

GENDER QUOTAS AND MODELS OF POLITICAL CITIZENSHIP

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Abstract

Gender quotas have spread rapidly around the world in recent years. However, few studies have yet theorized, systematically or comparatively, variations in their features, adoption, and implementation. This article surveys quota campaigns in Western Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. It proposes that one or more sets of controversies influence the course and outcomes of quota reforms. These revolve around (1) competing principles of equality, (2) different ideas about political representation, and (3) various beliefs about 'gender' and its relation to other kinds of political identities. The article draws on these distinctions to identify four broad models of political citizenship that determine the kinds of quota policies that are pursued and their prospects for bringing more women into political office.

GENDER QUOTAS AND MODELS OF POLITICAL CITIZENSHIP

Candidate gender quotas¹ have diffused rapidly around the world in recent years. Today, more than one hundred countries have explicit policies requiring the selection of female candidates to political office. Most research on these measures to date has tended to focus on three main issues: the forms that quotas take, the reasons for their adoption, and the variations in their effects. As a whole, the literature identifies three broad types of gender quota policies: reserved seats, political party quotas, and legislative quotas.² Four explanations are provided for quota adoption: women's mobilization,³ strategic incentives of political elites,⁴ consistency with existing political norms,⁵ and international norms and transnational sharing.⁶ Finally, the fact that some quotas are more effective than others is accounted for by pointing to the details of quota designs,⁷ their 'fit' with existing institutional frameworks,⁸ and the balance between actors who support and oppose quota policies.⁹

The majority of studies focus on individual cases, seeking to understand how quotas operate within a particular national context. Alternatively, they analyze diversity among quotas at the global level, aiming to distil similarities and differences across disparate quota campaigns.¹⁰ However, a growing number of scholars attempt a middle level of analysis by mapping region-specific trends in Latin America,¹¹ Sub-Saharan Africa,¹² and Western Europe.¹³ While a welcome development, the work endeavours mainly to signal broad similarities and differences across cases. Few scholars use this information in a wider sense (1) to theorize systematic variations across countries that are more or less comparable to one another, or (2) to interrogate possible links in these cases between quota types, quota adoption, and quota impact.

This article addresses this gap in the literature by analyzing quota campaigns across the West, focusing on the broadly similar political systems of Western Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. This sample of countries offers a unique starting point for undertaking comparative

research on gender quotas. On the one hand, it is not restricted to a single region of the world. At the same time, however, it includes countries that share important points of contact both culturally and historically. On the other hand, the sample consists of quota campaigns that began earlier than many other quota debates around the world,¹⁴ usually before international and transnational actors began to politicize this issue on a global scale. It therefore permits closer examination of the various national-level factors that affect how quotas are received, as domestic norms interact with global trends to shape the introduction and translation of quota demands in various national contexts.

The first section begins with an overview of quota policies in Western Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. Although reserved seats do not exist in these countries, party quotas and legislative quotas are extensive. A further category of measures is also evident: policies taken up more informally by political parties, or ‘soft’ quotas. The second section surveys quota debates across these countries. It finds that quotas are controversial in different ways across national contexts, revolving around competing definitions of equality, representation, or gender. Based on these conflicts, four general models of political citizenship are elaborated that reflect distinct configurations of these political principles. Combining these two analyses, the third section illustrates how citizenship models generate distinct logics that shape the form, adoption, and impact of gender quota policies. The article concludes that models of political citizenship play a crucial role in determining the shape and success of gender quota campaigns. However, while the analysis indicates that prior political contexts are important, the case studies also suggest that agency is vital in framing the degree to which quotas challenge or conform to existing political principles. Therefore, although structures provide opportunities and constraints in gender quota campaigns, actors ultimately construct the meanings that are given to quotas as reforms that either fulfil or undermine reigning definitions of equality, representation, and gender.

Gender Quotas in the West

Most work on gender quotas identifies three basic kinds of quota measures: reserved seats, which designate places for women in political assemblies that men are not eligible to contest; party quotas, which involve pledges by individual parties to nominate a specific percentage of women; and legislative quotas, which require that all parties put forward a certain proportion of women.¹⁵ Some scholars exclude reserved seats from comparative studies of gender quotas, on the grounds that they do not influence candidate nomination processes, but rather make specific guarantees as to who may accede to political office.¹⁶ Others divide party quotas into two types: aspirant quotas, which affect pre-selection processes by establishing that only women may be considered as nominees for certain elected positions, and candidate quotas, which require that parties select a particular proportion of women among their final lists of candidates.¹⁷ Still others draw distinctions between various kinds of legislative quotas, separating out those quotas that are instituted through changes to the electoral law from those that are secured through constitutional reforms.¹⁸ Despite these nuances, these latter contributions do not fundamentally challenge the assertion that reserved seats, party quotas, and legislative quotas constitute three broad categories of measures that share similar concerns to increase the numbers of women elected to political office. To these, however, it is possible to add the fourth category of ‘soft’ quotas (see Table 1). These are distinct from other types of quotas in that they seek to encourage, but do not require, parties to promote the selection of more female candidates. Indeed, in many they are often not even called ‘quotas,’ although they often influence candidate recruitment processes to an equal or greater degree than ‘hard’ quotas.

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Party Quotas

Reserved seats are not found in any countries in Western Europe, North America, Australia, or New Zealand, but instead appear primarily in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.¹⁹ Party quotas, in

contrast, are the most common type of formal quotas in the West: they are found in eighteen of the twenty-two countries in the sample. In global perspective, they were first adopted in the early 1970s by various socialist and social democratic parties in Western Europe. Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, however, they appeared in green parties, social democratic parties, and even conservative parties more broadly across the West, as well as in a diverse array of political parties in other regions around the world. At their most basic, party quotas are measures adopted voluntarily that commit parties to aim for a certain proportion of women among their candidates to political office. In this sense, they alter party practices by setting out new criteria for candidate selection that require elites to recognize existing biases and to consider alternative spheres of political recruitment.²⁰

Party quotas typically mandate that women constitute between twenty-five and fifty percent of parties' electoral slates. However, the particular phrasing of this requirement varies: some policies identify women as the group to be promoted by the quota,²¹ while others set out a more gender-neutral formulation, specifying a minimum representation for 'each sex' or establishing that 'neither sex' can account for more than a particular proportion of the party's candidates.²² Further, given distinct political systems, these measures may be implemented in a number of ways. In countries with proportional representation electoral systems, party quotas govern the composition of party lists. Some parties apply the quota to the list as a whole, while others simply direct it to the number of seats in the list that they anticipate winning in the next elections. In countries with majoritarian systems, party quotas pertain to a collection of single-member districts. This may entail nominating a proportion of women across all the districts where the party is running candidates.²³ Alternatively, the policy may apply to a designated set of seats that the party expects to win; for example, seats where one of the party's incumbents is stepping down, or seats that the party expects to capture in the next round of elections.²⁴

Legislative Quotas

Legislative quotas are much less common in the West. With few exceptions, they tend to be found in developing countries, especially Latin America, and/or post-conflict societies, primarily in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeastern Europe.²⁵ They exist in only five of the twenty-two states in the sample, although they have recently been proposed – and subsequently rejected – by national parliaments in several countries, namely Austria (1999) and Italy (2006).²⁶ These patterns may be explained in part by the fact that legislative quotas are the newest kind of gender quota policy, appearing for the first time only in the 1990s, generally after parties in many Western countries had already adopted other kinds of quota measures. Legislative quotas are similar to party quotas in that they address party selection processes, but they differ in that they are reforms that are passed by national parliaments that require all parties to nominate a certain proportion of female candidates. Thus, they are mandatory provisions that apply to all political groupings, rather than simply those who choose to adopt quotas. In the process, these reforms take important steps to legitimize positive action and recognize ‘gender’ as a political identity, altering the basic meanings of equality and representation that inform candidate selection processes.

Similar to party quotas, legislative quotas call for women to form between twenty-five and fifty percent of all candidates. However, they involve more extensive processes of reform, focused on changing the language contained in constitutions and electoral laws, rather than the content of party statutes. As such, their passage requires some degree of cross-partisan agreement; indeed, most legislative quotas are approved nearly unanimously by legislators representing parties from across the political spectrum. The language contained in these measures is generally gender-neutral, speaking of women and men together or making reference to the ‘underrepresented sex.’ All the same, the provisions vary in terms of how strictly or specifically their goals are articulated: some speak vaguely about ‘facilitating access’,²⁷ while others offer more concrete prescriptions regarding the selection

and placement of female candidates.²⁸ Like party quotas, legislative quotas are implemented in different ways depending on the electoral system, applying alternatively to party lists²⁹ or to a broader group of single-member districts.³⁰ Given their status as law, a distinctive feature of these measures is that they usually contain sanctions for non-compliance and are subject to some degree of oversight from external bodies.

Soft Quotas

Soft quotas are perhaps the most prevalent kind of quota measures in the West. The exact number of such policies is difficult to calculate, however, given that these measures are often not labelled ‘quotas.’ Further, many of the parties and countries that employ them generally reject or resist the idea of positive action *per se* as an option for bringing more women into political office. Nonetheless, these policies are often functionally equivalent to formal quotas in that they seek to increase women’s political representation in some concrete way. The two main forms they take are informal targets and recommendations, which are anticipated to affect directly the nomination of more female candidates, and quotas for internal party bodies, which are expected to influence indirectly the numbers of women who run for elected office.³¹ As such, despite the care taken to disassociate them from quotas, these provisions are often adopted with the express purpose of stimulating – although not necessarily guaranteeing – the election of more women to various kinds of political bodies. Consequently, soft quotas are not the same as the aspirant quotas applied by some political parties, which stipulate that only women may be considered among the potential candidates for a particular elected position.³² Indeed, they stop short of such mandates, and instead ‘encourage’ possible female candidates. Similarly, soft quotas also do not include the many formal quotas that for various reasons are given a name other than ‘quotas,’ such as *parité* in France³³ or *varannan damernas* in Sweden.³⁴ Rather, they are measures that step back from the spirit and aims of

formal quota policies, even as they agree with – and seek to promote – the same or at least similar ends.

Models of Political Citizenship

While quotas have now been taken up in many countries in the West and beyond, they nonetheless remain deeply controversial.³⁵ Indeed, even when they are adopted nearly unanimously within political parties or by national legislatures, doubts often linger as to their legitimacy and legality.³⁶ Most discussions revolve around whether or not quotas are in fact the best way to promote women’s access to political office. However, quotas are controversial in at least three ways: (1) they encourage positive action in candidate selection procedures, provoking a conflict between competing principles of *equality*; (2) they promote identities over ideas, leading to a clash between distinct notions of *political representation*; and (3) they recognize ‘women’ as a political category, raising questions about *gender* and its relation to other kinds of political identities.³⁷ While quotas may be disputed for all these reasons, cross-case comparisons reveal striking parallels with existing citizenship typologies:³⁸ quota debates are similar within but distinct across countries with different configurations of political ideals. Based on these patterns, it is possible to distinguish four general models of political citizenship (see Table 2). Importantly, these ideal types may vary at the national and the party levels. All the same, as will become apparent below, debates at the party level are often framed or informed by values at the national level. Reflecting distinct political logics, the four models influence the adoption and impact of quota policies by generating relatively predictable patterns of opportunities and constraints for gender quota campaigns, even if actors are ultimately responsible for the meanings given to specific quota reforms.

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Liberal Citizenship Models

Countries with liberal citizenship models are characterized by a philosophical commitment to individualism and are often associated with majoritarian electoral systems that yield two-party systems, one-party cabinets, and executive dominance.³⁹ Quotas are contentious in liberal models because of their explicit challenge to reigning definitions of equality, which is often exacerbated by significant political obstacles to quota implementation in electoral systems organized around single-member districts. In general, liberal citizenship models favour equal opportunities, attributing responsibility for unequal outcomes to individuals themselves and therefore viewing prospects for change in terms of individual initiative. Quota policies, on the other hand, seek to promote equal results, recognizing that inequalities may derive from broader structures that are best altered through group-based solutions. Thus, although similar objections are raised in nearly all quota campaigns, equality-based concerns are particularly powerful in countries governed by liberal frameworks. In contrast, questions of representation and gender are less subject to dispute in these debates. Liberal models stress principal-agent representation and as such do not offer any further expectations about links between personal characteristics and policy outcomes. In related vein, they simply bracket the issue of gender by focusing on individuals rather than groups. Taken together, these three elements suggest that quotas are least likely to appear in countries with a liberal citizenship model.

Republican Citizenship Models

Republican citizenship models, in contrast, embody a philosophical commitment to universalism and typically involve a politically centralized form of democracy in which popular sovereignty is expressed at the level of the nation.⁴⁰ Quota debates in republican models are most divided on the question of political representation. Meanings of political representation vary by their emphasis on ideas versus identities. Principal-agent notions consider representation to be adequate

when a representative acts on behalf of and according to the ideas of those who are represented. In contrast, descriptive conceptions deem the presence of representatives with relevant social or other characteristics to be sufficient.⁴¹ Gender quotas privilege descriptive representation, and in this way, strongly contradict the logic of the republican model. Given their commitment to universalism, republican systems promote a version of principal-agent representation that takes into account only the interests of the universal citizen, who exists above and beyond any particularistic group-based concerns. In comparison, issues of equality and gender remain largely below the radar. Republican models promote equal opportunities, but ignore gender and other group bases of inequality. Instead, citizens are enjoined to transcend their individual identities to assume the position of the universal citizen. These features indicate that quotas are also not very likely to emerge in countries with this type of citizenship model, unless they are successfully framed to mesh in some way with these universalistic aspirations.

Consociational-Corporatist Citizenship Model

Consociational and corporatist citizenship models are often treated as distinct, because consociationalism normally signifies political arrangements, while corporatism is typically used to refer to relations of social and economic bargaining (Royo 2002). In the context of this discussion, however, these two models of citizenship are more similar than they are different: they share a philosophical commitment to social partnership and consensus and are generally governed by proportional representation.⁴² Quotas are much less controversial in consociational-corporatist model and are relatively easily implemented due to the presence of list-based electoral systems. Nevertheless, they provoke vivid debates as to the nature and relevance of gender as a political identity. The main point of contention in these systems concerns the unity of the category ‘women,’ and as a subset of this question, the relationship between equality for women and for members of

other marginalized groups. Gender quotas to date have employed the category of ‘women’ as a single entity, strategically overlooking the fact that women as a group are invariably stratified by a host of other identities. The claims of women may therefore clash with those of other groups that are guaranteed, or seek to be guaranteed, representation in consociational-corporatist political arrangements. As a result, efforts to institute gender quotas may clash with attempts to facilitate access for other marginalized groups. By way of contrast, definitions of equality and representation are much less subject to debate. Consociational-corporatist models aim to foster equal results, place the onus for unequal outcomes on broader social structures, and understand the potential for change in terms of collective responsibility. Consistent with this approach, they emphasize descriptive representation and view quota policies as a means to acknowledge and promote group-based identities and interests. These characteristics imply that quota policies – whether or not they specifically involve provisions for women – are the most compatible with this kind of citizenship model, which is the least apt to challenge quotas on these various normative grounds.

Hybrid Citizenship Model

Hybrid citizenship models, which are often known in other typologies as social democratic regimes,⁴³ combine various features of liberalism, republicanism, and consociationalism-corporatism. At times, therefore, they are treated as a single and separate model;⁴⁴ at others, they are viewed as a subset of other types.⁴⁵ For this very reason, they are most usefully conceptualized as a hybrid of the three other kinds of citizenship models. They integrate simultaneous philosophical commitments to individualism, universalism, and social partnership and consensus through direct relations between states and individuals and universalistic welfare state policies.⁴⁶ Similarly, they employ proportional representation electoral systems, but their multi-party systems produce mixed effects, leaning towards either one-party dominance or an emphasis on broad cross-partisan coalitions.⁴⁷ Reflecting

these varied features, proposed quotas spur contentious disputes along a number of different lines, at the same time that tensions among these debates lead them to be resolved in relatively consensual ways. The focus on individualism in these systems, for example, leads to a preference for equality of opportunities over equality of results. However, this faith in the value of incremental change over an extended period of time is accompanied – due to the presence of a consociational-corporatist public policy strand – by a recognition of various structural factors that might get in the way of ‘natural,’ automatic change over time.⁴⁸ Similarly, the emphasis on universalism in these models tends towards the representation of ideas over the representation of identities. Nonetheless, the presence of strong and distinct party ideologies co-exists – again, stemming from a broader emphasis on social solidarity – with a more general awareness of the need for a certain degree of group representation.⁴⁹ Finally, the weight given to partnership and consensus in these systems is traditionally conceived in terms of social class and, to a slightly lesser degree, other more traditional cleavages like language and religion.⁵⁰ However, efforts by feminists to extend notions of individualism and universalism to women have led to increasing acknowledgment of gender as a political identity.⁵¹ These complex patterns indicate that quota policies in hybrid citizenship models are likely to be widespread but also to take highly differentiated forms, depending on how these tensions are resolved in practice in particular countries over time.

Gender Quotas and Models of Political Citizenship

Differences across these four models of political citizenship suggest that quota debates are likely to take distinct forms and experience varying rates of success, depending on how particular proposals mesh with reigning or emerging political norms. A survey of quota policies across the West largely confirms these expectations, with clear patterns surfacing between types of citizenship models and the form, adoption, and impact of gender quota policies (see Table 3). More specifically,

the equality-based controversies in liberal models appear to generate a preference for soft quotas – and, to a lesser extent, party quotas – that tend to produce only small increases in women’s political representation. In contrast, representation-centred debates in republican models compel the more radical solution of legislative quotas, although with more limited success in promoting the election of women. The gender-focused controversies in consociational-corporatist models incline towards party quotas – and, increasingly, legislative quotas – with often substantial jumps in the numbers of women elected to political office. Finally, the multiple dimensions of contestation in hybrid models are resolved through the varied adoption of party, legislative, and soft quotas, generally with great success in bringing more women into political office.

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Soft Quotas and the Liberal Citizenship Model

As outlined above, soft quotas aim to increase women’s representation indirectly through internal party quotas or more directly through informal targets and recommendations. Most likely, they prevail in countries with liberal citizenship models because they facilitate access but do not necessarily mandate fixed outcomes, thus achieving a compromise between the promotion of women and the wish to emphasize equal opportunities over equal results. Indirect soft quotas are employed in many political parties, and are the main measures used by parties to advance women’s representation in the United States. In the West, the U.S. stands out as the only country in which proposals for gender quotas for elected positions have made virtually no mark in political debates, in spite of the presence of measures to ensure the representation of African-Americans and Latinos.⁵² Despite their lack of attention to candidate provisions, however, both major parties have devoted a significant amount of time discussing quotas for internal party positions. Soon after women gained the right to vote in 1920, the Democratic Party mandated that the Democratic National Committee

(DNC) be composed of one man and one woman from each state and territory. The Republican Party adopted a similar measure that same year, which they abandoned in 1952 but replaced in 1960 with a rule calling for 50-50 representation in all convention committees.⁵³ Following protests at its party convention in 1968, the DNC later ratified guidelines requiring state parties to select women as national convention delegates in proportion to their presence in the state population.⁵⁴ When these reforms came under attack in 1972, the party rewrote delegate selection rules to ban ‘quotas’ in favour of ‘affirmative action.’ The Republicans, in contrast, chose not to regulate the state parties, although some states mandated 50-50 representation on their state central committees.⁵⁵ Reflecting the country’s liberal citizenship model, all of these debates have centred on the issue of equality, fluctuating between a desire to combat discrimination and concerns to preserve ‘merit’ as a criterion of delegate selection.⁵⁶ With some exceptions, these soft quotas have enabled women to participate to a greater degree in party matters. However, while women originally pursued equal representation on party committees out of the belief that these positions would provide an important wedge for gaining broader influence as a group within the parties, vacillations regarding ‘quotas’ – combined with the hesitation to take these policies into the realm of candidate selections – have produced few gains for women in U.S. electoral politics. In 2006, women won only 16.2% of the seats in the House of Representatives and 16% of the seats in the Senate, still below the world average of 17%.⁵⁷

More direct soft quotas have been utilized in New Zealand. As early as the 1970s, the New Zealand Labour Party (NZLP) began to take concrete steps to nominate women, largely in response to a disastrous electoral defeat in 1975. Women used the opportunity to campaign for more women in parliament and in decision-making positions, not least because the party had lost crucial electoral support to the new left-wing New Zealand Values Party, which presented 25% female candidates in 1975.⁵⁸ These policies never approximated formal quotas, however, even though the country has a strong national discourse concerning the rights of Maoris, the indigenous people of New Zealand,

for whom a certain number of seats have always been reserved in parliament.⁵⁹ The idea of quotas reached the political agenda again in 1993, when the country adopted a new mixed member proportional electoral system. Following this reform, the NZLP leader proposed party quotas, but these were rejected by the party in favour of a change in its constitution to include a principle of ‘gender balance’ for all selection procedures.⁶⁰ Thus, at each candidate selection conference, the party is supposed to ‘pause for thought’ after each bloc of five candidates to consider the balance of gender, ethnicity, age, and experience. The Green Party embraces a similar principle of parity in its nominations, but the party has never adopted specific quotas or applied strict alternation on its lists, in contrast to Green parties elsewhere in the world. The centre-right National Party, for its part, has not adopted quotas, but also talks of the need to take ‘balance’ into account.⁶¹ Consistent with its liberal citizenship model, debates over gender quotas in New Zealand have been sensitive to issues of equality, but have largely given way to the belief that change will occur without the need for formal rules. However, despite claims that the parties’ attitudes have evolved beyond quotas, the application of these measures over time reveals the limits of their ‘soft’ nature: while all parties increased the number of female candidates in the first two elections under the new more ‘women-friendly’ electoral system, the election of women decreased from 31% in 1999 to 28% in 2002.⁶² Although much of the decline in 2002 was due to the victory of right-wing parties with relatively few women on their lists, even the NZLP had placed fewer women in spots where they were likely to be elected, because the policy of ‘pausing for thought’ had become less effective with each successive election. Although women’s representation later increased to 32% in 2005,⁶³ the success of soft quotas has led to widespread complacency among all parties that these trends will continue upward, leading many to claim that women no longer need ‘special treatment’ in order to be elected to top political positions.⁶⁴

While soft quotas constitute a novel solution to the widespread resistance to quotas in states with liberal citizenship models, two parties in these countries – the Australian and British Labour parties – have nonetheless approved formal quota policies. Notably, these are both left-wing parties, which suggests that party ideology may play an important role in mitigating the effects of broader national-level citizenship models. The best evidence for the influence of ideology can be seen in the fact that most party quotas around the world have been adopted by socialist and social democratic parties,⁶⁵ matching the strong support for quotas inside the Socialist International.⁶⁶ All the same, the liberal citizenship model continues to affect debates in these countries on the form, adoption, and implementation of gender quotas. In the United Kingdom, for example, the Labour Party initially employed various kinds of soft quotas in an attempt to improve the share of women among its candidates. Given the country's electoral system, organized around single-member districts and winner-take-all elections, these policies focused not on party lists but on party shortlists, namely, the slates of possible candidates in each district. In 1987, the party mandated that in districts where a woman had been nominated, at least one woman had to be included on the shortlist for constituency selection. It strengthened this policy in 1990, when the party conference agreed to a 40% quota for women in all positions inside the party and a target of 50% women in the party's delegation to parliament within ten years or three general elections. Only when both measures failed to increase the number of women elected did the party move to a formal quota policy in 1993, which called for all-women shortlists to be used to select candidates in half of all vacant seats that the party was likely to win. Nonetheless, quotas remained very controversial for reasons similar to those in other countries with liberal citizenship models: while proponents argued that increasing the proportion of women would achieve greater equality between women and men,⁶⁷ opponents – which included a sub-group inside Labour, as well as Liberal Democrats and Conservatives – expressed concerns about the possible stigmatization of 'quota women' and the need to preserve

‘merit’ as a central criterion of candidate selection.⁶⁸ Although the policy was soon overturned on the grounds that it violated the terms of the Sex Discrimination Act, it was eventually reinstated following reform of this Act in 2002, when the party decided again to apply all-women shortlists in at least half of the all seats where incumbent Labour MPs were retiring.⁶⁹ As a result of these shifts, the number of women elected to the House of Commons doubled from 9.2% in 1992 to 18.4% in 1997, dropped to 17.9% in 2001 when no parties applied quotas, and climbed to 19.8% in 2005 when new quota policies were instated.⁷⁰ Interestingly, sustained attention to women in politics, combined with three consecutive electoral losses, has recently led the Conservatives to adopt their own soft quota measures. This includes a ‘priority list’ of aspirant candidates, consisting of at least 50% women and a ‘significant’ proportion of black, minority ethnic, and disabled candidates, that are to be considered for Conservative held and target seats.⁷¹ As such, while party quotas have been adopted in the UK, they are restricted to the Labour Party and have been controversial because they violate prevailing national ideas about equality. In contrast, soft quotas are common, even spreading to a party that is otherwise strongly opposed to equality guarantees.

Legislative Quotas and the Republican Citizenship Model

Legislative quotas are laws passed by national parliaments that govern the selection of female candidates by all political parties. They appear in the one country in the sample with a republican citizenship model, France, and in this case largely because they resolve – albeit, in a dramatic fashion – fundamental questions about the means and ends of political representation.⁷² The earliest proposals for gender quotas in France were party quotas adopted by the Socialist Party (PS) in 1974.⁷³ As early as 1975, however, several female MPs began to press for legislative quotas in municipal elections. They succeeded in gaining a 25% quota in 1982, but this law was almost immediately overturned by the Constitutional Council on the grounds that it violated articles in the

Constitution that did not permit the ‘division’ of voters and candidates into ‘categories’ for the purposes of election.⁷⁴ This verdict defended a notion of representation that did not recognize social differences, but instead privileged the primacy of ideas. Seeking to reframe the connection between identities and opinions, supporters launched a new campaign for quotas in the 1990s and eventually secured constitutional reform in 1999 and change to the electoral law in 2000 to mandate a 50% quota – or ‘parity’ – for women in local, regional, national, and European elections. Inspired by discussions inside the Council of Europe over the concept of ‘parity democracy,’ they argued that existing understandings of equality and representation – as well as their subject, the universal citizen – were originally deemed to apply only to men. Instead of abandoning these concepts, they proposed reforming the constitution to provide for the equal representation of women and men in political life, on the basis that this was the only way to acknowledge the two sexes of the abstract universal citizen.⁷⁵ This policy differed from quotas, they claimed, because quotas implied special representation rights for minorities, while parity simply called for the equitable sharing of power between women and men, the two halves of the human race.⁷⁶ Opponents responded that parity reified sexual differences and threatened to spur claims by other groups for similar concessions, with fatal consequences for the secular and universal republic.⁷⁷

The republican model of political citizenship thus compelled advocates to re-define equal representation, in a manner that could – and did – gain near unanimous approval from both houses of parliament. Nonetheless, many parity advocates were disappointed with the final version of the quota law because it focused on the nomination of female candidates, rather than on the proportion of women elected, and made weak provisions for elections to the National Assembly, where the low percentage of women had inspired the parity campaign in the first place.⁷⁸ As a result of these features, the law’s impact varies widely across levels of government. In local elections, where parties face rejection of their lists if they do not present lists with equal numbers of women and men,

women's representation increased from 25.7% in 1995 to 47.5% in 2001.⁷⁹ In contrast, in national elections, where parties are required to present equal numbers of male and female candidates across all electoral districts, the percentage of women increased only marginally from 10.9% in 1997 to 12.2% in 2002 and 17.5% in 2007. While regulations for local elections imposed specific placement mandates, regulations for national elections made no mention of placement and imposed relatively mild financial penalties for those parties that did not comply, equal to half the difference in their percentages of male and female candidates. These allowances offered greater opportunities for elites to deviate from the spirit – if not the letter – of the law.⁸⁰ On-going discussions on the details of the law reflect the systemic nature of the parity reforms, which combined with the many voting systems in France, require close attention to the dynamics of implementation at various levels of election. They also speak to continuing tensions in attempts to re-define equal representation in a system that gives precedence to ideas over identities via the figure of the abstract universal citizen.

Party Quotas and the Consociational-Corporatist Citizenship Model

Party quotas are provisions adopted voluntarily by political parties as part of a pledge to increase the number of female candidates to political office. These measures dominate in countries with consociational-corporatist citizenship models, generally because they build on commitments that parties have already made in terms of promoting the representation of other kinds of social groups. In some cases, parliaments have subsequently transformed these party-specific promises into legislative quota policies that apply to all parties, thus extending the obligation of gender-based representation to the entire political system. An example of a country with party quotas is Germany, where quotas were first adopted in 1983. That year, the newly formed Green Party applied a 50% quota and required that all its lists alternate between women and men.⁸¹ The Social Democratic Party (SPD), concerned about possible erosion in its electoral support to the Greens in the late

1980s, responded by adopting its own 25% quota in 1990, which it subsequently raised to 33% in 1994 and 40% in 1998. These events eventually led the SPD's main rival, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), to adopt its own 33% policy for party lists in 1996. Aware of negative connotations of the word 'quota' in conservative circles, the CDU devised the less objectionable term 'quorum' to refer to its requirement of one woman for every two men.⁸² In the wake of reunification in 1990, the Party of Democratic Socialism also adopted a 50% quota, but this decision was embedded in a separate set of political dynamics and thus took place largely in isolation from developments in the former West Germany. In line with its corporatist citizenship model, debates in Germany have revolved primarily around 'gender' as an identity deserving political representation. While opponents voiced concerns about gender quotas, advocates in the former West Germany justified these measures on the grounds that women were 'equal citizens' whose increased participation would enhance the overall quality of politics,⁸³ while those in the former East Germany noted the high price of reunification and its especially strong impact on women.⁸⁴ These arguments, however, generally made little progress until women's groups succeeded in convincing influential male allies to throw their support behind gender quotas, most often by casting women's representation as an issue that would enable their parties to win crucial votes among women.⁸⁵ As a result of these strategies, all but two parties – the Christian Social Union and the Free Democratic Party – apply gender quotas in their candidate selection procedures. Among seats decided by proportional lists, where quota policies govern the selection of many candidates, most parties approximate their quota goals, nominating between 34% and 49% women. In contrast, in constituency elections parties generally do not match their quotas for list elections, presenting between 21% and 37% women.⁸⁶ Despite disparities among parties and seats, these patterns resulted in the election of 32.8% women in 2002 and 31.6% women in 2005.⁸⁷

A country where party quotas have later led to the adoption of legislative quotas is Belgium. The first party quotas appeared as early as 1985, when the Flemish Liberal Party adopted a 20% policy. It was soon followed by the Movement of Citizens for Change, now part of the French Liberal Party, with a 33% quota in 1986; the Flemish Green Party with a 50% quota in 1991; the Flemish Social Democratic Party with a 25% quota in 1992; and the French Green Party and French Socialist Party with 50% quotas in 2000. On the initiative of the government, the first legislative quotas were mandated by the Belgian parliament in 1994. The Smet-Tobback Law specified that women would comprise at least 25% of all electoral lists until 1999, after which the quota requirement would be raised to 33%. When a new law on equality between women and men was subsequently passed, the parliament revisited the quota requirement and raised it to 50% in 2002.⁸⁸ Reflecting its consociational citizenship model, debates over gender quotas in Belgium have developed in reference to a long-standing tradition of descriptive representation, which guarantees the participation of a range of different social groups based on language, religion, and class.⁸⁹ In the case of linguistic groups, a certain number of seats are reserved for Flemish-, French-, and German-speakers to ensure their presence in all elected and appointed political bodies. Aware that even those opposed to quotas for women accepted the idea of ‘proportionality,’ advocates of gender quotas mobilized on the basis of this norm to justify their adoption in the form of party and legislative quotas, on the grounds that the balanced representation of key social groups was an essential legitimizing feature of the political system.⁹⁰ However, when the first quota bill was proposed, the governing parties introduced an important distinction between ‘gender’ and other kinds of political identities: while linguistic groups were guaranteed a specific share of seats regardless of election outcomes, gender quotas would apply to electoral lists and the group of potential candidates for political office.⁹¹ These legal provisions led to a dramatic increase in the number of women nominated as candidates, but only a marginal rise in the number of women actually elected to the

national parliament, as parties tended to place their female candidates in list positions where they were unlikely to be elected.⁹² Because parties generally followed the letter, but not the spirit, of the law, women's representation increased from 12% in 1995 to 23.3% in 1999, a major jump but still far short of the 33% quota requirement. In light of these shortcomings, the new quota law adopted in 2002 added the stipulation that the first three – and eventually the first two – candidates on a party list not be members of the same sex. This adjustment pushed the proportion of women elected up to 35.3% in 2003, although again, this outcome also remained far below the 50% quota requirement.⁹³

For many years, the only legislative quotas in the West were found in Belgium and France. However, a growing number of countries with consociational-corporatist citizenship models have witnessed the proposal of quota laws. In Italy, a legislative quota was adopted in 1993 in the context of broader reform of the Italian electoral system. The new electoral law stipulated that 75% of the seats would be assigned using majority elections and 25% of the seats would be decided by a proportional list system. For lists governed by proportional representation, parties were required to alternate between male and female candidates.⁹⁴ The quota provision was declared unconstitutional two years later on the grounds that it violated the principle of equality set forth in various articles of the constitution.⁹⁵ After sustained mobilization by women, the Constitution was reformed in 2003 to legalize positive action in candidate recruitment. This was followed by a new law governing elections to the European Parliament, which mandates that neither sex may constitute more than two-thirds of each party's candidates, with the penalty for non-compliance being financial sanctions proportional to the imbalance.⁹⁶ Legislative quotas for national elections have been proposed on a number of occasions, but have not yet been passed, despite most recently being approved by the lower house of parliament just before elections in 2006. In Austria, similar reforms were proposed following the 1994 elections, when women's representation dropped for the first time since the

1970s. In response, a female MP from the Green Party introduced a private member's bill to make 15% of public subsidies of political parties contingent upon the number of their female representatives being proportional to their presence in the population. The proposed law was eventually rejected in 1999, despite the fact that many Austrian parties have their own quota policies.⁹⁷ In Portugal, the Socialist Party presented two bills to institute a legislative quota, but both were rejected by parliament in 1999. The party later increased its own party quota from 25% to 33% in 2004. Nonetheless, advocates continued to mobilize and eventually the parliament approved a quota law in 2006 stipulating that all candidate lists must have a minimum of 33% of the under-represented sex. If parties do not comply, they will receive a public reprimand and be subject to a reduction in their public subsidies.⁹⁸ In Spain, finally, party quotas have existed inside the Socialist Party since 1988. In 1998, the party proposed to reform the General Election Act to require that all electoral lists have no more than 60% of candidates of the same sex. The bill was formally presented in parliament in 2001 but rejected in 2003.⁹⁹ A 50% quota law was eventually approved in 2007 as part of a broader bill on equality between women and men. Across these cases, therefore, the pattern is sequential: party quotas tend to be adopted first, to be followed only later by proposals for legislative quota provisions.

Soft, Legislative, and Party Quotas in the Hybrid Citizenship Model

Quotas tend towards one main form in the three core citizenship models in the West. That these patterns stem from the distinct controversies over gender quota policies – rather than simply chance or even policy diffusion – gains further credence when compared to choices in quota reform in countries with hybrid citizenship models. These mixed systems contain multiple dimensions of contestation that are resolved in various ways to influence the form, adoption, and impact of quota measures. Soft quotas are prevalent in countries and political parties where there is a strong

emphasis on gender neutrality, combined with a firm faith in incremental progress.¹⁰⁰ In Sweden and Finland, for example, the broader political culture places great value on notions of cooperation and consensus. In debates on gender equality, therefore, activists and elites stress the importance of looking at women and men together, being careful not to focus only on one group to the exclusion – or advantage – of the other.¹⁰¹ This approach is underwritten by an implicitly positive view of historical development, driven by the belief that attempts to change the behaviour of women and men will lead traditional beliefs about gender to eventually disappear. In Sweden, these ideas have caused parties to view formal quotas as a last resort to be applied only when softer measures fail to produce change.¹⁰² Initially, parties focused on securing an ‘obligatory woman’ for party committees and electoral lists.¹⁰³ As women mobilized for more women in politics in the 1960s and 1970s, several began to adopt formal quotas for party bodies but preferred to pass only more informal ‘resolutions’ stating that they would try to elect more women. In the 1980s and 1990s, party commitments slowly radicalized into more specific ‘recommendations’ and ‘targets’ that aimed to increase this proportion to at least 40%. By the mid-1990s, a number of parties further pledged themselves to strict alternation between women and men on all party lists. While this last policy is technically a 50% party quota, party leaders insist that it is not a ‘quota’ but rather the principle of ‘every other one for the ladies’ (*varannan damernas*). This phrase invokes a tradition in Swedish countryside dances whereby men and women take turns asking one another to dance, thus enabling supporters – through a well-chosen discursive strategy – to achieve equal representation through party quotas that still speak to the notion of partnership between women and men.¹⁰⁴ The soft measures applied by some parties, combined with the formal policies adopted by others, resulted in the election of 47.3% women in 2006.¹⁰⁵ However, women have occupied at least 20% of all seats since 1973 and at least 30% since 1985.¹⁰⁶ While these figures confirm that women’s representation increased before formal quotas were introduced,¹⁰⁷ a broader definition that includes soft quotas

indicates that these gains did not occur ‘on their own,’ but rather as the result of less formal gender quota policies.

Similar dynamics operate in Finland, where several parties employ various kinds of soft quotas, including indirect provisions for internal party bodies.¹⁰⁸ In addition, the country also mandates legislative quotas – the only one with a hybrid citizenship model to do so¹⁰⁹ – although these regulate access only to non-elected political positions. The law states that all indirectly elected political bodies – including government inquiry commissions, municipal executive boards, and other municipal boards and committees – must be composed of a minimum of 40% of each sex, unless there are particular reasons to the contrary. An additional clause specifies that there should be a ‘gender balance’ in the decision-making bodies – insofar as they are composed by political representatives – of state-owned enterprises and companies where the state is the majority share-owner. Passed in 1995, this law appears to provide for group representation through its emphasis on roughly equal numbers of women and men. However, a closer look at the debates surrounding its introduction reveals that it has been largely justified on the grounds of promoting ‘competence’ and ‘merit’ in the conduct of public affairs, to enable the wider society to benefit from the input of an increased number of qualified individuals.¹¹⁰ As such, the provision strikes a compromise between the representation of identities and the representation of ideas, privileging the latter even as it emphasizes the former. Pursued by cross-partisan network of female MPs and other feminist activists after an earlier act failed to produce many changes in the numbers of women on public bodies, this reform has proved highly successful, raising the proportion of women on municipal executive boards from 25% in 1993 to 45% in 1997.¹¹¹ The law has also altered the strong horizontal gender segregation of local government, bringing men onto boards dealing with social affairs, health, and education, and women onto boards related to economic development and technical services. Despite open resistance to these requirements when they were first passed, the need not to be

‘against gender equality’ has given way to broad implementation, framed as a means to promote further cooperation and consensus among women and men.¹¹²

In addition to soft and legislative provisions, party quotas also appear in countries with hybrid citizenship models. Usually building on earlier soft quotas, these more formal measures tend to be adopted mainly by green, left, social democratic, and centre parties.¹¹³ Party quotas are used most extensively in Norway, where they were introduced by the Liberal Party in 1974 and the Socialist Left Party in 1975. The first major party to establish such a quota was the Norwegian Labour Party, which approved a policy to nominate at least 40% of both sexes as candidates to elected office in 1983. At the same time, it adopted a parallel soft quota to ensure at least 40% of both sexes in all internal party bodies. When women’s representation then jumped to a world-record 34.4% in 1985, up from 26% in 1981,¹¹⁴ other parties began to consider formal measures as well. Similar quotas aimed at promoting at least 40% of both sexes were rejected by the Conservative Party in 1988, but were adopted by the Centre Party in 1989 and the Christian People’s Party in 1991.¹¹⁵ These measures were justified in line with distinct party ideologies, focused on women’s interests in left-wing parties and women’s values and resources in right-wing parties.¹¹⁶ In all instances, however, the adoption of formal party quotas was linked to a larger tradition of group representation in Norway. According to this approach, parties seek to ‘balance’ their electoral tickets by including candidates from different parts of the country, various social and cultural groups, and distinct age brackets. Parties continue to diverge as to which groups they deem ought to be represented, but in general, ‘gender’ has slowly moved from being one among several peripheral interests towards being one the central criteria of candidate selection.¹¹⁷ As a result, the proportion of women in the Norwegian parliament has remained above 30% since the 1980s, reaching 37.9% in 2005.¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, quota policies aimed at promoting women still co-exist uneasily with other ‘more important’ political principles, like local control of candidate selection.¹¹⁹ Similar tensions with

the principle of gender equality led party quotas to be overturned in the mid-1990s in the Socialist People's Party in Denmark.¹²⁰ The overall pattern is thus a mix of strategies, reflecting multiple lines of contestation that themselves have evolved over time.

Conclusions

Gender quotas are rapidly making their mark on the political landscape in countries around the world and research on their features, adoption, and implementation continues to grow. Because few studies have attempted to theorize these variations either systematically or comparatively, this article offers a first attempt to investigate a broader group of quota campaigns, namely those that have taken place in Western Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. The analysis explores the political contexts that shape quota debates, as well as patterns of quota adoption and impact, and consequently proposes that one or more sets of controversies influence the course and outcomes of quota reforms. These revolve around (1) competing principles of equality, (2) different ideas about political representation, and (3) various beliefs about 'gender' and its relation to other kinds of political identities. Based on distinct configurations of these principles, the article identifies four broad models of political citizenship that shape both the kinds of quota policies pursued and the prospects of achieving their goals of bringing more women into political office.

While developed in reference to the West, these findings are likely to offer crucial insights into the dynamics that are present in all quota campaigns, as domestic norms interact with global trends to affect the introduction and translation of quota demands in various national contexts. More specifically, they suggest that normative questions regarding equality, representation, and gender are likely to inform quota debates in many different parts of the world. Indeed, many of the specific controversies surrounding quotas are relatively straightforward to anticipate, revolving around the priority of equal opportunities over equal results, the representation of ideas over the

representation of identities, and the connection between ‘gender’ and other social identities. As the analysis here has shown, models of political citizenship are likely to shape which of these axes will become the main point of contention in quota debates, and thus what kinds of measures will later be adopted. The evidence also indicates, however, that structure is not destiny: individual actors play an important role in resolving and even creatively transforming these particular conflicts in ways that permit the introduction and successful implementation of gender quota policies.

Despite these general insights, the focus on citizenship models in the West does impose a number of important limits on the analysis. First, the discussion hints at but does not explicitly theorize all the boundaries on ‘equality’ imposed by the law. While quotas have been overturned as unconstitutional or illegal in several countries in the sample, similar measures have been blocked from even being passed elsewhere in the world. Combined with the end of recent civil conflicts that has resulted in the writing of new constitutions in many states,¹²¹ these situations provide a distinct set of constraints and opportunities for reframing definitions of equality that are not present in the West. Second, the analysis in this article draws a sharp distinction between the representation of ideas and the representation of identities. In practice, these questions are often elided, leading to the assumption that an increase in the numbers of women elected will result in an increase in attention to women’s policy issues. Indeed, these two notions of representation are often treated as one and the same in the various international documents that have been used to support efforts to institute quotas in many developing countries. Although international organizations do not play a major role in quota debates in the West,¹²² potential interventions by such actors in policy deliberations outside the West are likely to affect how concepts of representation are employed – and possibly reformulated – in the course of these debates. Third, the focus on ‘gender’ in relation to other identities overlooks the importance of intersections between these various identities. Evidence from the West justifies this lens, showing for example that quotas for women tend to promote women

from dominant races and classes, while quotas for minorities tend to give preference to men from these linguistic, religious, and ethnic groups. However, other cases reveal that the presence of both kinds of quotas can lead to the increased representation of minority women, as a means for ensuring the continued dominance of majority men.¹²³ These limitations do not necessarily undermine the arguments developed here, but rather point to the need to undertake further research – both comparative and case-specific – on the form, adoption, and impact of gender quota policies. The highly controversial nature of quotas, despite their rapid diffusion around the globe, suggests that debates over fundamental political norms are likely to continue to structure how citizens and elites perceive and implement gender quota reforms.

Table 1

Quota Type	Key Features
Party Quota	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopted voluntarily by political parties. • Set out new criteria for party candidate selection. • Affect composition of party lists in PR electoral systems and candidates eligible for particular seats in majoritarian systems. • May entail internal party sanctions for non-compliance.
Legislative Quota	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandated by national parliaments. • Set out new criteria for party candidate selection. • Affect composition of party lists in PR electoral systems and candidates eligible for particular seats in majoritarian systems. • Usually entail sanctions for non-compliance.
Soft Quota	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopted voluntarily by political parties. • Set out informal targets and recommendations in relation to party candidate selection. • Set out new criteria for membership of internal party bodies. • Rarely entail sanctions for non-compliance.

Table 2

Citizenship Model	Core Value	Point of Contention	Core Conflict with Gender Quotas
Liberal	Individualism	Equality: Equality of opportunity <i>versus</i> equality of results	Belief in individual responsibility for inequality and preference for non-intervention in candidate selection processes <i>versus</i> group-based solutions to inequality of outcome
Republican	Universalism	Representation: Principle agent <i>versus</i> descriptive representation	Goal to transcend concrete identities and represent interests of universal citizen <i>versus</i> group-based concerns about social identities
Corporatist-Consociational	Social Partnership	Gender: Ethno-linguistic political cleavages <i>versus</i> gender as a political cleavage	Aim to secure guaranteed political representation for ethno-linguistic social groups <i>versus</i> gender as a category deserving group representation
Hybrid	Individualism	Equality: Equality of opportunity <i>versus</i> equality of results	Preference for non-intervention in candidate selection process <i>versus</i> group-based solutions to inequality of outcome
	Universalism	Representation: Principle agent <i>versus</i> descriptive representation	Goal to transcend concrete identities and represent interests of universal citizen <i>versus</i> group-based concerns about social identities
	Social Partnership	Gender: Ethno-linguistic political cleavages <i>versus</i> gender as a political cleavage	Aim to secure guaranteed political representation for ethno-linguistic social groups <i>versus</i> gender as a category deserving group representation

Table 3

Country	Citizenship Model	Quota Type	Women in Parliament
Australia	Liberal	Soft and Party	24.7% (2004)
Canada	Liberal	Soft	20.8% (2006)
Ireland	Liberal	Party	13.3% (2002)
New Zealand	Liberal	Soft	32.2% (2005)
United Kingdom	Liberal	Soft and Party	19.7% (2005)
United States	Liberal	Soft	16.3% (2006)
France	Republican	Party and Legislative	12.2% (2002)
Austria	Consociational-Corporatist	Party	32.2% (2006)
Belgium	Consociational-Corporatist	Party and Legislative	34.7% (2003)
Germany	Consociational-Corporatist	Party	31.6% (2005)
Greece	Consociational-Corporatist	Party	13.0% (2004)
Italy	Consociational-Corporatist	Party (ex-Legislative)	17.3% (2006)
Luxembourg	Consociational-Corporatist	Party	23.3% (2004)
Netherlands	Consociational-Corporatist	Soft and Party	36.7% (2006)
Portugal	Consociational-Corporatist	Party and Legislative	21.3% (2005)
Spain	Consociational-Corporatist	Party and Legislative	36.0% (2004)
Switzerland	Consociational-Corporatist	Party	25.0% (2003)
Denmark	Hybrid	Soft	36.9% (2005)
Finland	Hybrid	Soft and Legislative	38.0% (2003)
Iceland	Hybrid	Party	33.3% (2003)
Norway	Hybrid	Party	37.9% (2005)
Sweden	Hybrid	Soft and Party	47.3% (2006)

Notes

¹ Strictly speaking, these measures are more accurately viewed as sex quotas, not gender quotas, as they focus on the biological markers of male and female rather than the social markers of masculine and feminine. However, in this article we follow the common practice in the literature to refer to these measures as 'gender quotas'.

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