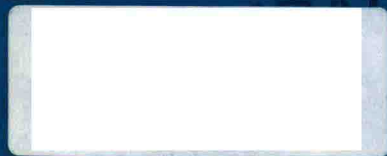


THE IMPACT OF GENDER QUOTAS

Edited by
Susan Franceschet,
Mona Lena Krook,
and Jennifer M. Piscopo

Preface by
Drude Dahlerup



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Edited by

Susan Franceschet

University of Calgary

Mona Lena Krook

Washington University in St. Louis

Jennifer M. Piscopo

Salem College

OXFORD

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The Impact of Gender Quotas

Preface

Drude Dahlerup

Twenty years ago, no one would have imagined the rapid diffusion of electoral gender quotas that we have witnessed during the past decades. In all types of political systems and in all major regions of the world, gender quotas are now being adopted in order to rapidly change women's historical underrepresentation. Everywhere gender quotas stir important debates about why women are still underrepresented, since quotas touch upon so many important themes in feminist theory and in theories of democracy and representation.

Even if politics is still highly male-dominated—with 81 percent of the parliamentarians in the world in 2011 being men—and even if only a few quota systems aim as high as gender balance, the introduction of gender quotas in politics has no doubt increased women's representation worldwide. In some countries, such as Rwanda, Argentina, South Africa, and Costa Rica, gender quotas have even led to historical leaps in the presence of women in parliaments and in regional and local assemblies, leaps unheard of in the Scandinavian countries that were previously alone at the top of the world ranking of women's political representation.

As of spring 2011, fifty-two countries have introduced gender quotas in elections by law. In approximately forty other countries, at least some of the political parties have voluntarily introduced gender quotas for their own candidate lists (see www.quotaproject.org). More countries and individual parties are joining the quota family every year. Quotas represent a fast-track policy measure, in contrast to the well-known incremental-track model according to which gender equality will come in due time as a country develops.

In a way, gender quotas are a simple answer to a very complex problem, namely that of women's historical exclusion from political life. Perhaps quotas have become so popular and at the same time so controversial precisely because quota provisions set up an easily identifiable target by requiring a certain number of candidates of each sex (in the case of candidate quotas, whether they are legislated or voluntary) or a certain number of women being elected (in the case of reserved seats). It is easy to observe whether the prescribed aim is met. However, it is more complicated to evaluate the broader effects of electoral gender quotas, especially in a middle-range or long-range perspective.

This volume breaks new ground in quota research. In general, the rapid diffusion of electoral gender quotas has spurred research on gender quotas as a new field within gender and politics research. Quota research has targeted a number of issues, such as quota discourses, variations in quota design, the diffusion of quotas, and the implementation process. However, it is difficult to isolate the effects of gender quotas *per se*, which may be the reason for the lack of comparative studies on the effects of gender quotas in a broader perspective than just that of numbers. This volume represents a much-needed study based on just such a perspective.

There is no general agreement among quota researchers regarding the effects of electoral gender quotas. Different results may derive not only from different country cases but also from the use of disparate criteria for evaluation. This carefully edited volume brings together twelve in-depth case studies from four regions in the world. The book takes this field of research a large step forward by basing it on the development of common concepts, indicators, and criteria for evaluation. Which "effects" should be looked for, in both a short-term and a long-term perspective? What do we know about the effects of gender quotas? How should we evaluate the effects of various types of gender quota regimes on women's descriptive, substantive, and symbolic representation? The editors refer to this as a "theory-building exercise." And that is exactly what makes this book so exciting to read.

Acknowledgments

The introduction of electoral gender quotas in diverse contexts around the globe has attracted a great deal of scholarly and political interest. To date, research on these measures has focused primarily on their design, adoption, and effects on the numbers of women elected. While this remains a crucial focus, especially as additional countries implement quotas and revise existing policies to make them more effective, it is also important to recognize that quotas are not simply about changing the proportion of women in political office. Both supporters and opponents of quotas suggest, albeit from different perspectives, that positive action for women in candidate selection will influence the kinds of women elected, the policy-making process as it concerns women's issues, views of the general public toward women in public life, and the relationship between female citizens and the political process. Seeking to initiate a "second generation" of research on quotas, this volume represents a collective effort by its contributors to inspire a new literature focused on theorizing and studying their broader impact on politics and society.

The idea for this book emerged in 2008 during discussions among the three coeditors that later expanded to a broader group of scholars through a series of panels organized at the annual conferences of the American Political Science Association in 2008 and 2009, the Midwest Political Science Association in 2008 and 2009, and the European Consortium for Political Research in 2009. The editors would like to thank the contributors, first and foremost, for their willingness to write chapters for this volume and to participate in a broader discussion of the potential impact of quotas on a wide range of existing political dynamics. Their innovative work ranks among the most cutting-edge scholarship in this area to date. In addition, participants in the conference panels offered helpful feedback on many of the chapters, and, in particular, we would like to thank Lisa Baldez, Gretchen Bauer, Karen Bird, Richard Matland, Mark Jones, Leslie Schwindt-Bayer, Aili Mari Tripp, and Celia Valiente. Drude Dahlerup graciously agreed to write the preface to the volume and has provided generous support for the project as a whole. The enthusiastic encouragement of Angela Chnapko at Oxford University Press was also instrumental in helping to move from the initial idea to the book proposal to the final manuscript.

In addition to supporting travel to conferences, the editors' three institutions—the University of Calgary, Washington University in St. Louis, and the University of California, San Diego—provided funds and space for a face-to-face meeting of the editors in San Diego in November 2009. Further, Susan Franceschet would like to

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INTRODUCTION

1 Conceptualizing the Impact of Gender Quotas

Susan Franceschet, Mona Lena Krook,
and Jennifer M. Piscopo

The past two decades have witnessed unprecedented gains in women's access to elected office. This trend has occurred across all major world regions, leading to dramatic increases in the percentage of women in national parliaments in countries as diverse as Rwanda, Sweden, Argentina, and Nepal. A major reason for these shifts has been the adoption of gender quotas aimed at increasing the proportion of female candidates for political office. While they take various forms, such measures now exist in more than one hundred countries, with the overwhelming majority appearing in just the last fifteen years. The recent and global nature of these developments has sparked both scholarly and popular interest in their design, origins, and mixed effects on women's political presence (Dahlerup 2006b; Krook 2009).

While such questions remain crucially important, the spread of quotas is not simply linked to efforts to increase the numbers of women in elected office. Advocates suggest that such measures will diversify the types of women elected, raise attention to women's issues in policy making, change the gendered nature of the public sphere, and inspire female voters to become more politically involved. At the same time, opponents say that quotas will facilitate access for "unqualified" women with little interest in promoting women's concerns, reinforce stereotypes about women's inferiority as political actors, and deter ordinary women's political participation. Such contrasting expectations indicate that quotas may have a host of positive and negative effects, above and beyond their impact on women's numerical representation. However, the empirical validity of these claims has not yet been systematically addressed (Dahlerup 2008; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Sacchet 2008; Zetterberg 2009).

This volume forges a new research agenda by presenting common concepts for analyzing quota impact, developed and illustrated through in-depth case studies from four regions of the world: Western Europe, Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia and the Middle East. The book organizes quota effects in relation to three facets of political representation: *descriptive representation*, the basic attributes of those elected; *substantive representation*, attention to group interests in policy making; and *symbolic representation*, the cultural meanings and ramifications of the representative process (Pitkin 1967; Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005). Closer examination of how quotas shape patterns of representation can reveal whether quotas achieve the ends anticipated by their advocates—or those feared by their opponents. It also provides an opportunity to link otherwise disparate literatures in political science by considering how electoral reforms affect trends in candidate recruitment and preparedness, policy-making processes, and public opinion and mass mobilization.

A large body of research analyzes gender and political representation. However, a key starting point in this book is that quotas may interfere with existing gendered dynamics. On the one hand, the public controversies surrounding quota adoption may shape expectations about who “quota women” are and what they will do once they reach political office. On the other hand, the varied design of quota policies and rates of quota implementation suggest that these measures are likely to have diverse effects on the composition of political elites. These patterns, in turn, may influence the capacities of quota women to pursue legislative change and may shape the broader meaning of quotas for democratic legitimacy and women’s political empowerment. This volume therefore asks whether the *means* by which women enter politics influence *how*, *why*, and *to what extent* their presence affects different types of representative processes, exploring the conditions under which various scenarios are likely to occur.

To set out this collective theory-building enterprise, this chapter begins by briefly summarizing quota policies around the world and research on their introduction and numerical effects. The second section outlines major theories and findings regarding women’s descriptive, substantive, and symbolic representation. The third section draws these two literatures together, reviewing the preliminary evidence on 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 and the case studies in this volume, the fourth section establishes definitions for theorizing and operationalizing quota impact with respect to these three facets of political representation. The section concludes with an overview of the following chapters, noting how the authors operationalize these questions and how they relate to one another. Taken together, the chapters suggest a rich and wide-ranging scholarly and political agenda, focused on ensuring that quotas combat, rather than perpetuate, existing patterns of domination and inequality.

GENDER QUOTAS: GLOBAL PATTERNS

The global diffusion of gender quotas to diverse contexts has met with intense interest among feminist scholars, who generally recognize three basic types: reserved seats, party quotas, and legislative quotas (Krook 2009). Some exclude reserved seats on the

grounds that these provisions do not influence candidate nomination processes but make specific guarantees regarding who may accede to political office (Dahlerup 2006a). Others divide party quotas into two types: aspirant quotas, which affect pre-selection processes by establishing that only women may be considered, and candidate quotas, which require that parties select a particular proportion of women (Matland 2006). Still others draw distinctions among various kinds of legislative quotas, separating out those instituted through changes to electoral laws from those secured through constitutional reforms (Dahlerup 2006b; Dahlerup 2007). This book uses the term *quotas* to refer to all of these policies, which, irrespective of their mode of intervention or legal status, share the goal of increasing the number 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* exist in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. They emerged in the 1930s and were the main type of quota adopted through the 1970s but, since 2000, have appeared increasingly in countries with low numbers of women in politics. Reserved seats mandate a minimum number of female legislators and are typically established through reforms to constitutions and electoral laws. *Party quotas* were initially adopted in the early 1970s by 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. They are adopted voluntarily by individual parties that commit to aim for a certain proportion of women among their candidates. *Legislative quotas*, finally, tend to be found in developing countries, especially in Latin America, and in postconflict societies, primarily in Africa, the Middle East, and southeastern Europe. They appeared first only in the 1990s, as women's representation became a priority of many international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Krook 2006). Enacted through legal and sometimes constitutional reforms, they constitute mandatory provisions applying to all parties.

Quota Adoption

Scholars offer four explanations for how quotas have reached the political agenda. The first is that women mobilize for quotas because they believe that equal representation is needed to promote justice and women's interests but will be achieved only through targeted actions to promote female candidates (Krook 2006). A second account is that elites adopt quotas for strategic reasons, both in competition with other parties and in efforts to maintain control over rivals inside the party (Baldez 2004; Chowdhury 2002; Meier 2004). A third is that quotas are adopted when they mesh with party- and country-specific norms. Left-wing parties are generally more open to quotas because these match their goals of equality (Opello 2006), while in some countries, gender quotas are viewed as similar to guarantees given to other groups

based on linguistic, religious, racial, and other cleavages (Inhetveen 1999). A fourth story is that quotas are supported by international norms and spread through transnational sharing, primarily via declarations by international organizations recommending that member states aim for 30 percent women in all political bodies (Krook 2006). In practice, components of these four explanations tend to combine in individual cases of quota reform (Krook 2009). Yet how quotas reach the agenda may have important implications for their perceived legitimacy and their potential to alter dynamics of political representation.

Quota Implementation

Despite their stated goal to improve women's political presence, some countries have witnessed dramatic gains following quota adoption, while others have seen modest changes or even setbacks in the numbers of women elected. One reason for cross-national variations relates to the details of individual measures, for example their wording (Htun 2002), requirements (Meier 2004), sanctions (Murray 2004), and perceived legitimacy (Yoon 2001). A second concerns the fit between quotas and other political institutions. Quotas often have the greatest impact in countries with proportional-representation (PR) electoral systems, particularly when combined with closed party lists and high district magnitudes (Caul 1999; Htun and Jones 2002). Quotas also tend to improve women's representation in parties with left-wing ideologies (Kittilson 2006) and in countries where the political culture emphasizes sexual difference and group representation (Inhetveen 1999; Meier 2000). A third account points to the importance of political will. In a number of cases, elites take steps to mitigate quota impact, ranging from passive refusal to enforce quotas to more active measures, including electoral fraud, to subvert their effects (Costa Benavides 2003). However, other actors may also play a direct or indirect role in enforcing quota provisions, including women's organizations (Sainsbury 1993), courts (Jones 2004), and ordinary citizens (Baldez 2004). In most instances, these three components work together, shaping the implementation process. By the same token, the mechanisms by which quotas are translated into practice have ramifications for who gains election through quotas and thus the degree to which their presence may or may not transform politics as usual.

In sum, gender quotas differ in how they intervene in the electoral process. First, these mechanisms take various forms: reserved seats, party rules, or legislative mandates. Second, quotas restructure elections in numerous ways; for instance, they can require special slates of candidates or stipulate new nomination and oversight procedures. Third, they trigger multiple favorable and unfavorable reactions among political elites, civil society groups, and voters. These details must be accounted for as scholars explore quota impact—a point emphasized by this volume's case studies.

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, which addresses women's descriptive representation, has received by far the most attention in comparative work, given that it is relatively straightforward to compare the percentages of women in legislatures across countries. The second, which analyzes substantive representation, has been the focus of some comparative analyses and a large body of single case studies, the latter because monitoring the effects of women's presence requires in-depth study of policy-making processes. Comparative studies of the third, in contrast, are much less common, as symbolic representation is often the least tangible outcome to study, creating difficulties with operationalization, measurement, and effects.

Descriptive Representation

Empirical studies of women's descriptive representation have primarily sought to account for cross-national variations in women's access to political office. Researchers have explored the impact of three categories of variables: institutional or "demand side" factors, such as electoral rules and candidate selection procedures; structural factors affecting the "supply" of female candidates, such as the proportion of women in the workforce and women's educational achievements; and cultural or ideational factors, such as beliefs about equality or the suitability of women for leadership roles. While mixed, the findings of large-*n* statistical analyses and small-*n* case studies signal the importance of dynamic relationships among these variables.

In terms of institutional factors, the percentage of women tends to be higher in countries with PR electoral systems than in those with majoritarian electoral arrangements (McAllister and Studlar 2002). In the latter, candidate selection can be viewed as a zero-sum game in which women and men compete for a single nomination. PR systems, in contrast, are organized around multimember districts. As district magnitude increases, parties can perceive advantages to placing at least some female names on the list. Opportunities for women to be elected are often enhanced when closed lists are used, as party leaders can place women in electable positions, in contrast with open lists where voters select individual names (Caul 1999). Nomination procedures also matter: they may be patronage-based or follow a bureaucratic logic (Norris 1997) and may involve decision making by party leaders or local constituency organizations (Caul 1999). In general, women tend to fare better in systems with clear and centralized rules (Lovenduski and Norris 1993).

Examining structural factors, many studies observe strong correlations between women's legislative presence and women's rates of education and labor force participation (McDonagh 2002) and levels of national development (Matland 1998). Scholars attribute these effects to modernization processes that help women move into higher social and economic roles, thus creating a greater "supply" of women to enter electoral politics. Finally, in terms of ideational variables, research uncovers close connections with cultural attitudes toward equality. 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). These patterns suggest that changing ideas about gender roles are closely associated with women's increased access to elected office.