Chapter 6
Women as political leaders

One fundamental and enduring problem facing democracies is the continued lack of gender equality in political leadership. The basic facts are not in dispute: worldwide today women represent only one in seven parliamentarians, one in ten cabinet ministers, and, at the apex of power, one in twenty Heads of State or Government. Multiple factors have contributed towards this situation, including structural and institutional barriers. But what is the role of political culture in this process? Do attitudes towards women as political leaders function as a significant barrier to their empowerment, and in particular how important is culture in comparison to structural and institutional factors?

Our thesis is that (a) contemporary attitudes towards women’s leadership are more egalitarian in post-industrial than in post-Communist or developing societies; (b) traditional attitudes towards gender equality remain a major obstacle to the election of women to parliament; (c) culture continues to prove a significant influence on the proportion of women in elected office, even controlling for social structural and political institutions; but that (d) there is evidence that as a result of modernization these cultural barriers have been fading somewhat among the younger generation in postindustrial societies. After setting out the theoretical framework and core argument, the analysis testing these propositions draws on evidence from the World Values Surveys 1995-2001. The conclusion considers the implications of the analysis for strategies to advance women’s voice and power.

Explaining the Barriers to Women in Public Life

The paucity of women in elected office is well established, despite greater moves towards gender equality in many other spheres. The Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on “Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace” followed a long series of international conferences calling for the empowerment of women. The session focused on full recognition of women’s rights and fundamental freedoms, and demands for progress towards gender equality in education and health care, in work and the family, and in the public sphere. Women have mobilized at the grassroots, national and global levels to press government agencies and non-profit organizations to incorporate these agendas into national programs for action. The UN report, The World’s Women 2000, which reviewed how far these goals and objectives had been met, concluded that substantive advances for women have occurred in access to education, health care and reproductive services, as well as in human rights such as greater recognition of the issues of domestic violence and sexual trafficking.

Yet at the same time progress worldwide has perhaps proved most intractable in the inclusion of women’s voices in politics and government. Out of 191 nations worldwide, only nine currently have a woman elected head of State or Government. Despite some redoubtable and well-known world leaders, like Margaret Thatcher, Gro Harlem Bruntland and Golda Meir, only 39 states have ever elected a woman President or Prime Minister. According to the UN report, women today are less than one tenth of the world’s cabinet ministers and one fifth of all sub-ministerial positions. The Inter-Parliamentary Union estimates that there are about 5500 women in parliament worldwide in Spring 2002, representing 14.3% of all members, up from 9% in 1987. If growth at this level is maintained (0.36% per annum), a simple linear projection predicts that women parliamentarians will achieve parity with men at the turn of the 22nd Century.

Despite the lack of substantial progress worldwide, women elected representatives have moved ahead far further and faster in some places more than in others (see Figure 6.1). It is well-known that women parliamentarians do best in the Nordic nations, where they are on average 38.8% of MPs in the lower house. Sweden leads the world; women are half of all the Ministers in Goran Persson’s Cabinet and 149 members of the Riksdag (43%), up from 10% in 1950. The proportion of women members of parliament elsewhere is lower, including in the Americas (15.7%), Asia (14.3%), Europe excluding the Nordic states (14.0%), Sub-Saharan Africa (12.5%), and the Pacific (11.8%). The worst record for women’s representation is the Arab region, where women
are less than 5% of elected representatives, and they continue to be barred by law from standing for parliament in Kuwait, Quatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates. Therefore despite many official declarations of intent made by governments, NGOs and international agencies pledged to establish conditions of gender equality in the public sphere, in practice major barriers continue to restrict women's advancement in public life.

The literature suggests that multiple reasons lie behind this phenomenon, including the role of structural barriers, such as levels of socioeconomic development and the proportion of women in professional and managerial occupations; the importance of political institutions, like the use of proportional representation electoral systems and gender quotas in party recruitment; and the impact of political culture, including the predominance of traditional attitudes towards women in decision-making roles.

Structural Barriers

Early sociological accounts commonly regarded the social system as playing a critical role in determining the eligibility pool for elected office, including the occupational, educational and socioeconomic status of women. In developing societies, women may find it difficult to break into electoral office where they are generally disadvantaged due to poor childcare, low literacy, inadequate health care, and poverty. Reynolds found that levels of socioeconomic development were significantly related to the proportion of women parliamentarians worldwide. Comparative studies of established democracies have long emphasized the importance of the pool of women in the professional, administrative and managerial occupations that commonly lead to political careers. Jobs like the law and journalism commonly provide the flexibility, financial resources, experience, and social networks that facilitate running for elected office. In recent decades in many postindustrial societies women have forged ahead in management and the professions in the private and public sectors, as well as in growing enrollment in higher education.

Yet there are many reasons why structural explanations provide only part of the answer to the barriers facing women seeking elected office. These accounts fail to explain major disparities in the proportion of women in national parliaments among relatively similar types of societies, such as the contrasts between Canada (were women are 19.9% of parliamentarians) and the neighboring U.S. (12.9%), or within Europe between Italy (11.1%) and the Netherlands (36%), or between South Africa (29.8%) and Niger (1.2%). A ranked comparison of the proportion of women elected to the lower house of parliament in the most recent election worldwide confirms that high levels of socioeconomic development are not necessary conditions for women's success; for example, female representation is far greater today among some poorer societies like Mozambique (ranking 9th worldwide), South Africa (10th), and Venezuela (11th), than in some of the most affluent such as the United States (50th), France (59th) and Japan (94th). In many postindustrial societies despite the transformation in women and men's lifestyles, electoral success has continued to elude women. This pattern is exemplified in the United States where almost a third of all lawyers (29%) are now female, a figure likely to increase further since the proportion of women graduating from law school has shot up eightfold, from 5.4% in 1970 to 44% in 1996. Law remains the most common training ground for legislative office in America, yet despite the rise of women lawyers, only nine out of 100 US Senators are female. This suggests that while improvements in women's educational and professional status serve as facilitating conditions for women's empowerment, structural change may be insufficient by themselves to win elected office, and something more that the eligibility pool is at work here. The relationship between socioeconomic development and the election of women parliamentarians can be examined further in this study using the UN index of gender-related development, combining indicators of women's literacy, longevity, education, and real GDP per capita.

Institutional Barriers

One alternative explanation is provided by institutional accounts emphasizing the importance of the political system, like the use of PR and the adoption of gender quotas in recruitment processes by political parties. This approach has become increasingly popular, indeed
probably accepted as the mainstream perspective in the literature today. Institutional accounts suggest that the rules of the game are the prime driver that can help to explain systematic differences in women’s representation among relatively similar types of society, as well as being the most important factor that can alter women’s political activism by public policy reforms.\(^8\)

Among institutional factors, the **level of democratization** provides the most general context. In general, the transition and consolidation of democratic societies can be expected to promote widespread political and civil liberties, including women’s rights to vote and to stand for elected office, as well as strengthening parties and institutionalizing the channels of political recruitment into parliament and government. To monitor democratization we can include the standard measure using the Freedom House 7-point scale of political rights and civil liberties. Yet the role of democracy in promoting substantial numbers of women in public life remains under dispute, since Reynolds found no significant relationship between levels of democratization and women’s parliamentary representation worldwide.\(^9\) If there is a weak relationship this may be due to the continued use of affirmative action strategies for women’s representation in Communist systems like Cuba and China, as well as the decline in the proportion of women in parliaments in Central and Eastern Europe once these quotas were abandoned in the transition to democratic elections.

Ever since Duverger, the type of **electoral system** has long been regarded as an important facilitating condition; many studies have demonstrated that far more women are commonly elected under proportional party lists than via majoritarian single-member constituencies.\(^10\) The level of **party competition** in terms of the number and ideological polarization of parties is another factor that may influence opportunities for candidacy, including whether the country has a predominant one party system as in Japan, a two-party system exemplified by the U.S., a moderate multiparty system such as in Germany, or a polarized multiparty system as in the Ukraine, Ecuador and Israel.\(^11\) Greater party competition may increase the access points for female candidacies, although this in itself does not necessarily lead to more women being elected. We can test whether the proportion of women in parliaments is significantly related to the **level of democratization**, the type of **electoral system** (classified simply into majoritarian, mixed, and proportional), district magnitude (the mean number of electors per district) and the **level of party competition** (measured by the effective number of parliamentary parties). Institutional accounts may therefore provide many important insights into why women leaders have moved ahead further and faster in some countries rather than others. Yet puzzles remain about why apparently similar institutional reforms may turn out to have unanticipated consequences, even among relatively similar political and social systems. Why should national list PR have a very different impact on women’s election in, say, Israel and the Netherlands? Why should the use of gender quotas for candidacies seem to work better in, say, Argentina rather than Ecuador? Rather like the failure of Westminster-style parliaments in many African states in the 1960s, uprooted institutions do not necessarily flourish in alien environments.

**Cultural Barriers**

Structural and institutional explanations therefore need to be supplemented by accounts emphasizing the importance of political culture. Ever since the seminar study on women and politics in the mid-1950s by Duverger,\(^12\) it has often been assumed that traditional attitudes towards gender equality influence women’s advancement in elected office, although, despite the conventional wisdom, little systematic cross-national evidence has been available to verify this proposition. Theories of socialization have long emphasized the importance of the division of sex roles within a country -- especially egalitarian or traditional attitudes towards women in the private and public spheres. Studies of the process of political recruitment in established democracies like Britain, Finland and the Netherlands have found that these attitudes influence both whether women are prepared come forward as candidates for office (the **supply-side** of the equation) as well as the criteria used by gate-keepers like party members and leaders, the news media, financial supporters or the electorate when evaluating suitable candidates (the **demand-side**).\(^13\) In cultures with traditional values concerning the role of women in the home and family, many women may be reluctant to run and, if they seek the office, they may fail to attract sufficient support to win. A recent study by the Inter-parliamentary Union found that female politicians in many countries nominated hostile attitudes towards women’s political participation as one of the most important barrier to
running for parliament. Cultural explanations provide a plausible reason why women have made such striking advances in parliaments within the Nordic region compared with other comparable European societies like Switzerland, Italy or Belgium, since all these are affluent post-industrial welfare states and established parliamentary democracies with proportional representation electoral systems. Karvonen and Selle suggest that in Scandinavia a long tradition of government intervention to promote social equality may have made the public more receptive to the idea of positive action, like gender quotas, designed to achieve equality for women in public life. Abu-Zayd suggests that culture is an important reason why many nations with a strict Islamic background have often ranked at the bottom of the list in terms of women in parliament, despite notable exceptions in Islamic societies in top leadership positions.

Traditional attitudes towards gender equality have therefore commonly been suspected to be an important determinant of women’s entry into elected office, yet so far little systematic cross-national evidence has been available to prove this thesis. Most comparative studies have been forced to adopt proxy indicators of culture, such as the historical prevalence of Catholicism within West European societies, understood as representing more traditional attitudes towards women and the family than Protestant religions. An early comparison by Margaret Inglehart found that women’s political activism was lower in the Catholic than Protestant countries of Western Europe, and it was suggest that this was because the Catholic Church was associated with a culture that was more hierarchical and authoritarian in nature. A more recent worldwide comparison of women in politics in 180 nation states by Reynolds found that the greatest contrasts were between dominant Christian countries (whether Protestant or Catholic) and all other religions including Islamic, Buddhist, Judaic, Confucian and Hindu, all of which had lower proportions of women in legislative and Cabinet office. An alternative approach has compared attitudes in Western Europe towards the women’s movement, feminism, and sex role equality in the home and workplace. This approach provides insights into support for feminism within Western Europe but it is difficult to know how far we can generalize from these general attitudes towards egalitarian support for women in positions of political leadership, still less whether comparable results would be evident in a broader range of societies.

It also remains unclear in the existing literature how far attitudes towards women in office may have been transformed over time in different types of society, particularly among the younger generation. Previous work by the authors has demonstrated that gender differences in electoral behavior have been realigning, with women moving toward the left of men in postindustrial societies, especially among the younger generation, although this process is not yet evident in post-Communist or developing societies. Just as the process of modernization has affected mass electoral attitudes and party preferences, so it may have eroded traditional views of the appropriate division of sex roles in the home and family, as well as in the paid labor force and the public sphere.

Given these alternative theories, this study uses survey and aggregate evidence to compare how far political culture is systematically related to the advancement of women in elected office in a wide range of countries. The study focuses upon four related propositions, namely that:

i. There are substantial differences in attitudes towards women’s leadership in post-industrial, post-Communist and developing societies;

ii. Traditional attitudes are a major barrier to the election of women to parliament;

iii. Culture continues to be a significant influence on the proportion of women parliamentarians even with the introduction of prior structural and institutional controls; but that,

iv. These cultural barriers have been fading most rapidly among the younger generation in postindustrial societies.

Attitudes towards Women’s Political Leadership

First, how does the public regard women as political leaders today and how do attitudes vary systematically in different types of postindustrial, post-Communist and developing societies? The third wave of the World Values survey contains many items measuring attitudes towards sex
role equality in the home and family, labor force and public sphere, as well as confidence in the women's movement. The basic indicator measuring support for gender equality in political leadership is the 4-point scale asking respondents how far they agreed or disagreed with the following statement:

“People talk about the changing roles of men and women today. For each of the following statements I read out, can you tell me how much you agree with each? Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or disagree strongly? ... On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do.”

The comparison of responses in Figure 6.2, ranking countries from most egalitarian to most traditional, shows that there are substantial cross-national differences in attitudes towards gender equality in politics. Countries that proved most positive towards women's leadership included the Nordic nations (Norway, Sweden and Finland), as well as many postindustrial societies such as New Zealand and Australia, the United States and Spain. Countries that proved most traditional included some of the poorer developing societies such as Egypt, Jordan, Iran and Nigeria.

[Figure 6.2 about here]

How can we explain the differences evident in this figure? As with previous chapters, the modernization process and human development is obviously part of the answer. More affluent nations were by far the most egalitarian. Yet despite the role of socioeconomic development, historical legacies in different world regions continued to demarcate cultural attitudes. Figure 6.3, illustrating support for gender equality in politics and human development, shows that a few postindustrial societies like Norway, West Germany and Finland expressed higher than expected support for women's political leadership given their level of development, while Spain, Australia and (to a lesser extent) the United States were close behind. Among richer nations, the Asian societies of Japan, Taiwan and South Korea clustered together, showing lower support for women in politics than would be predicted by their level of human development alone. Many Latin American countries with moderate levels of development are found clustered together in the middle of the graph, along with South Africa and the Philippines. Post-Communist societies like Armenia and Belarus also display more traditional attitudes towards male leadership (with the important exception of East Germany which is close to West Germany). Lastly Nigeria, Pakistan, Jordan and Egypt, scatter at the bottom of the chart, all poorer countries with sizeable Muslim populations. Therefore human development does appear to be significantly related to the global distribution of egalitarian attitudes towards women's political leadership, yet the major outliers such as the dramatic contrasts among developing nations, with India and China well above the regression line while Nigeria and Egypt can be found well below, indicate that much more is at work than simply differences between rich and poor societies.

[Figure 6.3 about here]

To explore how far responses towards women and men as political leaders tapped into and reflected deeper cultural values, these attitudes were also compared with a 24-item scale reflecting a much broader range of traditional versus rational values, based on factor analysis developed elsewhere. This scale included items reflecting beliefs in the importance of religion and adherence to traditional moral standards on issues like divorce, euthanasia and the family. The correlation analysis showed that the Scandinavian and West European societies proved consistently the most rational in their moral and ethical values, as well as the most favorable towards gender equality in politics. In contrast Nigeria, Jordan and Egypt emerged as the most traditional on both dimensions, along with Iran and Azerbaijan. Attitudes towards women and men as political leaders therefore do appear to be related to broader ideological values on a wide range of ethical and moral issues, increasing confidence that this measure relates to a deeper set of values.

The Relationship between Cultural Attitudes and Women in Parliament

So far we have established the existence of systematic cross-national differences in attitudes towards women's political leadership which are associated with levels of socioeconomic
development, and moreover that these egalitarian attitudes are related to broader cultural indicators. But do these cultural patterns matter in practice? In particular, do more egalitarian attitudes towards women leaders influence the proportion of women actually elected to office? We have already mentioned the substantial differences worldwide in the proportion of women in the lower houses of parliament, ranging from about 39% in Scandinavia down to less than 5% in Arab States. Figure 6.3 shows the simple relationship between egalitarian attitudes towards women leaders and the proportion of women elected to the lower house of the national parliament, following the election closest to the date of the survey in each country, in the mid to late-1990s.

The results demonstrate the strong and significant relationship between attitudes towards gender equality and the actual proportion of women in parliament (R=0.52 Sig. .01). Countries with an egalitarian culture have more women in power. The scatter gram displays a fairly tight regression, with the Scandinavian countries at the forefront on both indicators in the top right-hand corner. At the bottom corner can be found Jordan, Egypt, Pakistan and many of the Central Asian post-Communist states including Georgia, Belarus and the Ukraine. Yet there are some striking outliers to this general pattern that also deserve attention. Some established democracies including Australia, Spain and the United States fall below the regression line, displaying more egalitarian attitudes than might be expected given the actual proportion of women elected to parliament. In these countries, public opinion may have run ahead of the opportunities that woman face when pursuing public office. On the other hand, Bosnia Herzegovina, South Africa and China all have more women parliamentarians than would be expected from their cultural attitudes alone, suggesting that perhaps in these societies positive action strategies adopted to boost women’s leadership, like the use of gender quotas in South Africa and China, may be ahead of public opinion.

Of course the pattern of causation cannot be determined from any simple correlation, and we cannot rule out an interaction effect. It could well be that the experience of having many women involved in political life could shift public opinion in a more egalitarian direction, dispelling traditional stereotypes about men making better political leaders than women. Nevertheless it seems equally plausible to assume that the causal direction flows primarily from political culture towards the success of women in elected office, since more egalitarian attitudes could persuade more women that they should seek opportunities for elected office and could simultaneously influence the selector’s evaluations about suitable candidates. One way that this can be tested further is by examining the relationship between the proportion of women in parliament and the broader scale of traditional or rational values. The results of analysis show that there is a strong and significant correlation between these factors (r=.408 p.004). Since these broader moral values should not be greatly affected by women’s leadership, this strongly suggests that culture drives the success of women in elected office, rather than vice versa.

Cultural, Institutional and Social Barriers to Elected Office

So far we have demonstrated that culture matters, but not how much it matters compared with other social and institutional factors associated with gender equality in politics. The relationship could, after all, prove spurious if something else is simultaneously driving both egalitarian attitudes and the success of women leaders. Multivariate analysis is required to test the main relationship remains significant even with controls. Accordingly regression models were run to estimate the relative impact of cultural, structural and institutional factors on women’s representation in parliaments worldwide.

The first model in Table 1 shows the effects of human and political development, then the second model adds the additional effects of political institutions, then finally the complete model including all the variables. The result of Model 1 shows that the effect of political democratization appeared significant. Once model 3 controlled for all factors, however, then political development became insignificant. In Model 3, somewhat surprisingly, once controls were introduced, neither the
type of electoral system nor the number of parties proved to be important explanations for the proportion of women in parliament in this comparison, in contrast to many other studies. This could be in part because the simple measure of majoritarian or proportional electoral systems was unable to capture other important variations, such as the level of disproportionality, which could be refined in further research. Lastly, when the gender equality scale was added in the final model, the results demonstrated the importance of culture, which proved not only strong but also the only significant factor in the equation, even with the battery of prior controls. If the measure of attitudes was not derived from a source that is independent of the actual proportion of women in legislatures then we would be tempted to doubt this relationship, but the final model is clear and dramatic. The relationship between political culture and women’s empowerment already observed in Figure 6.1 survives unscathed our best attempts to explain it away with prior controls.

[Table 6.1 about here]

**Generational Shifts in Cultural Attitudes**

Lastly, if culture is important, is there evidence that traditional views about women’s suitability for political office are changing? The measure of attitudes towards men and women’s leadership was not only included in earlier waves of the World Values Surveys, so we are unable to compare trends over time directly, but cohort analysis can be used, analyzing the distribution of attitudes among generations within each type of society. Much evidence based on theories of socialization suggests that people’s attitudes are shaped by formative experiences in their early years, but the basic values of individuals are largely fixed by the time they reach adulthood.

During the twentieth century, in postindustrial societies the formative experiences of the younger generation of women and men have differed from the older generation. Women and men’s sex roles have been affected by a long series of critical developments, ranging from the impact of the extension of the electoral suffrage and full citizenship rights to the entry of more women into higher education and the paid labor force, the rise of the Second Wave women’s movement in the mid-sixties along with radical shifts in sexual mores and lifestyles, and dramatic changes within families, marriage and the sexual division of labor and child-rearing within the home, as well as the experience of seeing more women as leaders and statesmen in public life. All these factors can be expected to have altered the norms about the appropriate role of women in the public sphere and the suitability of women for elected office. The historical traditions in post-Communist and developing societies has followed a more complex and distinctive pathway, for example in the experience of women in the workforce, the widespread use of quotas in parliaments under the dominance of the Communist party and their subsequent abandonment, and the role of the organized women’s movement in Central and Eastern Europe. As a result we would expect that although some generational shifts in attitudes will be evident, the pace of change will be slower in these countries.

[Figures 6.5 and 6.6 about here]

Figure 6.5 and 6.6 confirms exactly these expectations. The traditional belief that men make better leaders than women shows a substantial decline among cohorts in postindustrial societies, with younger postwar generations far more egalitarian than their parents and grandparents. Yet in post-Communist and developing societies attitudes among younger and older generations are almost identical, with at most a modest shift towards less traditional views among the young. Moreover when we disaggregate the cohort analysis for women and men, the most striking pattern is how far the gender gap on this issue has widened substantially among the
younger generation. In the pre-war generation there was no difference by sex: women were as traditional in their attitudes as men, or even slightly more so. The gap widens steadily by successive cohorts until by the youngest generation the gap has become considerable. This suggests that through the gradual process of demographic turnover, attitudes towards women in public leadership are likely to become more egalitarian over time, especially among women themselves. The process of modernization will proceed in the broader political culture, even if no other strategies or institutional reforms were adopted to hasten the election of more women to office. Nevertheless there is little evidence that a similar process is transforming public opinion in general among post-Communist and developing countries, where traditional values are prevalent among younger and older citizens.

Conclusions: The Implications for Change

The idea that the values endemic in the broader political culture affect the success of women in elected office has always been commonly assumed, but rarely, if ever, proved in a convincing fashion using systematic comparative evidence. We have long suspected that somehow the ‘X’ factor distinguished the striking advancement of women in parliaments in the Scandinavian north from their European neighbors in the Mediterranean south, as well as from Latin America, Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab states. Yet capturing the ‘X’ factor has proved illusive from existing aggregate data.

What this study demonstrates is that egalitarian attitudes towards women in office are more widespread in post-industrial societies, reflecting broad patterns of socioeconomic development and cultural modernization. Moreover these attitudes are not simply interesting for their own sake, since egalitarian values are significantly associated with where women have been successfully elected to power. Culture matters. Lastly, the more egalitarian attitudes evident among the younger generation in postindustrial societies, especially younger women, suggests that over time we can expect to see continued progress in female representation in these societies. The empowerment of women remains a complex process and as the cases of Australia, the United States and Spain demonstrate, favorable attitudes towards women’s leadership, by themselves, are not sufficient to produce automatic breakthroughs since there remain social structural and institutional barriers, especially in the short term. Nor can we expect an overnight transformation in deep-rooted traditional beliefs about the appropriate division of sex roles prevalent in many developing and post-Communist societies.

Nevertheless cultural change in postindustrial societies produces an environmental climate of opinion that is potentially more receptive to effective policy reforms designed to boost the number of women in elected office, such as the use of positive discrimination or affirmative action strategies like gender quotas. Many studies suggest that reforms to the regulations governing the formal criteria of eligibility to stand for elected office, set by law and by internal party rules, play a critical role in promoting gender equality. Positive measures include quotas requiring a certain proportion of female candidates, such as those implemented by law at local level in India and adopted in the 1990s for the national parliaments in ten Latin American nations24. The French parity movement mobilized to achieve passage of legislation in summer 2000 guaranteeing that there should be equal numbers of male and female candidates on party lists in local, regional, parliamentary and European elections. Elsewhere the adoption of quotas for female candidates in internal party rules has proved one of the most important and successful means for getting more women into office, especially in bureaucratic mass-branch parties where the rules count25. Many parties in Northern Europe introduced quotas in the 1970s, followed by social democratic parties in Germany, Spain, Portugal and the UK. The situation is more varied in Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa, although again parties of the left have been more sympathetic to their introduction, such as the MPLA in Angola, the Popular Front in Côte d’Ivoire and the SWAPO party in Namibia26. Their impact can be demonstrated in ‘natural experiments’ by comparing changes in the proportion of women MPs in particular parties over successive elections, like the introduction of all-women short-lists in target seats by the British Labour party, leading towards the proportion of women at Westminster doubling from 1992-97. In all these developments, if the public is broadly sympathetic
towards getting more women into public life, then parties may feel more willing to introduce institutional reforms and affirmative action strategies to achieve these aims.

Trying to alter deep-seated attitudes towards sex roles in public life may prove a frustrating exercise, perhaps impossible to transform in the short-term even with extensive educational and public awareness campaigns. But in the longer-term, the secular trends in value change associated with the process of modernization, especially among younger generations of women and men, are likely to facilitate the process of getting more women into power. The combination of cultural shifts in attitudes in conjunction with institutional reforms of recruitment processes holds considerable promise that maybe projections can be accelerated towards a more optimistic scenario for democracy, so that women achieve political parity well before the dawn of the 22nd Century.
Figure 6.1: Women in elected office

Note: The percentage of women in the lower house of parliament, 2001.
Figure 6.2: Egalitarian attitudes towards women in politics

Note: “Men make better political leaders than women” (% Disagree)
Source: Pooled World Values Surveys 1995-2001
Note: For details about the Gender Equality Scale see Figure 2.1 and Chapter 2.
Figure 6.5. Attitudes towards women as political leaders by cohort

Source: Pooled World Values Surveys 1995-2001
Figure 6.6: Attitudes towards women leaders by gender

Source: Pooled World Values Surveys 1995-2001
Table 6.1. Explaining the proportion of women in parliament

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<th>Model 2 Social + Institutional</th>
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Notes: The models represent standardized beta coefficients derived from OLS regression analysis models with the proportion of women in the lower house of parliament in 43 nations worldwide as the dependent variable. The year of the aggregate data was selected to match the year of the WVS survey in each country. The variables were entered in the listed order. *p.05 ** p.01 ***p.001


District magnitude: Average population size per MP.

Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties: Calculated by counting all parties with more than 3% of the seats in the lower house of parliament, with data derived from Elections Around the World. www.agora.stm.it/elections/alllinks.htm.

Gender equality scale: See Chapter 2.

For details of all items see Appendix B.
Source: Pooled World Values Surveys 1995-2001


5 Reynolds measured socioeconomic development by the UN gender-related development index. Andrew Reynolds. 1999. ‘Women in the Legislatures and Executives of the World: Knocking at the Highest Glass Ceiling.’ *World Politics* 51(4).


18 Margaret Inglehart. 1979. ‘Political Interest in West European Women.’ *West European Politics*.


