

## **The Impact of Gender Quotas: A Research Agenda**

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## **The Impact of Gender Quotas: A Research Agenda**

The past two decades have witnessed unprecedented gains in women's access to elected office. This trend has occurred across all major regions of the world, leading to dramatic increases in the percentage of women in parliament in countries as diverse as Rwanda, Sweden, Argentina, and Nepal. A major reason for these shifts has been the adoption of gender quota policies aimed at increasing the proportion of female candidates to political office. While they take diverse forms, such measures now exist in more than 100 countries, with the overwhelming majority appearing in just the last 15 years (Krook 2009). Gender quotas are thus both a recent and a global political phenomenon. In addition to these intriguing empirical patterns, these developments raise a host of important theoretical questions. Previous work on quotas has focused primarily on explaining why quotas are adopted and why they have had varied effects on the numbers of women elected. The former requires closer examination because it seems to contradict expectations about gender norms and self-interest in politics. In many cultures, men are typically associated with the public sphere and women with the private sphere. As a result, political parties and national legislatures around the world are generally male-dominated. The adoption of gender quotas thus poses two interrelated challenges to politics-as-usual by attempting to 're-gender' the public sphere and – perhaps more meaningfully for individual male politicians – replace some male office-holders with female ones (Murray, Krook, and Opello 2009; Sgier 2004). At the same time, despite their rapid diffusion, not all quota policies have resulted in uniform increases in the numbers of women elected. A second line of research therefore seeks to account for variations in quota effectiveness by pointing to factors like policy design, institutional context, and political will (Htun and Jones 2002; Matland 2006; cf. Krook 2009).

These questions remain important as researchers seek to make sense of the origins and impact of these policies, given that they constitute the widest reaching electoral reforms of recent years. Yet, even a cursory look at quota campaigns around the world reveals that these measures are not simply attached to concerns to increase the numbers of women in elected office. Arguing their case for gender quotas, advocates have suggested that such measures will increase diversity among the types of women elected, raise attention to women's issues in policy-making processes, and inspire female voters to get more politically involved. The empirical validity of these claims,

however, has not yet been systematically addressed. One means of categorizing these anticipated effects is in terms of three facets of political representation: *descriptive representation*, or the basic attributes of those elected; *substantive representation*, or attention to group interests in policy-making; and *symbolic representation*, or the cultural meanings and ramifications of the representative process (cf. Pitkin 1967; Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005). Studies of women in politics provide a wealth of insights into how gender dynamics play out in relation to these three facets of representation. This literature can serve as a basis for theorizing how the increased presence of women may alter existing patterns of representation. However, simply transferring the insights generated by this work overlooks the possibility that quotas may interfere with the dynamics that normally operate between various forms of representation (cf. Franceschet and Krook 2008). In other words, the *means* by which women enter politics may influence *how, why, and to what extent* their presence affects different types of representative processes.

This paper aims to take some first steps towards bridging the gap between research on gender quotas and the literature on political representation. In so doing, it presents opportunities to inform a series of ongoing debates in the broader field of comparative politics. The leverage of this project hinges on developing more precise definitions of the three dimensions of political representation. In this study, descriptive representation refers to the numbers, attributes, and qualities of legislators; substantive representation captures the proposal and content of public policies; and symbolic representation denotes shifts in the attitudes and behaviors of constituents in relation to the political sphere. Consequently, the impact of quotas may vary in terms of their effects on the numbers and features of women elected, patterns in the initiation and passage of legislation on women's issues, and public perceptions regarding women in politics and political engagement of female voters. Closer examination of how these trends play out in various contexts across the globe offers insights as to whether or not quotas achieve the ends anticipated by their advocates. At the same time, it also links a series of otherwise disparate literatures in political science by considering how electoral reform may affect candidate recruitment and preparedness, dynamics of policy-making, and public opinion and mass mobilization. Viewed more broadly, such an investigation also begins to answer larger political concerns regarding whether quotas are

a step forward for democracy and for women, or alternatively, constitute a more insidious means for perpetuating existing patterns of domination and inequality.

The paper begins by presenting an overview of quota policies around the world, noting similarities and differences in the design of quota policies, paths to quota adoption, and trends in quota implementation. The second section describes the main findings of the existing literature on women's political representation, discussing major theories and findings regarding women's descriptive, substantive, and symbolic representation. Putting these two topics together, the third section then turns to the effects of quotas on these three dimensions of political representation. It reviews some of the preliminary evidence garnered from individual case studies in terms of how quotas influence the attributes of the women elected, the policy actions of female legislators, and constituent responses to female newcomers. Building on this work, the fourth section elaborates a conceptual framework for analyzing quota impact. It presents some basic guidelines for theorizing and operationalizing the ways in which quotas may affect dynamics of political representation. It argues that to go beyond numbers, scholars should focus on how quotas influence: (1) the *kinds of women* elected, in terms of how features like their age, education, occupation, degree of political experience, and family connections differ from men and from women elected without the help of quotas; (2) the *form* and *content* of policy-making, with regard to how the introduction of quotas alters the types of policies proposed and passed, paying special attention to the behavior and priorities of women elected through quotas; and (3) *public attitudes* towards women in politics and trends in the *political engagement* of female constituents, with an eye to examining how quotas break down traditional associations between men and the public sphere. Taken together, these possibilities suggest a rich and wide-ranging agenda for future research on gender quotas and political representation.

### **Gender Quotas: Global Patterns**

The diffusion of gender quotas to diverse contexts around the globe has met with intense interest among feminist scholars, leading the literature on these measures to become one of the fastest-growing areas of research on women and politics. This work has generated a variety of typologies for classifying quotas, but most scholars recognize three basic kinds: reserved seats,

party quotas, and legislative quotas (Krook 2009; Norris 2004). Some exclude reserved seats, however, on the grounds that these provisions do not influence candidate nomination processes, but rather make specific guarantees as to who may accede to political office (Dahlerup 2006a). Others divide party quotas into two additional types: aspirant quotas, which affect pre-selection processes by establishing that only women may be considered as nominees, and candidate quotas, which require that parties select a particular proportion of women among their final lists of candidates (Matland 2006). Still others draw distinctions between various kinds of legislative quotas, separating out those quotas instituted through changes to the electoral law from those secured through constitutional reforms (Dahlerup 2007). Despite these various possibilities, this paper retains a focus on reserved seats, party quotas, and legislative quotas, based on the fact that these policies share similar concerns to increase the numbers of women elected to political office.

#### *Quota Policies*

Quotas vary in terms of the countries in which they appear, the timing of their adoption, and the ways in which they attempt to alter candidate selection processes. *Reserved seats* appear in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East (Krook 2004). They first emerged in the 1930s and were the main type of quota adopted through the 1970s. Since the year 2000, however, they have been passed increasingly in countries that otherwise have low numbers of women in politics. Reserved seats are typically established through reforms to constitutions, and occasionally electoral laws, which create special electoral rolls for women, designate separate districts for female candidates, or distribute seats for women to parties based on their proportion of the popular vote. While they mandate a minimum number of female legislators, reserved seats often provide for low levels of female representation, usually between 1 percent and 10 percent of all elected representatives. However, since 2000, several countries have instituted much larger provisions of 30 percent. In some cases, reserved seats apply to single-member districts in which only women may run for election (Nanivadekar 2006). In others, they are allocated in multi-member districts to the designated number of women that win the most votes (Norris 2007). In yet others, women are selected to these seats weeks after the general elections by an electoral college (Tripp 2006).

*Party quotas* are the most common type of quota. They were first adopted in the early 1970s by a small number of socialist and social democratic parties in Western Europe. Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, however, they began to appear in a diverse array of political parties in all regions of the world. In some countries, they exist alongside the presence of other types of quotas to promote women's representation (Meier 2004; Araújo and García Quesada 2006). At their most basic, party quotas are measures adopted voluntarily by individual parties that commit the party to aim for a certain proportion of women among its candidates to political office, usually between 25 percent and 50 percent. However, the particular phrasing of this requirement varies: some policies identify women as the group to be promoted by the quota (Durrieu 1999; Goetz and Hassim 2003; Valiente 2005), while others set out a more gender-neutral formulation (Freidenvall, Dahlerup, and Skjeie 2006; Guadagnini 2005). Party quotas govern the composition of party lists in countries with proportional representation electoral systems. In countries with majoritarian arrangements, they are directed at a collection of single-member districts (Campbell, Childs, and Lovenduski 2006; Opello 2006; Russell 2005).

*Legislative quotas*, finally, tend to be found in developing countries, especially Latin America, and post-conflict societies, primarily in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeastern Europe. This pattern can be explained in part by the fact that legislative quotas are the newest kind of quota policy, appearing first only in the 1990s, when the issue of women's representation reached the agenda of many international and non-governmental organizations (Krook 2006b). Enacted through reforms to electoral laws and sometimes constitutions, legislative quotas are mandatory provisions that apply to all parties. They generally call for women to form between 25 percent and 50 percent of all candidates. In most instances, the language is gender-neutral, speaking of women and men together or making reference to the 'underrepresented sex.' Yet, these measures vary in terms of how strictly their goals are articulated: some speak vaguely about 'facilitating access' (Giraud and Jensen 2001), while others offer concrete guidelines regarding the selection and placement of female candidates (Jones 2004; Meier 2005). Like party quotas, legislative quotas are implemented in different ways depending on the electoral system, applying to party lists (Meier 2004) or a group of single-member districts (Murray 2004). However, given

their status as law, a distinctive feature of these measures is that they may contain sanctions for non-compliance and be subject to oversight from external bodies (Baldez 2004; Jones 1998).

### *Quota Adoption*

The adoption of quotas is puzzling on a number of grounds, but especially from a lens focused on political elites. Because the percentage of women identified in these policies is often significantly higher than the existing proportion of women in political office, implementing these policies to their fullest extent requires, by definition, a reduction in the number of men. As such, many of the same men voting for these reforms would lose their positions as a result. Scholars have offered four main explanations as to why elites have passed quota provisions, often quickly and with substantial margins of support. The first is that women mobilize for quotas, usually when women's groups come to realize that quotas are an effective, and perhaps the only, means for increasing women's representation. These women may include women's organizations inside political parties, women's movements in civil society, women's groups in other countries, and even individual women close to powerful men (Bruhn 2003; Kittilson 2006). In these instances, women pursue quotas for both normative and pragmatic reasons. They believe that there should be more women in politics in order to achieve justice, promote women's interests, and make use of women's resources for the good of society (Phillips 1995). However, absent any 'natural' trend towards change, they acknowledge that this is likely to be achieved only through specific, targeted actions to promote female candidates (cf. Krook 2006a).

A second account is that political elites adopt quotas for strategic reasons, generally related to competition with other parties. Various case studies suggest, for example, that party elites often adopt quotas when one of their rivals adopts them (Caul 2001; Meier 2004). This concern may be heightened if the party is seeking to overcome a long period in opposition or a dramatic decrease in popularity. In other contexts, elites view quotas as a way to demonstrate a degree of commitment to women without actually altering existing patterns of inequality (Htun and Jones 2002; Mossuz-Lavau 1998). In many Latin American cases, for instance, 30 percent quota laws were adopted but resulted in a wide range of outcomes, including a *decrease* in the numbers of women elected to the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies. Alternatively, elites treat quotas

as a means to promote other ends, like maintaining control over rivals within or outside the party. In Bangladesh, reserved seats have been used in the bargaining processes following elections as a means to secure coalition partners (Chowdhury 2002). If these motives are correct, the adoption of quotas may be less about empowering women in politics and more about how quotas fit in, perhaps serendipitously, with various other struggles among political elites.

A third possibility is that quotas are adopted when they mesh with existing or emerging notions of equality and representation. For example, left-wing parties are generally more open to measures such as quotas because these match with their more general goals of social equality (Hassim 2002; Opello 2006). In other countries, gender quotas may be viewed as an extension of guarantees given to other groups based on linguistic, religious, racial, and other cleavages (cf. Inhetween 1999). In Belgium, for example, quotas for women have followed the adoption of reserved seats for linguistic groups (Meier 2000). Finally, many quotas emerge during periods of democratic transition, when quotas are seen as a way to establish the legitimacy of the new political system, as has also been the case in many post-conflict societies (Bauer and Britton 2006). As such, quotas may 'fit' with features of the political context, rather than reflect principled concerns to empower women or pragmatic strategies to win or maintain power.

A fourth explanation is that quotas are supported by international norms and spread through transnational sharing. Over the last ten years, a variety of international organizations – including the United Nations, the Socialist International, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Commonwealth, the African Union, the Southern African Development Community, and the Organization of American States – have issued declarations recommending that all member-states aim for 30 percent women in all political bodies. In some cases, international actors are directly involved in quota adoption, either by directly applying quotas or by compelling national leaders to do so themselves (Corrin 2001; Norris 2007). In others, international events provide new sources of leverage in national debates, shifting the balance in favor of local and transnational actors pressing for quota adoption (Araújo and García Quesada 2006; Bauer and Britton 2006). In still others, women's groups and transnational non-governmental organizations share information on quota strategies across national borders (Lubertino Beltrán 1992; Russell 2005; cf. Krook 2006b).

### *Quota Implementation*

As a result of these various processes, quotas have now been adopted in all major regions and have a broad range of institutional, social, economic, and cultural characteristics. Yet, the mere advent of gender quotas has not resulted in uniform increases in the percentage of women in parliament worldwide. Rather, some countries have witnessed dramatic increases following the adoption of new quota regulations (Bauer and Britton 2006; Kittilson 2006; Nanivadekar 2006), while others have seen more modest changes (Murray 2004; Siregar 2006) or even setbacks (Htun 2002; Verge 2008) in the numbers of women elected. Pinpointing why some quotas are more effective than others is a complicated task: cross-national variations are the combined result of quotas, where these are present, and other factors that were at work before quotas were established. As a result, quotas do not simply lead to gains proportional to the quota policy, but also interact in various ways with features of the broader political context (Krook 2009).

Three broad reasons have been offered to untangle these effects. The first links cross-national variations to the details of individual quota measures. Although reserved seats generally produce small changes in the numbers of women elected, some claim that party quotas are more effective than other types of quotas because they are voluntary measures, adopted from concerns about electoral advantage. Others insist that legislative quotas have more force because they bind all parties, not simply those who choose to adopt quotas, and are enforced by state bureaucracies and the courts, rather than party leaders (Jones 1998; Norris 2007). Yet, the impact of particular policies also stem from their wording (Htun 2002), requirements (Chama 2001; Meier 2004), sanctions (Murray 2004; Schmidt and Saunders 2004), and perceived legitimacy (Yoon 2001), all of which may have intended and unintended effects. In France, for instance, financial penalties associated with the 50 percent quota law create distinct incentives for parties of different sizes: larger parties tend to ignore the requirements, while smaller parties are more likely to comply, for the simple reason that the latter are under greater pressure than the former to maximize the amount of state funding they receive (Murray 2007).

A second explanation relates to the 'fit' between quota measures and other political institutions. For example, quotas often have the greatest impact in countries with proportional representation (PR) electoral systems with closed party lists and high district magnitudes (Caul

1999; Htun and Jones 2002). In Sweden, for example, multiple seats are available in each constituency and candidates are elected from lists put forward by political parties. In contrast, it is more difficult to apply quotas where only one seat is available per district, unless the quota entails reserved seats, as in Tanzania. Quotas also tend to improve women's representation in countries where several parties co-exist and larger parties respond to policy innovations initiated by smaller parties, as well as in parties with left-wing ideologies where the party leadership is better able to enforce party or national regulations (Davidson-Schmich 2006; Kittilson 2006). Further, quotas are often more successful in countries where the political culture emphasizes sexual difference and group representation, and less successful where it stresses sexual equality and individual representation (Inhetveen 1999; Meier 2000). Indeed, in some countries quotas have been challenged as a violation of constitutional principles of equality, as was the case in Italy and the UK in the 1990s and Mexico and Spain in the 2000s.

A third account points to the role of various actors vis-à-vis quota implementation. Party elites, who are often overwhelmingly male, are the group most directly responsible for variations in quota impact, since the effective application of quotas largely hinges around elites' willingness to recruit female candidates. In a large number of cases, elites take various steps to mitigate quota impact, ranging from passive refusal to enforce quotas to more active measures – including large-scale electoral fraud – to subvert their intended effects (Araújo 2003; Costa Benavides 2003). Elites in Bolivia, for example, went so far as to change male names in female ones as a means to circumvent the 30 percent quota law. However, other actors may play a direct or indirect role in enforcing quota provisions, including women's organizations inside and outside political parties (Durrieu 1999; Sainsbury 1993), national and international courts (Chama 2001; Jones 2004), and ordinary citizens (Baldez 2004; Kolinsky 1991), all of whom may monitor party compliance with quota measures in ways that lead elites to ignore or honor, and possibly even exceed, quota requirements.

### **Women and Representation: Concepts and Trends**

Questions of political representation are a core focus of research on gender and politics. This literature explores why there are so few women elected to political office, whether women in

politics represent 'women' as a group, and how the presence or absence of women in politics affects voter perceptions and opinions. The first topic has received by far the most attention in comparative work on women's political representation, stemming at least in part from the fact that it is relatively straightforward to count the numbers of women in national legislatures and then to compare these percentages across countries. However, the second has been the focus of a large body of single case studies and a growing number of comparative analyses. The fact that most focus on single countries is not surprising: monitoring the effects of women's presence requires intimate knowledge of the dynamics behind policy-making processes in order to gauge how women might be able to intervene, as well as whether or not they do, to promote women's concerns in the formulation of public policies. Comparative studies of the third topic, in contrast, are virtually non-existent, due to some extent to the fact that scholars disagree in their definitions and symbolic effects are the least tangible of all three aspects of political representation.

#### *Descriptive Representation*

Efforts to understand women's numerical under-representation have typically been viewed through the lens of cross-national variations in women's access to political office. Scholars find that the percentage of women in national parliaments tends to be higher in countries with PR electoral systems than those with majoritarian electoral arrangements (McAllister and Studlar 2002). These systems often have higher district magnitudes, which open the way for women to be included as the total number of seats increases (Welch and Studlar 1990), and closed party lists, which enable parties to place women in electable positions on party slates (Caul 1999). PR is also associated with more effective implementation of gender quota policies (Tremblay 2008; Tripp and Kang 2008). Further, many studies observe strong correlations with women's overall rates of education and labor force participation (McDonagh 2002; Rosenbluth, Salmond, and Thies 2006), as well as levels of national development (Matland 1998), whose effects are attributed to modernization processes that help women move into higher social and economic roles that lead to greater influence in politics. There also appear to be close connections with cultural attitudes towards equality, as the number of women in politics is typically higher in Protestant countries

(Kaiser 2001) and in countries where citizens are more open to women in leadership positions (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Paxton and Kunovich 2003).

Despite the general nature of these conclusions, however, closer examination reveals that most of these results derive from studies of advanced Western democracies. Although some work confirms these findings in non-Western cases (Paxton 1997; Yoon 2004), other studies discover that many of these factors play little or no role in developing countries (Matland 1998). Further, most research gauges the causal impact of variables at single moments in time. Case studies nuance and help explain some of these patterns, revealing for example how features of electoral systems influence women's strategies, as well as elite reactions, concerning the nomination of female candidates. This explains why PR generally provides greater opportunities for women, even though women's descriptive representation has increased in some cases without a change in the electoral system (Sainsbury 1993), while it has remained relatively stable in others even as the electoral system has undergone reform (Beckwith 1992). Case studies often confirm the link with indicators of women's status (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994), but challenge findings regarding development, noting that many developed countries have low numbers of women in parliament, while some developing countries have seen dramatic increases in recent years (Goetz and Hassim 2003). Similarly, egalitarian political cultures do appear to favor women's access to political office (Bystydzienski 1995). However, in some instances, women assume prominent political positions in countries with strongly patriarchal religious and cultural norms, usually as a result of family connections or as a form of political patronage by powerful male leaders.

### *Substantive Representation*

Research on gender and policy-making primarily seeks to understand the degree to which women seek, and are able, to promote women's issues once they are elected to political office. A key concern is to determine whether or not women 'make a difference,' following the normative arguments for women's increased presence which often create expectations that women will 'do politics' differently than men (Phillips 1995; Young 2000). Demonstrating these effects, however, is much less straightforward. While scholars often detect distinct policy priorities among male and female legislators (Barrett 1995; Thomas 1991), they also find that these differences do not

always translate into policy gains for women as a group. Some argue that this stems from the fact that women constitute only a small minority among elected officials, anticipating that as women's numbers increase past a 'critical mass,' attention to women's policy concerns will grow (Childs and Krook 2008). The rationale is that as women become more numerous in legislative chambers, they will be increasingly able to form strategic coalitions with one another in order to promote legislation related to women's interests (Thomas 1994). However, four other scenarios are also possible: a rise in the number of women may influence men's behavior in a feminist direction, causing both male and female legislators to pay more attention to women's issues (Bratton 2005); the increased presence of women may provoke a backlash among male legislators, who may employ a range of tactics to obstruct women's policy initiatives (Hawkesworth 2003); a lower proportion of women may be more effective than a higher number, because female legislators may be able to specialize in women's concerns without appearing to undermine male domination (Crowley 2004); and a rise in the number of women may result in the election of an increasingly more diverse group who may or may not be interested in pursuing women's issues (Carroll 2001).

To explain these patterns, scholars identify various factors that might limit or enhance opportunities for women to translate policy preferences into legislative initiatives on behalf of women as a group. Many point to institutional rules and norms that compel women to conform to existing masculine legislative practices in ways that undermine their ability to integrate women's perspectives into public policy-making, as well as certain institutional innovations, like women's caucuses, that support a gendered lens (Reingold 2000). Party affiliation and ideology also play a crucial role. Mechanisms of candidate selection often determine what kinds of women are elected, while pressures for party discipline typically shape the policy positions they are likely to take once they accede to political office (Cowley and Childs 2003), in addition to the fact that some party ideologies offer greater or lesser opportunities for women to pursue feminist policy concerns (Beckwith and Cowell-Meyers 2007). At the same time, the possibility to achieve gains for women depends closely on features of the policy-making process, which influence how and when women's issues reach the legislative agenda, as well as their ultimate prospects for being passed into law (Franceschet 2008). Female legislators tend to differ most from men when it comes to setting the legislative agenda and proposing new bills that address issues of concern to women

(Childs 2004; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008), although male legislators often later vote for these bills at similar rates as women (Tamerius 1995). These dynamics may go far in explaining why higher proportions of women may be associated with women-friendly policy outcomes (Kittilson 2008; Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005).

### *Symbolic Representation*

Attempts to discern how women's presence affects constituent perceptions and opinions are less common in the literature on women's political representation. One approach assesses symbolic effects by examining how women's presence affects the perceived legitimacy of elected bodies (Childs 2004; Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005). Another explores how it alters voters' beliefs about the nature of politics as a 'male' domain (High-Pippert and Comer 1998). Together, these definitions capture the more diffuse cultural meanings of political representation. Viewed as a whole, current research offers mixed results with regard to the symbolic role or importance of female legislators. Some scholars find that male and female respondents believe that government is more democratic when more women are present (Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005). In contrast, others report that women represented by women were generally more positive about their representatives, but this did not lead them to be more positive about politics in general (Lawless 2004). Similarly, many authors document shifts in the attitudes of voters following the election of more women to political office, arguing that the inclusion of women sends important signals to female citizens that lead them to become more politically involved, or at least, to feel more politically efficacious (Childs 2004; High-Pippert and Comer 1998). Yet, others find that the presence of women appears to have only weak effects on trends in women's political engagement (Karp and Banducci 2008).

### **Quotas and Representation: Initial Evidence**

This rich and varied literature provides a starting point for exploring how quotas may affect women's political representation. However, sustained controversies over gender quotas in many countries suggest that a direct application of insights generated by non-quota cases may be misguided. More specifically, the need to find a greater number of women may lead to the election

of women with profiles distinct from those of male representatives, as well as from women elected prior to the quota policy. While quotas may facilitate political renewal, and thereby improve the caliber of candidates, beliefs that they undermine 'merit' as a criteria of candidate selection lead to the expectation that the women who benefit from quotas may be less 'qualified' than their non-quota counterparts. Similarly, being elected through quotas may have contradictory effects on the perceived need among 'quota women' to represent women's interests in policy-making. The way they achieved office may lead them to feel a particular obligation to speak on behalf of women as a group. Alternatively, these women may seek to avoid the stigma of quotas by disavowing women's issues entirely. The use of quotas, finally, may signal greater inclusion in the polity by legitimizing women's political presence, thereby challenging traditional stereotypes regarding women's roles. On the other hand, negative media attention towards quota women may undermine beliefs about their performance, as well as dissuade other women from coming forward as candidates. While all of these claims are subject to empirical investigation, these possibilities indicate that quotas alter the stakes of women's political presence, with a range of implications for women's representation.

#### *Quotas and Descriptive Representation*

The first wave of research on gender quotas offers numerous insights on the effects of quotas on women's descriptive representation. The vast majority, however, relate exclusively to their impact on the absolute numbers of women elected. In addition to the mixed findings of case studies, large-*n* analyses of quota impact produce variable results: while some find that quotas are not statistically significant (Tremblay 2007), others observe that quotas – together with the electoral system – are among the most important factors explaining cross-national variations (Tripp and Kang 2008; Yoon 2004). These changing results may stem from the fact that many new quota policies involve efforts to 'fast track' women's representation, leading to overnight changes in the proportions of women elected (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005). While a focus on numbers is important, it does not exhaust the category of descriptive representation, which also raises questions about what kinds of women are elected. Analyzing these patterns is crucial for evaluating how effective quotas are in promoting a diverse array of women. A common objection to quotas, on the part of feminists and non-feminists alike, is that they will lead to the election of

elite women (Dahlerup 2006a; Nanivadekar 2006), or those who serve as proxies and tokens and therefore are likely to reinforce the status quo (Abou-Zeid 2006; Krook 2008; Rodriguez 2003). Despite this oft-voiced concern, there has been little research on exactly what kinds of women benefit from quotas (Catalano and Baldez 2008; Franceschet and Piscopo 2009; Vincent 2004).

Some studies suggest that they primarily include women with ties to powerful men (Bird 2003; Chowdhury 2002; Pupavac 2005; Rai, Bari, Mahtab, and Mohanty 2006), high levels of education (Sater 2007; Srivastava 2000), and close loyalties to their political parties (Cowley and Childs 2003; Tripp 2006). However, others find that quotas promote women from marginalized groups (Mehta 2002), those with low levels of education (Schwartz 2004), those with lower status occupations (Bird 2003; Catalano and Baldez 2008), and those who are relatively young (Britton 2005; Burness 2000; Marx, Borner, and Caminotti 2007; Murray 2008). Evidence also suggests that women who accede to office via quotas tend to have less political experience when compared with men and non-quota women (Kolinsky 1991; Murray 2008). These varied patterns may be explained in part with reference to the need to find women to fill quotas in contexts where women had largely been absent from the political sphere: without a large number of women in the 'pipeline,' elites resorted to recruiting women who were previously known to them – including their wives and daughters, in some cases – and women with little prior political experience. Whether this means that these women are less 'qualified,' however, remains an open question.

#### *Quotas and Substantive Representation*

Although still a new topic, a growing number of studies address the effects of quotas on women's substantive representation, seeking to establish whether the introduction of quotas increases the number of policies proposed, debated, and passed on behalf of women as a group. Until recently, few studies tackled this question in a direct way. Rather, scholarship on women's legislative behavior in quota countries has tended to frame its contribution in relation to work on substantive representation rather than gender quotas (Chaney 2006; Childs 2004; Opello 2007; Rai 2007; Thomas 2004). Yet, campaigns for quotas often make assertions as to how politics will change as a result of the inclusion of more women (Bird 2008; Skjeie 1991). Such claims produce contradictory expectations. On the one hand, they can create a 'mandate effect,' leading citizens to

anticipate that the women elected through quotas will promote women's concerns. On the other hand, they can generate a 'label effect,' causing women elected through quotas to be stigmatized because of the way that they achieved political office (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008).

Initial work, while sparse, lends some support to both of these effects. Women elected through quotas have reported feeling obligated to act for women as a group (Schwartz 2004; Skjeie 1991), inspiring them to bring new issues to the table (Kudva 2003; Thomas 2004). However, others have sought to disassociate themselves with the quota and women's issues in an attempt to demonstrate that they are 'serious' politicians (Childs 2004). At the same time, many have been accused of acting only as proxies for men (Nanivadekar 2006) and of being more loyal to party leaders than men and women who win open seats (Cowley and Childs 2003; Tripp 2006). In part, this is because quota policies are often not rooted in processes of constituency formation (Burnet 2008; Hassim 2008; Pupavac 2005), which prevents quota women from gaining political skills that would make them less vulnerable to manipulation (Chowdhury 2002; Cornwall and Goetz 2005). These various patterns lead some scholars to suggest that women might be more effective in non-quota environments (Archenti and Johnson 2006; Walsh 2008), although some view these dynamics as problems faced by women in parliament more generally, not related to quota provisions (Zetterberg 2008). Yet, a closer look at the broader legislative process reveals a more nuanced picture: quotas have been associated with a sharp rise in women-friendly policy proposals, even if they have rarely altered policy outcomes (Devlin and Elgie 2008; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). In other cases, the situation is even more complex: quota women may support women's rights legislation but tread carefully in response to harassment, intimidation, or general security concerns (Longman 2006; Tamale 2000; Wordsworth 2007).

### *Quotas and Symbolic Representation*

Given the many normative controversies surrounding quotas (Bacchi 2006; Krook, Lovenduski, and Squires forthcoming), questions of symbolic representation are central to understanding their broader impact on public attitudes and women's political empowerment. Although gender quotas involve symbolic change in both of these respects, there are a small number of studies that address these effects. In terms of public attitudes, some scholars argue

that quotas pose a radical challenge to politics-as-usual because they involve a fundamental renegotiation of the public sphere (Sgier 2004). Some evidence supports this claim by showing that exposure to female leaders as a result of quotas can weaken stereotypes about gender roles, as well as eliminate negative bias in how the performance of female leaders is perceived among male constituents (Beaman et al 2008). Other work reveals, however, that outward acceptance of the legitimacy of quotas often masks continued resistance at the micro-level. This is especially true among male elites, who often continue to attribute women's under-representation to the choices of individual women, rather than to structural patterns of discrimination (Meier 2008; cf. Holli, Luhtakallio, and Raevaara 2006). Turning to trends in political engagement, the election of more women with the help of quotas appears to increase the rate at which female voters contact their political representatives (Childs 2004; Kudva 2003). Others find that the adoption of quotas has the effect of encouraging women to begin a political career, acquire political skills, and develop sustained political ambitions (Geissel and Hust 2005), at the same time that it may also help build support for women's movement organizing (Sacchet 2008). A number of other studies, in contrast, conclude that quotas have little or no effect on women's political activities, like their willingness to sign petitions or participate in protests (Zetterberg forthcoming). More troubling, the presence of quotas may be associated with the decreased strength and increased repression of women's groups (Hassim forthcoming; Longman 2006).

### **Analyzing Quota Impact: A Conceptual Framework**

Putting these elements together, it becomes clear that – based on current theories and evidence – quotas may have positive, mixed, and sometimes even perverse effects on women's descriptive, substantive, and symbolic representation. The literature on these questions, however, is still in its early stages, with scholars employing a range of different definitions and measures of quota impact. To enable this field of research to develop in a more cumulative fashion, this paper presents a basic conceptual framework for analyzing the effects of quotas on these three facets of political representation. Recognizing substantial variations in political contexts, as well as in the design, adoption, and implementation of quota policies, this exercise focuses on identifying core indicators of each dimension of representation and how the effects of quotas might be analyzed

empirically. It argues that these complexities can be reduced to a focus on (1) the kinds of women elected, (2) the form and content of policy-making, and (3) public attitudes towards women in politics and trends in the political engagement of female constituents.

### *Descriptive Representation*

Studying the effects of quotas on the kinds of women elected requires attending to *who* these women are. To parse out the effects of quotas, it is necessary to collect information on the profiles of male and female office-holders, drawing a distinction where possible between women elected with and without the quota. The latter would be women elected before quotas are adopted, or in a system of reserved seats, would refer to a woman elected in an open as opposed to reserved district. Depending on the information available, profiles might be coded in relation to each individual's age, ethnicity, marital status, education, occupation, degree of political experience, and family connections. This data can often be found in parliamentary handbooks or websites associated with parliaments, individuals, or their parties. Questions along these lines can also be included in interviews with politicians and political parties. To ensure the greatest accuracy, data should be assembled for the period before quotas are introduced, as well as for each session of parliament after their implementation. It should be collected for men as well as women in order to see whether their profiles differ in any way, as a means to evaluate, apart from gender, whether quotas reproduce or disrupt existing patterns of political recruitment.

### *Substantive Representation*

Investigating the impact of quotas on the form and content of policy-making involves collecting information on policy proposals, debates, and outcomes in the parliamentary sessions before and after quotas were adopted. Proposals should be analyzed in terms of their content and sponsors. 'Women's issues' may be defined in advance, but the best means to avoid essentialism is to instead scan the parliamentary record for issues that appear especially relevant to women (cf. Celis 2006), and then supplement these with priorities identified in focus groups and interviews with women's organizations. Another reason for this approach is that while policies on maternity leave and abortion rights may be important to women in some countries, access to water and land

rights may be the main concern of women in others (cf. Childs and Krook 2006; Tripp 2001). The sex, party, and seniority of the bills' sponsors should be coded to get a sense of the role of quota versus non-quota women in these activities. To ensure that quota women's participation is not under- or over-estimated, the research should take into account variations in legislative processes across cases. In some countries, for example, bills are initiated by presidents, while in others they are introduced by governing parties and/or individual legislators. Using the same measure of impact for all cases may therefore create distortions in the research findings, which may not accurately reflect the participation of quota women.

The reception of these bills should then be examined using transcripts of parliamentary debates. These should be analyzed with reference to the arguments made for and against each bill, as well as the sex, party, and seniority of each participant. The aim is to capture the respective roles of male and female MPs, as a means to determine how quotas shift the balance – or not – in the passage of bills on women's concerns. Using the data collected in the previous step, these discussions should be compared with the content of the bills that do not reach the floor, because they are either blocked by a legislative committee or introduced too late in the parliamentary session. This data should be supplemented with questions on these various bills in interviews with MPs and political parties, as a means to gain a better sense of the dynamics at work 'behind the scenes' to promote or block particular policy initiatives. Lastly, information should be assembled on the bills that pass and do not pass at the end of this process. These bills should be coded with respect to their content, which should be compared to their initial wording and goals, and the balance of votes for and against them, which should be broken down in terms of the party and sex of their advocates and opponents.

### *Symbolic Representation*

Gauging the impact of quotas in public attitudes and political engagement necessitates a multi-method approach, stemming from the fact that these outcomes are the least tangible in terms of their effects. Original mass surveys are an option for those researchers with suitable training and financial resources. However, a research strategy that 'triangulates' several distinct sources of information may in fact be more robust, at the same time that it involves fewer resources. To

explore mass opinion, a first step should be to consult existing datasets, like the World Values Survey, Eurobarometer, Latinobarometer, and Afrobarometer, which all include questions on attitudes towards gender equality and women in politics. This data can be supplemented with national electoral studies in countries where these have been carried out. A second step is to analyze public discussions on quotas and the degree to which they are framed as legitimate and central to the quality of democracy or as problematic and a threat to democratic values. This data may be found in articles and editorials in national newspapers, debates in parliament and party congresses, and court actions and decisions on the legality and application of gender quotas. Such sources can often be accessed in national and party archives, as well as transcripts and published decisions of the courts. A third step might entail a set of original surveys of MPs and political parties. In contrast to the two previous methods, which involve collecting data – as far as this is possible – from periods before and after quotas are introduced, this analysis should focus on the present but include questions on elite opinion before quota adoption. The aim should be to assess elite views and support for gender quotas, as well as their relation to ideas about democracy, disaggregated according to sex, party, and seniority. The logic of this comparison should be to see whether quotas are associated with a broader shift in values regarding the need for more women in politics, or if they remain controversial, especially among male politicians.

To determine how quotas shape political engagement, a similar array of methods might be used. The first step should be to revisit the large datasets on public opinion to see if they include data on women's participation and representation. The Latinobarometer, for example, contains information on women's degree of political activity in a number of different areas, like petition signing and protests. To the extent possible, this data should be analyzed for the periods before and after quota adoption to examine how quotas might shape – or not affect – patterns in women's political engagement. The second step is to scan articles and editorials in national newspapers, debates in parliament and party congresses, and court actions and decisions, for information on the range of interventions made by women and women's groups in these debates. These should be coded in terms of their content and the degree to which they refer to changes in women's connection to political processes. Special attention should be paid to evidence offered in support of these claims, for example with reference to voter turnout, protest activities, and

propensity to run for political office. The third step might involve a series of focus groups with women's groups in each country. These should be conducted, where possible, in both urban and rural areas. While not necessarily representative of all women, members of these groups are likely to be the most attuned to dynamics 'on the ground' in terms of women's political engagement following the introduction of gender quotas. The advantage of focus groups over interviews is that a collective forum may prompt recollections and foster the sharing of ideas as to why quotas have – or have not – changed ordinary women's relationships to politics.

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