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A Comparative Analysis of Women's Descriptive Representation in Subnational Politics in Peru and Russia

Alina Kathryn Clay
aclay6@vols.utk.edu

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Mentor: Dr. Jana Morgan, Department of Political Science

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This research paper addresses an overarching question related to women's representation in subnational politics. Which specific social and political conditions promote the descriptive representation of women in subnational political units? The first section presents an analytical review of literature to identify the social and political conditions found by researchers as creating access points and spaces that aid women's presence in subnational politics. Collectively, these social and political conditions, including decentralization, create a theoretical framework that can be utilized in comparative case analysis. The second and empirical part of this paper applies several of these identified conditions to the subnational sphere in two different cultural contexts, Peru and Russia. This comparative analysis fosters a more in-depth understanding of the complexities surrounding women's representation in subnational politics as I find that social and political conditions, most especially decentralization, are highly contingent on cultural context and existing gendered political structures and dynamics. The collision of political, social, and cultural forces actually may work against women's ability to gain a voice in prominent political processes. A focus on the two countries of Peru and Russia, with their distinct social and political milieus, allows me to provide a much more nuanced analysis in noting the degree to which these political and social conditions have almost paradoxically helped in opening spaces of representation for women while oftentimes challenging these spaces. This comparative analysis in turn enables me to explore the relevance and salience of using social and political forces to better understand women's subnational representation.

The definition of women's representation used in this paper draws on Hanna Pitkin's work (1967), but concentrates on descriptive representation as an initial step toward representing traditionally marginalized groups within the political process. Specifically, descriptive representation "refers to the extent to which representatives "stand for" the represented"

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(Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005, p. 408). The concept of descriptive representation in this paper is further delineated as "social representation," a subcategory that alludes to social traits, which in this case is gender (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005, p. 409). In addition to descriptive representation, Pitkin identified the other facets of representation: formal, substantive, and symbolic representation. However, while the other three facets offer important insights and interrelate with descriptive representation, institutional structures like decentralization, which is a primary focus of this paper's analysis, have frequently been singled out as contributing in profound ways to shaping descriptive representation. This paper defines decentralization as a process in which "resources, power, and often tasks are shifted to lower-level authorities who are somewhat independent of higher authorities, and who are at least somewhat democratic" (Crook & Manor, 2000, p. 1) and unpacks the popular belief that it "has the potential to empower citizens, including such historically excluded groups as women" (International Knowledge, 2008, p. 2). Focusing on descriptive representation offers valuable insights into an important avenue through which decentralization might shape the ability of women to enter the political realm and find voice within it. Moreover, descriptive representation has the potential to play a role in shaping other forms of representation. For example, higher levels of women's descriptive representation may correlate with greater levels of public confidence in political processes, promoting symbolic representation and thereby making these processes more trusted and reflecting the social change that can arise from greater representation of women in politics (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005; Barnes & Burchard, 2013). Consequently, "political systems that nurture and protect the representation of less-advantaged groups can be trusted by members of more advantaged groups to protect their interests as well" (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005, p. 425). Although scholars differ on the connections between descriptive and substantive

representation of women's interests, some research indicates that descriptive representation is important for advancing concrete policy outcomes that are favorable to women, which Pitkin views as the most important form of representation (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005; Pitkin, 1967). This insight supports the argument that "the quality of women's representation, in this sense, is universal" because improving women's representation in effect works to enhance broader political structures (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005, p. 425). Research finds that a greater number of women holding political positions "increase legislatures' responsiveness to women's policy concerns" (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005, p. 407). Research has also largely established 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," which has been yet another influential argument to support women's descriptive representation (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005, pp. 413-4). Altogether, these reasons establish the value of studying and promoting women's representation in the political sphere, in regards to both their self-advancement and broader structural improvements in their political environments.

This research paper develops a theoretical framework that identifies social and political forces viewed as shaping women's representation in subnational politics. I build this framework by discussing 1) social and cultural factors and 2) political institutions, within which decentralization is a primary focus. Studies abound that conclude that "formal representative structures and processes exert powerful influences on the extent of women's descriptive representation," which exemplifies why this paper details some of the key social and political structures that shape women's presence in subnational politics (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005, p. 424). Furthermore, describing or discussing both social and political structures offers readers a deeper understanding into the diverse and uneven realm of subnational politics (Snyder,

2001; Pitschel & Bauer, 2009). The conclusion of the literature review explores whether

decentralization can be categorically viewed as a catalyst that opens up spaces for women's

representation on the subnational level and then examines how social and political conditions

have in practice influenced women's subnational representation in Peru and Russia. This

empirical focus on two disparate cultural contexts yields more interesting and broader insights by

demonstrating the applicability and effectiveness of the theoretical conditions framework

presented in the first section. This cross-cultural analysis begins to shed much-needed academic

attention on the complex interplay of decentralization and intersecting political and social forces.

Theoretical Framework for Understanding Women's Subnational Descriptive Representation

Social and cultural conditions

This paper elucidates several social and cultural factors that prior research has found as

either promoting or discouraging women's political presence, including: local women's

movements, social and cultural norms, political party ideologies, and diffusion processes. These

social factors directly influence the formation of political structures, have considerable effects on

marginalized groups, and may support or deter women's political presence. Thus, an analysis

exploring just political structures would be one-dimensional and miss the breadth of complexity

associated with the overall conditions that influence women's representation in subnational

politics.

Research has pointed to the positive impact that active local women's movements have

had on promoting women's representation in subnational politics (Weldon, 2002; Barnes &

Burchard, 2013). Indeed, studies have observed that "the political mobilization of women and

organization of women's groups can play an important role in getting women elected to local

offices" (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015, p. 7). In a similar vein, Magda Hinojosa (2012) traced the participation of women in political and social movements across Latin America, concluding that women have throughout history been active and invested in advancing said movements. Public support then nurtures the strength of women's movements, the combination of which in turn may usher more women into subnational positions. Furthermore, some scholars convincingly argue that women's movements are more successful in leveraging women's political representation when these movements are "autonomous," that is, when they are "devoted to promoting women's status and well-being independently of political parties and other associations that do not make the status of women their main concern" (Weldon, 2002, p. 1161) and thus are not embedded within the local political establishment. Lastly, the linkages between civil society groups and subnational governments help to determine the level of women's descriptive representation. As decentralization is thought of as bringing the government closer to the people (Valdés & Palacios, 1999), the presence of active local women's movements may bolster the intended effects of decentralization reforms, such as allocating more autonomy to regular citizens and expanding representation of diverse social groups. This observation is explored later in this paper.

In addition to women's movements, social and cultural norms converge within society to shape how women are perceived within society, affecting the extent to which men and women alike view women as viable political representatives in the subnational realm. Scholars often define the diverse spectrum of entrenched societal beliefs, attitudes, and traditions toward men and women as "gender ideologies." The concept of gender ideology suggests that subnational descriptive representation may depend in part upon the sociocultural milieu regarding women's roles, which is relevant to this paper's later analysis of the effectiveness of decentralization on

women's representation in Peru and Russia. A prime example of the salience of gender ideology and its intersection with the political environment can be found in one scholar's work on local politics in Peru, which found that "women in the rural and less developed parts of the country were reluctant to run for office because it was inconsistent with their traditional role in society and they did not want their family and friends to think poorly of them" (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015, p. 7). In this context, despite the decentralization reforms that had occurred at the time, the cultural milieu halted any progress toward increasing women's subnational representation because women themselves had internalized norms that marginalized them as political actors and excluded them from the public sphere. Building on this logic, Maria Escobar-Lemmon and Kendall Funk find that a general lack of public support toward women in government and leadership "may decrease the chances that women will choose to run for office and successfully win election" (2015, p. 7). Thus, a deeply-embedded cultural system that normalizes and embraces traditional gender norms and practices has the potential to limit the impact of institutional and structural reforms that might otherwise promote women's descriptive representation. Therefore, it is important to highlight the complex ways in which sociocultural norms and gender ideologies interact with and shape the effectiveness of certain political structures and reforms. At the same time, one should recognize that progress made in the social sphere "alone will not push more women into elected office" (Htun & Piscopo, 2014, p. 16). Social conditions that support women's subnational representation will include the breakdown of sexist or patriarchal attitudes and behaviors salient in a country and broader public acceptance of women's roles in the public sphere. Yet political conditions must exist in tandem with social forces to promote women's representation, a valuable insight relevant to this paper's findings.

Building on these social factors, dominant political party ideologies are viewed as influencing women's presence in subnational politics (Escobar-Lemmon and Funk, 2015; Rincker & Ortbal, 2007; Viterna & Fallon, 2008). For example, some studies have found that "left-leaning governments are generally more likely to appeal to female voters, to promote female politicians, and to advance feminist policies" (Rincker & Ortbal, 2007, p. 4). This research has also been substantiated in research on the Russian political system (Moser, 2003). Furthermore, political party ideologies have been viewed as partially shaping the extent to which governments incorporate women and prioritize women's issues (Viterna & Fallon, 2008). Some scholars posit that these ideologies manifest in tangible advances for women, while others argue that they provide a better avenue for women to gain influence within political parties (Viterna & Fallon, 2008). Thus, the dominant party ideology of the subnational government in power may support or impede women's representation. This logic also applies to the ways in which the dominant political platform of a national government shapes the structures and practices of subnational governments, all of which then play a role in determining levels of civic engagement of marginalized groups.

Lastly, diffusion processes may also bolster women's descriptive representation and strengthen the institutional effects of decentralization. In a general sense, the notion of diffusion suggests that the political or social developments in one country or region will diffuse naturally to and emerge in nearby countries or regions; this process has often been applied to gender studies. Perhaps most notably, diffusion has been said to occur after a country within a certain region has instituted gender quotas (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015). This paper later reflects on the presence and impact of gender quotas in both the regions of Latin America and Eastern Europe, where diffusion can partially account for the variation we see in their implementation.

Diffusion can also refer to the natural process in which more women are elected to subnational positions, which results in a greater "probability that other women will be nominated and win election" (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015, p. 6). This insight will be particularly relevant when assessing the degree to which social conditions such as diffusion noticeably shape women's representation in Peru and Russia.

Social and cultural conditions are often challenging to conceptually unpack and analyze to examine their impact on women's visibility in subnational politics. However, researchers posit that the existence of the following social conditions may positively shape women's subnational representation: local women's movements; less patriarchal social and cultural norms; pro-women political party ideologies; and successful diffusion. The following section examines a range of political institutions and their influence on women's representation before focusing on decentralization.

Political institutions

Extensive research has found that a wide range of political institutions may significantly shape the descriptive representation of women in the halls of government (Barnes & Burchard, 2012). Indeed, "the chances for women to advance in political life depend, to an important extent, on structural conditions in the political system" and can largely shape the policy issues and objectives that are formulated and addressed (Rueschemeyer, 2015, p. 159). In these next paragraphs, I explore the following political structures/conditions in relation to women's representation: electoral processes, including the electoral system that establishes proportional representation and majoritarian structures; party and district magnitude; gender quotas; historical institutional legacies; and gendered institutions. This political institution lens helps me to assess the extent to which these conditions hold validity in Peru and Russia. This theoretical framework

also provides an important context for the subsequent discussion of decentralization, an institution that has not yet been extensively researched in contemporary literature but may serve as a potentially significant access point through which women may gain descriptive representation.

The rules and makeup of an electoral system may play a major role in influencing women's representation on the subnational level (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005; Escobar-Lemmon and Funk, 2015). The belief that elections should be structured as "free, fair, and open" aligns with liberal democracy and viewed as increasing the legitimacy of political institutions in the eyes of the greater public (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005, p. 410). Whereas the free aspect indicates that every citizen can engage in the electoral process, the fair and open aspects allude to the electoral process as being egalitarian and decisive. This condition supports women's representation because in a legal sense, women candidates have an equal chance to obtain political office as their male counterparts. They are also not excluded in or barred from voting or otherwise participating in the elections. Furthermore, a popular theory within the field of political science states "that political systems with more open and competitive elections will elect representatives whose backgrounds more closely resemble those of the represented" (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005, p. 410). This observation suggests that a linkage indeed exists between a free and fair electoral system and the descriptive representation of women on the subnational level. Moreover, the level of competitiveness in electoral processes will have interesting and somewhat differing implications in Peru and Russia.

It has also been largely accepted that the structure of the electoral system is instrumental in promoting or impeding women's representation. Majoritarian or plurality systems are known to be less inclusive toward women seeking office, whereas proportional representation (PR)

systems are deemed as more inclusive (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015; Vengroff, Nyiri, & Fugiero, 2003; Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Htun and Piscopo, 2014). A proportional representation system is defined as "ensur[ing] minority groups a measure of representation proportionate to their electoral support" (The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, 2010, para. 1). Studies show that proportional systems "affect not just electoral outcomes, but opportunities for women as candidates" (Vengroff et al., 2003, p. 164). Such a system aligns with the idea behind descriptive representation, that is, ensuring that elected officials mirror the demographics of the constituents whom they serve. A proportional system is also enhanced when, as described in more detail below, party and district magnitude are at high levels (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005). These latter two factors "affect party strategy when choosing candidates" and in turn have the potential to promote women's representation, thereby signifying one reason as to why PR systems benefit women ("The Effect," n.d., para. 4). Furthermore, PR systems support women's representation in how it interacts with "contagion," a process that is similar to diffusion and one in which "parties adopt policies initiated by other political parties" ("The Effect," n.d., para. 7). Such a scenario often produces greater representation of women because parties in a PR system do not experience negative results for selecting women due to the nature of the PR system, that is, "the party would have several slots from which it could find room to nominate a woman" ("The Effect," n.d., para. 7). The political parties operating within this system may instead be greatly rewarded for nominating women because "even a small increase in votes, caused by adding women to the ticket, could result in the party winning more seats" ("The Effect," n.d., para. 7). In this sense, the process of contagion interacts positively with PR systems and helps to promote women's representation.

In contrast, majoritarian systems are defined as supporting "the representation of a whole constituency to a single candidate who may have received fewer than half of the votes cast" (The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, 2010, para. 1). In the scenario outlined above with contagion, the issue with majoritarian systems is that parties have a single candidacy position and thus perceive a greater risk in nominating a female candidate as opposed to a male counterpart ("The Effect," n.d.). Parties may be less willing and certainly less incentivized to equally represent women, especially when the male candidate so often comes from a "faction which traditionally received the nomination" ("The Effect," n.d., para. 7). As a result, not as many women occupy seats under a plurality system. Moreover, contagion does not complement a majoritarian system as it does the PR system. In the United States' plurality system, for example, "only 13 out of 100 senators and only 61 (14 percent) out of 435 Representatives were women in 2001" (Vengroff et al., 2003, p. 164). In sum, scholars have found that women around the world become elected in greater numbers under a proportional representation system (Htun & Piscopo, 2014).

Two additional political structures cited as shaping women's presence in subnational units are party magnitude, that is, "the number of seats a party reasonably expects to win in the next legislature" (Vengroff et al., 2003, p. 165) and district magnitude, which is "the number of legislative seats assigned to a district" (ACE, 2013, p. 83). Studies find that greater levels of both increase the likelihood of electing women (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015; Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005). For example, a political party is more likely to take what it perceives to be a risk in adding women–or a marginalized group more broadly–to its candidate list if the number of seats the party has obtained in a subnational election is relatively high. Alternatively, a political party who obtains one seat will forego taking said risk to include a female candidate and instead

opt for the traditionally established route, that is, selecting a male candidate (Schwindt-Bayer &

Mishler, 2005). Such a scenario can be logically applied to district magnitude, as well. Overall,

in tandem with PR systems as described above, "electoral systems with greater proportionality

and higher district magnitudes elect larger percentages of women to legislatures" (Schwindt-

Bayer & Mishler, 2005, pp. 411-2). Therefore, women benefit in a political system that reflects

higher levels of party and district magnitude.

Aside from the structures of electoral systems, gender quotas have been commonly

established as improving women's representation around the world (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk,

2015; Barnes & Burchard, 2013). Studies in most countries across Latin America, for example,

have concluded that the "adoption of quota legislation increases the percentage of women in

office at the subnational level" (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015, p. 5). Yet within the context of

gender quotas, certain stipulations have proven to more effective than others, such as

establishing a closed list option for candidates and a penalty for not adhering to the quotas

(Rueschemeyer, 2015; Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015; Schwindt-Bayer, 2010). Gender quotas

are also notably more successful in putting women into office within the subnational legislative

arena, rather than in the subnational executive arena (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015). This

distinction is especially useful for identifying the conditions most conducive for women's

representation, that is, finding one subnational branch to be more accessible than another.

Furthermore, related to the interaction between quotas and political parties, studies have found

that "the voluntary adoption of party quota laws" plays an especially important factor in ushering

women into political office (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015, p. 6). Therefore, gender quotas can

thus be said to be a positive contributing factor toward women's descriptive representation in

subnational units, particularly in the legislative arena and within political parties.

Furthermore, a country's historical institutional legacy is cited as a common factor in determining women's presence in subnational politics and influencing the success of decentralization in empowering subnational units. Studying communist legacies across Eastern Europe, Diana Pitschel and Michael Bauer found that the historical institutional legacies of communism in the region influenced the effectiveness of decentralization in that they "have a crucial differential impact on the territorial restructuring and thus on the current institutional setup of subnational political authority" (2009, p. 333). The political structures in place during a specific political regime, such as socialism or communism, will remain in place even after the collapse of these regimes. Such constancy carries over to affect the degree of autonomy of subnational governments, which in turn influences women's ability to access spaces within them. A country's previous familiarity with a free and fair electoral system within a democratic framework, for example, is viewed widely as one condition that fosters women's subnational representation, whereas a country's persisting ties with a communist past is viewed as challenging women's political presence. The salience of historical institutional legacy is discussed in more detail later in this paper, and I find that its application to Peru reveals interesting insights on the spaces created for women under authoritarianism. Considering the relationship between historical institutional legacies and decentralization reforms will help to understand in which contexts one might expect women's subnational representation.

Institutions interact with and influence women's representation in diverse ways. In her seminal work about the gendered nature of institutions, sociologist Joan Acker (1990) recognizes gendered institutions/organizations as ones in which "advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine" (p. 146). Broadly speaking, these

gendered attributes within institutions "have been obscured through a gender neutral . . . discourse" (Acker, 1990, p. 140), which offers scholars today both challenges and windows of opportunity in delineating the forces that influence women's representation. While Acker's writing focused on organizational theory within the context of the United States, it is logical to posit that government organizations/institutions can broadly be viewed as upholding specific gender norms, behaviors, and practices. Researchers focusing on Latin America have drawn similar conclusions in examining political institutions, like national legislatures and cabinets, and often cite that these gendered dimensions hinder women's equal political participation (Schwindt Bayer, 2010; Escobar-Lemmon & Taylor-Robinson, 2009).

Furthermore, the notion of "policy-images" points to the ways in which institutions may "formalize and entrench the understandings of policies . . . preferred by dominant groups," which means that women's lack of representation may not be viewed as a policy priority (Weldon, 2002, p. 1159). Thus, changes in institutions can both promote or be detrimental to women's presence in subnational politics. Laurel Weldon found that "institutional changes" (2002, p. 1154) are critical in determining women's representation and that they must be altered if the policy-images and "institutional bias" within a country persist in subordinating women (p. 1159). In contrast, other scholars have noted that "institutional reforms of sub national government are not as effective as assumed, especially scale enlargements such as amalgamations" (Schaap, Geurtz, de Graaf, & Karsten, 2010, p. 159). In effect, such an observation suggests that institutional reforms may not be implemented well nor researched sufficiently beforehand. The ways in which these reforms interact with existing and fluid sociopolitical and economic conditions within a country may be another factor that distorts the effectiveness of them. Therefore, the gendered nature of political institutions will implicitly factor into shaping the level

of women's representation. Recognizing the gendered nature of institutions serves as a conceptual compass to guide readers throughout the rest of this research paper and buttresses the paper's ultimate findings.

This section has explored political institutions that may shape women's representation. Overall, the political structures that appear to promote women's descriptive representation are the following: free and fair elections; proportional representation systems; high party and district magnitude levels; historical institutional legacies accommodating toward women's issues; and gender quotas, especially those with closed lists and institutionalized penalty systems. Political institutions are notably gendered and thus signify that the obstacles that women face in accessing subnational spaces are oftentimes structural and deeply embedded into their social and political systems. I will now consider decentralization as a relatively unexplored political institution that advances an understanding of variation in women's representation on the subnational level.

Decentralization

The gendered distribution and flow of power between levels of government and methods for candidate selection have profound implications on women's representation. The effects of decentralization reforms are dependent on interconnecting cultural, political, and social conditions within a country. The interaction of these conditions in turn may in fact negatively influence the degree to which women can achieve representation in subnational politics, an argument that will be posited when comparing the political and social landscapes of Peru and Russia. Problematizing this political institution may become central to grappling with the reasons that account for women's sparse visibility in subnational political spaces.

As mentioned earlier, decentralization can be defined as occurring "when resources, power, and often tasks are shifted to lower-level authorities who are somewhat independent of

higher authorities, and who are at least somewhat democratic" (Crook & Manor, 2000, p. 1).

Furthermore, "elected bodies at lower levels must have substantial powers and resources

(financial and administrative), and strong accountability mechanisms must be created—to hold

bureaucrats accountable to elected representatives and elected representatives accountable to

citizens" (Crook & Manor, 2000, p. 1). In this sense, decentralization reforms may be perceived

as a method to lend more power and resources to subnational political units (Vengroff et al.,

2003). In some countries, effective decentralization reforms may also promote a system of

transparency and accountability as well as more access to political processes for everyday

citizens (Stein, 1998). Early advocates viewed decentralization as a vehicle that allowed "local

autonomy and self-government not only [to] serve as a political unit enabling people to realize

their own freedom, but also constitute an arena for political education" (Chang, 2010, p. 123). In

addition, researchers and government agencies alike argued that successful decentralization

reforms "provide better services and combat corruption" (Schaap et al., 2010, p. 157). Therefore,

these prominent ideas and beliefs bridge a connection between decentralization and the ultimate

aim of democracy.

Consequently, decentralization reforms can coincide with and often become embedded in

a broader dialogue about promoting democracy worldwide. Emphasizing such themes as

transparency, justice, and accountability, a narrative was constructed and propagated around the

world that strongly linked decentralization to democratization (National Democratic Institute,

2016; Grindle, 2009; Schaap et al., 2010; Pitschel & Bauer, 2009; Eaton, 2006; Moscovich,

2015). Amidst the waves of democratization that pervaded the late twentieth century, democracy

swiftly became the normative governance model, and countries aspired to implement

decentralization reforms in attempts to achieve greater democracy (Grindle, 2009; Diamond,

2004; Pitschel & Bauer, 2009). For some countries, these efforts were victorious and produced more liberal democratic practices. For others, said efforts produced much more complex and often negative consequences for governance (Faguet, 2012). Indeed, these negative effects have been largely ignored in international discourses and only recently has scholarly research endeavored to unpack and determine the heterogeneous effects of decentralization in conjunction with and apart from democratization, especially across Europe and Latin America (Eaton, 2009; Pitschel & Bauer, 2009; Schaap et al., 2010; Moscovich, 2015). When conducting a cross-country analysis of four countries—Brazil, Japan, Russia, and Sweden—Christina Andrews and Michiel S. de Vries ultimately found that decentralization reforms only resulted in greater civic participation in Sweden, viewed as "a typical developed, welfare country," but not so in the other less-developed or less-egalitarian countries (2005, p. 1). Other studies determine that "while local autonomy and decentralization have been considered as a driving force and even stronghold for a full-fledged, nation-wide democracy, decentralization . . . is in some cases conducive to the unraveling of the integrity of the state system" (Chang, 2010, p. 118). Recent studies have cast doubts on whether decentralization can be applied to all cultural or institutional contexts, emphasizing a much more complex and cautionary narrative about the implementation of decentralization reforms with which this paper ultimately aligns.

Decentralization has for years been supported by prominent international institutions and organizations, such as the World Bank, in association with efforts toward supposedly strengthening democracy, especially in the sense of strengthening "public participation" (Andrews & de Vries, 2005, p. 1). One reasoning that supports this idea of bolstering participation is that "effective decentralization allows subnational governments to more efficiently and transparently provide social services and access to public information" (USAID,

2012, p. 30). Decentralization then may be viewed as particularly favorable to underrepresented and marginalized groups, such as women. In the case of Latin America, Kent Eaton found that "the timing of decentralization, either in the course of the democratic transition or in its aftermath, suggests that democratization has played an important causal role in the shift toward more decentralized patterns of governance" (2006, p. 20). Another feature of decentralization that may in theory promote the representation of marginalized groups is that "serious decentralization and cooperation between subnational authorities really strengthens governing capabilities and provides more flexible structures and ways of working" (Schaap et al., 2010, p. 159).

However, the intermingling of these forces does not always equate to positively shaping women's descriptive representation. For example, recent research finds that the "extent to which a democratic country has an advanced industrial as opposed to a less developed or transitional economy" will improve the level of representation of women in a country (Vengroff et al., 2003, p. 171). That is, democracy may interact more positively with the intended effects of decentralization (i.e. expanding women's access points in politics) in more developed economies. In fact, another study shows that "decentralization is not promoting women's representation in the legislative and bureaucratic [subnational] spheres" in burgeoning democracies (Rincker & Ortbal, 2007, pp. 6-7). These insights seem to demonstrate that the level of familiarity a country has with a democratic political system may impact the success of decentralization, specifically in relation to women's increased representation.

It is central to also understand that decentralization reforms may even work against putting women in subnational office. For example, a recent study published by the United Nations Development Programme concludes that "more decentralized countries have less women

in subnational offices" (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015, p. 6). In effect, as political units become more decentralized, "the relative power and importance of the locality appears to decrease women's electoral prospects" (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015, p. 6). This insight is relatively novel and contrasts with early research, some of which is mentioned here, that propagates decentralization as a vehicle for women's greater visibility in the subnational political realm. Yet this insight may help to explain why we see later in Peru and Russia's cases that decentralization has not been a uniformly positive vehicle in supporting women's subnational representation. These findings across various geographic contexts suggests that the interplay of democracy and decentralization is much more multidimensional than was initially suspected by experts and governments during the push for decentralization reforms in the late twentieth century. Thus, researchers now argue that decentralization's effects on the political system and greater representation of women are uneven and dependent on structural factors, three of which are discussed below: electoral competitiveness and male political elite, gendered power hierarchy, and centralized candidate selection process. Indeed, to understand more deeply how decentralization may promote or impede women's representation, it is important to consider these broader political dynamics that are present amidst the implementation of decentralization reforms.

The established male political elite can be empowered by decentralization reforms, pushing out female candidates and blocking their access to representation (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015). An increasingly common phenomenon, a more competitive political process—although it may signify as being a more legitimate process–on the subnational level has been found to directly challenge women's representation. This finding might hold merit because as a government becomes decentralized, it yields greater decision-making power (Escobar-Lemmon

& Funk, 2015; Htun & Piscopo, 2014) and is thus a more attractive space in which to seek office. Indeed, Gibson (2013) demonstrates that "a decentralized territorial system maximizes the degree of autonomy enjoyed by subnational governments" (p. 17). In Latin America, the gubernatorial and mayor positions are more desired because they have considerable autonomy over the fiscal budgets, or "political 'pork'" (Htun & Piscopo, 2014, p. 6). Consequently, decentralized positions in this region "become more attractive to high quality male candidates" (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015, p. 6). This point is critical to consider in my analysis of Peru and Russia, as it supports the broader argument that women may only gain greater representation when their positions are not threatened by the established male political elite. Higher levels of competition mean that more women are pushed out of the political process or not able to secure higher-level positions. For example, a recent study found that "women in the Argentine national Congress . . . are significantly less likely than male legislators to have occupied "high pork" offices, such as governor and mayor" (Htun & Piscopo, 2014, p. 6). While a competitive electoral system is often perceived as being more legitimate and may attract women to partake in it, the competition also works against them as more male candidates hope to fill the same positions. Sources like the United Nations Development Programme have concluded in recent years that "more decentralized countries have less women in subnational offices [than in countries with little to no decentralization]" (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015, p. 6). Increased electoral competitiveness from decentralization reforms may disadvantage women while more generally adding legitimacy to the overarching political process, which demonstrates the complex political terrain that female politicians are forced to navigate.

Building on these insights, a gendered power structure within decentralized subnational units may also emerge in conjunction with increased political competition, which can also result

in women occupying less prestigious positions (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015). This gendered

power structure works to maintain and enrich male politicians' positions of influence and

challenges female candidates' ability to penetrate or gain equal footing in such spaces. Recent

research in Brazil found that "women are more successful in municipal elections in the poorer,

less developed regions of Brazil" (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015, p. 6). As this example

shows, female candidates may end up achieving more electoral success in poorer communities

because within these contexts, subnational elections may not be as competitive, decentralized

units may receive dismal budgets or resources, etc. Studies have also shown that in the

subnational realm, "since executive posts are often more powerful and prestigious than

legislative positions in Latin America, the finding [is] that women do better in legislative

elections than in executive ones" (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015, p. 6). This insight adds

validity to this paper's argument that women gain more access in less influential political

positions under a decentralized political system because of the gendered interplay of politics and

power. They are also simultaneously pushed out of more prestigious decentralized positions

because male political elite desire them, that is, the additional resources and autonomy attached

to them. Furthermore, this discussion of gendered power structures and electoral competitiveness

within decentralized spaces demonstrates the pervasiveness of male dominance across

decentralized political institutions, a trend that has recurred in most regions of the world,

including Latin America (Christie, 2015). Overall, an entrenched male political elite and

gendered power dynamics intertwine with decentralized units to significantly challenge women

from accessing subnational political office.

  Lastly, the candidate selection process of subnational political parties may hinder

women's descriptive representation if this process is, in fact, decentralized. A decentralized

candidate selection process suggests that "local party members choose candidates for their district," compared to a centralized candidate selection process where "national party members choose candidates for all subnational districts" (Escobar-Lemmon & Frank, 2015, p. 6). In effect, giving national actors this responsibility is said to override the "local power enclaves" that have been discussed above and which are particularly gendered on the subnational level (Escobar-Lemmon & Frank, 2015, p. 6). Indeed, female candidates competing in local elections may face more salient gendered power dynamics than those competing in the national realm. For example, studies indicate that subnational political spaces to a greater degree uphold "patriarchal or machista political culture and patronage," both of which have traditionally deterred and still today bar women's involvement in politics in regions such as Latin America (Rincker & Ortbal, 2007, p. 7). Consequently, scholars recommend that subnational political parties establish a centralized selection process, concluding that this centralized structure is less susceptible to these political power dynamics that discourage women from accessing political office. The process of self-nominating—an alternative to decentralized or centralized candidate selection—has also been found to disproportionately disadvantage women, who are "less likely than men to self-nominate" because their socialization experiences have so often relied on feeling or being subordinate in society (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015, p. 6).

To review, I have discussed the social and cultural conditions that appear to positively influence women's subnational representation, including active local women's movements, less traditional/patriarchal cultural and social norms, and diffusion processes. I then have argued that the following political conditions may promote women's subnational representation: free and fair elections; proportional representation; high party and district magnitude levels; historical institutional legacies; and gender quotas. Referencing Acker's work, I emphasized the enduring

and implicit nature of institutions as gendered, which serves as a conceptual tool to demonstrate the longstanding and structural challenges that women face and negotiate with in the public realm. I then described how decentralization reforms were at first viewed largely as a positive vehicle for stronger democratic governance but have recently been found to be more problematic as they helped to spread democratization in mainly Western countries. Considering the negative or unintended effects, decentralization may become a downright hindrance to women's subnational representation in some countries because it increases the competitiveness of electoral processes, thereby allowing the local male political elite to crowd out women from office. This scenario exacerbates the existing gendered power structures within these decentralized spaces and pushes women toward less prestigious or influential positions. In contrast to a decentralized candidate selection process, a centralized candidate selection process for subnational political parties helps to ameliorate the negative influence of the local male elite and gendered power dynamics. These interrelated political factors demonstrate that decentralization can actually bar women's subnational representation.

Empirical Case Studies: Peru and Russia

In the above section, I explored extant literature discussing political and social conditions that have been observed as promoting or hindering women's representation. This framework provides the foundation for a comparative empirical analysis of women's descriptive representation in Peru and Russia. In general, this paper's comparative approach aligns with the "most different systems design," which posits that "highly diverse" cases in fact encourage more substantive comparisons (Przeworski & Teune, 1970, p. 111). An increasingly prominent methodology used in the realm of comparative politics (Przeworski & Teune, 1970; Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010), this research design directs attention beyond specific social systems,

thus enabling one to posit deeper findings and broader regional alternatives for public policy

initiatives. This particular methodology has been applied to respected case studies like that of

France, Russia, and China, which underscores its applicability in various settings and ability to

provide substantive research findings drawing from contexts that showcase "maximum

heterogeneity" (Mills et. al, 2010, p. 2). In addition to a number of studies that have in the recent

past provided comparisons between these two countries' political and social milieus, Peru and

Russia present especially useful case studies because they have both experienced periods of

centralization and decentralization reforms within a similar timeframe yet in contemporary times

reflect distinct social and political systems. Thus, I consider this research methodology to be an

effective approach to understanding divergent systems and the overarching structural conditions

that often are subtle or overlooked within specific cultural contexts. The insights from the cases

of Peru and Russia can translate to future studies conducted on other nations, as researchers

attempt to better grasp the tensions and interplay of social and political conditions and women's

representation.

Previous studies have determined that a focus on the subnational level reflects several

advantages. For example, subnational-level studies are a more controlled unit of analysis

(Giraudy, 2012; Snyder, 2001) and can more aptly "handle the spatially uneven nature of major

processes of political and economic transformation" (Snyder, 2001, p. 93). In choosing to study

two disparate countries, this latter insight is especially useful. Furthermore, an analysis of

women's representation in specifically subnational politics helps me to more deeply examine the

nuanced interplay of institutions and public policy (Snyder, 2001). In fact, a subnational

comparative approach offers insights into the complexities and heterogeneity across sublevel

political institutions and their variant effects on women, which helps to explain why this method

is being increasingly used in contemporary political science research (Snyder, 2001).

Peru's government

This subsection first introduces decentralization trends more broadly across Latin

America before describing Peru's decentralization process and the social and political milieu

during its simultaneous democratic transition. It concludes with mentioning some formal

commitments that Peru has made toward gender equality, particularly in the realm of politics.

In Latin America, both political and fiscal decentralization have been implemented in the

past decades amidst several waves of democracy-building across the region (Stein, 1998;

Vergara, 2011). These processes initially started during the 1980s and 1990s (Moscovich, 2015).

However, democracy and decentralization have not always coexisted in Latin America as they

largely do today. Earlier research has identified certain areas that exemplify regime

juxtaposition, which is "the existence of subnational undemocratic regimes (SURs) alongside a

democratic national government," across the region (Giraudy, 2012, p. 2). The result is that "at

the subnational level elections are still severely manipulated, the civic liberties of the local

populations are partially suppressed, and varying degrees of harassment and violence . . . skew

the playing field in favor of incumbents" (Giraudy, 2012, p. 2). More broadly, politically

decentralized units across Latin America are primarily characterized by "the unevenness in terms

of resources, state capacity and democratization, and their relative strength and autonomy in

relation to central government" (Moscovich, 2015, p. 5). Studies have concluded that such a

trend has arisen because "all of the countries in the region underwent different kinds of

decentralization processes during the last decades" (Moscovich, 2015, p. 8). Other scholars view

decentralization in conjunction with democratization in Latin America as having had positive

results. For example, "by bringing government closer to the people, decentralization has widened opportunities for deliberation and participation and has given citizens a more tangible and "close to home" sense of their rights and responsibilities in the political process" (Sabatini, 2003, p. 149). Amidst broader regional trends, we can now turn toward decentralization's effects in Peru.

In Peru, the government committed to democratization after the decade-long dictatorship under Alberto Fujimori and consequently initiated decentralization reforms nationwide during the period of 2000-2010 (Vergara, 2011). Despite efforts by invested international actors such as the World Bank, decentralization occurred unevenly and with varying degrees of success across the country, and the nation struggled for years to reacquaint itself to a democratic mode of governance (Araoz, 2013; World Bank, 2010). Civic participation in political processes has been steadily encouraged yet has been slow to develop; at the same time, several civil society groups have been created to monitor the progress of decentralization (World Bank, 2010).

In addition to its 196 provinces, Peru is more broadly divided into a total of 25 administrative regions, and each of these regions is mandated by national law to develop an official strategy that supports gender equality. While the objective of greater gender equality is often expressed verbally and in written form, the implementation and accountability are often problematic and inadequate. Peru's Ombudsman's Office pointed out that "only 15 regional governments have approved gender equality plans, and of these, five have not earmarked any funds to put them into effect" (Salazar, 2011, para. 2). In a more general sense, Peru appears to have formal policies already in place that emphasize importance of achieving gender equality. For example, in recent years it has developed the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, which "calls for the viewpoints of both women and men to be included when formulating regional development policies, plans, budgets and projects" (Salazar, 2011, para. 7). Yet the

issue arises such that women involved in these decision-making processes have yet to be successful in "allocating resources to close the gender gap" (Salazar, 2011, para. 8). What this trend suggests is that while women in greater numbers are accessing positions of decision-making and policy-making in Peru, they are restrained in their ability and influence to sway where the money ultimately goes. One of several factors contributing to this problem may be in sufficient oversight or accountability in ensuring substantive policy outcomes that reflect women's contributions in these processes. As Teresa Valdés and Indira Palacios (1999) from the Women and Development Unit of ECLAC discern, these policies mentioned reflect the Peruvian state's "political will" in promoting gender equality (p. 20). However, the "political results" of this commitment is inadequate, suggesting that the "consequences of different processes or actions in relation to a specific target" are still not widespread (Valdés & Palacios, 1999, p. 21).

Application of theory to Peru: Social conditions analysis

The following paragraphs will examine how local women's movements, cultural and social norms, and political party ideologies shape women's subnational representation in Peru. Although local women's movements have been particularly active in Peru's recent history and today advocate for a range of political aims, Peruvian society still largely esteems traditional gender roles and women's participation in solely the private sphere, a trend particularly common in less developed or rural areas. Along with national parties, subnational political parties do not appear to prioritize women's visibility in office, regardless of ideological preference, although this latter finding needs to be more extensively researched in future studies.

Local women's movements in Peru have been perceived as generally improving women's subnational representation and have noticeably taken political undertones. Generally across Latin America, women have historically been instrumental in initiating and building successful

movements to advance their human and civil rights, such as advocating for the right to vote (Hinojosa, 2012; Rousseau, 2006). In the late twentieth century, numerous women's groups cropped up across Peru because of the nation's largescale political and economic chaos during the 1980s; the creation of these women's organizations in turn inspired many women to enter subnational political office, as well as assume various leadership roles in their communities in the 1980s and especially in the 1990s (Blondet, 2002). These movements were sustained and grew more salient and accepted in broader society during President Fujimori's reign, as discussed in the next paragraph, yet were forced to relinquish some of their influence once Peru transitioned to democracy and political parties became the prominent vehicle to gain political and social representation (Rousseau, 2006). Nonetheless, studies show that the existence of these movements are critical for advances in women's rights. In recent times, both in Peru and other Andean countries, women have been pivotal actors in jumpstarting indigenous rights movements since the late twentieth century (Hinojosa, 2012). Their participation reflects women's constant investment in and contributions to their community, as well as their agency in having the ability and resources to do so. Many of these local movements continue to reflect political undertones, especially regarding indigenous women's movements and their efforts to have indigenous women represented in both national and subnational political office. Along with the multilayered and controversial institutional legacy that the Fujimori regime left, discussed in the next subsection, women have found greater political representation on the subnational level and ultimately "represent an identifiable and, to a certain extent, recognized social force" (Blondet, 2002, p. 17). This identity-construction process is more of an intangible but nonetheless critical factor in supporting women's representation.

Furthermore, traditional cultural and social norms in Peru, commonly seen as reflecting machismo, coalesce to serve as a force that has historically marginalized and still today impedes women's representation in subnational politics. Broadly speaking, a great deal of research from scholars and government entities since the late twentieth century has alluded to culture as being one of several critical factors that have kept women out of subnational political office (Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Hinojosa, 2012; United Nations, 2004). This finding will also resonate later with Russia's case. One scholar found that impoverished women across the rural regions of Peru often did not view local politics as a viable space for them because "they did not want their family and friends to think poorly of them," due to the stigma attached to women's participation in the public sphere, that is, outside of the home (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015, p. 7). In this scenario, stereotypical gender norms in Peruvian society shaped these women's belief that politics was not an acceptable domain for them and they are not fit to take on political responsibilities. These attitudes and behaviors demonstrate the enduring presence and strength of machismo, a systemic cultural phenomenon akin to patriarchy, within Peru. A study as recent as August of 2016 revealed that 74% of Peruvians view its society as machista and a mere 2% of Peruvians view its society as feminist (Martinez, 2016). Additionally, the Peruvian government concluded that even when women do occupy subnational positions of power, "they are still given professional functions that constitute an extension of woman's private role of caring for and attending to the needs of the family" (United Nations, 2004, p. 18). Furthermore, those people who oppose women's greater representation in subnational positions often allude to "religious suggestions in order to disqualify them as citizens," which reflects the enduring influence that culture and religion collectively have on a country like Peru (Olivari, n.d., p. 7). While traditional cultural and social norms toward gender continue to challenge women's

representation in subnational politics, this finding is no doubt aggravated by entrenched patterns of poverty in rural areas and insufficient funds to contribute toward gender equality ("Women," n.d.). In fact, one study found that "among the regions lacking plans or funds for promoting equal opportunities are Apurímac, Huancavelica, Cajamarca, Huánuco, Ancash, Cuzco and Puno, which also have the highest rates of illiteracy among the general population and, specifically, among women, and the highest rates of gender-based violence" (Salazar, 2011, para. 3). This finding indicates that a substantial number of subnational governmental units across Peru are not only plagued by systemic social issues but also do not have funding available to actively promote or advance women's representation. Nonetheless, recent research shows that in Latin America, people not only "are now more likely to believe that women belong in the public sphere," but also that they "believe that women are underrepresented in politics" (Hinojosa, 2012, p. 35). There is then hope that more egalitarian social beliefs are emerging in Peruvian society but still face considerable pushback from sexist attitudes and beliefs toward women. Enduring machismo and larger, systemic intersecting cycles of poverty and insufficient resources intersect with one another to discourage women's descriptive representation in subnational politics.

Noting that less machista or sexist social and cultural norms are more commonplace across the more developed regions of Peru, I found over-time data to support this observation. From studying data of the female and male mayors in Peru's 25 regions from 1983 till present day collected by Peru's Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (Instituto, n.d.), it appears that the percentage of women who hold mayoral office in major metropolitan areas like Lima is greater than the percentage of women in less developed urban regions like Ayacucho and Arequipa. Moreover, less developed or rural regions like Ucayali have not seen a single female

mayor in over ten years (Instituto, n.d.). More generally, we see that the less developed regions have supported just one or two female mayors in each election cycle since 1983, as opposed to male candidates in the double digits (Instituto, n.d.). These data suggest that the more economically developed urban centers of Peru support higher levels of women's representation in subnational office, which may reflect a connection between women's representation and more economically advanced regions of the country. However, in all regions, women's subnational representation over time is significantly lower than that of their male counterparts. This observation holds true for their national representation, as well.

While subnational political parties in Peru have gained greater autonomy in recent years to form their own party platforms due to successful decentralization, their party ideologies are not linked to greater subnational representation of women. National political parties in Peru have traditionally been disorganized and struggle in contemporary times to take part in and influence subnational political processes (Vergara, 2011; International IDEA, Inter-Parliamentary Union, & Stockholm University, eds., 2016). A primary reason for this is cited by Christopher Sabatini, who finds that national political parties in Peru are often unable to adapt to the structures and dynamics that decentralization establishes, therefore, they are "not well-equipped organizationally to deal with its [decentralization] political consequences" (2003, p. 149). Decentralization reforms across the country have actually served to diminish the power and influence of national political parties and consequently, national parties have weakened in the face of "direct election of local officials and loss of control over patronage" (2003, p. 149). Subnational political parties, then, have emerged since 2000—the start of decentralization in Peru—and have partly disrupted the platform and policy agenda of the national government, the reason being that subnational party ideologies have autonomy to address the context-specific

challenges and policy interests respective of their constituents (Sabatini, 2003). While their leverage and influence then are greater, the extent to which subnational political parties integrate women's rights and issues is not commonplace, especially in reference to indigenous women's rights and issues (International IDEA, Inter-Parliamentary Union, & Stockholm University, eds., 2016). In Peru and elsewhere in Latin America, some scholars have recently found that "left parties were no more likely than those on the right to nominate or elect women," though studies are restricted mainly to the national level (Morgan & Hinojosa, 2016, p. 5). While decentralization has given autonomy to subnational parties to allow them to develop party platforms in line with their constituents' interests (i.e. do not necessarily follow the platform of national parties), both right-wing and left-wing subnational parties have not been incentivized nor pushed to advocate for women's issues and elect women into office.

So far, in juxtaposing Peru's political and social landscape with the paper's theoretical framework, active local women's movements in the last decades of the twentieth century appear to serve as a critical springboard upon which women's representation considerably expanded on the subnational level and more broadly in the public domain. Perhaps surprising, leftist political party ideologies are not seen as strengthening women's descriptive representation on the subnational level in Peru. Additional research will shed greater light, but political party ideology in the subnational realm may not play as large a role as expected in supporting women's subnational representation. This analysis now shifts toward applying the identified political conditions to the Peruvian case.

Application of theory to Peru: Political institutions analysis

I will now discuss how the structure and nature of the electoral system and application of gender quotas in Peru affects women's descriptive representation. I argue that proportional

representation, high party and district magnitude, and free and fair elections all bolster women's subnational presence. Furthermore, Peru's institutional legacy of authoritarianism under Fujimori has both surprisingly and arguably promoted women's presence in subnational politics and more broadly in the public sphere, and subnational gender quotas play an integral role in increasing women's representation in political office.

In line with this paper's conditions framework, Peru's electoral rules within a PR system promote women's representation on the subnational level. Yet these electoral structures are effective in leveraging women in subnational politics only when combined with gender quotas, which is described below (Piscopo & Hinojosa, 2013). Although there exists variation between Peru's provincial and cosmopolitan areas, research has shown that high district and party magnitude have generally produced greater subnational representation of women in Peru, applicable to both districts in Lima and districts outside of the city (Schmidt & Saunders, 2004). One noticeable exception to this trend occurred in 1998, in which women's greatest success in gaining subnational office in the 1998 municipal elections actually occurred in areas of particularly low district magnitude, specifically those outside Lima (Schmidt & Saunders, 2004). Furthermore, subnational elections have largely been viewed as being free and fair ("BTI," 2016) and offer closed-list options, all of which are conditions favorable to improving women's access to subnational office (Schmidt & Saunders, 2004). At the same time, subnational elections may be just as if not more vulnerable to cases of "corruption and crime," which recent reports has found as being ongoing today ("BTI," 2016, para. 4). This latter observation suggests that decentralization reforms have not reduced corruption on the subnational level, which in theory they are designed to do.

Peru's historical institutional legacy centers largely on having experienced authoritarianism under Alberto Fujimori in the last decade of the twentieth century, in which women's representation in the public sphere noticeably increased, including on the subnational level. As mentioned above, many women's movements gained momentum in the 1980s, which encouraged and provided access points for women to take part in important social and political processes on the subnational level. When elected in 1990 and throughout his regime, Fujimori captured the votes and interests of women from both high and low socio-economic statuses and made advances in women's representation in the public sphere and, more generally, in women's rights (Blondet, 2002; Rousseau, 2006). Ultimately, despite the highly controversial authoritarian manner that Fujimori used to prolong his time in office, women—and not only those in the upper echelon of society—were encouraged to participate in both political and social spheres of life in ways that prior they had not been encouraged to do. In this way, their contributions to their communities, which had often been overlooked, became recognized, valued, and encouraged. Interestingly, while comparatively higher levels of women vied for office in the 1998 municipal elections, their political aims were not united and consequently they did not achieve high representation in that year (Blondet, 2002). In conclusion, then, the joint efforts and synergy of women's local movements—as described in the above section—and substantive actions toward expanding women's roles under Fujimori's regime suggest that Peru's institutional legacy is more complex than it may appear. Taking the sole lens of considering women's advancement at this time, it does appear that women were able to gain greater access to public and social spaces from which they were previously barred and subsequently wielded power in their local communities to create some social change. These dual forces will contrast with the historical

context of Russia's communism, within which local movements were kept weak and national elite did not produce substantive actions toward women's rights.

Since the implementation of gender quotas beginning in the late 1990s on both the national and subnational level, Peru's gender quotas are decidedly an instrumental factor in buttressing women's subnational presence (Valdés & Palacios, 1999; "Women," n.d.). Such trends reflect some degree of institutionalized mechanisms on the part of these governments, more broadly signifying their stance toward advancing and prioritizing women's rights. In addition to national-level legislative quotas, Peru is one of the few Latin American countries today to have gender quota laws on the municipal level (Valdés & Palacios, 1999). Implemented in the late 1990s, this quota mandates that candidate lists for regional and municipal legislatures be at least 30% women (International IDEA, Inter-Parliamentary Union, & Stockholm University, eds., 2016; Htun & Piscopo, 2014). After this municipal quota was established, "female candidates enjoyed unprecedented success in the country's 1998 municipal elections . . . greater than in most other Latin American elections" (Schmidt & Saunders, 2004, p. 705). In addition to subnational elections, today municipal governments like that of Callao have committed to ensuring that 30% of those serving "in neighborhood boards, electoral committees, and public works commissions" are women (United Nations, 2004, p. 17). Progress on the subnational level has occurred because of these quotas, although women's representation is still lower than that on the national level. Government reports that trace the local progress made toward gender equality show that from 1995-8, "only 8% of elected councilors were women, while in 1998-2002 this figure rose to 24%" (United Nations, 2004, p. 17). This notable percentage jump in women's representation reflects that once gender quotas were implemented, subnational political positions were made more accessible for women to enter and gain visibility.

Furthermore, it is helpful to note that "for the period 2003-2006 five women have been elected out of a total of 194 city mayors, 26% of municipal councilors are women, and 49 women have been elected as district mayors (of a total of 1624)" (United Nations, 2004, p. 15). While such progress is certainly uneven across a country as diverse as Peru, research has overall "found that the implementation of gender quotas is one of the main drivers of women's representation" across the region of Latin America (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015, p. 5). Success of gender quotas in the region also exemplifies the expanse and success of diffusion (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015).

In conclusion, gender quotas, along with a specific set of electoral structures, all work to promote women's subnational representation in Peru. Though perhaps controversial, Peru's historical institutional legacy of authoritarianism also appears to have promoted women's representation, as Fujimori's administration advocated for and supported women's advancement in the public sphere. I will now shift toward focusing on decentralization's effects on women's subnational presence in this country.

Application of theory to Peru: Decentralization analysis

The theoretical framework outlined at the beginning of this paper anticipates that decentralization reforms may serve as both a window of opportunity and a deterrent for women's representation in subnational politics and is thus a political institution that depends largely on the intersection of cultural, social, and political factors within a country. The following sections show the positive and negative effects of decentralization within Peru and how decentralization mingles with other existing social and political forces to shape women's presence.

Broadly speaking, the presence of women in municipal-level positions of politics is one way in which women can exercise greater agency and influence in important political processes.

Research has shown that these positions are a "particularly favourable environment for women to act in, as they are closely linked to the day-to-day life of the community" (Valdés & Palacios, 1999, p. 49). Yet on a global scale, the United Nations reports that "female elected councilors are underrepresented in all regions of the world and female mayors even more so" (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2010, p. x). Although progress in heightening women's representation in these positions has been made in both Peru and Russia, it is important to note that their representation still significantly trails that of men, most especially on the subnational level. Research indicates that mayoral and gubernatorial positions in Peru inherit more power, influence, and financial autonomy; consequently, holding these positions allow one to "control local budgets (political "pork") . . . as a result, competition for these positions is fierce" (Htun & Piscopo, p. 6). As established above, this competition is gendered and disproportionately disadvantages women (Valdés & Palacios, 1999). In 1998, for example, just 7 women out of 194 politicians served as mayor (Valdés & Palacios, 1999). More broadly across Latin America, while progress is uneven, statistics show that women occupy about 9% of mayoral positions (Htun & Piscopo, 2014). There has notably been improvement in the representation of women in these positions in this region, having held "some 5 percent of mayors" when compared between 1990 and 2000 (Htun & Piscopo, p. 6).

In addition, the percentage of women mayors in Latin America significantly trails the percentage of women in subnational legislative positions (Htun & Piscopo, 2014). Yet in the legislative sphere, women are often placed on committees that are seen as being less influential and thus less important in the policy arena (UNDP, 2013). In a regional comparison, countries in Central America and the Caribbean have women in mayoral positions "ranging from 20% to 37%," which sharply contrasts with both Peru's 9% (Valdés & Palacios, 1999, p. 48) and

Russia's (approximate) 5%. Therefore, while mayoral positions are some of the most influential positions of power in the subnational realm and thus represent a critical space in which women may be able to exercise agency and influence, statistics reflect that both Peru and Russia encounter formidable challenges to women's representation in contemporary times.

As Peru came out of a decade-long dictatorship and asserted its renewed commitment to democratization starting in 2001, it has since widely experienced continuous processes of decentralization (United Nations, 2004). The government has notably drawn distinct connections between implementing decentralization reforms and alleviating poverty, as they believe that these reforms empower the largely female impoverished communities by offering them local positions of influence (United Nations, 2004). In this vein, Peru established the Decentralization Act, which "promote[s] human development and the progressive and sustained improvement of living conditions for overcoming poverty," with the implicit understanding that women experience greater levels of poverty than men (United Nations, 2004, p. 3). Furthermore, decentralization policies such as the Municipalities Act represent additional efforts made toward "preventing discrimination on grounds of ethnic origin, religion or gender, and any other form of discrimination" (United Nations, 2004, p. 6). As established above, it appears that Peru does not lack the written legal mechanisms and policies that portray its commitment to supporting women's access to subnational spaces of decision-making.

Yet what is problematic is that institutional mechanisms that promise "women's participation in the decentralization processes" are sparse (United Nations, 2004, p. 6). While the government has explicitly identified this as being an issue in its 2004 report to the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, it demonstrates an emphasis on showcasing written commitments of equality, especially to placate the international community, and less on

steadily achieving the objectives (United Nations, 2004). The Peruvian state also identifies the problem of not giving sufficient funds and "resources . . . to promote equal opportunity for women" on the subnational level; dismal funds then serve as a formidable financial barrier for women to access political office (United Nations, 2004, p. 5). This financial issue is also mentioned as hindering the potential impact that women and gender-specific policies can have in the political realm.

The Peruvian government recently found that the "expansion of municipal powers and the transfer of funding needed to fulfill their role in promoting local development" are crucial steps toward achieving effective political decentralization and women's representation (United Nations, 2004, p. 20). Therefore, the recurring issue of allocation of funds and limited subnational autonomy in decision-making processes may be said to inhibit women's full representation in this arena. At the same time, processes of decentralization have resulted in "an increase in resources at this [subnational] level, as well as in public visibility and political interest" (Valdés & Palacios, 1999, p. 49). This political dynamic increases the competitiveness of these positions, diminishing the access to opportunity for women in occupying positions of power. Therefore, as a recent UNDP report found, "Greater quantities of resources would not necessarily seem to produce environments of greater equality but, on the contrary, would seem to characterize a process of institutional inequality-building where men reserve the most coveted of positions" (UNDP, 2013, p. 57). Therefore, one notices the double-edged sword in increasing municipal-level influence and power, which problematizes how to most effectively ensure that women access positions of influence in their communities, ones that are meaningful and offer them the structural conditions to generate substantive policy-making and decision-making outcomes.

Russia's government

This paper now shifts toward an analysis of Russia's political system and subnational representation of women. Understanding more broadly the trajectory of governance across Eastern Europe provides a context for examining the current government structure of Russia. I will then discuss the social and political theoretical conditions in Russia's case before shifting the attention to decentralization's effects and its relationship with women's representation.

Numerous countries across Eastern Europe have historically been dominated by communist or authoritarian political systems that prevented significant autonomy at the subnational level (Pitschel & Bauer, 2009). Similar to Latin America, widespread decentralization processes diffused across Eastern Europe during the 1990s, although to significantly different degrees (Pitschel & Bauer, 2009). These reforms were also linked to building democracy in this region and sparked hope among many that these governments could finally leave behind their communist pasts (Pitschel and Bauer, 2009). Yet as was the case in Latin America, some challenges arose with associating democracy with decentralization. Specifically, many countries in Eastern Europe—most notably Russia—have since not followed a linear and swift path to democracy, despite initially successful decentralization reforms (Johnson & Saarinen, 2013). Today, we see that Russia is "a federation consisting of territorial units the number of which decreased from 89 in 2002 to 83 in 2012" (Golosov, 2013, p. 87). This number is noticeably greater than Peru's units, of which there are 25. The significant corruption in both national and subnational political bodies across Russia and the country's gradual retreat into authoritarianism provide a most interesting political landscape to compare alongside that of Peru to further analyze those conditions that should promote women's subnational representation (Gel'man & Ross, 2010; Hoxie, 1994). Furthermore, scholars have suggested that Russia's

experience with political and fiscal decentralization, which began in the 1990s after the fall of

the Soviet Union, resulted in a much different model than the democratic one that was expected.

Indeed, decentralization processes in Russia that occurred in the late twentieth and early twenty-

first century have resembled much more the "feudalism" or "clientelism" model (Chang, 2010, p.

128). This insight is important to highlight, as it differs from Peru's model of decentralization,

which adheres much more to the liberal democratic framework. This difference also helps us to

understand why we see a relatively stable democracy in Peru today, whereas in Russia we

observe the emergence of a hybrid regime in which some democratic dimensions linger but

which increasingly showcases authoritarian elements (Levitsky and Way, 2010; Gel'man, 2015).

Though not to the extent of the Peruvian state, the Russian state formally establishes

gender equality as a priority; accountability and implementation of this commitment, similar to

Peru, continue to serve as dual challenges. The Russian Constitution explicitly mentions equal

rights and opportunity for men and women, and it has often in the past participated in initiatives

from the United Nations that promote equality, including the International Covenant on Civil and

Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against

Women (CEDAW). It appears, however, that the Russian state's commitment to gender equality

and women's issues lies largely in the international realm and is rarely found in practice on

neither the national nor regional level, both in terms of policies and budgets for gender issues

(Zakirova, 2014). One recent study looking at decentralization and subnational governance in the

region of Bashkortostan found that "no systematic participatory planning, let alone planning that

is gender-sensitive, has taken place" (Zakirova, 2014, p. 202). Whereas the Peruvian state

ministries have dictated that "regional budgets should be evaluated from a gender perspective"

(Salazar, 2011, para. 29) but have not outlined explicitly how to implement this aim, the Russian

state ministries have not made any comparable mandates and discourage attempts by regional governments to allocate budgeting toward gender issues. It was only in 2000 that Putin briefly acknowledged the absence of women in the political realm; however, subsequent appointments thereafter both on the national and subnational level did not showcase notable numbers of women holding political positions (Nechemias, 2000). Overall, women's issues and rights have not been considered a statewide priority since arguably Soviet times (Zakirova, 2014).

It may also be insightful to mention that a presence of women in subnational positions can at times translate into larger numbers in the national arena, which in turn gives women greater access to decision-making processes within their communities and on a more global scale. In Peru, some studies have shown that women occupy more subnational positions than national positions; at the same time, however, levels of subnational representation in Peru and more broadly Latin America are still significantly low (Valdés & Palacios, 1999). In Russia, national-level appointments are made by President Putin and a few political elite, and the few female appointments that are made often come from women candidates who hold subnational positions (Nechemias, 2000). Scholars generally conclude that women's advancements in the national political domain are much sparser than those in the subnational domain, that is, women have in the past decades been better able to access positions of political power on the subnational level (Nechemias, 2000). Such a finding suggests that in Russia's case, women who occupy subnational roles may not find sufficient access to advance onwards to the national realm. One rationale for this could be seen in Gibson's (2013) concept of "parochialization of power," which he defines as "local strategies of political control" (p. 24). Female candidates may find greater access points in which to partake in these processes of gaining power on the local level, whereas they cannot gain this same level of access on the national level. Furthermore, the national

political realm also means "short tenures in office, a lack of insider status, and the treatment of women as secondary rather than central actors" for women, which may pose as additional rationale as to why subnational units may be more accessible for women's representation (Necehmias, 2000, p. 202). The connections made between women occupying subnational office and national office should be explored further in future studies. The insights found in this paragraph point to the myriad political forces that create dissonance in representation between the subnational and national level.

Application of theory to Russia: Social conditions analysis

Researchers argue that the social and cultural milieu in Russia is deeply patriarchal and that this patriarchy infiltrates the political system, work force, and private life to inhibit women's entry into the political sphere (Zakirova, 2014). I find that local women's movements in Russia are only effective in influencing women's entry in subnational office when supported publicly by female politicians; furthermore, in contrast to Peru's movements, those in Russia remain apolitical. Furthermore, whereas in Peru, traditional machista or sexist gender norms and attitudes are becoming less widespread in the more developed urban centers, this dissonance between rural versus urban regions has not developed in Russia. Instead, although women made some strides in the late twentieth century, Russia's turn toward authoritarianism has occurred in tandem with a reinforcement of the traditional patriarchy (Zakirova, 2014). Lastly, as is similar in Peru, no subnational political party ideologies have emerged that prioritize women's rights in Russia, and ideology itself is diminishing in significance as the local male political elite garner more power and control within the political processes. This analysis will ultimately reinforce the commonly-made conclusion that in Russia, "at its deepest level, the generally low level of

women's representation is due to the fact that society has not placed a priority on gender equality" (Moser, 2003, p. 17).

Local women's movements have at times helped women in Russia gain subnational office, however, they are relatively weak and struggle to exert influence. Because of the communist structure in place for much of the twentieth century, women's movements and organizations were not even allowed to publicly exist until the late 1980s. The reason behind this lies within the fabric of communism itself such that "the state sought to control the issue of women's rights just as it did all other social issues" ("Russia," 1995, para. 5). Whereas Peru's local women's movements gained traction in the 1980s and later helped to facilitate the country's transition to democracy, Russian women's movements in the 1980s and onward struggled to gain social acceptance and a foothold in their communities. Indeed, "throughout the 1990s feminist organisations in Moscow and St Petersburg have been perceived by grass roots provincial women as arrogant theorists alien to their basic concerns" (Shevchenko, 2002, p. 1219). In contemporary times, besides the notable exception of the women's crisis center movement, most local movements are still not wholly integrated in society because of deep-seated social stigmas and attitudes toward them stemming from communist times (Johnson & Saarinen, 2013). Of note, some Russian female politicians have often used local women's movements to their political advantage. For example, some head the movements themselves, whereas others establish "alliances for lobbying purposes" among these movements, and still others at least attribute their position of political influence to the advances made by these movements (Nechemias, 2000, p. 204). Such findings demonstrate that the local women's movements, while they do not gain national-level attention, do play a role in how local female politicians view themselves or position themselves in their community. In other words, women's movements are

not entirely irrelevant in modern Russia, although they have in recent years become more limited due to broader social stigmas toward pro-women or feminist activities, which is explained in more detail below, as well as internal divisions within the movements themselves (Nechemias, 2000). It appears that it depends on whether the female politician decides to collaborate with the women's movement, rather than the other way around. Furthermore, the women's movement as a lone actor "has been ineffective in mobilizing demand for female candidates," largely due to the apolitical nature of these movements and negative social attitudes toward them (Moser, 2003, p. 164). We will see below the conditions that may intertwine with these women's movements to render them weak and unable of pushing women into subnational office.

Since the turn of the century, mainstream social and cultural norms in Russia have reverted to traditional patriarchal attitudes and roles. The social realm is largely unsupportive of any efforts that can be portrayed as "feminist," and there has been a resurgence toward promoting traditional gender norms and roles in both the private and public sphere (Hesli, Jung, Reisinger, & Miller, 2001, p. 42). We see that progress toward women's representation in the political sphere remained stagnant throughout the last decade of the twentieth century for a plethora of interconnecting social factors, including "the image of women as belonging to the domestic sphere, the association of feminism with negative aspects of Communist social organization, and the lack of grassroots support for organizations that should serve as advocates for women's interests" (Hesli et al., 2001, p. 42). In contemporary Russia, subnational and national authorities alike reflect "patriarchal assumptions that women's place is in the home with traditional gender roles" (Zakirova, 2014, p. 209). Patriarchal gender norms and behaviors are normalized, reinforcing a patriarchal private sphere and masculine political realm (Hesli et al., 2001). Russia's structural patriarchy mirrors the machismo culture of Peru, both of which hinder

women's agency and voice in the halls of government. These social and cultural norms pervade across Russia's social and political landscape and strongly influence the stagnancy of local women's movements and party ideologies, the latter of which is discussed below, as well as the representation of women in subnational political office.

Historically, political party ideologies in Russia have not advocated for women's representation on the national or subnational level. As anticipated, "Over time, ideology has apparently emerged as a significant factor influencing how well a party will represent women" (Moser, 2003, p. 19). Even more so than Peru's case, no subnational parties in Russia exist on either the left or right that advocate for women's rights (Kiryukhina, 2013). Just as Peru's subnational political parties have autonomy in forming their policy platforms separate from those on the national level, Russian subnational parties "develop their own routines and strategies" (Sätre, 2014, p. 27). Yet in both cases, their platforms ignore the integration of women's rights and issues. Generally across Eastern Europe, conservative political parties often "explicitly advocated the traditional roles of homemaker and mother for women rather than endorsing policies in support of women's and family interests" after communism fell and still today (Rueschemeyer, 2015, p. 156). As turned out to be the case in Peru, even those parties perceived as being leftist in this region do not always "incorporate a women's agenda into their programs," although they have typically been known to advocate for abortion rights (Rueschemeyer, 2015, p. 158). Russian women during their lifetime alone have witnessed their interests and concerns no longer being a priority by the state nor represented in party platforms. Of interest, research suggests that since the mid 2000s, subnational parties compete less as left, right, or center parties and more so as "nonpartisan," the reason being that they are dominated by tight-knit linkages among the political local male elite (Gel'man, 2015, p. 85).

Concerning the few times when women in Russia were represented by political parties, research has shown that "parties . . . sought to manipulate women voters through largely symbolic measures, such as highlighting "their" woman as part of their electoral strategy, rather than bring women into the inner halls of power" (Nechemias, 2000, p. 216). Russia's political parties then pursued an ideological belief of women as tokenistic and not as capable of occupying notable decision- and policy-making roles. Rather than viewing women as equal agents, women were merely a "symbol of the party's concern" (Nechemias, 2000, p. 209). We see then that this largely symbolic status for women in Russia may mirror that for women in Peru. In both cultural contexts, women are not encouraged by their respective political parties on the subnational level to enter office, nor do these parties develop inclusive policy agendas to address gender-specific issues.

Overall, processes of diffusion do not seem to have noticeably advanced Russian women's presence in subnational politics. Subnational political party ideologies are influenced by the local political elite and broader gendered power structures that exclude women and are not affected by more liberal political movements norms that have emerged and spread across Europe. The below discussion of the stagnancy with quotas reiterates that diffusion has not been successful in Russia, even though countries across East, Central, and South Eastern Europe have adopted gender quotas. The Russian political domain overall remains largely unmoved by such steps toward greater gender equality in the political domain (Krook, 2004).

Application of theory to Russia: Political institutions analysis

I now apply the theoretical political conditions to Russia's case. The electoral conditions that should promote women's presence, including proportional representation structures and free and fair elections, are not effective in promoting women's subnational representation or do not

exist in the Russian political system. Higher party and district magnitude, however, do hold merit in this cultural context. Russia's historical institutional legacy of communism has helped to entrench women's roles in the private sphere and thus challenges women's access to subnational office. In contrast to Peru, Russia has not implemented subnational nor national gender quotas since 1990. The following paragraphs elucidate these findings.

Russia and Peru's electoral structures yield somewhat different results for their influence on women's subnational representation. First, in direct contrast to Peru's PR system, the most recent—and perhaps only—full-length study on Russia's PR process shows that the PR system in Russia does not have a positive effect on getting women elected (Moser, 2003). As a helpful side note, previous studies have already suggested that PR systems do not operate well under authoritarianism, as these two notions in effect contradict one another (Golosov, 2013). In Russia, the PR system used in subnational elections has been observed as having a harmful effect, whereas the plurality system instead has proven to be a better vehicle for women to gain a voice: "Significantly more women have been elected under the plurality half of Russia's mixed electoral system" (Moser, 2003, p. 2). This finding then reflects dissonance with research findings that the PR system is beneficial for women on the subnational level. As discussed above, the support or demand from broader society and women's movements were largely absent during communist times and in contemporary times simply do not exert great influence. As a result, political parties "have little incentive, strategically or normatively, to nominate women in favorable PR slots" (Moser, 2003, pp. 17-8). Another aspect of the electoral system is its levels of party and district magnitude, which in theory promote women's subnational representation. Both Peru and Russia are similar in that they struggle with establishing strong political systems and party identification (Moser, 2003). For Russia, "endemic party fragmentation has tended to

hinder female representation in the PR tier by lowering party magnitude," a condition which then allows men to dominate the "top slots on party lists" (Moser, 2003, p. 5). Therefore, men quickly end up occupying those positions so that subnational parties cannot select those female candidates whose names are typically found toward the bottom of party lists (Moser, 2003). Research thus shows that low party magnitude has occurred often throughout Russia's history and barred women's access to subnational office. Furthermore, political parties are typically responsible for nominating their candidates and thus have often chosen "to constrain female candidates" in the proportional representation districts of the political system (Moser, 2003, p. 6). The other half of Russia's system is single-member district, in which curiously enough, female candidates have in the past twenty years won seats at higher rates on the regional level than those candidates in PR districts (Moser, 2003). These findings suggest that women in subnational politics are not better off in PR systems and do not have the comfort of competing in districts with high party and district magnitudes. Lastly, the past decade has shown that most subnational governments across Russia can be considered as "electoral authoritarian systems" and thus do not qualify as having "fully free and fair elections" (Saikkonen, 2016, p. 438). Whereas research posits that free and fair elections support women's subnational representation, the political context in Russia suggests that some of the country's electoral structures still serve as barriers to women's representation.

It is also paramount to identify the interconnections between Russia's historical institutional legacy and women's subnational representation. Carol Nechemias (2000) describes the role that "historical continuity" plays in Russia today and reflects that "much in contemporary Russian society, including barriers to women's political participation, reflects ties with the past" (p. 199). She goes on to examine how communism "undermined respect for

women . . . by including them primarily as symbolic figures in symbolic institutions, the soviets (councils or legislatures)" (p. 214). This finding resonates and aligns with a broader observation implicated throughout this paper, one in which women have traditionally been construed as symbols rather than actual equal contributors in the political and social spheres. This national-level myth-making project also "presented women with the double burden of a profession and a domestic role as caretaker of the family and home" (Moser, 2003, p. 3), which created intense social pressure for women and helps to further contextualize their modern resistance to women's movements, feminist discourses, etc. Today, Russian society today has little familiarity with women occupying notable positions of decision-making power or influence in the public sphere. Overall, "this [Communist] legacy has produced a set of social, cultural, and economic conditions that have undermined women's ability to pursue elected office" (Moser, 2003, p. 3). This institutional legacy not only keeps women out of political positions on both the subnational and national levels, but also deters important steps from being made to improve women's representation, as detailed below in discussing the low support for quotas.

In contrast to Peru's implementation of and success with gender quotas, Russia has not implemented gender quotas on any level of governance since 1990, in part due to its communist legacy (International IDEA, n.d.). Indeed, studies indicate that right after the government dismantled the gender quota system that year, it "led to an unprecedented decline in women's representation in the Russian legislature" (International IDEA, n.d., para. 5). During the era of the Soviet Union, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) perpetuated the idea of creating an egalitarian society and initially instituted a legislative gender quota (Nechemias, 2000). This quota applied only to the subnational level, specifically in "soviets" or councils (Hesli, Jung, Reisinger, & Miller, 2001, p. 44). However, this system constructed images of

women as "symbolic figures in symbolic institutions" (Nechemias, 2000, p. 214). In effect, they were given little agency in important decision-making processes and were unable to accomplish much in their positions. The few policy arenas they had some influence in were those that were typically perceived as "compassion issues," such as caring for children, the elderly, and the poor (Nechemias, 2000, p. 201).

Broadly speaking, Eastern Europe implemented gender quotas in their respective political systems during the final years of communism in the early 1990s (Rueschemeyer, 2015). Once again, however, "this representation was largely symbolic . . . women were barely represented in the apparatus of the party and state, where real power lay" (Rueschemeyer, 2015, p. 152). Thus, descriptive representation on both the national and subnational levels was challenging to accomplish in the recent history of this region. Furthermore, this superficial inclusion of women in the political realm aligns with our observations during the times of the former Soviet Union. A dominant social belief both after communism fell and still today is that those policy concerns deemed as women's issues should not take priority until other "critical issues" are addressed, which devalues and renders irrelevant women's issues as occupying space within the political realm (Rueschemeyer, 2015, p. 156).

Application of theory to Russia: Decentralization

Some scholars have noted the sparse literature about decentralization and local politics in Russia and more broadly the post-Soviet space, even though dynamic changes have occurred in these spaces in recent decades and are thus worthy of academic attention (Chang, 2010). Because of the insufficient literature that is readily accessible on the topic, this section relies heavily on a few notable sources that focus on Russian women's representation in decentralized subnational spaces.

Dual forces of decentralization and recentralization have reflected a bitter and constantly evolving power struggle in Russia today. Between the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and Putin's rise to power in 2000, numerous steps were taken toward decentralizing the country's political realm (Zakirova, 2014), which was representative of broader processes pervading Eastern Europe (Andrews & de Vries, 2007). Efforts at decentralization aligned with the brief opening of Russia's economy and granted greater autonomy to subnational political units. However, since 2000, President Putin has embarked on a political strategy of vertical integration, which is defined as being a "hierarchical spatial organisation of power with a single chain of command extending from the federal centre . . . to the level of local government" (Golosov, Gushchina, & Kononenko, 2016, p. 511). Consequently, Russia is often seen as an example of authoritarian consolidation (Levitsky & Way, 2010). For example, the Russian government has limited the autonomy and actions of political parties, as well as mayoral and gubernatorial positions across the country (Gel'man, 2015). This national centralization strategy also resulted in the "abolition of gubernatorial elections," so that governors today are selected directly by the state (Monaghan, 2011, p. 8). When some social unrest occurred during the 2012 national elections, Putin successfully shut them down and has since proceeded to further "tighten the screws" on the freedoms and decision-making power of subnational institutions (Gel'man, 2015, p. 124). Today, the idea that "order should be associated to centralization, while disorder to decentralization" strongly characterizes the political climate on the national level (Andrews & de Vries, 2007, p. 16).

At the same time, centralization has not occurred as successfully as Putin and his political elite have imagined. Many of Russia's regions today remain untouched by the national vertical integration policies and are thus decentralized and able to exert some autonomy (Herrington,

2002). Furthermore, some studies show that decentralization diminishes the power of national political parties "by fragmenting the institutional framework of political competition" (Vergara, 2011, p. 2), a pattern that we also noticed in Peru. Despite Putin's coercion, subnational units across the country significantly vary "in terms of resources, state capacity and democratization, and their relative strength and autonomy in relation to central government" (Moscovich, 2015, p. 5). Ultimately, recentralization and decentralization reforms are in a constant power struggle, such that "recentralization moves in Russia seem to be driven mostly by a political confrontation between the central administration and the regional governments and republics" (Andrews & de Vries, 2007, p. 16). As a result, marginalized groups such as women are caught in and affected by this power struggle and ultimately are the actors who suffer the consequences of an unstable and constantly changing political system. Women's entry into the subnational political realm is especially challenging to navigate due to this uncertain and fluid environment. Statistics, such as women holding less than 5% of mayoral positions, reflect the structural challenges they face (Buckley, Garifullina, Reuter, & Shubenkova, 2014).

Keeping this fluid political context in mind, this paper finds that decentralized units across Russia have in fact served to some degree as an access point to represent female candidates and provide them the agency to engage in a spectrum of day-to-day responsibilities. In this way, women are constantly countering and re-negotiating dominant gendered power structures. At the same time, some of the decentralized structures of these subnational governments themselves pose several lasting challenges to female politicians.

Because of previous decentralization reforms, Russian subnational politicians "are subject to an increased responsibility for job creation and survival at the local level" (Sätre, 2014, p. 28). This insight suggests that new spaces are being created across decentralized

subnational units that allow local politicians to exert their own decision-making power and influence. If women accessed subnational office, then they too have an opportunity to engage in these economic and social responsibilities. Subnational units though are often faced with tackling issues of entrenched poverty within their communities—similar to issues with which Peruvian subnational governments have been tasked—and this realm of responsibility is often shifted to female local politicians in office (Sätre, 2014). Reserving this policy domain for female politicians on both the subnational and national level not surprisingly stems from the country's influential Soviet past, in which "social policy was predominantly a female responsibility" (Sätre, 2014, p. 28). In this case, it appears that Russian women are tasked with gendered work activities if they end up occupying subnational office.

Decentralized subnational units in Russia also suffer from insufficient funds, similar to Peru's case, and no funds have been allocated toward gender-related policy issues (Sätre, 2014). The ongoing issues of insufficient funds in the lower tiers of government is therefore a formidable barrier to women's ability to access political office in both Peru and Russia. Indeed, budgets can be so dismal in Russia's decentralized governments that female politicians have ended up taking from their own salaries to contribute to their work (Sätre, 2014). Furthermore, decentralized political units cannot exert as much autonomy and decision-making power as they otherwise might be able to because of the aforementioned power struggle with the national elite. Researchers have concluded, for example, that most of Russia's subnational political units hold elections that do not qualify as wholly free and fair. Consequently, "most Russian subnational cases can be classified as electoral authoritarian between 1991 and 2005," which in turn indicates that elections are dominated by local elite and reflect the "subnational (non)competitiveness" within the electoral process (Saikkonen, 2016, p. 437). As a point of comparison, Peruvian

female candidates are often pushed out of their respective decentralized political units from increased competitiveness because of the additional resources and funds said units receive from the national government (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2015; Valdés & Palacios, 1999). Yet in Russia's case, subnational electoral processes are not competitive and decentralized governments are not given adequate resources, which are dual challenges that may challenge women's ability to gain a voice in politics.

In response to dismal funding in decentralized units in Russia, subnational female politicians exercise innovative and often informal mechanisms of power and decision-making within their positions. For example, "local [female] politicians use their entrepreneurial skills to compensate for inadequate financial resources" (Sätre, 2014, p. 39). In this sense, then, Russian female politicians use creative methods to ensure that they still prompt change in their respective communities, despite the constraints they face structurally and financially. Their strategies include starting or supporting local women's councils, clubs, businesses, and trade unions (Sätre, 2014). This insight suggests that although Russian women similarly face financial restraints in decentralized spaces—which mirrors the reality for female politicians in Peru—Russian women have found alternative methods to exert political agency in their positions, which entail creating new groups or initiatives within the community. These signs of entrepreneurship are reminiscent of women's activities during the Soviet times, when they were tasked with a range of activities both inside and outside the home and thus learned special skills to help them survive and contribute to their communities. Furthermore, it is interesting that these entrepreneurial efforts are led and carried through by women; research does not mention any contribution on the part of their male counterparts, which may suggest greater agency and decision-making power on the part of women in these decentralized spaces than what initially appears. Such trends also suggest

the ability for women to re-negotiate the gendered power dynamics within decentralized spaces. Lastly, subnational female politicians' creative forms of power point to a broader trend in decentralized political spaces across Russia. That is, "due to the central government's lack of strategy in regard to local governments, regional governors and presidents of Russian republics have created their own rules in regard to municipalities and villages" (Andrews & de Vries, 2007, p. 16). In this sense, while decentralized subnational governments may not have adequate resources nor complete autonomy, they at the same time are afforded some leeway and little oversight. Indeed, one scholar mentions that "there are now new possibilities for individuals and local firms thanks to an access to resources, along with central funds for local development and social programs, from which the local level can apply for resources" (Sätre, 2014, p. 30). Decentralization has thus created entirely new yet still gendered dynamics within the political structures of these subnational governments, in turn perhaps encouraging women to run and certainly opening up possibilities for female leaders once in power to exert a range of informal political strategies.

Subnational female politicians have also developed "bargaining strategies" to request money from a variety of informal actors, including their constituents, as well as volunteering in their communities (Sätre, 2014, p. 43). Decentralization reforms have created then additional space in which female leaders use agency within their positions to support their communities despite dismal budgets. Russian women have noted that they have enhanced their social and interpersonal communication skills, as they have had to reach out to and gain the confidence of actors who can contribute funds to their subnational governments. This skillset in turn can make them more competitive candidates for future positions at least in their communities, since I earlier found that they do not typically advance to the national realm. However, because some of

these interpersonal strategies include "begging," particularly when appealing to small businesses for donations, this practice may undermine women's decision-making power, even increase local corruption, and perpetuate gendered power structures and the male power elite (Sätre, 2014, p. 43). Indeed, the "begging" practices are representative of deeply entrenched gendered discourses in Russian political processes because female politicians in Russia operate within a patriarchal system and thus must seek the help and financial support of "more prominent male entrepreneurs to provide work places and social services" (Sätre, 2014, p. 43). It also appears more common for Russian subnational female politicians to develop these informal mechanisms of power and influence in their communities, as opposed to female politicians in Peru, because of the distinct effects of decentralization across Russia.

Furthermore, Russian women face even less institutionalized mechanisms to support them in accessing office and yielding formal political power while in office; decentralization reforms have not noticeably resulted in the implementation of institutional mechanisms to promote women's subnational representation. Similar to Peru's case, decentralization reforms in Russia have not integrated "mechanisms needed for them to work" (Sätre, 2014, p. 43). In both cultural contexts, no institutional policies are in place to support women's entry in subnational office. In Russia, subnational politicians are financially constrained from allocating budget funds to support marginalized groups like women, the poor, and people with disabilities (Sätre, 2014). This financial disorganization and potential mismanagement could in turn affect the ability of female politicians to act effectively as entrepreneurs, as well as the longevity and reach of the policy projects they initiate in their governments.

Indeed, one study that discussed this multifaceted topic is notable in highlighting the uneven and potentially negative effects of decentralization on women's representation. A

regression analysis was done that measured the effects of decentralization in several countries, including Russia, and surveyed local politicians' inclination to engage their constituents and views on their autonomy within their decentralized units. This study concluded that, in contrast to countries like Sweden or Brazil where local leaders are apt to integrate their constituents in political processes and thus demonstrate the positive effects of decentralization, "in a country like Russia, however, increasing local autonomy will have a negative effect on involving societal groups. This becomes even more pronounced when we take into account intervening variables which might influence the impact of decentralization on public participation" (Andrews & de Vries, 2007, p. 21). This study further argued "that decentralization is not sensible in this country, because it diminishes the inclination among local elites to involve societal groups and citizens in the local policy making process" (Andrews & de Vries, 2007, p. 21). As pointed out above, most subnational elections are noncompetitive and controlled by the male elite establishment. In this vein, this trend in these subnational spaces "confirms the arguments by Rondinelli et al. (1983) that decentralization often serves as an instrument for achieving political objectives" (Andrews & de Vries, 2007, p. 22). This finding may narrow the access that women have in reaching subnational office, although further research on this topic is needed. Overall, this study expressed disapproval at making subnational spaces across Russia more decentralized because it actually may bar marginalized groups like women from gaining a voice in important political processes.

Conclusion

This research paper has attempted to identify which political and social conditions positively shape the descriptive representation of women across subnational units. A number of insights to help answer this question have been explored at length and will be briefly

summarized as follows, followed by some final thoughts on this research topic.

This research found that the following social conditions promote women's descriptive representation in subnational politics: active local women's movements; less traditional/patriarchal cultural and social norms; widespread diffusion; and pro-women political party ideologies. In Peru, local women's movements have become active since the 1980s, many of which have had political aims and spurred greater subnational presence of women. Traditionally sexist cultural and social norms in Peru still hinder women's subnational representation, which appears to be more common in rural areas and less so in major urban centers. This machismo is often embedded in and reinforced by religious beliefs and poverty cycles, all of which entrench Peruvian women in subordinate roles and challenge their ability to access spaces of political power. Notably, the social condition of pro-women or leftist political party ideology may not translate into more women holding subnational office in Peru, although further research to support this idea is recommended. Party ideology does not hold as much relevance as anticipated, as subnational parties across the political spectrum construct political agendas different from their national counterparts because of decentralization reforms, yet have given little policy priority to the advancement of women's rights, especially in the political realm. This trend can be partially attributed to the gendered power structures salient in subnational governments.

Comparing these social conditions to Russia, I found that women's movements appeared to be noticeably effective only when supported publicly or bolstered by female subnational politicians, which was not commonplace. In contrast to Peru's movements, Russian women's movements are apolitical in contemporary times and do not appear to significantly factor into promoting greater representation of women in subnational politics. Russian society and culture

still rest heavily on patriarchal binary gender roles for men and women, which has also challenged the existence of strong women's movements and pro-women party ideologies. Whereas in Peru, overtly machista gender norms and attitudes are becoming less widespread at least in the more economically developed urban centers, this nascent dichotomy between rural versus urban has not emerged in Russia. Lastly, similar to Peru, no subnational political party ideologies exist that prioritize women's issues in Russia. Moreover, ideology seems to be diminishing in significance and instead is being replaced by the internal interests and whims of the local male establishment. Gendered power structures in subnational politics remain a challenge to women's ability to gain a voice within the constantly changing Russian political landscape. These social conditions in Peru and Russia intertwine with the political conditions mentioned below to create a complex system of cultural and political norms, attitudes, and strategies that women must contend with and navigate in their respective cultural contexts.

This research also found that the following political conditions in theory promote women's descriptive representation in subnational politics: free and fair elections; proportional representation systems; high party and district magnitude levels; institutional historical legacy attentive toward women's issues; and subnational gender quotas, particularly those with closed lists and an institutionalized penalty system. In Peru, free and fair elections with closed-list options and PR systems facilitate women's subnational presence, but PR systems must be in tandem with mandated subnational legislative gender quotas to have the most positive effect toward women's representation. High party and district magnitude levels are also helpful components of its electoral system, but disparity in women's subnational representation still exists between rural and urban areas. Regarding Peru's institutional historical legacy, authoritarian leader Fujimori arguably made some advances in addressing women's issues during

his decade-long political regime, and women from all socioeconomic class found greater representation in the subnational political realm. This familiarity with and deliberate attention toward women's rights in the country's recent past can cautiously be said to serve as another force that has encouraged women's subnational political presence. Peru is one of few countries in the region of Latin America with municipal gender quotas, which has noticeably improved women's political visibility since 1998. While the quota system has not been successful in some regions of the world, they have been found to assist women's representation broadly across Latin America.

In comparison, I find that the effects of Russia's electoral structure differ greatly from this paper's theoretical assumptions. While PR systems are implemented in many regions of Russia, they have actually been found to not promote women's subnational representation. Parties still are not incentivized to include women on their candidate lists, which at least partially stems from deep-rooted stigmas toward women in politics developed during communist times. Moreover, the PR system has been noted as being especially ineffective within a broader authoritarian political system. Instead, nascent research shows that female candidates have fared better in plurality districts as well as single-member districts. Furthermore, Russia's history of low party and district magnitude suggests that subnational female candidates would indeed gain greater representation in regions that offer higher levels of both. The historical institutional legacy of communism in Russia remains especially salient in modern Russian society and politics, as the image and narrative built then that society is egalitarian serves today as an often intangible but forceful barrier to supporting and normalizing women's subnational representation. Women's positionality as merely symbols in the local political positions they held during communist times provides another layer of understanding to women's low

representation in subnational politics today, as these powerless positions erased any agency they could exert in making important political decisions. Lastly, Russia has not implemented subnational nor national gender quotas since 1990, and public initiatives to institute them have since been rare. While women's subnational representation was indeed greater under the Communist-instituted gender quota, it appears that the absence of them in contemporary times remains a barrier to more egalitarian political representation and processes.

Turning now toward decentralization, effects of decentralization may include stronger subnational governance, citizen participation, less corruption, and an entryway through which marginalized groups may gain political voice. At the same time, the research literature has shown that decentralization reforms result in heightened competitiveness among candidates and subsequently may serve as a vehicle that pushes women out of political office. Furthermore, I found that the coexistence of decentralization and democracy is multifaceted and will not inevitably flourish, especially in non-Western countries. Instead, while these dual forces may promote women's representation in Western established democracies, the case studies of Peru and Russia suggest that the implementation of decentralization reforms in vastly different cultural contexts yield both positive and negative conditions that both promote and exclude women in subnational office. These conditions are also contingent on the existing gendered political and power dynamics of the cultural context, as well as broader structural and social forces at play.

Decentralization in Peru has overall promoted female candidates occupying specifically more subnational legislative positions (in comparison to mayoral ones), which can be interpreted as a positive effect, as this insight symbolizes an access point in which women may be better able to influence policy and community-level decisions. At the same time, many decentralized

political structures are not given sufficient budgetary resources to allocate toward supporting women in subnational electoral races; therefore, while there is a national priority given toward achieving gender equality in the country, decentralized governments do not have adequate funding available to create projects and communitywide initiatives to advance women's rights and opportunities. Furthermore, gubernatorial and mayoral positions specifically have become noticeably competitive because of the additional resources they alone receive. Consequently, male elite candidates have pushed out female candidates in subnational electoral races. Institutional mechanisms are also noticeably absent within decentralized political structures to leverage female candidacy or assist in their political roles once they gain office.

In comparison, decentralization in Russia is in constant tension with an overarching state strategy of centralization, which results in some unintended effects for female candidates within decentralized subnational governments. This ongoing power struggle underscores the constantly changing political landscape in modern Russia, which in turn challenges researchers to conceptualize how to interpret the complex patterns and conditions that influence female's representation. Interestingly, decentralized government units are often given autonomy in the responsibilities they decide to take on, which translates into female candidates being faced with (and perhaps incentivized by) a spectrum of political activities that transcend the realm of formal power. Their heightened responsibilities ultimately ensure the "survival" of the local communities, which underscores the breadth of political, social, and economic issues and initiatives with which subnational politicians engage (Sätre, 2014, p. 28). It has also been shown that Russian decentralized spaces are similarly given scarce funding, none of which is allocated toward advancing women's rights or opportunities. Furthermore, decentralization has actually not made Russia's subnational electoral processes more competitive, in contrast to Peru's

mayoral and gubernatorial elections, yet are still controlled by the local male political elite. In this vein, gendered power dynamics are especially salient in subnational political spaces, perhaps even more so than national spaces. Perhaps most notably, decentralization reforms have created a new and unfamiliar political landscape in which female candidates are forced to navigate and negotiate. As a result, they have been given the agency to develop new and often informal mechanisms of decision-making and influence within their communities. These examples showcase perhaps a new wave of subnational female leadership, in which their daily work extends far beyond the traditional work done by subnational political actors. At the same time, women vying for office are still challenged by local male elite who control the election processes. Furthermore, once in office, women must negotiate and cooperate with male-dominated community actors and businesses in their political responsibilities, which may perpetuate the gendered power hierarchy within the subnational political realm. Similar to Peru, institutional mechanisms are not in place in Russia to support women's subnational candidacy or time in office. Lastly, some scholars suggest that decentralization will not promote the inclusion of marginalized groups in Russia largely because of the ruling male political elite, who do not feel obligated to share the realm of resources and responsibilities that are passed over to them (Andrews & de Vries, 2007). Few studies have gathered these diverse effects of Russia's decentralization process on marginalized social groups' representation on the subnational level, which highlights the relevance of this research paper and importance of future studies on this topic.

It is useful to conclude with how the case studies of Peru and Russia and importance of women's descriptive representation compare to a broader universe of cases. A notable study focused on women across sub-Saharan Africa, for example, found that greater descriptive

representation of women in national political office translated into greater women's political participation on the local level (Barnes & Burchard, 2012). Earlier in this paper, I suggested that this connection between national and subnational representation of women was nowhere near as noticeable in Russia as it may be in Peru. Furthermore, research tracing the effects of decentralization reforms similarly conclude that they have had divergent and unintended consequences in non-Western or lesser developed countries. For example, while decentralization in South Korea has granted subnational political units greater agency in decision-making and influence, their budgets remain dismally low (Chang, 2010) and extensive institutional mechanisms to support female candidacy or time in office may be absent. Another report on decentralization's effects on women in Uganda revealed that while their descriptive representation in subnational office increased post reforms, female politicians were "ill equipped to utilize such opportunities [in office] due to cultural and societal impediments," including gendered political institutions and local male elite occupying more prestigious positions of power (International Development, n.d., slide 6). We can see that the broader empirical trends noted in this paper then may resonate in other diverse cultural contexts. In particular, conclusions drawn by several agencies within the United Nations directly align with this paper's findings: "Decentralization can reinforce elite power, including discrimination against women" and "fails to address . . . other structural divisions and inequalities" (International Knowledge, 2008, p. 2).

This paper did not present the international context as a central role, as international-level discourses and initiatives toward garnering women's representation may not strongly translate to or affect the subnational level. One factor to help explain this phenomenon may be that international policymaking and guidelines could reflect bias or attention on promoting gender equality at the national-level and thus focus and invest less attention on the subnational social

and political realms. Another factor often cited is that the presence of decentralization processes in fact end up "negating governments' global commitments and obligations," such as CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action (International Knowledge, 2008, p. 1). At the same time, studies find that "the support of international agencies and donors is a key contribution to . . . subnational governments . . . in implementing these actions [toward gender equality] in many countries" (International Knowledge, 2008, p. 3). This latter observation could be especially important in regards to promoting women's political representation within Peru and Russia, and future research could shed light on the strength of the international community's presence and its efforts toward furthering gender equality within these two cultural contexts. This research paper only briefly mentioned the international dimension to maintain focus on the gendered dynamics and structures of subnational actors; this focus yields an integrated analysis and helped to refine an applicable framework for comparative analysis. However, the role of international actors and organizations does warrant future reference as it may provide an even more holistic lens in discussing women's subnational representation.

This research overall presents a comparative case analysis on a topic that is relevant in contemporary gender studies and comparative politics, revealing helpful insights through building a theoretical framework and then applying it to examine the political and social landscapes of Peru and Russia. While a considerable amount of research has been done on subnational governance and decentralization in these two countries separately, less attention has been placed on identifying the multifaceted effects of these political reforms and interactions with existing sociopolitical forces on marginalized groups such as women. These findings contribute to ongoing discussions about methods for improved subnational governance and the civic engagement of women. This research also highlights the uneven and fluid effects produced

by the intersection of political and social forces with a country's political reforms and processes. The ways in which these elements interconnect greatly differ in and are highly contingent on each cultural context. Decentralization reforms are particularly variable, as they can serve as an outright obstacle to women's subnational representation amidst existing male political elite circles and broader structural gendered power structures. The unanticipated consequences of decentralization reforms provide a cautionary tale for advocates and government leaders. Deeper understanding of the intersecting dynamics of political, social, and cultural conditions clearly are important to advancing effective strategies to increase women's political representation in the subnational realm.

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