

A JUDICIAL GLASS CEILING?  
THE SELECTION OF BUENOS AIRES FEDERAL AND STATE JUDGES

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper I explore the role of gender in the procedures for the selection of judges to Buenos Aires federal and state courts established in the 1994 reform of the Argentine Constitution. I argue that institutional constraints in the design and operation of the selection mechanism coupled with background conditions of court employment and the private practice of law influence women's comparatively greater self-exclusion from the selection process and impact the gender of the appointments. This, in turn, results in the reproduction of existing patterns of vertical and horizontal sex-segregation in the Buenos Aires courts.

The paper is organized as follows. Part I discusses normative considerations compelling enquiries about the situation of women in the courts and underscoring the case for greater female participation in the bench. Part II presents findings resulting from: (a) the review of existing research, (b) the profiles of all judicial appointments to the Buenos Aires federal and state benches since the inception of the new selection system, and (c) data on female and male candidates' participation and relative performance in 12 randomly selected contests organized to cover 25 vacancies. Part III discusses the findings and suggests possible explanatory accounts. A conclusion with proposals for future research and current reform debates follows.

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