Selecting Women, Electing Women is a groundbreaking book that examines how the rules for candidate selection affect women’s political representation in Latin America. Focusing particularly on Chile and Mexico, Magda Hinojosa presents counterintuitive assumptions about factors that promote the election of women. She argues that primaries—which are regularly thought of as the most democratic process for choosing candidates—actually produce fewer female nominees than centralized and seemingly exclusionary candidate selection procedures. Hinojosa astutely points out the role of candidate selection processes in explaining variation in women’s representation that exists both across and within political parties. Selecting Women, Electing Women makes critical inroads to the study of gender and politics, candidate selection, and Latin American politics.
The number of women elected to Latin American legislatures has grown significantly over the past thirty years. This increase in the number of women elected to national office is due, in large part, to gender-friendly electoral rules such as gender quotas and proportional electoral systems, and it has, in turn, fostered constituent support for representative democracy. Still, this book argues that women are gaining political voice and bringing women’s issues to state agendas, but they are not gaining political power. Ultimately, this book communicates the complex and often incomplete nature of women’s political representation in Latin America. Excerpt. Since the democratic transitions of the 1980s, women have gained unprecedented access to governments in Latin America. The use of all-women shortlists (AWS) is an affirmative action practice intended to increase the proportion of female Members of Parliament (MPs) in the United Kingdom, allowing only women to stand in particular constituencies for a particular political party. Only the Labour Party and Liberal Democrats currently use this practice. Political parties in other countries, such as South Korea and Latin American countries have used practices analogous to AWS, especially in relation to government sex quotas.