

## Resisting and Accommodating Institutional Change: Provisional Commissions, *Laranjas*, and Gendered Candidate Selection in Brazilian Legislative Elections

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**Abstract:** Brazil's 1995 *Lei de Cotas*, first implemented in national legislative elections in 1998, has been notoriously ineffective. Characterized as a "lei que não pega," or law on paper only, even efforts to reform the quota in 2009 and 2015 have come up empty handed (Wylie and dos Santos 2016). Five electoral cycles since the quota's initial implementation, with two of those elections held after the 2009 "mini-reform," just 9.9% of the 513 members of Brazil's Chamber of Deputies are women. This paper situates the failure of Brazil's quota law to enhance women's representation within the literature on informal institutions. The approach illustrates how quota resistance, rooted in party leaders' drive to preserve their own power (Gatto 2016), has persisted in the wake of its implementation and reform. We employ candidate-level electoral data, state-level party characteristics, and an original survey with legislative candidates (failed and successful), to evaluate the reactions of Brazil's more than 600 state party organizations to the quota and its reforms, and assess the extent and patterns of their subversion of quota provisions. Following Helmke and Levitsky (2004, 2006) and Waylen (2017), we identify specific informal institutions—including the use of provisional commissions to minimize oversight over candidate selection (Guarnieri 2011) and female sacrificial lambs and phantom candidates ("*laranjas*") (Wylie, Marcelino, and dos Santos 2015)—and demonstrate how they interact with formal institutions in *competing* or *accommodating* ways. From 1995-2009, competing informal institutions facilitated quota neglect by most state party organizations. Since the 2009 mini-reform, accommodating informal institutions have dominated candidate selection processes of many state party organizations, allowing them to comply with the letter of the law without altering the distribution of power. We discuss the efforts in 2015 and 2017 to implement reserved seats for women, and consider prospects for enhancing quota effectiveness in Brazil and beyond.