

From Discursive Predictions to Evaluation: The Actual Impact of Electoral Gender Quotas

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draft – not for quotation

Paper presented at the First European Conference on Politics and Gender

21 to 23 January 2009

Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, Northern Ireland

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1. Introduction

Gender quotas touch upon fundamental issues in democratic theory and feminist theory. Consequently, the new global trend to introduce gender quota regimes into political institutions, now in use in almost 100 countries around the world, has stimulated research on quota discourses. Quota discourses are embedded in national contexts. However, having studied gender quota discourses all over the world, we have found striking similarities between them (Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2005; Dahlerup 2006).

A closer look at quota discourses reveals that a considerable number of arguments take the form of predictions. They are not always stringent, they are sometimes vague and they often contradict each other. We have encountered many predictions concerning what the adoption of electoral gender quotas might lead to – both among the advocates of gender quotas and, interestingly enough, among the opponents of quotas, who often have more elaborate predictions. To give some examples: “Being elected on a quota will stigmatize women politicians” or “It will not be possible to find a sufficient number of women”. Not surprisingly, the predictions are mostly positive when made by advocates of quotas and mostly negative when coming from opponents.

This paper argues that it is possible – and about time – to discuss how some of the most important and frequently presented, though not always very accurate, predictions can be turned into precise arguments and in some cases hypotheses amenable to empirical testing. It is annoying to hear the same arguments time and again, when some of them include predictions that we now should be able to test through research. Electoral gender quotas are recent phenomena, but the mounting body of experience should facilitate empirical research. In this way, the discussion of quotas may move away from the present deadlock between those who are for applying gender quotas as an equal opportunity measure and those who are against, be it in relation to the educational system, politics or company boards. The focus of this article is on gender quotas in elections to political assemblies, also called electoral gender quotas.

Electoral gender quotas are an affirmative action policy involving the establishment of a percentage or number for the gender composition among candidates or among those elected. Quotas often come in the form of a minimum percentage, for instance 20, 30 or 40 percent women, or as a gender neutral regulation, such as no less than 40 percent and no more than 60 percent of either sex. In general, quotas are used as a measure for rapidly increasing the representation of historically excluded or under-represented groups (Dahlerup 2006: 19-21).

The paper begins with a discussion of the predictions – or lack of predictions – presented in theoretical discussions of the relevance of gender quotas. This is followed by a collection of some of the most frequently used arguments in the public debate for and against gender quotas. As a next step, we extract arguments that take the form of predictions and present them, whenever possible, in pairs. We focus on predictions in relation to three dimensions of representation: descriptive, substantive and symbolic. In the final and largest section we confront these frequently used arguments and predictions from the public debate with what we know from the mounting body of quota research about actual experiences with quotas, and we try to turn some of the predictions into hypotheses amenable to empirical testing. Three cases are selected for closer discussion: Sweden and Rwanda, representing voluntary party quotas, reserved seat quotas and legislated candidate quotas, respectively. Because of lack of longitudinal research on a large number of quota cases, we discuss these predictions primarily in relation to actual experiences in these two cases but with a view to other relevant cases on which research is available. Where empirical research is not available, we will discuss how to formulate predictions in such a way as to make empirical testing possible in the future.

2. Predictions in Feminist Theory

Predictions about the future are not common in Feminist Theory in general nor in the theoretical discussions about gender quotas. However, some interesting considerations regarding the effects of gender quotas may be identified in scholarly texts on quotas and parity representation.

In *The Politics of Presence* from 1995, Anne Phillips’ discussion of gender quotas largely takes the form of theoretical arguments – arguments against the opponents of quotas. However, it is, nonetheless, possible to extract some predictions about the consequences of gender quotas. Anne Phillips leaves aside the *role model* argument, since this is not connected to her main interest, democracy, but she does argue for the importance of *symbolic representation* – in contrast to Hanna Pitkin, who dismissed this type of representation. If political decision-makers, Phillips argues, are predominantly drawn from one of the two sexes or from numerous ethnic groups, it puts the others into the category of political minors. “Claims on political representation then figure as one of many avenues for challenging the existing hierarchies of power” (p.39-40).

¹ This research is part of FEMCIT, Gendered Citizenship in Multicultural Europe, sponsored by EU’s 6th framework programme.

Of Phillip's three main arguments for parity representation, the *justice argument* does not include any predictions - women have the right to half of the seats because they are half of the population - whereas both *the interest argument* and the *different values/experiences argument* do involve some predictions, however cautious.

"So the case for gender parity among our political representatives inevitably operates in a framework of probabilities rather than certainties. It is possible – if highly unlikely – that assemblies composed equally of women and men will behave just like assemblies in which women have a token presence; it is possible – and perhaps very likely – that they will address the interests of certain groups of women while ignoring the claims of others." (p.82).

In the public debate the experience and the interest arguments are often linked – by quota opponents as well as quota advocates – to the frequently asked question: "Will women in politics make a difference?" In our opinion this question is, however, unjustifiably static. Like Anne Phillips, we prefer to see representation a dynamic process. This implies that the outcome of parity representation will be an effect of a combination of contemporary forces and processes with no given result. Changing the gender composition of political assemblies is largely "an enabling condition", Phillips writes, with "no definitive guarantees" (p.82). Among quota advocates, the arguments about the utility of gender parity, the wish that more women in politics will make a difference is, nevertheless, frequently heard.

Iris Marion Young has made the important point, with which this article agrees, that our concept of representation is crucial. Young states that the arguments against opening up for increased inclusiveness, for instance through the use of quotas for women and other groups, derive from a misunderstanding of the nature of representation more generally. Representation is not about a relation of substitution or identification but a "differentiated relationship" among political actors (2000:123) – or, as Anne Phillips formulated it, a dynamic process.

Even if Judith Butler does not address the question of gender quotas directly, her criticism of "the foundationalist frame in which feminism as an identity politics has been articulated" (1990:189) has led others to argue that by talking about women as a group (as implied in sex/gender quotas) there is a risk is that we construct the very category which we want to escape from. Even if Butler in *Gender Troubles* from 1990 in fact argued that "construction is not opposed to agency" (p.187), she nevertheless later "revised and expanded" her views on the necessity of the category "women" for feminist analysis (1990, 1999: xxiv). Gender quotas rest on this strategic necessity and might be seen as a temporary measure. Longitudinal studies are needed to follow up on the consequences for more general social views of women and men of adopting gender quotas.

Laws on gender quotas do not discuss how gender is constructed! The post-structural critique and the post-colonial doubts about women as a group do not seem to bother quota advocates in their successful post-Platform for Actions campaigns. Quota legislation regulates the distribution of seats between two separate groups, women and men. We have found surprisingly little debate world-wide about the categories 'women' and 'men' during quota campaigns in our research.

Dahlerup & Freidenvall (2004) identify *a new discourse of exclusion*, which takes us beyond the historical dilemma in feminism involving sameness or difference and makes the discussion of women's 'identities' irrelevant. Their distinction between *the fast track discourse* versus *the incremental track discourse* is based on different diagnoses of the cause of women's under-representation, different goals as well as different strategies. The focus is on the mechanisms of exclusion of women and of other groups or categories - structural discrimination - not on characteristics of those who are excluded (Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2005).

The influential *Platform for Action* adopted at the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 represents the new fast track discourse (Krook 2004; Dahlerup, 2006; FWCW 1995). Even if the language is cautious and the controversial word 'quotas' is omitted, the Beijing Platform represents, on the whole, a new discourse with its *diagnosis* focusing on mechanisms of exclusion through institutional practices, setting gender balance as the *goal* and demanding that governments and political parties commit themselves to *strategies* of affirmative action. It is an empirical question to what extent political parties have adopted this new line of argument, which in fact places the burden of change on their shoulders. It follows from this line of argument that quotas for women cannot be considered discrimination of men but rather prevention of current and future discrimination of women (Bacchi 2006).

Ethnic quotas

While Anne Phillips, on the basis of her concern about making democracy more equal and deliberative, argues for quotas for women in politics, she expresses doubt about the relevance of quotas for minorities in politics or 'racial quotas'. While the proportionate presence of women gives women half of the seats, quotas for minorities may end up stressing their minority status and become entirely symbolic (p.95). Moreover, even if, Phillips states, black Americans have been considerably more forthcoming than women in defining themselves as members of a distinct group, it is in general very difficult to establish the boundaries between ethnic minorities

and majorities (p.96). Thus, the ‘fear of balkanization’ of politics, which Anne Phillips discarded in her advocacy for quotas for women, becomes in her view a real danger when it comes to quotas for ethnic minorities. Phillips’ position seems problematic today. In practise, quotas for ethnic minorities are used in many countries. What we see is that ethnic quotas might even in some cases be a tool for conflict resolution, as in the cases of Rwanda, Bosnia and Macedonia. At best, the combined effect of ethnic and gender quotas opens up the possibility for the representation of diverse groups of women, as we also have seen in India.

3. Discursive framings: Arguments in the public debate

The introduction of gender quotas is spreading rapidly across the world. At the same time as this phenomenon is raising hopes for increases in women’s political representation and the anticipation that the very presence of more women will contribute to more gender sensitive politics and a different style and approach in politics, quotas are also meeting fierce resistance. Not all women support quotas, not even all feminists; and men are also divided on the issue. Attitudes towards gender quotas also have a right-left dimension, at least in Europe. A recent survey, which was sent to all political parties in the EU/EEA as part of a study of the implementation of electoral gender quotas in Europe, shows that political parties are split on the issue of gender quotas, with the left being most supportive, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The general positions of political parties on gender quotas

Figures are percentages of respondents.

	Quotas are a good and fair method	Quotas are a ‘necessary evil’, since it is the only way to rapidly increase the number of women in elected bodies	Quotas are unacceptable and in principle wrong	Total
<i>Parties</i>				
Left parties	66.7	26.7	6.7	100
Centre parties	13.0	47.8	39.1	100
Right parties	0.0	16.7	83.3	100
All	35.4	32.3	32.3	100

The political parties were asked to characterize themselves as left, centre or right.

Source: EUPARL 2008, Table 3.

Some of the arguments most frequently used in the public debate and identified in these case studies and in the many other empirical studies we have conducted are listed below.

Arguments against quotas

- Political representation is about the representation of ideas and interests, not about gender or the representation of social groups.
- Gender quotas violate the principle of equal opportunity for all and the principle of equal treatment, since women are given priority.
- Gender quotas are in conflict with the principle of merit, since politicians are elected because of their sex and not because of their qualifications. Let the best person win!
- Quotas are discriminatory, since one group of candidates will be favoured at the expense of better-qualified candidates who are set aside. Thus, gender quotas represent reverse discrimination, where better-qualified men will lose out in order to achieve a quota for women.
- Quotas are in conflict with the principle of local autonomy, since the prerogative of party organizations to decide over their own candidate selection processes is restricted.
- Introducing quotas creates conflicts within the party organizations.
- Quotas are undemocratic, since voters should have the final say on who is to represent them.
- Quotas are unnecessary, since many women do not want to hold office. If they did, their numbers in politics would increase.
- Many women do not want to be elected just because they are women. Quotas contribute to a suspicion that women have been promoted thanks to their sex rather than their talent. Who wants to be a ‘quota woman’?
- Quotas for women will be followed by demands for quotas for other groups, such as Volvo drivers, left-handed and red haired people. Where will this endless urge for quotas stop?
- Quotas for women will be followed by demands for quotas for other groups, which will result in an increased ‘balkanization’ of politics and a politics of sheer group-interest representation (rather than a politics for the common good).
- Quotas are irrelevant. Women and men have equal status in society.

- Quotas are a relic of the Communist past and a symbol of ‘Soviet-style’ forced emancipation

Arguments for quotas

- Political assemblies should reflect the major social groups in society. Since women constitute half of the population, they should have half of the positions in public decision-making bodies.
- Political representation is not only about merit and competence. It is about representing the people.
- Political representation is about rights and justice. Women have the right as citizens to equal representation. How can the fact that men occupy more than 80 percent of the parliamentary seats in the world be justified?
- Quotas for women do not discriminate. Rather, they compensate for existing barriers that hinder women from receiving their fair share of political seats, and they prevent further barriers and mechanisms of exclusion.
- Quotas for women do not discriminate against individual men. Rather, quota rules limit the tendency of political parties to nominate mostly men and compel them to seek out active and competent female candidates. For the voters, the opportunities are expanded, since it now becomes possible to vote for parties with women candidates.
- Political assemblies should take advantage of all of the resources and all of the pools of competence in society. Women have special gender-based knowledge that should be utilized in politics.
- Women are just as qualified as men, but their qualifications are downgraded and minimized in a male-dominated political systems.
- Women will introduce a new political style into politics, and politics will become more constructive and less hierarchical and adversarial.
- Women will introduce new policy concerns onto the political agenda and a broader range of perspectives into national legislatures.
- Women’s particular experiences and interests, which can only be understood and represented by women, are needed in political life.
- Women are best represented by women, since they have an understanding of what equality means for them, an understanding that men do not have.
- Introducing quotas may cause internal party conflicts, but only temporarily.
- Quotas are a quick method for increasing the number of women elected. Introducing quotas thus accelerates the process and leads to major leaps in the number of women elected.
- Quotas are already in use in other countries, and targets for women’s political representation are acknowledged in several internationally recognized conventions, including CEDAW as well as the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.
- Quotas, formal or informal, are already in use for other categories in nomination processes – geographical territories, trade union interests, occupation, age, and so on.
- Including women may contribute to the process of democratization and increase the legitimacy of established democracies.

As these lists show, the arguments for and against quotas are based on various assumptions related to key concepts, such as ‘equality’, ‘representation’ and ‘merits’. For instance, while opponents of quotas argue that quotas are in conflict with principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination and become a form of discrimination of men, proponents of quotas argue that they are not a form of discrimination against men but a response to discrimination against women and an effort to prevent present and future mechanisms of exclusion. Quotas are an attempt to achieve justice. Thus, while the opponents of quotas base their arguments on the classical liberal notion of equality as equal opportunity and the removal of formal barriers, their proponents base their arguments on the notion of equality as real equal opportunity or even equality of result (Dahlerup 2007). The removal of formal barriers, such as extending voting rights to women, is not enough to achieve an equal share of political influence. Rather, active measures must be introduced to achieve substantive equality.

Furthermore, the discursive controversy over quotas is connected to a debate concerning the relation between descriptive and substantive representation of women and the presumed consequences of more women in politics. Many opponents of quotas argue that quotas bypass competitive processes and, hence, ignore the merit principle that ensures that the best person for the job is selected. Quotas will, consequently, ultimately lead to a deterioration of competence: since women will be selected on the basis of quota rules, there will be no need for them to improve their skills. Nor will men improve their skills, since they will know in advance that they will lose out to women.

Advocates of quotas would rather assume that quotas will not only improve the level of female representatives (descriptive representation) but may also lead to a more ‘women-friendly’ and gender sensitive agenda (substantive representation). Women will, thus, bring specific experiences and knowledge to politics, which, in turn, will be beneficial to society, contributing to economic benefits, organizational advantages and other gains to be made from having more balanced and integrated decision-making bodies.

4. Predictions embedded in quota arguments

A closer look at these lists shows that a considerable portion of the arguments takes the form of predictions. Among proponents as well as opponents, arguments can be identified that relate to the anticipated effects of electoral gender quotas, for good or bad. Simultaneously, it must be noted that not all arguments take the form of predictions. A closer look also reveals that some of the predictions target the nomination and election of women (numerical, descriptive representation), while others target the performance of “quota women MPs” (substantive representation). Many of these predictions are, moreover, framed in a dialectical way; for instance, while one pro-argument highlights the positive effects of quotas in terms of providing a head start in the number of women elected, the con-argument notes that quotas may form a glass ceiling for women. In Figure 1 we focus on predictions that relate to different types of representation: descriptive, substantive and symbolic. The predictions are listed in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1 Arguments in the form of predictions

Prediction target	Proponents' predictions	Opponents' predictions
<i>Women's descriptive representation</i>	PP1. Quotas will result in and are necessary for a rapid increase in women's political representation.	OP1a. Quotas are unnecessary, since the proportion of female parliamentarians will increase in due time in a 'natural' way.
		OP1b. Quotas may form a glass ceiling for women.
	PP2. Quotas give the voters the opportunity to vote for both women and men or choose between lists with many or few women candidates.	OP2. Quotas mean restricting the free choice of the voters.
	PP4. Quotas contribute to the reflection of the major social groups in society in political decision-making	OP4a. Women do not want to be elected because of their sex. OP4b. It will not be possible to find a sufficient number of (qualified) women.
	PP5. Quotas contribute to enlarging the pool of potential candidates and, thus, we make better use of all qualifications in society.	OP5. Quotas will result in the nomination and election of unqualified candidates, and, consequently, quotas are demeaning to women and undermine the principle of merit.
	PP6. Existing recruitment processes favour males, and women must, therefore, be compensated for this discrimination.	OP6. Gender quotas favour women candidates and, therefore, they are unfair to men.
<i>Women's substantive representation</i>	PP7. Women will bring a different style and approach to politics.	OP7. Women elected via quotas will only be seen as representatives of the group women, and their political effectiveness will, consequently, be limited.
	PP8. Women will introduce new policy concerns onto the political agenda.	OP8. Quotas contribute to a suspicion that women have been promoted thanks to their sex rather than their talent. Women elected on the basis of quota rules will be stigmatized, and, consequently, 'quota women' cannot function well as politicians.
	PP9. Women will contribute to more gender sensitive legislation and policy outcomes.	OP9. Women elected on the basis of quota rules tend to be 'tokens' or 'proxy women', and, consequently, they cannot represent women and women's interests - or they simply

		have no qualifications of their own.
	PP10. In order for women to have an impact on public policy, a critical mass of women must be present in the decision-making process. Quotas contribute to this process.	
<i>Symbolic representation</i>	PP11. Gender is one of the most important axes of power in society. Gender quotas are, thus, necessary and essential.	OP11. After gender quotas, other groups will also demand quotas – where does it stop? Volvo owners, left handed, red haired, etc.
	PP12. Quotas will contribute to the process of democratization in a country and to the legitimacy of established democracies.	OP12. Quotas will result in the ‘balkanization’ of politics (and sheer interest politics)
		OP13. Quotas are only treating the symptoms of women’s under-representation and, consequently, will only be a symbolic gesture.

As Figure 1 shows, a considerable number of the arguments take the form of predictions. Not surprisingly, the predictions are mostly positive when made by proponents of quotas and mostly negative when they stem from opponents. We believe that it is time to try to convert these predictions into hypothesis amenable to empirical testing. Although the use of electoral gender quotas is a recent phenomenon, actual experiences with quotas are emerging. There is also a growing body of empirical research available, both case studies and comparative studies.

5. From Predictions to Actual Impact. The Possibility of Empirical Testing

In the following section, we will discuss how some of the most central predictions can be made subject to empirical testing. Case studies from two countries will be used to demonstrate the validity of the hypotheses made: Sweden and Rwanda. These two countries are the two top countries in the world with regard to women’s representation in national parliaments (www.ipu.org). They may also be discussed as successful examples when it comes to quota implementation. They represent two of the main types of electoral gender quotas in use in the world. Voluntary party quotas have been adopted in Sweden, and the system of reserved seats has been introduced in Rwanda (for a taxonomy of electoral gender quotas, see Dahlerup & Freidenvall, forthcoming).

All predictions are not amenable to empirical testing and, thus, will not be tested in this paper. In fact, a general aim of this paper is to problematize the apparent inconsistency underpinning some of these predictions and to discuss the probability of converting them into testable hypotheses. Research is not available for all of the remaining predictions to be tested, which means that the two case studies will not be comparable. Furthermore, drawing valid conclusions requires a profound knowledge of the complexities surrounding the political process, a process that might linger on for many years, even decades, and which might involve many critical actors operating at various sites and levels of government. In order to successfully test some of the predictions, thus, longitudinal studies and studies including the system level are needed. Having pointed out these limitations, we argue that the two cases illustrate aspects of the actual impact of electoral gender quotas of principle importance. Further research is, however, needed both to elaborate on the hypotheses and to fully test them in a systematic way on the basis of a larger number of cases and developments over a longer period of time.

5.1 Sweden

In worldwide comparisons of women in national parliaments, Sweden and the other Nordic countries are regularly ranked at the top of the list. As of 2008, Sweden is ranked number two, after Rwanda, on the world ranking list, with women currently making up 47 percent of the members of the Swedish national parliament (www.ipu.org).

At the same time as Sweden is recognised for its high representation of women in politics, it should be noted that the process leading to this recognition began 40 years ago. Since universal and equal suffrage was introduced in 1921, the proportion of women parliamentarians has gradually increased to the current level, with a take-off phase in the 1970s when the 20 percent threshold was passed for the first time. It should also be noted that, contrary to common belief, no constitutional clause or electoral law requires any specific level of representation for women in elected bodies. In Sweden, as in many of the other Nordic countries, voluntary party quotas have been introduced by many of the political parties, first introduced by the Green Party and the Left Party in 1987 and then by the Social Democratic Party in 1993 (Freidenvall 2006). These party quotas were

introduced when the share of women parliamentarians exceeded 30 percent. Consequently, these so-called ‘high echelon quotas’ do not explain the high number of women in Swedish politics (Freidenvall et al 2006). Rather, they function to protect the already high level of representation against any backlash. The political parties to the right and in the centre have adopted non-mandatory targets or minimum recommendations instead of binding party quotas. Thus, in Sweden all the political parties have adopted special measures to increase the number of women in elected bodies at all levels of government. All these measures have been introduced step-wise - usually first targeting the internal party boards and committees and then the electoral lists - and have been gradually strengthened (Freidenvall 2006).

Research suggests that the movement towards gender-balanced political representation in the Nordic countries can be characterized as having taken an incremental track, being based on a view that the primary problem of women’s under-representation in politics is that women do not have the same political resources as men, for instance in terms of political experience, time and money, and that the number of women in politics will grow more or less automatically as society develops (Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2005). This incremental track model can, thus, be distinguished by an inherent notion of gradualism, often imbedded in an optimistic, linear view of progress.

5.1.1 Nomination and election – women’s descriptive representation

In debates in favour of gender quotas, it is often heard that quotas are necessary in order to rapidly increase women’s political representation. Quotas are supposed to contribute to a head start, facilitating a leap in the proportion of female parliamentarians. In order to test this prediction (PP1) in a country with party quotas, the candidate selection process must be targeted, for instance by comparing the proportion of women candidates nominated and women elected in parties with quotas in parties without quotas, as well as comparing the proportion of women elected before and after the adoption of the quota provisions. The dependent variable in this case would, thus, be change in the proportion of women nominated and the proportion of women elected, respectively.

Prediction PP1. Quotas will result in and are necessary for a rapid increase in women’s political representation.

The Swedish case shows that the introduction of voluntary party quotas has led to small and gradual, improvements in women’s descriptive representation. Table 2 illustrates women’s parliamentary representation in a historical perspective, focusing on the past five elections.

Table 2. Women’s national representation in the Swedish Parliament through five elections – before and after the introduction of party quotas

Country	Election 5	Election 4	Election 3	Last election but one	Most recent election	Difference (1–5)
Sweden (P)	1991: 34%	* 1994: 41%	1998: 43%	2002: 45%	2006: 47%	+13

Source: Official electoral statistics of Sweden. The first election after the introduction of quotas is marked with *.

Party quotas (P) are voluntary measures adopted by individual political parties. Quotas are considered to have been introduced when at least one of the three major parties represented in the parliament has done so. In Sweden, the Social Democrats adopted party quotas in 1993.

Table 2 makes it possible to observe whether the introduction of quotas has had an immediate effect on women’s political representation. If a leap *is defined* as a change in women’s representation from one election to the next that exceeds 10 percentage points, the table shows that the introduction of party quotas in Sweden in 1993 has contributed to an increase of 7 percentage points, from 34 to 41 percent. Since then, the proportion of women elected has increased by two percentage points per election. The introduction of quotas has, thus, had a steady, though not immediate, effect. Compared with legislated quotas, voluntary quotas tend to result only in gradual increases in the overall representation of women (Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2008 et al). With voluntary party quotas, in contrast to legislated quotas, not all parties become bound by quota regulations at the same time. Consequently, when studying the effect of voluntary party quotas, the focus has to be on the individual parties.

Table 3 shows the proportion of women nominated and elected in the three parties with party quotas and the four parties without quotas. The table also shows the increase in the proportion of women elected after the adoption of party quotas. As the table shows, the proportion of women nominated within the Social Democratic Party increased from 42 to 50 percent between 1991 and 1994 after the zipper system was introduced, a system in which women and men are alternated on party lists. Since then, the proportion has been more or less stable.

Correspondingly, the percentage of female Social Democratic MPs increased from 41 to 48 percent between the 1991 election and the 1994 election.

The increase in the proportion of women nominated within the Green Party and the Left Party follows a similar trend. When the 40 percent quota was introduced in the Green Party in 1987, the proportion of women nominated increased from 47 to 49 percent, and when the Green Party won its first seats in the Parliament, its parliamentary party group was comprised of 45 percent women. In 1997, the quota system was revised, now stipulating that every party list should consist of 50 percent of either sex, plus minus one person. In the following election in 1998, the proportion of women nominated and elected was 47 and 50 percent, respectively.

In the Left Party, the proportion of nominated women decreased in 1988, after a party quota was adopted which stipulated that the party lists should be comprised of the same proportion women as women members in the party district. Since then, the quota system has been revised twice, first in 1990 stipulating that party lists be comprised of at least 40 percent of the under-represented sex, and then in 1993, stipulating that party lists be comprised of at least 50 percent women. In the 1994 election, the proportion of women nominated was 49 percent and the proportion of women elected 46 percent. With regard to the Green Party and the Left Party it is important to note that these are small parties, electing only one candidate per constituency (at best), which means that women must be placed at the top of the lists in order to make it into parliament.

However, it is also important to point out that the nomination of women candidates in parties without quotas is quite successful as well. In fact, most of these parties nominated around 40 percent women on their respective candidate lists between 1991 and 2006. This result can be explained partly by what Matland and Studlar (1996) have identified as contagion effects. However, while the proportion of women nominated is comparatively high in all of the parties, it is somewhat higher in parties with quotas than in parties without quotas. The same results can be noted regarding women elected, ranging between 37 and 45 at the 2006 election.

Table 3 Women nominated and elected to the Swedish national parliament

Political party	Quota	Year of introduction	Women nominated (%), national Parliament	Women elected (%), national Parliament	Women elected (%), European Parliament
Social Democratic Party	50%	1993	1991: 42	1991: 41	1995: 57
			1994: 50	1994: 48	1998: 50
			1998: 49	1998: 50	2004: 80
			2002: 49	2002: 47	
			2006: 50	2006: 50	
Green Party	40%	1987	1985: 47	1985: NA	1995: 50
	50%	1997	1988: 49	1988: 45	1998: 50
			1991: 47	1991: NA	2004: 0
			1994: 51	1994: 56	
			1998: 47	1998: 50	
			2002: 44	2002: 59	
Left Party	40%	1987	1985: 46	1985: 16	1995: 33
	40%	1990	1988: 44	1988: 38	1998: 33
	50%	1993	1991: 44	1991: 31	2004: 50
			1994: 49	1994: 46	
			1998: 50	1998: 42	
Conservative Party			2002: 50	2002: 47	
			2006: 50	2006: 64	
			1991: 31		
			1994: 35		
			1998: 37		
Christian Democratic Party			2002: 34		
			2006:		
			1991: 39		
			1994: 42		
Liberal Party			1998: 39		
			2002: 41		
			2006:		
Liberal Party			1991: 45		
			1994: 43		
			1998: 43		

	2002: 41
	2006:
Centre Party	1991: 41
	1994: 43
	1998: 42
	2002: 42
	2006:

Sources: Freidenvall (2006, 2008); official electoral statistics.

As Table 3 shows, the implementation of voluntary party quotas has been quite successful in all of the political parties and at all electoral levels. The 40 percent rule introduced in the Green Party in 1987 resulted in more than 40 percent women being nominated on party lists for the national Parliament (ranging from 47 to 51 percent) and 40 percent women being elected over the period 1988–1994 (ranging from 41 to 56 percent). With the exception of the 2004 election to the European Parliament, when the Green Party received only one seat, the subsequent 50 percent (plus or minus one person) rule adopted by the Green Party in 1997 resulted in proportions ranging from 44 to 47 percent women nominated to the national Parliament and 45 to 59 percent women elected in all elections at all levels over the period 1998–2006.

The zipper system (50 percent) introduced by the Social Democratic Party in 1993 resulted in proportions of women nominated ranging from 49 to 50 percent for the national Parliament and women elected ranging from 47 to 51 percent at all levels and in all elections between 1994 and 2006.

The proportion of women elected within the Left Party fluctuates to a greater extent than it does within the other parties. The 40 percent rule introduced by the Left Party in 1990 resulted in 44 percent women candidates nominated and proportions of women elected ranging from 31 to 38 percent in the three elections in 1991. The subsequent 50 percent (women) rule adopted in 1993 resulted in 50 percent women nominated in the 1998, 2002 and 2006 elections but to variations between 42 and 64 percent in the share of women elected in the elections between 1994 and 2006. These fluctuations can be explained primarily by the fact that the party is small, with only one safe seat in most electoral districts, and that men topped most of the party lists in these electoral districts. This result highlights the significance not only of the mean district magnitude but also of the number of safe seats for individual parties (Matland 2006; Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2008a).

In sum, the Swedish case shows that the prediction that quotas will result in rapid increases in the number of female parliamentarians does not hold for countries that already have a high representation of women. The process can more appropriately be described as incremental, having resulted in leaps smaller than 10 percentage points. The case also shows that the proportion of women nominated in parties with quotas tends to have stabilized at around 50 percent, which seems to have become established as an unquestioned norm in the Swedish halls of power.

In debates on gender quotas it is also commonly argued by quota opponents that it will not be possible to find a sufficient number of women, partly due to the assumption that many women do not want to hold office. The underlying premise of this argument is that increasing women's political representation must take time and that the political parties, by pushing the development too much, will risk electing unqualified and even less committed politicians. Since the point of introducing gender quotas is to make the political parties recruit more women, it seems highly relevant to test this prediction by studying the nomination process from the perspective of the number of aspirants. Do parties experience a shortage of women candidates when they are to fill the quota provisions, as suggested in OP4b? Do female elected politicians more often than male politicians drop out?

Prediction OP4b. It will not be possible to find sufficient number of (qualified) women.

Empirical studies from Sweden show that nomination committees found it quite easy to recruit female candidates among the potential aspirants to fill the party lists (Freidenvall 2006). Table 4 shows the extent to which nomination committee chairs marked the box 'easy' or 'very easy' in response to the question about their views on the supply of candidates, including female candidates, young candidates (below 30 years of age) and candidates with ethnic minority background to fill the party lists for the national election in 2002. A distinction is made between parties with quotas and parties without quotas.

Table 4 Supply of candidates. Percent. Figures from 1994 within parenthesis.

PARTY	Parties without quotas	Parties with party quotas	All
Candidates	96 (91)	88 (78)	93 (85)
Women	90 (61)	88 (67)	89 (64)

Young candidates	70 (52)	63 (37)	68 (46)
Candidates with ethnic minority background	41	59	49

Source: Freidenvall (2006), Johansson (1999).

The respondents were asked the following question: "To which extent did you find it easy to find women candidates for the candidate list?" Respondents could mark one of five options: very easy, easy, difficult, very difficult, and do not know. The same question was asked concerning young candidates and candidates with ethnic minority background.

As Table 4 shows, most nomination committee chairs (89%) found it easy or very easy to find female candidates among the aspirants for political office. There are no major differences between parties without quotas and parties with voluntary party quotas; 90 percent of committee chairs in parties without quotas marked that it was 'easy' or 'very easy' to find female candidates as compared to 88 percent of the chairs in parties with quotas.

The table also shows that figures from 1994 are less positive. In 1994, 64 percent of all the respondents answered that they found it easy or very easy to find female candidates. This change can probably be explained by an increase in the pool of female aspirants following the quota debates in the 1990s, triggering more or less all political parties to respond to the pressure from women's organizations to increase the number of women in politics, and the threat posed by the government to introduce legal quotas did the parties not improve their share of female candidates. As has been shown in research, the rejection of quotas in the right and centre parties has been followed by various measures to improve women's representation and, thereby, to prove that quotas are unnecessary. The analysis of the 2002 nomination process shows that the issue of gender balance in list composition is taken for granted within quota parties (Freidenvall 2006). In non-quota parties, however, gender balance is indeed identified as an important value, but not necessarily more important than other values, such as the right of local party organisations to decide their own lists. This indicates that the promotion of gender balance needs to be negotiated within non-quota parties.

Furthermore, the table shows that the nomination committee chairs found it easier to find female candidates than young candidates and candidates of ethnic minority background. Here the parties differ significantly. In particular, the task of finding candidates with ethnic minority background seems more difficult, especially for parties without quotas.

The question posed in this national survey, however, requires some discussion. It may have been unproblematic for the nomination committee chairs to mark the box 'easy' or 'very easy', since they did not have to answer 'how many' women they believed were sufficient. Perhaps one woman was sufficient, in their views. This problem could, however, be eliminated by checking the actual number of women nominated.

In sum, prediction OP4b concerning problems in finding a sufficient number of women candidates seems less valid. Neither parties with quotas nor parties without quotas found it difficult to find women candidates. The liberal thesis about political parties will experience a shortage of women candidates when they are to fill the quota provisions cannot be confirmed in the Swedish case.

5.1.2 Women's substantive representation

Many arguments against gender quotas revolve around the question of the status of women elected on the basis of quota provisions. These categories of arguments may be translated into a fear of stigmatization of women elected or appointed as 'quota women.' In focus here is the political arena as a workplace and the effectiveness of women elected to work in that arena (OP 7-9). The effectiveness of women politicians may be defined as their ability to perform their tasks as elected representatives in the way they themselves want, feminist or non-feminist. Here questions could be asked addressing the extent to which the effectiveness of women politicians is limited for 'quota women.' Does being a 'quota woman' involve some kind of stigmatization that implies reduced status? The focus here is on the political institutions as a workplace, that is, the institutional routines, norms and culture that frame women's and men's abilities to work as politicians. It is important to isolate the effect of being elected via quota rules from the effect of being a woman in politics in general. The hypothesis following from these predictions is that lack of competition in the selection process will lead to the election of less qualified politicians and that these politicians will experience great problems in fulfilling their legislative duties. These predictions, however, need to be questioned. As research indicates, both theoretical and empirical competence is highly subjective.

Lenita Freidenvall's interview series with Swedish nomination committee members and political candidates for the general election in 2002 may serve as an example of this (Freidenvall 2006). This study shows that male politicians argued that quotas were 'demeaning' and 'humiliating' and that quota women will get stigmatized in politics, regardless of their individual competence. A conservative nomination committee member expressed this in the following way:

"At the same time I wonder, if I was a woman, how it would feel to be elected due to your gender and not due to your merits. I am convinced that it would feel a lot better to be elected via your merits and not via a quota regulation./.../ Most women argue in this way. The women that I know, that I have met, they want to get elected

on their own accord. They feel their parliamentary career will be tarnished otherwise.” (Interview with a male nomination committee member and a Member of Parliament for the Conservative Party).

Conversely, most of the female nomination committee members, including those in parties without party quota regulations, displayed opposing views. They did not argue in this way. For instance, a female nomination committee member stated:

“Of course women want to become elected on their merits. However, women do have proper qualifications, they have the merits needed. The problem is that they incorporate men’s views on quotas as demeaning. We (women) accept men’s arguments, and then we are back in square one again. They (men) know exactly what to do, and we (women) dance like marionettes around them and, thus, deny our capacity.” (Interview with a female nomination committee member and a former Member of Parliament for the Centre Party).

In a similar vein, a female member of the Social Democratic parliamentary group maintained that the argument that quotas have detrimental effects on competence was a ‘male argument’ and that nobody ever questions men’s competence. In her view, questions such as “what kind of competence is needed, whose competence and who defines what competence is” must be addressed in candidate selection and list composition.

With regard to these predictions, it is, thus, important to stress that women’s political representation and means of increasing it is about representation, not competence. The Swedish zipper system, where women and men are alternated on the party list, also shows that in such fifty-fifty situations, women are no more ‘quota women’ than men are ‘quota men’, since even men are selected on the basis of gender quotas (Freidenvall et al 2006). Research on the nomination process in Sweden also shows that more or less all candidates are selected via some kind of quota system, be it geographical quotas (being the candidate from the northern, southern, etc. area of the constituency), interest quotas (being the trade union candidate), or quotas based on ethnic minorities or young up-and-coming stars (Freidenvall 2006).

The predictions that women will bring different styles and approaches into politics and that women will introduce new policy concerns onto the political agenda target the substantive representation of women and, thus, the idea that the very presence of women in legislatures is important for changing its policies and increasing its range of concerns. It is commonly argued by quota proponents that women by simply being present will shape the political agenda, redefine political priorities and contribute to ‘women-friendly’ legislation and policy outcomes (PP 7-9). These predictions are, of course, very difficult to test empirically, requiring a deep understanding of the complexities of the political process, which many times could be stretched out over many years, even decades and which involves many actors operating at different levels of government and in various arenas, including the non-parliamentary arena. However, as just pointed out, there is no such thing as ‘quota women’, since, for instance, all candidates are elected via the quota system in the parties applying the zipper system.

In her interview series with Swedish Parliamentarians, Lena Wängnerud (2005) posed questions to MPs on their political campaigns and areas of personal interest. One of the theoretical aims of her study was to encapsulate policies that can be expected to increase the autonomy of female citizens, based on the assumption that in order to increase gender equality in society, women’s interests must be voiced. Empirically, the study asked: “do women MPs have an agenda that differs from that of their male colleagues? Are women MPs giving women’s interests a voice?” The MPs were then asked which issues/problems they emphasized the most in the most recent election campaign and which political issue area/s they were personally most interested in. Women’s interests were defined in a broad way, including responses referring to social policy, policy on the family, care of the elderly or health care in their election campaigns.

The study showed that there is link between the sex of the politicians and the extent to which they are engaged in women’s interests. For instance, a higher percentage of female MPs addressed issues of social policy, family policy, care of the elderly and health care in their campaigns (75 percent female MPs compared to 44 percent male MPs), and 52 percent of these women stressed these areas as areas of personal interests, compared to 10 percent men. Even if the gender gaps have decreased over time, the gender differences linger on. Also, more female MPs explicitly mentioned gender equality as a campaign issue, as compared to male MPs. Wängnerud concluded that women MPs are more engaged in this field than men, and without female MPs there is a great risk that issues on gender equality will be silenced.

5.1.3 Women’s symbolic representation

Not all predictions are amenable to empirical testing. The claim that quotas are only treating the symptoms of women’s under-representation and, consequently, will only be a symbolic gesture is one of them (OP13). While gender quotas may not solve all gender related problems in the world, by jumping over the barriers that prevent women from having an equal share of political positions, gender quota provisions may in themselves create a new reality by ensuring more women political positions. However, in order to test the symbolic representation of

women, one suggestion would be to investigate public opinion on gender quotas and their effects, preferably by collecting data on views on gender and gender quotas among members of the general public, parties and politicians, etc. and compare shifting views over time and across groups. This exercise could be undertaken in several ways, such as analyses of media debates on quotas over time, interviews with focus groups, including women, men, majority and minority groups, various age cohorts, etc.

5.2 Rwanda

In the first election after the new constitution of 2003, the Rwandan parliament passed Sweden and became number one on the world rank order of women in parliament with 48.8 percent women in the Chamber of Deputies. In the following election in 2008, Rwanda became the first country in the world with a majority of women in parliament: 56.3 percent women. When discussing various quota predictions in relation to the Rwandan case, one should be aware of the context: a small and poor African country in a complex post-conflict process of reconciliation and democratization after the genocide that exterminated one-seventh of the population. The party system is dominated by one large party, President Kagame's Rwandan Patriotic Front (FPR), which obtained almost 80 percent of the seats in 2008. With its pro-women policy, the FPR has facilitated the engendering of Rwandan politics. Regional African women's organizations also played an important role (Tripp et al 2006). As in the 2003 election, the main opposition parties in exile in Belgium and the Netherlands were not allowed to compete in the 2008 election. In other regards, international observers concluded that the most recent election had been well-prepared, orderly and successful (www.ipu.org).

Women's groups were very actively involved in the reconciliation process. Three women served on the constitutional committee, among them Judith Kanakuze, a well-known front figure for the women's organisation Réseau des Femmes, a women's network for rural organizations (Hansson 2007). The new 2003 constitution stated that at least 30 percent of the seats in the Senate and in the Chamber of Deputies should be reserved for women. The quota system is a *reserved seat system*, based on election, not appointment. Two women are elected from each province, a total of 24 reserved seats in the Chamber of Deputies out of 80 seats. The reserved seats are elected indirectly by a special electoral college consisting of local and district councillors and women's organizations (Constitution of 2003, art. 9 and 76). A few seats are also reserved for young people and for disabled people. The electoral system is PR based. One of the main research findings is that the construction of a quota system is important for the outcome. Did this reserved seat system contribute to the remarkable increase in women's representation in Rwanda?

5.2.1 Nomination and election - women's descriptive representation

Rwanda may be seen as a critical case in relation to several of the predictions outlined in Figure 1. Predictions PP1 and OP1 illustrate a fast track policy and an incremental track policy, based on two contradictory discourses. While the fast track discourse preferred by many quota advocates argues that gender balance will not occur by itself and that active measures are needed, the incremental track discourse rests on the assumption that equality will come about in due time as a country develops and, consequently, affirmative action policies such as quotas are unnecessary and 'unnatural' (Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2005). Since this article is about the evaluation of the effects of gender quotas actually adopted, it seems reasonable to transform OP1 and PP1 into the following question:

Prediction PP1: Gender quotas will result in and are necessary for achieving a rapid increase in women's political representation.

From the growing number of studies that deal with the adoption and implementation of gender quotas, we know that the effect of gender quotas on women's political representation varies depending on a number of factors, such as the level of mobilization around the demand, political will, the type of quota adopted, rules about rank order and sanctions for non-compliance (Dahlerup 2006). For instance, a quota system that is not compatible with the electoral system in a country will leave quota advocates disappointed, since the result can very well be no increase at all, as we have recently seen, though at a different level of representation, in France and Spain (EUPARL 2008; Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2008). In conclusion, the first part of the prediction - that quotas will inevitably lead to a greater number of women in politics - cannot be supported. Consequently, we cannot conclude that electoral gender quotas of all types and in all political systems will lead to an increase in women's political representation. Moreover, gender quotas are not a necessary condition for increasing women representation, as the high representation of women in Denmark and Finland with no quota provisions reveals. However, there are many examples of successful gender quotas that have been able to increase the number of women nominated and elected (Dahlerup 2006; EUPARL 2008). The second part of the prediction - that gender quotas are necessary for a rapid increase - will be discussed here in relation to the Rwandan case (see also the discussion of Sweden above).

In this article we define a leap as an increase of 10 percentage points or more in one election. In comparison, increases in women's representation in the Nordic countries, for a long time alone at the top in terms of women's parliamentary representation, has never exceeded 8-9 percentage points (Freidenvall et al 2006).

Table 5. Women's representation in the Rwandan Chamber of Deputies

Year:	Elect. men	Elect. women	Women MPs in %	Women candidates %
1994	74	19	25.7	N.A
2003	41	39 (RS 24)	48.8	N.A
2008	35	45 (RS 24)	56.3	55.1 %

Source: IPU archive for various elections. RS: Number of women elected to seats reserved for women.

Table 5 shows that the quota provision in the 2003 constitution did result in a leap in women's representation, from 25.7 to 48.8 percent, later to increase to 56.3 percent. A jump of 23 percentage points in one election is exceptional in a global perspective. It should, however, be noted that women's representation was already comparatively high in Rwanda in 1994 with 25.7 percent, as is shown in Table 5 (world average 11.7%, Sub-Saharan average 10.8 % in 1997). Thus, Rwanda is not a country with virtually no women in parliament previously, a situation in which gender quotas might break the first hole in the wall of a deeply rooted tradition - that politics is a business for men - and thus contributing to giving women a head start.

In her study of women in Rwandan politics, Frida Hansson concludes that traditional explanations of culture and socioeconomics are not valid in this case and that even if the change in Rwanda from a majority election system to PR had some impact, the reserved seats for women made almost all the difference (Hansson 2007). It seems reasonable to conclude that the very high women's representation achieved in 2003 and later in 2008 would not have been achieved in Rwanda at this point in history without the quota provision.

Among the predictions in Figure 1, we find the assumption, usually brought up by opponents or critiques of gender quotas but also heard in feminist circles, that quota provisions will come to constitute a glass ceiling, which will tend to prevent women from being nominated and elected to the free, non-reserved seats (OP1b.)

Prediction OP1b: Quota rules will form a glass ceiling, which will prevent women from being nominated and elected to the free seats.

Table 5 shows that the Rwandan case does not support this prediction, since an increasing number of women are being elected beyond the 24 reserved seats, 15 in 2003 and 21 in 2008, almost as many as those elected to reserved seats. However, it is not possible to dismiss totally this concern. In Morocco women's organizations complain that the 30 seats reserved for women in a nation-wide election between female candidates leads to women not being nominated to the party lists – "now women have had their share".² In India research has shown that the 33 percent of seats reserved for women, based on a system of rotating the reserved seats between the wards, leads to many women not standing for election again after their first term, when their seat is no longer reserved for women. However, here, as the argument goes, women do not want to compete against men in such a strong patriarchal gender regime (Dahlerup 2006). In Uganda, the existence of a glass ceiling has been substantiated (Tripp 2000). Obviously, we need longitudinal comparative studies of the effect of reserved seats on the nomination and election of women to free seats.

Many quota opponents argue that with quotas women will obtain seats without deserving them and, further, that women will not want to obtain seats through quotas, which will, as a consequence, diminish the competition for seats (OP4 and OP5). How can this be studied? One key component in this argument seems to be the prediction about lack of competition. Quota women will obtain their seats too easily, it is argued. In order to make sense of these arguments, we would need to compare the degree of competition for all types of seats, including seats heavily occupied by incumbents (usually men). Drude Dahlerup (2007) has suggested that we approach these liberal concerns about (lack of) merit and qualification by converting these into two questions, both concerned with the degree of competition: 1) *Does the quota regime in place guarantee the target group, in this case*

² Personal communication from the leaders of Union de l'Action Féminine, a leading centre-left women's organization in Morocco during the nomination period up to the 2007 election, where only four women were elected in addition to the 30 women elected on the national list for women candidates only.

women, a certain number or percentage of the seats in the political assembly? and, 2) Do individuals from the quota target group receive their positions in political assemblies without any competition?

Only in quota systems based on reserved seats, as in Rwanda, is the answer to the first question yes. All other types of quotas target the aspirants or the candidates to the electoral list, not women's share of those elected. In some cases quota systems remain purely symbolic, with no or very few women being elected at all. As for the second question, Table 1 shows that women candidates in Rwanda's 2008 election made up 55.1 percent of the candidates, almost parallel to their share of those elected, which implies an almost identical success rate for female and male candidates. A closer look at the "quota women" reveals that 134 female candidates competed for the 24 reserved seats in the 2008 election in Rwanda, e.g. more than 5 candidates per seat. Consequently, one cannot say that these female MPs obtained their seats without competition. This involves, however, competition between women only, since male candidates were excluded from running for the 24 reserved seats. However, most elections in the world are de facto limited to competition between men. As mentioned above, the point of reference should be studies of the general level of competition – or lack of competition. We will next address the question of whether the Rwandan system gives women elected to reserved seats a special mandate?

5.2.2 Women's substantive representation

One of the main points of this paper is that women politicians elected to reserved seats ("quota women") meet many contradictory expectations – accused of having shortcomings by liberal opponents, by feminist opponents of quotas and, finally, by feminist quota advocates. According to OP7 quota women tend to be seen as representatives of 'just' women, which is seen in negative terms. The prediction is that this will undermine the effectiveness of women politicians elected on the basis of quotas. Paradoxically, acting on behalf of women is exactly what women's movements want women politicians to do, since, as the argument goes, women lack representation in politics, lack someone who, in Hanna Pitkin's terms, will 'act for' women (PP7-9). But women's groups, and especially feminist groups, are often critical of the fact that women parliamentarians do not, to the extent that the feminist movement expect, see themselves as representatives of women. This tension between women elected as politicians and feminist groups began from the time the first women entered parliament after enfranchisement.

We will argue that the scientific evaluation of the performance of women politicians in general and quota women in particular is also often based on unclear criteria. Sometimes researchers studying the same country offer different results of their evaluations. The discrepancies indicate the use of disparate criteria for these evaluations and reveal the need for theoretical and methodological discussions within this field of study. Rwanda has the highest number of women of any parliament in the world, after 2008 a majority of women. However, even in this case we find different results of scientific evaluations.

Some preliminary points of clarification

Please note that all predictions mentioned in Figure 1 under women's substantive representation concern experiences with women nominated and elected on the basis of gender quotas. Even if PP7-10 and OP7-9 touch upon many essential issues discussed in research on women's political representation in general, the discussion of experiences with electoral gender quotas should be limited to the impact of gender quotas on women's substantive representation. Furthermore, the concept of substantive representation is in need of clarification, and its recent widespread use tends to blur the original meaning from Hanna Pitkin and the one used even here: It involves the degree to which elected female representatives are 'acting for' or see themselves as acting as representatives for women. Thus, substantive representation in this paper is not about equality politics in general ('gender-sensitive' or 'women friendly politics) nor about representation of/acting for women in other fora where representation might occur, such as on school boards, public committees, boards of large private companies. The present discussion is limited to publicly elected political assemblies.

As mentioned above under Sweden, there are considerable difficulties in trying to isolate the effects of quota provisions. Furthermore, it is more or less impossible to tell which women MPs are in fact elected *because of quotas*, unless a public debate about moving specific candidates up on a list has taken place. Usually, the voters and even colleagues in political assemblies are totally unaware of the details of the nomination process in local party organizations. However, the reserved seat system presents a unique opportunity to focus on this problem, since we can identify women that are elected to reserved seats. Which mandate do they (think) they have?

There are different research strategies available. One could conduct surveys among *voters* in order to study their understanding of the mandate of women elected on the basis of various types of quota provisions. One could also analyze the subject position as well as actual political actions of these *women politicians* themselves – compared, for instance, to women elected to free seats and to male politicians, of course. Thirdly, analyses of performance by and influence of women elected on the basis of quotas as compared to their colleagues, female and male, are also an option.

It should be noted that some lines of argument for gender balance in politics do not accept this entire discussion of the extent to which women in politics (or expressed as more women, a critical mass of women or gender balance) will make a difference. Under *the justice argument*, women have a right to half of the seats. Period! Also, the new *discourse of exclusion* wants to redirect the focus away from what women can, will or want - which only fosters serious disagreements among women due to the great diversity among women. Instead, the primary focus should be on the mechanisms of exclusion at work in political life, structural discrimination in society (Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2005; Dahlerup forthcoming). However, as Marian Sawer states, regardless of the scientific discussion, we cannot expect campaigns for more women in politics to give up on the 'making a difference' discourse (Sawer 2000:377).

Research on women in parliament in Rwanda.

For obvious reasons, there is a growing interest in studying the impact of the large influx of women in the Rwandan parliament - one of the smallest parliaments in the world with the world's highest representation of women! From her survey from 2005 with politicians elected to the Rwandan parliament, Helle Schwartz concludes that women MPs tend to be more committed to promoting interests of women than of men. Both men and women politicians agreed that women's priorities were more likely to include education, health, children, basic needs and social issues than those of men. Furthermore, women MPs appeared to have more frequent contact with women's organizations than their male colleagues. Schwartz also compares women elected to reserved seats with women elected to free seats, although the numbers are, as she stresses rather small. Quota women have more contact with women's organizations and "Women elected on quota are vaguely more enthusiastic toward representing women's interests than their female colleagues elected on party lists." (Schwartz 2004:49).

Prediction PP8, PP9 and OP7 reformulated: Women elected/appointed on the basis of reserved seat quotas tend to see themselves as representatives of other women and of women's organizations to a greater degree than women elected to free seats in the same parliament.

It is hard to isolate the effects of being elected on the basis of quotas from all other factors, however Rwanda makes a comparison between quota women and women elected to free seats possible. Even if this hypothesis seems supported by the Rwandan case, some qualifications are necessary. Reserved seat systems vary. Within this category, we find important differences in the system of election, which might influence the validity of these predictions. In Uganda, 56 seats in a parliament of 305 members are reserved for District Women Representatives. These were previously indirectly elected, however since 2006 they are elected by all voters on a special ballot in each district for women candidates only (www.quotaproject.org). In contrast, women elected to the Rwandan seats reserved are elected by women organizations, which might make a difference for their inclination to see themselves as representatives of women.

Researchers have shown the importance of the large number of women politicians in Rwanda for changing the public agenda and the political agenda in parliament (PP8) as well as for recent legislation (PP9). New laws have been passed on women's and girl's right to inherited land reform, on the protection of children and on violence against women. In these cases women politicians in Rwanda's parliament have been proactive (Bauer 2008; Powley 2008). With the leap in women's representation, Rwanda lends support to the common, though methodologically dubious, argument that it takes a critical mass of women to make a difference (P10, see Dahlerup 2008).

However, several central methodological problems remain when discussing the Rwandan experience in relation to the above mentioned predictions. All of the women parliamentarians have worked together for these reforms in the Forum for Rwandan Women parliamentarians (FFRP), which renders it impossible to distinguish clearly between women parliamentarians based on their electoral base. Furthermore, is advocating children's rights a case of 'acting for' women? According to Elizabeth Powley's research, "female parliamentarians in Rwanda are seen by colleagues as the "natural" guardians of children's rights because of their experience as mothers. They have used this presumed moral authority to mobilize support for children's protection" (2008:5). This implies that the general gender regime and gendered discourses are important for the performance and evaluation of women parliamentarians. In contemporary Western countries such a maternalistic argument is rather uncommon today. How women politicians are understood and how they understand themselves can be seen as an empirical question, always historically contingent.

In their study of the effects of increased female representation based on interviews, Claire Devlin & Robert Elgie find mixed results. Women politicians in Rwanda have a greater concern for grassroots politics, but they have not changed the working hours or calendar of parliament. In general, with the many women MPs, women's issues are raised more easily and more often and there has been strong support for 'international feminism' among the deputies. Devlin & Elgie point out that gender issues seem to have been established as part of the agenda prior to the increase in the number of women, in fact to a large degree from the very beginning of

parliamentary politics in Rwanda in 1994. They, thus, rightly turn the discussion from one of the effect of the increasing number of women in parliament to the dynamic process of engendering politics in Rwanda after the genocide. But they also argue that the policy effect has been limited – following the evidence, they argue on the basis of previous studies that “policy output is the area most resistant to gender effects” (p.11). However, a gender agenda was now perceived to be ‘guaranteed’ by the presence of more women (2008).

While praising the legislative successes of women in Rwanda’s parliament, Elisabeth Powley, perhaps surprisingly, concludes, that “their presence has yet to transform society” (2008:18). One of the reasons given by Powley is the huge gap between legislation and implementation in Rwanda. This is, of course, crucial but a problem for all legislation in Rwanda. In general, we cannot judge women politicians on their capacity to radically transform society alone – a goal many of them may not even share. One may also ask if the many women in Rwandan politics have not changed society by just being there (symbolic representation).

Stigmatization of women elected on the basis of quotas?

Many arguments against gender quotas revolve around the question of the status of women elected on the basis of quota provisions. These categories of arguments may be translated into a fear of stigmatization of women elected or appointed as ‘quota women’, see OP8 in Figure 1.

The focus here is the political arena as a workplace and the effectiveness of elected women in working in that arena if elected on the basis of some quota provision. One might define the effectiveness of women politicians as their ability to perform their tasks as elected representatives in the way they themselves want, feminists or not. Does being elected as a ‘quota woman’ diminish the effectiveness of a women politician? Does it involve some kind of stigmatization that entails losing status? The focus here is the institutional routines, norms and culture that frame women’s and men’s abilities to actually work as politicians, to form alliances within and outside parliament. In contrast to Sweden, we have in Rwanda’s case a distinguishable group of women MPs, the 24 elected to reserved seats. The question is:

Prediction OP8 reformulated:

Women who are elected to a distinguishable gender quota seat are exposed to a certain kind of stigmatization that diminishes their power.

No such stigmatization has been demonstrated by the research on women in Rwandan politics. Rather, these women MPs are seen as being especially accountable to women and children. It should be mentioned that the Speaker of the House is herself elected to a reserved seats. For empirical testing, interviews with women politicians and their colleagues (males and females) in countries or parties operating quota systems as well as surveys among voters would seem to be relevant methods. Comparison with other groups elected on the basis of quotas could also be relevant. Or is it only quotas for women that creates these sentiments?

Our research so far on the issue of stigmatization of quota politicians has shown that most cases of stigmatization seem to occur when only a few women are elected and mostly in countries characterised by a general hostility towards women politicians. But the very construction of the quota regulation may, in fact, influence the status of women politicians. If a quota system is constructed in such a way that ‘quota women’ do not have a constituency of their own, their status and room for manoeuvre may diminish (Dahlerup 2006).

“Token women” and “proxy women”.

‘Tokenism’ is especially feared when quotas are introduced as reserved seats, but even voluntary party quotas are sometimes met with this suspicion. In an African context, many opponents of gender quotas, even among feminists, believe the practice leads to tokenism and can become yet another mechanism in the service of patronage politics. There is a concern that the women elected will not be qualified and, therefore, will be unable to work the system (Tripp, Dior & Lowe-Morna 2006, see also International IDEA 2004). In Egypt, where gender quotas were in practice for a shorter period of time in the 1970s and 80s, the women elected on the basis of quotas were heavily criticized, not least by the women’s movement (Abou-Zeid 2006). This critical prediction that quotas will lead to the election of token women derives partly from feminist circles, which fear that gender quotas will be counter-productive as an equality policy. Other opponents just predict that quota women will be less competent, less independent and may just be stand-ins (“proxies”) for their husbands.

An attempt to test these predictions in relation to the case of Rwanda quickly reveals that many different assumptions are involved. One is that women elected on the basis of quotas are too dependent on their husbands and fathers, a theme which has been central to the discussion of the more than 1 million new women serving on local councils. Another is that women politicians are too dependent on networks and family ties. The relatively large number of women in top positions in South Asia and South East Asia have brought this discussion to the surface (forgetting that most men also obtain their positions because of family ties!). Thirdly, however, it is also said that women politicians elected on the basis of quotas are too dependent on the party

leadership, which demands loyalty in return as a payment for the seat. Research on Rwanda has pointed to this concern, which may be formulated in the following way for empirical testing:

Prediction OP9 reformulated: Women who are elected to a distinguishable gender quota seat tend to be more dependent on the party leadership than other MPs.

Timothy Longman asks whether the many female politicians in Rwanda represent equality having been achieved or whether they are “serving an Authoritarian State?” (2006). This is a highly relevant question, which is also asked in South Asia and in many other parts of the world – even in the British Labour party with regard to the nickname of many new Labour parliamentarians: “Blair’s Babes”. However, it seems relevant to issue a warning against double standards. A comparison with other parliamentarians and their relationship to the party leadership seems to be the only way ahead. Feminist movements tend to want purely feminist, totally party independent women MPs – which are not in existence anywhere on the globe!

Because of the dominant position of one party - the FPR - in Rwanda, most women MPs come from this party. In fact, it may be easier for women’s groups to gain influence within a dominant party, where you do not have to begin by crossing party lines in order to start a process for new equality legislation. We have seen this in the cases of the ANC in South Africa as well as previously in the Social Democratic Party in Sweden.

In addition to Rwanda, women elected to reserved seats in Uganda and the ‘National List’ in Morocco are accused of being too dependent on the political parties and the party leadership that nominated them. There may be some truth to this, however even here double standards are involved. It is a fact that in every party-controlled political system, all of the candidates are dependent on the party leadership, be it local or national, for their nomination. The political parties are the gatekeepers to political representation – even for men. In these cases, women politicians are no more ‘tokens’ than their male colleagues, and quotas do not alter this. Within most electoral systems there are many incumbents and many safe seats. Most of these safe seats are occupied by men, who owe their positions to the nominating party organization.

Again, the construction of the quota systems seems crucial. The most important may be whether those elected have a constituency of their own to relate to, to represent and to be accountable to. There will probably be an increased risk of dependency when a quota system is based on appointment rather than election. Consequently, the new trend for reserved seats to come increasingly in the form of elected seats can be important for the future.

5.2.3 Symbolic representation

The concept of symbolic representation touches upon crucial aspects of representative democracy: the voters’ feeling of being represented, the legitimacy of the political institutions and the importance of inclusion for the functioning of democracy and for processes of democratization (PP11-12, OP11-13).

Even if most of these questions are far too complex for simple empirical testing, the case of Rwanda can speak to some of them. The demand for gender balance in Rwandan politics, which has also been extended to local offices, may be seen as an integrated part of the reconciliation process in Rwanda, and in this case it is hard to imagine this process including ethnicity but not gender – even if that has been the norm thus far. Instead of seeing the demands for gender balance as a further ‘balkanization’, another example of interest group claims (OP12), engendering was an integrated part of the reconciliation. The active involvement of women’s groups across ethnic lines may have been positive for the process.

While women previously had to accept being excluded from processes of reconciliation and constitution building, today women’s organizations demand inclusion and, to an increasing extent, also gain access during the process of democratization, supported by the international community, the international feminist movement and UN resolution 1325. The new discourse of inclusion points to the importance of the inclusion of women for the legitimacy of political institutions and for the process of democratization (Dahlerup forthcoming).

6. Conclusions

Quota discourses have been the focus of most of the growing literature on gender quotas. While this research remains important, there is a need for research that confronts the predictions embedded in quota discourses with lived experiences and actual effects. It is time to study the extent to which the predictions of quota opponents and quota proponents are coming true. In this paper, predictions are scrutinized and suggestions for further studies are made in order to advance this field of research. The study of actual experiences with quotas in the two selected cases, Sweden and Rwanda, has revealed considerable variations in the impact of gender quotas, and has confirmed the crucial importance of the different quota types. Many of the quota predictions heard in the public debate are no doubt too general and too imprecise to form a firm base for decisions about whether to introduce gender quotas or not.

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