

Women's Political Engagement Under Quota-Mandated Female Representation: Evidence From a Randomized Policy Experiment

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Abstract

Do affirmative action measures for women in politics change the way constituents view and interact with their female representatives? A subnational randomized policy experiment in Lesotho with single-member districts reserved for female community councilors provides causal evidence to this question. Using survey data, I find that having a quota-mandated female representative either has no effect on or actually *reduces* several dimensions of women's self-reported engagement with local politics. In addition, implications from the policy experiment suggest that the quota effect is not accounted for by differences in qualifications or competence between the different groups of councilors, but rather stems from citizens' negative reactions to the quota's design.

Keywords

electoral gender quotas, experimental methods, political attitudes and behavior, affirmative action, African politics

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Introduction

To date, 110 countries have adopted some sort of electoral gender quota at the national level—mostly in the last two decades. Currently, more than 70 countries have reformed their constitutions or passed new electoral laws requiring that women comprise certain percentages of electoral candidates or legislative seats. In other instances, political parties voluntarily have adopted quotas on their own. These quotas have emerged in every region of the world, often in surprising places, with transformative results for the number of women in politics. Gender quotas have also expanded rapidly at the subnational level, allowing more women access to local political decision making than ever before.

Of the recent surge of political science research on gender quotas, the ability of quotas to redefine individual-level attitudes and behavior remains under-explored. The bulk of scholarship about electoral quotas in political science has been theory building, usually through the examination of single or comparative case studies. To date, most of these studies have sought to understand the diffusion of quota policies and the effectiveness of quotas in increasing the number of women in politics (Bush, 2011; Dahlerup, 2006; Jones, 2009; Krook, 2009; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009; Tripp & Kang, 2008). The theoretical and comparative literatures on women's descriptive representation have argued that more inclusive and diverse legislatures are important for the democratic legitimacy of elected bodies, in part because they provide a voice for historically underrepresented groups (Lovenduski, 2005; Mansbridge, 1999; Phillips, 1995; Pitkin, 1967; Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005; Williams, 1998; Young, 2000). The first generation of quota scholarship has provided the theoretical underpinnings for empirically testable hypotheses on a range of potential impacts of electoral gender quotas, including the symbolic effects of gender parity in political decision making (see Franceschet, Krook, & Piscopo, 2012).

This study tests previous theoretical work to examine how electoral gender quotas affect the political engagement of female citizens. It does so by taking advantage of a nationwide randomized policy experiment in the southern African nation of Lesotho, in which 30% of single-member electoral districts were reserved for female community councilors. Importantly, women also won an additional 26% of seats by beating male candidates in unreserved districts. The main results presented here are counterintuitive and puzzling: Women living in districts reserved for only female community councilors are less politically engaged across several attitudinal dimensions than women living in unreserved districts. Using implications from the policy experiment, I argue that this result stems from female citizens' suspicion of affirmative

action measures for women in politics rather than an overall rejection of female representation.

I offer a more complete discussion of the generalizability of my findings below, but here briefly put Lesotho's experience in the global context. The electoral system employed through Lesotho's subnational policy experiment is fairly unique. Indeed, Lesotho and India are the only two countries in the world that have experimented with reserved single-member districts for women that completely exclude would-be male candidates from running in their districts. However, the results presented here have important implications for the study of the impacts of electoral quotas more broadly.

Quota laws may affect the way a citizen feels she is represented by the state in two potentially contradicting ways. On one hand, quotas include historically marginalized groups in state decision making and thus make the legislature more diverse and inclusive by design. On the other hand, this effect may be attenuated when the policy is seen as giving preferential treatment to the minority group at the expense of majority members. Not only does this create the perceptions of exclusionary rather than inclusionary institutions, but it can also create a stigma surrounding the beneficiaries of the affirmative action measures. Whereas testing the implications of (hyper) exclusionary versus inclusionary political institutions speaks specifically to the quota experiences in India and Lesotho, testing the stigma effects of affirmative action measures has relevant implications to many other cases.

Indeed, an increasing number of countries are adopting gender quotas in which beneficiaries of the policy can be uniquely identified as having received preferential treatment. This has occurred at the national level in majoritarian and mixed systems in which districts are reserved for only female candidates (i.e., Uganda and Kenya) or when political parties adopt all-women short lists (i.e., the United Kingdom). In addition, even in quota systems in which women's reserved seats are appointed proportionally by political party vote share (i.e., Pakistan, Morocco, and Rwanda), beneficiaries of the quota policy can be easily identified as "quota women." Quota systems that employ different electoral rules for women are also becoming increasingly popular at the local level (i.e., India, Tanzania, Bangladesh, and Pakistan). The results presented here shed light on how this distinction may change the ways quota recipients are perceived by their constituents in contradistinction to their male and female colleagues elected via non-gender-specific rules.

The article is organized as follows: "The Literature" section reviews the relevant literature examining how exposure to female representatives (quota-mandated and non-quota-mandated) affects women's engagement with local-level politics. The following section outlines the theoretical framework of

this study including a discussion of causal mechanisms and the extent to which they are testable from this analysis. The next section presents the case of Lesotho as a policy experiment that allows for a causal investigation to detect the quota's effect on constituents' political engagement. The "Measures and Method" section introduces the data and methods used to measure the impact of the quota law and the "Results" section presents a series of results examining the quota's conditional average treatment effects (CATEs) across male and female respondents and across different age cohorts. It also provides a measure to identify citizens in reserved districts with a high latent propensity for female representation as a way to distinguish between the effects of quota-mandated versus non-quota-mandated female representation. This section pays careful attention to the valid experimental and observational inferences that can be made between groups given the experimental research design (see Dunning, 2008; Gerber & Green, 2012; Sekhon & Titiunik, 2012). The "Discussion" section offers a discussion of the results in relation to the theoretical framework, as well as situates the contributions of these findings into our understanding of gender quotas and women's political representation. The final section concludes.

The Literature

Gender and politics scholars traditionally conceptualize the ability of women's presence in political bodies to induce individual-level behavioral or attitudinal changes as a form of symbolic representation (Pitkin, 1967). For historically underrepresented groups, having a representative body that more closely mirrors the electorate may symbolize a more open and legitimate political arena (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005). Some scholars have argued that this may improve the group's political participation as well as how the group views its role in the political process (Mansbridge, 1999; Phillips, 1995).

Several recent comparative studies examine the relationship between the presence of female politicians and women's political engagement, but without a particular focus on the presence of quotas. Wolbrecht and Campbell (2007) find that in a sample of 28 Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) countries, women are more likely to discuss and participate in politics when there are a higher number of female members of Parliament (MPs), and that this effect is especially pronounced among young women. Similarly, Norris and Krook (2009) find that in a larger cross-national sample, civic engagement among women is higher in countries with more gender-equal parliaments. In addition, Barnes and Burchard (2013) examine cases from sub-Saharan Africa and find that women's

political participation increases in countries with a higher percentage of female parliamentarians.

American politics scholars have also developed a substantial empirical literature relating the presence of female public officeholders or candidates to women's political engagement. The findings here are mixed. Several studies report that women discuss politics more often, feel more internally and externally politically efficacious, and participate in political activities to a greater degree when they have a female representative (Atkeson, 2003; Atkeson & Carrillo, 2007; Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 2001) or when there are a greater number of visible female electoral candidates (Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006). However, other research has noted that these apparent effects are largely muted when party congruence is properly controlled for, suggesting that the ideology of the candidate or officeholder is more important than his or her gender (Dolan, 2006; Lawless, 2004; Reingold & Harrell, 2010).

Importantly, the above studies do not explicitly examine how the presence of gender quotas mediates this relationship—that is, whether the way in which women come into political office affects the political engagement of female citizens. There have been fewer studies that directly relate gender quotas to women's increased engagement with politics at either the national or local level, and the results here have been largely inconclusive. For instance, in a cross-national sample, Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer (2012), find that the presence of a gender quota decreases the gender gap in some dimensions of political engagement (political interest), but not in others (political knowledge and discussion). Furthermore, the authors find that the decreased gender gap in political interest is due to men's decreased interest in politics rather than women's increased interest (Kittilson & Schwindt-Bayer, 2012). Using cases from Latin American, two other recent studies have looked explicitly at the role of gender quotas in this regard and report null findings. Examining variation of quota adoption in Mexican states, Zetterberg (2012) finds that female leadership does not influence women's self-reported interest in politics, nor does he find any systematic impact on women's political engagement across 17 Latin American countries with varying quota experiences (Zetterberg, 2009).

However, several case studies have detailed the largely positive symbolic effects following the rapid proliferation of gender quotas across African countries. These studies have documented how quotas have changed political cultures to be more inclusive of women's perspectives and how quotas may legitimize women's presence in nontraditional spheres more broadly (see Bauer, 2012, for a review). For instance, using over a decade of ethnographic research to examine the impact of the highly lauded Rwandan gender quota, Burnet (2011) notes that measuring women's political engagement

in an increasingly authoritarian state proves difficult, but that “gender quotas and the increased representation of women in the political system have encouraged women to take leading roles in other areas of Rwandan society” (p. 315).

In a related literature, economists have also examined individual-level behavioral and attitudinal changes in political engagement following gender quota adoption. Most of this research has come from India, specifically because the design of the Indian quota allows for causal analysis. Similar to Lesotho’s subnational quota, India has reserved one third of representative positions in local-level single-member districts for women since 1993, and most states have rotated these districts at random in each election cycle since 1998. Beaman, Duflo, Pande, and Topalova (2010) use the random assignment of reservation to show that the likelihood that a woman speaks in a village meeting increases by 25% when the local political leader position is reserved for a woman. The authors contend that this increased willingness may result directly from the presence of the female leader at the meeting or indirectly from changes in social norms resulting from female leadership. Also examining the Indian case, Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2003) and Deininger, Jin, and Nagarajan (2011) similarly find that the percentage of women who attend and actively participate in local meetings is significantly higher in districts reserved for women. In addition, Bhavnani (2009) finds that female candidates are more likely to run and win elected local political positions even after quotas have been removed.

In sum, the literatures to date relating female representation to the political engagement of female citizens report mixed findings. In addition, the aforementioned studies (with the exception of Zetterberg, 2012) have only examined the effect of female representation in either the presence or absence of an affirmative action policy. This study is the first to present both causal and observational evidence on the differential effects of different types of female representation on public attitudes and behavior in the same national setting at the same time.

Theoretical Framework: Why Should Gender and Gender Quotas Matter?

The literatures outlined above suggest multiple ways in which exposure to female representatives may influence women’s political engagement. First, as mentioned, an increase in the number of female politicians may have a symbolic effect on female citizens, making the ruling body seem more open and accessible (Phillips, 1995). A government of men may create an immediate psychological barrier for women indicating that they are better suited to

be led rather than to be community leaders (Mansbridge, 1999). A governing body that more closely mirrors its electorate appears more democratically legitimate, and this may motivate previously underrepresented groups to engage in the political process in new ways (Bobo & Gilliam, 1990; Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005).

However, the positive effects of symbolic representation due to quotas rest on the assumption that citizens respond to quotas in positive ways. Contrary to the intended effects expressed above, it is possible that quotas may actually trigger negative symbolic reactions. When quotas are seen as an illegitimate form of representation in such a way that quota recipients are not seen as deserving their positions, they may discourage political engagement (Zetterberg, 2009). Some scholars have noted that quotas are more likely to be perceived as illegitimate if their adoption is seen as originating from an outside body rather than pressure from domestic groups (Dahlerup, 2006; but see Bush & Jamal, 2014). In addition, it is possible in the case of Lesotho (and India) that a quota's symbolically exclusionary, rather than power-sharing, nature may cause citizens to become less engaged with the political process (Kittilson & Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Norris, 2008).

In addition, the fields of public opinion and social psychology have produced large literatures on attitudes toward affirmative action in employment and education, largely pulling from American experiences. This body of work suggests that responses to affirmative action policies may be related to individual-level perceptions of the existence of discrimination, as this legitimizes the need for corrective policies that privilege one group over another (Lowery, Unzueta, Knowles, & Goff, 2006; Martins & Parsons, 2007; Stoker, 1998). I explore how this finding applies to Lesotho further in the "Discussion" section, but in brief, this research suggests that when public attitudes are such that women do not constitute a group considered deserving of special treatment on the basis of historic marginalization, affirmative action policies may produce a stigma around the policies' beneficiaries among both in-group and out-group members.

The existence of two types of female representatives in Lesotho (quota-mandated and non-quota-mandated) provides an important test to differentiate between a "quota effect" and a "female representation effect." In general, if quotas produce a positive symbolic effect by creating a more open and legitimate ruling body, then I do not expect to see a difference between women's political engagement under these two types of female representatives. However, when quotas are viewed as an illegitimate form of representation, attitudinal and behavioral differences between citizens (both male and female) under these two female representative types should emerge.

Another distinct way that quotas may affect women's political engagement is based on the argument that women are better able to substantively represent women's interests. This theory has empirical backing, as a sizable literature has demonstrated that female citizens (Miller, 2008) and female politicians articulate different policy preferences than men (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004; Chen, 2010; Xydias, 2008); initiate gender equity policies, at times in cross-party women's alliances (Hassim, 2003; Lovenduski & Norris, 1993; Sainsbury, 2004); vote differently (Swers, 2002); and have more consensus-based legislative styles than their male colleagues (Volden, Wiseman, & Wittmer, 2013).

If women believe female community councilors are better able to substantively represent their interests, I expect that women will report greater levels of external political efficacy in both reserved and unreserved electoral divisions (EDs) than female residents in male-led EDs. This, of course, is also an observable implication from the impact of positive symbolic representation as expressed above, and in the presence of such a result either or both of these causal explanations may be at play.

Another distinct mechanism that may explain how female representation affects women's political engagement involves female representatives as potential role models. The presence (or lack) of female role models can create different social expectations for men and women, often learned in childhood and reinforced in adulthood (Steuernagel, Yantek, & Barnett, 1996). This mechanism is a conceptually distinct form of symbolic representation than expressed above. Rather than changing perceptions about the openness, fairness, or accessibility of a legislative body, this explanation contends that a lack of female political representatives signals to women and girls that politics is not an appropriate sphere for women. There is some evidence that women's increased presence in political bodies encourages the popular perception that women can effectively govern (Alexander, 2012). In addition, several studies have shown that the socializing effect of exposure to female representatives at a young age encourages women's political participation, both in America (Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006) and cross-nationally within OECD member states (Wolbrecht & Campbell, 2007).

Evidence from the Indian case also shows that female leadership positively influences adolescent girls' career aspirations (including aspirations for careers in politics) and educational attainment in reserved districts (Beaman, Duflo, Pande, & Topalova, 2012). This work finds that having a female village leader creates a role model effect for the young girls in their districts. This role model hypothesis implies that younger cohorts of women will be more politically engaged than older cohorts, as local politics becomes an area that may be open to them in the future. The Indian case, however,

benefits from having citizens that have been exposed to quota-mandated female leaders in some instances for nearly two decades. In contrast, this study tests whether these socializing effects appear in the short term, that is, three years after the adoption of the quota policy.

A negative impact of the socialization theory, however, is also possible and perhaps more likely in the short term. Some research has indicated that instead of encouraging women's political participation, gender quotas may exacerbate existing biases against women if female politicians are perceived as violating appropriate gender roles (Goldin, 2002; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). There is anecdotal evidence from Lesotho that supports this observation. The main gender advocacy group in the region reports,

[Quota recipients] repeatedly stated that a challenge for women in politics or desiring to enter politics is the beliefs and attitudes of society . . . All respondents during the interview process (both male and female) attested to attitudes, culture and beliefs being a major challenge for women's authority. Women respondents noted the intense verbal abuse they underwent when visiting the districts and promoting women's involvement. (Gender Links, 2011, p. 10)

In this instance, female constituents may believe their new female representatives are behaving inappropriately, causing them to avoid association or contact with these women. There is some evidence, both experimental dating back to the seminal Goldberg (1968) paradigm and observational (Iversen & Rosenbluth, 2010), suggesting that under some circumstances cultural norms around appropriate gender roles may be most intractable among women. Again there is anecdotal evidence of this occurrence in Lesotho, as one gender rights activist in the country notes:

Before women were not allowed to stand in front of people or be a part of any development in the community—so they are still shy. Our culture has a lot to do with that. You find that in the communities, we see men as leaders, as people who bring about change. Our culture plays a major role in all of this and women are the ones sometimes who hold these beliefs the strongest.¹

Rethabile Pholo, who helped coordinate the 2005 local elections through Lesotho's Independent Electoral Commission, concurs, noting,

When you go to the villages, you will see that the women still have deeply held religious beliefs, often more so than the men. When the quota law was passed in 2005 women still had the same legal rights as minors under federal law in this country. This changed in 2006, but you see that in the villages under

customary law, women may still consider themselves as minors, first under the authority of their fathers and later their husbands.²

One question from the 2003 Afro-barometer survey, 2 years before the quota's adoption, also reveals that gender biases may be most pronounced among Basotho women.³ In this survey round, 44% of male respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "Women have always been subject to traditional laws and customs, and should remain so," while 56% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "In our country, women should have equal rights and receive the same treatment as men do." Surprisingly, among female respondents, 62% either agreed or strongly agreed that women should remain subject to traditional laws, while only 38% either agreed or strongly agreed in the principle of women's equal rights. In sum, 2 years prior to the quota policy, gender biases appeared most pronounced among female citizens.

Related specifically to the case of Lesotho, it is important to note that these types of attitudes in many ways are a contradiction to Basotho women's active role in organizing rural life. Throughout most of the 20th century, the largest employers of Basotho men were South African gold and diamond mines—employing up to 60% of the working age male population of Lesotho at the peak of migrant labor in the 1970s. This economic history has left many women as *de facto* heads of households and community leaders, explaining why women won close to 37% of unreserved community councilor positions. The simultaneous occurrence of women holding active roles in the community yet explicitly stating that they do not hold the same rights as men is related to gendered dimensions of Sesotho culture that have built up around this history of migrant labor.⁴

Whether the reserved district quota caused a women-led backlash against female representation in general is not directly testable in this study, but in forthcoming research, I measure differences in gender role stereotypes, as well as taste and statistical discrimination against female leaders across formerly reserved and unreserved EDs. However, as an implication relating to women's political engagement, it is not immediately clear why selection procedures for female representatives should affect their function as role models (either positively or negatively), and in the exclusive presence of this mechanism there should be no difference in women's political engagement under quota-mandated and non-quota-mandated female representation.

Case Selection: A Policy Experiment in Lesotho

This study takes advantage of a nationwide randomized policy experiment in the southern African nation of Lesotho. In 2005, similar to other African

nations at the time and in part guided by international and regional organizations, Lesotho began a protracted process of decentralization. At this time, the Ministry of Local Government divided the country's 10 main local administrative districts into 129 newly created community councils. The new law further split each community council into 9 to 13 single-member EDs, which were each to elect one community councilor through a first-past-the-post election.

The experimental nature of the quota is as follows: The 2005 Local Government Elections Act required that 30% of all single-member EDs (distributed evenly across the newly created councils) be reserved for only female councilors. Women still competed with other women in these EDs, but men were not allowed to compete. Importantly, the all-women constituencies were assigned completely at random (South African Development Community (SADC), 2011).⁵ Therefore, between April 2005 and October 2011, electoral law required that Basotho citizens in 30% of all local EDs be exposed to quota-mandated women as local political representatives, whereas the remaining 70% of EDs had open arenas of contestation. It should be noted, however, that despite the 30% legal requirement, in actuality only 29.1% of EDs were selected for reservation.⁶

Importantly, women also won in EDs that were not reserved by the quota. In total, during this period, quota-mandated women held 29.1% of community councilor positions, non-quota-mandated women held 26.3%, and men held 44.6%. The "Measures and Method" section presents various tests for true random assignment as stipulated by the quota law, including balance diagnostics on observable characteristics between future reserved and unreserved districts prior to the quota.

Lesotho's randomized policy experiment has several advantages. First, cross-national comparisons do not address the possibility that countries that adopt quotas are also more likely to have a citizenry that holds egalitarian views about the appropriateness and capabilities of women in the political sphere. The use of time-series data also does not ameliorate this problem, the key concern being that countries that adopt quotas may be doing so as a response to an ongoing nationwide change in attitudes toward appropriate gender roles. In such instances, correlations between quota-induced increases in female leadership and individual-level attitudinal and behavioral shifts may not reflect the causal impact of quotas. The random allocation of reserved single-member EDs in one national setting, however, implies that a difference in citizens' attitudes and behavior across reserved and unreserved EDs captures the causal effect of having seen a quota-mandated woman as a local legislator.

Measures and Method

Random Assignment and Matching

The experimental nature of the quota design depends on the random assignment of the reserved EDs. First, it is important to note that Lesotho is a small landlocked mountainous country that is ethno-linguistically, culturally, and religiously homogeneous. Here, 99.7% of the population self-identifies as belonging to the Basotho ethnic group and speaks Sesotho as a first language, and 96.7% of the population claims to be Christian (Afro-barometer, 2008). The clustering of religious and ethnic groups are not plausible confounders of the quota's random assignment, but other potential ED-level characteristics are. To gain leverage of the validity of random assignment, I test for observable differences across future reserved and unreserved EDs before the quota law's implementation.

Table 1 shows data from the 2003 Lesotho Afro-barometer survey, 2 years before the realization of the quota. It lists potential confounding variables, their mean values in the future reserved and unreserved EDs, the difference between the groups, and the standard errors associated with these estimates. Column 5 shows the p value associated with a difference of means t test, and column 6 reports the coefficient of future-reserved-ED residence with each cofounder as a separate dependent variable. The models are hierarchical with random intercepts allowed at the community council level. Variables that achieve traditional statistical significance ($p \leq .05$) are indicated in bold.

The only observable potential confounder with a statistically significant difference between the future reserved and unreserved EDs is the respondents' mean age. Respondents in future reserved EDs are on average 4.6 years older than respondents in future unreserved EDs. This is potentially problematic as female leadership may have differential effects across age cohorts (as would be predicted by the socialization/role model hypothesis, for instance). To account for this preexisting difference, I use an empirically based matching technique on the 2008 data (Ho, Imai, King, & Stuart, 2007). I selectively drop and weight observations to create a treatment group (residents in reserved EDs) and a control group (residents in unreserved EDs) that are statistically identical in the respondents' mean age.⁷ The corresponding mean values for age in both treatment and control groups in the matched 2008 dataset are listed below the unmatched 2003 figures in Table 1.⁸ Additional matching diagnostics are listed in Online Appendix B. The results presented below are also robust to analyses conducted on the complete sample without matching.

Balance on observables across future reserved and unreserved EDs does not mean there will be balance across the constituencies of the three

Table 1. Random Assignment Check: Checks for Random Assignment From 2003 Lesotho Afro-Barometer Data.

	<i>M</i> future unreserved	<i>M</i> future reserved	Difference (SE)	t test <i>p</i> value	Reservation effect with council random effects (SE)
Percent rural	0.815	0.809	0.007 (0.030)	.828	1.987 (1.166)
Discuss politics	1.861	1.947	-0.086 (0.061)	.164	0.041 (0.101)
Poverty level	2.928	2.870	0.058 (0.094)	.536	0.006 (0.107)
Education level	2.210	2.171	0.040 (0.054)	.461	0.080 (0.116)
Interest in politics	2.640	2.715	0.075 (0.044)	.091	0.045 (0.131)
Age	41.101	45.691	-4.590 (1.351)	.001	3.434 (1.682)
Age (matched)	40.270	40.018	0.252 (1.273)	.843	0.016 (0.105)
Belief in women's equal rights	2.396	2.467	0.069 (0.094)	.465	1.093 (1.427)
Trust in traditional leaders	2.650	2.581	0.069 (0.081)	.396	0.018 (0.095)
Contact with traditional leaders	2.445	2.401	0.044 (0.094)	.666	0.063 (0.115)

Differences with significance of $p \leq .05$ are indicated in bold. $n = 243$ for the future reserved electoral divisions, and $n = 542$ for the future unreserved electoral divisions. See Online Appendix A for variable coding.

councilor subgroups, as citizens that are more likely to elect female councilors in the absence of a quota requirement may be systematically and observably different from citizens that are less likely to elect a female councilor on their own volition. That is, EDs have varying latent propensities to elect female councilors in the absence of a quota, and this propensity is not observable in the reserved districts. Any observed reservation effect could either be a reaction to the institution of a compulsory quota among residents across reserved EDs with both high and low latent propensities for female representation or it may be a particular reaction among residents of low-propensity EDs against female representation (perhaps in combination with the institution of the quota) when they would have preferred a male councilor. The “Results” section first reports the aggregate reservation effect in different scenarios and then proposes a measure for the latent propensity for

female representation to differentiate between the dual explanations for the aggregate effect.

Data and Dependent Variable Specification

To measure the impact of living in a reserved ED, I rely on Afro-barometer survey data, which includes a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of approximately 1,200 Basotho. The 2008 Afro-barometer survey measures the impact of living in a reserved ED for three years. This research specifically employs the local-level Afro-barometer data, which identifies the village of each respondent. Respondents are located in 577 villages as identified by Afro-barometer survey administrators. I construct an original dataset by merging the Afro-barometer results with data collected from Lesotho's Independent Electoral Commission in Maseru to identify the gender of each village's community councilor and whether the village was in a formerly reserved ED. I list-wise delete observations for which I cannot definitively identify the councilor's gender and ED reservation status.⁹ The rate of missingness across other relevant variables is relatively minimal (between 0% and 7%), but I choose to use Amelia II for R to impute missing values rather than list-wise delete remaining observations.¹⁰

For a robust analysis, I use five attitudinal and behavioral measures of political engagement. I choose not to aggregate these measures into a single index because each measure taps into a theoretically distinct form of political engagement that may provide evidence to adjudicate between the causal mechanisms described above. The first three measures relate to political attitudes. Of these, the first two measure different aspects of external political efficacy—the individual perception that governmental institutions and authorities are responsive to citizen influence (Balch, 1974). Measures of external political efficacy are of theoretical interest as their presence has been related to citizens' increased political participation and increased perceptions of democratic legitimacy (Abramson, 1983; Atkeson & Carrillo, 2007).

The first question asks the respondent, "How likely is it that you could get together with others and make your elected community councilor listen to your concerns about a matter of importance to the community?" The second question is related, but conceptually distinct and asks, "How much of the time do you think the elected community councilors try their best to listen to what people like you have to say?" The final attitudinal question reads, "How interested would you say you are in public affairs? You know, in politics and government." All question responses are on a four-level Likert-type scale with higher responses indicating greater degrees of external political efficacy and interest in politics, respectively.

The second set of dependent variables involves two types of political behavior. The first question reads, “When you get together with your friends or family, would you say you discuss political matters: never, occasionally, or frequently?” The final question asks, “During the past year, how often have you contacted a community councilor about some important problem or to give them your views?” Responses here are coded as dichotomous outcomes indicating that the respondent either contacted his or her councilor once or more in the previous year or did not contact him or her at all. Full details on survey question wording and coding are included in Online Appendix A.

Results

In the population of community councilor positions in Lesotho, 29.1% are quota-mandated women, 26.3% are non-quota-mandated women, and 44.6% are men. The Afro-barometer sample of respondents living in these districts closely mirrors the population of leadership groups: 31.7% of respondents in the sample live in a reserved ED, 23.3% live in an unreserved ED that elected a female councilor, and 44.9% live in an unreserved ED that elected a male councilor. The distribution of the population of councilor characteristics across EDs and the corresponding respondent sample within those divisions are statistically indistinguishable.¹¹

The Reservation Effect

Table 2 lists the mean values of the five dependent variables in the reserved and unreserved EDs. It also displays the difference in means between these two groups, which can be interpreted as the quota’s average treatment effect on each measure of political engagement and the 95% confidence interval that brackets this estimate. The ATEs and associated confidence intervals are simulated and calculated through randomization inference based on the principles of cluster random assignment as described in Gerber & Green (2012) with respondents clustered within EDs. The final column shows the *p* values associated with the one- and two-tailed significance tests for the quota’s ATEs across measures. Table 3 lists these values among male and female respondents. ATEs that achieve traditional statistical significance ($p \leq .05$ for a two-tailed test) are indicated in bold.

Table 2 reveals a statistically significant ATE (for a one-tailed test) for the second measures of external political efficacy and the measure of political interest. Interestingly, Table 3 reveals there are significant differential effects by gender. First, men appear to be significantly more politically engaged than women across all five measures. In addition, contrary to the findings of

Table 2. Total Sample Reservation ATEs.

	M reserved	M unreserved	ATE (95% CI)	p values 2-tailed (1-tailed)
Total sample				
Can you make councilors listen?	2.98	3.08	-0.09 [-0.31, 0.12]	.41 (.20)
Do councilors try to listen?	1.89	2.03	-0.15 [-0.32, 0.02]	.09 (.04)
Interest in politics	2.74	3.17	-0.43 [-0.64, -0.22]	.00 (.00)
Discuss politics	1.87	1.94	-0.07 [-0.20, 0.06]	.30 (.15)
Contacted councilor	0.32	0.36	-0.04 [-0.11, 0.05]	.46 (.23)

ATEs with significance of $p \leq .05$ indicated in bold. ATE = average treatment effect; CI = confidence interval.

previous work, the presence of a gender quota actually *reduces* women's political engagement. The top panel of Table 3 shows that women report significantly less external political efficacy and less interest in politics when living in a district reserved for a female councilor, whereas only the political interest variable is statistically significant and negative within the male split sample.

Among women, the ATE for the first measure of external political efficacy ("Can you make councilors listen?") is a decrease of 0.31 on a 4-point scale. To measure the standardized effect size, I divide the ATE by the standard deviation of the control (unreserved) group to reveal that the quota caused a decrease of 0.28 standard deviations. The ATE for the second measure of external political efficacy ("Do councilors try to listen?") is -0.23, which equates to a standardized effect size of -0.22 standard deviations. Finally, the political interest variable has an ATE among women of -0.47, which is equivalent to a decrease of 0.38 standard deviation. The equivalent ATE among men for this variable is -0.38 on the 4-point scale with an associated standardized effect size of -0.35 standard deviation.¹²

As an additional modeling consideration, I use a series of regressions to model the quota's effect on each outcome variable. This allows me to add the covariate of age to test for heterogeneous treatment effects across age cohorts.

The response categories for the five measures of political engagement are all ordered, except for the dichotomous outcome indicating whether the

Table 3. Male and Female Split Sample Conditional Average Treatment Effects.

	M reserved	M Unreserved	ATE (95% CI)	p values 2-tailed (1-tailed)
Split sample: Female respondents				
Can you make councilors listen?	2.84	3.15	-0.31 [-0.58, -0.04]	.03 (.20)
Do councilors try to listen?	1.78	2.00	-0.23 [-0.44, 0.00]	.05 (.02)
Interest in politics	2.55	3.02	-0.47 [-0.75, -0.20]	.00 (.00)
Discuss politics	1.83	1.88	-0.05 [-0.20, 0.10]	.51 (.25)
Contacted councilor	0.27	0.31	-0.04 [-0.14, 0.07]	.49 (.25)
Split sample: Male respondents				
Can you make councilors listen?	3.14	3.01	0.13 [-0.14, 0.40]	.36 (.18)
Do councilors try to listen?	1.98	2.05	-0.07 [-0.30, 0.16]	.56 (.28)
Interest in politics	2.94	3.32	-0.38 [-0.66, -0.12]	.01 (.00)
Discuss politics	1.92	2.00	-0.09 [-0.27, 0.09]	.34 (.17)
Contacted councilor	0.38	0.42	-0.03 [-0.14, 0.09]	.64 (.32)

ATEs with significant of $p \leq .05$ indicated in bold. ATE = average treatment effect; CI = confidence interval.

respondent contacted his or her community councilor in the past year. I use ordered logistic model specifications for the former and a logistic specification for the latter. I use the `clmm2` function in R’s ordinal package to fit all cumulative link mixed models with random effects at the ED level.¹³ Goodness of fit measures and a discussion of ED random effects are included in Online Appendix C.¹⁴ I use hierarchical linear modeling to allow the intercepts for each ED to vary randomly on the assumption that measures of political engagement may be clustered by ED.

Tables 4 and 5 present model results among female and male respondents, respectively. Each column lists the effect size for each respective measure of political engagement. The first row shows the causal effect of living in a

Table 4. Female Split Sample: Reservation Effect on Respondents' Political Engagement.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Can you make councilor listen?	Do councilors try to listen?	Interest in politics	Discuss politics	Contacted councilor
Quota	-0.60 (0.26)	-0.51 (0.26)	-0.77 (0.27)	-0.06 (0.23)	0.07 (0.31)
Under 25	-0.07 (0.27)	-0.37 (0.27)	-0.58 (0.27)	-0.08 (0.26)	-0.85 (0.36)
1 (Quota × Under 25)	0.48 (0.48)	0.10 (0.48)	-0.78 (0.48)	-0.59 (0.47)	-0.77 (0.76)
Cut points					
0 1					-0.73 (0.19)
1 2	-2.20 (0.22)	-0.73 (0.17)	-1.70 (0.20)	-0.65 (0.15)	
2 3	-0.98 (0.18)	0.82 (0.17)	-1.01 (0.18)	-1.18 (0.17)	
3 4	-0.31 (0.17)	1.97 (0.31)	-0.36 (0.17)		
Random effects: SD	0.63	0.62	0.64	0.42	0.69
Bayesian Information Criterion	1,041.54	1,066.13	1,022.16	920.39	495.45
Log likelihood	-499.68	-511.97	-489.98	-442.12	-232.66
n.	414	414	414	414	414

Councilor contact is specified as a logistic regression, all other models are ordered logistic regressions. Models are multilevel with random effects specified at the community council level. Coefficients with $p \leq .05$ indicated in bold. Standard errors are listed with coefficients in parentheses.

reserved ED. To test for observational effects by age, the next two rows display the coefficients of whether the respondent is under 25 years old and an interaction term with this variable and reserved ED residence. In all the tables that follow, coefficients that achieve traditional statistical significance ($p \leq .05$) are indicated in bold.

Confirming the results from the ATEs calculated through simulation and randomization inference above, the reservation effect is statistically significant for all three attitudinal measures of political engagement among women. Women in reserved EDs report feeling significantly less likely that their (female) councilors want to listen to their concerns or that they can get together with others in the community to make their councilors listen to important issues. Living in a reserved ED also reduces women's general interest in politics. The two behavioral measures, whether the respondent contacted her councilor during the previous year and how often she discusses politics, do not achieve statistical significance suggesting that negative attitudes have not translated into decreased political behavior. Among men, living in a reserved ED is associated with less interest in politics, but residence has no other significant effect on political engagement. The interaction term of the under-25 cohort is not associated with any change in political engagement among either men or women

Table 5. Male Split Sample: Reservation Effect on Respondents' Political Engagement.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Can you make councilor listen?	Do councilors try to listen?	Interest in politics	Discuss politics	Contacted councilor
Quota	0.15 (0.27)	0.02 (0.25)	-0.61 (0.30)	-0.07 (0.25)	-0.01 (0.33)
Under 25	-0.01 (0.27)	0.04 (0.25)	-0.34 (0.31)	0.03 (0.25)	-1.41 (0.36)
1 (Quota × Under 25)	0.37 (0.49)	-0.23 (0.45)	0.54 (0.52)	-0.50 (0.46)	0.92 (0.62)
Cut points					
0 1					0.14 (0.21)
1 2	-1.90 (0.21)	-0.39 (0.15)	-2.22 (0.25)	-0.61 (0.16)	
2 3	-0.88 (0.19)	0.92 (0.16)	-1.54 (0.23)	0.65 (0.16)	
3 4	-0.22 (0.18)	1.81 (0.18)	-0.97 (0.22)		
Random effects: SD	0.64	0.34	0.94	0.38	1.00
Bayesian Information Criterion	981.65	1,051.29	854.21	898.10	516.29
Log likelihood	-469.89	-504.71	-406.17	-431.11	-243.19
n	398	398	398	398	398

Councilor contact is specified as a logistic regression, all other models are ordered logistic regressions. Models are multilevel with random effects specified at the community council level. Coefficients with $p \leq .05$ indicated in bold. Standard errors are listed with coefficients in parentheses.

in reserved EDs, suggesting that age is not a salient determinate of engagement with local politics in the presence of a quota-mandated female councilor.

The substantive effects of the significant variables are also noteworthy. I use the model results to simulate predicted probabilities for each measure of political engagement. In an average council, compared with her counterpart in an unreserved ED, a woman in a reserved ED is 60% (a move from 10% to 16%) more likely to report that she cannot make her (female) councilor listen to her concerns and 21% less likely to report that she is very likely to make her councilor listen (a move from 57% to 45%). Furthermore, in an average council, a woman in a reserved ED is 31% more likely to think that her community councilor never does her best to listen to her concerns (a move from 35% to 46%) and 36% less likely to report that her councilor always does her best to listen (a move from 11% to 7%) as compared with her counterpart in an unreserved ED.

Finally, in an average council, a woman in a reserved ED is 78% more likely to report that she is not at all interested in politics compared with a woman in an unreserved ED (an increase from 18% to 32%) and 34% less

likely to report that she is very interested in politics (a decrease from 56% to 37%). Confirming the results from the split sample ATE calculations above, this effect is also statistically significant although somewhat attenuated among male respondents. A man in a reserved ED is 64% more likely to report that he is not at all interested in politics (an increase from 11% to 18%) and 20% less likely to report that he is very interested in politics (a move from 70% to 56%) as compared with his brother in an unreserved ED.

In sum, it appears that quota-mandated female representation has deleterious effects on citizens' attitudes toward the local political process and their role in it. Surprisingly, these effects are more apparent among female respondents and somewhat less pronounced among their male neighbors. Interestingly, however, the quota's effects on public attitudes have not extended to shifts in public behavior. Both male and female respondents have similar levels of political discussion and contact their councilors to the same degree across reserved and unreserved EDs.

Explaining the Reservation Effect

The above analysis does not reveal whether the councilor's gender is causing women to become less engaged with local politics or whether it is the compulsory nature of the quota that is causing political apathy. Whereas the average reservation effect allows for causal inference because of the random nature of the quota assignment, the comparison between residents in reserved EDs and those that voluntarily elected a female councilor is problematic because these two subgroups are neither randomly assigned nor observably identical. The analysis above does not reveal whether the reservation effect is due to a general dislike of the mandatory quota (and its recipients) across all reserved EDs or whether it is an effect of general taste discrimination against female councilors in reserved EDs that would have preferred to have a male councilor. Furthermore, the latent propensity to elect female councilors in the absence of the quota is not directly observable in the reserved EDs, so it is not possible to directly differentiate between these competing explanations.

This problem can also be framed through concepts familiar to researchers who utilize experimental methods. The treatment in this policy experiment is the realization of the quota policy, and this has the downstream effect of female representation in reserved districts. This research is able to test for the causal effects of citizens' exposure to quota-mandated female councilors, but it offers less direct insight into the effects of female representation in the absence of a quota. Measuring the quota's effect as a proxy for female representation (as done in the extensive research from India) is complicated by the fact that Basotho citizens in unreserved districts elected

female councilors on their own volition causing a case of one-sided non-compliance within the control group.¹⁵ In this section, I use the two control subgroups to my advantage to gain leverage on the observational effects of the quota while holding female representation constant. I do this by identifying a measure to test for the latent propensity to elect female councilors within the treatment group and then examine the quota's effect between comparable subsets of observations that both elected (and arguably wanted to elect) female councilors.

One question from the 2003 Afro-barometer survey (two years prior to the adoption of the quota law) reveals a way to identify areas where citizens may have been more or less likely to elect female councilors without the quota. This question asks respondents how often they have contacted a traditional leader during the previous year "for help to solve a problem or to give them your views." Respondents could indicate on a 4-point Likert-type scale that they had never contacted a traditional leader, done so only once, done so a few times, or had done so often during the previous year. Traditional leaders' presence in their communities prior to quota adoption varies systematically with whether citizens in the unreserved EDs elected male or female councilors two years later. Perhaps unsurprisingly, citizens living in EDs with high average levels of contact with traditional leaders were more likely to elect male councilors than those in EDs with average reported low contact. Tables 8 and 9 in Online Appendix D show the systematic variation in this measure by control subgroup. Importantly, responses to this 2003 survey question are not correlated with the assignment of the quota policy (see Table 1).¹⁶

Table 6 shows the ATEs within a subset of observations from the 2008 Afro-barometer data that contain residents in reserved EDs with one standard deviation below the mean reported contact with traditional leaders (as identified from the 2003 data) and residents in unreserved EDs that voluntarily elected female councilors. Respondents in these groups arguably had similarly high latent propensities to elect female councilors prior to the quota's implementation. Those in the control group went on to do so and those in the treatment group likely would have done so even in the absence of the quota. Given the infrequency of sampling in the same areas across Afro-barometer survey years, there are a limited number of observations that fall into the included subset of the treatment group. Because of this, I calculate the ATEs grouping male and female respondents together.¹⁷

Despite the limited number of observations in the treatment group, the three attitudinal variables still either achieve traditional statistical significance or come close to it. Testing whether there is indeed a negative effect, the first measure of political efficacy achieves significance at the .01 level

Table 6. Estimates of ATEs Using Preexisting Traditional Contact as a Measure for the Latent Propensity for Female Representation.

	<i>M</i> reserved	<i>M</i> unreserved	ATE (95% CI)	<i>p</i> values 2-tailed (1-tailed)
Total sample				
Can you make councilors listen?	2.11	3.08	-0.96 [-1.74, -0.27]	.03 (.01)
Do councilors try to listen?	1.44	1.98	-0.53 [-1.16, 0.07]	.11 (.09)
Interest in politics	2.56	3.19	-0.63 [-1.85, 0.01]	.25 (.13)
Discuss politics	1.89	1.96	-0.07 [-0.64, 0.39]	.87 (.43)
Contacted councilor	0.22	0.33	-0.11 [-0.45, 0.24]	.62 (.31)

Sample includes reserved EDs and unreserved EDs with a high latent propensity for female representation (low preexisting levels of contact with traditional leaders). ATEs with significance of $p \leq .05$ indicated in bold. ATE = average treatment effect; CI = confidence interval; EDs = electoral divisions.

and the second measure achieves significance at the .09 level. The measure of political interest achieves significance at the .13 level.¹⁸

These results generally indicate the persistence of the reservation effect when holding female representation constant. By comparing arguably similar sample populations in treatment and control conditions, I find evidence that it is not the councilor's gender, but rather the selection mechanism through which she achieves office that causes her constituents to feel more disengaged from the political lives of their communities.

Alternative Explanations

Two alternative explanations emerge that may explain this study's results. First, it is possible that citizens' political disengagement in reserved EDs stems from experiencing a political process that was somehow objectively less interesting. For instance, this might occur if elections in reserved EDs were not as fiercely contested as elections in open districts. Empirically, this appears not to be the case. The 2005 election data reveal that 8.2% of the 1,285 community councilor positions across EDs went uncontested, and

these elections were distributed evenly across the three subgroups of councilors. Male councilors were elected without competition in 8% of EDs, and women won uncontested in 7.8% of unreserved EDs and 8.8% in reserved EDs.

The 2005 election data also contain information on how many votes the winning candidate received (but not the margin of victory). This measure is also distributed evenly across councilor type. Winning male councilors received an average of 160 votes and winning female councilors received an average 162 votes in unreserved EDs and 159 votes in reserved EDs, suggesting that voter turnout was similar across ED type. In sum, female contestants in reserved EDs had elections observationally similar to both their male and female colleagues in unreserved EDs.

A second alternative hypothesis relates to electoral competition and the real or perceived competence of councilors (or lack thereof) in reserved EDs. The restrictive nature of the quota limits the number of potential candidates in reserved EDs so there is a higher likelihood that less competent leaders will attain office.¹⁹ When citizens believe their councilors are ineffective, they may become less interested in local politics. Furthermore, assuming there is at least some degree of taste discrimination against female leaders in Lesotho, women who win in unreserved EDs may be more competent than their male competitors to make up for this sexism penalty. This is not the case in the unreserved EDs, and immediately after the creation of the councils in 2005, there may have been more open seats reserved for women than there were experienced local female community leaders.

I am able to test this possible explanation through a series of questions from the 2008 Afro-barometer survey, which asks respondents to evaluate the performance of their community councilors on a series of tasks that fall within their purview. These questions follow the format, "What about local government? I do not mean the national government. I do not mean the central government. I mean your community council. How well or badly would you say your local government is handling the following matters . . ." The survey enumerators then referenced a series of specific local government tasks such as "maintaining local market places," "keeping our community clean (e.g., refuse removed)," "making the Council's program of work known to ordinary people," "providing citizens with the information about the Council's budget (i.e., revenues and expenditures)," "guaranteeing that local government revenues are used for public services and not for private gain." Table 7 shows the quota's ATE across this range of performance indicators. Interestingly, citizens (both male and female) report that councilors in reserved EDs perform better across these indicators than councilors in unreserved EDs—differences that at times reach statistical significance.

Table 7. Estimates of ATEs of Performance Indicators Between Reserved and Unreserved Electoral Divisions.

	<i>M</i> reserved	<i>M</i> unreserved	ATE (95% CI)	<i>p</i> values 2-tailed (1-tailed)
Total sample				
Performance: Market maintenance	2.06	1.90	0.16 [-0.03, 0.35]	.11 (.05)
Performance comm. cleanliness	2.25	2.05	0.24 [0.03, 0.45]	.03 (.02)
Performance: Make work well known	2.20	2.05	0.13 [-0.08, 0.35]	.23 (.12)
Performance: Info on budget	2.17	1.84	0.29 [0.08, 0.50]	.01 (.01)
Performance: Public benefit	2.08	1.90	0.15 [-0.07, 0.38]	.18 (.09)

ATEs with significance of $p \leq .05$ indicated in bold. ATE = average treatment effect; CI = confidence interval.

Furthermore, there are no systematic differences in the way male and female respondents answer these questions (tables not included).

These findings are indeed noteworthy in their own right: On average, male and female respondents believe their councilors in reserved EDs perform just as well—or in some cases significantly better than their counterparts in unreserved EDs. Despite this, male and female respondents express less interest in politics in reserved EDs and female citizens in particular report lower levels of political efficacy under quota-assigned female leadership. Taken together, these results indicate that the stigma of receiving one's position through an exclusionary affirmative action measure persists despite the public perception that councilors are performing well. Although only speculative, these findings provide suggestive evidence that the negative attitudinal reactions quota recipients experience from their female constituents may only exist in the short term and may dissipate over time. Indeed, the evidence from a similar policy experiment in India suggests that the positive symbolic effects of quotas may take two electoral cycles to realize (Beaman, Chattopadhyay, Duflo, Pande, & Topalova, 2009; Bhavnani, 2009).

Discussion

Interpreting the Reservation Effect

This research has found that women are significantly less engaged with politics in districts reserved for female representatives on several attitudinal dimensions. Furthermore, this negative reaction against quota-mandated women holds when comparing this group with women elected via regular electoral rules. Although an exhaustive test of potential mediators is beyond the scope of this article, a review of the evidence relating to the mechanisms discussed above is informative.

I find no evidence that women view their community councils as more open, accessible, and legitimate when they have a female representative. There is also no evidence that the quota policy increases female constituents' political engagement because women perceive female councilors as better able to substantively represent their interests. It also does not appear that female community councilors act as role models to younger cohorts of women (at least in the short term), as younger women do not appear to be distinct from their mothers across the various measures of political engagement.

The question then remains: Why do female citizens report strong negative reactions against female beneficiaries of Lesotho's affirmative action policy? First, my findings fit well with the theories advanced by Norris (2008) and Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer (2010, 2012), which claim that exclusionary political institutions, as compared with power-sharing and inclusionary institutions, cause citizens to view politics and political officeholders with skepticism.

This discussion is particularly relevant to the case of Lesotho for at least two reasons: First, this particular quota design prohibits men from competing in a significant number of local EDs, which some Basotho perceived as unfair. In 2005, a Mosotho man unsuccessfully challenged the electoral rule's constitutionality in the Lesotho High Court claiming the law violated his right to run in his district. Second, the impetus for Lesotho's quota came largely from the Southern African Development Community, a regional body comprised of 15 Southern African states, rather than from domestic groups. The somewhat valid perception that the quota's implementation was a policy dictated to Lesotho rather than one that originated from a sustained grassroots effort furthered perceptions of the law's illegitimacy. For instance, Tsepo Molefe, the denied candidate who challenged the law's constitutionality directly cited the imposed nature of the law, stating, "The government needs to come and explain to the people why it is important for women to participate. There was no consultation. We were just told: it has to be done."²⁰

This explanation alone, however, does not totally account for the particularly negative reaction women express toward quota-assigned female councilors, suggesting that the inclusivity/exclusivity argument may be gendered. For instance, even the policy's beneficiaries expressed concerns about the law's legitimacy, as one female councilor in a reserved ED stated, "I think in the future we should just have open elections. We don't want a quota. Women should stand on their own feet . . . for our creditability it is important to stand on our own and win."²¹

My findings also support theories from scholars of affirmative action policies in other fields, such as school admissions and hiring practices. First, Aberson (2003) finds that both in-group and out-group members in America report greater support for affirmative action when justifications were provided for the policy—something that did not happen when the quota was adopted in Lesotho. Earlier work examining race-based affirmative action policies in the United States also finds that in the absence of such explanations, attitudes toward the policy depend on individuals' assumptions about the existence of racism rather than their levels of hostility toward the policies' beneficiaries (Stoker, 1998). Applied to the case of Lesotho, these studies would rightly suggest that in rural Sesotho society, in which gender discrimination is rarely openly discussed, when the quota was implemented without local buy-in or discussion, the policy generated negative unintended attitudinal reactions toward its beneficiaries.

Second, the literature on affirmative action sheds light on the puzzling finding that female citizens have stronger negative reactions toward the policy than male citizens. Although studies from the United States suggest that women overwhelmingly endorse gender-based affirmative action much more strongly than men and have stronger support for stricter preferential policies (see Crosby, Iyer, & Sincharoen, 2006 and Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006, for reviews), several studies note that support for affirmative action is based on individual-level identities. For instance, pulling from social identity theory, Linnehan, Chrobot-Mason, and Konrad (2006) and Lowery et al. (2006) show that individual support for race-based affirmative action are related to the individual's level of identification with his or her own race or ethnic group. Similarly, Konrad (2003) and Martins and Parsons (2007) find evidence that women's support for sex-based affirmative action policies are related to women's beliefs that they are part of a marginalized group. Again, we see how these theories are applicable to the case of Lesotho. As noted in the section "Theoretical Framework: Why Should Gender and Gender Quotas Matter?" two years before the quota policy's implementation, Basotho women reported stronger support for the continued traditional role of women as compared to male respondents, suggesting, perhaps unsurprisingly, that

most Basotho women do not have the type of feminist identities that would predict support for preferential treatment of women.

Finally, support for different types of affirmative action policies relate to the previous discussion of inclusionary and exclusionary political institutions. For instance, Cropanzano, Slaughter, and Bachiochi (2005) find that African Americans show greater support for race-blind affirmative action policies (such as targeted recruiting, but no preference in hiring), rather than race-conscious policies that explicitly give preference based on race (such as tie-breaking policies or quotas). The authors argue that race-conscious affirmative action policies contain a tacit threat to the self-image of the historically underrepresented group because they carry the message that potential beneficiaries lack certain relevant qualifications.

In sum, taken together, these theories provide a unified and nuanced explanation for the findings presented here. Both my quantitative results as well as my qualitative research in Lesotho suggest that the exclusionary nature and perceived illegitimacy of the quota law created a backlash of sorts against the quota's beneficiaries. Furthermore, in a country in which women have been socialized to accept male authority, female citizens expressed the strongest negative reactions against beneficiaries of the quota policy. Indeed, this is a common narrative in Lesotho. Alice Ranthimo, who worked with councilors during this period, notes, "The quota gave female villagers the impression that the councilor didn't belong there; that she was just put there—and this often led to judgment and dismissal."²²

External Validity and Theoretical Relevance

Like all research utilizing experimental methods, this study sacrifices external validity for increased internal validity. Nevertheless, the findings presented here add insight into the larger theoretical literatures on gender quotas and women's political representation.

First, affirmative action measures for women in politics have become incredibly popular in the last two decades, as various types of quotas have been implemented to correct for the historical underrepresentation of women. Again, although Lesotho and India are the only two countries in the world that have experimented with single-member districts in which women entirely replace would-be male candidates and are therefore the most exclusionary type of quota policy, many other countries have adopted different types of reserved seat quotas at both the national and subnational levels. While not replacing potential male candidates, these quota policies often create additional seats for women either in a post hoc manner appointed by political parties or in additional single-member constituencies that overlap

with representatives elected via non-gender-specific rules. In 2013, for instance, both Kenya and Zimbabwe implemented such measures at the national level.²³

In addition, whereas women have almost never won a majority of seats in an electoral body by winning a sizable number of open seats in addition to quota-assigned seats, this trend has happened, albeit to a lesser degree on frequent occasions.²⁴ In most other quota systems that have both gender-specific and non-gender-specific electoral rules, women do typically win some unreserved seats—suggesting that testing for the effects of female officeholders through different selection mechanisms has important implications to the quota experiences in other countries.

Whereas the way that constituents relate to their representatives is certainly different in national compared with local politics, the findings here may provide insight into how “quota women” are perceived by their constituents more broadly. Policies that add women to elected bodies rather than creating a scenario in which they replace men are by nature inclusionary, rather than exclusionary, but still allow citizens to potentially associate these women with the stigma of being affirmative action beneficiaries. Future work might test whether the negative reactions that I find in Lesotho extend to more inclusionary instances in which women who attain office via quotas are still easily identifiable. This is a testable implication that will provide insight as to whether the findings presented here are best explained by the stigma effect or the inclusion versus exclusion effect.

Importantly, this study also provides insight into a decade’s worth of research that has emerged from the Indian case. After nearly two decades of the affirmative action policy, the positive substantive and symbolic results are firmly established. At least three theoretically salient explanations emerge when attempting to reconcile this body of work with the findings presented here.

First, it is very possible that the positive symbolic effects of gender quotas take more than three years to realize. Given that there were no studies of the Indian quota immediately following its adoption, the results presented here could indicate a short-term negative reaction to the quota that would dissipate and eventually turn into positive reactions as the quota became more established and accepted as a legitimate and fair electoral rule over time. Indeed, several studies from India have found that the reported positive symbolic effects take two electoral terms to realize (Beaman et al., 2009; Beaman et al., 2012; Bhavnani, 2009;).

Second, it is possible that the perceived source of Lesotho’s quota policy in particular caused a negative reaction among citizens. If Basotho citizens perceived the quota as an external attempt to shape policy or as a policy

originating from a domestically unpopular regime (see Bush & Jamal, 2014), this may have caused negative reactions toward the policy's beneficiaries.

Third, in India, women seldom win in unreserved districts causing researchers to methodologically conflate the quota policy with female representation. The Lesotho case, however, allows one to parse out the effects of gender and electoral rules—but, of course, it is also likely part of the explanatory story. In Lesotho, the fact that a significant number of women won in unreserved electoral districts suggests that both the stigma effect and the effect of exclusionary institutions may have been heightened, as the justifications for the affirmative action policy are less immediately apparent to ordinary citizens. Parsing out the relative weight of each of these explanations is certainly an area of future research that would lend itself well to creative comparative or experimental approaches.

Conclusion

The popularity of electoral gender quotas as a way of integrating more women into formal political power structures has increased dramatically in the last two decades. Scholarly work aimed at understanding the varied potential impacts of an increase in women's descriptive representation has grown in tandem. This study has examined one facet of this growing research agenda, specifically, the ways in which electoral gender quotas foster female citizens' engagement with local politics. The results presented here provide new evidence on the ways citizens react to exposure to female politicians, those elected via a mandatory gender quota that gives absolute preference on gender and those elected through the same electoral rules as men. Counter-intuitively, I find evidence that all citizens express less interest in politics and that female citizens in particular express lower levels of political efficacy under a quota-assigned female leader. Using implications from the policy experiment, I argue that the perceived preferential treatment from the quota policy, rather than the councilor's gender or the perceived competence of quota-mandated representatives, is the key determinant affecting women's engagement with local politics.

The implications of these findings speak to the broader comparative study of gender quotas—most notably through the mediators that may be at play. My results suggest that the causal effect of the quota is likely related to the hyper-exclusionary nature of the quota policy, a stigma surrounding the policy's beneficiaries, or both. Whereas the former explanation is most relevant in comparison with the Indian case, the latter is an effect that can potentially apply to more inclusionary types of quotas in which women are still visibly given preferential treatment. Testing the competing implications that arise

from these potential mediators in different cases is a fruitful area for future research.

This research also represents the first study that can compare another policy experiment case with the large literature that has emerged from a similar subnational policy experiment with reserved districts in India. Contrary to the broad consensus from the Indian case, the findings presented here have less than sanguine implications for the likelihood that compulsory quotas will positively shift women's political attitudes and behavior, at least in the short term. This leads to at least four policy-relevant conclusions that give some leverage on understanding when quotas might produce unintended negative consequences.

First, quotas are more likely to be symbolically successful in electoral systems in which women cannot be uniquely identified as having benefited from the policy (for instance, by integrating more women into top spots on party lists in proportional representation systems). Second, local consultation and buy-in from domestic groups will likely increase the possibility that the quota policy is well received. Third, greater insistence on the longevity of reserved single-member districts may normalize this policy as an appropriate electoral rule, which in turn may lead to the positive symbolic effects that have been demonstrated in India. Fourth, quotas are likely to be more successful when implemented in systems in which it is historically clear that women experience discrimination in open competition with men, as it will provide citizens with a historically grounded justification for preferential policies based on sex. Given the continued rapid pace of quota adoption, the nuances of the effects of different types of affirmative action policies for women in politics are important areas of future research.

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Notes

1. Interview with Malepota Mafeka, then Country Director, Lesotho Gender Links, interviewed by author, Maseru, Lesotho, February 8, 2013
2. Interview with Rethabile Pholo, Independent Electoral Commission program manager and Gender Links consultant, interviewed by author, Maseru, Lesotho, February 24, 2014.
3. Basotho is Lesotho's predominant ethnic group and is a term that has become synonymous with the country's nationality. The singular form of this term is Mosotho. The language and the culture of the Basotho people are referred to as Sesotho or Southern Sotho.
4. For the classic anthropological account of the salience of gender roles and economic production in structuring rural life in Lesotho, see Ferguson (1990) and Murray (1981).
5. Reservation status was randomly assigned by selecting every third electoral division (ED; or at times every fourth ED) from the complete list. Tangential to this study, in 2011 the Local Government Elections Act was amended to replace the women-only single-member districts with a different type of quota system that now allows open contestation in all EDs. As an odd example of international policy diffusion, Lesotho's Minister of Gender seemed to have gotten the reserved district idea from Rajeev Ahal, an Indian gender expert who was working in Lesotho for the local GTZ (German Agency for Technical Cooperation) office at the time (Morna & Tolmay, 2007).
6. The community councils are charged with village-level maintenance issues such as land allocation, managing the local water supply, and maintaining village markets and local roads. The community councilors elected from each ED represent the villages in their district at community council meetings, which meet at least once a month. The EDs are relatively small, with constituencies consisting on average of around 600 adults over the age of 18. Before each council meeting, each councilor customarily has a separate meeting with residents from the villages in his or her ED to better represent his or her constituents in the community council. The small district size means that councilors are very well known in their communities. In interviews I conducted in 2014 with over 100 Basotho citizens in councils across the country, almost every respondent knew the names of both their current and previous councilor without hesitation.
7. I use MatchIt for R with a genetic matching algorithm (Diamond & Sekhon, 2010).
8. Through the list-wise deletion on unknown ED characteristics (described below), my model data is reduced to a total of 870 observations. My results are robust to model specifications that do not match on respondents' age.

9. This happens, for instance, when there are two villages with the same name in the village census list, and I cannot identify which one corresponds with the respondent's residence as identified from the Afro-barometer data. This narrows my total observations from 1,200 to 897.
10. See Honaker, King, and Blackwell (2011).
11. Pearson's chi-square test p value = .997.
12. Researchers typically characterize standardized effects of less than 0.3 standard deviations as small, between 0.3 and 0.8 as moderate, and above 0.8 as large (Gerber & Green, 2012).
13. See Christensen (2013).
14. The results presented here also hold under a fixed-effects model specification.
15. Under this conceptualization, the subset of the control group that elected female councilors would be considered "always-takers" because they always take the treatment of female representation regardless of whether it was assigned to them. The measure I describe below essentially allows me to identify the "always-takers" in the treatment group.
16. For a further examination on how the quota affected perceptions of the influence of traditional leaders, see Clayton (2014).
17. Again, it should be emphasized that this test is observational, as the latent propensity to elect female councilors was not randomly assigned.
18. When estimating the average treatment effects (ATEs) through the model-based approach described above, the results are similar. The first measure of political efficacy achieves significance at the .03 level and the second measure achieves significance at the .11 level. The measure of political interest achieves significance at the .16 level.
19. A survey of then-councilors in Lesotho, however, reveals that male and female councilors have similar levels of education, although they do not distinguish between female councilors that were elected in reserved versus unreserved districts (Morna & Tolmay, 2007).
20. Interview with Tsepo Molefe (Morna & Tolmay, 2007, p. 68).
21. Interview with Mathato Mantso, councilor in a reserved ED in Lesotho's Khomokhoana Council (Morna & Tolmay, 2007, p. 169).
22. Interview with Alice Ranthimo, program officer, Gender Links Lesotho, interviewed by author, February 10, 2014.
23. In Kenya, "women's districts" are cobbled over other open districts in a first-past-the-post system, so citizens vote both for their MP in an open seat and their female MP in a "women's district." In Zimbabwe, an additional 30% of seats are appointed proportionally by political party vote share.
24. In addition to subnationally in Lesotho, this also describes the current makeup of the Rwandan Parliament.

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