

Candidate gender quotas: A framework for analysis

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Abstract. Quotas for women in politics have diffused rapidly around the globe in recent years, with political parties and national legislatures in more than a hundred countries adopting – or debating the adoption of – reserved seats, party quotas or legislative quotas to increase the selection of female candidates to political office. These developments have sparked an explosion of research on candidate gender quotas. However most of this work focuses on single cases and reflects little awareness of developments in other countries around the world. As a result, the findings in one case are often contradicted in other studies, revealing few clear patterns with regard to the origins and outcomes of gender quota policies. To foster a more cumulative research agenda, this article approaches quotas as a global phenomenon and elaborates a framework for analyzing and comparing the actors, motivations and contexts at work in specific quota reforms.

Quotas for women in politics have diffused rapidly around the world in recent years, with political parties and national legislatures in more than a hundred countries adopting – or debating the adoption of – quotas for the selection of female candidates.¹ These policies encompass three types of measures: reserved seats, which set aside a certain number of positions for women among elected representatives through constitutional reforms; party quotas, which aim to increase the proportion of women among a particular party's candidates through party reforms; and legislative quotas, which require parties to nominate a certain proportion of women among their candidates through constitutional or legal reforms.² The quick spread of these provisions, most of which have appeared only over the last decade, has sparked a literal explosion of research on candidate gender quotas. This growing body of work, however, focuses almost exclusively on single cases and reflects little awareness of developments in other countries around the world (for partial exceptions, see Lovenduski 2005; Dahlerup 2006.) As a result, the findings in one case are often contradicted in other studies, revealing – at least initially – no clear patterns with regard to the origins and outcomes of gender quota policies.

The lack of a comparative perspective on candidate gender quotas is consistent with the region- and time-specific nature of most research on women in politics. While such an approach is vital for mapping gendered interactions in political life, it also leads scholars to draw quite distinct conclusions regarding

general trends. Addressing shifts in political representation in recent years, for example, studies on advanced industrial democracies find that changes in the number of women occur in a largely linear fashion (Caul 2001b; McAllister & Studlar 2002; Siaroff 2000), while research on Latin America and Africa notes modest to significant increases in women's representation (Htun & Jones 2002; Tripp 2001), and work on Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union points to major decreases in the proportion of women in national assemblies (Matland & Montgomery 2003; Nechemias 1994). Actual patterns become clear only when viewed in global terms and, indeed, indicate noticeable shifts in women's representation over the last twenty years: whereas in 1987 the nine countries in the world with the highest proportions of women came from two recognizable groups – the Nordic region and the Communist Bloc (United Nations Office at Vienna 1992: 12) – by 2007 the top nine countries had grown much more diverse to include one African country, four Nordic countries, two continental European countries, one Latin American country and one Communist country (IPU 2007). These developments highlight the limits of generalizations drawn from the study of single cases, but also signal the need to consider new factors that might explain these dramatic patterns of change.

At first glance, these shifts seem to coincide with the adoption of candidate gender quotas around the globe as quotas have appeared in countries in all major world regions with a broad range of institutional, social, economic and cultural characteristics. The effect of quota policies, however, is not entirely straightforward: some countries have experienced strong increases following the adoption of new quota regulations, while others have seen more modest changes or even setbacks in the proportion of women elected to national assemblies (Krook 2005). The current focus on single countries offers little leverage on these variations as scholars tend to focus on the idiosyncrasies of individual quota campaigns without subjecting their conclusions to the details of other cases. As such, they simply cannot distinguish between the features that are common to many quota debates and those that are unique to their particular case. Furthermore, they may overlook certain actors and strategies that were in fact important to quota adoption, but not part of the common story of quota adoption in that country, as well as specific features of the political context that are crucial to quota implementation, but currently subsumed under more nebulous explanations like 'political will'. Correcting these accounts, therefore, is imperative not only for informing future quota campaigns, but also for making existing quota policies more effective.

To promote greater awareness of other cases in research on candidate gender quotas, I draw on existing work to elaborate a framework for analysis that outlines the range of actors, motivations and contexts involved in quota reforms. Juxtaposed, these studies suggest that there is no single model of

quota adoption and implementation. All the same, diversity across cases is limited: similar dynamics appear in many, but not all, quota campaigns. To make this complexity more manageable, I review the literature to identify causal narratives that appear across many studies. I then transform these narratives into a template of elements to consider when analyzing quota policies. With the help of this approach, I perceive four common stories as to how and why quotas are adopted, which I sort into three groups of actors potentially involved in quota campaigns, as well as a long list of possible motivations for quota reform. I also discover three basic accounts as to why some quota policies are more effective than others in facilitating women's access to political office, which I organize into three categories of factors shaping quota impact. Given its roots in conflicting assessments, the goal of this exercise is not to present a single unified framework for all quota campaigns, but rather to map the universe of actors, motivations and contexts that influence quota adoption and implementation across various cases. Its primary aim, therefore, is to call attention to factors that might be overlooked in any particular case study, even as it recognizes that not all elements will be relevant in every single instance. A related advantage, however, is that explicit attention to the full range of diversity within these various dimensions will enable scholars more readily to identify similarities and differences between their studies and the findings of other cases. The framework thus offers concrete tools for initiating comparative studies of quota adoption and implementation, in this way taking the first steps towards a more cumulative research agenda.

Four stories on quota adoption

Research on candidate gender quotas offers four basic stories to explain quota adoption: women mobilize for quotas to increase women's representation; political elites recognize strategic advantages for pursuing quotas; quotas are consistent with existing or emerging notions of equality and representation; and quotas are supported by international norms and spread through transnational sharing. Taken together, these narratives present conflicting views on the actors involved in quota campaigns, as well as their motivations in pressing for quota reforms. Even more seriously, each rests on evidence from some cases that is contradicted by details from others. Allowing for diversity among cases, however, these four stories identify a range of local, national, international and transnational actors involved in individual quota campaigns, as well as numerous motivations that lead these actors to support or oppose quotas as measures for increasing the proportion of women in political office.

Women mobilize for quotas to increase women's representation

The most ubiquitous narrative on quota adoption views women as the source of quota proposals. Scholars telling this story argue that efforts to promote female candidates never occur without the prior mobilization of women, even when male elites are ultimately responsible for the decision to establish quotas, and usually emerge when women perceive quotas as an effective – and perhaps the only – means for increasing women's political representation. The literature, however, specifies various groups of women responsible for articulating quota demands, including grassroots women's movements who work both nationally and internationally to promote women's political participation (Baldez 2004a; Bih-er et al. 1990; Lokar 2003; Schmidt 2003b; Tripp 2003); cross-partisan networks among women who make connections with each other through national and international women's gatherings, or through transnational women's networks, to exchange information on successful strategies for increasing women's representation (Bruhn 2003; Lubertino Beltrán 1992; Myakayaka-Manzini 2002); women's organizations inside political parties who propose specific quota policies or draw on gains made by women in other parties to press for changes within their own parties (Connell 1998; Christensen 1999; Luciak 1998; Tripp 2001); individual women inside political parties who lobby male leaders to promote female candidates (Abou-Zeid 2003; Araújo 2003; Bonder & Nari 1995; Caul 2001a); and women involved with the national women's machinery who support gender quotas as a means of accomplishing their broader goal of women-friendly policy change (Chama 2001; Costa Benavides 2003; García Quesada 2003).

While efforts to nominate more women hardly ever occur in the absence of women's mobilization, these accounts often gloss over the many women who oppose quota policies. According to a smaller group of studies, women as a group are in fact frequently divided as to the desirability of gender quotas. Indeed, several find that some of the strongest opposition comes from feminists, both inside and outside the political parties, who argue that quotas do not further the cause of female empowerment (Amar 1999; Huang 2002; Kishwar 1998). This resistance takes on a variety of different forms, ranging from limited mobilization by grassroots women's groups to active denunciations by prominent female politicians (Badinter 1996; García Quesada 2003; Mar'iyah 2002). Other individual scholars point out that even in cases where a large number of women do support quotas their proposals rarely gain consideration until they are embraced by at least one well-placed elite man who pressures his own party, or his own colleagues in parliament, to approve quotas for women (Schmidt 2003a). These insights may be more broadly valid: before such leaders come out in favor of quotas, such measures are often ridiculed as a

demand made by a few radicals who are out of touch with more moderate women.

Political elites recognize strategic advantages for pursuing quotas

A second common account focuses on political elites and the strategic advantages they perceive for adopting gender quotas. This work observes that political parties typically adopt quotas after one of their rivals establishes them (Davidson-Schmich 2006; Matland & Studlar 1996; Wängnerud 2001). These tendencies are especially strong in cases where parties seek to overcome a long period in opposition or a dramatic decrease in popularity by closing a gap in support among female voters (Kolinsky 1991; Perrigo 1996; Stevenson 2000). They also appear as part of attempts to overcome a perceived crisis in representation (Costa Benavides 2003; Varikas 1995; Yáñez 2003) or to sustain an existing regime (Durrieu 1999; Howard-Merriam 1990; Rai 2002). In many of these scenarios, however, quotas become empty gestures as they offer a relatively easy way of demonstrating commitment to women's rights without necessarily altering existing patterns of political representation (Araújo 2003; Craske 1999; Htun & Jones 2002; Jenkins 1999; Mossuz-Lavau 1998). In other instances, they serve non-electoral ends as a means to consolidate control over party representatives and political rivals. For these elites, quotas are attractive because they enable them to hand-pick 'malleable' women who will not challenge the patriarchal status quo (Goetz & Hassim 2003), to institutionalize procedures for candidate selection that enforce central party decisions (Baldez 2004a; Bruhn 2003), or – in countries with reserved seats – to build alliances with potential coalition partners or to strengthen their base in parliament (Chowdhury 2002; Shaheed et al. 1998).

While a great deal of evidence supports the argument that elites respond to strategic incentives when they adopt gender quotas, most of these accounts do not consider instances where quotas meet with strong opposition from party leaders and male politicians (Haug 1995; Huang 2002). Rather than outspoken and pragmatic convergence, some elites abstain from taking public positions on quotas (Sgier 2003), adopt quotas but do not publicize this policy widely (Bruhn 2003), or engage in acrimonious debate within and across their own parties as to the desirability of quotas (Scott 1998; Squires 1996). A limited number of studies cast further doubt on the general applicability of these purported incentives. They find that competition among parties may work against the selection of female candidates, as parties uncertain about electoral outcomes fall back on more traditional male politicians (Green 2003; Randall 1982; Stevenson 2000). At the same time, lack of party competition may sometimes facilitate women's recruitment, as when single party regimes draw on

inclusion as a way to gain social legitimacy (Goetz & Hassim 2003; Nechemias 1994). In other cases, elites appear to act more from normative rather than strategic concerns to improve women's access to political office by engaging in repeated attempts to institute or extend quota policies (Araújo 2003; Meier 2004; Mossuz-Lavau 1998; Stevenson 2000). Finally, some evidence suggests that elites do not always espouse quotas in efforts to consolidate control, but rather in response to internal party struggles initiated among the rank-and-file (Bruhn 2003; Caul 2001a; Krook 2002).

Quotas are consistent with existing or emerging notions of equality and representation

A third story treats quotas as an extension of existing or emerging notions of equality and representation. This normative consistency takes a number of different forms, however, depending on how quota provisions mesh with reigning political principles. One set of scholars equates quota adoption with ideas about equality and fair access, noting that quotas in left-wing parties match their more general goals of social equality and grassroots decision making (Connell 1998; Kolinsky 1989; Opello 2006). A second group interprets quotas for women as a logical extension of other types of representational guarantees – for example, those afforded to groups based on language, religion, race, ethnicity, youth or occupation (Bih-er et al. 1990; Chowdhury 2002; Jenkins 1999; Lijphart 1986; Tamale 2003) – that are meant to recognize difference and the need for proportional representation (Inhetveen 1999; Meier 2000; Valen 1988). A third school views quota adoption in the context of democratic innovation, observing that demands for quotas frequently emerge during periods of democratic transition or the creation of new democratic institutions. In these cases, quotas for women are included in broader packages of political reform in order to guarantee the representation of traditionally underprivileged groups and to establish national and international legitimacy for the new regime (Brown et al. 2002; Meena 2003; Reyes 2002).

While these accounts are correct in observing connections between quotas and broader political ideals, they do not discuss cases where proposals for gender quotas encounter fierce opposition among a wide range of domestic groups. Several studies, therefore, present findings that undermine these generalizing claims. In countries where quotas are framed as a means for promoting equality and fair access, for example, detractors argue against these measures on the grounds that quotas for women discriminate against men and thus are unconstitutional or illegal (Chama 2001; Guadagnini 1998; Haug 1995; Lovenduski 1997; Mossuz-Lavau 1998). In cases where quotas aim to recognize difference and proportional representation, quotas for women interact in

various ways with claims for the representation of other groups: some governments recognize certain groups to the exclusion of others (Catt 2003; Goetz & Hassim 2003; Rai & Kumud 2000; Sgier 2003), while other governments avoid adopting quotas for any group at all (De Diop 2002; Scott 1998). In countries where quotas are linked to democratic innovation, finally, reformers sometimes reject special provisions for women – especially in cases where the former regime applied quotas as a means for gaining social legitimacy – on the grounds that such measures are fundamentally anti-democratic and thus contrary to the spirit of the transition (Antić & Gortnar 2004; Waylen 1994; Yoon 2001).

Quotas are supported by international norms and are spread through transnational sharing

A fourth narrative centers on international norms and transnational information-sharing and their role in the rapid diffusion of quotas around the globe. This research locates the origins of quota policies in international recommendations negotiated over the course of international meetings and conferences that urge member states to improve women's access to political decision making. Although the United Nations (UN) Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, passed in 1979) and the Beijing Platform for Action (PfA, approved in 1995) are perhaps the two most important documents in this regard (Abou-Zeid 2003; Bataille & Gaspard 1999; Htun & Jones 2002; Krook 2004; Stevenson 2000), other international organizations have issued similar recommendations in recent years, including the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Socialist International, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Commonwealth, the African Union, the Southern African Development Community and the Organization of American States (Krook 2004; Leijenaar 1997; Lovecy 2002; Nordlund 2003; Tripp 2003). At the same time, these scholars note that numerous transnational actors have contributed to the rapid spread of quota policies around the world. These actors include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), groups formed under the auspices of international institutions, and formal and informal networks among scholars, activists and politicians, who share information across national borders and thus enable domestic campaigns to learn new tactics for reform and to import strategies from other countries into their own (Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2005; Krook 2006).

While gender quotas are frequently adopted in the wake of recommendations issued by international organizations, this literature rarely traces the explicit causal connections between international and transnational trends and

domestic quota campaigns. Instead, most scholars mention these effects only in passing and limit their observations to a restricted number of well-known international and transnational events like the Beijing Platform for Action produced at the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women. A range of disparate studies suggests, however, that national campaigns in fact interact in a number of different ways with international and transnational trends. In some post-conflict societies, for example, international actors play a direct role in pressing for the adoption of quotas for women (Bauer 2002; Corrin 2001; Dahlerup & Nordlund 2004). In other cases, campaigns develop locally before international conferences establish the legitimacy of quotas as a measure to increase women's political representation (Kassé 2003; Lubertino Beltrán 1992; Wisler 1999) such that international events act as catalysts to domestic campaigns already in progress, rather than as initial inspirations for these campaigns (Araújo 2003; García Quesada 2003; Yáñez 2003). Finally, in some contexts, international actors are pivotal to the rejection – rather than the promotion – of quotas, despite mobilization by local women's groups and transnational NGOs in support of these measures (Ciezdlo 2003; Pires 2002).³

Actors and motivations in quota adoption

The literature on candidate gender quotas thus presents four basic stories regarding quota adoption. Each of these general claims, however, is subject to challenge based on evidence from a smaller number of cases, where feminists oppose quotas as demeaning to women, political elites reject quotas due to concerns about electoral competition, existing representational guarantees block quota adoption and international actors obstruct efforts to institute quotas. Furthermore, the four narratives themselves appear to contradict one another as they highlight different actors and motivations for quota reform. Because these stories emerge from single case studies, these patterns raise two possibilities: some accounts characterize only some cases, and some tell only part of a story that engages several of these narratives. As such, the four stories may in fact be dynamics that operate within the wider universe of quota campaigns rather than accounts that explain all cases of quota adoption. Alternatively, they may each form only one part of a larger sequence of events: women's mobilization may precede and influence elite decision making, while international and transnational norms may affect democratic innovation at the local and national levels. To incorporate these possibilities into a new research agenda, I separate the four narratives into their component parts to list the actors who may participate in quota campaigns and their range of potential motivations for pursuing quota reform. These elements, I argue, form the basic

building blocks for a more focused scholarly debate that recognizes diversity across efforts to institute quotas, but also facilitates comparative research through a common set of tools for analyzing the origins of gender quota policies.

Actors in campaigns for candidate gender quotas

The four stories on quota adoption point to three broad categories of actors who participate in quota campaigns: civil society actors, state actors, and international and transnational actors. While each narrative focuses primarily on one type of actor, the details of each explanation often implicitly include references to other types. The main exception is the third account, which focuses on norms of equality and representation that simultaneously engage civil society and the state. Combined with the evidence against each claim, this synthesis reveals that all three categories of actors may be involved in campaigns for or against gender quotas and, indeed, often form alliances within and across action locations.

Civil society actors. The women's mobilization narrative highlights the role of civil society actors like grassroots women's movements, women's movement organizations, women's sections inside the political parties, cross-partisan networks of female politicians, and individual women active inside and outside the political parties. Similarly, the international/transnational narrative calls attention to NGOs, as well as formal and informal networks, that enable local women's groups to learn about new international norms and exchange information on quota strategies that have been successful or unsuccessful in other countries. These women's groups and networks generally mobilize for gender quotas, although some occasionally organize against these measures, and are frequently the actors who initiate quota campaigns.

State actors. The political elite narrative privileges the part played by state actors, especially national leaders, governing coalitions, representatives in parliament, political party leaders, and judges in national and local courts. Although the women's mobilization narrative also points to the importance of state-level women's policy agencies, together with the international/transnational narrative it usually frames state actors as the targets of campaigns waged by civil society and international and transnational actors. Although they rarely propose quotas prior to women's mobilization, these elites are often the most powerful voices for and against these provisions because of their broad visibility and their capacity to institute or reject quota policies within political parties and national assemblies.

International and transnational actors. The international/transnational narrative calls attention to the role of international and transnational actors like international organizations, groups formed under the auspices of international organizations, transnational NGOs, and transnational networks of activists, politicians and scholars. The women's mobilization narrative intersects with these explanations to the extent that it recognizes the importance of international and transnational women's activists. These organizations and networks almost invariably support gender quotas, and in this way provide crucial inspiration and resources for civil society actors in their quest to convince state actors of the virtues of gender quotas, but in certain limited cases prove to be an effective obstacle to quota reform.

Motivations in campaigns for candidate gender quotas

Studies of quota adoption similarly suggest a number of motivations for quota reform: principled stands, electoral considerations, empty gestures, promotion of other political ends, extension of representational guarantees, international pressure and transnational learning. Each account makes reference to one or more of these incentives to explain actors' decisions to advocate or oppose gender quotas. Viewed in conjunction with one another, these studies indicate that motivations may overlap in some instances, while in other cases the same strategies may be used to achieve opposite ends.

Principled stands. All four narratives incorporate principled stands. The women's mobilization narrative, for example, notes that women's groups generally pursue quotas out of the belief that women should be better represented. Although it emphasizes pragmatic concerns, the political elite narrative also recognizes that elites sometimes undertake repeated quota reform out of concerns to improve women's political access. In a more obvious fashion, the normative consistency narrative argues that political parties and states adopt quotas in order to promote equality or redefine citizenship in more inclusionary directions, while the international/transnational narrative observes that international and transnational actors recommend quotas as a way to foster gender-balanced decision making. Normative arguments, however, may offer strong ammunition against gender quotas when opponents insist that quotas do not empower women, discriminate against men, and contravene articles of national and international law that enshrine equality between women and men.

Electoral considerations. Despite their recognition of normative motivations, the women's mobilization and political elite narratives also draw attention to

the importance of electoral considerations in elites' decisions to adopt gender quotas. They point out that women's sections often use gains made by women in other parties to press for quotas in their own parties and that political parties frequently consider quotas only after one of their key rivals adopts these policies. In both scenarios, advocates portray quotas as an effective tool for winning women's votes, especially in instances where parties seek to overcome a long period in opposition or a dramatic decrease in popularity. Electoral incentives, nonetheless, may prove a double-edged sword as opponents also argue against quotas for women on the grounds of electoral competition, claiming that women are less effective candidates than men and thus that increasing the proportion of women will decrease the party's electoral fortunes.

Empty gestures. As a subset of electoral considerations, the political elite narrative refers to the possibility of empty gestures that occur when elites adopt quotas because they view them as a relatively easy way to demonstrate commitment to women's rights without necessarily altering existing patterns of representation. In these cases, leaders enthusiastically embrace gender quotas out of the belief or knowledge that these policies will not personally affect them, will never be implemented or will be deemed unconstitutional or illegal before they can be applied. In this sense, empty gestures may embody both a strategy and a counter-strategy for quota adoption and implementation as they facilitate the approval of quotas, but ensure that these policies are unlikely to be applied in line with the broader spirit of the reforms.

Promotion of other political ends. The political elite narrative further explains elites' decisions to pursue quotas by listing the other goals that quotas help elites accomplish like consolidating power over party representatives and political rivals. More specifically, the adoption of quotas enables elites to hand-pick 'malleable' women who will not question or challenge the status quo, institutionalize procedures for candidate selection that enforce central party decisions, build alliances with potential coalition partners, and establish the national and international legitimacy of a particular regime. The promotion of other political goals, however, may also undermine quota adoption if opponents argue that other projects are more pressing than increasing women's representation.

Extension of representational guarantees. The normative consistency narrative, in line with its principled focus on political inclusion, frames the adoption of gender quotas in terms of broader approaches aimed at recognizing difference. Rather than viewing quotas for women as discrete phenomena, they argue that

these measures are simply the logical extension of representational guarantees given to other groups based on language, religion, race, ethnicity, youth or occupation. Existing guarantees, nonetheless, may also be used to argue effectively against gender quotas on the grounds that 'gender' is not a relevant category of political representation or not on par with other recognized group identities.

International pressure. The international/transnational narrative, and to a lesser degree the normative consistency narrative, point to the role of international influences on party and national debates over gender quotas. They note that leaders sometimes include a range of different social groups in an attempt to establish the international legitimacy of a new regime or conform to emerging international norms following the direct intervention of international and transnational organizations. In rare cases, however, pressure from international actors may force national actors to abandon quotas as a strategy to increase women's representation on the argument that quotas do not constitute international 'best' practice for conducting elections.

Transnational learning. The women's mobilization and international/transnational narratives, finally, observe a dynamic of transnational learning across an increasing number of quota reforms. In these cases, quota proposals have their origins in exchanges among women's groups across national borders, or among transnational organizations and networks and domestic women's groups, regarding successful strategies for increasing women's political representation. Given these mechanisms of transmission, these processes rarely reveal direct application of lessons learned, but frequently involve efforts to 'translate' quotas to suit specific party and national contexts. Although unusual, opponents may also pursue this strategy by associating quotas with fallen Communist regimes to de-legitimize their use as anti-democratic and old fashioned.

Combinations of actors and motivations in campaigns for candidate gender quotas

These accounts highlight the importance of certain actors and their incentives for pursuing gender quotas. Viewed together, however, they suggest a number of ways in which actors may form alliances within and across locations in response to similar – but sometimes entirely different – motivations. Although the potential combinations are endless, some of the most common alliances involve women in civil society and women in the state, who both take principled stands on the need for increased representation; women in civil society,

who assume principled stands, and men in the state, who respond to electoral considerations, make empty gestures, promote other political ends and extend representational guarantees; women in civil society, who take principled stands, and transnational organizations, who engage in transnational sharing; women in civil society, who assume principled stands, and international organizations, who exert international pressure; and women in civil society across two or more countries, who participate in transnational sharing. These patterns nuance the claims of the four causal accounts, revealing that some narratives characterize some cases better than others at the same time that some stories capture only one stage of particular quota campaigns.

Three stories on quota implementation

Most of the literature on candidate gender quotas addresses quota adoption, but a number of scholars have turned their attention in recent years to explaining variations in quota implementation. Their work offers three main accounts as to why some quota policies are more effective than others in facilitating women's access to political office: the impact of quotas is linked to details of the measures themselves, the impact of quotas depends on the institutional framework in which they are introduced, and the impact of quotas stems from the balance of actors for and against implementation.⁴ These narratives produce a list of favorable details, institutions and actors that both scholars and activists apply to understand and predict the success rates of emerging and existing quota policies. As with the literature on quota adoption, however, most research on quota implementation is specific to individual cases and regions. Integrating evidence from a broader range of studies challenges these causal formulas, but also suggests a new means for reconciling them, focused on multiple configurations of details, institutions and actors across quota campaigns.

The impact of quotas is linked to details of the measures themselves

The first story on quota implementation focuses on the details of quota measures themselves. Initial studies assert that the impact of quotas is closely connected to the type of measure involved. Although most agree that reserved seats generally produce small changes in women's representation (Chowdhury 2002), one group claims that party quotas are more effective than other types of quotas because they are voluntary measures, adopted from concerns about electoral advantage (Leijenaar 1997), while another insists that legislative quotas are more effective because they bind all political parties, rather than

merely those who choose to adopt quotas, and are enforced by state bureaucracies and the courts, rather than simply by party leaders (Jones 1998). More recent work delves deeper into variations within and across types, seeking to understand why specific quota measures are more or less effective in achieving changes in women's representation. These scholars argue that the impact of gender quotas stems from the wording of the quota, whether the language used in the policy strengthens the quota requirement or reduces ambiguity or vagueness regarding the process of implementation (Baldez 2004b; García Quesada 2003; Htun 2002; Meier 2004); the requirements of the quota, whether the policy specifies where female candidates should be placed and to which elections the policy applies (Chama 2001; Green 2003; Htun & Jones 2002; Jones 2004); the sanctions of the quota, whether the policy establishes organs for reviewing and enforcing quota requirements and procedures for punishing or rectifying non-compliance (Guldvik 2003; Jones 1996; Peschard 2003); and the perceived legitimacy of the quota, whether the policy is viewed as legal or constitutional from the point of view of national and international law (Guadagnini 1998; Mossuz-Lavau 1998; Russell 2000).

While the details of individual quota provisions clearly shape quota implementation, this line of research largely overlooks unintended consequences that lead otherwise similar policies to produce distinct effects on women's representation and policies that are otherwise dissimilar to experience comparable results. Most obviously, all three types of quota measures are present today among the parliaments in the world with the highest proportions of women, at the same time that all three have similar ranges in terms of their impact: reserved seats produce between 5.5 and 48.8 per cent women in parliament, party quotas between 5 and 45.3 per cent, and legislative quotas between 4.6 and 35.3 per cent (Global Database of Quotas for Women 2007; IPU 2007). Exploring these variations, individual case studies reveal numerous unanticipated effects related to the wording, requirements, sanctions and legitimacy of quota measures. Strong wording, for example, sometimes inadvertently establishes a ceiling for women's representation if elites interpret positions not designated for women as seats or districts reserved for men (Huang 2002; Meena 2003; Nanivadekar 2003; Tahri 2003), while strict requirements are often less important to quota implementation than related legislation passed at a later moment in time (Chama 2001; García Quesada 2003; Meier 2004). Similarly, the presence of sanctions is not always sufficient for gaining elite compliance if sanctions are not applied consistently by oversight bodies (Baldez 2004b; Green 2003; Jones 1996), while the absence of sanctions does not preclude compliance if parties respond to other normative or strategic incentives for implementing quota provisions (Leijenaar 1997; Opello 2006). Finally, a sense of legitimacy does not always match patterns of

implementation: measures viewed as illegitimate by the population can result in dramatic increases in women's representation (Nechemias 1994; Waylen 1994; Yoon 2001), while those seen as legitimate can lose their effect over time, leading to stagnation in the number of women elected to parliament (Dahlerup 2001; Kjær 1999).

The impact of quotas depends on the institutional framework in which they are introduced

A second account relates the impact of quotas to the 'fit' between quota measures and existing institutional frameworks. Most studies in this vein focus on characteristics of the electoral system, examining how electoral rules facilitate or hinder the potentially positive effect of quotas on women's representation. They observe that quotas have the greatest impact in proportional representation (PR) electoral systems with closed lists and high district magnitudes (Araújo 2003; Caul 1999; Htun & Jones 2002; Jones & Navia 1999), although they also identify idiosyncratic features of particular electoral systems that negatively affect quota implementation, including the possibility for parties to run more than one list in each district (Costa Benavides 2003), the existence of distinct electoral systems for different types of elections (Jones 1998), and the chance for parties to nominate more candidates than the number of seats available (Htun 2002). Other scholars consider features of the political party system, as well as the characteristics of parties themselves, to discern partisan dynamics that aid or subvert quota implementation. They argue that quotas are more likely to have an impact in party systems where several parties co-exist and larger parties respond to policy innovations initiated by smaller parties (Kolinsky 1993; Styrkárssdóttir 1986), as well as in parties with left-wing ideologies where the party leadership is able to enforce party or national regulations (Caul 1999; Davidson-Schmich 2006; Htun 2002). Still others observe higher rates of implementation across all parties in countries where the political culture emphasizes sexual difference and group representation (Meier 2004), and lower rates of compliance in countries where the political culture stresses sexual equality and individual representation (Inheteven 1999).

While these scholars persuasively connect quota effectiveness to the presence of certain electoral, partisan and normative characteristics, disparate studies suggest that quotas in fact succeed in a variety of different institutional contexts. In terms of the electoral system, quotas sometimes have a strong impact on the proportion of women elected to parliament in countries with first-past-the-post and mixed electoral systems (Breitenbach & Mackay 2001; MacIvor 2003; Russell 2005). Similarly, open lists and low district magnitudes

in certain cases magnify the effect of quotas through the dynamics of preferential voting, the distance between legislated and 'effective quotas', and the relative magnitude of the largest political party (Carrio 2002; Schmidt 2003b; Schmidt & Saunders 2004).⁵ Turning to the party system, the presence of several parties is not always necessary for quotas to have an impact, as some of the most effective quotas are those applied by single-party regimes as a form of political patronage or as a means for establishing social legitimacy (Beck 2003; Goetz & Hassim 2003; Nechemias 1994). By the same token, right-wing parties occasionally implement quotas at a greater rate than left-wing parties (Green 2003), while more decentralized parties sometimes have better implementation records than more centralized parties (Kolinsky 1989). Finally, arguments centered on sexual equality and individual representation are often extremely effective in increasing women's representation (Dahlerup 2001). At the same time, quota campaigns frequently transform existing beliefs in the course of arguing for quotas, suggesting that variations in quota implementation are related as much to new and emerging norms as to more traditional ideas about gender and politics (Agacinski 2001; Sgier 2004; Squires 1996).

The impact of quotas stems from the balance of actors for and against quotas

A third story outlines the actors who support and oppose quotas and their respective roles in guaranteeing or undermining quota implementation. Much of this literature focuses on political party elites as the group most directly responsible for variations in the impact of quotas since the effective application of quotas largely hinges on elites' willingness to recruit female candidates (Peschard 2002). Most accounts expose the ways that elites seek to mitigate quota impact through passive refusal to enforce quotas to more active measures to subvert their intended effect (Araújo 2003; Costa Benavides 2003; Freedman 2004; Holli et al. 2006), to the point of even committing large-scale electoral fraud and widespread intimidation of female candidates (Delgadillo 2000; Human Rights Watch 2004). Many also mention other actors who play a direct or indirect role in enforcing quota provisions, including women's organizations both inside and outside the political parties who pressure elites to comply with quota provisions, distribute information on quota regulations both to elites and the general public, and train female candidates to negotiate better positions on their respective party lists (Camacho Granados et al. 1997; Durrieu 1999; Lokar 2003; Luciak 1998; Sainsbury 1993); national and international courts who provide an arena to challenge non-compliance and require parties to redo lists that do not comply with the law (Carrio 2002; Jones 2004; Villanueva Flores 2003);⁶ and ordinary citizens who engage in public

scrutiny of parties' selection practices through reports and reprimands that lead elites to honor and even exceed quota commitments (Baldez 2004a; Holli 2004; Kolinsky 1991).

While many party elites oppose quotas and take steps to reduce their impact, and various state and civil society actors support quotas and pressure elites to ensure their implementation, several studies find that these groups in fact play a variety of roles in promoting and subverting quota regulations. Political elites, for example, sometimes adopt and implement quotas despite public opposition: some introduce quotas gradually over the course of several elections to reduce resistance among incumbents, voters and local party organizations (Dahlerup 1988; Meier 2000; Steininger 2000), while others embrace these measures as a convenient pretext for eliminating experienced male rivals in favor of lesser experienced female candidates (Bird 2003). At the same time, some women's groups actively seek to undermine existing quota provisions, although in many of these cases they aim to gain the passage of more radical measures to increase women's representation (Chowdhury 2002; Huang 2002). Similarly, some judges dismiss allegations of non-compliance, issue erroneous decisions regarding the applicability of quota laws, and reduce their judicial activism over time, leading to decreases in quota effectiveness (Chama 2001; Schmidt 2003b). Many citizens, finally, are not even aware of the existence of quota provisions, much less variations in their impact, thus diminishing the possibility for public oversight of the implementation process (Htun & Jones 2002).

Political contexts in quota implementation

Research on the implementation of gender quotas is relatively new, but offers three basic narratives to explain quota impact. As the numbers of studies grow, however, they reveal the limited empirical range of these existing accounts: similar quota measures achieve distinct outcomes, while different measures accomplish similar results; quotas succeed and fail in a variety of institutional contexts, with different electoral, partisan and normative characteristics; and actors who support quotas sometimes do not implement them, while actors who oppose quotas sometimes do. All the same, these three stories do not explicitly contradict one another, but rather appear to capture distinct elements of the implementation process that may come together to affect quota impact through various configurations of policy details, institutional contexts and actor support. Indeed, each story implicitly makes reference to all three groups of political factors, suggesting the need to incorporate all three elements in explanations of quota implementation. To integrate these dynamics

within a single framework, I disassemble the three accounts into three broad types of political factors shaping quota impact – namely formal system-level rules and organizations, formal and informal party-level selection practices, and formal and informal system- and party-level norms of equality and representation. These formal and informal structures, I argue, constitute a firm starting point for developing a more comprehensive model of quota implementation that acknowledges causal complexity across efforts to apply quotas, but also promotes cumulative research through a set of shared tools for understanding the outcomes of quota reforms.

Formal system-level rules and organizations

At the most general level, each story signals the importance of formal rules and political organizations in framing and enforcing quota provisions. The details narrative, for example, argues that successful implementation hinges on the presence or absence of a central oversight body responsible for reviewing and imposing quota requirements, as well as the presence or absence of official procedures for punishing and rectifying non-compliance. Similarly, the actors narrative identifies national and international courts as a crucial arena for challenging non-compliance, as well as for requiring parties to redo candidate lists that do not comply with a given quota law. In a slightly different vein, the institutional narrative explains variations in implementation in terms of electoral rules and characteristics of political party systems that favor or reduce the effect of quotas on women's representation.

Formal and informal party-level selection practices

Each account also addresses the role of individual political parties by highlighting the formal and informal selection practices that facilitate and subvert quota implementation. The details narrative, most notably, associates rates of implementation with the degree to which specific quota policies bind the hands of political elites to reduce ambiguities in quota requirements, establish placement mandates and impose sanctions for non-compliance. The other two accounts, in contrast, emphasize the capacities and intentions of political elites themselves: the institutional narrative attributes variations in quota implementation to the ability of party leaders to carry out particular party and national regulations despite opposition from the grassroots, while the actors narrative locates the source of these differences in the willingness of political elites to ignore quota policies despite public support or, alternatively, to promote female candidates despite public opposition.

Formal and informal system- and party-level norms of equality and representation

Each story, finally, points to the role of formal and informal norms of equality and representation in legitimizing and undermining quota provisions at both the system and the party levels. The details narrative observes that a central element shaping quota implementation is the perceived legitimacy of a particular quota policy or, more specifically, whether it is viewed as legal or constitutional from the perspective of national and international law. Along similar lines, the institutional narrative predicts greater rates of implementation in political parties with left-wing ideologies that emphasize social justice and in countries with political cultures that stress sexual difference and group representation. The actors narrative, for its part, is least explicit with regard to equality and representation, but draws indirect attention to these ideas by pointing to the civil society, state and international and transnational actors who pressure political elites to implement quotas through arguments that reference personal, national and international norms.

Conclusions

Research on candidate gender quotas has increased exponentially in recent years as a result of the rapid diffusion of these measures around the world. Given the relative newness of this phenomenon, most studies focus on tracking the origins and outcomes of individual quota policies. Although such work is crucial for mapping developments in various countries, the lack of a comparative lens obscures the diverse actors, motivations and contexts involved in quota campaigns. In this article, I have drawn on this literature to elaborate a template for future research that will enable scholars more readily to recognize dynamics that are common to many cases of quota reform, as well as features that are particular to their individual cases. While not all elements will be relevant to explaining all quota campaigns, the need to consider the full range of actors, motivations and contexts will ensure that scholars do not overlook any aspects central to the adoption and implementation of specific quota policies. Furthermore, this framework will allow researchers to engage in more systematic cross-case comparisons of the origins, content and context of quotas and their impact on women's access to political office. In promoting an explicit dialogue across cases, it will thus provide valuable insights for devising more effective quota policies.

This integration of existing research, in turn, serves as a launching pad for a new round of studies aimed at modifying, adding or even discarding certain

elements of this framework. Future research, however, will also need to expand the study of gender quotas beyond this template in order to explore the larger significance of quota reforms. On the one hand, it will need to address the positive and negative effects of quotas on the ability of elected women to act autonomously in politics and, especially, to pursue policies beneficial to other women. Hopeful anecdotes about women's empowerment, combined with disparaging references to 'quota women', suggest that quotas do not have uniform effects in terms of promoting women's substantive representation. On the other hand, future work will have to assess the broader goals invested in quota reforms. More specifically, what actors say and believe about gender quotas may not capture the wider intentions or implications behind the rapid spread of quota policies around the globe. In some countries, for example, elite responses to demands for increased representation have coincided with decreased attention to feminist policy issues (Sawer 2002; Young 2000). These possibilities demand closer attention to unexplored motivations and contexts that may further explain the origins and outcomes of gender quota policies.

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Notes

1. Details on individual countries are available in the *Global Database of Quotas for Women* (2007).
2. Research on candidate gender quotas tends to treat these three types of measures separately on the grounds that reserved seats, party quotas and legislative quotas address

candidate selection processes in fundamentally different ways. I view all three as distinct solutions to the same problem – the under-representation of women – and thus believe that attempts to understand the origins and outcomes of these measures are better served by examining them in conjunction with one another.

3. These arguments are developed at greater length in Krook (2006).
4. Although I use 'implementation' and 'impact' interchangeably in this text, the two terms actually measure two distinct outcomes with different implications for gauging the 'success' of quota policies. Properly speaking, 'implementation' indicates compliance with specific quota provisions and 'impact' refers to the contribution of quotas to higher levels of female representation (Krook 2005).
5. Low district magnitudes raise the 'effective quota' when the laws of arithmetic necessitate rounding up the number of seats in order to meet the quota requirement, transforming a 25 per cent quota into a 50 per cent quota when two seats are available, a 30 per cent quota when three seats are available and a 25 per cent quota when four seats are available (Schmidt 2003b).
6. In unusual cases, citizens exhaust domestic remedies and appeal to international authorities to gain compliance with quota measures. Citizens in Argentina and Peru, e.g., have lodged complaints with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). In Argentina, the IACHR decision to admit the case pushed President Fernando de la Rúa to support a new presidential decree specifying how quotas were to be implemented (IACHR 1999, 2001). In Peru, the appeal to the IACHR led the National Elections Tribunal to correctly calculate the minimum quota for the 2002 local elections (IACHR 2002).

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