gallagher & Kimoto 2005: 246). Insofar as Irish politicians and aspirants are primarily concerned with building personal networks in the local community as opposed to appealing to ideological positions or party policy, localism as a strategy of vote-getting can, therefore, be understood as one form of clientelism. Clientelism is just one way in which political actors secure votes in the electorate, which is based on a personal relationship between voter and politician, as opposed to an ideological one (Bjarnegård, 2013: 8). Clientelism as a strategy of vote-getting is therefore distinct from strategies which rely on appeals to wider programmatic objectives or policy positions, or which emphasise higher degrees of competence (Bjarnegård, 2013). Clientelism, exists on a spectrum which ranges from ideal ‘clientelist’ to ideal ‘ideological’ and attempts to secure votes within any political context fall somewhere on this spectrum (Bjarnegård, 2013). Although localism and clientelism are not interchangeable, both depend on the reproduction and maintenance of extensive local networks in order to increase the chances of being selected and

elected. Moreover, it should be noted that although there is limited scope for politicians to build clienteles in the electorate, politicians do build political machines (Bax, 1976; Sacks, 1976; Carty, 1981). In order to cover a constituency, politicians need a political machine. Indeed, it would be impossible for a single candidate to do such personalised work across large geographical areas. Politicians have an extensive team, a series of sub-brokers or ‘broker's brokers’ (Bax, 1976) who carry out this work for them in their own ‘bailiwick’ or section of the constituency. As known supporters of specific politicians, these machine members report back to the incumbent or aspiring TD about the concerns of constituents.

In order to generate these personal connections in the electorate and by extension localness, aspirants go above and beyond what might be considered ‘constituency work’ and even perhaps the standard conceptualisation of brokerage activities. As one Fianna Fáil aspirant remarked on this:

There are some people who will never miss a funeral or a twenty-first birthday. There is a certain element in the countryside that if you want my vote you need to turn up at everything that happens here. Be it the parish field day, be it the pub on a Saturday night, turning up at a 21st birthday, the removal of remains, being down at the graveyard. People in rural Ireland do expect you to turn up to things.<sup>15</sup>

What is clear then, is that a personal approach, with transactional elements, is extremely important in determining Irish voting behaviour. While brokerage activities are one way of generating localness and local ties, increasing the likelihood of getting elected on a personal vote, it may not be sufficient. As already highlighted, providing resources collectively to the constituency and individual constituents is an important aspect of brokerage politics but constituents are still not tied to one particular candidate. In order to increase the predictability of election, aspirants must generate a personal vote through the active cultivation of networks, personal connections and indeed friendships in the local community. Bax (1976: 90) describes this as a key part of machine politics in Ireland where TDs and local councillors

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<sup>15</sup> Interview no. 60, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

strive to create ‘many stranded relations’ to ensure the stability of one’s political machine and support base in the electorate. Being bound by friendship and kinship is an obligation to mutual help and thus gives aspirants a moral hold over their supporters (Bax, 1976). Thus, the voter or the machine member ‘is not only a follower because he is going to get something [...] but also because he and the leader are members of the same group and share a common goal for which they strive. They feel united by moral ties as well and such ties are less easily broken’ (Bax, 1976: 90). As the previous quote highlights, turning up at social events is one way of building one’s connections and by extension one’s personal team. Thus, building up one’s local recognition and personal networks, through whatever means, be it brokerage activities or otherwise are a necessary part of being perceived as an electable candidate. This will be elaborated on in the next section.

### **4.3 Candidate recruitment and selection**

Informed by a candidate-centred electoral system and a party system that tends more towards personality than ideology, localism is undoubtedly a key part of Irish political culture. Political parties also operate within a series of formal and informal intra-party rules, which shape and are shaped by these broader systemic institutions. The following section outlines candidate recruitment and selection within parties paying specific attention to the ways in which localism has shaped and is shaped by these processes.

#### **4.3.1 Who should be a candidate? Informal local candidate criteria**

There are invisible quotas that operate in all political parties in terms of age, geography, family name, sporting ability.<sup>16</sup>

Candidate recruitment and selection in the Irish context is marked by informality. Formal rules regarding the selection of candidates in Ireland are set out in party rule

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<sup>16</sup> Interview no. 21, unsuccessful female aspirant, the Labour Party, March 2015



books and constitutions which stipulate the guidelines that pertain to the process. These largely set out who is responsible for selection by detailing the distribution of power between local branches and central committees. However, as noted at the start of this chapter, ‘the rules are so administrative that they’re practically not rules.’<sup>17</sup> While administrative rules do exist around selection, there are no rules that pertain to the recruitment of potential candidates, and ‘no formalised mechanisms where people are approached or asked to run.’<sup>18</sup> Despite this, there was a strong sense that recruitment does occur in the Irish context. Although neither formalised nor the responsibility of one group or person, there was a broad consensus that ‘everyone is a recruiter’<sup>19</sup> within parties and informal encouragement from local branch officials or the national level to seek a nomination is the norm.

Furthermore, there are virtually no formal criteria that determine a candidate’s suitability. Basic eligibility requirements state that aspirants must have been a party member for a specific amount of time and must take a pledge that states allegiance to the party. However, other determinants of suitability or definitions of merit, such as educational or political experience, are wholly absent from each of the parties’ internal documents. Unlike comparative party processes that mimic corporate recruitment, there is also little to no process for measuring a candidate’s suitability, either at the central or local level. With the exception of the Labour Party,<sup>20</sup> application forms, job descriptions and interview processes are absent in the Irish context. After securing two nominations from local members, aspirants have the task of contacting other members and branches personally and individually pleading their case as the best person for the job. As the previous chapter showed, informal rules around who is a suitable candidate are common amongst political parties. Despite the

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<sup>17</sup> Interview no. 6, strategist for Fianna Fáil , national level, female, January 2015

<sup>18</sup> Interview no.7, male candidate, Fine Gael, January 2015

<sup>19</sup> Interview no. 13, Labour Women Executive member, the Labour Party, February 2015

<sup>20</sup> A notable difference between the parties is the use of Candidate Selection Boards by the Labour Party, which screen aspirants prior to the selection convention. The Labour Party is the only party who has an official screening process and the right to intervene before a convention. There is, however, no objective criteria that these panels attempt to measure. Thus, although the Labour Party has a process, what that process is trying to assess is undefined.

lack of formal criteria and screening process in the Irish context, those who have a hand in recruitment and selection, at both the local and central level, have a strong sense of informal criteria.

#### **4.3.1.1 Geography**

First, due to the extent of localism in Irish political culture, aspiring candidates must have local roots in the constituency they are running. Candidates without this criterion are perceived as unelectable. As one Fianna Fáil central strategist remarked:

If party headquarters decided that John was the best candidate for Athlone<sup>21</sup> and they said he's standing in Athlone there would be no point if he wasn't from the community, involved in the community, understood by the community, respected by the community. They could bring our Lord into a constituency and he still wouldn't be accepted unless they were from that area. It is very simple, they have to be from the community.<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, 'parachuting candidates' into a constituency where they do not live is not considered a rational or legitimate political move. Furthermore, candidates must be geographically suitable relative to the other party candidates running in the constituency. Running two candidates with the same local base has the potential to split the party vote and thus lose any seat the party might gain. Parties therefore attempt to present a geographical spread of candidates in a constituency where more than one candidate is run. Although multi-member constituencies often compel parties to present candidates that appeal to various social cleavages, 'balancing the ticket' in terms of geography is the strongest concern for political parties in Ireland. Furthermore, although it is not formal criteria, geographical criteria has been institutionalised across each of the parties, with Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin and the Labour Party having geographically specific processes in cases where two candidates are run and Fine Gael affording power to the central level in terms of specifying geographical criteria.

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<sup>21</sup> A town in central Ireland

<sup>22</sup> Interview no. 37, National Constituencies Committee member, male, national level, July 2015

#### 4.3.1.2 Local recognition

Geographical identity is an element of localism, the other element of localism is community involvement.<sup>23</sup>

Second, political parties widely acknowledge that a strong local profile is key in determining ‘a good candidate.’ The preference for ‘local heroes’<sup>24</sup> is a cross-party phenomenon, with the ideal candidate being one who is ‘big in the community,’<sup>25</sup> with ‘extensive local connections’ and ‘name recognition.’<sup>26</sup> It is clear that localism does not just represent a geographical preference for candidates from the local area. Residing within the local constituency is a necessary, but not sufficient criteria to be considered legitimate. Rather, a range of strong personal networks is integral to the perception of being local and has shaped ideas about what makes a good and electable candidate. It is not only expected that candidates be locally known by the electorate but also that they have personally met them, or even better, have a personal connection to them. As one aspirant from Fianna Fáil remarked:

It depends on whether you’re known or not when you set out. People will vote for someone they have met over and above someone they haven’t met [...] Meeting the candidate has a huge impact on whether or not you’re going to vote for them. That has a big impact [...] You mightn’t bother to find out what their policies are if you actually know them because you know you’ll be able to approach them and talk to them.<sup>27</sup>

Being active and known in the community was therefore considered necessary to build up trust, establish localness and therefore increase electability under a person-oriented system. As a candidate from Sinn Féin remarked:

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<sup>23</sup> Interview no. 40, Organisational Committee member, male, the Labour Party, July 2015

<sup>24</sup> Interview no. 12, former Organisational Committee member, female, the Labour Party, 2015

Interview no. 66, female candidate, Sinn Féin, November 2015

<sup>25</sup> Interview no. 25, strategist for Fianna Fáil, national level, female, March 2015

<sup>26</sup> Interview no. 37, National Constituencies Committee member, male, national level, July 2015

<sup>27</sup> Interview no. 60, unsuccessful female candidate, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

Even now that I'm canvassing for the general election, a lot of it is who you know, the local person, even though that's not what the general election is about. So you definitely would have to be involved on some level in the community [...] You have to be on the ground working with people, and people need to know they can trust you and they like to know whose who and what's what. And I suppose that's fair enough.<sup>28</sup>

The assessment of electability is not only uniform across parties but also across party levels. Commenting on what makes a successful candidate, an influential central level male strategist from Fianna Fáil remarked:

Big in the community, geography. But you do know when you meet a candidate whether a candidate is a candidate. It's a bit like if you're walking through 6th class in a primary school and you're watching the men [pauses]...or the women playing football. Anyone who knows their football will walk up and say "that girl will make the county team" [...] What determines that statement being made? Tis' the same.<sup>29</sup>

The above statement illustrates two things. Firstly, despite a lack of formal criteria, there is an institutionalised informal perception of electability. If you know politics, if you are aware of the rules of the political game, you know what is needed to succeed, namely local recognition and networks. Secondly, despite a lack of screening process, there is a perception that those involved in selection, at both the local and central level, are able to personally judge who has local recognition and networks.

#### **4.3.1.3 Personal networks and political machines**

I think somebody who has the ability to put a team together. You won't get elected on your own.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Interview no. 66, female candidate, Sinn Féin, November 2015

<sup>29</sup> Interview no. 37, National Constituencies Committee member, male, national level, July 2015

<sup>30</sup> Interview no. 23, National Constituencies Committee member, Fianna Fáil, male, national level, March 2015

A third aspect of local informal candidate criteria is the need for personal networks. Political machines, or to use a less loaded term, personal teams are perceived as essential to ensure election. Although electioneering has become more professionalised and centralised within the parties (Farrell, 1974), potential candidates are expected to bring their own resources to a campaign, particularly door-to-door canvassers. While some of these *may* be within the party, largely aspirants need to rely on personal, as opposed to party resources in order to succeed initially. Thus, although canvassers might be determined a party resource in some contexts, this is not so in the Irish case. Commenting on the need for personal resources and a personal team, party members from Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin commented:

You do it yourself, go for it, get yourself elected. Once you are elected then you became a central part [of the party]. But up until then you're out on your own.<sup>31</sup>

Forget the parties- it's your family and friends that you get your canvassing, leafletting and support from -emotional and hands on support.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, having one's own large network, a personal machine, is perceived by parties as a necessary resource to get elected. Candidates who have numerous personal networks in the locality are perceived as able to mobilise a large team, who can further lobby their own personal connections in the electorate during canvassing and campaigning. In the case of returning politicians, these team members may be benefactors of 'brokerage' activities, however an aspiring politician's machine often consists of friends and family. In terms then of finding a good candidate, large loyal networks are key. This was highlighted by one Labour Party OC member through her remark, 'you might come back and say I've found someone with seven brothers and sisters, much more important than gender!<sup>33</sup> Similarly, having a person of

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<sup>31</sup> Interview no. 29, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, April 2015

<sup>32</sup> Interview no. 43, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015

<sup>33</sup> Interview no. 12, former Organisational Committee member, female, the Labour Party, February 2015

influence within one's team, that is someone who themselves is widely locally and personally known, is also beneficial.

### 4.3.2 Who selects?

Every constituency is a little world of its own- it's an autonomous organisation.<sup>34</sup>

#### 4.3.2.1 Party Organisation

Within party politics, localism can also be defined as a preference for locally based ways of organising and decision-making. A defining feature of the Irish party organisations is that they have traditionally been heavily decentralised (Farrell, 1994) and early descriptions of Irish political parties portray them as little more than a collection of local notables commanding personal and voluntary machines (Chubb, 1959; Bax, 1976). Central organisations were traditionally weak with the predominant model being one of 'stratarchy' (Farrell, 1994: 217). The description of parties as lacking any centralised structure or influence is however, no longer applicable as each of the parties has undergone a process of centralisation and professionalisation (Farrell, 1994). The four main political parties in Ireland have very similar organisational structures, although the names of the various levels differ across parties. Broadly speaking, each adheres to a three-tier system of branch, constituency and national level organisation, with additional district level structures existing within some regions/parties (see Appendix 3 for summary of party structures). The local branch (referred to as a *cumann* in Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil) is the basic unit of the political party in Ireland and is organised on a territorial basis. Branches vary greatly in size, activity and numbers but are the hub of party organisations, with a number of party branches existing within one electoral constituency. Each branch has an elected officer board that co-ordinates branch activities and conducts meetings in the local area which are open to all branch

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<sup>34</sup> Interview no. 24, Regional Organiser, male, the Labour Party, March 2015

members. Above the branch are the constituency councils. Similarly, constituency councils have an elected officer board that convene meetings on a regular basis which are open to all registered branch members in the constituency. At election time, the branch members and constituency organisations are expected to promote the party's candidates by canvassing, putting up posters and distributing election literature. In theory, the supreme decision-making body in the parties is the national conference. Comprised of delegates from each unit of the party, the national conference meets roughly once a year (every two in Labour) to elect party officers, discuss policy motions and decide on changes to the party rules. In practice, the national executive is the most senior unit of the party, directing and co-ordinating the daily organisation, policy and affairs of the parties. The composition of the national executive differs amongst the parties and generally includes, but is not limited to, representatives from the constituency executives, local councils, the parliamentary party and a core of members who are elected at the national conference. Furthermore, each of the parties has a central office, 'party headquarters,' which employs a number of paid staff who co-ordinate and organise party activities. Party HQ is the secretariat of the national executive. It is governed by the general secretaries of each of the parties and includes administrative staff in addition to regional organisers, who support campaigning work on the ground, oversee candidate selection and generally are present as 'the face of HQ in the constituency.'<sup>35</sup>

Owing to the local organisation of the political system and the prevalence of localism more generally, candidate selection in the Republic of Ireland is largely decentralised and democratised. Although selection has always been localised, over the past twenty years the parties have come under pressure to democratise their internal systems and have moved to the one member, one vote system, the main feature of which is the power it affords to the rank and file members of the party. Previous to this, the process was decentralised but not democratised with each of the parties employing a delegate system where selection meetings were comprised of an

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<sup>35</sup> Interview no. 24, Regional Organiser, male, the Labour Party, March 2015

allocated number of representatives from each local branch structure. The further dispersal of local power suggests that selection processes across the parties ‘have never been so democratic’ (Weeks, 2008). Candidates are both nominated and selected at constituency selection conventions by party members through the one member, one vote (OMOV) system with each member of the associated constituency afforded voting rights so long as they are a standing member of the party for a specific length of time and they have paid their associated membership fees. The basic process for selection conventions is also similar. Following the decision that a selection convention is to be held, party headquarters write to members from the relevant constituency and their associated branches. A nomination period is opened, usually a week or two, where any paid-up member can nominate party members for selection. After this period is complete, the list of aspirants is confirmed. Aspirants then have a further number of weeks to campaign the party membership in that area for member votes. On the night of the convention, they make speeches to those present and every paid-up member is invited to vote by secret ballot, which are distributed using PR-STV.

#### **4.3.2.2 Centralised and decentralised selection**

Although selection has been largely decentralised and democratised in practice, there has been an overall trend towards increasing central power (Gallagher, 1988; Farrell, 1994; Galligan, 2003; Reidy, 2011). While traditionally, party headquarters have been weak and largely unable to enforce a decision on local structures, each of the parties now possess a central committee or department through which selection is overseen and instructed. The process is often described as ‘constituency-level selection, with national supervision and influence’ (Gallagher, 1988:125) or as one respondent put it ‘managed democracy.’<sup>36</sup> Although nomination and selection remain a largely local affair, the national executive works with these committees to influence outcomes in three ways. First, the central level has the power (in varying degrees) to appoint, veto, deselect and ratify candidates. Vetoing or deselecting a candidate, however, is rare, indeed almost unheard of, for fear of local backlash.

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<sup>36</sup> Interview no. 15, Regional Organiser, male, Fine Gael, February 2015



Appointing or ‘adding’ candidates to a locally selected panel is more common, although also a delicate process. Added candidates are rarely ‘parachuted’ in, completely unknown by the local organisation. Rather, they are often unsuccessful aspirants who did not make it through the convention or local party members. Thus, the central level is also acutely aware of the need to pick local candidates and their interventions are still very much bound by localism and the informal rules of the game. Second, the central level exercises power through its ability to devise and issue convention directives. These guidelines specify how many candidates are to be selected and in some cases candidate criteria. Indeed, deciding on the number of candidates to run in each constituency is a complex part of party strategy in the Irish context. Running too few candidates could result in less elected representatives; however, over-selection could potentially split party voters between two candidates and have the same result. The decision to run any more than one candidate by the central level is therefore a potential risk to an incumbent’s seat and existing TDs are resistant to taking on a running mate. Third, the central level has informal persuasive powers, using their position of influence to carry out ‘behind the scenes’ work. These informal discussions are frequent during, and in the run-up to candidate selection. The level of power afforded to the central level and the process of selection does differ slightly across parties. The next sections will elaborate this last point.

#### *Fianna Fáil*

The rules surrounding candidate selection within Fianna Fáil have been the most static across each of the parties over the years. Selection processes largely occur at the local level with consultation between the central level and local constituency boards. The central party exercises power through its election strategy committee, the national constituencies committee (NCC) who manages preparation for the election, consults with the constituency organisation (CDCs) on election strategy and directs the constituency on when and how to approach the selection process. The guidelines and rules surrounding selection are vague within the party’s constitution and rules, specifying that conventions be held in line with party protocols. Officially, the Fianna Fáil national executive (Árd Comhairle) has near definitive powers in

terms of the selection process.<sup>37</sup> The party rules give it the right to interfere at all stages, from stopping an aspirant from going forward to the selection convention to altering the panel by adding, selecting or vetoing candidates. It even enjoys the right to independently select candidates for a particular constituency itself, eradicating input from the local organisation entirely if it is deemed necessary. In practice, the powers set out in the formal rules are not generally utilised to the extent that they allow, although candidate selection within Fianna Fáil has traditionally been a more centralised affair than the other parties (Weeks, 2008). In the 2007 elections, for example, a number of conventions were cancelled and candidates were chosen centrally, however this is not the norm (Weeks, 2008). In 2011, only two candidates were added by party headquarters to local tickets. This low number can be explained however by the catastrophic drop in the party's support levels which meant that, due to incumbency, the party already had too many candidates than was politically strategic to run. The power to specify candidate criteria to a convention is not explicitly mentioned within the party rules. Interviewees suggested that party directives only specify the number of candidates to be selected and occasionally geographic considerations.

### *Fine Gael*

Selection of candidates in Fine Gael similarly occurs at the local level with central direction. In terms of candidate selection, the powers of the executive council are consequential to the 'proposal of the party leader,'<sup>38</sup> who is afforded the right to add, deselect and ratify candidates as well as determine the maximum and minimum number of candidates that a constituency can run. In practice, party directives are usually devised, however, through the consultation of four party organs: The executive council, constituency strategy committees, the national election committee and the party head office. The rules surrounding candidate selection have been through a greater level of restructuring within Fine Gael than Fianna Fáil. The power to add, veto and ratify candidates was introduced during the 1980's and is often used to 'balance a ticket'. In the 2011 elections, Fine Gael added 18 candidates over 15

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<sup>37</sup> Fianna Fáil, 2012

<sup>38</sup> Fine Gael, 2014

constituencies (Reidy, 2011). In 1982, the constitution was changed to enable the national executive the right to instruct constituencies to take geographical criteria into account (Farrell, 1994: 227). Previous legal challenges have been taken against the party over exactly what criteria a directive can specify to a convention in accordance with party rules. Present rules state that the executive council in consultation with the constituency officer board can require a selection convention to select candidates in accordance with ‘such geographical or other considerations that may be determined by the executive council.’<sup>39</sup>

### *The Labour Party*

Selection of candidates within the Labour Party is largely a local affair however the party has arguably undergone the most drastic of changes in terms of centralisation over the last three decades. In the past, the selection process allocated almost all powers to local organisations with the selection convention itself deciding both on the number of candidates to be run and who those candidates would be. It was only in 1984 that the national executive was given the right to add or veto candidates (Farrell, 1994: 228). The official powers of the executive board currently lie in its ability to ratify or veto candidates selected by a selection convention. It may also advise the party leader and party chairperson to add a candidate or candidates to those selected by a convention. In 2011, the party added eight candidates after locally selected tickets had been completed (McGing & White, 2012). In practice, the power of the central level is administered through the organisational committee (OC), one of two standing committees appointed by the executive board, which is directly responsible for electoral and recruitment strategy in the Labour Party. The twenty-person committee work closely with the general secretary to formulate and implement plans relating to election strategies and selection processes. Unlike the other parties, Labour has candidate selection boards that screen aspirants prior to the selection convention.<sup>40</sup> These three-person committees authorised by the organisational committee are tasked with assessing the suitability of aspirants and submitting a list to the selection convention from which paid-up members can vote.

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<sup>39</sup> Sinn Féin, 2013

<sup>40</sup> The Labour Party, 2015

These relatively new panels came into existence in 2009 and were discussed and passed in the face of some resistance at the party's conference in March of that year. The introduction of these panels represents an increasing centralisation of power with regards to selection processes or as one interviewee described it, a 're-balancing of power'<sup>41</sup> following the introduction of the OMOV system.

The constitution stipulates that when more than one candidate is run, the OC may prescribe outcomes in terms of gender.<sup>42</sup> This is the only explicit criterion that the OC is afforded the right to prescribe to conventions. The meeting of geographical criteria is considered through a separate rule which specifies that in the case of two candidates, two selection conventions can be held in separate parts of the constituency. Following this, directives have been regularly used at selection conventions in order to ensure that the party meet its internal gender quota of 30 per cent. These quotas, more adequately described as targets, are monitored by the organisational committee. Although the 30 per cent is calculated, monitored and enforced on a national level, ensuring a balanced ticket is the responsibility of local constituency organisations, which are required to report on their electoral strategy including a break-down of candidate profiles in terms of gender amongst other things. In order to seek an exemption from the quota, the local party organisation has to seek a waiver from the national executive.

### *Sinn Fein*

Selection of candidates in Sinn Féin is also a 'devolved' affair. Formal responsibility for parliamentary elections is given to the relevant regional executive (Comhairle Cúige) with candidates being ratified by the national executive (Árd Comhairle). The national executive largely acts through the national electoral department, a permanent feature of the party. For the purpose of each general election, an electoral strategy group is formed in each constituency to initiate discussion around upcoming elections. The main power of the national executive is its ability to ratify 'or

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<sup>41</sup> Interview no. 9, National Executive Committee member, male, the Labour Party, January 2015

<sup>42</sup> The Labour Party, 2015

otherwise' candidates that are chosen at a convention.<sup>43</sup> The power to add candidates is not afforded to the national executive or any other body within the party. In areas where two candidates are run, the constituency is divided into, 'geographic election convention areas,' (GECAs) based on the party's electoral support and a candidate is run in each area. The selection of candidates within Sinn Féin is similar to the other parties in terms of process; however it has differed from the other parties in a number of ways. Most notably, intra-party competition has not been a large feature of the party compared to the other three described so far. In previous elections, contested conventions were a rarity within the party. In 2011, for example, Sinn Fein selected 41 candidates to contest the elections but had only one contested selection convention (McGing & White, 2012). The party rules also do not allocate powers to the central level in terms of issuing criteria to a selection convention. The rules include a very loose guideline in terms of gender representation stating that 'strategy for candidate selection and election preparations in the area and should be informed by party policy in areas such as gender and youth policy.'<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, all co-options to council seats must be women where possible. In addition to this, the formal rules set gender targets for each of the lower party structures, stating that the elections of officers should be carried out in such a manner so as to ensure at least 30 per cent women and men 'so far as practicable.'<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Sinn Féin, 2013

<sup>44</sup> Sinn Féin, 2013: 6.2g

<sup>45</sup> Sinn Féin, 2013: 6.2G.

#### 4.3.2.3 Who should select? The central-local tension

Democracy is something that we really closely protect. The cumanns' [local branches] are the ones who make the decisions, we're the ones in charge and if town came in and said 'you have to do this or that,' then it would kind of be resented. The cumanns' value their democracy so highly. They value their decision-making.<sup>46</sup>

As highlighted in the previous chapter, candidate selection is often the epicentre of intra-party tension and internal power struggles (Gallagher, 1980). Within Ireland, this tension is often positioned as one between the local and national party who are perceived as having different and competing interests. Katz and Mair (1994b) distinguish three levels or 'faces' of the party: the party on the ground ('the local party'), the party in public office and the party in central office ('the national party'). For the purpose of analysing candidate selection in Ireland, the distinction between the 'party in public office' and the 'party central office' is not so easily defined (Farrell, 1994). The national executive of each of the parties includes a number of the parliamentarians and local party members and is answerable to the parliamentary party. With regards to selection and recruitment, local members often refer to 'headquarters' interchangeably with the national executives and the election sub-committees through which they act to denote the central elements of the party. In rural areas, these elements are often referred to collectively simply as 'Dublin.' The national party is taken here to be a combination of the national executive, party headquarters and election committees, while the local party are the branch and constituency organisations including local members and activists.

While conflict over who selects is endemic within party organisations, it is particularly acute in the Irish context due to the extent of localism and the electoral system (Gallagher, 1980). While, localised democratic selection is not necessarily

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<sup>46</sup> Interview no. 39, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015

interchangeable with localism, it is perhaps the most logical realisation of it. Selection by local members is considered the natural right of the local organisation and party members. Thus, although the formal rules do give power to the national party, they are used less in practice than is formally decreed. Within the Irish context, localism also therefore shapes perceptions of who *should* select. Although codified in the formal rules, central intervention is far less in practice than in theory. The powers available to the national party are not used as frequently as one might expect as the ‘imposition’ of an ‘outsider’ is considered in opposition to the ‘spirit of the organisations’ (Gallagher, 1988: 131). The rationale that the local organisation should pick the candidate runs deeper than opposition to the non-local candidates or non-party members. To reiterate the point made earlier in the chapter, it is rare that the national level intervenes to select someone without local roots, either inside or outside the party. Yet, when the central level do utilise their powers, they are often accused of interfering in the democratic right of the constituency party to choose its representative with disputes sometimes manifesting in public and bitter disagreements. Thus, ‘an outsider,’ is often anyone not chosen directly by the local members. Considering that it is the local members who must work on the ground to get the candidate selected and who act as the foot soldiers of a successful campaign, there is an expectation that the person in question should be ‘their candidate,’ that is, directly known and chosen by them. It is not enough for the candidate to have local roots, nor be a member of the local party; they must be known and selected by the local organisation, highlighting the privileging of personal connections over party allegiance. As two Sinn Féin members commented:

I think it’s very stupid for any political organisation in far far away, that haven’t got their finger on the pulse, to think they are wiser than the local membership. At the end of the day it’s the local membership who are going to go out and do the local work during the election and if they haven’t bought into it then they’re going to say I haven’t picked that candidate, that candidate hasn’t been decided by us.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Interview no. 49, male candidate, Sinn Féin, October 2015

If you're asking people to go out and put up posters in the rain and get up and go out at 5 o'clock in the morning and do work, you know you can't impose a candidate on someone you don't want.<sup>48</sup>

While local democratic selection is considered the rightful, fairest method, those at the local level often perceive it as the one that can produce the best outcomes electorally. Due to their position at the local level, those within the branch perceive themselves as having the best understanding of local interests and thus as more suitable judges of local credentials than central level elites, who may not have their ear to the ground. As one local member remarked, 'we're the ones with the local knowledge. We have an idea what our support is like at any given time.'<sup>49</sup> Thus, local democratic selection is considered both inherently valuable and the best method available to channel local desires into suitable candidates. The national party in the Irish context are also cognisant of the importance of the members, often validating local democratic selection and the role of local branches in supporting the national organisation with local knowledge and the campaign of local candidates.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the 'rules of the game' in Ireland by mapping the formal and informal institutions that shape candidate recruitment and selection. It showed how the electoral system and the ideologically weak party system motivate the electorate, aspirants and the party selectorates to perceive voting through a candidate-centred rather than a party-focused lens and how this has facilitated the informal institution of localism. It then showed how localism has shaped intra-party rules and processes. First, through informal candidate criteria, such that the ideal candidate is one that is locally known by the electorate with wide spanning personal networks and second, through perceptions of who should select, a power that is largely attributed to the local level. Having detailed how institutions matter with regards to recruitment and selection, this chapter paves the way for understanding the gendered implications of

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<sup>48</sup> Interview no 14, female party member, Sinn Féin, February 2015

<sup>49</sup> Interview no. 39, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015



these dynamics. The following chapter will build on these insights to understand how male dominance was reproduced prior to the introduction of gender quotas.

# 5

## Revealing an Uneven Playing Field

### *Gendering Candidate Recruitment and Selection in the Republic of Ireland*

I don't think it's by chance that we find ourselves in a situation in Ireland where only sixteen per cent of the elected representatives are women, that hasn't happened by chance. Decisions were made that allowed us to be in the year 2016 and for that to persist.

- National executive member and candidate, Sinn Féin <sup>50</sup>

The level of Irish constituency work and PR-STV and the political culture of clientelism and all that stuff adds up to a particular colour of politics that's particularly difficult for women.

- Former organisational committee member, the Labour Party<sup>51</sup>

Having mapped the formal and informal institutions that govern recruitment and selection in the Republic of Ireland, this chapter shows how these institutions are

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<sup>50</sup> Interview no. 28, Árd Comhairle (National Executive) member and candidate, female, Sinn Féin, March 2015

<sup>51</sup> Interview no. 12, former Organisational Committee member, female, the Labour Party, February 2015

gendered and have bestowed disproportionate power to men. As the previous chapter showed, localism, as the central informal institution in the Irish context, shapes political recruitment and selection in terms of informal rules regarding who should select and who should be selected. Having already detailed how localism operates and interacts with recruitment and selection, the central aim of this chapter is to understand how this informal institution has facilitated male dominance in political recruitment and selection. The chapter begins by offering some background on male over-representation in the Republic of Ireland. Following this, it shows how informal localised candidate criteria has traditionally privileged local men by highlighting the gendered way in which local recognition is perceived and the impact this has had on who is recruited as a candidate. Moving on to selection, the chapter then outlines the gendered implications and consequences of localised and democratised selection processes, highlighting how the need for personal networks, both within the electorate and within the party selectorate is a requirement that rewards incumbents which has enabled the maintenance of male political dominance. While this is key, the chapter also shows that central intervention and selection has served to reproduce male dominance and therefore concludes by crucially evaluating the ‘local-central’ tension.

## **5.1 Male over-representation in Irish politics**

As argued in Chapter one, male over-representation is one aspect of male dominance in politics and is a key indicator of male dominance in recruitment and selection. As with many countries across the globe, male over-representation has been consistently high in the Republic of Ireland. From 1923 to 1977, a meagre 24 women were elected to Dáil Éireann (Randall & Smyth 1987: 191) and prior to the 2016 election, male over-representation had never dropped below 84 per cent. While a shift in the number of women elected to the Dáil did occur in the late eighties (Table 5-1), with women’s representation rising from 8.5 to 13.9 per cent, there have not been significant increases since. In fact, while other countries across Europe were adopting affirmative action measures during the 1990s and 2000’s, Ireland appeared

to be in a representative standstill regarding gender, dropping 52 places in the IPU from 1992 to 2011 (Brennan & Buckley, 2017). After the 2011 election, the first to precede the introduction of gender quotas, men made up 84 per cent of Irish TDs, winning 141 of the 166 Dáil seats. Ireland was therefore 83rd in the global ranking of women in parliament and 20th of the 27 EU member states.

**Table 5-1** Sex of Candidates and TDs in Dáil Éireann 1973-2011

Election	Total Candidates	Women Candidates	% Women	Total TDS	Women TDs	% Women
1973	334	16	4.8	144	4	2.7
1977	376	25	6.6	148	6	6.6
1981	404	41	10.1	166	11	6.6
1982a	366	35	9.6	166	8	4.8
1982b	365	31	8.5	166	14	8.4
1987	466	65	13.9	166	14	8.4
1989	371	52	14.0	166	13	7.8
1992	482	89	18.5	166	20	12.0
1997	484	96	19.8	166	20	12.0
2002	463	84	18.1	166	22	13.3
2007	470	82	17.4	166	22	13.3
2011	566	86	15.2	166	25	15.1

*Source:* Buckley and McGing (2011)

The over-representation of men in parliament has therefore been a key concern and puzzle for Irish feminist activists, academics and politicians alike. The election of men cannot be explained through Irish voter bias. A number of studies in the Irish context have shown that the Irish electorate do not discriminate based on gender once other variables such as incumbency are controlled for (Buckley et al., 2007; McElroy & Marsh, 2010; 2011). Moreover, the formal institutional context in the Republic of Ireland is largely considered beneficial to more gender-balanced representation (McGing, 2013). As Chapter three showed, electoral systems matter with regards to male dominance, shaping party behaviour and incentivising parties in different ways, many of which have gendered implications. Proportional Representative systems are often thought to be more ‘women-friendly’ than single-member districts (Matland & Studlar, 1996; Caul, 1999; Norris, 2004), which reinforce incumbent male advantages (Fréchette et al., 2008; Murray, 2008). Given

that they enable more than one winner, parties can nominate a number of candidates without unseating incumbents and are therefore potentially favourable to minority and marginalised groups. Despite this, the number of men in politics has remained high as the recruitment and selection of female candidates has remained low.

This then points yet again to the role of political parties and their candidate recruitment and selection processes in reproducing male dominance. Men are not just over-represented within Dáil Éireann but also on party tickets. Of the 566 candidates who ran in 2011, 480 of them were men. This staggering figure reflects a broader and long-term pattern, as illustrated in Table 5-1, of political parties selecting men. The reluctance of parties to select women is clear; prior to the introduction of the 2016 legislative gender quota, Fine Gael's highest percentage of female candidates on a general election party ticket stood at 18 per cent (2002), Fianna Fáil's at 14.7 per cent (2011) and Sinn Féin's at 24.4 per cent (2007). The Labour Party has traditionally had the most gender-balanced slates reaching a high of 27 per cent female candidacy in 1997.

The four main political parties have, however, differed in their attempt to address this gender imbalance in the past, demonstrating that internal party ideology and internal rules do matter in terms of representation. The Labour party, for example, introduced soft quotas in the 1980's as a result of internal lobbying from the women's group within the party, Labour Women, and although these targets were often not met, they did produce a much higher number of female candidates in comparison to the other parties at a much earlier point in the party's history (Galligan, 1993; Buckley, 2013). The other three parties have introduced soft or rhetorical measures at various points in recent years but have also failed to meet their own party targets and promises on numerous occasions. In the 1990's, Sinn Féin agreed to introduce a 40 per cent quota for its National Executive, which rose to 50 per cent in 2003 (McGing, 2014). It wasn't until the 2009 local elections, however, that they decided to introduce a quota for candidate selection (McGing, 2014). The 30 per cent quota was not met and was not applied to the subsequent 2011 elections. In the 2000's both Fine Fáil and Fine Gael made an attempt to address gender

inequality within their party (Buckley, 2013). In 2004, Fianna Fáil stated their aim to have 25 per cent female candidates in the 2009 local elections and 30 per cent in the 2011 general elections. The party failed to achieve both targets and also did not have a single woman TD elected in the 2011 general election. Although Fine Gael did not introduce specific targets, the party did express a desire to increase its female TDs from two to eight in the 2007 general election, an aim that was also not achieved (Buckley, 2013; McGing, 2014). Proposals to bring in harder party quotas were made in March 2012, however, they were met with strong opposition from local branches and reluctantly discarded (Buckley, 2013; McGing, 2014).

## 5.2 Male dominance in recruitment

It's all character and reputation based.<sup>52</sup>

In order to fully understand the overwhelming presence of men, both on party tickets and in Dáil Éireann, it is necessary to turn to the internal rules and logics by which Irish political parties recruit and select their candidates, which were outlined in the previous chapter. As highlighted, while the party constitutions do give some administrative guidelines around selection, there are virtually no rules or internal processes surrounding the recruitment of candidates. Thus, a large amount of discrepancy exists in terms of how candidates are actually found, through what means, and by what criteria. Shaped by the informal institution of localism, there are, however, strongly institutionalised but informal candidate criteria. How this privileges men and translates into male over-recruitment, however, still requires further unpacking.

While studies in other contexts have shown that 'localness' is a greater predictor of voter preference than gender (Campbell & Cowley, 2014), there is nothing to suggest that a desire for local candidates should discount women. It is rare that an area has a

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<sup>52</sup> Interview no.52, male aspirant unsuccessful, Fine Gael, November 2015

skewed population in terms of sex. Despite this, the recruitment and selection of women is often presented in tension with geographical representation (Childs & Cowley, 2011). Moreover, the desire for local recognition and large personal networks in the community need not privilege men. It has been argued, in fact, that women's political engagement has been more concerned with the locality, with women opting to invest their energies in grassroots issues and organisations (Lovenduski, 1993: 13). Whether this holds true or not, in keeping with traditional gender roles, women are expected to be more 'communal' and concerned with others, displaying attributes such as friendliness and caring-ness (Eagly et al., 1992; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Given that there is an overlap between that which is typically associated with the feminine and informal criteria regarding the good candidate, it might be hypothesised that a local orientation would disadvantage men. Unpacking why 'local women' were less frequently approached and encouraged, both within branch structures and in the local community, the explanation that 'women are invisible'<sup>53</sup> was re-occurring. This begs the question as to which networks matter, and what local experience is valued by those within political parties.

### **5.2.1 Seeking existing brokers, seeking incumbents**

Most discernibly, those who had held an elected post previously are perceived as the most desirable candidates.<sup>54</sup> Those who have already succeeded in becoming an elected representative have had time to build and maintain extensive brokerage networks in the constituency and thus were perceived as having greater local name recognition and connections in the electorate. Furthermore, they have proven electability. It has long been argued that the desire for incumbents reproduces the

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<sup>53</sup> Interview no. 12, former Organisational Committee member, female, the Labour Party, February 2015

Interview no. 28, Árd Comhairle (National Executive) member and candidate, female, Sinn Féin, March 2015

Interview no. 10, equality strategist, Fine Gael, January 2015

Interview no. 25, strategist for Fianna Fáil, national level, female, March 2015

<sup>54</sup> Interview no. 12, former Organisational Committee member, female, the Labour Party, February 2015

Interview no. 38, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015

Interview no. 23, National Constituencies Committee member, Fianna Fáil, male, national level, March 2015

status quo by favouring existing elites. For non-incumbent TDs, a track record in local government is key to being considered a legitimate candidate, with local councillors holding the same advantages as incumbents but to a slightly lesser extent. Indeed candidates for the general election are largely drawn from this pool of aspirants. Considering that incumbency is gendered insofar as both local and national government structures are and have historically been male-dominated, these criteria are readily met by a much larger number of male aspirants than female (Buckley et al., 2014; Buckley et al., 2015). Following the 2009 local election, only 16.5 per cent of City and County Councillors were female (Buckley, 2014).

While local experience is important to candidate success in general elections (Gallagher 1980; Weeks 2008; Reidy, 2011), the use of representative experience as one of the sole determinants of electability serves to devalue other criteria and thus acts as a mechanism of exclusion in the Irish context. In the Irish context, previous polling results or ‘tallies’ as they are known locally, frequently act as hard evidence for electability. For aspirants with different experience and backgrounds, this evidence is impossible to supply. One explicitly feminist member of the central Labour party remarked on the trouble of attempting to get a female aspirant accepted on to the ticket, despite the fact that she had no ‘tallies’ from the previous election:

Every time you would talk about her winability, track record, media profile, the tallies were just thrown on the table, physically, aggressively [...] that’s what you were up against and no she hadn’t got that, so culturally the patriarchy was maintained through the mechanism of maintaining that way of making decisions and not bringing in other criteria for making decisions, [...] her visibility to the electorate was much more significant, her policy capacity, but that didn’t matter- numbers was how patriarchy maintained its power base.<sup>55</sup>

Therefore, as is articulated above, local experience and incumbency are often used to maintain male dominance, even when other candidates may have broader local recognition without experience as a representative. The way in which political parties assess electability through previous records, experience, track record and

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<sup>55</sup> Interview no. 12, former Organisational Committee member, female, the Labour Party, February 2015



quantity of established networks is geared towards people who have already had the experience of being local authority members and TDs. Although it is a key tool with which those in power can re-assert their position, ‘it’s a good measure of incumbency but not much else.’<sup>56</sup>

It should be noted however, that a family connection to an incumbent is also lucrative as it allows a successor to inherit local recognition, credibility and intra-party contacts. Families have also been central recruiting grounds for candidates and family connections have been a particularly important factor in determining the recruitment of women. Until the early 1970s, the majority of female Dáil members were related by family or marriage to a former incumbent, a determinant that has been more significant for women’s access to political office than men’s (Galligan, 1993; 2005). This trend has lessened over time; however, informal networks based on kinship have benefited the participation of women who are able to inherit networks and name recognition from powerful men within the party.

### **5.2.2 Seeking potential brokers, seeking men**

If it’s more policy-oriented you get away with not having to take the localism factors into account. When you take localism, it tends to be more civic engagement and all of that, it tends to be more male-oriented, more male forms- the GAA in Ireland despite changes in women’s football. So that is a factor in terms of getting candidates still.<sup>57</sup>

Explanations for the over-representation of men in national Irish politics and elsewhere have frequently relied on the ‘pipeline problem’ considering that local government is the prime recruiting ground for national politics and local government remains male-dominated (Buckley et al., 2015). This tells us where strategies that

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<sup>56</sup> Interview no. 55, female city councillor, Labour, November 2015

<sup>57</sup> Interview no. 40, Organisational Committee member, male, the Labour Party, July 2015

aim to increase women's presence need to target, but reveals little about why men are over-represented within local government structures. To say that men dominate national politics because they dominate local authorities only partially explains the persistence of male dominance. Electoral experience aside, the dominant perception of the ideal candidate as a political broker is also gendered, with women less likely to be perceived as potential political brokers in the Irish case. While participation in the locality and community groups is a generator of local recognition and personal networks, which is central to informal candidate criteria, party members frequently and uncritically described the ideal candidate as one involved in the GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association).<sup>58</sup> Thus, although being known in the community is of the utmost importance in terms of electability, there is also a coherent sense of where one can find someone with local recognition.

To offer some context, the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) is an all-Ireland amateur sporting organisation committed to the administration and promotion of Irish sports including Gaelic football and hurling. The GAA is central to the fabric of Irish society and community life. Arguably, the GAA has always had a close association with Irish politics (Hassan & McGuire, 2016). The organisation was established in 1884 in order to counter the effects of British influence in Ireland by reviving traditional games and pastimes and defining Ireland's cultural difference. Along with other organisations at the time, it was central to the formation and spread of cultural nationalism in Ireland and a number of high-profile revolutionaries were also active within the GAA, such that it has been described as the 'playground of the Irish Revolution' (Murphy, 2009). Although adamantly nationalist, the organisation is not, nor has it ever been explicitly political in the sense that it is non-partisan, a

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<sup>58</sup> Interview no. 40, Organisational Committee member, male, the Labour Party, July 2015  
Interview no. 12, former Organisational Committee member, female, the Labour Party, February, 2015  
Interview no. 24, Regional Organiser, male, the Labour Party, March 2015  
Interview no. 49, male candidate, Sinn Féin, October 2015  
Interview no. 36, male candidate, Sinn Féin, May 2015  
Interview no. 66, female candidate, Sinn Féin, November 2015  
Interview no. 52, male aspirant unsuccessful, Fine Gael, November 2015  
Interview no. 60, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, November 2015  
Interview no. 33, CDC chairperson, male, Fianna Fáil, May 2015  
Interview no. 64, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

fact that is reflected in their official rules. The presence of the organisation in almost every parish in the country, however, means that the GAA club is often the focal point of the local activity and is woven into Irish society in a way that is unparalleled by other organisations. Much akin to political parties, it is organised at the parish level with over 2,200 clubs spanning the island of Ireland.<sup>59</sup> Upon this is built a county and provincial structure. The dominant position of the organisation within Irish life means that politically, it is a highly influential and powerful body.

Traditionally, there has been a strong inclination towards approaching men who have played hurling or Gaelic football for their counties (Gallagher, 1980). Attention must, therefore, be given not just to informal candidate criteria but to the ways in which this translates into male dominance through gendered sites of recruitment. As is evident from interviewees, participation in the GAA is considered a signifier of localness and one of the main indicators of electability. Indeed sport often plays a part in the formation of identity. As Liston (2002:232) highlights: '[Sport] crystallizes collective identities, whether it be at a parish, club, team, county, national or international level.' Those who play and participate in the GAA are thus locally recognisable to the electorate, and potentially have come in personal contact with them through sporting events. As one female candidate remarked:

One of the county councillors [...] elected in my municipal area was a young GAA star and people who weren't of his political persuasion, that knew him from the GAA just said no, he's a lovely lad and that was it. That would be still pretty strong.<sup>60</sup>

Political parties therefore tap into a history of collective local loyalties and attempt to channel these into electoral success through the recruitment of candidates from these local sporting organisations. Local GAA clubs are also in themselves extensive pre-established loyalty networks so that those who are sufficiently active within them at a local level are already within positions to access a broad range of contacts in the local community and by extension have local influence. They either already are, or

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<sup>59</sup> This includes Northern Ireland

<sup>60</sup> Interview no. 66, female candidate, Sinn Féin, November 2015

have potential to be brokers as they have extensive personal friendships and networks in the area, built through the sporting organisation. Playing on a team or holding a position on a sporting board, therefore, enables the production of social and interpersonal capital which is essential to the politics of localism. Thus, those involved in the GAA do not only have local recognition, akin to a celebrity, but also personally know the electorate through working with members of the community. Remarking on the role of the GAA, a male Sinn Féin candidate remarked:

It's really a network- you're immediately identifiable to dozens working within the club, but also the thousands of supporters for that club.<sup>61</sup>

Given the personalised and localised voting patterns of the Irish electorate, a number of party members were explicit in justifying the recruitment of GAA players and organisers as a necessity in order to maximise electoral gains. However, other party members perceived sporting abilities and involvement in the GAA as a demonstration of hard work, networking abilities, competitiveness, dedication and commitment to the local community, which were qualities that were also deemed necessary to be a 'good politician.' Referring to the selection of a local man at a local selection convention, one Fianna Fáil member remarked:

I don't think they looked at his policies, I don't think they looked at his abilities but *his abilities are obvious in terms of his involvement in the GAA.* [emphasis added]<sup>62</sup>

While another party member, this time from Sinn Féin commented:

You have to know people to know they're committed. If you work with them in that or see them involved, they are committed. It's parochialism really too, if you're involved in the GAA you would say 'that person is one of our own and we want one of our own as a councillor.'<sup>63</sup>

The above statement highlights the necessity to be trusted, to be considered 'an insider' when entering Irish politics. In a system where informal networks,

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<sup>61</sup> Interview no. 49, male candidate, Sinn Féin, October 2015

<sup>62</sup> Interview no. 64, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

<sup>63</sup> Interview no. 49, male candidate, Sinn Féin, October 2015

interpersonal capital and who you know are so important, the GAA is a space where those connections can be made, where trust, loyalties and friendships can be built up. Of course, there is no assurance that being involved in a sporting organisation will translate into being a good politician and recruiting candidates from local sporting clubs will not necessarily produce a slate of good quality candidates. Nor is there an assurance that being involved in the GAA means that you are hard-working or committed to the local community. The person in question could simply like sports. Despite this, being involved in the GAA or participating directly as a player was often taken as a direct indicator of one's ability to perform as a representative. Indeed, analogies between (Gaelic) football and politics were regularly and uncritically made by male party members, with little reflection on the gendered implications of these comments suggesting that the association between politics and sports runs deeper than perceptions of electability.<sup>64</sup>

Indeed, it is quite accurate to compare the two fields; although women are present in sporting organisations and actively participate in sport, they remain largely invisible. Political parties are not the only organisations where male dominance persists. Gender is embedded in other organisations that function alongside political parties in broader society. Traditionally, Gaelic Games were not just considered a man's game but were central to the revival of a nationalist masculine identity (Beatty, 2016). Undoubtedly, the GAA as an organisation remains largely a 'male preserve' (Liston, 2006). The organisation is in essence responsible for the administration of games that are played by men. The association's sister organisations, the Ladies' Gaelic Football Association (LGFA) and the Camogie<sup>65</sup> Association of Ireland, promote the women's versions of the games; however, the two are independently run organisations, being a player in the GAA is a privilege which is exclusively reserved for men. Women are active as members, spectators and officials, however, in terms of participation in the administrative and governing bodies of the organisation, male

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<sup>64</sup> Interview no. 33, CDC chairperson, male, Fianna Fáil, May 2015  
Interview no. 37, National Constituencies Committee member, male, national level, July 2015  
Interview no.52, male aspirant unsuccessful, Fine Gael, November 2015  
Interview no.36, male candidate, Sinn Féin, May 2015

<sup>65</sup> Camogie is the name given to hurling when it is played by women.

dominance also persists in terms of leadership positions (Liston, 2006). It was only in 2014 that a female chairperson of a county board was elected, the first in the organisation's then 130-year existence. The GAA is, therefore, in essence, an extremely large male-dominated network.

Women are, however, active in other sporting clubs and the popularity of women's football is growing, however sporting capital translates much more readily into political capital for men. In McMorrow's book, *Dáil Stars* (2010), for example, he highlights how the GAA has been a breeding ground for Irish politicians for over a century, devoting each of the fifteen chapters to men who have transitioned from the organisation into politics. Such is the connection between Irish politics and sport that the GAA have a section of their website listing the sporting achievements of male politicians or family members of male politicians.<sup>66</sup> Men's sport also remains comparatively overvalued.<sup>67</sup> As one Labour Party OC member remarked:

Sporting organisations are very important in the Irish context and women's sport isn't visible so you can rule out camogie, women's football players, whatever. So people who get to be the local heroes in the community through sport tend to be men and that's one huge vehicle.<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, while participation in other civic activities would offer local name recognition and similarly demonstrate commitment to the community, non-sport-related community organisers are not as perceived as desirable to parties.

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<sup>66</sup> The GAA, 2015

<sup>67</sup> The different regard for male and female sport in Ireland is evident in disproportionate media coverage, funding, support and even recognition from central governing bodies. In July 2015, for example, it was decided that a coin toss, as opposed to a rematch, would decide whether County Dublin or Clare would advance to the quarter-final of the All-Ireland senior camogie championship. Later in the Summer, the Ulster GAA Poc Fáda competition was accused of sexism after the male winner receive a ski holiday for his triumph, while the winner of the female equivalent got a meda (IMcGonagle, 2015: 1)

<sup>68</sup> Interview no. 12, former Organisational Committee member, female, the Labour Party, February 2015

As a Regional Organiser for the Labour Party remarked:

Someone that is involved in a GAA club or soccer club, that still packs a hell of a punch more than anything else. Whether people support the club or whatever, it seems to have a networking element and it produces dividends. Does participation in other community groups pack the same punch? It helps... If there was a women's group or a domestic violence group or an educational group within the community you could get candidates from that but they'll always put a huge premium on the guy who's in the GAA club.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, while local recognition, local connections and interpersonal capital are important, yet seemingly neutral aspects of informal candidate criteria, it is clear that the perception of localness is intimately associated with maleness.

### **5.3 Male dominance in selection**

#### **5.3.1 Local inclusive selection and power: The role of local networks**

As we saw in Chapter three, the issue of who selects is another important aspect when analysing the maintenance and reproduction of male dominance (Hinojosa, 2012; Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2016), with gender scholars examining the gendered effects of inclusivity and decentralisation. The localised and inclusive nature of selection in Ireland is frequently cited as a gendered barrier within the Irish literature on recruitment and selection (Galligan, 1993; 2010; McGing & White, 2012). A key question with regards to the reproduction of male dominance is how selection methods bestow disproportionate power to men. Given that institutions shape the behaviour of political actors, how has local inclusive selection shaped the behaviour of political aspirants and contributed to gendered outcomes? What is actually needed in order to be selected, to both gain and maintain power?

Due to the largely democratised and decentralised nature of selection in Ireland, party respondents suggested that building up one's personal support in the local

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<sup>69</sup> Interview no. 24, Regional Organiser, male, the Labour Party, March 2015

selectorate was central to ensuring success. Succeeding in local selection conventions therefore requires recruiting large personal networks into the party structure. The ‘stuffing’ of selection conventions with relatives and personal supporters is a widely known and common informal practice. This involves aspirants signing up members to the local party organisation, who remain inactive until the night of the convention when they then ‘come out of the woodwork’,<sup>70</sup> to cast a vote. Formal criteria surrounding voting rights state that members must have been signed up (and paid up) for at least two years, a rule that is aimed at preventing this practice. As opposed to halting it, however, these criteria again serve to advantage those who have been there the longest to utilise their networks. The recruitment of party members into the local party in Ireland is a mechanism through which the recruiter, whomever that may be, attempts to secure power, for oneself or for one’s own political faction or network. Furthermore, it is a way of investing in political power, ensuring that power will be maintained if a potential challenge is made in the future. The recruitment of party members, and by extension the widening of democracy, is not here about enhanced participation, nor about increasing party support and active members, but a strategic use of the institutional machinery to ensure selection and create personal power blocs in the local party. As one male Fine Gael respondent remarked:

I’ve a rake of friends who are members who barely know they’re members except they get a card once a year, but they are members and they know the deal and they know that come the day if I need the numbers they have to show up.<sup>71</sup>

Inclusive decentralised selection within the Irish context is therefore a numbers game which, at its core, gives disproportionate power to those who can mobilise the greatest number of people to show up and vote at a local selection convention. This is not unique to the Irish case, but rather is an unintended consequence of democratised selection more broadly (Cross & Katz, 2013: 138). An emerging theme in the exiting mainstream neo-institutionalist literature is the power-holding strategies that actors employ to gain and protect power under specific institutional

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<sup>70</sup> Interview no. 43, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015

<sup>71</sup> Interview no.7, male candidate, Fine Gael, January 2015



configurations regarding selection. For example, informal practices regarding recruitment have been noted in a number of contexts where selection is inclusive (Solomos & Black, 1995; Malloy, 2003; Katz & Rahat, 2010: 98; Cross & Katz, 2013). In Canada, it is common for local politicians to enrol large numbers of personal supporters just prior to the selection process, the sole purpose of which is to have them selected as candidates (Katz, 2001). Strategic candidates carry out large registration drives which produce ‘instant’ members who are there solely to ensure selection.

The need for large personal networks within the selectorate first and foremost privileges incumbents, most of whom are male, who are able to depend on their long-standing supporters for votes. Due to their brokerage work, TDs are able to recruit sufficient numbers of local members to overcome any challenger's efforts, sometimes to preposterous extents. In many cases, representatives have created and installed ‘personal machines’ that work to preserve the power of their chosen TD (Carty, 1981) and hinder potential competitors. Often entire local organisations are built around and explicitly loyal to one politician. Although installing large numbers of inactive personal supporters is important, integrating personal supporters into key positions of power within the regional organisation is also a common practice. Having a personal connection in a position of power within the branch and the constituency can also benefit an aspirant. Incumbents often install personally loyal supporters and relatives in the local organisation over time who often then obtain official positions of power within the branch. These sentiments are reflected in Gallagher and Marsh's (2004) study of membership within Fine Gael which show that half of the party membership have an explicit link to an individual politician and consider themselves a supporter of that particular person. The incumbent advantage is not then just about electability within Irish parties, as is outlined above, it is also about selectability. Incumbents have also had more time to carry out brokerage work and thus, cultivate personal networks and build up a personal vote within the constituency. Incumbents have a particular standing *within* the party such that, it is unlikely that an incumbent will be deselected by local party members, regardless of their broader electability.

### 5.3.2 Central intervention and power: the rules in use

It is this thing of who knows best? Is it the people on the ground level or is it the central people? The people at the local level are looking for someone who can represent their local area, the head level are looking for who can win the most seats for the party. And of course their aims are intertwined but the means can be different. At the end of the day, it's about winning seats isn't it?<sup>72</sup>

The decentralised and inclusive nature of the process has also been considered a hindering feature with regards to more balanced representation, considering that local influence over selection inhibits central strategy committees and party leaders from promoting female candidates (Buckley et al., 2015). As highlighted in the previous chapter, selection by the local membership is considered the norm by party members, and arguably, more the important than the outcomes it produces, whether that is male over-representation or a lower quality slate of candidates. As one candidate remarked:

If the membership all votes for a man? If that's the case then that happens and the vote has to stand.<sup>73</sup>

While informal rules around who should select do inhibit the national party from using their formalised power to the full extent, this suggests that the central level is more concerned with ensuring gender balance than the local level. That there is political will, but not power. As the previous chapter showed, however, national 'management' of the process is commonplace. Centralised intervention and the existence of central powers are often justified as a way of ensuring a competent and electable slate, thus combatting the negative effects of patronage and personal loyalties that localised and democratised selection tends to create. While selection based on personal loyalties and good quality candidates are not inherently in conflict,

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<sup>72</sup> Interview no. 64, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

<sup>73</sup> Interview no. 39, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015

the two do exist in tension. That is not to say that inclusive local selection does not or cannot produce good outcomes, however, there is very little to suggest that local democratic selection does produce the best outcome or indeed good outcomes for the party. If members are there through a personal connection and the basis on which they vote is motivated solely by this it is unlikely that they will choose any new alternative, regardless of who that person is, how electable they are, how many professional or educational qualifications they have, their political experience or their policy capabilities. Thus, although the concepts of merit and electability are contestable, selection based solely on personal connections may not ensure it and can actively undermine it. This particularly holds true with regards to ‘paper voters’ given that their *raison d’être* within the party is to promote one particular candidate.

Tension between the party levels is often characterised by both party members and Irish scholars as the need to balance the interests of local party selectorates with the demands of the national party and broader party policy (Gallagher, 1980; Buckley & Brennan, 2017). While constituency organisations want a candidate that best represents local interests and gets on with the local party, the national party is more concerned with ensuring a high quality slate of candidates (Gallagher, 1980). The priorities of the selectorate at the local level are often deemed at odds with that of the central level, considering that local influence tends to foster strong personal loyalties that subvert broader party priorities such as producing a ‘balanced slate’ of ‘electable candidates.’ The central-national tension is generally therefore characterised by the difference in interests of selectorates, or put differently, why different selectorates select. Commenting on the need for centralised intervention in the process to ensure positive outcomes in the Labour Party one central strategist outlined the problem with localised and personalised selection:

She was a very good candidate- and this male candidate was picked who had a bad record because we left it completely to the local organisation. We then decided he wouldn’t get elected. So we added her. She got elected. Now why did the local organisation select an obviously transparently weak candidate? Because they know him very well. They weren’t going to turn up and vote against him. They’d have to turn up and talk to him the next day. So they would yield that local pressure. And we realised that. That sometimes, there

will be such strong local factors of personalities and loyalties that they won't select the best candidate.<sup>74</sup>

This need to intervene to ensure electability was further reiterated by a Regional Organiser for Fine Gael:

The locals just would not want to do him wrong and he's so nice and they've known him for 35 years. So that leads to difficulty then [...] So that means that often times you can put in a directive.<sup>75</sup>

Given, however, that the national party is crucially concerned with ensuring an electable slate, central intervention and selection has also served to reproduce male dominance within Irish parties. In order to understand how male dominance is produced and reproduced, we must understand how the rules are used, for what ends and by whom. As was highlighted in the previous section 'electability' is a highly gendered concept and thus, the local well-networked man is often as appealing to central level strategists as he is to the local constituency. Although the two levels may sometimes be in tension, there is significant overlap on what the characteristics of an ideal candidate are. This was reiterated by a female Labour Party member:

Remember that people who are at the central level also come through the system and they look as well at what looks like a politician and try to repeat that.<sup>76</sup>

Furthermore, while the 'rules in form' may be intended for specific purposes, that is to ensure an electable slate, there is a gap between this and how they function in practice. There is, therefore, significant 'play' in how the formal rules are used. For example, as a Regional Organiser within Fine Gael remarked:

You could literally say the convention must select a candidate whose second name is Smith, who is 15 stone and who looks exactly like the person who is reading out this directive. And there would have been a time in my time in

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<sup>74</sup> Interview no. 40, Organisational Committee member, male, the Labour Party, July 2015

<sup>75</sup> Interview no. 15, Regional Organiser, male, Fine Gael, February 2015

<sup>76</sup> Interview no. 55, female aspirant, the Labour Party, November 2015

the party where I would have turned up at conventions with two directives in my pocket. Often that would happen.<sup>77</sup>

While centralised powers regarding selection are in essence supposed to ensure a ‘balanced’ and electable slate of candidates, they are often used during personal or factional power struggles to ensure the selection of a preferred candidate. Referring to one particular convention prior to the introduction of quotas, a Fine Gael Regional Organiser remarked:

We knew we wanted one male and one female. That was as much to keep out another male councillor as it was to promote women at that particular time. We knew Mike O’ Reilly<sup>78</sup> would be one candidate. People didn’t want it to be John Ward<sup>79</sup> and their way of doing that was to say well we’ll pick a woman.<sup>80</sup>

Most notably, the formal rules are often used at the selection stage to protect the position and interests of incumbents. Incumbents, having already proven their electability, are valuable assets to the party. Furthermore, the loss of an incumbent, through defection, could result in a potential seat loss for the party as a significant number of local and personality-oriented voters might vote for the newly independent candidate. As outlined in the previous chapter, independent candidacies are common and many successful independents are originally candidates or notable members of existing parties (Weeks, 2017). Forty-nine of the seventy-two independents who sat in Dáil Éireann between 1948 and 2016 had a party background or party affiliation. Considering that incumbents, once they have gained significant notoriety and local loyalties, are not fully reliant on a party label to get elected, they pose a significant threat to existing parties. Using electability as a bargaining tool, the value placed on incumbents enables them to protect both their own positions and those within their personal networks through central intervention. As one male Fine Gael candidate remarked about previously competing against an incumbent:

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<sup>77</sup> Interview no. 15, Regional Organiser, male, Fine Gael, February 2015

<sup>78</sup> Name changed to protect anonymity

<sup>79</sup> Name changed to protect anonymity

<sup>80</sup> Interview no. 15, Regional Organiser, male, Fine Gael, February 2015

He [the incumbent] would have been very friendly with one of our chief electoral strategists at the time. There was a huge aversion to having anyone run with him. It was felt, or so it seemed to me, that he needed to be protected and if he had a running mate he would potentially lose his seat to his running mate- if there was only going to be one Fine Gael seat in that constituency it would be whoever wasn't him basically. So at all costs, they said no way, you are not going in there.<sup>81</sup>

Although it was perceived that the party could have maintained a seat with another candidate, the incumbent was protected and was able to maintain his position and power through central intervention. Thereby, open competition was hindered for other aspirants who could potentially have displaced him.

Due to their positional power, incumbents also have greater access to the formal rules of the game, allowing them to protect those within their own networks. As one female Fine Gael aspirant remarked:

The selection convention was set up so that the members I had signed up wouldn't have been members for two years. I asked them to delay it by a few weeks but he [the incumbent] said no. His best man was running against me so blood is thicker than water.<sup>82</sup>

The above statement points to the importance of intra-party networks in advancing aspirants at the selection stage. Although it is rare that the interests of incumbents are protected over the chance of winning a seat, 'all things equal,' personal loyalties, friendship and kinship have significant sway in determining which electable aspirant benefits from the formal rules and central intervention. In the above case, a long-standing friendship with a person of influence enabled the exclusion of other aspirants from the selection process. This does not just advantage incumbents, but also those who they wish to be their successors, allowing systems of patronage to be realised at the selection stage. The formal rules and informal personal networks therefore interact with social connections conditioning political strategies, central decisions and the use of formal rules.

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<sup>81</sup> Interview no.7, male candidate, Fine Gael, January 2015

<sup>82</sup> Interview no. 42, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fine Gael, July 2015

The experience of being ‘shafted’ or ‘blocked’ is certainly not a practice that pertains only to female party members. However, considering that central intervention has been wielded on gendered criteria of ‘electability’ and furthermore on the basis of personal loyalties, which must be built up over time, newcomers to the game, particularly female newcomers, are disadvantaged. These practices at both the central and local level raise questions not only about gender but about the transparency and fairness of the selection system. The stifling of aspirants, at both the local and national level, was not perceived to be problematic for the functioning of a democratic or meritocratic selection system, rather it was seen as ‘politics as usual. As one highly influential Fianna Fáil strategist remarked:

The problem is they say they shafted someone but the reality is there’s someone there already. What actually happens is there someone else in situ. You can’t be the captain of the team if there’s a captain already, even though you want to be the captain. But what happens then is that people who surround the captain don’t want the competition for the captain so they stop competition- that is the world over.<sup>83</sup>

Hindering open and fair competition was also not perceived as a structural or institutional problem. Respondents across Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and the Labour Party referenced notable female aspirants who had been ‘blocked’ by existing TDs, but who had left and built a successful career in another party, thus overcoming the barriers they had faced. Speaking about the blocking of female candidates, the previous respondent continued:

You have to believe yourself that you want it- man or woman – and if you are good enough you will make it. If you are good enough in any political party you will make it.<sup>84</sup>

As the above comment illustrates an unfair playing field is widely accepted in the Irish context and if not legitimised, it is at least normalised. This calls into question the tension between the priorities of the central and local level, a presumption that is evident in both mainstream and feminist literature regarding candidate selection.

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<sup>83</sup> Interview no. 37, National Constituencies Committee member, male, national level, July 2015

<sup>84</sup> Interview no. 37, National Constituencies Committee member, male, national level, July 2015

Strong local influence over selection does hinder the opportunity for central strategy committees and party leaders to intervene with regards to gender, however, it is important to acknowledge that central intervention has also reproduced male dominance as opposed to challenging it. The issue of gender, therefore, calls into question the supposed dichotomy between the two, pointing to the importance of both shared gendered perceptions of electability and personal networks, which connect actors at different levels of the organisation. Commenting upon the party quotas that have existed in the Labour Party since the early nineties, one female aspirant remarked ‘it depends on the people you have at the central level and what incentive they have [...] Gender equality and parity is there when it suits them so if everything was centralised I wouldn’t be relying on suddenly everything becoming more dynamic.’<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, localism cannot be deemed a logic that is only reproduced by local level actors. Insofar as ‘being local’ is considered a marker of electability by the central party, localism is widely accepted at all levels. While the mainstream literature points to a distinction in interests, and thus, outcomes of selectorates at the local and central level, there is often significant overlap. Furthermore, even when interests do diverge, both may serve to reproduce male-over-representation.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has applied an FI lens to recruitment and selection, demonstrating how male dominance has been reproduced on party tickets and within parliament in the Republic of Ireland. It showed the ways in which informal localised candidate criteria has traditionally privileged local men by highlighting the gendered way in which local recognition is perceived and how this has impacted who is asked and encouraged to seek a nomination in the existing membership. Moving on to selection, the chapter then showed the gendered implications and consequences of localised and democratised selection processes, highlighting how the need for personal networks, both within the electorate and within the party selectorate is a requirement

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<sup>85</sup> Interview no. 55, female aspirant, the Labour Party, November 2015



that rewards incumbents, which has enabled the maintenance of male political dominance. However, the chapter also demonstrated how central intervention has served to reproduce male dominance, challenging the assumption that local decentralised selection is the main hindrance to more gender balanced tickets. While the central level has had the power to intervene with regards to gender, the will to do so has not been strong given that electability is a highly gendered concept.

This chapter and the previous chapter have shown that at its heart, localism is an institution that rewards and values who, as opposed to what you know, raising questions about how easy it is to enter politics as a newcomer to the game and to the quality of candidates that these recruitment and selection processes provide. This of course has implications with regards to new rules which aim to re-structure the criteria upon which political parties select their candidates, such as gender quotas. Having established the ways in which male dominance is produced through traditional recruitment and selection processes, giving due attention to the role of informal institutions, this chapter sets the scene for the following two chapters which seek to understand the impact of new institutional rules on male dominance.

# 6

## Disrupting Male Dominance

### *Party Responses and Quota Implementation Strategies*

When older successful politicians retire, the first thing people used to do was look at somebody in the family and see who in the family is going to run. Now, funnily enough, they look at the area and they see if there is a woman there to meet their quota requirement.

- City councillor, the Labour Party <sup>86</sup>

Having outlined how male dominance has been traditionally reproduced in recruitment and selection in Ireland, this chapter moves on to understand the impact of gender quotas. This chapter, therefore, describes how political parties, as the key instigators of gender reform, enacted new institutional rules in the post-adoption phase and sought to change recruitment and selection. The central argument of this chapter is that gender quotas did incentivise political parties to change existing processes, which disrupted male dominance to some degree.

This chapter has two aims. The first is to show how this happened, through an analysis of implementation strategies and intra-party change. As Chapter three

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<sup>86</sup> Interview no. 55, female aspirant, the Labour Party, November 2015

argued, despite a broad literature on gender quotas, there remains a large gap with regard to parties' internal processes of reform. Moving away from the traditional emphasis on inputs and outputs, this chapter examines how parties changed, adapted and reorganised in response to gender quotas in Ireland, seeking to pry open the 'black box' of institutional reform. Second, this chapter aims to show how localism shaped this process. It seeks to show not only how change happened, but why – shedding light on the role of pre-existing institutions in shaping political action. The chapter begins by outlining the introduction of gender quotas and details party motivations for changing internal processes. Following this, it shows how each of the parties set about implementing the new legislation. It then discusses the impact of the new rules on gendered party recruitment practices, highlighting how new rules interacted with informal local candidate criteria. The chapter then examines changes to selection, with a particular focus on levels of centralisation. The chapter concludes by detailing the overall change in female candidacy rates and in gendered patterns of representation.

## **6.1 The introduction of gender quotas**

In July 2012, legislative gender quotas were established in the Republic of Ireland through the passing of The Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act, which obliged political parties to put no less than 30 per cent male or female candidates on party tickets for the 2016 general election. Quotas had been on the political agenda prior to this, although they had never been a popular measure. In 2005, for example, a report by the Democracy Commission called for parity through the introduction of 50/50 quotas for general elections. These suggestions were not, however, taken on board by political elites, with key figures arguing that compulsory quotas were 'less pragmatic' than softer measures (Shehan, 2007). The eventual introduction of gender quotas in the Republic of Ireland was the result of a 'constellation of pressures' (Buckley, 2013: 341), however, the most notable of these was the demand for political and institutional reform which emerged in 2008 following the economic crash (Buckley, 2013: 341; Buckley et al., 2016). The particularly harsh effects of

the global economic crisis in Ireland and the revelation of political corruption, personalism and cronyism during the boom years of the ‘Celtic Tiger’ led to criticism of the Irish political system and prompted the call for a ‘renewed’ politics.

The economic crisis therefore acted as a ‘tipping point’, a moment where feminist activists and TDs were able to take advantage of the change in national sentiment and public discourse and push gender quotas back onto the political agenda (Buckley, 2013; Buckley et al., 2016). The Labour Party played a particularly strong role in bringing quotas to the fore. Having had internal gender targets since the 1990s, the party had long been rehearsing the arguments for gender parity. In 2009, Labour TD Ciaran Lynch had put forward the first private members’ bill aimed at introducing gender quota legislation, however the bill lapsed. Following the emergence of a new political reform discourse, however, Ivana Bacik, a Labour Party Senator with a history of strong involvement with feminist civil society groups, was particularly influential in reinvigorating the debate. In December 2008, she organised a parliamentary women’s event to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the election of Countess Markievicz as the first female TD (Bacik, 2009). Inspired by an event staged by Spanish feminist parliamentarians, a mock parliament was held which was comprised of 50 per cent females who were current or previous members of the Oireachtas (Bacik, 2009). Although purely symbolic, the event allowed a visible representation of parity in a space typically occupied by male bodies. Following this, she suggested the establishment of a sub-committee to look at barriers to women in politics (Bacik, 2009). Consequently, in April 2009, a sub-committee of the Joint Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women’s Rights looked specifically at this issue. Made up of thirteen deputies and three senators, the sub-committee heard testimonies from a number of female politicians and political specialists and made suggestions to combat barriers leading to women’s political under-representation. One such suggestion was the introduction of temporary candidate gender quotas. A second parliamentary committee was also called at this time in response to the appetite for political reform. Initiated in September 2009, the Joint Committee on the Constitution, looked at the electoral system and possible alternatives. The role of the

electoral system in advancing or hindering female representation was one issue under examination.

These committees and events created a debate, which was instrumental to the mobilisation of new civil society groups, including the 5050 group, whose wish was to see gender parity in Irish politics by the year 2020. One of its key aims was the lobbying of the Irish government on the recommendations set out by the Sub-Committee on Women in Politics. The group was also active in staging meetings around the country and coordinating a social media campaign on correcting the gender imbalance of Irish politics (Buckley, 2013). These debates on political reform shaped a number of parties' campaigns in the 2011 general election, with women's participation and diversity becoming a key concern (Buckley, 2013). Despite the failure of the 2009 bill, the Labour Party included a commitment to gender quotas in their 2011 election manifesto, while the Fine Gael manifesto included a rhetorical acknowledgement of the lack of women within decision-making. Following the formation of a new Fine Gael-Labour coalition government, quotas were included in the programme for government, a concession made by Fine Gael to secure Labour's support on a number of issues surrounding austerity. The following December, these plans were put into action through a draft bill put forward by Phil Hogan, the newly appointed Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government and the bill was passed in July 2012 to come into effect for the 2016 election.

## **6.2 Implementing the quota: Electoral motivations and financial incentives**

Despite cross-party support for the initial bill, gender quotas were considered, at best, 'a necessary evil'<sup>87</sup> by Irish political parties, with attitudes reflecting a 'scale of discontent.'<sup>88</sup> Normative oppositions to gender quotas were common; however, pertaining specifically to implementation, political parties stressed the difficulties in increasing the number of female candidates while maintaining existing male

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<sup>87</sup> Interview no. 29, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, April 2015

<sup>88</sup> Interview no. 38, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015

incumbents and managing candidate numbers. These practicalities were perceived as being exasperated by a highly unpredictable election period. Political uncertainty distinguished the 2016 election as ‘the most difficult to call in modern Irish history’ (Murphy, 2016: 3). Following the onset of Ireland’s deep financial crisis, the ‘earthquake’ election of 2011 had marked a drastic shift in Irish politics, with Fianna Fáil, the party that had dominated the state for almost 80 years, losing the majority of its seats. The 2016 election was now a chance for the electorate to pass verdict on their chosen alternative: austerity under a Fine Gael/Labour coalition government. As the election approached, opinion polls signalled national discontent and increased support for independent candidates and smaller parties (Murphy, 2016:2). Despite having the fastest growing economy in the EU at the time of the election (Murphy, 2016: 2), it was clear that the electorate was seeking a political alternative to what had been provided in the five years previous. Furthermore, the decision by the Constituency Commission to decrease the overall number of Dáil seats from 166 to 158 meant that before selections even began, there were already eight more incumbents than there were seats in parliament. The redrawing of constituency borders to facilitate this change added further complications with regards to incumbents, as traditional supporters of candidates and aspirants were moved into neighbouring constituencies.

Despite this, each political party was adamant that they would fully meet the 30 per cent quota in the Republic of Ireland. This was largely due to the presence of a sizeable financial penalty.<sup>89</sup> Parties who failed to adhere to the new rules were sanctioned with a 50 per cent cut in their state funding, an amount which was annually allocated to each in accordance with their percentage share of the national first-preference poll in the previous general election. In 2013, a total of €5.5 million was provided to the four biggest political parties, divided on this basis. The sanction was therefore a significant threat to party income and was proportionally calculated, thus incentivising each one to comply rather than impacting only smaller, less wealthy parties. Without this threat, it is unlikely that the 30 per cent would have

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<sup>89</sup> Interview no. 29, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, April 2015

<sup>89</sup> Interview no. 16, female candidate, Fine Gael, March 2015

been reached; ‘money talks’,<sup>90</sup> and indeed, money was enough to ensure that the new rules were met. As one Fianna Fáil candidate remarked:

If it wasn’t mandatory, women wouldn’t be added. I think the fact that money is attached to it is the only reason that the parties are implementing it. The people I’ve met at the senior level are very on board with it. The party secretary is very on board with it and I think he’s pushing the party forward.<sup>91</sup>

While undoubtedly the financial penalty was the main driving force for selecting women, there was also a sense that new rules had served to ‘sharpen the minds’ of political parties, pushing them to fully realise a commitment to greater gender equality which had been merely rhetorical before. Ensuring that women were elected, not only selected, was, at least at the national level, perceived as necessary. For some, this reflected a genuine belief that women should be included in politics on a greater scale. The normative justifications for this varied, although were not distinguishable by party. A number of respondents spoke about the need to incorporate women in order to change how politics operates, positioning women as having an inherently different ‘way of doing things’,<sup>92</sup> while others stressed substantive concerns stating the benefit of women’s policy contributions and the need to integrate women’s interests more broadly.<sup>93</sup> The desire for a greater number of female representatives also, however, reflected electoral concerns in a number of cases. Given the desire for a ‘new’ type of politics from the electorate and the central theme of reform in 2011 election campaigns, political parties felt it necessary to present themselves as ‘rejuvenated’ to voters. Upholding the ‘true spirit’ of the quota and increasing the number of female representatives within parties, not just candidates was considered

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<sup>90</sup> Interview no. 29, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, April 2015

<sup>91</sup> Interview no. 16, female candidate, Fine Gael, March 2015

<sup>92</sup> Interview no. 23, National Constituencies Committee member, Fianna Fáil, male, national level, March 2015

Interview no. 28, Árd Comhairle (National Executive) member and candidate, female, Sinn Féin, March 2015

Interview no. 64, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

<sup>93</sup> Interview no. 25, strategist for Fianna Fáil, national level, female, March 2015

Interview no. 45, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, July 2015

central to representing this ‘newness’ to the electorate.<sup>94</sup> As one Fianna Fáil strategist remarked:

I think it’s an opportunity for ourselves and the other political parties to put forward fresh faces but I think before, you know, fresh faces, they were looking at people in their twenties or early thirties because that’s what the public was associating with new and fresh but the public now are actually associating women with a fresh politics.<sup>95</sup>

On the 3rd of February 2016, Taoiseach Enda Kenny announced that the election would take place on the 26th of February. While the official campaign period was relatively short, preparations for the election had begun long before that. Candidate strategies were devised as early as 2014 and broader quota implementation strategies even earlier. The next section will detail each party’s implementation strategies in further detail.

### **6.2.1 Fianna Fáil**

Following the party’s decimation in 2011, the 2016 general election was important for Fianna Fáil to win back its traditional support within the electorate. When the election was called, the party had 22 sitting TDs, all of whom were male. With no female incumbents, the party had much work to do. However, with ‘nowhere to go but up’<sup>96</sup> and male incumbents in only 18 of 40 constituencies, the party also had a number of open seats and thus had a good opportunity to get female candidates selected and elected. Furthermore, higher levels of support enabled two and three candidate strategies in a number of constituencies, which was a further opportunity to facilitate an increase in female candidacy, without unseating existing male TDs.

The push to recruit more female candidates began prior to the 2014 local elections. Fianna Fáil introduced an informal gender quota of 33 per cent in an effort to have

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<sup>94</sup> Interview no. 25, strategist for Fianna Fáil, national level, female, March 2015

<sup>95</sup> Interview no. 25, strategist for Fianna Fáil, national level, female, March 2015

Interview no. 45, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, July 2015

Interview no. 28, Árd Comhairle (National Executive) member and candidate, female, Sinn Féin, March 2015

<sup>96</sup> Interview no. 6, strategist for Fianna Fáil, national level, female, January 2015



candidates ‘election ready’ for 2016. Fianna Fáil’s local election saw a welcome rise in support for the party, but a disappointing number of women were selected and elected. Both these outcomes came as a surprise to party strategists who had expected they would be able to meet the internal target for the local elections by going through the ‘ordinary channels’.<sup>97</sup> Despite few changes to selection processes, there was an expectation that female candidacy would rise. However, there was particular resistance at the local level. It was evident ‘that the preferred son wasn’t giving way to a woman’<sup>98</sup> and a number of unsuccessful female aspirants felt particularly disillusioned by their experience of the 2014 local election. The disappointing results produced by the informal quota at the local elections prompted a realisation that the number of female representatives was not going to rise on an ad hoc basis, and that a more substantial effort needed to be made if the gender quotas were to be met.

At the party’s Ard Fheis (National Conference) in March 2014, party leader Micheál Martin had announced his plans to establish a committee that would offer recommendations on implementing the quota. Named after the first Irish female MP, the Markievicz Commission was an attempt to obtain practical solutions on increasing women’s participation within the party, with a particular view on increasing the number of female candidates in future national elections.<sup>99</sup> Martin enlisted the help of feminist academic and activist Yvonne Galligan to chair the commission and ten members – six women and four men – were agreed on. These included general members, members of the national executive, members of the parliamentary party and the party’s general secretary. The commission members were identified by the party leader as being broadly supportive of gender equality, or at least acutely aware that implementation was an unavoidable task.<sup>100</sup> The commission was consequently made up of members willing to create change rather than block reform efforts. The commission began working in September of 2014, and in mid-December a draft report was submitted to the National Constituencies

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<sup>97</sup> Interview no. 6, strategist for Fianna Fáil, national level, female, January 2015

<sup>98</sup> Interview no. 6, strategist for Fianna Fáil, national level, female, January 2015

<sup>99</sup> Fianna Fáil, 2015

<sup>100</sup> Interview no. 6, strategist for Fianna Fáil, national level, female, January 2015

Committee and the party leader in time to influence the formulation of a national election strategy. The report made 16 recommendations in total, a number of which dealt with long-term change aimed at increasing female participation and representation within the party. There were, however, five recommendations that specifically related to the more immediate task of meeting the quota for the forthcoming election.<sup>101</sup> The report recommended that female candidates be run in half of the constituencies where the party had no sitting TD and in half of the constituencies where the party already held one seat. In running female candidates in areas with existing TDs, this strategy was devised to counteract the potential to run female candidates in areas where the party had little existing support. Indeed, in the early stages of planning, it was suggested that all female candidates be run in Dublin constituencies, where the party held no seats, a subversion technique that was not taken on board by central party strategists.<sup>102</sup>

The rest of the report focused on three areas: workshops, mentoring and candidate selection. The first two of these areas essentially focused on how female candidates would be identified, encouraged and supported. The primary aim of the workshops was to increase women's capacity and confidence to seek a nomination and furthermore to enable them with the skills and knowledge needed to run a successful campaign if selected. A strong emphasis was put on facilitating women to run, and on empowering attendees to see themselves as potential candidates. A large part of the workshops was therefore aimed at tackling traditionally deemed 'supply side' factors by 'addressing the underlying issues which may prevent a woman from putting herself forward'.<sup>103</sup> The first workshop took place on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and was attended by over 60 women; both existing party members and non-members. It provided attendees with information and advice on campaign management, ranging from finance to canvassing to media appearances. In addition to facilitating female aspirants, the workshops also enabled those at the national level to identify potential candidates, including those who had been elected at the 2014 local election. The introduction of party workshops therefore marked a change to recruitment practices,

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<sup>101</sup> Fianna Fáil, 2015

<sup>102</sup> Interview no. 6, strategist for Fianna Fáil, national level, female, January 2015

<sup>103</sup> Fianna Fáil, 2015: 37.

insofar as no such formal ways of identifying aspirants existed in previous elections. Furthermore, advertising workshops to the general public reflected a push to find new female aspirants from outside the traditional pipelines. Although the Markievicz Report stressed the importance of local political experience, it also stressed the need to identify candidates from outside sub-national politics, due to Fianna Fáil's continued low representation of female local councillors. Acknowledging the gendered nature of both local political experience and local recognition, one recommendation of the commission was that the party 'take a broad and generous view of what constitutes leadership and how it is demonstrated'.<sup>104</sup>

While mentoring schemes and workshops attracted a small amount of criticism, with male aspirants claiming they too should benefit from such initiatives,<sup>105</sup> it was changes to candidate selection that caused the greatest amount of controversy. In the lead-up to the Markievicz Commission, negotiations were made on the terms of reference with a decision that this would be a key focus. The subsequent report suggested that the NCC may direct a convention with regards to the gender of the candidate. Prior to this, gender directives were not used within the party, although geographical criteria for candidates were taken into consideration. The change was met with accusations of centralisation, framed largely as an affront to local democracy. Consequently, party strategists felt that the selection of women through 'the natural' means was an essential part of quota success and hoped that the issuing of gender directives would be unnecessary. This need to 'bring people along' through ensuring that local constituencies 'take ownership'<sup>106</sup> of selecting a female candidate was continuously stressed by party strategists. However, as the 2014 election showed, challenging male dominance at the local level and selecting women through local and democratic means was not an easy task. In the likelihood that central intervention would be needed, issuing gender specific directives, as opposed

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<sup>104</sup> Fianna Fáil, 2015:19

<sup>105</sup> Interview no. 33, CDC chairperson, male, Fianna Fáil, May 2015

<sup>106</sup> Interview no. 6, strategist for Fianna Fáil, national level, female, January 2015

Interview no. 23, National Constituencies Committee member, Fianna Fáil, male, national level, March 2015

to the addition of female candidates was deemed the preferable option, marking a break with traditional mechanisms for central intervention.

Fianna Fáil was the first to begin its selection process early in December 2014. In May of 2015, the party was dealt a blow by the resignation of Senator Averil Power over the party's approach to the marriage equality referendum campaign.<sup>107</sup> Power had been a strong advocate for gender equality within the party, and had worked on internal strategies to increase female participation and representation. Her resignation was a blow to women in the party who were seeking change.<sup>108</sup> Her strong stance on equality issues had also given her a strong public profile and she was tipped to be a general election candidate in her constituency of Dublin Bay North. Following her departure, Michéal Martin publicly refuted her reasons for leaving, instead claiming that she was unhappy that a one candidate strategy would not be pursued in her constituency.

In October 2015, the party came under further controversy as Brian Mohan, a local Fianna Fáil member took a case against the State, challenging the provisions of the Electoral (Political Funding) Act 2012. The case was taken after Fianna Fáil issued a gender directive in the constituency of Dublin Central stating that one candidate must be chosen and that candidate must be a woman. The decision was met with controversy as Dublin Central had three prospective candidates: former councillor and former general and European election candidate Mary Fitzpatrick, and long-term party members Brian Mohan and Denise McMurrow. On the night of the convention, McMurrow made a speech denouncing gender quotas and withdrew her name from the convention, leaving Mary FitzPatrick, the only eligible remaining nominee, as the selected candidate.

The 2016 election saw the return of Fianna Fáil as a political force within Irish politics, doubling its numbers of seats from 22 to 44. Although a stark rise, this was

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<sup>107</sup> Power left following the party's approach to the marriage equality referendum campaign describing it as 'cynical and cowardly.' In her official statement, she claimed the vast majority of TDs refused to campaign for a yes result for fear of losing votes despite the party officially endorsing a positive outcome.

<sup>108</sup> Interview no. 48, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, August 2015

still modest compared to the party's glory decades. Fianna Fáil selected a total of 71 candidates to run in the 2016 general election, 22 female candidates (31 per cent) and 49 men (69 per cent). Overall, the National Constituencies Committee issued nine directives which specified criteria to local conventions, three relating to geography and six relating to gender. The Committee issued a directive to members to select one man and one woman in Louth, Galway West and Galway East. Finally, the Committee issued directives to three constituencies to select one woman only: Dublin Central, Dublin South Central and County Longford. Furthermore, the party made 15 additions, five men and nine women. Overall, of the 22 female candidates selected by the party, seven women came through a selection convention by membership vote, while fifteen were selected through central party intervention. Thus, although a push was made to have women selected 'naturally', nine directives and six additions were made in order to meet the gender quota.

### **6.2.2 Fine Gael**

As the main governing party with the highest numbers of male TDs, Fine Gael had a big problem pertaining to male incumbency. After a series of defections and resignations, the number of Fine Gael incumbents decreased from the 76 elected in 2011, to just 61. This remained highly male-dominated, with 51 men. This difficulty was exacerbated by the expectation that the party would lose a significant number of seats following its stint as the main governing party during a period of austerity. Fine Gael was, therefore, faced with increasing its number of female candidates in addition to notably reducing its number of general election candidates, while desperately trying to maintain its existing incumbents. The establishment of Renua, a break-away party from Fine Gael, added further difficulties with regards to the party's declining vote share and the party reduced its candidate number from the 104 in 2011, to 88 in 2016.

Unlike the other parties, Fine Gael sought the help of an external firm in response to the new legislation.<sup>109</sup> Following the introduction of the new legislation in 2012, a

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<sup>109</sup> Interview no. 10, equality strategist, Fine Gael, January 2015

call for tender was put out to help the party implement change. This was answered by a consultancy group, Equality Strategies Ltd, whose experience included working with organisations to devise and deliver equality and diversity management strategies. In order to devise an appropriate response, the firm set about conducting an analysis of the party constituencies, conferring with a wide range of actors on what they wanted to see change, and how the firm could facilitate reform.<sup>110</sup> The fruits of this consultation – a realisation of the importance of women’s networking and training – led to a number of networking events around the country. These were advertised within the party and well attended by party members. The networking events not only created a space for female members to network, they also allowed the party to identify and encourage potential candidates for the 2014 local government elections.<sup>111</sup> This tactic would subsequently enlarge the pool of elected female representatives within the party that could be targeted for the forthcoming general election.

Less than six months after the local elections, Fine Gael began to run training days that targeted aspirants for the general election. The first workshop saw two dozen potential candidates receive training and advice on media, campaign strategy and national and party policy. Attended and provided by top party officials, the event, much like Fianna Fáil’s workshops, provided members of the national party with the opportunity to assess and identify candidates in addition to meeting the recommendations as suggested by Equality Strategies. Unlike the Fianna Fáil workshops, this centralised strategy to identify and support female aspirants caused tension among existing and aspiring TDs. Attendees were identified by party headquarters almost entirely from local councils and, despite being comprised of seven males and 17 females, the training day created controversy in the national media who listed attendees as ‘Enda Kenny’s secret list of women.’<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Interview no. 10, equality strategist, Fine Gael, January 2015

<sup>111</sup> Interview no. 10, equality strategist, Fine Gael, January 2015

<sup>112</sup> The Irish Independent, 2014  
The Journal, 2015f

With regards to selection, Fine Gael felt the need to devise a tightly controlled election strategy due to the parties drop in electoral support and the new concerns regarding gender. The party established a national strategy committee in September 2014 which was also responsible for implementing the quota. Headed by the Minister for Justice and Equality (and former chair of the National Women's Council of Ireland) Francis Fitzgerald, the committee was made up of members of the national executive, Fine Gael headquarters and representatives of the parliamentary party. A subsection of this committee, headed by the director of elections, Brian Hayes, was particularly responsible for candidate strategy. The first undertaking of the candidate subcommittee was to complete an analysis of the political landscape, taking into consideration the changed circumstances regarding boundary alterations and a reduction in Dáil seats (Reidy, 2016: 53). By the end of 2014, the party instructed constituencies to establish strategy committees and prepare their constituency reports (Reidy, 2016: 53). For the first time, a gender component was integrated into constituency strategy committee reports. As outlined in Chapter four, constituency strategies are usually devised through the consultation of four party organs: The executive council, constituency strategy committees, the national election committee and the party's head office. Prior to general and local elections, strategy committees were traditionally established in each constituency which prepared a report on the area. These included the potential candidates in the constituency, levels of local support and suggestions on the number of candidates to run. In the run-up to the 2016 elections, however, these committees were tasked with including a gender analysis within this report. Thus, they were asked to ensure female candidates were identified and to report back on efforts to recruit and encourage female candidates. Regional committees at the 2014 elections were also tasked with this responsibility, making the local constituency accountable for the recruitment of more women.<sup>113</sup> Following these recommendations, and through their own analysis, the committee identified a number of constituencies that would be subject to a gender quota and a number of constituencies where women would be added to the ticket.

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<sup>113</sup> Interview no. 15, Regional Organiser, male, Fine Gael, February 2015

Fine Gael began officially selecting candidates in March 2015 and had completed its ticket by October 2015. Fine Gael made no official changes to their selection practices following the introduction of the new legislation. Directing a convention with regards to candidate criteria had been common practice within the party, as had the addition of candidates, and the party continued local inclusive selection in addition to central intervention. The party ran 88 candidates, 27 females (30.7 per cent) and 61 males (69.3 per cent). Overall, the party issued eight directives, five related to gender and three related to geography. At no point did the party instruct the local members to choose a female in single-candidate constituencies, choosing instead to issue directives in two and three candidate strategy areas. In addition to directives, the party made 15 additions, six men and nine women. Of the 27 female candidates run, 14 were selected through central intervention, while 13 reached the party ticket as a result of an undirected local membership vote.

### **6.2.3 Labour**

Similar to Fine Gael, the Labour Party was facing a significant loss in electoral support at the 2016 general election. As the junior party in an unpopular government, the party prepared itself for defeat. Informed by significant losses in the local elections and the substantive shift in opinion polls, it too was faced with the difficulty of decreasing the overall candidate number while increasing the number of women on party slates. Unlike Fine Gael, however, the Labour Party had a much greater proportion of female incumbents due to the legacy of informal party quotas. After a series of resignations, the party had 26 incumbents seeking re-election, 19 of whom were male. Women already made up 27 per cent of incumbents and the party was therefore already close to meeting the quota. Furthermore, these retirements left a number of open spaces for new candidates.

Due to the pre-existing party infrastructure, the Labour Party found it unnecessary to change the manner in which it selected candidates and by-passed some of the issues that the other parties were confronted with. Existing rules within the party already accounted for gender, stating that where two candidates ran, gender parity must



apply. Thus, while other parties were adapting to new gender requirements, the Labour Party found it unnecessary to make any internal changes to selection and continued with their traditional rules and practices. As one female aspirant commented:

It hasn't been necessary, we already have a strong structure in place and there's already within the party rules.<sup>114</sup>

These rules had not always been fully adhered to in the past, with exceptions being granted by the Executive Board under certain circumstances. Although not always fully implemented, the active inclusion of gender criteria on party directives had become 'embedded within the culture'<sup>115</sup> of the party and therefore caused little controversy in the selection processes preceding the 2016 election. Furthermore, the use of these to actively ensure greater gender balance prior to the 2016 election meant that the party had a much larger percentage of existing female incumbents. Thus, female representatives were in greater positions of power having built up their own networks and local recognition. As one central Labour strategist remarked about the implementation of the quota:

It's not a crisis with us as it is with the other parties. That really is because of our history; our philosophy is attractive to women and our own activist interventions along the way. I think if we hadn't made the interventions we'd made in 2004 and 2009 we would be in a weaker position. If we had just let the natural processes work their way through without any consciousness in gender, we would have had less women.<sup>116</sup>

The Labour Party ran 36 candidates in total, 32 less than the previous election due to the decrease in overall support for the party, 13 of these candidates were female (36.1 per cent) and 23 were men. The 2016 election returned disastrous results and was the worst in the party's history; the party returned just seven seats, two men and five women, with no non-incumbent candidates elected. This marked a decline in the number of elected female TDs. Five female incumbents lost their seats to the party's

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<sup>114</sup> Interview no. 21, unsuccessful female aspirant, the Labour Party, March 2015

<sup>115</sup> Interview no.13, Labour Women Executive member, the Labour Party, February 2015

<sup>116</sup> Interview no. 40, Organisational Committee member, male, the Labour Party, July 2015

electoral misfortune. However, although the overall number of female representatives in the Labour Party decreased, women now made up 28.6 per cent of Labour TDs following the 2016 election (a slight increase on the previous Dáil), following the drop in the overall number of TDs. The party employed a two-candidate strategy in only two constituencies, thus existing rules ensured the selection of female candidates in Dublin South West and Louth. The remaining non-incumbent female candidates were selected in one-candidate strategy constituencies through local selection conventions.

#### **6.2.4 Sinn Féin**

For Sinn Féin, the 2016 election was set to be a historic success. Gaining from the anti-establishment sentiment, it was predicted the party would drastically increase its number of seats. At the time of the election, Sinn Féin had twelve incumbent male TDs and one incumbent female TD,<sup>117</sup> but with a number of ‘green areas’ and an upward trajectory, spectators suggested that the party would be scarcely affected by the new legislation. Sinn Féin responded to the new rules with a dual strategy of capacity building workshops and changes to the selection process. Shortly after the legislation was introduced in 2012, Mary Lou Mc Donald, Vice-President of the party was internally tasked with the job of increasing female representation and initiated a number of internal workshops for female members of the party.<sup>118</sup> These workshops targeted women activists in the party, as opposed to elected councillors, and party strategists expressed a desire to target grass-roots women who may never have thought of fulfilling constituency roles or running for local or general election.<sup>119</sup> The workshops focused on training and advice on communications and campaigns, but also facilitated a discussion about the challenges to women in politics.

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<sup>117</sup> Following the 2011 election, the party had two female TDs however in the run-up to the election Sandra McLellan announced her decision not to recontest her seat in the constituency of Cork East.

<sup>118</sup> Interview no.22, equality strategist, female, Sinn Féin, March 2015  
Interview no. 28, Árd Comhairle (National Executive) member and candidate, female, Sinn Féin, March 2015

<sup>119</sup> Interview no. 28, Árd Comhairle (National Executive) member and candidate, female, Sinn Féin, March 2015

Much like the other parties, these workshops ‘created a space’ for women to discuss issues pertaining to them and to explore the possibility of pursuing official positions within the party, but also, more practically, allowed women to be identified by the national party.<sup>120</sup>

In July 2014, the Ard Comhairle (National Executive) of Sinn Féin met to discuss how to practically implement the new legislation.<sup>121</sup> The party developed a national strategy which suggested the application of parity in every constituency with a two-candidate strategy unless there were already two sitting incumbent male TDs.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, it was suggested that sitting female TDs could not be challenged by a male aspirant. In December of 2014, selection convention rules and guidelines were issued which set out the exact manner in which constituencies were to select candidates and run conventions within the party. This document updated the existing selection convention procedures by introducing nine new rules pertaining to candidate selection.<sup>123</sup> The new rules introduced a number of centralised powers which had never existed in Sinn Féin. The national director of elections was newly authorised to prepare a list of constituencies who would be directed with regard to the gender make-up of their candidate list. The national executive also obtained the right to ‘establish an extraordinary process’ whereby they may appoint or select a candidate to a constituency that has not selected in accordance with the party directive.<sup>124</sup>

In addition to the new powers afforded to the central level, the national executive instructed the national director of elections to draw up precise implementation procedures detailing how the gender quota would be put into effect in various constituencies. Essentially, these procedures outlined the practicalities of fitting gender into the overall party strategy surrounding geography and candidate number. Outlining five potential scenarios, the document set out how the quota would play

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<sup>120</sup> Interview no. 28, Árd Comhairle (National Executive) member and candidate, female, Sinn Féin, March 2015

<sup>121</sup> Interview no.19, former Árd Comhairle member and candidate, Sinn Féin, March 2015

<sup>122</sup> Interview no.19, former Árd Comhairle member and candidate, Sinn Féin, March 2015  
<sup>123</sup> Sinn Féin, 2014

<sup>124</sup> Sinn Féin , 2014

out in single-candidate challenge constituencies (constituencies where the party would run one candidate) and multi-candidate challenge constituencies (constituencies where the party would run two or more candidates). In one-candidate constituencies where no gender intervention would be applied, the conventions would run as per the existing traditional rules with all names eligible for nomination. However, it also stated that there would be a number of single-candidate constituencies where gender directives would be issued. In such cases, only women would be eligible for nominations, ensured through the use of all women short-lists. In multi-candidate constituencies, candidates would be nominated according to GECAs (Geographic Election Convention areas), as was the case prior to the new rules changes. In the event that there was a sitting male TD, however, they had to first declare which GECA they intend to contest and then, by default, the second area must then select a female candidate using all-women shortlists. If there was no incumbent, then the gender intervention area was determined by the national director of elections in consultation with the relevant areas.

Sinn Féin began selecting candidates in January of 2015. Much like the Labour Party, selection conventions within Sinn Féin occurred without too much public controversy. However, in October 2015, the party was dealt a blow as one of its two female incumbent TDs, Sandra McLellan announced she would not seek re-election after serving a single term in the Dáil. McLellan stated that she had been consistently undermined by local party members and was subject to bullying.<sup>125</sup> This resulted in the party launching an internal investigation in the Cork East constituency, leading to the expulsion of sitting councillor Kieran McCarthy and the suspension of councillor Melissa Mullane. Tensions in the constituency had arisen due to dissatisfaction among some members with the sitting TD, and declarations from both McCarthy and Mullane that they would seek the nomination for the general election. Although public spokespeople of the party denied that the internal inquiry and in-fighting was related to the selection process, speculation in the national media suggested that the nomination of two councillors could result in the deselection of McLellan. Sinn Féin

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<sup>125</sup> The Journal, 2015e

ran 50 candidates in total, 18 women (36 per cent) and 32 men (64 per cent). The party won 23 seats, returning six women and 17 men, with the percentage of women representatives in the party rising to 26.1 per cent.

## **6.3 Reforming Recruitment**

### **6.3.1 Adhering to the local rules: creating local brokers**

Given the strategies and responses outlined above, it is possible then to make some assessment of how political parties sought to challenge male dominance. As the previous two chapters have shown, male dominance has traditionally been reproduced through local informal candidate criteria, which favour those who have large personal networks in the local electorate and existing research has shown that quotas can impact various aspects of the process, be they procedural or psychological (Bjarnegård & Zetterberg, 2011). In the Irish context, new rules did very little to challenge this idea within political parties, and those who had existing networks continued to be deemed the most electable candidates. The negative implications of this will be elaborated upon in the following chapter; however, first it should be noted that despite the continuation of this criteria, procedural changes in recruitment processes did occur.

As chapter five showed, male-dominated spaces have traditionally been relied upon by political parties as recruiting grounds for potential candidates. In order to form local ties and gain local recognition, local political experience is the most important requirement for aspirants, and local government is the pool from which candidates are drawn. At the national level, this has resulted in gendered outcomes, given that local councillors are predominantly men. Despite this informal requirement, the gender quota did not apply to sub-national politics, a flaw in the new rule which was criticised by feminist activists and political actors.<sup>126</sup> Despite behind the scenes lobbying from feminist groups, the argument provided against the application of the quota to local government was that political funding is only provided to parties in

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<sup>126</sup> Interview no. 21, unsuccessful female aspirant, the Labour Party, March 2015

relation to the general elections, thus there would be no incentive for Irish parties to comply.<sup>127</sup>

Aware of the strength of localism within Irish politics, however, parties made an effort to create a larger pool of women with local political experience. Although not a formal requirement, each of the four main parties took it upon themselves to introduce voluntary quotas for the 2014 local elections. In preparation for the general election, this would allow women the time to build local networks and connections in their respective constituencies, thus increasing their electability by 2016. Ambition differed by party, with targets ranging from 25 to 33 per cent. The two left-leaning parties, Sinn Féin and the Labour Party, set a target of 30 per cent. Sinn Féin exceeded its target, running 31.6 per cent female candidates and the Labour Party came close with 29.1 per cent. Fine Gael self-imposed a 25 per cent quota but failed to meet it, running 22.8 per cent female candidates. Fianna Fáil set a target of 33 per cent. Mindful that they had the lowest number of TDs and councillors, this was the highest quota amongst the four. As outlined in the previous section, this did not translate into an increase in female candidacy. The party returned the lowest percentage of female candidates at just 17.1 per cent a disappointing change from 2009. Overall, however, these informal quotas did increase the number of female candidates on party tickets (Table 6-1). 127 more women ran in the 2014 local elections than in 2009 (Buckley et al., 2014).

**Table 6-1** Increase in female candidacy in the 2009 and 2014 local elections by party

<b>Local election</b>	<b>Fianna Fáil (%)</b>	<b>Fine Gael (%)</b>	<b>Labour (%)</b>	<b>Sinn Féin (%)</b>
<b>2009</b>	16.9	18.1	23.1	22.8
<b>2014</b>	17.1	22.8	29.1	31.6

*Source:* Buckley et al. (2014)

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<sup>127</sup> Interview no. 6, strategist for Fianna Fáil, national level, female, January 2015  
 Interview no. 21, unsuccessful female aspirant, the Labour Party, March 2015

Consequently, this translated into a greater number of female candidates elected to local City and County councils (Table 6-2). Thus, the new rule had a ‘trickle-down effect’ on gendered patterns of representation at the local level. Female representation stood at 20.8 per cent following the election, a 4.3 percentage point increase on 2009.

**Table 6-2** Percentage of elected female County and City Councillors in the 2009 and 2014 elections by party

<b>Local election</b>	<b>Fianna Fáil (%)</b>	<b>Fine Gael (%)</b>	<b>Labour (%)</b>	<b>Sinn Féin (%)</b>
<b>2009</b>	14.2	17.4	22.0	20.4
<b>2014</b>	13.5	21.3	33.3	28.9

*Source:* Adrian Kavanagh (2014)

Although local recruitment has also traditionally been gendered, larger district magnitudes at the local level make it easier to run a female candidate than at the national level. As one respondent commented:

Now there were no financial penalties at the local level so that was probably a good way to realise that if we do what’s expected it can actually work. It’s going to be more difficult at the general election because you have to run fewer candidates. You have constituencies who had eight seats or more at the local level, you could afford to throw in another candidate, be it male or female.<sup>128</sup>

Thus, decreased competition at the local level made it easier to accommodate these new gender aware recruitment practices. As one respondent remarked:

It’s easier to do at local level, at the national level that’s very hard to do. It’s very hard to put together a ticket that the sitting TD is opposed to. Quite

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<sup>128</sup> Interview no. 29, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, April 2015

difficult. You work extremely closely with them for a long time to achieve that.<sup>129</sup>

Much of the work on informal institutions is explicitly concerned with change. Informal rules, norms and narratives are often considered an ‘overhang’ which can undermine the impact or implementation of new formal rules (Waylen, 2014). By virtue of being informal, they are often more difficult to change or may be considered by those involved in change as outside the remit of reform. Although local perceptions of the good candidate remained after the introduction of the new rule, political parties attempted to challenge it as a mechanism for male dominance. By the time selection took place, there were a greater number of female councillors who had begun to establish themselves in local communities and create brokerage networks with local constituents, although these numbers did differ by party. Thus, there were a greater number of women who fitted within traditional conceptions of merit, as determined by the informal institution of localism.

### **6.3.2 Making women visible: seeking female aspirants**

Prior to both the local and general election, parties therefore actively sought female candidates. As previous chapters highlighted, the recruitment of general election candidates is largely informal insofar as it is not a role that is formally attributed to any one person within the organisation, nor is there a specified process by which candidates are found. No new rules were introduced regarding who or how candidates were recruited at the local level, however respondents suggested that regional organisers were given a particular push to seek out potential female candidates within the party membership and in the local community. Central party strategists met with each of the constituencies asking them to identify women and to ensure that women were nominated. Upon making this a new priority, ‘finding women’ involved asking female members who had been active in branch structures but who may never have considered becoming a candidate to seek a nomination.

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<sup>129</sup> Interview no. 40, Organisational Committee member, male, the Labour Party, July 2015



Thus, it involved making visible existing female members and approaching them to run. As one long-standing female candidate remarked:

There was always an effort to get more women involved but it became an imperative to get them on the ticket. It wasn't just enough to have them involved in the local party, being the cumman [branch] secretary, doing a local collection or whatever. You actually had to take the next step, to get them as candidates. So it was just bringing activities to a higher level and then they realised that it worked.<sup>130</sup>

Speaking about her own constituency, one Sinn Féin candidate commented:

They went around every single woman. They did the groundwork; they went around every single woman.<sup>131</sup>

Asking female members to run often involved tackling gendered assumptions of what makes a good candidate. As one Fianna Fáil aspirant remarked:

I never saw myself as a candidate, I didn't want to be, I thought I'd be a very odd choice as a candidate – I don't look like a politician, I don't sound like a politician, I don't act like a politician. And every time I said that he [the regional organiser] said 'well that's what we're looking for.'<sup>132</sup>

As outlined in the previous section, identifying women also became somewhat formalised through the running of training days and workshops. Although the aim of these events was to encourage and support women, they also made women visible to the national party and central strategists who could then encourage them to run.

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<sup>130</sup> Interview no. 29, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, April 2015

<sup>131</sup> Interview no. 43, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015

<sup>132</sup> Interview no. 48, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, August 2015

## 6.4 Reforming selection

A lot of constituencies are saying this: ‘Yes we agree in principle but our constituency is different.’<sup>133</sup>

### 6.4.1 Overcoming the ‘paradox of primaries’

In addition to recruitment, changes to selection were also made. In a number of cases the national parties and strategy committees intervened with regards to the gender composition of tickets. As Chapter five argued, the decentralised and inclusive nature of the Irish process has generally been pinpointed as a hindering feature with regards to more balanced representation, considering that local influence over selection inhibits central strategy committees and party leaders from promoting female candidates (Buckley et al., 2015). Prior to the implementation of the quotas, party actors were fearful that the local nature of party politics would inhibit the selection of women and that some level of central intervention would be necessary. This is reflected in existing literature on recruitment and selection which argues that a centralised selection system (combined with political will) has been shown to be integral to the success of affirmative action measures (Lovenduski & Norris, 1993; Matland & Studlar, 1996; Kittilson, 2006; Murray, 2010a). Although workshops and training days attempted to facilitate, support and encourage women to seek election, it was selection that was a key target and area of contestation for each of the parties.

Political parties were, however, faced with increasing female representation in a context where selection was deemed the role of local party members. Thus, while party strategists identified the potential need for central intervention and co-ordination with regards to gender, they also hoped that it would not be needed. Maintaining a sense of ‘local democracy’ was a key feature of party implementation process. Prior to selection, a desire was expressed across all parties for the process to

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<sup>133</sup> Interview no. 45, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, July 2015

be ‘owned’ by the local level, with strategists emphasising the need to include the local membership in the process and maintain the practice of localised inclusive selection. Each of the parties felt strongly that female candidates should be selected through ‘the natural means’. As one central strategist for Fianna Fáil remarked:

We’ve been saying the women have to be selected at the convention. Otherwise, it’s too late: don’t even try to impose them afterwards because they’re not going to get anywhere, so if you’re serious you’ll select them at the convention.<sup>134</sup>

Furthermore, local selection was seen to serve a legitimising function, such that, getting women selected at a convention was considered the only way to ensure that the support of the local organisation was behind them and thus, the only way female candidates would be given the support needed to run a campaign and win an election. Having women selected locally and democratically was considered key to having women elected. As another equality strategist commented:

We’re going to try not to add people to the ticket, men or women. We’re really trying to put a strong focus on people getting selected at a convention because if you can get selected at a convention you have the organisation behind you automatically, it’s a decision that’s made at the grassroots and also you have more momentum behind your campaign [...] we’re kind of adamant that we have as many selected at the conventions as possible.<sup>135</sup>

Political parties were therefore met with a paradox: a potential need to intervene to ensure the quota was met and a need to maintain decentralised inclusive selection. This tension is one that is reflected in the existing literature, which outlines the incompatibility between localised and democratised selection and gender quotas (Baldez, 2006; 2007).

Due to local resistance and gendered legacies, which will be elaborated upon in the following chapter, central intervention was both needed and used to fulfil the quota. National executives and strategy committees across the parties actively challenged

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<sup>134</sup> Interview no. 6, strategist for Fianna Fáil, national level, female, January 2015

<sup>135</sup> Interview no. 25, strategist for Fianna Fáil, national level, female, March 2015

male dominance by directing constituencies on formal gender criteria and through the addition of female candidates to locally selected tickets. Female aspirants and candidates from across parties spoke of the importance of critical actors at the national party level in ensuring that female candidates were selected, and the role of party leaders and general secretaries was particularly stressed. Resistance was often narrated as a central-local battle, with respondents suggesting that the political will from party headquarters was there, however ‘the nearer you get to the ground the weaker it is.’<sup>136</sup> Women who were aided by formal central intervention were particularly adamant that without it they would certainly not have been selected:

Without intervention, without serious level planning, we wouldn’t be in the position we are now. You can’t just turn around overnight and expect it to happen.<sup>137</sup>

Well at my own particular convention I have no doubt that if there hadn’t been a gender quota for the constituency I wouldn’t have been selected. I would have been contesting with another male councillor from my area but it was specifically said in the letter notifying the area of the convention that this constituency has been designated as one of those that has to implement the gender quota.<sup>138</sup>

Of the 27 female candidates run by Fine Gael, the party formally intervened in over half the cases through directives and additions. Similarly, Fianna Fáil formally intervened in the selection of 15 of the 22 female candidates. Sinn Féin and the Labour Party directed that gender-balanced tickets should be run in constituencies with more than one candidate, with Sinn Féin additionally employing all women shortlists.

While central intervention, through the use of directives and appointments, was one tool with which national parties sought to challenge male dominance, they also intervened in less formal ways. In the face of resistance from local party members, the central level provided ad hoc financial resources to female candidates such as

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<sup>136</sup> Interview no. 44, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July, 2015

<sup>137</sup> Interview no. 54, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

<sup>138</sup> Interview no. 38, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015

campaign materials and campaign teams.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, national parties engaged with local constituencies informally, entering into discussions and negotiations. The combination of strong local male networks and a desire to maintain inclusive decentralised selection resulted in a large amount of ‘behind the scenes’ work. A member of the Labour Party’s national executive committee remarked that this involved ‘talking to important people in the constituency, people who can sway things’.<sup>140</sup> Such work was ongoing from before the 2014 local elections within constituencies more broadly; however, in the run up to the 2016 election, the national party deliberated with those who had local political influence to use their sway over the members. In a number of constituencies, these negotiations were carried out directly with incumbents and rival male aspirants, who were consulted with to avoid fall-out and more open public conflict. In a number of cases, female aspirants spoke about these processes as central to avoiding conflict:

They had looked around and said this is a green field for a female. Now who is in that area? Who do we have to talk to? Who do we really have to come to an agreement with? And it would be the male fellas. What is essential is you talk to the male potential candidate and if you get them in agreement they will bring the rest of the people with them [...] when you don’t get it fallout is massive.<sup>141</sup>

#### **6.4.2 Selecting women: old rules, new purposes**

Although central intervention was necessary to ensure the selection of women, with the exception of Sinn Féin, gender quotas did not result in an increase in centralisation across the parties (Table 6-1). As outlined in Chapter four, central intervention was common and codified in the formal rules. Amongst the three largest parties, the right to centrally add candidates, for whatever reason the national party saw fit, pre-existed the introduction of gender quotas. While Fine Gael made fifteen additions in 2016, the party made 18 additions (six men and nine women) in the 2011 elections and the Labour Party actually made eight fewer additions than the

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<sup>139</sup> Interview no. 54, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

<sup>140</sup> Interview no. 40, Member of the Labour Party National Executive Committee, July 2015

<sup>141</sup> Interview no. 43, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015

previous election. Although the addition of candidates was lower in Fianna Fáil in 2011, the party has traditionally relied heavily on candidate additions. Moreover, the specification of candidate criteria from the national party to a local convention was commonplace. Within Fine Gael, this took the form of a broad specification which afforded the national executive the right to direct a convention on whatever criteria they deemed fit. It had, however, largely lain dormant with regards to gender. Conversely, the specification within the Labour Party rules exclusively enabled the party's Organisational Committee to prescribe candidate criteria solely in terms of gender, a power which had actively been employed to ensure a greater number of female candidates on party tickets. Within Sinn Féin, the Labour Party and Fianna Fáil the national party was also empowered to establish geographically specific processes in cases where two candidates are run. Thus, the parties had always employed a geographically based quota in constituencies with more than one candidate, which put limits on full membership choice.

**Table 6-3** Changes in powers afforded to party national executives before and after the introduction of the Electoral Funding (Amendment) Act 2012

	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Fine Gael</b>	<b>Fianna Fáil</b>	<b>Sinn Féin</b>
<b>Pre-legislation</b>				
Adding candidates	Y	Y	Y	N
Criteria Specification	Y	Y	Y	N
Candidate gender quotas	Y	N	N	N
<b>Post-legislation</b>				
Adding candidates	Y	Y	Y	Y
Criteria Specification	Y	Y	Y	Y
Candidate gender quotas	Y	Y	Y	Y

Taking traditional rules and practices into account, what changed within parties was not necessarily the power afforded to the central level, but the purpose for which these powers were used. Within the Labour Party, gender parity rules already existed and within FG and FF, old rules were diverted towards new purposes. While these old rules were traditionally used to 'balance the ticket' in terms of geographical representation and electability, parties began to use directives and appointments to ensure gender parity, in addition to geographical criteria.

## **6.5 The impact of gender quotas on candidacy and representation**

### **6.5.1 Impact of the quota on women's candidacy**

The changes to existing processes outlined above did serve to disrupt male dominance to some degree. A tangible outcome of these changes was visible in the increase in the number of female candidacies and representatives. With each of the main parties fulfilling the quota requirements, the new legislation achieved its purpose and almost doubled the number of women who ran for election. In the 2011 general election, only 86 (15.2 per cent) of the 566 election candidates were female. Following the new legislation, overall female candidacy levels rose to 29.6 per cent with 163 women out of 551 candidates contesting the election, almost double that of 2011. The four main parties actually exceeded the quota, with the more left-wing parties faring better than those of the centre-right. Sinn Féin ran 36 per cent female candidates (up from 19.5 per cent) with the Labour Party running 36.1 per cent (up from 26.5 per cent in 2011). Thirty-one per cent of Fianna Fáil's candidates were female, although this was actually the most sizeable increase, with the party running a mere 14.7 per cent in the previous election. Fine Gael ran 30.7 per cent female candidates, up from 15.4 per cent.

**Table 6-4** Difference in women’s candidacy in the 2011 and 2016 elections by party

<b>General Election</b>	<b>Fianna Fáil</b>	<b>Fine Gael</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Sinn Féin</b>
	<b>N (%)</b>	<b>N (%)</b>	<b>N (%)</b>	<b>N (%)</b>
<b>2011</b>	11 (14.7)	16 (15.4)	18 (26.5)	8 (19.5 )
<b>2016</b>	22 (31.0)	27 (30.7)	13 (36.1)	18 (36.0)
<b>Difference</b>	+16.3	+15.3	+ 9.6	+16.5

### **6.5.2 Impact of the quota on gendered patterns of representation**

Increases in candidacy also impacted levels of male over-representation within parliament (Table 6-3). Overall, the percentage of female representatives rose from 15.2 to 22.2 per cent, with 35 women taking their place within Dáil Éireann. This was a historic high in terms of female representation. Following the 2016 election, the Republic of Ireland ranked 17<sup>th</sup> of the 27 EU member states in terms of female representatives in the lower house of parliament, rising five places since the previous election (European Commission, 2016). Fianna Fáil went from zero to six TDs and Sinn Féin tripled the number of female TDs from two to six. The number of elected women within Fine Gael and Labour did not increase. The Labour Party returned only two female TDs, a decrease of six from the last election and Fine Gael maintained the same number, at 11 female TDs. This can however be explained by the parties’ overall loss in electoral support. Given the downward trajectory of both parties, women did hold a higher percentage of each of the parties’ overall seats than in 2011 (Table 6-6). Following the 2016 election, women made up 22 per cent of Fine Gael candidates, compared to 14.5 per cent after 2011, and 28.6 per cent of Labour TDs compared to 21.6 per cent in 2011. Furthermore, women held 26.1 per cent (up from 14.3 per cent) of Sinn Féin’s seats and 13.6 per cent of Fianna Fáil seats.



**Table 6-5** Sex of candidates and TDs in Dáil Éireann 1973-2011

<b>Election</b>	<b>Total Candidates</b>	<b>Women Candidates</b>	<b>% Women</b>	<b>Total TDS</b>	<b>Women TDs</b>	<b>% Women</b>
<b>1973</b>	334	16	4.8	144	4	2.7
<b>1977</b>	376	25	6.6	148	6	6.6
<b>1981</b>	404	41	10.1	166	11	6.6
<b>1982a</b>	366	35	9.6	166	8	4.8
<b>1982b</b>	365	31	8.5	166	14	8.4
<b>1987</b>	466	65	13.9	166	14	8.4
<b>1989</b>	371	52	14.0	166	13	7.8
<b>1992</b>	482	89	18.5	166	20	12.0
<b>1997</b>	484	96	19.8	166	20	12.0
<b>2002</b>	463	84	18.1	166	22	13.3
<b>2007</b>	470	82	17.4	166	22	13.3
<b>2011</b>	566	86	15.2	166	25	15.1
<b>2016</b>	551	163	29.6	157	35	22.2

While the quota did alter male over-representation both on party tickets and within parliament, the success rate of female TDs did go down. In 2011, female TDs had a success rate of 29.07 per cent, almost equal to that of their male counterparts, which stood at 29.17 per cent. Twenty-five of 86 female candidates who ran in 2011, therefore, took a seat. Despite the increase of female candidates from 86 to 163 following the introduction of the gender quota, only 35 of 163 women were successful in the 2016 general election, making the success rate of female candidates 21.5 per cent, compared with 31.4 per cent of men. This suggests that although running more candidates, and getting more women elected, there was some disconnect between selection and election which will be elaborated upon in the next chapter.

**Table 6-6** Change in intra-party gender representation

<i>Party</i>	<i>2011</i>			<i>2016</i>		
	<b>Total TDs</b>	<b>Male (%)</b>	<b>Female (%)</b>	<b>Total TDs</b>	<b>Male (%)</b>	<b>Female(%)</b>
<b>FF</b>	22	22 (100)	0	44	38 (86.4)	6 (13.6)
<b>FG</b>	76	65 (85.5)	11(14.5)	50	39 (78.0)	11(22.0)
<b>SF</b>	14	12 (85.7)	2 (14.3)	23	17 (73.9)	6 (26.1)
<b>LAB</b>	37	29 (78.4)	8 (21.6)	7	5 (71.4)	2 (28.6)

## 6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has detailed how Irish political parties responded to the introduction of legislative gender quotas in order to challenge male dominance in political recruitment and selection. Centrally, it has shown how pre-existing informal institutions, namely, localism, shaped these responses, fashioning party strategies for change. With regards to recruitment, it demonstrated how new rules interacted with informal local recruitment criteria which privileged those with local political experience. Rather than challenging these criteria, it argued that new rules caused a procedural change in recruitment causing political parties to work within pre-existing informal institutions to ensure a larger number of female aspirants conformed to local definitions of merit and electability in the run-up to the 2016 general election. The chapter also highlighted how the rule impacted selection, highlighting how the national party intervened to challenge male dominance. While this was necessary to meet the 30 per cent quota, the chapter challenged the interpretation of this process as an increase in centralisation, instead showing that old rules were used for new purposes and thus benefited a new set of actors, namely women. While this chapter detailed how parties reacted in the post-adoption phase of quotas, it only tells us half of the story. The next chapter builds on the insights outlined here to detail how

resistance emerged and how male dominance was reproduced in political recruitment and selection in the Irish context.

# 7

## Reproducing Male Dominance *Resistance and Continuities*

Let's face it, the men have been around forever.

- Candidate, Sinn Féin <sup>142</sup>

Whether it [the party] will be willing and able, they are two different things. To move men out of the way to put women on the tickets is probably not something you're going to be able to do for this election.

- Former organisational committee member, the Labour Party <sup>143</sup>

This chapter seeks to explain the ways in which male dominance was reproduced and reimagined following attempts to disrupt it through new institutional measures. Having examined changes in recruitment and selection in the previous chapter following the introduction of gender quotas, this chapter gives specific attention to institutional legacies and continuities, highlighting the ways in which the existing institutions of localism facilitated resistance within the selection process in new and old ways. The chapter begins by outlining the interaction between the new quota and

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<sup>142</sup> Interview no. 43, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015

<sup>143</sup> Interview no. 12, former Organisational Committee member, female, the Labour Party, February 2015

the electoral system, highlighting the opportunities that PR-STV offered parties in terms of producing and hindering change. Following this, the chapter moves on to the reproduction of male dominance through local inclusive selection processes. It outlines a number of resistance strategies which enabled the selection of men at local conventions through traditional ‘democratic’ means and which delegitimised female candidates. Second, it outlines resistance at the central level and shows how continuities in gendered perceptions of electability meant that incumbents continued to be privileged by the national parties, despite the corresponding push to have female aspirants selected.

## **7.1 PR-STV: opportunities for change and subversion**

The previous chapter showed that non-compliance was not considered feasible for political parties, for both financial and electoral reasons. However, political parties often maintain male dominance through the subversion of rules in a variety of creative ways (Krook, 2016). Existing research on the implementation of gender quotas has highlighted the importance of the ‘institutional fit’ between the electoral system and the new rules (Caul, 1999; Htun & Jones, 2002). A common subversion strategy is to engineer women’s electoral losses by running them in districts or seats that are essentially unwinnable (Ryan et al., 2010; Langston & Aparici, 2011). Thus, women are selected as candidates but not elected. ‘Safe seats’ or ‘party seats’ do not exist to the same extent in Ireland as they do in other countries, given the personalised and localised nature of Irish voting. However, the notion of ‘realistic’ candidacies or districts can be applied. For example, running a candidate in a constituency where a party has historically had little support, outside traditional party heartlands or running a candidate with little local recognition in areas where there is a strong incumbent would call into question whether there was a genuine commitment to having such a candidate elected. Political parties in Ireland have often run ‘token’ or ‘sweeper’ candidates whose purpose was not to get elected but to secure votes in their respective local area, which, could then transfer to a more established running mate, the ‘real candidate’ once they had been eliminated during

the count. Given that parties can run infinite numbers of candidates in any one area, multi-member systems facilitate such practices. Prior to selection conventions, party members were aware of the possibility to subvert the quota in this way, with claims being made in the national media and by respondents that female candidates would be put forward as ‘sacrificial lambs’ in order to reach the thirty per cent. Furthermore, Ireland's system differs significantly from both single-member district and party-list systems as there is no national list or closed party-list into which a gender quota or placement mandate can easily be integrated which might address this issue. Considering that incumbents did not have to be replaced, and there were no requirements or placement mandates as to where women must be run, the electoral system offered a distinct opportunity for parties to uphold male dominance.

While PR-STV offered distinct opportunities for subversion, it also offered distinct opportunities for change. Proportional Representative systems are often thought to be more conducive to a greater representation of women than single-member districts (Matland & Studlar, 1996; Caul, 1999), which reinforce incumbent male advantages (Fréchette et al., 2008; Murray, 2008). Given that they enable more than one winner, parties can nominate a number of candidates without unseating incumbents. PR systems therefore allow for new challengers without creating discontent among existing representatives. The electoral system was favourable for parties in Ireland insofar as male candidates did not have to be replaced by a female candidate. In the Irish context, female candidates could be run in addition to and alongside male candidates without unseating existing incumbents. Increasing the number of women on party tickets, at the *selection* stage, did not mean, as is often observed, that you had to ‘kick men out and let women in’ (Baldez, 2006). The electoral system therefore created an opportunity structure for parties to both challenge and maintain the status quo and existing gendered power hierarchies. However, these opportunities needed to be seized by political parties.

## 7.2 Local democratic selection and resistance

Whatever is happening at the moment, it's not democracy. I don't think they'd even do it in North Korea or China – at least they'd go through the motions of having an election.<sup>144</sup>

You're directing a group of people that they have to pick someone so there's no real democracy in that.<sup>145</sup>

As highlighted in previous chapters, localism has shaped informal rules about who selects candidates. New rules did very little to challenge the idea that democratic and localised selection was normal, natural and legitimate. Resistance to gender quotas in Ireland therefore took a particular, but not unique form. From the beginning of party debates, gender quotas were largely presented as being 'undemocratic' and objections to new rules during the selection process drew on this narrative. Resistance to quotas was not an objection to female candidates per se, but rather to an increase in the centralisation of the process, which moved control of selection from the hands of grass-roots members into those of national-level elites.

Due to the importance of localism and local democracy in the Irish case, political parties tried as far as possible to continue local selection processes and to get women selected at party primaries through the 'natural means.' As the previous chapter highlighted, a key strategy to tackle the traditional under-selection of women was to increase the number of female aspirants. Political parties recruited and identified potential female candidates, explicitly encouraging and asking women to run, while simultaneously providing training and workshops to female aspirants. These processes started before the 2014 local election in many cases such that, by the time selection conventions started for the 2016 general election there were also a greater

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<sup>144</sup> Anthony Moore, male aspirant for Fianna Fáil. Quote from an interview on LMFm radio as quoted in the Irish Times (Lord, 2015).

<sup>145</sup> Interview no. 33, CDC chairperson, male, Fianna Fáil, May 2015

number of female aspirants who had local experience and networks in the electorate and thus conformed to informal local criteria. The aim of these strategies was to both increase the pool of female aspirants and to ensure they were electable such that local members had a greater number of ‘good quality’ female aspirants to choose from. Although this proved successful in some cases with a number of female candidates coming through conventions, asking women and boosting their electability did not directly translate into their selection at the local level due to gendered legacies and local resistance.

### **7.2.1 Local legacies: informal networks and ‘deserving men’**

It’s seen as an entitlement.<sup>146</sup>

Critically, local democratised selection made it difficult for female aspirants to break through local conventions due to the masculinised legacies of traditional processes. As Chapters two and three highlighted, decisions made earlier on in a party’s life may hinder change as reformers are confronted by the unintended legacies of gendered institutions. In the Irish context, national parties had to contend with the gendered consequences of recruiting, selecting and encouraging men. The enduring effects of this were the presence of local male strongholds within local constituency organisations and branches. Prior to implementation, it was perceived both in the public domain and in the media that Fine Gael and the Labour Party would have the largest issue around implementation due to the issue of incumbency. Given that a high number of seats were already occupied by incumbent men, there were not as many free seats for which women could compete for. For Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil, who had significantly fewer elected TDs, the incumbency problem should not have been as pressing an issue with regards to implementation. Across parties, however, female candidates were not unseating incumbent men who had a seat, but rather,

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<sup>146</sup> Interview no. 44, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July, 2015



male rivals who wanted a seat and who felt it was ‘their turn’ to run. Respondents, both female and male, frequently described specific male aspirants as the perceived ‘natural’ candidate in their constituency. This was usually a long-standing male councillor or party activist who had established relationships with the local organisation and (if in existence), the current TD. Female candidates were not replacing, but ‘displacing’ these males. In both Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin, the parties did not have an incumbent male in a large number of constituencies. Despite this, there were male aspirants waiting to take the reins at the 2016 election. As one female Fianna Fáil aspirant commented:

There’s no constituency that doesn’t have somebody.<sup>147</sup>

Candidates were therefore to an extent informally pre-designated; they were ‘favourite sons’ and had been earmarked as the next in line. In many cases grooming of these candidates had lasted over a decade. Many female aspirants, on the other hand, had not had long-term plans for election. As one losing Fianna Fáil aspirant remarked:

There are long-term plans for constituencies. There is a map, a mental map, they are constructed by men, and involve men and it’s quite difficult for women to break up.<sup>148</sup>

Whether long-standing activists or local councillors, female aspirants were rarely the candidate that local members had had in mind. As two female Fianna Fáil candidates commented:

Years ago they may have seen this young fella coming up who would make a good candidate in the future and they are mentally geared in that direction and traditionally women have worked in supportive roles within the constituency and it’s hugely true outside Dublin and so women have a huge job to do to be taken on equal terms as men who have been groomed for the job for years and years so yes there is a problem and for some very able women.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Interview no. 54, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

<sup>148</sup> Interview no. 45, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, July 2015

<sup>149</sup> Interview no. 45, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, July 2015

It's just because people have been there for years and years and they've their own loyalties and networks built up. And women were never meant to get a look in and now we are.<sup>150</sup>

'Deserving' and 'rightful' often therefore translated into longevity, that is, who had been there the longest and had the chance to build up the largest number of loyal networks. The result of encouraging, recruiting and selecting a higher number of women at the 2014 local level was that a higher number of female aspirants were local councillors. At the selection stage, however, female aspirants were met with the assumption that they were not 'the deserving' candidate. In contrast to widely held assumptions that 'if you are good enough you will make it, man or woman'<sup>151</sup> quotas were layered on to a system where selection was just as much, if not more, about who, not what you know. These pre-existing and personal loyalties, as opposed to any concept of merit, often determined who the rightful candidate was.

These networks not only granted men more legitimacy but also ensured the re-selection of men through inclusive localised selection. A number of female respondents commented on the role of personal networks as hindering their selection with unsuccessful aspirants reporting that they did not have the same numbers 'built up' in the local membership to get democratically selected. As Chapter five showed, democratised selection benefits those who can best mobilise networks and recruit them into party structures. Indeed this personal support in the party membership was often positioned as gender-neutral by rival male aspirants and even used to point to their own greater popularity and legitimacy as the rightful candidate. As one male Sinn Féin aspirant commented:

If you don't recruit enough members then you shouldn't be on the ticket and that's the way I look at it. So if I'm in it and I recruit twenty members and you only recruit five then I'm obviously winning and it's your fault for not recruiting members. It's all fair in love and war. We can all abuse or do what we want in the same way.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Interview no. 54, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

<sup>151</sup> Interview no. 37, National Constituencies Committee member, male, national level, July 2015

<sup>152</sup> Interview no. 33, CDC chairperson, male, Fianna Fáil, May 2015

While supposedly gender-neutral, the transfer of personal networks inside party structures reflected the long-term plans of male aspirants to seek the party nomination. Long-term plans for selection incentivised and enabled local male rivals to institutionalise their advantage, transporting personal networks into party structures which they were able to utilise to get selected. Having not been groomed and prepared for selection, however, female aspirants often lacked these *explicitly* personal networks at the time of selection, pointing not only to an incumbent advantage but to a male aspirant advantage. As one female Sinn Féin aspirant remarked after losing out to a branch that was ‘stuffed:’

I’ve had a bad experience of it but I think it’s localised. I was very naïve, I think it’s a fiefdom if you know what I mean- the numbers are there that I would never have. So maybe if I hadn’t have been naïve, I would have built up my own numbers if I had been that ambitious but I wasn’t thinking [...]In hindsight I’ll keep my eye on the ball in what’s going on – not just in the next election but going on, a bit more strategic planning – not stupid I suppose. I don’t know if it’s stupidity – it’s just someone being in the game a lot longer than me. It was a burning experience.<sup>153</sup>

Furthermore, female respondents suggested that they were unaware such strategies would be necessary to get on to the ticket and instead presumed that their own ‘merit’ and policy positions would ensure selection by members. As another losing female Fianna Fáil aspirant remarked:

I’ve been chair of the CDC [constituency organisation] for 18 months and there were people that came into that convention that I’ve never seen before in my life [...] Each one of my five brothers and sisters are now members of Fianna Fáil [...] The defeat has taught me something. Was I wet behind the ears? Absolutely. Was I naïve? Absolutely. Would I make the same mistakes again? Definitely not.<sup>154</sup>

Inexperience with these informal strategies that enable success was also expressed by respondents. Existing literature on networks (Bjarnegård & Murray, 2015: 6) has stated that male networks ‘allow men to create, learn, and reinforce the unwritten rules of the game (informal institutions) that are so important for determining

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<sup>153</sup> Interview no. 43, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015

<sup>154</sup> Interview no. 48, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, August 2015

success within political life.’ Thus, gendered networks act as a pipeline through which men share insider information and thus, transmit privilege to other men (Bjarnegård, 2013; Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2015). As the above context highlights, those who had not been geared for selection were inexperienced with these rules, they had not learned the unwritten rules that were necessary to succeed.

While a highly inclusive selection process had incentivised long-term male aspirants and incumbents to transfer personal networks into the local party membership, thus ensuring their selection at conventions, they also had personal connections with people who were in positions of power in the wider local constituency organisation. Their networks were not only horizontal, in that they existed in the local party membership but also vertical, in that they spanned to the regional and national party level. As one Fianna Fáil candidate remarked:

I can tell you now the situation of the CDC [constituency organisation]. The CDC is made up of a number of people. The best friend of my running mate is the CDC representative who will more than likely be the director of elections who is out canvassing with my running mate. His daughter is the secretary. His election agent is the co-chair. The chairperson is a friend of his too and I know that there is an internal agreement between the two of them that if he gets elected he’ll be co-opted on to the council to get a seat. So that’s where I’m at.<sup>155</sup>

Due to the way in which support is generated within local constituencies, central intervention was needed. As one Fine Gael candidate who benefited from a gender directive remarked:

Ideally, if you’re coming through you want to get in on the convention but you have to be a member for 2 years. As a new politician, you’re relying on people who are already there. People are bused in for the convention. I know I’m not getting in on any convention. I’ll ring the members and do all the usual stuff but I won’t get through. They’ve [the national executive] always made it clear to me that if I was to run in the election I’ll be added<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Interview no. 62, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

<sup>156</sup> Interview no. 16, female candidate, Fine Gael, March 2015

### 7.2.2 Tactical voting and ‘stalking horses’

While male aspirants were able to utilise their personal networks to ensure selection, they were also used to subvert gender directives from the national party through the nomination and selection of ‘paper’ candidates. Gender directives designated areas where a female candidate must be chosen, they did not designate who this had to be. In a number of cases, respondents spoke of members deliberately nominating and selecting ‘stalking horses’ or weaker female candidates at the selection stage to block the progression of stronger female rivals. While this still ensured the selection of a female candidate, these strategies were intended to safeguard the position of local male aspirants in future elections by choosing what was perceived as a less electable and threatening woman. Whereas the election of a strong female candidate would have a long-term impact on the opportunity structure for any future aspirant looking to run, the failure of a female candidate in the general election would not threaten the political aspirations of the male aspirant. As one female Sinn Féin aspirant commented on her own experience:

What seems to be happening is that a male wants to get on the ticket and has the support, remember it’s about the support and having the long-term support within the cumman [branch], the kingdom. Then they put up a weaker female, that female will get the support of the cumann [...] which leaves the other female who wants to go forward impotent because you know you’re not going to get the support. It’s not necessarily the strongest candidate, be it male or female, or the preferred candidate, it’s personal loyalties.<sup>157</sup>

Although not subject to this strategy herself, another aspirant was also fearful that this technique could and would be used to undermine her own candidacy and reported that this was a strategy that she had witnessed in other constituencies:

I was worried that there could be a backlash. I was afraid that they’d pick a woman that wasn’t a member that long or a token person just to put up someone against me... to say ‘well there you go there, here’s your gender

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<sup>157</sup> Interview no. 43, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015

quotas if you want someone.’ But fortunately, that didn’t happen, I was lucky that didn’t happen.<sup>158</sup>

These strategies demonstrate the role and influence of rival local male aspirants at the local level. In order for a ‘stalking horse’ to work, local male actors need significant networks and influence within a local constituency in order to direct local members to vote in a certain way. The local organisation did not break the rules, rather, they undermined the quota by selecting a candidate who they felt would be less electable and therefore less threatening to political aspirations of the male aspirant.

### 7.2.3 Discursive strategies and tactical voting

I think the whole centralisation accusation- I wouldn’t take that as being a thing at all no more than ‘I don’t like black people but I’m not a racist.’ That’s an excuse. If the local level was left to make the decisions we wouldn’t have as many women heading in.<sup>159</sup>

‘Local democracy’ was also used as a discursive strategy to delegitimise women at the selection stage and to dissuade party members from voting for female candidates. In order to maintain power, local men actively employed discursive strategies to re-enforce the association between women and centralisation and thus, secure votes from local members.<sup>160</sup> These strategies ensured that all women, even those who were long-standing party members and local councillors became ‘quota women.’ Despite a push to distil the responsibility for female selection to branch members and

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<sup>158</sup> Interview no. 38, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015

<sup>159</sup> Interview no. 44, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July, 2015

<sup>160</sup> Interview no. 45, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, July 2015

Interview no. 48, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, August 2015

Interview no. 45, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, July 2015

Interview no. 61, unsuccessful male aspirant, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

constituency officers, the association of female candidates with centralised powers actually served to hinder the democratic selection of women at local conventions. Competition at local conventions became one between the ‘quota woman’ and the ‘preferred local son’, a narrative which has emerged in other contexts where measures have been taken to address gender imbalance (Kenny, 2013).

While lobbying the local party members for votes, female aspirants were frequently confronted with the assertion that they would get on the ticket through directives or addition by the central level. Women, as it was perceived, did not need membership votes and a vote for a female aspirant was considered a vote wasted. Considering that there was no guarantee that any specific female aspirant would get on the ticket, this was not true. In situations where no central intervention applied, female aspirants lost out because of this. As one female Fianna Fáil aspirant remarked on her experience:

People said ‘well don’t vote for her because she’ll be put on the ticket anyway.’ I think that’s a huge factor [...] Now nobody ever said to me, ‘you’re going to be put on the ticket’, and I know for a fact that the person we selected is not in favour of that. So politics being politics, people do all sorts of things and it definitely did me out of quite a few votes in my own situation.<sup>161</sup>

Similarly, these narratives were employed by male aspirants to urge local party members to undermine central directives around gender and therefore actively subvert the implementation of the gender quota at local party conventions. The Fine Gael selection convention of Dublin Bay North received significant attention in April 2015 as local party members engaged in tactical voting to secure the place of the local male aspirant on the party ticket in the face of a gender directive.<sup>162</sup> The new five-seat constituency, created by the 2012 boundary changes encompassed two entire former constituencies and transfers from their surrounding areas. The party already held one TD in the former area of the Dublin North–Central constituency, Richard Bruton, who had been the sitting TD (and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and

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<sup>161</sup> Interview no. 45, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, July 2015

<sup>162</sup> The Irish Independent, 2015

Innovation) since 1982. Bruton was re-nominated as a potential candidate and the convention was also contested by a local male city councillor and former Lord Mayor, Naoise O' Muiri, a female local party activist, Stephanie Regan and the policy director for the youth division of the party (Young Fine Gael), Aoibhinn Tormey. On the night of the convention, the candidates made their speeches to party members asking for their votes. O' Muiri, urged members to vote for him over the other aspirants as it would be the only way to ensure he reached the ticket. Conscious that a gender directive would be applied, he argued that he was the only candidate of the four that had no chance of reaching the ticket without the vote of the local membership. Following the speeches, members votes were cast and the party directive was read out, stating that the convention must select two candidates, one male and one female. The results were opened and revealed that Stephanie Regan and Naoise O' Muiri had been chosen, with the sitting minister failing to reach the ticket. Shocked at the defeat of an electable incumbent, the central level added Minister Bruton to the ticket the next morning.

Due to the specifics of the party strategy, the above example was specific to the constituency at hand. However, it illustrates the association of male aspirants with local intra-party democracy, a strong narrative that resonated with party members. Male aspirants were able to use this narrative to delegitimise local female selection and re-assert their own position as the rightful candidate. Given that there were two female aspirants, the gender directive did not secure the selection of any of the four aspirants. By virtue of being female, however, both aspirants were considered to benefit from central intervention. Although these strategies and narratives are new, they are rooted in pre-existing norms around who should select candidates, which struck a chord with party members. As one attendee of the convention commented on the incident:

He [Naoise] said: 'listen if you don't vote for me tonight I am the only candidate out of the four who has no chance in hell of being put on the ticket' and members really responded to that. A few people said they weren't even



going to vote for him and then they heard his speech and then said oh actually he's right.<sup>163</sup>

Given the importance of local selection as a legitimising process, these discursive strategies were a new mechanism, through which male dominance and legitimacy were maintained and reproduced by local male actors. Furthermore, the event highlights the importance placed on electability and incumbency at the central level. Local members were able to tactically cast their vote for a male candidate upon the near certainty that the sitting minister would be added by the central level if members did not select him democratically. Thus, local members effectively wielded the central preference for incumbents to subvert the gender directive in Dublin Bay North. As will be expanded on later, the privilege afforded to incumbents was not altered following the new legislation and this mediated the impact of the new rule.

#### **7.2.4 Intimidation and domination techniques**

If you don't have a thick skin, you are very much at the mercy of the wolves. They're like a pack of wolves. That's the only way I can describe it.<sup>164</sup>

In a number of cases, female aspirants who benefited or who were perceived to have benefited from centralised intervention were *personally* blamed for displacing men and were subjected to a series of sanctions from fellow party members who were aligned with rival aspirants. In the Longford-Westmeath constituency, these tactics were noticeable from Fianna Fáil members who were unashamed in their resistance to the selection of a female Fianna Fáil candidate following the issuing of a gender directive. The constituency had one sitting incumbent TD, Deputy Robert Troy, and by the time the selection conventions took place, five other nominees were set to contest. Disputes over the number of candidates to run also existed, due to a number

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<sup>163</sup> Interview no. 41, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fine Gael, July 2015

<sup>164</sup> Interview no. 62, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

of different groups within the constituency wanting a representative from their own area. Despite a push for a three-candidate strategy, Fianna Fáil headquarters decided only two candidates would be run. A further decision to run two separate conventions, one in Westmeath and another in Longford, was also made. The first of these took place in September of 2015 and ran relatively smoothly. Two of the three nominees, Emer Gavin and Aengus O'Rourke withdrew to leave the incumbent TD to be selected unopposed. The Longford convention was, however, marked by public controversy. Three aspirants had been nominated by branches in the area: party activists Connie Geraty Quinn and Pat O'Rourke and sitting local councillor, Seamus Butler. Following the issuing of a gender directive which declared that the convention must pick a female candidate, Connie Geraty Quinn was automatically selected, leading party members and the two male aspirants, one councillor and one party member, to condemn the decision. Following the selection, resistance to the selection of the female candidate persisted. Local members lobbied the Ard Comhairle not to ratify the candidacy and to re-run the convention with no directive. Failing to succeed with these tactics, local members organised an unofficial meeting, the aim of which was to select their 'preferred' candidate, whose name would then be forwarded on to the national constituency committee. During this meeting, a vote of no confidence was passed in Geraty Quinn, however, the unofficial selection of an alternative candidate did not happen. Despite resistance, both selected candidates were ratified and ran in the 2016 election. Objections to the selection were once again framed as resistance to anti-democratic practices, with local members stating publically that the diktat had robbed them of their 'democratic right.'<sup>165</sup> One local councillor went on to compare the struggle for democracy in the local constituency to that of Nelson Mandela's, claiming: 'Mandela spent half his life in prison defending his rights, we are demanding our rights.'<sup>166</sup> Although Geraty Quinn commented publically that the resistance was misogynistic, local party members insisted that there was nothing misogynistic about the dispute.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> The Journal, 2015d

<sup>166</sup> The Journal, 2015d

<sup>167</sup> Doyle, 2015.

Whether explicitly misogynistic or not, ‘undeserving’ female candidates or supporters of ‘undeserving’ candidates were threatened, mocked, intimidated and shunned in other parties and constituencies. Female candidates from Sinn Féin, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael remarked on their experiences of these tactics:

The constituency organiser who approached me has since left politics, he’s been in it years and he left because of the in-fighting. He had people threatening to burn his house down with his mother inside. He would have been seen to be a supporter of mine when he should have been a supporter of someone more deserving.<sup>168</sup>

I was afraid of being pushed down the stairs or something. [...] I was going to meetings and I was being followed out to my car and being threatened outside my car on my own.<sup>169</sup>

Somebody came into my office, a member who is very much strongly against me because he is in favour of another candidate who he had put all his support behind and he told me that the area would survive without a local candidate but would I survive in the area after the election? As in my business.<sup>170</sup>

Existing work on informal institutions has shown that they are usually enforced in this way, through means outside of the legitimised channels and outside of the formal rules (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004). The above respondent, a local councillor who had been recruited at the 2014 local election, objectively fit within local concepts of merit insofar as she had local experience and local recognition. Yet, this was not enough to be considered a legitimate candidate when it came to selection. The use of domination techniques to reinscribe male power and male authority has been documented in other contexts. Although delegitimising women more broadly, the primary aims of these tactics were to coerce female candidates to step down and to withdraw their names from party tickets, following selection thus allowing men to run. This speaks to the growing body of work that looks at how women’s greater inclusion in politics is resisted through violent means. Although physical violence was not reported, a number of interviewees who were perceived as benefiting from

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<sup>168</sup> Interview no. 16, female candidate, Fine Gael, March 2015

<sup>169</sup> Interview no. 54, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

<sup>170</sup> Interview no. 62, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

central intervention spoke of threats or incidences of verbal bullying which was intended to force women to re-think their own inclusion on party tickets. Women were therefore met with a double-bind; in many cases, they did not have the explicitly personal and local networks built up to get through democratic selection conventions but were demonised as candidates if they benefited from central intervention.

## 7.3 Central intervention and resistance

### 7.3.1 Electability and vote-maximising

Are we in the business of seats or women? <sup>171</sup>

While the continuation and legacies of inclusive decentralised selection was a particular constraint on the selection of female candidates, intervention from national parties also served this purpose. As is often argued, performing well in elections and maximising the number of seats is the primary aim of mainstream political parties (Downs, 1957; Murray, 2010a). However, as Chapter five showed, concepts of electability are often gendered. In the Irish context, a gendered concept of electability has led to the privileging of men who are perceived to have greater local name recognition and local networks in the electorate. While meeting the target was crucial to each of the parties, electoral gains remained the key priority for national parties following the new rules.<sup>172</sup> As one Fianna Fáil strategist commented:

The constituency committee of the party has one aim and one aim alone- who is going to win the seat. [...] We will only be judged on who wins the seat. We won't be judged by if we meet the quota by thirty per cent or fifty per

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<sup>171</sup> Interview no. 40, Organisational Committee member, male, the Labour Party, July 2015

<sup>172</sup> Interview no. 10, female party strategist (central level), Fine Gael, January 2015

Interview no. 29, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, April 2015

Interview no. 40, Organisational Committee member, male, the Labour Party, July 2015

Interview no. 37, National Constituencies Committee member, male, national level, July

cent or a hundred per cent. It doesn't matter so long as we win the seat- that's what we'll be judged by.<sup>173</sup>

Given that the majority of incumbents were male, finding women who were as 'electable' under such a personalised system was not perceived as possible. As one Labour Party member commented:

It's not like first past the post where you can simply change the candidate and people will still vote. The Labour Party in England could change the gender mix overnight really. There's that opportunity.<sup>174</sup>

Selecting women was often therefore perceived as a 'conflict between strategy and gender,'<sup>175</sup> with political actors asserting that 'strategy must win.'<sup>176</sup> With regards to individual constituency strategies, gender was therefore treated as secondary to 'more important' elements that had traditionally guided candidate strategies such as candidate number, electability and geography. As a Fianna Fáil candidate responded:

We're a political party! The aim of the game is to win seats in Leinster House-so whatever it takes to do that. Strategy, geography, number of candidates, gender, background all of that. Gender I tell you now will not be the over-riding consideration in any constituency.<sup>177</sup>

The decision on where to apply the gender quota was based on balancing new requirements and winning seats. Though failing to meet the quota was perceived to be an unfeasible option, implementing the quota became 'about getting that balance right.'<sup>178</sup> Central to this strategy was the protection and prioritisation of incumbents. As one female Fianna Fáil candidate remarked of the central party:

While they're being very encouraging- they don't want to lose seats. We have 21 TDs. They want to make sure those 21 get elected first and foremost, solidify that and build on it. And unfortunately those 21 TDs are male, so they're being prioritised over anyone else.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Interview no. 37, National Constituencies Committee member, male, national level, July

<sup>174</sup> Interview no. 40, Organisational Committee member, male, the Labour Party, July 2015

<sup>175</sup> Interview no. 29, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, April 2015

<sup>176</sup> Interview no. 29, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, April 2015

<sup>177</sup> Interview no. 29, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, April 2015

<sup>178</sup> Interview no. 48, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, August 2015

<sup>179</sup> Interview no. 54, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

Indeed incumbency was presented as a challenge by each of the national parties, who were unregretful of their need to run incumbents. Thus, although a genuine effort was made to make female aspirants both electable and selectable, the protection and privileging of incumbents remained. While the presence of a large number of incumbents is widely noted as hindering the nomination of new groups of people and is largely deemed a ‘rational’ response on the part of political parties, the findings also point to the advantages bestowed to incumbents that do not pertain to ‘electability.’ Incumbency is also an issue as incumbents benefit from the long-standing privileges of patronage at their disposal, which they use to create a pool of influential people who are dependent on or indebted to them, at both the local and the central level (Pionchon & Derville, 2004; Murray, 2010a: 86). In a number of cases, incumbents were also able to use their positional power to help those within their personal network in terms of selection, continuing trends of personalism and patronage within local constituencies. As one losing Fianna Fáil aspirant remarked:

If I were very strong the candidate would clearly be opposed to me because I would compete and I would split the vote. However, since I am not that strong [...] it is more likely that I won’t be allowed on the ticket because of the traditional relationship between the former TD and the current councillor in my area, because if I’m on the ticket it will break up that connection. The councillor will see maybe she’s on the ticket this time, she might be on the ticket next time. And you must remember, it’s all politics, the TD needs the support of the councillor to get elected so it’s all politics.<sup>180</sup>

While another unsuccessful aspirant remarked:

HQ didn’t want me to get on the ticket because the brother of my local TD wanted his go and his run so effectively I was blocked.<sup>181</sup>

### **7.3.2 ‘Where will we run women?’ Formal rules and selecting men**

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<sup>180</sup> Interview no. 45, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, July 2015

<sup>181</sup> Interview no 31, female unsuccessful aspirant, April 2015

Consequently, the decision about where to implement the new formal rule was judged on gendered criteria of electability and incumbent power. Existing power hierarchies and gendered legacies influenced which constituencies were subject to the new requirement regarding gender. Although all local constituencies were urged to recruit and select female candidates, the reality that some constituencies would be subject to central intervention led both party strategists and members to question ‘where will the women be run?’ Long prior to selection conventions taking place, speculation had already begun about which constituencies female candidates would be run in. There was ‘a lot of politics’<sup>182</sup> over which constituencies were going to be subject to central intervention regarding the new quota, specifically within Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil. Rather than a standardised parity clause for all constituencies who run more than one candidate, Fianna Fáil’s national constituencies committee and Fine Gael’s executive council determined gender directives on a case-by-case basis, which gave significant power to the central level to determine outcomes. The result was a highly managed process through where the issue of gender was omitted and included depending on gendered constituency dynamics, loyalties and legacies. Contrastingly, the Labour Party’s existing party quotas dictated that gender parity should be ensured on every constituency ticket where there was a two or more candidate strategy and Sinn Féin also adopted this strategy following the introduction of the new rule meaning gender was automatically a consideration for the local membership.

While a careful case-by-case approach was articulated as an obvious and rational approach to implementation by central level actors, one female Fianna Fáil aspirant felt that the inconsistency in application and method was indicative of central strategy committees getting their preferred candidates:

The party has been able to manipulate it, and they can get the result they want if it doesn’t go according to how they want it. That’s been the most inconsistent thing – is that it’s been a different strategy, a different formula and a different process in every constituency. In some constituencies, they’ve been split, in some, they used a gender directive [...]. The inconsistency

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<sup>182</sup> Interview no. 15, Regional Organiser ,male, Fine Gael, February 2015

means that the party have manipulated the system. There might have been a level of choice, but the party certainly got who they wanted to get.<sup>183</sup>

Furthermore, in some cases, female aspirants were actively blocked from competing against existing incumbent males at the selection stage. As the previous chapter highlighted, formal central intervention, through the issuing of convention directives has been used to ensure the selection or exclusion of specific candidates. This has reproduced male dominance insofar as concepts of electability have been gendered and have privileged both local males and incumbents. This mechanism of exclusion continued to be utilised in order to protect male incumbents, mediating the impact of the gender quota. In July of 2015, the national media reported that two local female councillors had been ‘shafted’ in this way by Fine Gael headquarters in County Louth.<sup>184</sup> From a very early point in the election process, County Louth/East Meath was earmarked as a Fine Gael constituency where there was a very strong possibility that a gender quota would be applied. Despite having two sitting TDs, the presence of two local female councillors, who were geographically distinct from the existing incumbents made it a compelling choice. Both female aspirants were considered ‘strong’ and had been invited to take part in party training targeted at potential (mostly female) candidates and received nominations in the run-up to the selection convention. Weeks before it was scheduled, one of the sitting incumbents, Peter Fitzpatrick, announced he would not be seeking re-nomination. The former Louth senior football manager had been approached by the party prior to the 2011 general election after leading the team to Leinster finals in 2010, however, it was speculated that his decision was influenced by a fear that a three-candidate strategy would threaten his potential to retake his seat.<sup>185</sup> The announcement resulted in the delaying of the selection convention by a month and a personal meeting between the TD and party leader Enda Kenny.<sup>186</sup> The incumbent TD subsequently reversed his decision to stand down. On the night of the convention, the Fine Gael executive council

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<sup>183</sup> Interview no. 64, female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

<sup>184</sup> The Journal, 2015c

<sup>185</sup> The Journal, 2015a; The Journal, 2015b

<sup>186</sup> The Journal, 2015b; The Journal, 2015a



issued a directive stating that two candidates should be chosen, one from the Dundalk region of the constituency and the other from the Drogheda region. This led to the automatic selection of the two incumbent male TDs at the expense of a number of other nominees, including the female local councillors.

For the central party to block an aspirant from a member-based vote, the threat of success at a convention must be a genuine concern. Thus, it must be perceived that the aspirant has the networks and local support from party members which are necessary to triumph if not actively hindered. Not only was the gender quota not applied in the Louth constituency, a geographical directive ensured the reselection of the sitting male incumbents and a two-candidate strategy protected them from the threat of competition by ruling out the female candidates. Strong female aspirants were therefore actively blocked from selection by local members and subsequently, the electorate. The privileged position of incumbents remained in the wake of the new quota and was facilitated by seemingly gender neutral and central rules. New female candidates were desirable and sought by central strategists as long as they were not too much of a threat to the existing status quo. This perception that ‘threatening women’ were being hindered or blocked re-emerged from other interviewees.<sup>187</sup>

## **7.4 Conclusion**

This chapter showed the ways in which male dominance was reproduced and reimagined following attempts to disrupt it through new institutional measures. While the previous chapter showed changes in the process, arguing that a genuine attempt was made to recruit and select more women, this chapter highlighted the continuities and legacies of localism which shaped and facilitated opposition. First, it highlighted strategies of resistance within local constituency organisations, showing how ‘local democratised’ selection as both an institutional narrative and as a party practice enabled the continued selection of men at local conventions. While political

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<sup>187</sup> Interview no 31, female unsuccessful aspirant, April 2015

parties attempted to work within the informal rules to get women aspirants electable, they were still not selectable at the local level. As relative latecomers, local women were met with local constituencies that were inherently organised around male rival aspirants who had exploited the institutional opportunities needed to build on and protect power. Second, the chapter showed how gendered notions of electability continued following the new rules and thus, male incumbents were protected against female rivals by the national parties. This chapter therefore highlighted the disjuncture between recruiting women and selecting women. As shown in the previous chapter, parties may ask women to run and ensured they have the skills and informal criteria to be electable; however, selection may remain a distinct obstacle due to institutional legacies and resistance from institutional actors. The final concluding chapter will now summarise the empirical findings of the last four chapters, situating them within the broader literature on male dominance, institutions and change and outline the implications and contributions of the overall thesis.

# 8

## Conclusion

I feel like a suffragette. I feel like a pioneer of some sort because we're at the forefront of this change in culture and I hope to god it is different next time if my daughter is running or whoever. I think there will be a generation of us that will benefit. We're getting a leg up, but it has been tough.

Candidate, Fianna Fáil <sup>188</sup>

This thesis investigated the impact of legislative gender quotas on male dominance in political recruitment and selection in the Republic of Ireland. While much of the existing work on the impact of these mechanisms focuses on parliament as the key site of change, and numerical outcomes as the key measurement of change, this thesis argued that, in order to understand the impact of new rules, we must focus on their interaction with political parties and internal party processes at the recruitment and selection stage. Using feminist institutionalist tools and concepts, it pointed to the gendered nature of the pre-existing institutions of political recruitment and selection in privileging and empowering men, paying specific attention to the informal institution of localism as the key over-arching mechanism through which this has occurred. Following the introduction of new institutional measures, it

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<sup>188</sup> Interview no. 54, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, November 2015

showed that new rules incentivised political parties to alter internal processes and challenge some aspects of male dominance in recruitment and selection, causing subsequent shifts in gendered patterns of representation. However, it also demonstrated the ways in which male dominance was maintained through the endurance of the traditional rules of political recruitment and the gendered legacies of these processes. Moreover, it showed that male dominance was reconfigured in the new context, drawing attention to the active ways in which powerful political elites used existing formal and informal institutions to protect political power and resist change. While the thesis found some evidence that new rules reduced male dominance, it also showed that male dominance was reproduced and reimagined in the new context, therefore highlighting the complex process of disrupting male dominance in recruitment and selection, as well as the possibility for transformation.

This concluding chapter revisits the central research question of the thesis and demonstrates how previous chapters have provided an answer to it. It begins with a summary of the arguments presented in the preceding chapters and elaborates on the overall findings of the thesis. Following this, it outlines how this research contributes and fits alongside the existing literature and theoretical discussions. Situating the findings within broader scholarship on gender quotas, political parties and male dominance in recruitment and selection, it highlights what the thesis adds to these fields. Finally, there is a discussion of some of the limits of the thesis with suggestions of some further areas of study that could take forward the research on male dominance in political recruitment and selection.

## **8.1 The impact of gender quotas on male dominance in recruitment and selection**

The study of male dominance in politics is perhaps more pertinent than ever. While ‘an engendering of political life has taken place’ across the globe, marking a distinct shift in the scope of male dominance, it has far from disappeared (Dahlerup & Leyenaar, 2013). Men continue to be overwhelmingly present in political spaces and to be empowered within those spaces, presiding at the higher end of political

hierarchies with greater access to resources and recognition than women. Moreover, contrary to being eradicated, male dominance continues to re-emerge in new and ever more creative ways. In the four short years since this research began, events across the world, particularly those within the United States, have shown that ‘progress’ with regards to gender equality is neither linear nor irreversible as gains in women’s rights and status within and outside formal political spaces are ever subject to backlash and withdrawal.

This thesis has been specifically concerned with male dominance within recruitment and selection and the impact of new rules designed to undermine it. It is particularly vital to understand the ways in which male dominance operates within candidate recruitment and selection. How political parties select their candidates, through what rules, logics and practices is central to the sustenance of male parliamentary over-representation. This is a problem which has been increasingly identified as a ‘crisis of democracy’ by international governments and organisations. While much existing work on this problem has focused on women’s powerlessness and disadvantage, this thesis follows the budding trend amongst feminist political scholars in problematising men’s power advantage and privilege (Bjarnegård, 2013; Murray, 2014; Bjarnegård & Murray, 2015; Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2017).

As Chapter two argued, in order to understand the origins and continuation of male power, we must unpack the complex ways in which institutions are gendered, that is the ways in which rules, norms and narratives produce and reinforce gender inequalities in political and public life. Following other institutional scholars, the intention of FI scholars is not to assert that institutions can explain everything but that, institutions matter in terms of explaining and predicting the creation and sustenance of gendered power hierarchies. Male dominance in politics is far-reaching and extends past the quite literal numerical dominance of men within political spaces. Studying male dominance therefore requires investigating the ways in which institutions are substantively masculinised, that is, the ways in which ‘seemingly neutral’ political institutions are embedded with formal and informal rules which privilege and empower men and which normalise and naturalise power advantages such that political and social inequalities appear legitimate and

defendable. Central to FI explanations of gender inequality is a focus on informal institutions, power, continuity and change and these themes have re-emerged throughout the thesis.

In order to understand the impact of new rules on male dominance in recruitment and selection, it is necessary to go past the statistical logics that are associated with quotas and instead understand the impact of new rules on the traditional institutional mechanisms, both formal and informal, through which men are empowered and privileged. This is the central argument of Chapter three which outlines an FI framework for understanding the impact of new rules on male dominance in political recruitment and selection. In addition to Chapter two, Chapter three therefore set up the framework for the rest of the thesis. It showed how existing FI work on the gendered dynamics of recruitment and selection has revealed a complex web of formal and informal rules and norms, which shape the over-recruitment and selection of men. Crucially, this chapter showed the importance of informal institutions, that is, the ‘socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside officially sanctioned channels’ (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004:727), in shaping recruitment and selection and in producing male dominance. Moreover, it highlighted the role of political parties as the central ‘gatekeepers’ to political representation. While this work has provided crucial insights into the gendered dynamics of these processes, the existing literature that focuses on gender quotas as a mechanism for change has largely overlooked these key areas. Taking into account informal institutions, power, continuity and change, it argued that understanding and explaining the persistence of male power in political recruitment is a challenge that requires unveiling how the institutions of political recruitment and selection bestow power to men in new and old ways and how political actors use existing institutions to constrain women’s inclusion.

Chapter four served as a starting point for understanding political recruitment and selection in Ireland. It showed ‘what matters’ in political recruitment and selection in Ireland, giving specific attention to the role of localism. Localism is often used to denote the desire for territorial representation but also signifies a growing expectation that political representatives be from the area they represent (Childs &

Cowley, 2011). As Chapter four argued, localism is an informal institution that requires a personal, rather than a party vote be built up within the electorate, thus it can be viewed as one type of clientelism (Bjarnegård, 2013). While localism is reflected in voting patterns of the electorate through ‘the friends and neighbours’ effect, its influence on political parties and their selection and recruitment processes have been underexplored. Chapter four showed how localism operates through a series of inter-relating informal rules and formal rules within political parties in Ireland. Formally, rules around candidate recruitment and selection are thin and largely administrative, detailing who selects and how selection should take place. However, in practice, there is a strong and consistent sense of ‘how things are done’ on the ground.

By applying a feminist institutionalist lens to existing rules and practices, Chapter five demonstrated how localism, operating through informal and formal party rules, has translated into the recruitment and selection of men. Thus, it sits alongside other feminist institutionalist work, in highlighting that one of the key ways in which male dominance is reproduced is through ‘socially shared’ rules, which although unwritten, are highly institutionalised. Local informal criteria favours men insofar as, the need for large personal networks privileges those who already have political experience in local politics, the majority of whom are men. While localism then favours the positional power of men, Chapter five also argued that men are more likely to be perceived as potential political brokers and are therefore more likely to be encouraged by party ‘gatekeepers.’ This is indicated by overwhelming use of male-dominated sporting organisations as informal recruiting grounds. While undoubtedly personal networks matter to obtain a vote under a locally oriented system, political parties are therefore key intermediaries in determining what networks matters. Thus, although localism may set the over-arching framework within which political parties operate, it is also interpreted and wielded by political parties in gendered ways. Chapter five also showed the gendered implications of decentralised and inclusive selection, showing that the need for pre-existing personal networks at the selection stage rewards longevity and thus bestows disproportionate

preference and privilege to incumbents, reproducing the masculine nature of Irish politics.

The thesis then showed the impact of new institutional rules designed to undermine male dominance in recruitment and selection in Ireland: legislative gender quotas. Evidence from the case study showed that gender quotas provided the necessary impetus for the national parties to actively change internal party processes in ways they thought would produce more gender-balanced candidate slates. As Chapter six demonstrated, male dominance in political recruitment was challenged and there was some success in re-casting the gendered operation of institutions of political recruitment and selection. The Irish case demonstrates that new formal institutional rules do have the potential to alter traditional gendered practices and processes. The meeting of the target by political parties in the Irish context and the subsequent shift in male over-representation is a measurable result of reforms made by political parties to internal recruitment and selection processes. This links to the broader FI literature, which asserts that although institutions are never neutral and interact with gender and power in different ways, there is space for negotiation and transformation (Beckwith, 2005; Chappell, 2010)

The findings also show the endurance of informal rules after the introduction of new formal institutional measures. As Chapter six showed, informal rules around the ideal candidate and about who selects continued to shape parties' behaviour. However, while the importance of localism remained, shaping party strategies for change, national parties worked within the informal rules of the game to try and ensure a greater number of female candidates were selected. Although new rules did not cause a psychological shift within parties, they did cause a procedural one incentivising parties to actively recruit and encourage women and equip them with informal candidate criteria. Furthermore, it showed a shift in the use of the formal rules. While formal rules have traditionally been used to the benefit of men, these old rules were used in new ways to challenge male dominance following new institutional measures. Chapter six showed that gender quotas did install the necessary motivation to alter the will of the central party, causing them to use formal rules to ensure the selection of female candidates. As highlighted in Chapters four



and five, ‘adding’ candidates to locally selected tickets and issuing directives were not, however new practices; for the most part the power to do this already existed in the formal rules and were actively used, particularly to ensure geographical balance and the presence of ‘electable candidates’ on party tickets. Thus, despite the accusation of centralisation, the findings contend that resistance to the use of central formal rules was a resistance to a shift in who they benefited, not to the rules themselves.

However, the Irish case also reiterates the ‘gendered difficulties of embedding innovations and reforms within a pre-existing institutional context’ (Kenny, 2013:174; see also Chappell, 2011; Mackay, 2014) by demonstrating the enduring effects and gendered legacies of pre-existing institutions. As argued in Chapter three, gender quotas are a ‘layered’ form of change (Thelen, 2003; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010); they are introduced alongside or on top of existing informal and formal rules, norms and practices that have traditionally empowered men. While gender quotas may cause some institutional elements to be renegotiated, others may persist or have durable legacies that reproduce male power. In the Irish context, national parties were confronted by the gendered legacies of localism and of having traditionally recruited, encouraged, groomed and selected men due to local masculinised perceptions of ‘the good candidate.’ These historical processes had palpable effects: most notably, the presence of an overwhelming number of men, both incumbents and aspirants, who had actively engaged in network-building in the electorate such that they were considered the most electable and legitimate candidates.

While pointing to the enduring legacies of masculinised and localised selection, the findings also showed how political actors in powerful institutional positions drew on existing institutions in new and old ways to re-assert male dominance and block women’s access to political power following new rules. As Chapter three argued, gender quotas as a form of institutional change explicitly seek to disrupt power settlements within political parties and thus are subject to resistance from both men and women, who benefited from such gendered settlements. Looking towards micro-strategies of resistance, the findings draw attention to the practices carried out by those faced with change. It, therefore, uncovers some of the ‘every day forms of

resistance' that were carried out following the introduction of new institutional measures. While institutionalist analysis has been a useful tool for understanding the reproduction of structural inequalities over time, it has been less useful for understanding these micro-processes (Scott, 1990). Furthermore, descriptions of explicit resistance often dominate accounts of institutional change, with open and visible conflict gaining the most attention. More nuanced and subtle forms of resistance are important, however, in order to understand attempts to re-inscribe male legitimacy, while correspondingly delegitimising female political candidacies. As Chapter seven showed, discursive strategies of 'othering', intimidation and domination techniques and tactical voting at the local level were used to constrain and resist new rules and to re-assert male legitimacy. Although the practical resources and networks that male aspirants and incumbents had built could be viewed as an 'unfortunate consequence' of traditionally having recruited, encouraged and locally selecting men, active resistance to gender quotas also points to the ways in which gendered privileges were defended and how male dominance was therefore re-inscribed in institutions following attempts to challenge it. This marks a shift from continuity to resistance, highlighting that male dominance is not a hangover from the past; rather it is produced and reproduced through very active processes which seek to re-assert the status quo.

These power-holding strategies may be 'seemingly trivial,' however, they reveal a lot about the interaction between actors, institutions and power. While, existing research has shown that rule-breaking or a general lack of rule enforcement by key party actors is central to ensuring the re-enforcement of male dominance (Kenny, 2013), the findings at hand show that resistance to women's inclusion occurred within the established rules of the game. 'Rule-breaking' was not a central component of ensuring male dominance, rather, at the local level, male aspirants were in positions of power such that they were better able to 'make, set and interpret' the rules (Kenny, 2013) which further placed them in an advantageous position. Given that no explicit 'rule-breaking' occurred, the findings again bring attention to the ways in which political actors used institutional rules in new and old ways to re-assert male dominance and block women's access to political power following new

institutional measures. Crucially, then, the findings reflect the normative and practical tools available to those in privileged institutional positions to protect their position under threat.

While the legacies of decentralised and inclusive selection made it difficult for female candidates to be selected at selection conventions by the popular vote, 'local democracy' as an institutional narrative also performed this function. The discursive strategies used by political actors to delegitimise female candidates and re-enforce their own privilege were not free-floating but rather were informed by the institutional context, which made certain narratives relevant and powerful to invoke. Rival male aspirants were discursively linked with 'local democracy,' while women were associated with 'centralisation.' This association had important gendered implications insofar as it delegitimised women as 'Other' while associating men with traditional and well-accepted values. These discursive and gendered strategies of 'Othering' have been noted in other contexts (Hawkesworth, 2003: 534; Puwar, 2004; Kenny, 2013:156), however in the case study at hand the discourses through which women were marked as different were particular to the institutional context. This highlights that resistance is institutionally dependent; although certain strategies may re-occur across contexts and are transferable, they take on a particular a hue depending on the existing context. Well-established rules, norms and narratives, both formal and informal, thus acted as resources that facilitated resistance during times of challenge (Lowndes, 2005; Campbell, 2010; Mackay, 2014; Krook, 2016).

Ultimately the ways in which change and continuities in male dominance can co-exist following new rules, echoing claims made by other FI scholars (Murray, 2010a; Verge & de la Fuente ,2014). Adding to the existing literature on institutional change and layering, the findings showed that challenging male dominance was not a zero-sum game, rather, change and resistance happened in tandem. Chapters six and seven highlighted how the national parties pursued strategies which attempted to protect the status quo, as shaped by localism, while simultaneously intervening in recruitment and selection to try to challenge it. Quota implementation strategies were predicated on a negotiation between old gendered perceptions of 'electability' which privileged male incumbents a new need to reach the thirty per cent quota. The formal

rules were therefore used in old ways to reproduce male dominance. As Chapter seven showed, central intervention was simultaneously used to ensure the protection of incumbents and their interests and networks. Not intervening, that is not issuing a directive or adding a female candidate in certain constituencies was also a strategy used to the same effect.

## **8.2 Contribution of the thesis**

This thesis applies a feminist institutionalist approach to the question of male dominance in political recruitment and selection. Thus, it applies a rapidly growing framework to the reframed question of male dominance with a new case study in order to generate new theoretical and empirical insights.

### **8.2.1 Localism and Irish politics**

Empirically, the thesis adds evidence to the study of localism in Irish politics and to the study of male dominance and recruitment and selection in the Republic of Ireland. Although localism has been identified as an obstacle to women within Irish politics (Randall & Smyth, 1987; McGing & White, 2012), few studies have sought to understand how localism privileges men. Furthermore, given the first application of the quota only occurred in February 2016, this thesis is the first in-depth study of the implementation of these new measures and their impact on male dominance in recruitment and selection. Through tracking these processes, it therefore provides new data and makes a significant contribution to the Irish scholarship on gender and politics. The thesis is also of interest to the broader ‘mainstream’ literature on recruitment and selection and party politics in the Republic of Ireland. While localism is recognised widely in the Irish context and in political science literature as a political logic or element of political culture, this thesis recognises and defines it as an informal institution. In situating it within an institutionalist framework, it therefore moves the study of localism and its impact on party recruitment and selection into new theoretical waters and offers a base upon which further feminist or mainstream analyses could build upon.

Moreover, the thesis contributes to the study of Irish politics by highlighting some of the broader implications of localism. Localism, in its essence, benefits and favours those who know the most people. Given the connection between localism and electability, which is shaped by the electoral system, it is unlikely that parties will ever voluntarily shed the logics of localism. This thesis does, however, raise some critical questions about its value as a guiding institution in recruitment and selection. Although the determination of a good quality candidate is thoroughly contested (Murray, 2014; 2015), it is hard to see the merits of localism. Male dominance aside, the thesis therefore draws attention to some of the other unintended consequences and dynamics of the process which require further attention.

### **8.2.2 Gender quotas as a mechanism for change**

Analytically, the thesis draws on literature from a number of scholarly fields and in doing so contributes to a number of bodies of work that generally don't engage with one another. First, this thesis adds to the existing literature on gender quotas as a mechanism for change. The popularity of gender quotas as a mechanism for reform is unrivalled and they continue to be adopted in different forms across the globe. These findings, therefore, add to an expanding scholarly field which informs the work of institutional designers and feminist critical political actors who wish to challenge politics as a male bastion. While the existing quota literature has largely focused on the role of formal or systemic institutions in shaping quota outcomes, paying attention to the role of the electoral system and the quota design itself (Jones, 2009; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009), this thesis showed the importance of informal institutions and their enactment by political parties in understanding reform processes. This does not diminish the role of the electoral system. This thesis has also shown that electoral systems matter. However, it draws attention to the relationship and interaction between the electoral system and informal institutions following gender quotas and furthermore, it highlights that it is parties who must navigate the institutional context. It therefore reiterates as Threlfall (2007: 1074) argues, that: 'an enabling electoral system only creates opportunities and it is up to the political parties who control candidate selection to use them.'

Moreover, a central contribution of the thesis is its focus on the impact of gender quotas on male dominance in recruitment and selection, as opposed to a sole focus on women's under-representation. This thesis, therefore, goes beyond the numerical logics of the existing literature to bring attention to the impact of new rules on the more substantive aspects of male dominance. The added-value of this approach is two-fold. First, it demonstrates that while male-over-representation may be challenged, male dominance more broadly can persist and re-emerge in different forms. Second, in drawing attention to intra-party processes it highlights the complex process of negotiation, change and resistance that occur within political parties, warning against the conceptualisation of quotas as 'critical junctures' (Murray, 2010a; Verge & de la Fuente, 2014). While existing literature often views quotas as a 'success' or 'failure', this thesis shows that quotas are not the end point, but the 'beginning, of a long and contested process to transform the principles and practices privileging men over women as political actors' (Krook, 2016: 269).

In focusing on male dominance in recruitment and selection, the thesis also has broader implications with regards to the use of gender quotas as mechanisms for gendered change. If indeed male dominance is the object of reform, there may be a need for new and more creative devices and incentives which specifically target the ways in which men are empowered within parties and within recruitment and selection. The findings outlined in this thesis specifically draw attention to the ways in which power is invested in and maintained by political elites, which explicitly aim to exclude others. These informal practices of 'branch-stuffing', patronage and intimidation strategies are questionable not just from a gender perspective but from the perspective of transparency and fairness. Given that power is institutionally specific, power-holding strategies will depend on individual contexts; however, the findings suggest that, if political parties wish to challenge male dominance, it may be necessary to go beyond tactics to include women to approaches which explicitly challenge the accumulation of power and resources by political actors.

### **8.2.3 Male dominance in candidate recruitment and selection**

Second, the study at hand contributes theoretically to the study of male dominance and political recruitment and selection. Reinforcing the conclusions of other FI scholars, this research establishes gender as a foundational part of institutional processes, outlining the ways in which institutions work to bestow power to gendered actors and highlights the gendered effects of recruiting and selecting candidates in various ways. It therefore adds to existing feminist work while also offering new insights to party politics scholarship and particularly candidate recruitment and selection, which has largely been gender-blind in its analysis.

The thesis also contributes to the study of informal institutions in recruitment and selection. While interest in informal institutions is growing, it is still comparatively scarce, both within the mainstream and feminist literature. This work, therefore, answers the call for greater interrogation into the role of the unwritten rules of the game in determining recruitment and selection (Annesley, 2015; Kenny & Bjarnegård, 2015; Kenny & Bjarnegård, 2016; Kenny & Bjarnegård, 2017). In line with existing feminist institutionalist work, the case study vividly demonstrated the importance of informal institutions in shaping the behaviour of political actors and the recruitment and selection of male political candidates. While existing FI work has shown that informal institutions are crucial to the reproduction of male dominance, often hindering the impact of new rules (Kenny, 2013; Bjarnegård, 2013; Chappell & Waylen, 2013: 607; Mackay, 2014; Waylen, 2017a), this thesis has highlighted the central role of political parties in creating and challenging male dominance. The findings show that, like formal institutions, informal institutions set the rules of the games but how those rules are enacted and interpreted to create or minimise male dominance is dependent on political parties. The analysis at hand showed that while localism shaped the need for personal networks in the electorate, both before and after new institutional rules, there was a procedural shift in recruitment which altered the way in which this criteria has traditionally favoured men.

Moreover, the thesis enriches understandings of the interaction between the formal and informal rules in reproducing male dominance. Although FI work on recruitment and selection has been key in showing the importance and role of the informal, uncovering ‘the hidden life’ of institutions and challenging mainstream assumptions on ‘what matters’, there is arguably less work which focuses on the formal rules. This is because, in many cases, formal rules governing recruitment and selection are non-existent, vague or simply not adhered to. Moreover, when formal rules regarding selection and recruitment do exist, they are rarely explicit in their empowerment of men. It is critically important, however, that we uncover the interaction between formal and informal institutions and understand the contextual dynamics between the two which serve to ‘keep men in and shut women out’ (cf Jonhson, 2016; see also Bjarnegård & Kenny, 2015; 2016). The findings at hand demonstrate the interplay between the two by showing how informal candidate criteria, was enforced and reproduced through formal rules, both before and after gender quotas. Chapter five showed that although a local gendered criterion was informal and unwritten, it frequently determined national party intervention, recreating gendered consequences. The thesis therefore directs our attention to the ‘play’ that is afforded to those in positions of power to use the formal rules to protect both their own personal interests and the status quo. FI literature has shown that the ‘rules in form’ are designed and intended for specific purposes, there is often a gap between how they function in practice. Although centralised powers regarding selection are justified upon the need to create a ‘balanced’ and electable slate of candidates, the formal rules were at times used to ensure the selection of candidates based on personal connections and patronage, often to the benefit of male aspirants. The positional power of male incumbents also allowed them greater access to the formal rules enabling them to protect their own power, interests and personal networks.

The thesis also makes a step towards gendering local inclusive selection, and intra-party democracy more broadly and therefore contributes specifically to the growing debate on these issues within both mainstream and feminist literature on political parties, recruitment and selection. Applying an FI lens to the issue of male dominance, this thesis has therefore reiterated the need to ‘critically evaluate the



ideals and goals of intraparty democracy’ (Kenny & Verge, 2016: 362; see also Childs, 2013). This body of research has developed in response to the growing trend across Europe and other parts of the world to ‘democratise’ selection processes by disseminating power to rank and file party members. In line with other research on the gender ‘paradox of primaries’ (Hinojosa, 2012), the research shows the gendered processes embedded in these methods, which empower those that have been there the longest and favour the status quo. The case study reveals that the need for networks in democratised localised selection provides disproportional power to long-standing institutional actors. There are two reasons for this. First, the building of a network requires time. One cannot decide to acquire a large and loyal personal network and have it be realised immediately. Rather, entering into, creating and building a personal network is a process whereby trust and loyalty are nurtured. Although a simple point, it is important to highlight that although personal connections, bonds and networks are a basic part of human interaction and social life, investment in social relations, takes time. There is a temporal aspect to network-building insofar as it privileges those who have been there the longest. Second, in order to build a network explicitly for political purposes, both within the political party and within the local electorate, an aspirant must have the intent to run as a candidate. Upon developing political aspirations, an aspirant begins to invest in these social relations, aware of the importance of this process in recruitment and selection. Within an inclusive decentralised system, the transfer of personal networks into the party, that is, the act of mobilising personal networks to join the party and consequently gain voting rights requires a long-term plan to run for election, indeed it requires long-term political ambition.

While mainstream institutionalist work on political parties focuses almost exclusively on the unintended and varying consequences of selections *methods* (Gallagher & Marsh, 1988; Katz, 2001; Hazan & Rahat, 2010), particularly localised inclusive methods, the findings here highlights the risk in conceptualising selection and recruitment as stages of the process which can be seen in strict isolation. Thus, the thesis shows that the ‘processes involved are so entangled that it is seldom possible to determine where recruitment ends and selection begins’ (Siavelis &

Morgenstern, 2008: 30). Crucially mainstream accounts fail to take into account the fact that men have traditionally been encouraged to run for political office by both local and central selectorates, which has encouraged them to build the necessary resources, in both the electorate and the party, which enable them to be selected through 'democratic' means, that is, the popular local vote. Without understanding the informal, historical and gendered patterns of recruitment, existing work fails to see why men often have more support at the local level.

While previous feminist scholarship has shown the ways in which gender affects political ambition (Lawless & Fox, 2005; 2010) such that women are less likely to put themselves forward for nomination, the case study showed that 'asking women' is not enough to ensure selection and counter male dominance in a decentralised inclusive system, pointing to the structural barriers in selecting women. Having been historically encouraged, it was men who had been incentivised to institutionalise their power advantage by building explicitly personal networks within the party selectorate. While existing work has focused on the gap between selecting women and electing women, this thesis highlights the disjuncture between recruiting women and selecting women. Parties may ask women to run and ensure they have the skills and informal criteria to be electable, however, male dominance in selection may still be difficult to tackle. This highlights the institutional and individual resistance towards selecting women even when they are 'qualified' and good candidates. Even though many more female aspirants had the local experience that is associated with 'merit,' this did not directly translate into selection at the local level, thus highlighting the indistinctness of this category and the distinct problem that selection rather than recruitment remains for women aspirants.

The thesis also contributes to questions of merit within recruitment and selection and by extension normative resistance to gender quotas. Perhaps the most common argument against gender quotas is that they undermine the quality of candidates by privileging the category of gender over ability. It is proposed that political representatives, like all other professions, should be the 'best people for the job' and that affirmative action measures skew selection based on an aspirant's capabilities. Women, therefore, are chosen because of their sex, as opposed to merit. The

underlying presumption of this objection to quotas is that traditional selection and recruitment processes, in both political and corporate spheres are meritocratic and furthermore, that meritocracy is gender-neutral. Consequently, it is assumed that those already within the system, largely incumbent males, were chosen based on merit and thus any threat to their position would be unjust. A common response from both academics and female politicians is to assert that female aspirants are quality parliamentarians and candidates. Indeed, existing work has shown that quota women are just as good as their male counterparts (Murray, 2010b; 2012; 2014; Franceschet & Piscopo, 2012; O' Brien, 2012; Allen et al., 2016). Through a focus on male dominance in political recruitment and selection, both before and after the introduction of gender quotas, this thesis shifts the focus towards the ways in which existing and traditional processes were not meritocratic, often unfair and have the potential to produce politicians of questionable quality. Rather than assert that women are 'good' candidates, it unpacks what is necessary to become a candidate, what resources are required, what practices are necessary to engage in order to be considered electable and selectable.

#### **8.2.4 Feminist institutionalism**

Third, this thesis contributes to the feminist institutionalist literature by applying an FI approach to the question of male dominance in political recruitment and selection, demonstrating how the rules of the game are used to empower and privilege men. While FI work has been interested in gendering the institutions of candidate recruitment and selection in order to explain the causes and consequences of female under-representation, this subtle reframing has allowed new questions to be explored and has thus given a fresh perspective on the operation of gender and political institutions. Most notably, the emphasis on power and indeed power struggles draws attention to the competing forces within political parties, warning against the treatment of political parties or even party levels as homogenous. Within the existing literature on parties and selection, the role of inclusivity and centralisation in reproducing male dominance continues to be the subject of debate (Lovenduski & Norris, 1993; Kittilson, 2006; Murray, 2010a; Kenny & Verge, 2013; Kenny &

Bjarnegård, 2017). While there has been uncertainty on the subject this thesis contends that there may be an over-simplification that either national or local selection is 'good' or 'bad' for women. Rather it points to the different set of power resources, or institutional mechanisms, available to actors at the national and local level which interacts with the will to use them for resistance or change. This thesis, therefore, warns against a conflation between centralised powers and central motivations, that is, what the national party can do and what they are willing to do. This distinction is an important one to consider when theorising the impact of new rules on male dominance. The findings show that male dominance may be challenged and maintained simultaneously by different party actors at different levels using different mechanisms. Although this muddies the terrain, acknowledging this complexity is central to understanding attempts at reform and for pinpointing exactly how power is wielded. Moving towards questions of power, as opposed to a central-local dichotomy, this thesis instead draws attention to tools of resistance or institutional mechanisms available to actors at the national and local level.

Finally, this thesis contributes to the emerging body of work on informal networks within feminist institutionalist literature. Crucially, the findings show that informal networks were a major perceived influence on the recruitment and selection of men. While previous work (Hinojosa, 2012; Bjarnegård, 2013; Franceschet & Piscopo, 2014) has highlighted that men have greater access to male-dominated networks or 'power monopolies', this case study highlights that, due to a prolonged history of gendered recruitment, informal encouragement and grooming, men disproportionately have engaged in network building, which is essential for selection in a localised democratised system. It therefore moves from the gendered dynamics of entering a network to the temporal aspects of both building one's own network and building loyalty within an existing network. New rules such as gender quotas aim to increase the number of female candidacies; however, their effectiveness was mitigated by the pre-existing institutions and the gendered legacies that these long-standing institutions have produced. Although this points to the enduring effects of masculinised institutions and their role in shaping institutional change, it also

highlights the new ways that existing norms and institutions are wielded to maintain male dominance.

### **8.3 Limits**

This thesis has added to the theoretical study of gender quotas, male dominance in recruitment and selection and feminist institutionalism. It has also added empirical evidence to the study of Irish politics; however, it also has limits that must be addressed. First, studying the persistence and reproduction of male dominance in a context where male parliamentary over-representation was altered to some significance may pose questions about the focus and framing of the thesis. Relative to other contexts, where new rules were disregarded or radically subverted, the Irish case can be, and often is, considered a ‘success story.’ While presenting this research over the last number of years, it was not uncommon to encounter some puzzlement, particularly from Irish feminists who had worked inside and outside of political parties to challenge the status quo and achieve this result. In one respect, this touches on broader questions of what successful change is and indeed how gendered change is measured. As touched on in Chapter one and reiterated in Chapter three, the existing literature on gender quotas has given great attention to numerical outcomes to the detriment of more subtle internal processes of change and resistance. A consequence of this is that new institutional measures are often considered a success or a failure, without acknowledging that change and resistance can happen simultaneously and in different ways. This thesis contends that that nominal male over-representation is only one aspect of male dominance and shifts in gendered patterns of representation are only one indicator of change. Thus, its focus is on internal party processes and mechanisms, which are so often overlooked. There are therefore a number of good reasons for choosing to study the impact of new rules on male dominance in recruitment and selection, as opposed to women’s under-representation, which have been previously outlined. However, while this framing poses new questions and generates previously unrecognised insights, it is important to note that a limitation of the thesis is that less attention is given to the ways in

which male dominance was challenged. This was a trade-off in choosing to focus on the more substantive aspects of male dominance and it is inevitable that due to time and word limitations, these decisions must be made. However, this limitation may be something to consider for future research on the subject, such that a focus on men in politics and on the persistence of male dominance does not overshadow positive change and crucially the work of feminist actors and women's movements that work to ensure it.

Second, while much of the emerging research points to differences between political parties (Childs, 2008: xix; Lovenduski, 2005) highlighting that parties have distinct gender regimes (Caul, 1999; Kittilson, 2006; Murray, 2010a; Verge & de la Fuente 2014; Verge 2015; Kenny & Verge, 2015: 355), this thesis has given more attention to similarities than difference. Largely this decision reflects the findings that emerged during the course of the research. While the research had originally been designed to give a stronger focus on party differences, the role of localism and particularly the role of informal candidate criteria and decentralised inclusive selection as the key features that shaped the process emerged strongly and consistently across all of the parties, overshadowing variations in intra-party ideology and rules. It should be acknowledged, however, that differences did emerge amongst the parties, which are worthy of analysis. Much like a focus on positive gendered change, however, an emphasis on party differences could have been an entire thesis in itself. Though again this reflects the limitations of the thesis and the trade-offs that must be made, the decision to give a more prominent and in-depth focus to the over-arching role of an informal institution was a conscious one.

Third, it should also be acknowledged that the findings here are limited in their generalisability to other contexts. However, as outlined in the introduction, creating generalisable results was not the aim of the thesis. The ways in which gender operates within recruitment and selection is contextually and institutionally specific and thus in-depth qualitative single-case studies are often advocated by feminist institutionalists who acknowledge both the importance and the complexity of researching these dynamics. This thesis details male dominance in the Irish context, giving specific attention to the interaction between localism, recruitment and

selection and gender quotas and is therefore intended to contribute empirically to the Irish context and analytically to feminist institutionalist understandings of male dominance and change. While the findings are not wholly generalisable, the thesis does identify two intra-party mechanisms through which an informal institution works to reproduce male dominance which can be relevant in different contexts.

## **8.4 Moving forward**

Moving forward from this research, there are a number of areas that could be explored using a similar feminist institutionalist approach to male dominance and institutions. Future work might apply the same question and research design to other single-case studies in order to understand how gender quotas impact male dominance in political recruitment and selection. This would be particularly fruitful in other countries where localism is a central political logic to see if similar dynamics emerge. Additionally, future work on informal networks is crucial. Although informal and personal networks are central to localism, informal networks are also crucial to the maintenance of other institutions such as clientelism (Bjarnegård, 2013) and patronage (Franceschet & Piscopo 2014; Verge & de la Fuente, 2014). However, the role of informal networks within political recruitment and selection and the relationship between informal networks, male dominance and institutions is still under-theorised within feminist institutionalism. More research is therefore needed which explores these dynamics, particularly in different institutional settings.

Directly following from the research at hand, further analysis of the impact of gender quotas on male dominance in recruitment and selection in the Irish context will be necessary. Legislative gender quotas are the first step in challenging male dominance within Irish political life and the beginning of a long trajectory; the threshold will increase to 40 per cent from 2023 and following this the legislative gender quotas introduced in 2012 will cease to exist. Further research should question how, in the face of more challenging rules, political parties seek to change and maintain male dominance, in new and old ways. Considering that more women were elected in 2016, there will be a greater number of incumbent women who have actively

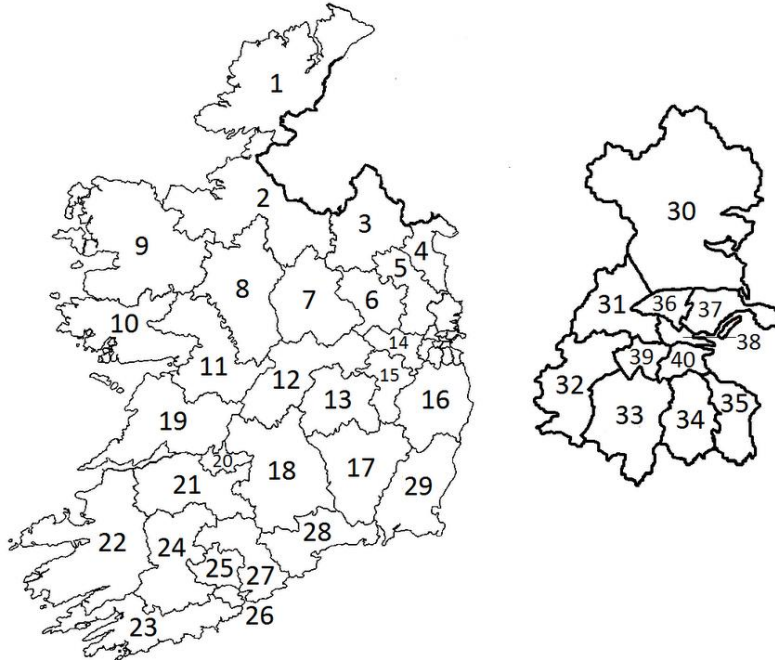
engaged in localist practices such as network-building and branch stuffing, thus strengthening their positional power. Understanding how this will influence the recruitment, selection and election of men in the future and whether similar institutional strategies are used to subvert these gains will offer greater insight into the gendered nature of the process. Furthermore, gender scholars have shown that gains with regards to gender equality are not fixed. Institutional reforms must be actively maintained or they can be subject drift, erosion or displacement (Kenny, 2013). Further research should examine whether old and masculinised ways of recruiting and selecting candidates will re-emerge following the formal removal of gender quotas or whether gender balanced candidate slates will become institutionalised within the political parties.

These future research projects reflect the many stimulating questions that have yet to be asked about male dominance which in part flow from this thesis and marks the emergence of a new agenda, which reverses the lens of traditional feminist political science. However, as the thesis has shown, this focus also provides a greater understanding of broader institutional processes by shining a spotlight on issues of power, merit, fairness and informal institutions. Applying an FI lens to male dominance, therefore, has the potential not only to further our knowledge on gender inequality but also to enhance our understanding of the political process more broadly.



# Appendices






















## Appendix 1: The Republic of Ireland divided into constituencies



1	Donegal (5)	21	Limerick (3)
2	Sligo-Leitrim (4)	22	Kerry (5)
3	Cavan-Monaghan (4)	23	Cork South West (3)
4	Louth (5)	24	Cork North West (3)
5	Meath East (3)	25	Cork North Central (4)
6	Meath West (3)	26	Cork South Central (4)
7	Longford-Westmeath (4)	27	Cork East (4)
8	Roscommon-Galway (3)	28	Waterford (4)
9	Mayo (4)	29	Wexford (5)
10	Galway West (5)	30	Dublin Fingal (5)
11	Galway East (3)	31	Dublin West (4)
12	Offaly (3)	32	Dublin Mid-West (4)
13	Laois (3)	33	Dublin South-West (5)
14	Kildare North (4)	34	Dublin Rathdown (3)
15	Kildare South (3)	35	Dún Laoghaire (4)
16	Wicklow (5)	36	Dublin North-West (3)
17	Carlow-Kilkenny (5)	37	Dublin Bay North (5)
18	Tipperary (5)	38	Dublin Central (3)
19	Clare (4)	39	Dublin South Central (4)
20	Limerick City (4)	40	Dublin Bay South (4)

**Source:** <http://irishpoliticalmaps.blogspot.co.uk/2012/06/constituency-commission-boundary.html>

## Appendix 2: Sample ballot paper 2016, Tipperary Constituency (5 seats)

<p><b>AMBROSE – FIANNA FÁIL</b> SIOBHÁN AMBROSE, of 20 Ard na Gréine, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, Public Representative.</p>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>CAHILL – FIANNA FÁIL</b> JACKIE CAHILL, of Thurles, Co. Tipperary, Farmer, Public Representative.</p>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>COONAN – FINE GAEL</b> NOEL COONAN, of Roscrea, Co. Tipperary, Public Representative.</p>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>DILLON – NON PARTY</b> MICHAEL DILLON, of Cloneygowney, Newtown, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, Unemployed/</p>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>FITZGIBBON – GREEN PARTY/ COMHAONTAS GLAS</b> GEARÓID FITZGIBBON, of 3 Ballalley Court, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, Community Organiser/Company Director.</p>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>HAYES – FINE GAEL</b> TOM HAYES, of Cahervillahow, Golden, Cashel, Co. Tipperary, Public Representative.</p>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>HEALY – NON PARTY</b> SEAMUS HEALY, of 56 Queen Street, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, Public Representative.</p>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>KELLY – THE LABOUR PARTY</b> ALAN KELLY, of Loughtea, Ballina, Co. Tipperary, Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government.</p>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>LOWRY – NON PARTY</b> MICHAEL LOWRY, of Glenreigh, Holycross, Co. Tipperary, Public Representative.</p>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>MCGRATH – NON PARTY</b> MATTIE MCGRATH, of Garran Casey, Ardfinnan, Cahir, Co. Tipperary, Public Representative.</p>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>MORRIS – SINN FÉIN</b> SÉAMUS SEÁN MORRIS, of Rathnaleen, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, Postman.</p>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>MURPHY – FINE GAEL</b> MARIE MURPHY, of Kilballyboy, Clogheen, Cahir, Co. Tipperary, Full-time Public Representative.</p>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>SMITH – FIANNA FÁIL</b> MICHAEL SMITH, of Behagloss, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary, Farmer, Public Representative.</p>			<input type="checkbox"/>

Source: <http://www.tipperarysinnfein.com/?p=1242>

## **Appendix 3: Party organisational structures**

### **The Labour Party:**

- a. The Branch
- b. Constituency Council
- c. Executive Board
- d. Central Council
- e. The Party Leader and Deputy Leader
- f. The Parliamentary Party
- g. National Conference
- h. Labour Youth
- i. Labour Women
- j. Labour Equality
- k. The Labour Trade Union Group

### **Fianna Fáil:**

- a. An Cumann/ The Branch
- b. An Coiste Áitiúil/ The Local Committee or Special Interest Group
- c. An Chomhairle Ceantair/ The District Council
- d. An Chomhairle Dáilcheantair/ The Constituency Council
- e. An Fóram Chomhairle Fhianna Fáil/ The Fianna Fáil Councillors' Forum
- f. Forám Chontae/ County Forum
- g. Ceannteathrú Fhianna Fáil/ Headquarters
- h. An Páirtí Parlaiminte/ The Parliamentary Party
- i. An Árd-Chomhairle/ The National Executive
- j. An Ard Fheis/ National Conference
- k. Ógra Fianna Fáil/ Young Fianna Fáil

### **Sinn Féin:**

- a. An Cumann/ The Branch
- b. Dáil Ceantair /
- c. An Chomhairle Ceantair/ The District Council
- d. An Chomhairle Dáilcheantair/ The Constituency Council
- e. Comhairli cúige/ Regional Councils
- f. Fóram Náisiúnta na gComhairleoirí/ Councillors Forum
- g. An Coiste Seasta
- h. Ard Oifig/ Head office
- i. The six county parliamentary group
- j. The twenty six country parliamentary group
- k. An Árd-Chomhairle/ The National Executive

- l. An Páirtí Parlaiminte/The Parliamentary Party
- m. An Ard Fheis/ National Conference

**Fine Gael:**

- a. The Branch
- b. The District Executive
- c. Constituency Executive
- d. Executive Council
- e. The Party Leader and Deputy Leader
- f. The Parliamentary Party
- g. The Ard Fheis

## Appendix 4: Full 2016 election results

Party	TDs	Male	Female	% Male	% Female
Fine Gael	50	39	11	78.0	22.0
Fianna Fáil	44	38	6	86.4	13.6
Sinn Féin	23	17	6	73.9	26.1
Labour	7	5	2	71.4	28.6
AAA–PbP (Anti-Austerity Alliance – People before Profit Alliance)	6	4	2	66.7	33.3
Social Democrats	3	1	2	33.3	66.7
Green Party	2	1	1	50.0	50.0
Workers and Unemployed Action Group	1	1	0	0	0
Independent Alliance	6	6	0	0	0
Independents 4 Change	4	2	2	50.0	50.0
Other Independents	12	9	3	75.0	25.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>77.8</b>	<b>22.2</b>
Incumbent TDs re-elected	98	82	16	83.7	16.3
Former TDs returning after an absence	8	8	0	0	0
First-time TDs	52	33	19	63.5	36.5

## **Appendix 5: List of all interviewees**

### **Fianna Fáil**

#### *National Level*

Interview no. 6, equality strategist, female, Fianna Fáil, national level, January 2015  
Interview no. 23, National Constituencies Committee member, male, Fianna Fáil, national level, March 2015  
Interview no. 25, strategist, female, Fianna Fáil, national level, March 2015  
Interview no. 37, National Constituencies Committee member, male, Fianna Fáil, national level, July 2015

#### *Local Level*

Interview no. 1, female local councillor, Fianna Fáil, August 2014 COD  
Interview no. 29, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, April 2015  
Interview no 31, unsuccessful female aspirant, April 2015  
Interview no. 32, male candidate, Fianna Fáil, May 2015  
Interview no. 33, CDC chairperson, male, Fianna Fáil, May 2015  
Interview no. 48, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, August 2015  
Interview no. 50, male candidate, Fianna Fáil, October 2015  
Interview no. 53, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, November 2015  
Interview no. 54, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, November 2015  
Interview no. 45, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, July 2015  
Interview no. 60, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, November 2015  
Interview no. 61, unsuccessful male aspirant, Fianna Fáil, November 2015  
Interview no. 62, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, November 2015  
Interview no. 64, female aspirant, Fianna Fáil, November 2015  
Interview no. 67, female candidate, Fianna Fáil, April 2016

### **Fine Gael**

#### *National Level*

Interview no. 10, equality strategist, female, national level, Fine Gael, January 2015  
Interview no. 15, Regional Organiser, male, national level, Fine Gael, February 2015  
Interview no. 17, equality strategist, female, national level, Fine Gael, March, 2015

#### *Local level*

Interview no. 3, female local councillor, Fine Gael, November 2011  
Interview no. 7, male candidate, Fine Gael, January 2015  
Interview no. 11, female candidate, Fine Gael, February 2015  
Interview no. 16, female candidate, Fine Gael, March 2015  
Interview no. 26, female candidate, Fine Gael, March 2015  
Interview no. 30, unsuccessful male aspirant, Fine Gael, April, 2015  
Interview no. 41, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fine Gael, July 2015  
Interview no. 42, unsuccessful female aspirant, Fine Gael, July 2015  
Interview no. 47, male candidate, Fine Gael, July 2015

Interview no. 51, female candidate, Fine Gael, November 2015  
Interview no. 52, male aspirant unsuccessful, Fine Gael, November 2015  
Interview no. 59, unsuccessful male aspirant, Fine Gael, November 2015

## **The Labour Party**

### *National Level*

Interview no. 9, National Executive Committee member, male, the Labour Party, January 2015  
Interview no. 12, former Organisational Committee member, female, the Labour Party, February 2015  
Interview no. 13, Labour Women Executive member, the Labour Party, February 2015  
Interview no.18, former National Executive Committee member, male, the Labour Party, March 2015  
Interview no. 21, unsuccessful female aspirant, the Labour Party, March 2015  
Interview no. 24, Regional Organiser, male, the Labour Party, March 2015  
Interview no. 27, Regional Organiser, female, the Labour Party, March 2015  
Interview no. 34, National Executive Committee member, male, the Labour Party, May 2015  
Interview no. 40, Organisational Committee member, male, the Labour Party, July 2015

### *Local Level*

Interview no.35, male candidate, the Labour Party, May 2015  
Interview no. 46, female candidate, the Labour Party, July 2015  
Interview no. 55, female aspirant, the Labour Party, November 2015  
Interview no. 56, male candidate, the Labour Party, November 2015

## **Sinn Féin**

### *National Level*

Interview no.19, former Árd Comhairle member and candidate, male, Sinn Féin, March 2015  
Interview no. 22, equality strategist, female, Sinn Féin, March 2015  
Interview no. 28, Árd Comhairle member and candidate, female, Sinn Féin, March 2015

### *Local Level*

Interview no 14, female party member, Sinn Féin, February 2015  
Interview no.36, male candidate, Sinn Féin, May 2015  
Interview no. 38, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015  
Interview no. 39, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015  
Interview no. 43, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015  
Interview no. 44, female candidate, Sinn Féin, July 2015  
Interview no. 49, male candidate, Sinn Féin, October 2015  
Interview no. 58, male candidate, Sinn Féin, November 2015

Interview no. 63, male candidate, Sinn Féin, November 2015  
Interview no. 65, female candidate, Sinn Féin, November 2015  
Interview no. 66, female candidate, Sinn Féin, November 2015

### **Academics and activist groups**

Interview no.2, member of the 50/50 group, female, October 2014  
Interview no. 4, member of the 50/50 group, female, October 2014  
Interview no.5, People Before Profit member and feminist activist, female,  
November 2014  
Interview no. 8, academic (political science and Irish politics), January 2015  
Interview no.20, co-founder of Women for Election Group, female, March 2015  
Interview no. 57, academic (sociology and sport), November 2015



## **Appendix 6: Sample set of interview questionnaires**

Below is a sample set of questions that guided the interviews that were conducted as part of the thesis fieldwork. As is the case with semi- structured interviews, these served as a template but in many cases the interview veered away from these set of questions with interviewee responses prompting new questions in that moment.

### **Personal experience**

- In your own words can you tell me a little bit about your own background and how you came to be involved in politics?
- How/why did you join your party?
- Was it easy to get involved? Was there a process to actually join? Did anyone help you? Was there a strong local branch when you joined?
- Were you recruited or did you go and seek to become a member? If so, who by?
- Were you recruited into the party with the explicit intention that you would run as a candidate?
- If no, how did you decide to run for election? Did someone ask or encourage you or did you have to put yourself forward? If the former- who?
- Did you have long-term plans for election when you joined the party?
- Can you talk me through the process of actually getting on the ticket? How do you secure a nomination? Is who nominates you important?
- Tell me about your own selection process- was there any others who wanted to run in your constituency?
- Was there central intervention?
- Was there resistance from others who wanted to run for the seat?
- How did you try and convince members to vote for you and that you were the best person for the job?
- Why do you think you succeeded/ didn't succeed at getting selected? What was the biggest obstacle to you and the biggest advantage that your competitor had?
- Did you feel the result was fair? Did you feel that you were disadvantaged?
- Do you think your experience is reflective of the norm in terms of recruitment and selection within Irish parties?
- Do you think there is clientelism in Irish politics? Is who you know more important than your position on policies?
- Are networks important in getting selected?
- Who is part of your team? How do you build one?
- Do you think the general process is democratic? Do you think it is fair?
- What is the relationship between local and national politicians in your area?
- Would they work together? Does the local rep act as a broker for TDs?
- Is there a lot of intra- party competition within the party?

- Do incumbents have a lot of sway in a constituency over who joins them on the ticket or who replaces them?
- If you're running who pays for the campaign, does the party contribute?
- What matters to the electorate in Irish politics?
- Have you ever experienced any barriers in progressing in politics?
- Have you any experienced any discrimination because of your sex?

### **Traditional candidate recruitment and selection**

- How do you look for a new candidate?
- Is there one person or set of people who have a particular responsibility to ask someone to run or recruit new candidates?
- Are candidates usually recruited and chosen from within the party structure or outside?
- Who selects candidates in the party? Why do you select in that way?
- Is the selection and recruitment process democratic? How centralised is selection?
- What is the role of the central level in selection or recruitment? How do they intervene? Do they informally intervene?
- What is needed to be deemed a 'good candidate'?
- Has there ever been any rules, formal or not in order to ensure the selection of certain types of candidates? Job descriptions?
- Are there any formal rules around recruitment or selection? How far is the process actually guided by these rules?
- Are there any non-party organisations that are particularly involved in the selection or recruitment of candidates?
- Do you think there are any problems with selection and recruitment in terms of getting the best candidates? What do you think is the biggest problem in Irish politics?
- Are networks important in terms of selection?
- How is geographical spread dealt with in the party? Are there certain rules?
- Has the parties selection and recruitment system changed at all over the years?
- What about before the OMOV system? Who had more power then?
- People keep talking to me about getting 'shafted' or blocked within their constituency- is this something that happens in your party? What does it mean? How can you stop someone else from getting on the ticket at the selection stage?
- Is the stuffing of branches common within your party/constituency?
- Why do you think women are so under-represented within politics?
- Has gender equality been something that is party of your party identity?
- Has there ever been any rules in your party, formal or not in order to ensure the selection or recruitment of women?

## Gender Quotas and change

- How did gender quotas get onto the Irish political agenda?
- Will your party meet the quota? Why? How?
- What has been the response to quotas within the party? Positive/Negative?
- What is the biggest argument for or against them in your party?
- What is the formal strategy for implementing the quota?
- How is this formal strategy playing out on the ground?
- Who is responsible for ensuring the quota is met and making changes?
- What has actually changed within the party since gender quotas have been introduced? New rules, people, processes?
- What has actually changed from before in terms of *recruiting and selecting* women?
- Has there been an increase in centralisation?
- Is there anything about the PR-STV system that makes it particularly hard or easy to implement a quota?
- Have there been any difficulties or benefits in implementing the quota with the one member one vote system (democratic selection)?
- Is there anything within your specific party that will make it particularly hard or easy to reach the quota in comparison to the other parties?
- Has there been any resistance to gender quotas in the party/constituency? Why?
- If yes, how has this effected the implementation of the quotas? Have they been subverted?
- Are you in favour of them? Why/why not?
- How is geography playing out with the new quota?
- How is localism playing out with the new quota?

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