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*Three Guiding Questions about Decentralization
and Women's Empowerment*

Since the 1980s, politicians, scholars, and policy makers from the
United Nations, the World Bank, the European Union, and the Asian
Development Bank have heralded the benefits of decentralization.
Decentralization is "a process of state reform composed by a set of public
policies that transfer responsibilities, resources, or authority from higher to
lower levels of government in the context of a specific type of state" (Falleti
2005, 328). Decentralization advocates argue that when decisions are made
at a subnational level, all citizens will believe they can make a difference and
will participate, thus injecting new blood into the political process (Blair
2000; Brady, Schlozman, and Verba 1999; Putnam 1993). By "subnational,"
I mean all levels of government below the national level. Most countries
in the world can be considered to have three main levels of government:
national, meso, and local.[1] Consequently, international organizations argue
that decentralization of politics brings about more efficient, responsive public

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1. For example, in the United States, national government offices are primarily located in
Washington, D.C.; meso-level offices in the fifty state capitals; and local offices in cities, towns,
and counties. Meso units go by different names in different countries: in the United States, meso
units are states; in China, they are provinces; and in Switzerland, they are cantons. Because this
book evaluates decentralization trends across many countries, I employ the term "meso" as most
generalizable for governmental units situated one level below the national level of government
(see Vengroff, Nyiri, and Fugeiro 2003). I use the term "local" to refer to units of government
that are at neither the national nor the meso level, such as counties, municipalities, townships,
villages, and hamlets (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994). When the causal logic of my argument
applies to both meso and local levels of government, I use the umbrella term "subnational."

policies (Eaton and Schroeder 2010; Montinola, Qian, and Weingast 1995; Oates 1972; Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema 1983; Tiebout 1956; Treisman 2007) made by a more diverse set of local citizens than rarified policies made by elite politicians in a nation's capital (World Bank 2004).

Public officials have largely responded to these appeals to decentralize governance, but they have done so without questioning whether decentralization benefits women and men equally. My central aim in this book is to explain *under what conditions decentralization will lead to women's empowerment in countries around the globe.* As of 2010, at least 80 percent of countries had a meso tier of government between the national government and local municipalities.[2] Moreover, these meso-level governments accounted for 65 percent of government spending (Falleti 2005).

In her seminal discussion of decentralization, Tulia Falleti (2005, 2010) describes three relevant sectors of decentralization: political, administrative, and fiscal. Briefly, these sectors correspond to the power to choose meso-level or local officials, the power to spend at the meso or local level, and the power to tax at the meso or local level. More specifically, *political decentralization* refers to creating, moving, or reinvigorating subnational political spaces. Falleti states, "Examples of this type of reform are the popular election of mayors and governors who in previous constitutional periods were appointed, the creation of sub-national legislative assemblies, or constitutional reforms that strengthen the political autonomy of sub-national governments" (2005, 329). *Administrative decentralization* refers to the "administration and delivery of social services such as education, health, social welfare, or housing to subnational governments" (329). Falleti stresses that administrative decentralization might or might not entail authority over these policies and that they can be funded (by the national government) or unfunded (as the responsibility of the subnational unit, with its own preexisting revenues). *Fiscal decentralization* refers to measures to "increase the revenues or fiscal autonomy of subnational governments . . . such as an increase of transfers from the central government, the creation of new sub-national taxes, or the delegation of tax authority that was previously national" (329).

It is important to note that decentralization reforms arise in context-specific ways. In a given country, decentralization reforms might apply to some policy areas and not others. Countries can enact weak decentralization in a set of parliamentary laws that politicians can easily change after an election, or countries can enshrine rigid decentralization as a constitutional reform that protects the status of subnational units. Decentralization

2. Eighty percent is a conservative estimate. For example, Daniel Treisman (2002) collected data on tiers of government in 154 countries and found that all but Singapore had more than one tier of government.

as a reform of the 1980s onward occurs as an overlying reform, potentially affected by variables that preceded it. For example, countries adopt decentralization at different levels of development (high, middle, or lesser), and countries possess a preexisting constitutional structure (unitary, federal, or hybrid) and political party structures that themselves are centralized or decentralized in how they choose candidates (Hinojosa 2012). However, any package of decentralization reforms affects one or more of the political, administrative, or fiscal sectors.

The main argument I make in this book is that all three sectors of decentralization must be "engendered," or made inclusive of women, to achieve women's empowerment and gender equality. Engendering occurs only when what I term the *gender policy trifecta* is present. The gender policy trifecta consists of three nodes, all of which I argue are necessary and sufficient for women's empowerment in decentralized states around the globe (see Figure 1.1). I construct the gender policy trifecta in terms general enough to be useful in examining women's empowerment at any level of governance, but since the focus in this book is on decentralized politics, I examine countries in terms of whether this trifecta applies at the subnational level of governance.

The first node of the gender policy trifecta refers to legislative gender quotas, which enforce that legislative seats are open to women at the subnational level to engender political decentralization. The second node is gender mainstreaming, or consideration of policy implications on women and men, enforced by subnational women's policy agencies, to engender administrative decentralization. The third node is gender-responsive budgeting at the
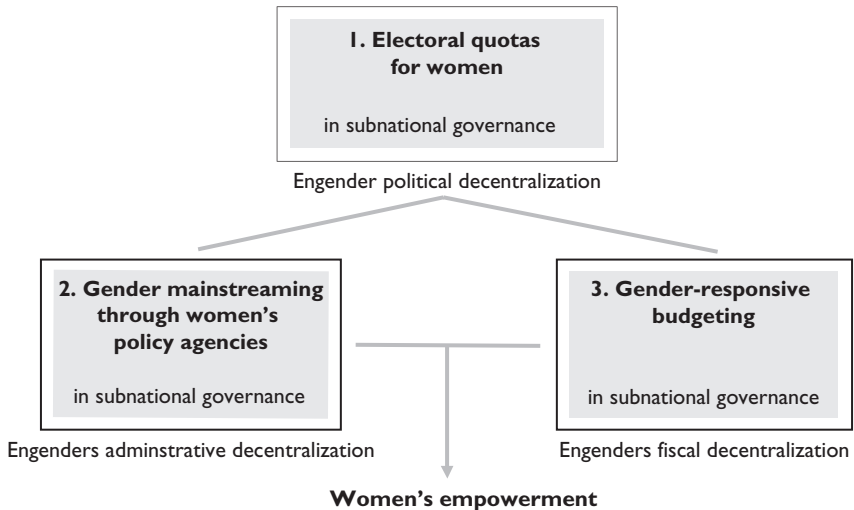

Figure 1.1 The gender policy trifecta in decentralization

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subnational level, enforced to include women's organizations in civil society and engender fiscal decentralization. The United Nations defines gender-responsive budgeting as "government planning, programming and budgeting that contributes to the advancement of gender equality and the fulfillment of women's rights. It entails identifying and reflecting needed interventions to address gender gaps in government policies, plans and budgets" (United Nations Development Fund for Women, n.d.).

Decentralization entails the distribution of a set of complex political institutions that may affect men and women differently in terms of political power and decision making. While mainstream research on decentralization has not examined its gendered implications, international organizations have assumed it leads to only positive outcomes for women. Karen Beckwith (2005) notes gender can operate as both a category[3] and a process.[4] For example, the category of gender may help us explain why female meso-level legislators are more likely than male meso-level legislators to support government spending on shelters for battered women. The process of gender refers to the possible differential effects of the apparently gender-neutral policy of decentralization on women and men. If power is pushed from a diverse national government to local tribes to make policy more responsive to local needs, and through closer analysis we find that female politicians make up 20 percent of the national government but only 2 percent of tribal authorities, then the apparently gender-neutral institution of decentralization is not gender neutral at all. This second step of analyzing the process of gender has been lacking in the literature on decentralization. For example, Daniel Treisman's (2007) *The Architecture of Government* uses formal modeling and examples to test the outcomes of decentralization. He lists seven outcomes, ranging from efficiency to policy innovation. His elegant and nuanced analysis shows support mainly for the veto player hypothesis (the expectation that decentralization creates more policy players, leading to fewer policy changes) and mixed or no support for other outcomes, but his analysis does not address gendered implications of decentralization.

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3. "By gender as category, I mean the multidimensional mapping of socially constructed, fluid, politically relevant identities, values, conventions, and practices conceived of as masculine and/or feminine, with the recognition that masculinity and femininity correspond only fleetingly and roughly to 'male' and 'female.' Using gender as a category permits us to delineate specific contexts in which feminine and masculine behaviors, actions, attitudes, and preferences, for example, result in particular outcomes, such as military intervention, social movement success, and electoral choice, among others" (Beckwith 2000, 131).

4. "By 'process,' I mean behaviors, conventions, practices, and dynamics engaged in by individuals, organizations, movements, institutions, and nations. . . . [G]ender as process is manifested as the differential effects of apparently gender-neutral structures and policies upon women and men, and upon masculine and/or feminine actors" (Beckwith 2000, 132).

In contrast, international organizations have largely assumed that decentralization leads to women's empowerment for three main reasons. First, some evidence suggests that subnational political offices are less competitive and more open to female candidates than sought-after, media-saturated national positions (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Lovenduski 1986; Randall 1987; Thomas and Wilcox 2005; Vengroff, Nyiri, and Fugiero 2003). Second, subnational governments tend to focus more heavily on policy areas like education, health, and social welfare—issues about which many women care deeply and therefore in which they participate (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994). Third, in terms of time, as in scheduling and daily commute, meso-level politics could provide a much more feasible sphere of participation for women by allowing more room for family and home responsibilities (Chaney, Mackay, and McAllister 2007; Vengroff, Nyiri, and Fugiero 2003). While research shows that more women are in meso-level elected offices in liberal democracies (see Schedler 1998; Vengroff, Nyiri, and Fugiero 2003), international organizations do not test these assumptions in the electoral democracies where they bankroll decentralization.[5] International organizations report positive findings in the literature studying liberal democracies and report some negative outcomes for women in countries with decentralization reforms, but they do not follow up by proposing and testing specific policy reforms to improve future rounds of decentralization for women. Decentralization could lead to more opportunities for women—a true democratization of politics such that elected officials respond to women and men and feel pressured to represent all constituents. Conversely, decentralization could push political power into the hands of local traditional elites who are predominantly male or who deprioritize women's political involvement, leading to stagnant or retrograde policy outcomes (Beall 2005). In contrast to the expectation of international organizations, decentralization could be a façade, giving the mere appearance of democratization (Rodriguez 1997). Decentralization could push political

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5. Andreas Schedler creates a typology ranging from authoritarian regime to electoral democracy to liberal democracy to advanced democracy. An authoritarian regime lacks competitive elections and civil liberties. An electoral democracy follows procedures for competitive elections but "fail[s] to uphold the political and civil freedoms essential for liberal democracy" (Schedler 1998, 93). A liberal democracy has both competitive elections and civil freedoms, and advanced democracies "possess some positive traits over and above the minimal defining criteria of liberal democracy, and therefore rank higher in terms of democratic quality than many new democracies" (93). Because international organizations fund decentralization in so many electoral democracies, it is critical to test decentralization's impact on women's empowerment among countries that include electoral democracies and liberal democracies. The countries I selected to study include an advanced democracy (the United Kingdom), a liberal democracy (Poland), and an electoral democracy (Pakistan). To those who argue that democracy precedes women's rights, I say that the direction of that relationship is the reverse; as women are empowered, democracy in that country is strengthened.

decision making to meso units, where women are not ready to run for office or are excluded from political life (Keefer, Narayan, and Vishwanath 2006) or where women's organizations are too few or fragmented to make an impact (Haussman 2005; Haussman, Sawer, and Vickers 2010; Siahaan 2004).

Measuring Women's Empowerment and the Three Guiding Questions

How can we find the conditions under which decentralization leads to women's empowerment? The United Nations defines women's empowerment as "women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally" (United Nations 2010). Women's empowerment consists of not just individual agency, decision-making power, and economic access but also the ability to influence social and political institutions (United Nations 2010). The United Nations' definition of women's empowerment suggests that women's voices in "social and political institutions" matter and should therefore be heard at all levels of governance. Women's empowerment thus means women articulating their priorities in public life and not needing males to do it instead of them or on their behalf. Men are key allies in bringing about women's empowerment, but women's empowerment cannot happen through men alone. So women themselves must play an active role in decentralized governance. But how will we know women's empowerment when we see it? The next section presents three guiding questions that frame the book's inquiry in ways that are meaningful to policy makers, scholars, activists, and those interested in women's rights around the world.

Women, Feminist Policy, and Representation

In any country, women are a diverse group of individuals, and "women's interests" are plural and contested rather than unified and essentialized (Verloo 2007). Women are diverse by virtue of their social class, age, race or ethnicity, religion, language, and sexual orientation. Other significant categories and identities intersect within an individual woman, shaping her views and policy preferences (Celis 2009; Celis et al. 2008; Hancock 2004; hooks 2000). It is also important to emphasize that either women or men may advocate feminist policies. According to Amy Mazur (2002, 30–31), legislation qualifies as feminist policy if it meets at least three of five components:

- making women's status equal to men's
- reducing or eliminating gender hierarchies or patriarchies
- focusing on both public and private spheres or an approach that avoids distinctions between the two
- attending to both men and women
- acknowledging ideas associated with a recognized feminist group, movement, or actor in context

While women might share core policy interests, such as eliminating violence against women, most scholars today recognize the diversity of women's policy preferences and employ research designs that let women identify their top political priorities. For example, Lisa Baldez (2011, 2014) argues that we can begin to measure women's interests by looking at the statements women's organizations make to international entities like the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, which requires 187 state parties to report annually on progress implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The unprecedented CEDAW treaty codifies core issues that women around the world share. *Empowered by Design* looks at what women want both within and across countries. Therefore, the first guiding question is *do women have diverse policy priorities that vary as much within one country as they do across different countries?*

Rural women from different countries might have very similar policy priorities, but urban and rural women residing in the same country might disagree markedly on public policy priorities. The original data I collected for this book allow me to address this guiding question about political aggregation (for further discussion of political aggregation, see Carey 2000). Depending on the unit of geographic analysis, different policy priorities emerge. Previous studies examined whether decentralization increases representation for particular women's groups of interest, such as Dalit women, LGBT women, and First Nations women (see, for example, Devika and Thampi 2012; Haussman, Sawer, and Vickers 2010), and this is critical work that is being done in the field from an intersectional point of view. In my study, however, I systematically surveyed a wide range of leaders of women's organizations in three countries: Poland, Pakistan, and United Kingdom. I asked these leaders to rank their top four policy priorities and can therefore test whether women's priorities vary as much across countries as they do within countries. When women's policy priorities vary considerably within a country, I argue that this constitutes a new and important justification for decentralization: countries should decentralize because of the potential of government to more closely match the policy priorities of women, who have historically been marginalized from politics.

Women's Descriptive and Substantive Representation

Is women's political representation any different from men's political representation? How do we understand women's representation in the broader context of politics? Hannah Pitkin's (1967) work identifies four dimensions of representation, which act individually and in combination with one another. The first is *formal* representation, which involves the rules for elections and selection of representatives. The second is *symbolic* representation, or the social and political consequences of who represents us. The third is *descriptive* representation, or the physical, or identity, attributes we use to describe our representatives, including gender, race, and age. The fourth is *substantive* representation, which refers to the policies those representatives support and advance while in office. In this book, I focus on the third and fourth of Pitkin's dimensions of representation. Pitkin and many scholars since have identified the significance and interrelated nature of descriptive and symbolic dimensions of representation. A lot of research examines whether women's higher descriptive representation (percentage of women in office) leads to better women's substantive representation (policies likely to address issues of particular concern to female constituents) (see, for example, Mazur 2002; Phillips 1998; Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005). While men can substantively represent the interests of female constituents, having women in elected office has intrinsic value, which is why descriptive and substantive representation are kept conceptually distinct.

Looking at data from 2015, men held 78 percent of seats in national-level parliaments and assemblies worldwide, women only 22 percent. One take on this data is that the gender of the parliamentarians (or women's descriptive representation) is not that consequential, particularly in comparison to other categories, like party affiliation. For example, in David Mayhew's (1975) *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, all members, regardless of gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation, engage in the same essential behaviors: position taking, credit claiming, and advertising. Similarly, Anthony Down's (1957) model of democracy suggests that each candidate running for Congress, regardless of the person's gender, tends to favor the views of the median voter in his or her district.

However, in the *Politics of Presence*, Anne Phillips (1998) challenges previous literature because it fails to take into account how gender affects the type or quality of political representation. Phillips develops four reasons to explain why gender is a category that matters in terms of a legislative body. First, increasing the number of women in elected office provides role models for other women in society (Barnes and Burchard 2013). Second, seats should be open to all groups in society, including women, who are a predominant group by numbers, and increasing the number of women establishes justice

between the sexes because the offices themselves come with status and perks that should be distributed across key groups in society.[6] This second reason highlights for Phillips and other scholars that the descriptive representation of women, or the numbers of women in office, is a valuable end unto itself.[7] Third, the presence of women affects the type of legislation introduced and ultimately what is passed, linking the descriptive with the substantive representation of women in some cases. For example, Susan Thomas (1994) found that women consistently prioritized issues related to child care, women's health, and women in the workplace more than men did. Likewise, other studies have shown that women are more likely to support bills that reflect an ethic of care. For example, Lyn Kathlene (1995) found that female legislators supported a more rehabilitative criminal code. Fourth, the gender composition of the legislative body affects the style of deliberation and can improve overall political life. In her in-depth studies of the Colorado legislature, Kathlene (1994) found statistically significant differences in the behavior of female and male legislators. For example, female legislators consulted a greater range of experts in writing and assessing bills, had a more inclusive chairing style, and interrupted speakers less frequently. In addition, their bills were more heavily scrutinized than those of their male counterparts.

There are four schools of thought on how decentralization affects women's descriptive and substantive representation. First, decentralization may lead to greater women's descriptive representation and then to enhanced women's substantive representation. For example, Raghabendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo (2004) suggest that decentralization can lead to greater women's descriptive representation, or more women in government, resulting in women's substantive representation and empowerment.

Second, decentralization could lead to greater women's empowerment, without increasing women's descriptive representation. Because decentralization creates new subnational units of government, subnational politicians have better information about what women and men want and can match their preferences more directly (Hayek 1945). If subnational politicians have the resources and capacity to implement the will of their provincial citizens, they can do so more effectively than national politicians. National politicians have to juggle national and international issues. National-level

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6. In later writing, Phillips (2002) concludes that the inclusive aspect of the descriptive representation of women is quite important. Pitkin (1967) places emphasis on substantive representation, but Phillips believes that descriptive representation is important in terms of women having seats at the table.

7. An interest in and focus on the numbers of women in office should not be interpreted to be equivalent to the notion that any female political candidate is preferable to any male political candidate.

politicians at times have to change priorities on the basis of conditions else-where in the country and in the world.

A third possibility is that decentralization could bring about no net change in the substantive representation of women. In short, the subnational level could replicate politics at other levels, where women are excluded to a greater degree than men. Fourth, decentralization might strengthen patriar-chal or nondemocratic actors who capture local-level politics, which could ultimately result in new restrictions on women's rights and opportunities. In this scenario, women's substantive representation does not merely stay at the same level but actually declines, as we see in Pakistan (Keefer, Narayan, and Vishwanath 2006). To summarize, these four schools of thought show that studies of decentralization and women's empowerment should include analysis of both the number of women in subnational office and the sorts of policies being passed at the subnational level.[8] Why is there a shortage of women in political office in so many countries?

Women and Political Recruitment

Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski's (1995) generalized model of political recruitment helps us understand how, across many societies, women opt out of running for political office (Matland and Montgomery 2003, 21). In this model, Norris and Lovenduski conceive of political recruitment as a funnel-like process in which individuals progress from the broadest possible situation of being in the general population of a given country to technically being an *eligible*, or able to run for office, to publicly voicing an interest in politics as a political *aspirant* to becoming a formal *candidate* on a ballot and finally to being selected by voters as an *elected official*. While in most countries women and men are all eligibles, participation drops off thereafter. At the aspirant stage, girls and women in some places might be already less likely than boys and men to express political interest or ambition, unless they are socialized by their families to talk about or demonstrate an interest in politics. Even then, a visible female candidate in some countries, like the United States, is necessary to inspire parents to discuss politics with their girls. What fol-lows then is the requirement that young girls show signs of future political

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8. I conducted analyses on the frequencies with which the meso units of my study show positive outcomes for women's empowerment. Across the subnational units, the outcomes for women's empowerment were as follows: 44 percent had increased descriptive and substantive representation, 9 percent had no change in descriptive but had increased substantive representa-tion, 30 percent had no change in either descriptive or substantive representation, and 17 percent had decreased women's substantive representation.

ambition and that this gets reinforced in family discussions (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006). Women's disproportionate responsibilities in the private sphere and frequent experience with employment discrimination result in women being less confident that they possess the necessary qualifications to be an aspirant (Conway, Steuernagel, and Ahern 2005; Sanbonmatsu 2006). Whereas having a family boosts men's confidence to run for office, having a family, and particularly school-age children, decreases women's political aspirations. At the candidate stage, party leaders act as the major gatekeepers whom aspirants must convince to win the party nomination. In addition, at this stage, majoritarian election rules tend to favor male candidates. Proportional election rules encourage party leaders to favor balancing tickets with women and other minority candidates (Matland and Montgomery 2003; Rule and Zimmerman 1992).

At the election stage of the generalized model of political recruitment, voters might winnow out female candidates on the basis of their gender, particularly in countries that report low levels of support for the idea that women are just as suitable for office as men (Inglehart and Norris 2003). Cross-national variation is significant in mean country responses to the World Values Survey item (1995 Wave 3) "Men do not make better political leaders than women." Countries range from a mean value of 1.5 in Jordan to roughly 3.2 in the United States and 3.5 in Germany (Norris and Inglehart 2005, 254). These findings suggest that in countries like Armenia, Egypt, Georgia, and Jordan activists should focus on changing the sexist views of male and female voters to get more women into elected office. In contrast, in other countries, voters are relatively unsexist about actual vote choice (even if campaigning is fraught with sexist double standards for female candidates), but it is a huge challenge getting women to run. When women run for congressional seats in the United States, voters are just as likely to support female as male candidates (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Fox and Lawless 2004; Lawless and Fox 2010). In countries like the United States, the most effective strategies for increasing women's representation might be programs offering political training to female eligibles, public discussions about how male and female candidates are treated by the media, and systematic organizing to make political meeting times and work environments more family friendly. Another strategy that can increase women's descriptive representation is the passage of electoral gender quotas.

Electoral Gender Quotas at the National and Subnational Levels

According to the Global Database of Quotas for Women, gender quotas are "mandatory or targeted percentages of women candidates for public

elections" (Global Database of Quotas for Women, n.d.).[9] Gender quotas are an institutional tool that can help women gain descriptive representation in parliaments and legislatures, and they potentially enable women's substantive representation (Jones 1996; Krook 2009; Weldon 2002a, 1154). On average, gender quota laws result in a 10 percent increase in the number of women in office (Htun and Jones 2002). Results of gender quotas have been mixed. While they increase the number of women in office, sometimes the electorate and other legislators discount women elected under a quota. Beliefs emerge that quota women are less qualified despite having qualifications comparable to their male counterparts, as shown by studies providing data on such countries as Argentina, France, Morocco, and Uganda (Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo 2012). Gender quotas can lead to women's substantive representation when there is underlying cultural support for quotas but not when they are hotly contested or party leaders greatly constrain member initiative (Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo 2012).

Gender quotas can be devised along four key dimensions (source, penalties, stage of game, and winnability), all of which ultimately influence how many women get elected and how party leaders and voters balance an official's gender with other salient dimensions of representation. The source of gender quotas can be voluntary, pursued by individual parties at their own discretion, or they can be statutory—required by law or constitution and applying to all political parties in a system (Krook 2009). Quota provisions can have significant penalties for parties if they fail to field enough candidates of a given gender. If penalties are low, parties might flout quotas and just pay the associated penalties for noncompliance (see Murray 2004). Quotas can target the game at the candidate stage or the elected official stage. Gender candidate quotas are set by declaring a minimum percentage of candidates of one gender that must be nominated by a political party (in proportional systems) or by twinning (in majoritarian systems, in which parties select one man and one woman to stand for each constituency seat), but quotas might not control the actual percentage of women elected. In contrast, a reservation system sets aside a certain number of seats that elected officials of one gender will hold. The benefit of candidate quotas is that they give voters discretion over final outcomes and the ability to vote, for example, for a male candidate over a female candidate if factors other than gender are more salient to the

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9. The Global Database of Quotas for Women goes on to state, "An electoral quota for women may be constitutional, legislative or be in the form of a political party quota. It may apply to the number of women candidates proposed by a party for election, or may take the form of reserved seats in the legislature. Quotas and other affirmative action strategies may apply to minorities based on regional, ethnic, linguistic or religious cleavages. However, this Database focuses on gender quotas, that is quotas that apply to women for elective office."

voter. The benefit of reserved seats is that they remove the possibility of voters discounting nominated women.

Finally, some provisions on winnability have been devised to make sure parties do not meet quota requirements through numerical targets, which merely shuffle women to unwinnable positions without substantially changing their access to politics. In proportional electoral systems, these provisions are sometimes called zipping or zebras, because they alternate by gender the order of party lists to make sure that women are in winnable positions. In majoritarian elections, quotas may have district targeting to make sure the party is not just nominating women but running them in winnable districts. But some factors can limit the ability of quotas to increase the percentage of women in elected office. As Baldez (2007) and Magda Hinojosa (2012) show, exclusive centralized nominations are most beneficial to women, inclusive decentralized are least beneficial, and exclusive decentralized or inclusive centralized have middling effects on women's candidacies. Centralized methods benefit women over decentralized methods of candidate selection because, at a centralized level, when party leaders specifically ask women to run they overcome the confidence gap that many women have, and centralized party nominations also circumvent local power monopolies to which women have limited access (Hinojosa 2012, 51).

At the national level, research shows that in some cases candidate gender quotas also enhance substantive representation. Newly elected women under quota systems can provide substantive representation, pursing policies related to improving women's status in the public arena (Krook 2009; Mazur 2002) and to women's issues, defined as those traditionally faced by women in the private sphere (such as reproduction, child care, gender violence, and work-life balance). Still, studies are mixed on whether quotas result in a sea change for women's status and influence in political institutions (Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo 2012; Krook and O'Brien 2010). Gender quotas can be necessary, but not sufficient, to engender legislatures.

Cross-national research shows that in developed countries the percentage of women in meso-level legislative assemblies is higher than in national parliaments (Vengroff, Nyiri, and Fugiero 2003). However, in developing countries, the percentage of women in meso-level assemblies is lower than in national office. In other work, I argue that in developing countries with fewer job opportunities meso-level legislatures are high-status places to work and can be extremely competitive and masculinized environments (Rincker 2009; Rincker, Aslam, and Isani 2016). So we already have evidence that decentralization does not automatically lead to a boost for women in meso-level legislatures. Subnational gender quotas may be necessary to ensure the descriptive representation of women in decentralizing countries. Therefore, a second guiding question is *is women's descriptive*

representation higher in meso-level assemblies that have gender quotas than in those that do not?

Research on Gender and Political Institutions

Research on gender and politics is growing in important and innovative ways that help us understand the conditions under which decentralization empowers women. This section reviews insights and findings from key subareas in the study of gender and politics, including the comparative politics of gender and institutions, cross-institutional work on gender, and information from the Research Network on Gender Politics and the State about state reconfiguration. I discuss each in turn, deriving the third and final guiding question. A comparative politics of gender and institutions helps us "gain a deeper understanding of the way that gender shapes political institutions and also, through interaction with social actors, including feminists, the way gender norms can be disrupted to open new spaces for these actors" (Chappell 2006, 223).[10] Research on the comparative politics of gender strongly argues for cross-systemic analysis, moving beyond research conducted only in Western Europe and among advanced industrial democracies (Beckwith 2006, 2010; Krook and Mackay 2010; Tripp 2006; Waylen 2010; Weldon 2006). A key insight from the comparative politics of gender is the need for consulting literature from a wide range of countries, including what Freedom House (2014) categorizes as free and partly free countries, to test and consolidate the theory on how decentralization and state reconfiguration affect women, and Chapter 2 is this literature review.

Research on gender and politics makes increasingly clear that women and feminists organize not just in legislatures but also in bureaucracies and civil society groups to achieve representation. To achieve feminist policies, the triangle model posits, feminists must participate in three avenues, or nodes: legislatures, bureaucracies, and civil society and social movements (McBride and Mazur 1995; Outshoorn and Kantola 2007). Studies of "strategic constellations," "women's advocacy coalitions," "velvet triangles," and the "triangle of women's empowerment" all agree that measuring women's representation and feminist policy in the legislative arena alone is insufficient (Holli 2008; Lycklama à Nijeholt, Vargas, and Wieringa 1998; McBride and Mazur 2010). For example, in their celebrated work on women in Canadian multilevel governance, Linda Trimble, Jane Arscott, and Manon Tremblay note that

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10. For example, Jill Vickers's (2013) innovative work describes how states make gender and how gender makes states, noting that states enact reforms that reinforce gender norms but also that changing gender norms in society has the ability to affect and change the way the state operates.

future comparative work should "consider links among extra-parliamentary feminist interests, elected politicians, and bureaucratic units charged with gender quality responsibilities" (2013, xix).

Research projects, including the Research Network on Gender Politics and the State, have greatly contributed to our awareness that women's policy agencies (WPAs), or bureaucracies, charged with policies affecting women are critical sites for women's political representation. WPA leaders from the bureaucratic side of the triangle play critical roles and can "represent women by transforming the policy process to include women's interests" (Weldon 2002b, 158). Amy Mazur argues that "[WPAs] have the potential to be major conduits for women's descriptive and substantive representation in three ways" (2005, 3). They bring women's interests into public policy debates, help women's activists influence policy debates, and ensure that women fill the ranks of the bureaucracy as more women are appointed to posts in WPA offices. Hester Eisenstein (1996) shows the critical impact of femocrats (feminist bureaucrats) working within the Australian bureaucracy on behalf of women. Laurel Weldon (2002a) further argues that WPAs provide better representation than any individual female legislator because they can liaise across government ministries, pursue cross-sectoral gender goals, and network with a variety of women in society—by hosting public forums for women's organizations that pool their policy preferences, for example. In the United States, feminists inside the government expanded women's rights through bureaucratic rule making, even when the women's movement on the outside lagged and under conservative presidents (Banaszak 2010). Leftist governments often empower WPAs to build capacity in the women's movement. But under coalition governments, when rightist parties control the women's ministry portfolio, they can dismantle WPAs or reorient them toward family policy rather than toward women's empowerment. However, Louise Chappell and Kathleen Teghtsoonian (2008) show that rightist parties at times have also facilitated women's empowerment through WPAs.

The three institutional sites of women's empowerment correspond with the functions of legislators, who promote and pass legislation; bureaucrats, who implement laws as public policy; and civil society, which articulates policy desires. This model "articulates women's demands, translates them into policy issues, and struggles to widen support for their agenda. The dynamism created between these actors accounts for the relative effectiveness with which women's interests can be defended" (Lycklama à Nijeholt, Vargas, and Wieringa 1998, 3–4). In other words, Beatrice Halsaa writes, "coming from different institutional sectors with shared feminist goals, women's movement leaders can form 'strategic partnerships' or advocacy coalitions to articulate important policy priorities, and women's policy agency leaders can connect

these women to female legislators who in turn write laws and craft policies to address issues of greatest concern to women" (1988, 183).

While the triangle of women's empowerment has been helpful in identifying that women's representation often occurs across political institutions, this model has been challenged by research finding that other actors can be pivotal and that the specified actors are not always necessary and sufficient to achieve feminist policy outcomes. For example, Anne Maria Holli advocates use of the alternative term "women's co-operative constellation" because this term acknowledges the contributions of feminists who emerge from seemingly other sectors, like academia and women's party sections (2008, 169). Joni Lovenduski and Marila Guadagnini (2010) reaffirm that while important collaboration does occur across the triangle, critical actors in just one node can achieve the substantive representation of women even after these coalitions fall apart. Research conducted by McBride and Mazur (2010) and Lovenduski and Guadagnini (2010) contributes greatly to the comparative politics of gender and to the established findings that critical actors for women are at least as important as having a critical mass, or a certain minimum number of female political actors in an institution.

This book builds on this model by moving the discussion from feminist actors to engendered processes, from feminist legislators, women's groups, and women's policy agencies to gender candidate quotas, gender mainstreaming, and gender-responsive budgeting. The gender policy trifecta encourages activists, policy makers, citizens, and politicians to put in place institutionalized engendered processes rather than hanging all hopes on a point-in-time presence of critical women actors. As new actors fill new political offices, it is essential that the processes are engendered to increase the number of women and the standing of feminist viewpoints in policy making and that institutions for gender equality are maintained following elections and other changes in a country's political landscape. It also builds on the work of scholars advancing the "conditional approach" (Vickers 2010, 419–420; Chappell 2002)—that is, the study of conditions under which federal institutions situated in a given time or place possess more accurate information about women's diverse policy priorities, increased women's representation, and feminist outcomes, which are constituents of women's empowerment. Thus, the third guiding question in this book is *are subnational women's policy agencies and organizations, in subnational contexts, important sites of representation of women's policy priorities in decentralizing countries?*

The intention of these guiding questions is to speak directly to readers outside academia and think tanks and to present a reminder of the gender and politics research that is most relevant to everyday life for men and women in countries around the world. In this book, I consider cross-national and country-specific data on decentralization and women's empowerment, about

which readers can ask themselves: Are politicians better matching the diverse priorities of women across this country when decentralization reforms happen? Is decentralization leading to subnational gender quotas and more women in elected office than before? Is decentralization leading to women working together across legislatures, agencies, and civil society to respond to female as well as male citizens? If, within a given country, the answers to these three questions are yes, then decentralization is empowering women in that country. An additional benefit of the questions is that they are a prism that helps us understand women's status both globally and locally. Women in very different parts of the world are more alike than we may suppose, but within the same country, women are more different from one another than we may guess. This is why I return to the three guiding questions in Chapter 6, demonstrating that this book makes significant contributions to our knowledge, not just in terms of the gendered implications of decentralization but also in how representatives go about understanding and aggregating diverse policy preferences.

Why the Aim of This Book Matters

Decentralization's impact on women in politics is critical to understand. It is important to know how 50 percent of the population is being affected by reforms that geographically reposition power in more than 80 percent of the world's countries. This study contributes the empirical analysis of gender to an existing policy literature that has traditionally evaluated decentralization along other dimensions, such as according to its ability to achieve fiscally efficient policies or reduce ethnic tensions or corruption (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2005; Bird and Villancourt 1998; Brancati 2009; Putnam 1993; Rodden and Wibbels 2002).

Ignoring the gendered implications of decentralization is unacceptable to those who want to understand the spread of democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms around the world. We live in a world where women represent 50 percent of the global population but, despite significant advancements, 70 percent of the poor (Freeland 2015). Moreover, up to 70 percent of all women experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetimes (UNITE, n.d.). It is not surprising that gender inequalities in poverty and violence are reflected in the halls of political power (Duerst-Lahti 2005). Women are not represented in parliaments in proportion to their presence in society. Just 22 percent of parliamentary seats worldwide are held by women (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2016). If decentralization facilitates democracy, as its supporters claim, decentralization would increase the numbers of women in office and the responsiveness to their policy priorities, ultimately reducing gender inequalities.

Some readers may be concerned that my focus on women will lead to another extreme, in which men's rights are gravely compromised. But the opposite is true. Research on women's policy priorities in India shows that the quality of both men's and women's representation increases after gender quotas are passed. Why? When more women hold political office, they bring the issues most salient to them to the agenda. Sometimes these issues are different from those that men prioritize, but this enhances the responsiveness of government to its diverse citizenry. For example, Rohini Pande and Deanna Ford (2011) found that after local gender quotas were passed in India new female politicians prioritized water investments in Rajasthan and road improvements in West Bengal. Despite these particular female leaders being poorer and having less education and experience than their male counterparts, their attention to water resources was associated with more government funds being allocated to these initiatives, and women and men benefited from better access to clean water. Thus, gender quotas, which ensure that women hold an equitable number of seats at the bargaining table, result in better overall government responsiveness—not just to what men believe matters but also to what women believe matters most (Asian Development Bank, Department for International Development, and World Bank 2004, 28; Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004).

As India demonstrates, with the adoption of local council gender quotas and election of female mayors, *countries around the world need to engage in "engendering," or passing concrete institutional rules to empower women by design*. Countries cannot afford to wait decades for women to overcome obstacles and slowly matriculate into office. In *Rising Tide*, Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris (2003) argue that if the current pace of women's advancement in parliaments worldwide continues, it will take generations for women's representation in parliaments to equal men's. As with any other goal, to reach a specific outcome by a reasonable deadline, specific rules and benchmarks are required to bring about equitable percentages of women and men in office. Some wonder whether gender candidate quotas are defensible only initially, until the number of women in elected office increases from about 10 to 20 percent, at which point the quotas would be retracted. In my opinion, having gender quotas to ensure minimum levels of women's representation is as important as the specific percentage specified. Implementing a constitutional or legislative quota protects gains made, which are often hard fought and can slip away in the absence of a legal document. Barring the occasional matriarchal society, like the Mosuo in China, the default image of a political leader in many countries around the world is of a man, and government institutions and priorities naturally reflect the interests of incumbent male officeholders, consciously or unconsciously. If the percentages of female and

male members of Congress had been flipped (85 percent female to 15 percent male), would it have taken until 2011 for a women's bathroom (built by Speaker of the House John Boehner) to be accessible to the House floor? The persistent underrepresentation of women in national and subnational government means that countries have to engender their political process to even elicit what women specifically want out of public policy. In our current systems, in which women make up one in five members of parliament, women do not always mobilize as women (Baldez 2002). They do so under only some conditions, such as when parties realign and women themselves are critical to elections. In addition to having other dimensions of identity that may be more salient at times, women may not fully enunciate their policy priorities in public opinion surveys. Unless a survey is primed for hearing their priorities, women may not view their sincere priorities as achievable or likely to appear on the political agenda. Therefore, women's public opinion responses can often look similar to men's in a given country context.

Unless there is gender parity in political party leadership and legislative institutions, a researcher has to signal to female respondents that she wants to hear their gender-based priorities. I asked leaders of women's organizations to rank their top four policy priorities for women. These organizations can remain open and active only if they prove that the issues they address are worth presenting to the government and to the female constituents they seek to represent. The priorities of politicians responsible for women are often different from those expressed by the leaders of women's groups. In the twentieth century, women's movements around the world mobilized to persuade citizens that women should have voting rights equal to men. In the twenty-first century, women's movements around the world are mobilizing to persuade citizens that women should hold an equal number of political offices as men. In neither case does change mean disenfranchisement for men. In both cases it means greater democracy for all.