

## CHAPTER TWO

# The Electoral Market as a Mechanism of Political Inequality

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For as long as the structure of candidates and parliamentarians resemble the top of the stratification ladder rather than its whole, issues of electoral control are firmly connected to the issue of political inequality. Despite a trend towards demographic and experiential diversity in the political elite, it is axiomatic that disadvantaged groups of gender (Kenworthy and Malami 1999; Paxton and Kunovich 2003), race and ethnicities (Swain 1995), and other social groups (Norris and Lovenduski 1993; Zweigenhaft and Domhoff 1998) are numerically and substantively underrepresented in the national legislatures of modern democracies. Political equality, according to social scientists and democracy theorists, is a foundation of modern democracy (e.g. Dahl 2006; Verba 2006). Yet, everywhere political power is exercised, there is political inequality. Political inequality refers to the unequal influence over decisions made by political bodies and the unequal outcomes of those decisions (Dubrow 2015). Political inequality is a subtype of power inequality, visible within the political processes of all kinds of political structures. In modern democracies, political inequality is simultaneously a dimension of democracy and a dimension of stratification. Under-representation is a key indicator of political inequality.

Our understanding of how and why disadvantaged groups are simultaneously unequal in economic, status and political domains would be enhanced by specifying the mechanisms that link micro-level voter behavior to macro-level electoral representation. Micro- and macro-level studies of women's and ethnic minorities'

political representation dominate the empirical field while normative defense of descriptive representation of various groups dominates the theoretical field (see also Bird 2003 and Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005: 407). In descriptive representation, the composition of the representative body resembles the demographics and experiences of the citizenry (Mansbridge 1999: 629; Pitkin 1972: Chapter 4).

As a means to explain how micro-level actions of voters and parliamentarians construct the composition of a national legislature, many scholars co-opt the economic language of market dynamics, where supply of and demand for types of candidates governs a nation's state of descriptive representation (Cannon 1999; Norris and Franklin 1997; Paxton and Kunovich 2003). The implication is that when the supply of descriptive candidates increases, voters will vote for them, and descriptive representation will be achieved (Dubrow 2007). Use of market imagery creates a state policy continuum with government intervention at one extreme and *laissez-faire* market solutions at the other. While the concept of an electoral market is a useful theoretical guideline, its empirical parameters are more often assumed than tested.

Research into government intervention centers mainly on constitutional and electoral law quotas and reserved seats for women and ethnicities (see also Htun 2003 and Chapter 10 of this book). Whether government intervention, in and of itself, enhances descriptive representation depends on the type of law implemented and how it is enforced (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005). For example, reserved seats can actually serve to reduce women's progress in gaining representation above the level set for reservation. In addition, quota management can be used against women's interests when party leaders are more interested in recruiting docile descriptive representatives who do not challenge the status quo (Dahlerup 2002). Government intervention for ethnicities follows a similar logic. Active descriptive representation policy for ethnicities is a potential means for securing political stability, especially during the formation of heterogeneous countries born of ethnic conflict, and can be achieved through electoral support for ethnic parties and formal guarantees of political representation (Htun 2004; Juberias 2000). Government intervention for ethnicities, however, can have negative, unintended consequences, depending on how the law was written, implemented, and enforced, and how it is perceived by other ethnic groups (Stein 2000).

Research into market solutions is largely limited to the effectiveness of voluntary party quotas for enhancing women's representation and government support for ethnic party competition without electoral guarantees (Kittilson 2006; Juberias 2000). Voluntary party quotas for gender have been shown to increase women's representation, though like other types of descriptive representation policy, success depends on the form and magnitude of the quota, along with the sanctions for non-compliance. Though endorsement of gender quotas is widespread in the women's representation literature, there is disagreement as to the necessity of quotas. Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2005) argue, "Major historical leaps in women's parliamentary representation can occur without quota provisions" (27). Jane Mansbridge, a noted descriptive representation scholar, presents a contrary view; "... as I write, significant representation by gender cannot be achieved in any existing polity without some form of quota" (2005: 622).

Quotas, however, are not the entirety of market solutions. A range of non-government action, such as party level affirmative action, social movement pressures, and changing ideology, all have the possibility to increase descriptive representation for the disadvantaged. Thus, in order to understand whether market solutions can enhance descriptive representation for the disadvantaged, we need to explore beyond just party quotas and analyze the entirety of the political market as a feasible mechanism for change.

Linking attitudes and behaviors of political leaders and voters to the demographic composition of parliaments, I advocate the use of concept of an electoral market as a micro to macro level mechanism to explore the determinants of how new democracies create their state of descriptive representation in the national legislature for disadvantaged social categories.

Elections link masses to political elites and are a crucial mechanism through which political leaders understand mass interests. Thus, repeated elections are supposedly designed to enable the masses to achieve one or more of the following goals: (a) sanction directly the political elite by either voting for or against the extension of incumbents' term in office and (b) vote for the political leaders that best represent their interests (Manin et al. 1999). Central and Eastern Europe has had great electoral volatility (Lawson 1999: 32–33; Zielinski et al 2005), caused in part by social cleavages translating their dissatisfaction into

vote choice during subsequent, and frequent, economic downturns (Tavits 2005, Roberts 2008). If political stability is a result of parties rooted in social cleavages (Elster et al. 1998: Chapter 7; Lipset and Rokkan 1967), then adequate gender, class, ethnic and other social groups' representation in national legislatures in the course of repeated, free, and fair elections is crucial.

Perhaps the most convincing way to counter to criticisms, demonstrating the importance of studying the subject, is by assessing whether the demographics of the representative make a measurable difference in the representation of the disadvantaged (Mansbridge 1999; Ogmundson 2005: 319–323). Any impact of descriptive representation could be felt in two main ways; (a) raising constituents' political engagement and/or (b) descriptive representatives' impact on legislative processes.

While some find that descriptive representatives make little difference in either of these areas (Lawless 2004; Swain 1995), others show that descriptive representatives do have a measurable impact. In terms of raising constituents' political engagement, whites and blacks are more likely to contact representatives of the same race (Gay 2002) and women are more likely to become politically active in states with competitive and visible women candidates (Atkeson 2003). Some explain this phenomenon in terms of legitimacy, in that "constituents are more likely to identify with the legislature and to defer to its decisions to the extent that they perceive a significant percentage of 'people like themselves' in the legislature" (Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005: 413–414).

As for impacting legislative processes, research is mixed on whether demographic characteristics influence roll-call behavior, but is more definitive on policy introduction (for a review, see Swers 2002: 7–17 and Reynolds 1999: 548). Partisanship seems to have a larger impact on roll-call voting than voter's demographic ties to their constituency (e.g., Latino dominated districts exert little influence on their Latino representatives (Hero and Tolbert 1999)). As for gender, net of partisanship, women legislators used to consistently vote more liberally than men, though this behavior has attenuated over time (Welch 1995). Blacks consistently vote more liberally than whites and support more Black issue bills, a phenomenon dating back to Reconstruction (Cobb and Jenkins 2001). One cross-national study of wealthy, industrialized countries found that greater percentages of women in legislative

positions positively impacts foreign policy in terms of providing development assistance (Breuning 2001).

Dubrow (2007) used the concept of demographic cues, i.e. when voters vote based on the individual characteristics of the candidates, to argue that it is theoretically possible for the disadvantaged to “vote in” their own descriptive representatives. The main hypothesis was that voters are more likely to vote for parties that are demographically similar to them. For example, women are more likely to vote for parties that have women in them. He found that, for the demographic groups who do vote based on demographic cues, the contribution to overall voting behavior is much smaller than that of political attitudes toward the economy, the State Socialist past, and the role of the Church in political life. Dubrow (2007) concluded that demographic cues voting in Poland from the 1990s to the early 2000s, with its *laissez faire* political market consisting only of voluntary gender quotas, could not produce a descriptively similar government. Stronger government intervention could produce what a *laissez faire* approach did not.

Stronger impacts are felt in terms of policy introduction. Swers’ (2002) study of the policy impacts of women legislators strongly suggests that women are more likely to introduce women’s issues and feminist bills into legislative consideration than their male colleagues (see also Thomas 1994). Others find that Blacks are more likely to introduce Black issue bills and work harder for their passage than whites (Cannon 1999: Chapter 4; Whitby 2002), though some find the results somewhat mixed (Tate 2003: Chapter 4). In Eastern Europe, descriptive representation of disadvantaged groups influences the form and magnitude of policy, but primarily through ethnic political parties (Chiribuca and Magyari 2003; see also Xydias 2008).

All told, it appears that descriptive representation does matter in that demographic groups both raise constituents’ political engagement and impact the legislative process. It should be noted, however, that because disadvantaged groups have only recently entered the political elite (Zweigenhaft and Domhoff 1998), research on the direct impact of descriptive representatives is in its early stages.

## POLITICAL INEQUALITY

Under-representation of demographic groups in the parliament is a form of political inequality. Political inequalities are found throughout the political process, and include (A) voice, identified in the political process as participation (electoral and non-electoral) and representation (governmental and non-governmental, i.e. by third sector organizations); and (B) response, identified primarily in terms of policy (symbolic, formal and informal). For a full discussion, see Dubrow (2015).

Dahl's (2006) work suggests that democracy and political equality are distinguishable in that democracy is a system of rights and political processes, whereas political equality is the extent to which different participants have reasonably similar opportunities for voice and response within that system of rights and processes. That political inequality is a creature of the political process does not reduce all political processes to political inequality – it merely points out where we should suspect it (Dubrow 2015). From the equality of political opportunities side, the study of political inequality is a hunt for these structured differences in individual, group or organizational influence over government decisions. From the equality of political benefits side, it suggests how we should view any situation in which political processes systematically and historically lead to a pattern of unequal political outcomes.

The APSA Task Force has initiated what can be called an American school of economic inequality in politics. This school includes Theda Skocpol et al in the American Political Science Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy (2004), Robert Dahl's in "On Political Equality" (2006), as well as Gilens and Page (2014), among others, who argues that there are three major dimensions of political inequality: Citizen voice, government response, and patterns of public policy-making. Citizen voice refers to how people transmit their opinions and interests to their representatives. Governments can choose to respond, or not, under the threat of electoral accountability. Patterns of public policy-making can be discerned from studying who gets what and why. Economic inequality depresses participation and opens gaps between the political power of social groups (Solt 2015). They warn that the pluralistic aspects of American democracy – the interplay of voice and response – are imperiled by economic inequalities. The reason is that the disadvantaged are less represented and less involved in

political participation and government officials and policy makers are less inclined to be responsive to the preferences of the disadvantaged.

A description of political inequality should consist of an interlinked set of components that can be applied to a wide array of contexts across levels of decision-making, time, and place, with a simple, interdisciplinary vocabulary. As such, I describe a generic political process that can be used to explain structured inequalities in influence over the decisions of decision-making bodies. The purpose of identifying the process is to indicate where political inequality is and how it is connected to political inequality found throughout. It allows us to localize where the political inequality occurs, and where it affects other parts. In sum, the aim of the model is to show (a) various types of political inequalities, (b) how these political inequalities interact, and (c) how these multiple, simultaneous and interacting political inequalities contribute to a person's, group's, or organization's overall level of political inequality. My description of the process is based on the American school, and as such I have accepted their assumption that voice and response is where democracy and inequality meet, and I cannot think of other relevant parts of the political process that they did not cover.

Voice refers to how constituencies express their interests to decision-makers directly or through representatives. Voice has two main components of participation and representation and each has subcomponents. Participation can be electoral – such as voting or standing for office in elections – or non-electoral, such as attending a demonstration, contacting a public official, or joining a political organization, among others. Representation means that a person or an organization interprets the political voice and transmits their interpretation to the decision-making body. Government representation refers to those individuals and government agencies whose function is to listen to the interests of their constituency. Examples include parliamentarians, Ombudspersons, and special offices directed by the government. Non-governmental representatives include NGOs that can be non-profit or for-profit and whose function is to transmit the interests of their selected constituency to decision-making bodies. NGOs can be non-violent organizations such as Kongres Kobiet in Poland and the NAACP in America, or they can be organizations that advocate violence. People and organizations who interpret voices may or may not be expressly or directly appointed by their constituency.

Response refers to how decision-makers act and react to their constituencies and is expressed via policy and symbols. Policy can be defined as a deliberate plan of action to guide decisions to achieve specific outcomes with the intention of providing specific guidelines for future, related decisions. Policy has two main forms: formal and informal. Formal policy refers to legislation, judicial precedent or executive directives that are written and have the force of codified law. Informal policy consists of rules that lack force of codified law yet impact how decisions are made. For example, when a political party leader directs the organization to include more minorities in their candidate lists, this can either be formal within the party rule book or an informal rule, something that the rank-and-file know about but on which there is no paper-trail.

Symbolism is a response that does not set firm guidelines for future decisions. Symbols are often publicly expressed in limited-time events, such as a speech on the parliamentary floor or introducing – but not passing – legislation. Symbols also manifest in commemorative events such as “Black History Month” in the U.S. or “The Decade of the Roma” as proclaimed by the United Nations.

Symbols and policy are distinguished not by their intent, but by whether the response is a recognizable directive to guide future action and the extent to which the directive is enforced. To declare a “Decade of the Roma,” for example, is symbolic in the absence of policy measures. Enforcement is the bright line between policy and symbolism: loosely enforced policy is tantamount to symbol. A complicating factor is when policy is in the form of a symbol, such as “resolutions” and other non-legislative statements. “Symbolic policy” is expressed as policy yet carries the force of symbol (see also Tomescu-Dubrow et al 2014).

### *Sensitizing Principles*

I posit the following sensitizing principles as guidelines for the interaction between components of the conceptual framework. The principles are designed to cover a wide range of political contexts.

**Dominating Principle of Context Dependence:** Social context rules all principles and all components.



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**Principle of Interaction:** At any point, all or most of the components influence each other. At an abstract level, voice and response are in a continuous direct feedback loop.

**Principle of Direct and Indirect Effects:** Within voice and response, relationships between subcomponents may be indirect or direct. At some point, a voice subcomponent has a direct influence on a response subcomponent. For example, representatives [voice] make policy [response]; via campaign contributions (legal or otherwise), non-electoral political participation [voice] can directly influence symbols [response].

**Principle of Unequal Influence of Components:** Components differ in the extent to which they influence political inequality. Difference depends on context, where in Country A at one point in time some components emerge as more important than in other countries and times. In general, symbolic responses are less effective than policy in influencing the extent of political inequality.

**Principle of Disproportionate Response:** Loudness of voice is not always met with a proportionate response. At times, very loud voices are met with zero response, or with symbolic response. At other times, very quiet voice, or even implicit silence (e.g. elite consensus), is met with high response, as in the case of economic policy favoring the wealthiest, whether or not they expressly voice their interests to decision-makers.

**Principle of Unintended Consequences:** Voice may elicit an unintended response. Loud voice may amplify political inequality, as in the case of regimes suppressing dissent. This assumes voice is intentional, and the intention can be correctly interpreted by decision-makers. The term “backlash” fits here.

**Principle of Simultaneous Inequalities:** Inequality between individuals, groups or organizations can occur within any of the subcomponents. Inequalities between subcomponents interact and contribute to an overall level of political inequality. For example, inequality is possible in participation and representation. As for their interaction, low political participation by a specific group – either electoral or non-electoral – can contribute mightily to their under-representation in governmental and non-governmental bodies. Voice

inequality then influences response inequality, where policy does not reflect their interests.

## DESCRIPTIVE REPRESENTATION IN THE ELECTORAL MARKET

Debate on how best to achieve descriptive representation produces a wide spectrum of policy types. Half of the countries in the United Nations have had some descriptive representation policy within their electoral market (Dubrow 2006). Examples of government intervention in the electoral market include “selective” forms of descriptive representation policy (Mansbridge 1999: 632–33) such as race-conscious re-districting, lower thresholds for ethnic minority parties (Juberias 2000: 35), the establishment of representative councils for consultation on certain types of legislation, quotas mandated by electoral or constitutional law, and reserved seats. Examples of market solutions include affirmative action or quotas voluntarily adopted by political parties.

The electoral market imagery is attractive, most likely because the assumptions of market dynamics are well known and well tested in other areas of research. Electoral market is often used as analogy and metaphor rather than theory (Udehn 1996: Chapter 3). Use of the concept of an electoral market is decidedly situational, depending wholly on the phenomenon under study. The concept of an electoral market remains a theoretically fruitful means of understanding social phenomena, as it provides one of the only ways to link micro-level behavior to macro-level outcomes in the social sciences (see also Coleman 1990).

Though combining political and economic concepts to form theories of social behavior are common, including the use of the term “electoral market,” few explicitly define what they mean (see also Udehn 1996: Chapter 1). Since Becker’s *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior* (1976), researchers have used market language of supply and demand to explain social phenomena such as occupational attainment (Kaufman 2002), marriage (Cherlin 1992), religion (Gill 2001), and crime (Becker 1976). Economists examining political processes in the context of public choice theory are most likely to use the term

political or electoral market, but few discuss it substantively (Wittman 1995: 1). In *The Myth of Democratic Failure* (1995), Donald Wittman, an American economist, asserts the primacy of the market in writing, “Most controversies in the social sciences are ultimately arguments over the nature of the market” (1). Recently, market language and the analogy of a political market has been used to explain variations in the representation of disadvantaged groups (Cannon 1999; Norris and Franklin 1997; Mackay 2004; Paxton and Kunovich 2003).

Since the goal is to understand how micro-level political market dynamics produces a given state of descriptive representation, I need to construct an electoral market as a link between micro-level behavior and macro-level outcomes. Supply and demand dynamics need to be well defined, as well as their constituent levels of analyses and the actors within them. Moreover, social structural, contextual factors need to be clearly delineated as both conceptually distinct yet theoretically integrated into the actions of the various actors. Additionally, the concept should be durable enough to be comparable across time and space.

Conceptions of the electoral market are similar to the more well-known labor market. In studies of the labor market, the supply side is generally conceived as those factors that influence the kind of job aspirants available. Demand side consists of the employers who seek types of job aspirants. In the electoral market, especially when used to explain candidate emergence, the supply side factors are such as candidate resources and motivation (Mackay 2004) that influence the kind of candidate aspirants available; the demand side as the parties who seek types of candidates.

Following previous use of market imagery, definitions of who or what influences supply and demand vary substantially from study to study. In macro-level studies of women’s representation, macro-political and economic forces define supply and demand and govern the dynamics of the market. In explaining cross-cultural variation in women’s representation in national legislatures, Paxton and Kunovich (2003) define the supply side as structural factors, such as education levels and workforce participation of women, and the demand side as political parties and electoral systems.

There are alternative visions of the concept of the electoral market. Micro-level studies seem to use supply and demand as all factors that contribute to candidate emergence and selection. In explaining

descriptive representation in the European Parliament, Norris and Franklin (1997) conceive of a “political market-place;” on the supply side are candidates and their characteristics, including motivations and political capital, and on the demand side are attitudes of political gatekeepers and party rules. In explaining Black minority representation in the U.S. Congress, Cannon (1999: Chapter 3) defines the supply side as individual politicians, the demand side as voters and their social contexts.

Voters are rarely considered as important actors in the supply and demand dynamic. A contrast with how labor markets work is illustrative. The key differences between the labor market and the electoral market are the factors that potentially influence supply. Labor market employers rarely have to consider how the public at-large thinks about hiring decisions and thus have a great capacity to conceal discriminatory hiring practices. Parties, on the other hand, must consider public, or voter, reactions. Moreover, voter demands are vital for party survival and hence must be significant in influencing supply.

Thus, my conception of the electoral market is more similar to that of Cannon (1999: Chapter 3), who includes voters into the supply and demand dynamic. Including the voter forces a change in the entire concept, defining voters as those who demand descriptive representation and political leaders as those who control the supply of demographic types of candidates. This change allows researchers to ask new questions concerning the ability of market solutions to produce descriptive representation and the extent to which voters play a role in this process.

## THEORY OF THE MARKET

A market can be defined as an institution that governs distribution of resources (Carruthers and Babb 2000). A political market is an institution that governs the distribution of representation and other political goods using the concepts of supply and demand. This leads to the following proposition: The state of descriptive representation at the macro-level is a function of the electoral market such that micro- and meso-level actors and their interactions determine supply and demand for types of candidates under varying contextual restraints.

*Levels and Their Actors*

Three levels of analyses, each with their own actors, comprise the political market (Table 1).

Table 1. *Levels and Actors in an Electoral Market*

|        |             | Levels |                             |
|--------|-------------|--------|-----------------------------|
|        |             | Micro  | Meso                        |
| Actors | Legislators |        | Political Parties           |
|        | Candidates  |        | Social Change Organizations |
|        | Voters      |        |                             |
|        |             |        | Macro                       |
|        |             |        | Legislature                 |

At the micro-level, individuals are the units of analysis. Actors include legislators, candidates, and voters. For both the meso- and macro-levels, organizations are the units of analysis. Influencing both micro-level behaviors and the state of descriptive representation is the meso-level, comprised of political parties and social change organizations. At the macro-level is the legislature, whose demographic composition is a product of both micro and meso-level actions. Influencing all actors at all levels are the social structural, or contextual factors.

Actors of the supply side are individuals in the political institutions, e.g. political leaders, including political party leaders and the rank and file legislators. Political institutions influence supply by impacting the structure of opportunities in the political market, providing the contexts necessary for candidates of all demographic stripes to emerge (Kunovich and Paxton 2005; Norris and Franklin 1997; Wilcox et al. 2003: 44). Political leaders' attitudes towards descriptive representation heavily influence the supply of available descriptive representatives (Cannon 1999; Norris and Franklin 1997). Political elites are capable of holding strong attitudes toward descriptive representation as a governance solution (Chaney and Fevre 2002), lending support for the contention that these influential subgroups help foster attitudes, positively or negatively, towards descriptive representation.

Actors of the demand side are individual voters. Voter demand is measured in two ways; (1) using attitudes towards descriptive representation in theory and (2) by voting behavior through demographic

cues. Attitudes toward descriptive representation in theory are the intellectual foundations of behavior outcomes, influencing propensity to vote for descriptive representatives. The second demand signal, voting behavior, assumes that individual traits on the part of the candidate cues voting behavior which in turn signals to parties a demand for types of candidates. While the intellectual foundations of demand are concealed from suppliers, vote choice is visible.

## MARKET RATIONALITY

Market language as used in explaining socio-political phenomena has its roots in sociological rational choice theory (RCT), and from economics in public choice theory and the assumption of economic rationality in actors' approach to political decisions (Buchanan 1968; Downs 1957; Hechter and Kanazawa 1997; Kiser and Bauldry 2005). As a multilevel theory, RCT assumes that individuals are the starting point, though influenced by macro-level conditions (see also (Coleman 1990: 5). In essence, RCT assumes Becker's (1976) *homo economicus*, where individuals engage in utility maximization, selfishly seeking to increase benefits and minimize costs in any exchange situation. Thus, rational action is that which provides the greatest personal good with the least bit of bad.

RCT has been criticized on many fronts (for a review see Green and Shapiro 1994). There are two main criticisms of RCT's main assumptions; the stability of preferences and the capability of individuals to make rational decisions based on available information. I address each in turn.

I assume relative stability of preferences across time which, for my purposes, is reasonable. I present what Hechter and Kanazawa (1997) call a "thick" model of rational choice. Opposite to "thin" models, thick ones "specify the individual's existing values and beliefs" (Hechter and Kanazawa 1997: 194). For disadvantaged groups, whose structural position is heavily determined by their lack of political resources, preferences are dependent on whether they are voters or political leaders. As explained and tested in later chapters, preferences for both are for descriptive representation for their particular social group. Thus, women prefer women representatives, farmers prefer farmer representatives,

young people prefer youth representatives, and so on. However, demographic intersectionality and within-group heterogeneity of social and political attitudes cause variation in preferences.

I also assume that individuals, be they voters or parliamentarians, have sufficient information to realize their preferences, with some key qualifications. I assume a bounded rationality within institutional constraints (Ingram and Clay 2000; see also Chapter 1 on accountability and information availability). This leads to two qualifications. First, assuming an open-information environment, politicians are aware of voter sentiment towards descriptive representation through voter behavior and have the possibility of reacting in a supply and demand appropriate fashion. Also, in the absence of perfect information, I argue that both have just enough information to realize preferences, e.g. voters can determine demographic types of candidates.

Second, in an electoral market, hidden information can damage the effectiveness of the electoral process to produce a descriptively similar legislature. Thus, I argue that it is exactly the deficient information possessed by both demanders and suppliers that can fuel electoral market ineffectiveness. However, there is reason to support the contention that even if there was perfect information, descriptive representation without government intervention would be difficult to achieve. Thus, the extent to which the electoral market is rational is an open empirical question.

## DYNAMICS OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Dynamics of supply and demand should function such that if voters signal demand, political leaders would furnish supply proportional to the demand. Thus, supply of demographic types of candidates should be directly related to demand for those candidates.

How demand influences supply is a theoretically thorny problem. Some previous researchers consider voter demand to be an inadequate way of influencing supply. Demand for women representatives as expressed by the voting public, for example, has been referred to as unorganized, diffused and as a general function of attitudes toward the role of women (Wilcox et al. 2003: 43; see also Dubrow 2007). While demand by voters is not signaled so clearly as that of social movement

groups working specifically for descriptive representation, the degree to which the signal is unorganized and diffused is an empirical question, as is the basic assumption that demand is signaled within elections at all.

Thus, in the electoral market as I define it, the supply of candidates is partially driven by demand of voters, which is antithetical to current literature on candidate emergence (Fox and Lawless 2004; Norris and Lovenduski 1993, 1995). Candidate selection by parties is largely secretive (Kunovich and Paxton 2005). Some qualitative evidence suggests, however, that political leaders exercise prejudice against certain types of candidates:

People start with prejudices about the candidates. In the old days, they used to band them and say, 'We're not having anybody under 40, nobody over 50, or we're not having a lawyer, or we're not having somebody from the south-east,' or whatever it might be. Whatever prejudice they decided to start with knocked out a whole lot of people many of whom might have been exactly what they really wanted. (A Conservative member of the British parliament, as quoted in Norris and Lovenduski 1993: 379).

In another research project, in Poland, some members of parliament thought the idea of descriptive representation was untenable (Pawłowski and Dubrow 2011):

"The Parliament is a legislative body, whose aim is to create laws for all citizens, not for the special interests of any social, ethnic, religious, etc group. The state stands for all equally, whether they are red-headed or blond. If we accept the idea that the make-up of Parliament is to mirror that of society it would mean that we are returning to the time of socialist realism, where a 32-year old teacher with three children from a small town could become a representative. This is nonsense." (Member of the Sejm, quoted in Pawłowski and Dubrow 2011: 311).

Norris and Lovenduski (1993) argued that examining supply side explanations for candidate emergence, defined as those factors that influence the propensity of people to apply, is more fruitful than examining prejudice on the part of political leaders. Some assume prejudice, they argue, by looking only at the outcomes of elections, a questionable strategy considering that supply side factors may be more influential.



I argue, however, that candidate emergence is at least partially due to voter demand for types of candidates, a situation that can be gleaned by doing exactly what Norris and Lovenduski (1993) caution against; examining outcomes (379). If parties are rational, then they seek to maximize seat allotments. If vote outcomes are the sum of rational decisions, then party reactions are also the sum of rational decisions. Assuming parties know how voters vote, which is likely considering the extent to which exit polls are taken in modern industrialized nations, parties are aware of which demographic types are voting for them (or not). Thus, demand increases from a particular voting demographic should lead to supply increases for that demographic's type of candidates, a situation gleaned from examining vote outcomes.

Voting and voter demand for types of candidates are primarily driven by three relatively interrelated factors; policy, accountability, and demographics of the candidate. Policy preferences in terms of partisanship and economic voting dominate all recent theoretical models of vote demand (Brooks and Brady 1999; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000). Accountability, or the sanctioning of governments, is often measured in terms of policy preferences, though it includes other factors such as the influence of a parliamentarian's roll-call voting history (Przeworski et al. 1999; Zielinski et al. 2005). Finally, demographics of the candidate have recently been shown to be a factor in the voting calculus (Dubrow 2007). As disadvantaged groups have only recently penetrated the spheres of the political elite, examining the contribution of individual qualities of candidates to the vote calculus is a young – but rapidly maturing – literature, and its contributions are just beginning to be understood.

## MARKET SUCCESS AND FAILURE

For *laissez-faire* electoral markets to produce a descriptively similar legislature, two main assumptions need to be met. Electoral market analysis assumes that parties are responsive to voter demands. Voter voice is met by party response. Whether a particular electoral market is capable of producing a descriptively similar legislature in the light of the relative capability of suppliers to recognize the demand signals and react in a rational fashion is an open empirical question. Another

principle concern is the extent to which there is a choice of descriptive representatives from which the voting public can choose. Electoral market analysis assumes that every major social cleavage, gender, social class, and age, being primary demographics, are available on the ballot. Electoral markets would not be able to produce a descriptively similar legislature if voting ballots are overly demographically homogenous.

Market success and failure is dependent on the extent to which these assumptions are met. If a group loses descriptive representatives while signaling preferences for descriptive representatives of their type, and there is no government intervention on their behalf, then purely market solutions to representational inequality contribute to political market failure.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter connects the ideas of political inequality and electoral control in modern democracies by focusing on descriptive representation. To summarize: The legislatures of Central and Eastern Europe, as is the case around the world, reflect the top of the stratification ladder rather than its whole. This fact violates the principle of descriptive representation, which states that the parliament should resemble the demographics and experiences of its constituency. Thus, poor descriptive representation is an indicator of political inequality, defined as the extent to which there are structured differences in influence over decisions made by political decision-making bodies, as well as in the outcomes of those decisions. We get closer to achieving a fundamental principle of democracy – that of political equality – when there is reasonable descriptive representation. This is not the case, and thus modern democracies are systems in which political inequality thrives.

This chapter then posits a theory of how parliaments become politically unequal places through the metaphor of an electoral market. An electoral market contains dynamics of supply and demand for different types of demographic candidates and parliamentarians. While some put voters on the supply side and political parties on the demand side, I argue for the opposite: Voters demand types of candidates and political parties supply them. An efficient electoral market is when voters signal demand to parties and parties respond to voter demand by supplying

the types of candidates that voters want. An inefficient market is where voters demand but parties do not supply what the voters demand. A key factor is governmental intervention. Governments can intervene in the electoral market by insisting that parties supply a particular type of candidate, under threat of sanctions. Governmental intervention does not necessarily lead to a more efficient market and by its intervention, it can privilege some demographic types over others. However, without such an intervention, some demographic types of candidates would not appear, or appear rarely, and the parliament would not get appreciably closer to resembling the demographic and experiential diversity of the citizenry.

Electoral markets exist within the political process and can be understood as a subset of the relationship between political voice and political response. In an electoral market, we talk of voters and parties. In the political process as a whole, we talk of everyone with a voice – individuals, groups, and organizations – and the response to those voices by the government. Electoral markets are thus connected to political equality and can be used to explain how legislatures become more or less equal over time.

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