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# INTRODUCTION: GENDER QUOTAS AND WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION—NEW DIRECTIONS IN RESEARCH

**Mona Lena Krook and Pär Zetterberg**

*This article introduces the special issue and places the contributions in context. It begins with a brief discussion of main trends in quota research to date, focusing on major findings in relation to gender quotas and women's political representation. It then presents an overview of the articles in the special issue, detailing their research strategies and theoretical and empirical findings. The final part of the section addresses the implications of these studies – and work on gender quotas more generally – for forging new research agendas on political representation.*

Electoral gender quotas have emerged as one of the critical political reforms of the last two decades, having now been introduced in more than 130 countries worldwide (Krook 2009).<sup>1</sup> While the majority of these provisions have been adopted by individual political parties, a significant and growing proportion involve changes to constitutions or electoral laws requiring that all parties select a certain percentage of female candidates. The recent and global nature of these developments has sparked both scholarly and popular interest in gender quota designs, origins and effects (Dahlerup 2006; Krook 2009; Tremblay 2008). The result has been the consolidation of a broad body of knowledge on the origins and technical aspects of quota implementation, highlighting the actors mobilising for quota reform in various countries (Anderson and Swiss 2014; Bush 2011; Krook 2006) and the factors shaping the effectiveness of quotas in increasing the numbers of women elected (Jones 2009; Krook 2009; Paxton et al. 2010; Schwindt-Bayer 2009; Tripp and Kang 2008). This has led to widespread recognition by international actors of the role of well-devised gender quotas in spurring the dramatic jumps witnessed in recent years in terms of the proportions of women elected to national parliaments around the globe (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2013), even if not all countries at the top of this list apply formal quota policies (Krook 2014).

A new wave of quota research takes this work forward by observing that quotas are not simply about increasing the numbers of women elected (Franceschet et al. 2012; Krook and Messing-Mathie 2013; Zetterberg 2009b). Inspired by competing claims put forward during debates for quota adoption, this 'second generation' of quota research largely focuses on the implications of quotas for a wide variety of representative processes. In terms of descriptive representation, scholars explore what kinds of women are elected as a result of quota policies, finding that 'quota women' are often as—and sometimes even more—qualified as their non-quota counterparts, both male and female (Josefsson 2014; Murray 2010; O'Brien 2012; Sater 2012), while also enhancing diversity in legislator backgrounds (Bird 2003; Franceschet and

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Piscopo 2012; Hughes 2011), even if gendered norms of recruitment continue to circumscribe women's political careers (Franceschet and Piscopo 2014).

With regard to substantive representation, studies ask whether an increase in the numbers of women elected as a result of gender quotas leads to greater attention to women's issues in the policy-making process. Evidence from a diverse range of countries provides mixed conclusions. Some studies find a clear impact on policy discourses and outcomes (Barnes 2012; Bauer and Burnet 2013; Childs 2004; Wang 2013; Xydias 2007; Yoon 2011), while others observe that quotas do not appear to eliminate all barriers to the articulation of women's concerns (Larson 2012; Tønnessen and al-Nagar 2013; Zetterberg 2008). In a seminal article, Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) argue that these distinct patterns may be due in part to contradictory pressures on women elected through quotas, requiring them to navigate between a 'mandate effect', a feeling of obligation to act on behalf of women, and a 'label effect', a sense of stigma associated with their mode of election leading them to be apprehensive about advocating for the rights of women (cf. Childs and Krook 2012).

A final group of analyses considers the impact of quotas on symbolic representation, posing a variety of creative questions regarding the potential transformative nature of gender quotas—on women, politics, or society more generally. Some of this work gauges whether the introduction of gender quotas has created sustainable gains in women's representation that would endure if quotas were withdrawn (Bhavnani 2009; Darhour and Dahlerup 2014)—or, alternatively, whether quota adoption has produced a spillover effect increasing women's nomination and election in political offices not governed by quota regulations (Davidson-Schmich 2010; Shin 2014). Related research maps whether quotas for women in politics inspire the introduction of quotas in other spheres, for example on corporate boards (Franceschet and Piscopo 2013; Meier 2014). Other work examines what quotas have meant in terms of women's political engagement (Zetterberg 2009a) and women's empowerment more broadly, whether inside political parties (Verge and de la Fuente 2014), within society (Beaman et al. 2009, 2012), or inside the home (Burnet 2011).

The contributions to this special issue seek to expand these research agendas further, taking the quota literature in a variety of new directions and presenting novel approaches to the study of political representation. The topics taken up include additional paths to quota adoption, as well as—in the wake of quota introduction—changes (or not) to existing dynamics of candidate selection and the status and role of women in legislative institutions. Expanding the scope of quota studies, the articles also address trends across different political parties and levels of government, as well as the effectiveness of quotas in democratic and non-democratic settings. The final, more critical article raises questions as to whether there may be non-quota mechanisms that could be pursued together with, or in lieu of, gender quotas to increase women's political representation.

The first two articles address the introduction of gender quotas, expanding the focus to new contexts and in relation to other social groups. The contribution by Kerryn Baker considers how the implementation of the French parity laws in the French Pacific collectivities fits in with established discourses of quota adoption. Calling into question assumptions that quotas by definition represent an 'exogenous shock' to the political system, she proposes a theoretical distinction between endogenous and exogenous tracks to quota introduction. She signals how the French parity law stretches beyond the borders of mainland France, and thereby is imposed from the outside rather than developing internally within the local political system. For this reason, however, these islands constitute outliers within the Pacific region, which has the lowest average level of female political representation in the world.<sup>2</sup>

Elin Bjarnegård and Pär Zetterberg also take up the issue of quota adoption, but focus on states where quotas exist for both women and minority groups, comparing similarities and differences across these policies. Going beyond work mapping the presence of quotas for women and minorities (Hughes 2011; Krook and O'Brien 2010), they qualify the concept of 'quota types' by focusing on whether the quota implies the creation of a special constituency. Their analysis reveals substantial differences in the philosophy behind quotas for these two groups. Minorities tend to be guaranteed representation via the creation of special constituencies, whereas gender quotas more commonly imply integration into pre-existing constituencies (cf. Bird 2014; Htun 2004). The authors conclude on this basis that gender quotas and quotas for minorities seem to rest on somewhat different underlying normative motives.

The next two contributions tackle new questions related to gender quota implementation. The focus of Fernanda Vidal Correa's article is the application of quota laws in a sample of 12 Mexican states, highlighting two aspects of policy design that become apparent when bringing the analysis down to the subnational level, which has been thus far been understudied in the quota literature (but see dos Santos 2012; Jones 1998; Zetterberg 2008). Using data on the nomination and election of women in these states between 1998 and 2010, she observes that quota impact at the subnational levels depends on the design of state-level laws. In Mexico, as she points out, some state quota laws dictate only partial or no enforcement at all. Further, the two-nominee system—whereby the first person runs for the seat (*propietario*) while the second is elected as a substitute (*suplente*)—provides opportunities for parties to circumvent the spirit of the law. Quotas in some states may apply only to *suplentes*, resulting in women's entrapment in substitute and thus powerless positions. Vidal Correa therefore highlights the need to move the analysis down to the subnational level, while also examining who in fact is promoted through the quota policy.

Audrey Vandeleene, in comparison, explores how quotas may—or may not—lead to changes in candidate selection processes in ways that are more 'women-friendly' (see Reiser 2014 for comparisons among women and other groups). She approaches this question in a slightly different way than Bjarnegård and Zetterberg (2011), who theorise what types of quotas may have the most lasting impact in terms of changing candidate selection procedures in a more permanent fashion, such that women would still be nominated and elected even if quotas were withdrawn. In the article, Vandeleene collects data from party statutes and interviews to map differences across the main political parties in Belgium in terms of who selects candidates and how the selection process is organised, with the goal being to gauge whether quotas lead to substantive changes in decision-making procedures. She uncovers substantial variations across political parties, highlighting what reforms are necessary in order to open up candidate selection procedures to women's increased participation.

The following three articles address patterns stemming from gender quota implementation that may signal the broader impact—or not—of quota reforms, particularly with regard to women's status and role in legislative institutions. The contribution by Pablo Oñate tracks whether the application of gender quotas has eroded traditional structures of vertical and horizontal discrimination in the political sphere, whereby women are excluded from leadership positions and allocated to committees dealing with 'feminine' policy concerns, using data from the national congress and 17 subnational legislatures in Spain. Echoing the findings of Verge and de la Fuente (2014), who discover very little transformation in gendered structures within Spanish political parties, Oñate observes that the gender parity law has not altered differential access for women and men to these positions and committees, despite substantial numbers of women in these legislative bodies (cf. Towns 2003).

Vibeke Wang approaches this question from a different angle, examining whether being elected through reserved seats has led female members of parliament (MPs) in Uganda to be less active than non-quota legislators, given widespread expectations that quota women will be more pliable, strongly beholden to party leaders, and act as subordinate or 'token' representatives (cf. Goetz and Hassim 2003). Drawing on a unique dataset, she tests this hypothesis with a hierarchical growth curve analysis of MPs' activity levels in the plenary proceedings in the national assembly from 1998 to 2008. She finds that in fact there are no significant differences among women in terms of their activity levels. Indeed, the contrary is true: overall, women are as active as men in plenary debates, with female MPs holding leadership positions speaking consistently more than any other group. As such, quota women are not inactive or invisible in decision-making processes.

In a separate analysis of Uganda, Amanda Clayton, Cecilia Josefsson, and Vibeke Wang investigate whether female MPs in general, and women elected via quotas in particular, are accorded respect and authority in parliament. They operationalise this question in terms of parliamentary recognition, or the number of times an individual MP is referred to by name in plenary debates, using data from 2001 to 2008. Taking into account other possible determinants of MP recognition, they find that women elected to reserved seats are significantly less recognised over time when compared to men and women in open seats. Juxtaposed with the findings of the previous article, this suggests that there may not be any differences in legislative behaviour, in terms of speaking, but that quota women are not treated on par with other MPs. This recalls the 'label effect' theorised by Franceschet and Piscopo (2008), whereby women elected via quotas may be stigmatised in other ways stemming from their mode of election.

The final article by Happy M. Kayuni and Ragnhild L. Muriaas strikes a more sceptical note, pointing out that gender quotas represent only one solution to women's underrepresentation in politics. More specifically, in relation to the well-known 'supply and demand' model of candidate selection (cf. Norris and Lovenduski 1995), quotas reflect a demand-side solution—overlooking potential supply-side interventions that could help make women stronger candidates (but see Krook and Norris 2014). To this end, they analyse the '50-50 campaign' organised in the run-up to the 2009 elections in Malawi, which equipped women with financial resources and publicity to support their political campaigns. Although women's representation increased notably in these elections, Kayuni and Muriaas conclude that even with electoral financing assistance, party organisations remained biased and weakly committed to the promotion of female candidates—even as women demonstrated that they could win elections.

In mapping new frontiers for gender quota research, the articles in this special issue contribute to concept formation by rethinking what quotas are and what they do; theory development by nuancing how far quotas can go in terms of re-gendering the political sphere; methodological sophistication by parsing out the effects of 'quotas' versus those attributable to 'sex' or 'gender' in terms of quota impact; and comparative analysis by expanding the scope of study to include quotas for other groups and non-quota strategies for empowering women in politics.<sup>3</sup> Even in a now well-established literature, which has begun to be incorporated into the work of non-gender scholars (see Krook and Messing-Mathie 2013), these studies signal that there are still many important research questions yet to be asked and answered with regard to gender quotas and dynamics of political representation.

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## NOTES

1. For an updated list, see <http://www.quotaproject.org>.
2. See <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>.
3. On the issue of gender quotas and comparison, see the special issues on 'Electoral Quotas and Political Representation: Comparative Perspectives', in *International Political Science Review* 35 (1): 3–118, and 'Gender Quotas and Comparative Politics', in *Politics & Gender* 9 (3): 299–328.

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