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The Impact of Women's Participation and Leadership on Policy Outcomes:
A Focus on Women's Policy Machineries*

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* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

Introduction

“National machineries for the advancement of women” or women’s policy agencies (WPAs) have been an important part of the UN policy for women since its inception in the 1970s.¹ Identified officially in 1975 at the first women’s conference in Mexico and mentioned systematically at every women’s conference since, “. state-based institutions charged formally with furthering women’s status and gender equality (RNGS 2004)” have figured prominently in the official policy directives, statements and reports from the UN on women’s status. The UN’s WPAs -- the Commission on the Status of Women and the Division of the Advancement of Women – are important administrative actors in the elaboration of the UN women’s policies on women; the UN emphasizes the importance of “national policy machineries “ in the implementation of UN-backed principles of gender equality at the national level, through “gender mainstreaming” in national level policies; and has called for WPAs to promote “...the active involvement of the broad and diverse range of institution actors in the public, private and voluntary sectors to work for equality between men and women (Beijing Platform of Action cited in Rai 2003b: 2)”. From this complex and multi-level process, WPAs have received a great deal of attention from both state and society based advocates for women’s rights and gender equality at international, national and local levels.

A wealth of relatively recent research, in part commissioned by the UN, (e.g. Rai 2003a), maps, assesses and explains the role of WPAs in promoting gender equality.² The scholarly turn toward understanding the activities of women’s policy offices has coincided with their growth (by the mid 1980s the UN had identified 127 member states with WPAs) and with the increasing feminist interest, both scholarly and political, in the state as a potential site for social change and gender equality

The goal of this paper is to focus on the role of WPAs in enhancing women’s political participation with a particular emphasis on their influence on women’s participation and leadership in policy outcomes. Using the feminist scholarship on gender and politics, the presentation first discusses how women’s policy machineries can improve women’s representation and participation on a conceptual level. The second section presents the results of one systematic cross-national study, the RNGS (Research Network on Gender Politics and the State) project, that specifically examines the question of whether women’s policy agencies actually do promote women’s representation and participation in western post industrial democracies. The paper ends with some concrete policy recommendations about how to enhance women’s representation and participation through WPAs suggested by the RNGS study.

¹ For an overview of the United Nations actions on women’s policy agencies as well as a critical assessment of the role and impact of WPAs worldwide see the UN-commissioned book by Rai (2003).

² In western post industrial democracies see for example Sawer (1996); Stetson and Mazur (1995); Stetson(2001); Mazur 2001); Outshoorn (2004); Lovenduski (2005); Haussman and Sauer (forthcoming); Chappell (2002). In countries outside of the West, see for instance, Goetz (2003); Kardam and Acuner (2003); Ugalde (2003); Honculada and Ofreneo (2003); Jezerska (2003); Kwesiga (2003); Rai (2003c); Lycklama,Vargas, and Wieringa (1998).

Women’s Policies Agencies and Women’s Participation and Representation

Work on gender and the state asserts that these state agencies for women and gender equality can represent women and women’s interests. As Weldon (2002a) argues in her study of sexual violence policy in 36 countries, social movements and institutions like WPAs are able to represent societal groups in the same way as elected officials.

It is important to note that the term *women’s policy agency* or *machinery* has come to mean any state-based agency, at all levels of government – national, sub-national or local -- or in any type of organ – elected, appointed, administrative, or judicial— that seeks to promote the advancement of women and gender equality. In countries where political parties have a central role in government, in single party states or parliamentary democracies for example, quasi WPAs (QUAWPAs) act partially outside of the state parameters in the same manner as WPAs.³ Thus, these agencies not only have the potential to speak for women as a group as it is cross-cut by race, ethnicity, class, geographic location, etc., but also for anyone, group or individual, man or woman, seeking to advance women’s rights and strike down gender-based hierarchies that contribute to inequalities between men and women.

Experts agree that the shift from women to gender in the focus of most WPAs throughout the world occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Staudt 2003 and Rai 2003b). Today, the names of many WPAs do not even include the word woman, as in the cases of Scandinavian countries which focus on gender equality. A new form of intersectional agency, first introduced in the USA in the mid 1960s, where different forms of discrimination are dealt with under one rubric, the so-called “one-stop-shops” (Lovenduski 2005a), have become more common in Western Europe since the adoption of a new EU directive on discrimination.

WPAs have the potential to be major conduits for women’s descriptive and substantive representation⁴ and participation in three ways:

- 1 They may represent women substantively through bringing women’s interests and gender equality issues into public policy discussion, formulation and implementation, often through gender mainstreaming.
- 2 They can represent women descriptively and procedurally through helping the actors that speak for women and gender equality to enter government policy-making arenas.
- 3 Through the fact that women tend to work in and lead these agencies, although not in all case, WPAs can increase the participation of women in the state.⁵

³ The notion of QUAWPAs was first developed in the context of the RNGS study to discuss women’s commissions in political parties in parliamentary systems in post industrial democracies.

⁴ Based on Pitkin’s (1967) taxonomy of representation, gender and politics research focuses on these two ways in which women can be represented. Women can be represented by individual women in office—descriptive representation—or women’s interests and gender equality can be taken up in public policy content, debates and outcomes—substantive representation. Many feminist theorists and analysts argue that descriptive representation of women leads to their substantive representation through the “politics of presence (Phillips 1995).” Descriptive representation is a form of women’s direct participation as well.

⁵ The French WPA structures, since the early 1980s – including national level ministry, central administrative agencies, regional delegations, departmental offices and national and territorial network of women’s rights information centers--employs 500 people, most of whom are women (Mazur 2005).

Through facilitating women's representation, WPAs have the potential to contribute to the process of democratization, whether the country be undergoing transitions to democracy, struggling to maintain a stable democracy, or looking to make a stable democracy more democratic.

As Honculada and Ofreneo (2003: 142) observe in their study of WPAs in the Philippines, women's machineries can produce "... an expanded sisterhood with women in government staking out claims as much for themselves as for the whole bureaucracy, networking among each other and with women in the GO-NGO community for mutual growth and ... a common agenda." Femocrats, the individuals --usually women, but sometimes men -- who work for WPAs are important agents of women's representation in the policy formation process.⁶ As Vargas and Weiringa (1998) first articulated in a discussion of women's movement and public policy in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, femocrats in WPAs have the potential to form a "triangle of empowerment" with women in elected and appointed office and women's groups that can improve women's substantive representation through the formulation and implementation of effective "feminist policies" and women's descriptive representation through bringing more women into the process.⁷

Halsaa's (1991 and 1998) work on Norway also shows that "strategic partnerships" between women in parliament, women's groups and WPAs are crucial in developing successful feminist policy. Weldon's cross-national study of domestic violence policy also uses the notion of a triangle of empowerment (2002b) and these triangles are also identified as important variables in enhancing women's participation and representation in Mazur's (2002) study of feminist policy formation in western post industrial democracies. It is important to note that the women's group/movement part of the triangle can involve a wide variety of actors from civil society, both individual groups, including women's groups and associations, autonomous women's movements, women's associations in non gender specific groups like trade unions or political parties, and experts.⁸ These women's movement actors, as Weldon (2002) points out, should also be seen as agents of women's representation.

WPAs and femocrats play an ever-increasing role in gender mainstreaming by both helping to implement a mainstreaming approach to gender equality and in training and educating other government actors about the complexities of gender-based disparities and the necessarily transversal response to it. As studies of mainstreaming in the EU have shown (e.g., Woodward

⁶First identified in the Australian case, in Eisenstein (1996), Sawer (1990); Watson (1990) for example, the term femocrat is typically used to refer to any individual working for a WPA.

⁷ Feminist policy consists of any government action that explicitly contains three of the five following characteristics "1) the improvement of women's rights, status or situation to be in line with men's, (however rights, status, and situation are culturally defined within a given context); 2) the reduction/elimination of gender-based hierarchies or patriarchy; 3) a focus on both the public and the private spheres or an approach that avoids distinctions between the public and the private; 4) a focus on both men and women; 5) ideas that can be readily associated with a recognized feminist group (Mazur 2002: 30-31)". Feminist policy was identified and mapped out as a new sector for government action in western post industrial democracies by Mazur (2002).

⁸ This broad-base definitions of women's movements was developed in the context of the RNGS study of women's policy offices to allow for a more accurate analysis of women's movements in a variety of different national contexts. For more on the development of this approach to studying women's movements see McBride and Mazur (2005).

2003), without an activist and knowledgeable WPA, informed by gender experts, government can easily circumvent the original intent of gender mainstreaming, which is to insert gender considerations in all areas of public policy to better address gender-based inequities. Staudt (2003) particularly emphasizes the need for femocrat experts to train bureaucrats outside of WPAs in implementing gender mainstreaming and through gender audits in budgeting. The French gender audit, for example, was instituted and has been since overseen by femocrats in the women's rights service (Mazur 2005). This education and training role of WPAs and their staff needs to occur in any explicitly feminist policy, whether it be mainstreaming or not.

Femocrats also play crucial roles in reaching out to "male allies" who are not aware of the intricacies of the policy issue but may have the political will to push for a given policy (e.g., Eisenstein 1996). They have been shown to be pivotal in convincing and cajoling recalcitrant decision-makers as well. Valiente's studies of the Women's Institute in Spain, for example, have pointed to the important "power of persuasion" of the major national –level WPA (1995).

Creating agencies that are accountable to groups, yet have enough autonomy within the political administrative system is also seen as an important ingredient for achieving effective gender mainstreaming (Rai 2003d and Staudt 2003). Femocrats, gender experts and women's groups often work together to educate policy makers about the complexities of gender-based inequities, their variegated solutions, and how gender mainstreaming can be adopted and implemented. It is in this manner that gender mainstreaming can actually be seen as a means of enhancing women's representation and participation. As such, like WPAs, mainstreaming efforts have the potential to contribute to processes of democratization in all corners of the globe.

Assessing State Feminism: The RNGS Study and Results

Having conceptually mapped out the different ways in which WPAs have the potential to enhance women's descriptive and substantive representation, it is important to now consider how these diverse government structures have actually realized their promise and the conditions for a positive outcome for women's participation. This is a formidable task given the variety of WPAs throughout the world in a broad range of cultural, political, and social settings and at all levels of government. To name a few forms of WPAs, Ministries, ministerial correspondents; government study groups, National Level Institutes, Delegations, Advisory Commissions, administrative agencies, enforcement agencies, parliamentary commissions, government-run information centers, equality councilors in police agencies and chargées de mission in city governments. There are many case studies of national-level WPAs (e.g., Valiente 1995, Kardam and Acuner 2003; Ugalde 2003; Honculada and Ofreneo 2003; Kwesiga 2003 and Rai 2003c , a few at the sub-national level (e.g., Ortbals 2005), national cases studies that are placed within a global perspective (e.g., Lycklama, Vargas, and Wieringa 1998 and Rai 2003a) a few cross national comparisons in two or more countries (Goertz 2003; Sawer 1996), studies of WPAs in a given region of the world (e.g. Jezerska, 2003; Stetson and Mazur 1995; Stetson 2001; Mazur 2001; Outshoorn 2004; Lovenduski 2005; Haussman and Sauer forthcoming) and examinations of WPAs at the transnational level (e.g., Zwingel 2005 and True and Mintrom 2001) . To date, there has been no research that *systematically* studies whether WPAs make a difference in women's representation in all regions of the world. Many would argue that such an effort would be too daunting in the absence of basic case studies of WPAs at all levels of

government in most countries. At this point, it makes sense to take a mid range approach by examining activities of WPAs in different regions of the world where countries have similar social and political contexts, identifying trends in each region and then developing systematic propositions for a more global perspective. As Rai (2003c) indicates, contexts matter a great deal in the effective performance of WPAs.

The RNGS study takes such an approach, examining the questions of women's representation and WPAs in western post industrial democracies. Rather than assuming that WPAs represent women, the study asks whether WPAs have acted, since 1970, in alliance with women's movement activists, to enhance women's representation. Founded in 1995, the Research Network on Gender Politics and the State (RNGS) is composed of 43 members and 95 associates. RNGS designed and is currently completing the large-scale comparative research project that examines if, how, and why women's policy offices, through their relations with women's movements, make post industrial democracies more democratic and the state more feminist. Fifteen country teams--USA, Canada, Italy, the UK, Ireland Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Austria, Belgium, Sweden, France, Finland, and Australia-- have been collecting data for this project since 1997.⁹

To assess the significance of the activities of the agencies in policy debates, the study examines hypotheses explaining whether or not their involvement was necessary for women's movement activists to be successful in achieving their procedural and substantive goals. This interface between the movements and agencies is explored in 132 policy debates on five key issues: job training, abortion, prostitution, political representation, and a top priority issue specific to each country concerned. Research results appear in five edited volumes, one for each issue area (Stetson 2001; Mazur 2001; Outshoorn 2004; Lovenduski 2005; Haussman and Sauer forthcoming) and plans are underway for specific qualitative and quantitative analyses across the issues.¹⁰

The findings presented here are based on the qualitative studies published in the five books. The findings presented in this paper must be seen as quite *preliminary*, because systematic analyses of both the qualitative and quantitative data across all five issue areas and all seventeen countries are still underway.

While the goal of the RNGS project was to study three policy debates for each issue in each country, we were not able to gather information on all issues in all of the countries. After selecting the debates using common criteria, researchers were asked to describe how the debate

⁹ RNGS is coordinated by Dorothy McBride (Florida Atlantic University), Amy Mazur (Washington State University); Joyce Outshoorn (Leiden University); Marila Guadagnini (University of Turino), and Joni Lovenduski (Birkbeck College). Mazur and Stetson write many of the working research of the group, including the project description elaborated by the group (RNGS 2004) and the summary results presented in this section. Dorothy McBride also contributed to writing this report. For the most recent copy of the RNGS project description, results and other RNGS materials go to the network's website at <http://libarts.wsu.edu/rngs/>.

¹⁰ The qualitative results of the entire study were first presented by RNGS researchers at a policy practitioners conference at the Institute of Women's Policy Research (IWPR) in June 2005 through a set of country and issue-specific papers available at the RNGS website – IWPR-RNGS papers (2005). The dataset will be released in 2008 and a final capstone book is in the works to examine both the qualitative and quantitative findings.

around the policy proposals unfolded, to locate the actors involved and to outline the frame of the debate. They classified the debate in terms of the major analytical question of the study:

To what extent and under what circumstances do different kinds of women's policy offices provide necessary and effective linkages for women's movements in achieving substantive and procedural responses from the state?

The model developed by RNGS to answer this question names state responses to movement activist' demands in policy debates as the dependent variable, characteristics of women's movement actors and the policy environments as the independent variables and the degree of effectiveness of women's policy offices on specific policy debates in relation to their institutional capacities as the intervening variables.

There are four categories of classification for the state responses to women's movement actors, the dependent variable. Dual response is where the state both accepts individual women, groups, and/or constituencies representing gender interests into the process and changes policy to coincide with feminist goals; Cooptation is when the state accepts the individual women, groups, and/or constituencies into the process but does not give policy satisfaction; Preemption is when the state gives policy satisfaction, but does not allow women, as individuals, groups or constituencies into the process; No response is where the state has no procedural or substantive response to movement demands.

The intervening variable measures WPA Activities that is, the role and effect of women's policy agencies as potential allies of the women's movement within the state in each policy debate. Are these agencies representatives of women's movements inside the state? Or are these agencies examples of the state's efforts to control or 'deal with' the movement without changing process or policy? Do agencies affect changes in state operations and policies to integrate women's movement activists and goals? This produces four categories for measuring the WPA effectiveness in representing women's movement claims. Insider -- the WPA incorporates women's movement goals into its own positions on the policy issue and is successful in gendering, that is, inserting these gendered policy definitions into the dominant frame of the public debate on the issue; Marginal—the WPA asserts movement goals, but is not successful in gendering the policy debate; Non-feminist—the WPA is not an advocate for movement goals but genders or degenders policy debates in some other ways; and Symbolic—the WPA is neither an advocate for movement goals in the policy process nor does it gender policy definitions on the issue.

The following alliances between women's movements and WPAs are produced when these two dimensions are combined. Table 1 below summarizes the RNGS results in terms of these alliances across the five issue areas.

Successful Alliance (Insider/Dual Response) This type of alliance occurs when WPAs present women's movement goals and gender the debate and the women's movement actors participate and were able to achieve policy satisfaction; in other words, WPAs fully enhanced women's substantive and descriptive representation.

Partially Successful Alliance (Insider/ Cooptation or Preemption) Here the WPA brings gender into the frame of the debate and supports women's movement demands, but there are

either no women's movement actors in the debate or the women's movement does not achieve any policy success.

Failure (Symbolic/No response) The WPA neither genders the debate nor supports women's movement positions in the debates. Women's movement actors are absent from the debate arena and the policy response fails to contain women's movement demands.

Unsuccessful Alliance (Marginal/No Response) WPAs do support women's movement actor positions in these alliances, but they are unable to gender the debate and women's movement actors have neither presence nor policy success.

No Alliances (some success)—(Symbolic/Dual Response, Cooptation, Pre-emption) Here, the women's movement actors achieve full or partial success without an active WPA.

Ineffective/Unwilling WPAs—(Marginal, Non Feminist/No response) WPAs either do not support women's positions in the debate or gender the debate and the women's movement movements fail to participate or achieve policy success.

TABLE 1: WPA's Impact on Women's Substantive and Descriptive Representation by Issue Area and Types of Alliances

Issue Area	Successful Alliances	Partially Successful Alliances	Failures	Symbolic/Dual	Symbolic/Cooptation	Symbolic/Preemption	Ineffective Alliances
Abortion 33 debates	33%	0%	9%	18%	12%	6%	21%
Job Training 24 debates	22%	8%	26%	0%	4%	0%	39%
Prostitution 30 debates	37%	3%	20%	10%	6%	6%	17%
Political Representation 33 debates	48%	12%	9%	3%	6%	6%	15%
Hot Issues 12 debates	8%	17%	0%	25%	33%	8%	8%
Total =132	30%	8%	16%	11%	15%	5%	20%

NO ALLIANCES

KEY: Successful Alliances--Insider/Dual Response; Partially Successful Alliances--Insider/Cooptation or Preemption; Failed Alliances--Symbolic/No response; Unsuccessful Alliances--Marginal/No Response—No Alliances--Symbolic/Dual Response, Cooptation, Pre-emption; Ineffective/Unwilling WPAs-- marginal, non feminist/no response

The following observations can be made about WPAs and women's representation from this table:

- WPAs can fully enhance women's representation , but not in all cases. Nearly 40% of all cases showed that an active WPA led to either full (30%) or partial women's representation (8%).

- Complete failures, when WPAs do nothing and women's movement actors have no effect, are less frequent than successes – 16% overall, suggesting that the trend is toward some level of link between WPA activities and women's representation.
- In 20% of the case, when WPAs are not fully in action, either they are non feminist or marginal, women's movements fail; further showing the importance of WPAs for women's representation.
- In nearly 1/3 of the cases women achieved some level of representation in the process with no WPA; thus, WPAs are not *always* the crucial link, but tend to be in most of the cases.
- The rate of success varies by issue area: political representation issues have the highest rate of success, nearly half; and prominent national issues, the "hot issue" has the lowest 8%.

With these patterns of success and failures in mind, we can now turn to the question of what explains for the successful cases of women's representation. In other words, what are the conditions that allow WPAs to be successful conduits for women's representation? Three sets of factors are considered: women's movement resources; the characteristics of women's policy agencies; and the dynamics of the policy environment in which each debate unfolds.¹¹ To make this presentation more concise, only those factors associated with completely successful or failed alliances between WPAs and women's movement actors are examined.

Do women's movements resources matter? – Out of the three series of factors, women's movement resources (stage of development, closeness to the Left, issue priority, cohesion, location and feminist activism) appears to be the least important in determining successes and failures. For the abortion and political representation debates, successes are more likely when the movement actors are cohesive in their demands, place the issue as a high priority and are closer to Left parties. The only movement resource that separates the successful alliances from the failed alliances in the hot issue area is the priority of the issue being debated on the movement agenda. In job training and prostitution there were no patterns of movement resources that were compelling. This means that movements and WPAs could form alliances at any stage of the movement (decline, growing or consolidation) closeness or distance from the Left. Particular issue priority of the movement and movement unity were important only in abortion and political representation debates.

Do the characteristics of the WPAs matter? – Generally, there are no strong patterns that provide a recipe for designing a WPA that will open the policy doors to women and women's movement demands. It is important to note that at this point, the evolution of the impact of WPA characteristics for the RNGS study is quite inconclusive. Given the number of characteristics examined – scope, type, proximity, administrative capacity, leadership and policy mandate—and that in many debates there is more than one WPA active, the definitive answer must lie in an analysis that uses more sophisticated data analysis technique. There are, nonetheless, some tentative trends that can be identified in each issue area.

¹¹ These three factors have been identified by studies of WPAs as the most important ingredients for success in WPAs ability to impact women's representation. For more on how these variables were operationalized for the RNGS study see RNGS (2004).

In the abortion and prostitution debates nearly all the successful agency allies had separate budgets and staff. In addition, in abortion debates the successful WPAs were led by feminists. Typically, they were also closer to power than the symbolic agencies. For job training there was no single profile of women's policy agency for either successful or failed alliances. Agencies assumed a variety of forms ranging from single-issue offices like the Equal Opportunity Unit at the EU level, the Women's Bureau in the United States, and the Employment Equality Agency (EEA) in Ireland to agencies that approached women's issues from a cross-sectoral perspective. The women's policy agencies which achieved successes were both removed from decision-making power within government and in relative proximity to where important government matters were decided. Staff-size and budgets also varied among the women's policy agencies which overcame the symbolic imperative in job training.

Similarly, for political representation debates there is no single type of government ally, although most are Ministries and bureaucratic offices. There is no pattern of resources that mark the allies from the unwilling agencies: one finds small and large budgets and staffs in both groups. The 8 cases of QUAWPAs that acted as insiders took place within left wing political parties in the political representation debates. The women's sections that successfully advanced positive steps to increase women as candidates and in party office especially for quotas tended to be cross sectional, close to party leaders, led by feminists and with small or no separate budgets.

For the hot issue debates, if we look at allies within governments (3 cases of insider) we see that the resources of these agencies were not significant. The amount of money or staff does not seem to be important for agencies to become allies of the women's movement. But another characteristic might be significant – the closeness of the agencies to power (all three cases) as well as feminist leadership (all three cases).

Does the policy environment matter? -- The nature of the policy environment appears to be quite an important ingredient for success, with significant variations by issue area. The different aspects of the policy environment include the structure of the specific policy sub system on the issue; the fit between the approach of the mainstream policy actors of the given policy arena and the women's movement actors approach; the presence of a left-wing government; and the presence of a strong counter movement.

In the abortion cases, the presence of a left-wing party in power occurred in well over half of the successful alliance and in only one of instance of a failed alliances. The party in power is very important to the activities of women's policy agencies in abortion debates because abortion tends to be a divisive partisan issue. The issue frame fit was compatible with women's movement goals in nearly all of the insider cases. The subsystem was more likely to be closed in the insider cases, suggesting that the agencies can use their positions (inside) when movement actors are facing closed policy subsystems.

In job training although the presence of a countermovement on the issue does not block alliances and successes and failures occur to the same degree under left-wing governments, the dynamics of the issue sub system do seem to make a difference. There is a strong connection between the structure of the job training subsystem and successful alliances; these alliances occurred when the policy arena in which training decisions were discussed was moderately open.

In addition, five out of the six cases of failed alliances took place in the context of closed training subsystems that excluded actors outside of organized labor and business.

To some degree, mainstream employment policy actors share a gender-blind approach to training employment issues in the cases of failed alliances. In Spain, Italy, and France the highly closed nature of the training subsystem prevented women's movement actors from entering the debates to change gender-blind discourse of the labor policy actors. In Ireland the gender-blind approach to training was present, but in Finland, Canada and the USA, mainstream actors appeared more willing to accept gendered approaches to training. In part, as a response to the resistance of the mainstream employment/training subsystems, parallel equal employment networks emerged in Italy, France, Spain, and in the 1990s, in Ireland. Democrats and women's movement advocates purposefully chose to develop the equal opportunities policies of the EU outside of the mainstream employment arena precisely because the social partners were so resistant to taking into account gender issues in employment. In France, Spain, and Italy the players in the state feminist-dominated equality subsystem did not even seek to enter the male-dominated and gender-biased arena of job training. These policy subsystems had indirect influence on training issues for women, mostly in implementation, but did not change the terms of debates and policies on training at either a macro or micro level. In fact, the presence of an equal employment subsystem appears to lead to women's movement failure more than success.

For political representation debates, there is virtually no difference in the policy environment characteristics between the cases of successful alliances compared with the failed alliances. The subsystem is not completely closed (moderately closed or open) in half of all the cases of insider and symbolic agencies. There is a compatible fit between the women's movement frame and the dominant issue frame in nearly all of the successful and failed alliances. The only differences run against expectations. In the cases of failed alliances the Left parties were in power in 75% of the cases and there was no strong counter movement. With respect to the alliances, the Left parties were in power in 50% of the cases (not including the QUAWPA cases because they took place inside left parties), yet there was a strong countermovement in 35% of the cases.

The policy environment leading to successful alliances in the prostitution debates has some distinct features. The successful alliances occur when the policy subsystem is not closed (9/12 cases) the Left is in power (10/12), and the fit between the WM demands and the perspectives of the policy makers is compatible (11/12). The environment for no alliances is more likely to occur when the Left is out of power (6/11), and the movement views do not fit with the policy makers perspectives (7/11). Counter movements are weak or non-existent in nearly all of the prostitution debates.

There are no clear patterns that suggest some policy environments are more conducive to building successful alliances between movement actors and women's policy agencies in the hot issue debates. It appears that of the 5 debates where the left wing parties were not in the government, we found agencies that were symbolic in 4. When conservative and other right wing parties form governments, their women's agencies are reluctant to develop ties with movement organizations. However, a left wing government is no guarantee of success. Of the 7 cases where the left was in power, the movement found no allies inside those governments in 4.

Does the issue area matter?-- As we can already see, issues area matters a great deal, with clear area-specific patterns, for all but one of the issue areas. For job training debates, the trend toward closed decision-making arenas with policy actors that are resistant to demands for gender equality make it very difficult for WPAs to effectively enhance women's representation in policy debates, even with the development of equal employment networks.

Political representation appear to have the highest level of success for several reasons.

1. A majority of the debates were about proposals that explicitly focused on increasing women's representation or political status. As such, there is an advantage for gaining access to policy making subsystems and arenas because the issue is about women and those who claim to speak for them have legitimacy as spokespersons.

2. Nearly 1/3 of the debates took place in political party decision making arenas, not the state. This occurred because in many European countries, the parties are one of the major decision making venues for women's representation in elected and appointed office. In all but one of the debates there was a QUAWPA inside the party that helped movement activists achieve dual success. Given the likelihood that these arenas are less contentious than state arenas, this may give the QUAWPA an advantage. We find that QUAWPAs outside of party arenas were not successful allies.

3. Many (more than 2/3) of the debates occurred from 1985-2003, a period of consolidation and integration of movement activists into parties and government arenas. This increases the likelihood of finding access to subsystems because such access had already been established in earlier debates.

4. Compared to issues such as abortion and prostitution, political representation tends to provoke less conflict among parties and among movement activists. Strong movement resources (priority, unity) associated with this issue coincide with winning effective government allies (75% of the time).

In the abortion issue, WPAs are more likely to sidestep the abortion issue than other matters, especially where right-wing parties are in power and/or the issue is especially contentious. In addition, the women's movement actors tend to be unified and make the issue as a top priority, especially when the movement is in the emerging and growth phases. This formula did not work in Germany or Ireland, however, while it was more successful in the U.S. In Germany and Ireland, the movement actors remained divided and did not place the issue as a high priority at any time during the debates studied here.

One of the features of prostitution as a public policy issue is that it often reveals deep divisions among feminists over whether prostitution is the ultimate oppression or a reasonable form of work. When the feminists can agree on a policy proposal, they are much more likely to be successful and to gain help from women's policy agencies inside the government. When they are divided, agencies tend to be symbolic, lacking coherent support on the issue. At the same time, the prostitution issue, unlike abortion, does not divide political parties. Therefore, women's movement actors can find allies among policy actors from the right and left parties which can help them overcome the failure of Democrats to step into the debates, especially on proposals regarding sex trafficking. And in comparison to job training, debates are likely to occur in more open policy subsystems such as legislatures and investigating commissions.

Given the diversity of types of hot issues —welfare state restructuring, constitutional reform, expansion of state activities -- there was no patterns of success with that area. Alliances between women's policy agencies have occurred in the two issues of state expansion in the hot issue area – the French 35 hour work week and the state devolution in Italy. Building of alliances was also possible in cases of welfare state restructuring and state shrinking such as Sweden and the US.

What About the National Context? – It is impossible to definitively answer this question from this study, given that analyses across all five issues areas were only covered in four of the 16 countries – France, Italy, Spain and the USA. Nonetheless, the preliminary findings do suggest that there is significant variation in the pattern of success and the conditions for success by issue area; thus suggesting that national contexts would take a secondary level of explanatory importance to issue specific dynamics

Ways of Coping without WPAs --- Although WPAs do tend to play crucial roles in enhancing women's representation, women can gain entry to the system without WPAs. Women's movement actors gained some level of success in 1/3 of the cases without the help of the WPA. It is therefore instructive to examine the different women's movement strategies for success without WPAs as allies. The analysis shows that there is a wide range of strategies and potential allies. The WMAs coped the best without WPA as allies in abortion (36%) and the hot issue (66%) and the worst in job training (4%) and political representation (15%); successes with WPAs was in the middle for prostitution cases (25%).

Women's movement actors gained access to the process with the help of women MPs from the right and the left across all issues areas. In political representation debates women and men in top positions in the political parties rather than in the government supported women's movement actors positions, and also through women's movement actors who had entered the party or had been named to key government decision making positions. Men in important decision making positions within the particular sub system were important allies for women's movement actors as well. In several cases in prostitution, it was not so much that women's movements success came from the help of specific individuals, but because the policy positions of the government happened to coincide with the positions of the women' movement actors involved with the debate – often under right-wing governments.

Conclusion: Tentative Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The preliminary analysis of the RNGS findings, suggests the following lessons for WPAs and women's political representation in western post industrial democracies.

Do WPA's enhance women's political representation and participation?
WPAs play a crucial, but not definitive role.

The ability of WPAs to help women varies by the type of policy issue – WPAs are most successful in political representation, abortion, and prostitution issues and the least successful in job training and hot issues.

What are the conditions for WPAs to enhance women's representation?

Women's movement resources are not important in job training and to a limited degree in the other issue areas.

- The stage of development of the women's movement is not important at all.
- When movements give the debate a high priority and are unified around the issue in political representation and abortion there is a tendency toward success.
- Unite also brings success in prostitution
- Successes are also a product of high women's priority and women's movement closeness to the Left in the hot issue area.

No single profile of WPA is identified with success. Three successful agency profiles emerge across four out of the five issue areas:

- a separate budget and staff;
- separate budget and staff, with feminist leadership and proximity to power;
- feminist leadership and proximity to power.

The policy environment matters the most, for three out of the five issue areas, each with a different combination of factors.

- In abortion, success of the WPAs occur under left-wing governments, when the issue frame of the debate matches women's movement actors positions, and when the arena for decision-making is closed.
- For job training, success comes when the policy making arena is relatively open and mainstream policy actors support women's movement actor positions. In prostitution, open decision making systems and the presence of a left-wing government tend to lead to success.
- More open sub systems and a good fit between sub system actors positions and women's movement positions tend to favor success.
- The presence of a left-wing government is somewhat important, but not crucial.
- Counter movements do not pose any significant obstacles in any of the issue areas.

Issue area matters a great deal, arguably more than national context.

- Political representation issues has the highest level of success due to the explicit focus on women's representation; debates tend to take place outside of government arenas; debates took place since 1983; the less controversial nature of the issue.
- Prostitution has the next level of success when feminists can agree on the issue and policy making systems are open, under both governments of the right and the left.
- Abortion issues produce success without WPAs, particularly when the right is in power and women's movement actors are unified and place a high priority on issues.
- Job training debates produce the second lowest success rate due to the trend toward sub systems closed to WPAs and women's movement actors or the gendered demands that they articulate.
- Issues of national significance have the lowest success rate, with no common patterns, due to the diversity of those issues.

Allies outside of the WPAs can play crucial roles. particularly in the areas of abortion and the hot issue. These allies can be men and women, inside the government as MPs, ministers and top level bureaucrats or in political parties..

It is important to note that the degree to which these lessons apply outside of the Western context must be left to experts from the other regions of the world to assess. At the same time, the RNGS study contributes to our systematic understanding of WPAs and women's representation amongst western post industrial democracies and hence confirms that WPAs make a difference in women's political representation.

Finally, the findings of this study suggest the following paths to pursue in terms of good practice and policy recommendations for improving women's representation and participation.

1. Women's Policy Agencies should be seen as important partners in the pursuit of women's representation at all levels of government, across all issue areas, when they are supportive of women's movement actors positions and are willing to introduce gender into policy debates.
2. QUAWPAs, particularly within the political parties, are key partners in policies related to women's political representation.
3. Women's movements need to be identified outside of western notions of autonomous feminist movements and or women's pressure groups. Rather, they should be seen as fluid and ever-changing composites of individual and group actors both inside of non women's movement organizations and part of free-standing women's movement groups, at all levels of organization, who take public stances that express identity with women as a group/ gender consciousness; that are explicitly gendered and that express ideas in terms of representing women as women in public life. These positions do not necessarily need to be feminist.
4. Advocates for women's participation should be less concerned about having strong, developed or united women's movements, rather than the presence of individual actors who publicly articulate women's movement stances, in the broad sense, who are willing to come forward into established government-based policy making arenas to articulate demands and to work with sympathetic WPAs and powerful allies outside of the women's movement and WPA orbits.
5. WPAs need to be created and sustained by governments, preferably with a separate budget and resources, that are willing to support women's movements positions and to introduce considerations of gender into all issue areas; in other words to support WPAs that support gender mainstreaming that is seated on a women's movements perspective.
6. Advocates for women's representation should worry less about securing the election of left-wing governments or defeating counter movements than on creating the conditions for regular policy actors, from across the entire ideological spectrum, to be open to women's movement ideas and to the participation of women's movement actors and WPAs in the regular arenas where policy discussions take place.
7. Connections with men and women, who are not necessarily associated with women's movement positions and/or are not democrats, in top decision-making positions in political parties, ministries, parliaments and governments, on the Left and the Right both men and women should be developed and nurtured by both democrats and women's movement actors.

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