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Title of Essay: Variance in Quotas and Women in Legislatures:
   The impact of factors affecting quota implementation on quota success
Course: Gender Studies Capstone Essay
Semester Taken: Fall 2015
Advisor: Christina Wolbrecht, Political Science
Title:

Variance in Quotas and Women in Legislatures:

The impact of factors affecting quota implementation on quota success

Parameters:

Course Description from the Gender Studies Website:

“In collaboration with the Director of Undergraduate Studies in Gender Studies, students choose a Gender Studies faculty member who will guide them through the semester-long composition of a capstone essay. The capstone essay is an original and professional piece of scholarly writing based on the student's interdisciplinary research in their primary and supplementary majors. The capstone essay may build upon, but cannot replicate, the work done for a senior thesis or paper in another major or course. This course fulfills the senior capstone project requirement for Gender Studies supplementary majors. It can only be taken in the fall semester of the senior year. In the spring semester of the junior year, interested students should speak to the Gender Studies Director of Undergraduate Studies about planning their thesis topic and research and securing a faculty advisor. For the essay to be accepted by Gender Studies, the minimum page requirement is 20 pages.”

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I am deeply grateful to Dr. Christina Wolbrecht at the University of Notre Dame, who not only gave me the inspiration for the topic of this article during a lecture in her class on American political parties, but also served as my ever helpful and encouraging advisor for this project. I am also grateful to the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program at Notre Dame for funding the interviews that led me to my research question; to Dr. Abby Palko, Associate Director of the Gender Studies Department, who has served as a mentor for me throughout my undergraduate career and who approved this project; to Rasmus Schmidt Jørgensen, who heard about, read, and provided suggestions for this article for five months straight; and to Kyle Witzigey, who provided comments on my final draft.
Introduction

In 1999, Pakistan’s legislature was composed of 98% men and 2% women. The United States, on the other hand, boasted a legislature with 77% men and 13% women. Just six years later, female legislators comprised 21% of the Pakistani legislature, while the representation of women in the United States had risen just to 15%. What accounts for the stark differences between these two countries in the percentage of women in national legislatures? In 2002, Pakistan introduced a legally-imposed gender quota reserving seats for women in its legislature. The number of women who were elected through Pakistan’s parallel electoral system apparently increased dramatically as a result.

In 2011, Kyrgyzstan also introduced a gender quota but experienced significantly different results. Between 2008 and 2014, Kyrgyzstan experienced a 2.3% decrease in the percentage of women in their legislature, despite the implementation of a quota meant to increase that percentage. The surprisingly different levels of success of quotas in these two cases of Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan begs the question: Why would the implementation of quota have such different results in these two countries?

Many women’s rights activists have encouraged the implementation of gender quotas in order to increase the number and percentage of women who are legislators. However, there is a substantial variation in how well quotas achieve that goal. In this paper, I examine the impact of three factors regarding the success of quotas in electing more women to the legislature. These three factors are imposing agency, quota type, and electoral system. I conclude that in terms of achieving their central goal of electing more women to legislative office, quotas imposed by law, quotas mandating reserved seats within the legislature, and quotas within hybrid electoral systems are more successful in increasing women in the legislature than those featuring other
imposing agencies, quota types, and electoral systems. In this paper, I first address the existing literature on gender quotas and variation within those quotas. I then present my hypotheses and research design before discussing the results of my study. I conclude by considering the potential implications of the results of this study and the research questions that remain unanswered.

**Literature Review**

49.6% of people in the world are women (Institut National d’Etudes Démographiques, 2015). Globally, women only hold 22% of seats in legislative bodies (QuotaProject, 2015). Women do not exceed 50% of any legislative body in the world. This disparity in democratically-elected positions shows a predisposition of many different types of societies to always elect men at a higher rate than women. Scholars have provided many plausible reasons for this pattern, and the activist community has provided many potential plans to eliminate this discrepancy. One such plan is the institution of gender-based electoral quotas, or mandates on a minimum percentage of candidates or legislators who must be of people of a particular gender. These quotas usually require a minimum percentage of candidates or legislators to be women, but some may mandate both genders; for example, in Costa Rica, 50% of candidates must be men and 50% must be women.²

In order to approach the question of which conditions most positively influence quota success, we must first examine more established questions on the topic. First, what factors are associated with the election of women? Second, why are quotas proposed as a potential solution? Third, what factors influence the decisions of agents in adapting quotas? Fourth, what variance exists among quotas? Fifth and finally, what factors influence quota success?

² [http://www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org)
Factors influencing the election of women to legislatures

The Inter-Parliamentary Union, the international organization of Parliaments, reports that most countries have no formal barriers to the election of women to the legislature (2008). However, there are many informal (meaning non-legislated) barriers that prevent women from entering elected public office.

The first step in an election of an individual is the individual’s eligibility, or capability of meeting the legal requirements to run (Norris 1987, 1997). There is very little literature available as to whether and how eligibility affects men and women differently. Research has not indicated that requirements such as a minimum age to run or the need to be a citizen of a country in order to run there have a strong difference in their gendered application. More research ought to be done in this area to examine the possibly gendered effects of eligibility requirements.

The second step in an individual’s election is his or her informed decision to run for public office (Norris 1987, 1997; Lawless & Fox 2005). This involves both ambition and resources, both of which are informed by social norms. Women may be encouraged to run by the presence of other women already in their country’s legislature (Carroll 1985; Burns, Schlozman, & Verba 2001; Wolbrecht & Campbell 2007) or of feminist organizations that promote women’s involvement in politics (Germain 1994; Matland & Taylor 1997). The presence of role models may help increase the number of women who are willing to run for office because the lived examples of women politicians and activists can reshape the cultural expectation about women in politics (Dahlerup 1988). On the other hand, it is less likely for women to participate in politics at all, especially to run for office, in more patriarchal countries, such as those that are predominantly of faiths that accepting of women in power (Reynolds 1999; Fish 2002; Inglehart & Norris 2003). This may influence the decision a woman makes to run by presenting her with a
conception of a general bias in the electorate against women.

One study found that factors such as the cultural standing of women and women’s workforce participation rate only matter if a country is above a certain development threshold (Matland 1998). In less patriarchal countries where men and women achieve similar levels of education, women still report lower political interest and knowledge than do men (Delli Carpini, & Keeter 2000). Even in the United States, women show a much lower desire to run for public office than men do, as well as report being asked or encouraged to run by family or friends far less often than men (Matland & Montgomery 2003; Lawless & Fox 2010). These societal expectations shape many aspects of the decision a woman may make to run or not to run for elected office.

Even women who want to run may believe they do not have the time or resources to do so, especially if they have families; they may choose to wait until their children are grown to run, which limits the amount of time they can spend climbing the political ladder, or they may choose not to run at all because of their children (Matland & Montgomery 2003). Women who do run for office generally are older than their male counterparts and have fewer children than their male counterparts (Carroll 1989; Dodson & Carroll 1991; Thomas 1997; Matland & Montgomery 2003).

If the women themselves do not self-select out of the process, party gatekeepers may select away from them (Norris 1987, 1997). As parties tend to choose candidates who have proven track records or high socioeconomic status and as men tend to dominate fields considered politically relevant or lucrative, parties often overlook women for more “attractive” candidates from pipeline professions (Matland & Montgomery 2003; Lawrence & Rose 2010). The lack of women in pipeline professions is less of a difficulty in developed countries with higher numbers
of educated or qualified women candidates than it is in non-industrialized countries (Matland 1998). The lack of women in pipeline professions also matters less in countries with a higher rate of women in the workforce (Andersen 1975; Welch 1977; Togeby 1994). However, even in developed countries with a high rate of women in the workforce, such as the United States, women are far less likely to be asked by party officials, referred to as “gatekeepers” due to their political power, to run (Lawless & Fox 2010).

Ideology within parties may affect the decisions party gatekeepers make, as green parties that campaign for gender equality or new leftist post-materialist parties tend to choose the most women as candidates (Caul 1999; Paxton & Kunovich 2003; Thomsen 2015). Another major roadblock women face is a lack of persistence in lobbying for more spots for women or women candidates. Research suggests that once women attain a few more spots or some other small or marginal success, the women’s lobby within a country stops working to change the gender dynamics of the party choices on candidates (Brichta & Brichta 1994).

Even if party gatekeepers allow or encourage women to run within a certain district, party decision still plays a significant role in the potential success of that candidate. The party can decide if a woman will run in a seat that is very nearly claimed for the party, in a seat that is in contest; or in a seat that is a sure loss. In some countries such as Costa Rica, which has a high percentage of women in the legislature, women are more often found in the last of the three types of seats than are men and less often found in the first of the three types of seats than are men (Haavio-Mannila et al. 1985). Another possible explanation of this is that men incumbents continue to run for office, making the sure seats disproportionally male (Matland & Taylor 1997).

The last step in the electoral process is dependent on the desires of voters (Norris 1987,
1997). Some research suggests that voters tend to vote more based on party than on candidate, making a candidate’s gender less relevant than his or her party identification (Leduc, Niemi, & Norris 1996). This is especially true within proportional representation systems with closed lists (Valen 1988). Whether voters focus on party or candidate, research shows that when men and women candidates present themselves to voters, both genders fare about the same (Darcy & Schramm 1977; Rasmussen 1983; Welch & Studlar 1986; Darcy, Welch, & Clark 1994; Seltzer, Newman, & Voorhees Leighton 1997; Ford 2011).

Overall, research shows that the strongest barriers for women in Norris’s three-step process of election lie in the second step, the informed decision to run for office (Rasmussen 1981; Gallagher & Marsh 1988; Lovenduski & Norris 1993; Matland 1993; Githens, Norris, & Lovenduski 1994).

**Quotas as a potential solution**

Quotas provide one way to overcome this barrier of deciding to run for office through encouraging parties to recruit women, offering more resources to women who run, or providing more likely rewards for women’s ambition. Proponents of quotas often pursue multiple goals. The basic premise of gender quotas is to increase the representation of women within a legislative body. In regard to this goal, quotas seem to be successful. Some scholars claim that quotas are the best predictor of women’s representation in legislative bodies (Tripp & Kang 2008). In countries such as Germany, Norway, and Britain, women’s representation increased directly after the implementation of quotas (Kolinsky 1991; Matland 1993; Studlar & McAllister 1998). Other studies indicate that quotas positively impact women’s representation even after the quotas are repealed; one potential explanation for this residual effect is that the quotas have positively affected the cultural perception of women within politics (Bhavnani 2009).
There are two main arguments against quotas as a mechanism of increasing the number of women in a legislature. The first is that the true purpose of measures such as quotas ought to be to promote women’s rights and participation in the public sphere in the very specific example of legislatures. However, an increase in women’s political power does not necessarily follow from the election of women. While quotas may effectively increase the number of women elected into office, they do not in and of themselves reappropriate all of the dominance men hold within legislatures to women (Hughes 2011). Therefore, the results of a quota could vary from electing an active member of Congress who advocates for women’s issues relentlessly to electing a member of Parliament who simply stands at roll call and does nothing else. This wide range of results casts doubt on whether a quota empowers women or simply elects them. Because of this, some question whether “quota women” would behave more actively or passively than women elected via traditional channels and therefore whether quotas are helpful. It is helpful to remember that as limited political tools, quotas may achieve one goal, the election of women, without achieving other goals, such as the representation of women’s interests.

A second critique of the quota system for women is that it tends to favor non-minority women. In trying to adjust one inequality, some would say, it is in fact furthering others (Mansbridge 1995; Strolovitch 2007; Mansbridge 2005). This is not only true of quotas regarding gender. The same inequality is apparent in attempts to institute race quotas; overwhelmingly more racial minority men than racial minority women were elected (Darcy, Hadley, & Kirksley 1993). This seems to indicate a problem with the quota system in general, not necessarily with gender-based quotas. One study has shown that in Germany, mostly minority women were elected after the implementation of a gender quota, but there has not been a comparative analysis on whether or not this is generally the case (Geissel & Hust 2005). Some
of these scholars argue that taking even small steps toward a heterogeneous legislature is valuable, so quotas should not be deemed unsuccessful or not useful simply because they do not solve all problems of inequality (Paxton & Hughes 2007).

**Factors influencing countries’ adaptation of quotas**

Over the past forty-five years, a substantial number of countries have chosen to adopt gender quotas. Before 1970, five countries had instituted quotas regarding women’s representation in the legislative body. Since then, more than a hundred countries also adopted quotas for various reasons (Bush 2011).

Some argue that democracies adopt quotas because of women’s grassroots activism (Gelb 1989; Lovenduski & Norris 1993; Beckwith 2003). This is especially true of cases where women internally pressure parties to support women candidates (Matland & Studlar 1996). Others, however, claim that internal pressure, while perhaps necessary, is not a sufficient cause for quota implementation (Bush 2011).

Another potential factor is that party leaders realize that it is in their best interests to promote the representation of women or to appear to promote the representation of women. Party leaders may make these choices for some of many reasons. First, because many parties within the democracy are competitive with each other, some may of their own initiative adopt some type of gender quotas in order to outdo the others (Kolinsky 1991; Matland 1993; Matland & Studlar 1996; Caul 2001). Second, once again, ideology may play a role, as leftist groups are more likely to advocate for more women in politics than are rightwing groups (Jenson 1982; Beckwith 1986; Lovenduski & Norris 1993). Some argue that the leftist ideologies, as more egalitarian that ideologies on the right, espoused the ideals of women’s rights more quickly (Jenson 1982; Beckwith 1986; Caul 2001). Others respond that the left’s comfort with
government intervention compared to the right’s laissez-faire approach apply to electing women to political office as well as to economics (Lovenduski & Norris 1993). However, this has become less of a factor over time in countries where both left and right wing parties have responded to women’s rights movements by nominating more women as candidates (Lovenduski & Norris 1993; Matland & Studlar 1996).

The electoral design of a democracy also may impact its likelihood of adopting quotas. For example, proportional representation systems are more likely to adapt quotas than single-member district systems. This difference could potentially due to how the presence of many parties proportional representation systems encourages parties to compete with each other (Matland & Studlar 1996). This hypothesis would claim that if one party appoints a woman as a candidate, the others are more likely to follow suit in a proportional representation (or list) system than in a single-member district (or plurality) system. In addition to the advantage of competition and mimicry among parties, it is also less costly in list systems such as proportional representation to nominate women because the nomination of candidates is not a zero-sum game, meaning that nominating a woman in these systems does not mean not nominating a man. A party can simply add another candidate to its list or, if lists are limited, nominate a few women while still nominating men. This is not true in countries with single-member district nominations.

Many of the countries that have recently instituted quotas are developing or recently developed countries that one may not at first consider to be woman-friendly (for examples, Afghanistan and Iraq). These recently developed countries face the particular influence of international actors in addition to those already mentioned. International actors tend to push emerging democracies to adopt a range of democratic norms, including women’s representation. Such actors have had more opportunities to intervene in the workings of fledgling democracies.
International pressures to improve democracy have dramatically increased since the Cold War (Carothers 1999; Burnell 2000; Bush 2011). This provides the opportunity for activists to promote policies such as quotas to improve the situation of women within the democracy, especially in post-conflict countries. Previous research finds that international actors have strong power in these scenarios (Gourevitch 1978; Pevehouse 2002; Levitsky & Way 2005; Simmons, Dobbin, & Garrett 2006; Hyde 2007; Kelley 2008; Beaulieu & Hyde 2009; Bush 2011). The literature also indicates that these international actors have an interest in bettering the political climate of new or struggling democracies (Keck & Sikkink 1998). One form of that betterment may be defined as instituting quotas for the further representation of women.

**Variance within quotas**

Gender quotas take multiple forms across these different countries. Some ways quotas can work include reserving seats for women, requiring a number of women on each party’s candidate list, or requiring a number of women in the candidate pool generally (Htun 2004). List systems are more likely to institute quotas regarding actions of parties, and less democratic systems are more likely to simply save seats for women. Whether these are the more effective types of quota for the country or not has not been examined (Dahlerup 2006).

Most of the literature regarding the success of quotas looks only at one country or region (for examples, see Htun & Jones 2002; Baldez 2004; Schmidt & Saunders 2004; Bauer 2008). As a result, there is very little analysis of which types of quotas are more successful even in broad categories, such as in proportional representation systems as opposed to first past the post systems.
Hypotheses

I fill a gap in the literature by investigating the factors that make quotas more or less successful in increasing the representation of women. Specifically, the puzzle I address is as follows: Which kinds of quota structures are more or less successful in increasing the number of women in legislatures? Unlike most previous research, I do not compare quotas versus non-quota countries. That area has attracted the attention of many scholars (as noted previously), and though disputed, the prevailing conclusion is that quotas do increase the percentage of women in legislatures. Thus, I am more interested in answering questions regarding the variation among these different types of quotas than in reexamining the question of women’s representation in quota versus non-quota countries. To address this general question, I consider the following three hypotheses.

H1. I hypothesize that countries with quotas imposed by law will increase the percentage of women in the legislature to a greater extent than countries with quotas adopted by parties. I expect that the movement for gender equality is more effective when legislated by government than when voluntarily promoted by individual parties. The first reason for this expectation is that legislated quotas apply to all parties, while party quotas only apply to individual parties. Because legislated quotas will impact all parties in a system at once instead of impacting one party at a time, it is reasonable to expect legislated quotas to increase the percentage of women in the legislature more quickly than party quotas would. The second reason for this expectation is that there are structured consequences for parties that fail to meet legislated quotas, such as limited funding. On the other hand, party-set quotas have little if any enforcement mechanism.

H2. I hypothesize that countries that implement quotas through reserving seats in the legislature for women will increase the percentage of women in the legislature to a greater extent
than countries that implement quotas through legislating a percentage of candidates that must be women or than countries in which parties voluntarily implement quotas through supplying a percentage of candidates that are women. The reason for this expectation is that any potential of voter choice negatively impacting the election of women is eliminated by reserved seats. Alternatively, even when a high percentage of candidates on a list of potential legislators are women, voters may chose to elect mostly men. The possibility of voters choosing men over women from a list is amplified by different ways lists can work or where women are on the list. The process of legislated or voluntary candidate quotas seems to focus on increasing the number of women in the legislature by increasing the number of women in the candidate pool; however, the third step in the election process (as mentioned above) is dependent entirely on voters (Norris 1987, 1999). Reserved seats focuses on the increase of women who are able to overcome potential barriers in that final step while also requiring that a number of women run if for no other reason than filling a seat reserved for a woman.

H3. I hypothesize that countries that have electoral systems based on the principle of lists (or multiple winners per race) will increase the percentage of women in the legislature to a greater extent than countries that have electoral systems based on the principle of plurality (or a single winner per race) or countries that combine the two types of electoral systems. The academic literature suggests that systems which elect candidates through lists elect more women to office than do systems which elect candidates through plurality (Norris 1985; Rule 1987; Matland 1998; Kenworthy & Malami 1999; Reynolds 1999; Siaroff 2000; Moser 2001; Paxton & Kunovich 2003). Norris (2006) claims that “Women proved almost twice as likely to be elected under proportional than under majoritarian electoral systems” (201). She attributes this specifically to the electoral system. One possible reason for this finding is that in list systems,
party leaders look for a group of candidates diverse enough to attract attention from every demographic (Matland and King 2002). In plurality systems, each candidate must run on his or her own terms, so diversity may not play as much of a role as an impressive resume or access to funding. Women may be more limited in these areas simply because women have not been in the political game as long as men have. Kenworthy and Malami (1999) suggest that the smaller the number of candidates, the more important identity is to voters. They claim that in list systems, including women on a party list presents a balanced and wholesome approach while running a sole woman candidate in a plurality system can cause those who are less comfortable with women in political roles not to vote for that party or candidate. This approach leads me to expect that systems that work on lists will increase the number of women in the legislature to a greater extent than will countries that work solely or partially on the principle of plurality.

Research Design

The goal of this research is to determine the impact of gender quotas, depending on variation in imposing agency, type of quota, and country’s electoral system, on the election of women to national legislatures. To that end, I observe the percentage of women in individual national legislatures over a six-year period, three years before and three years after the introduction of a gender quota. I chose a six-year window because in each country I observed, there was at least one election for the national legislature in the three years following the institution of the quota. Any period longer than three years after the quota introduction would have severely limited my data set because so many quotas were introduced in the 1980s and 1990s, before organizations began collecting regular and reliable data on the number of women
in national legislatures. I measured the percentage of women in national legislatures for each year in the month of June because that data was more consistently collected than some other months. I gathered data regarding the percentage of women in each national legislature from the Inter-Parliamentary Union’s website and archives.³

I limited my research to lower houses or houses of the people for two reasons. First, these houses, which I shall refer to collectively as lower houses, are often designed to be more reflective of the voter’s desires or to be more representative than higher houses (for example, the House of Commons versus the House of Lords in the United Kingdom). Thus, to examine voter’s desires regarding women and to measure to how proportionately women are represented based on their gender, I only included quotas affecting the lower houses, and my data on the representation of women comes only from lower houses. Second, there is much more data available regarding lower houses, while data on women in the legislature are far less available for the higher houses. I gathered all of my data regarding quotas imposed on lower houses form the Quota Project website.⁴

Starting with a list of all democratic countries known to have quotas that affect their lower houses (N=112), I eliminated countries from the data set for one of five reasons. First, in the cases of some party-imposed quotas, the nature of the available data was such that I was not able to discover the years quotas were instituted (N=12). Without these years, I was unable to ascertain which elections were influenced by the quotas and which were not. Second, I eliminated countries which experienced an electoral transition that reshaped elections during the time span three years before and three years after the institution of a quota (N=5). These countries experienced such an overhaul of their electoral systems that I was unable to parse the

³ [http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif010615.htm](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif010615.htm)
⁴ [http://www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org)
impact of the transition from the impact of the quota, thus making any data I had on the impact of quotas in that country potentially misleading. Third, I eliminated countries for which there was no recorded data for the percentage of women over the time span three years before and three years after the institution of a quota (N=4). This prevented me from measuring the increase in the number of women and therefore from determining the impact of the quota. Fourth, I was unable to examine countries where the quota was instituted before 2001 (N=20). Reliable and regular data has been collected on the number of women in national legislatures since 1998, so either I was unable to determine the number of women in legislatures before 2001 or the data I could find was so varied in collection length that I was unable to make a consistent time frame to examine for my project. Fifth, and similarly, I could not include countries where the quota was instituted after 2012 (N=11). In these cases, three years has not yet passed, so to include these countries would have been inconsistent with the rest of the data gathering process and potentially misleading as some of these countries have not experienced an election since the implementation of the quota.

The remaining data set features 60 countries (see Table 1 below). I will detail the distribution for each of these factors as I address them. As regards region, the majority of these 60 countries comes from the region of Africa and the least from the region of Oceania. These countries span a wide range of gross domestic product per capita (measured below in thousands of international dollars in 2012). The GDP per capita can imply information about a country or group of countries’ level of development, educational opportunities, workforce, and healthcare availability; future research might investigate a potential link between these factors and the successful or unsuccessful implementation of quotas.

### Table 1: Description of Sample

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**Imposing Agency:**
- **Electoral Law**: 82%
- **Party**: 18%

**Quota Type:**
- **Reserved Seats**: 28%
- **Legislated Candidate Quotas**: 53%
- **Voluntary Candidate Quotas**: 0%

**Electoral System:**
- **List**: 48%
- **Plurality**: 17%
- **Both**: 13%
- **Unknown**: 3%

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**Region:**
- **Africa**: 35
- **Americas**: 15
- **Asia**: 23
- **Europe**: 25
- **Oceania**: 2

**Average GDP in 2012 in thousands of intl. dollars:**
- **Full sample**: 13.1
- **Electoral Law**: 11.2
- **Party**: 21.6
- **Reserved Seats**: 8.1
- **Legislated Candidate Quotas**: 12.8
- **Voluntary Candidate Quotas**: 21.6
- **List**: 15.0
- **Plurality**: 9.0
- **Both**: 7.3
- **Unknown**: 21.2
My first hypothesis concerns the agency imposing the quota. In 49 countries, the quota was imposed by electoral law or the state constitution; in the remaining 11, the quota was imposed by one or more major political parties (see Table 1). This set of data on party-imposed quotas is limited by the fact that parties do not necessarily advertise or report the years in which they implement quotas. The smaller sample of countries where quotas were imposed by parties is mostly comprised of countries in Europe (36% of this sample) and least represented the region of Asia (9% of this sample). This may be because counties in the region of Africa have become developed or democratic under more international pressure and, as previously discussed, international actors do have the power to influence these democracies. Their influence could explain why the region with more of these countries, Africa, has more legally enforced quotas than the region with more long-standing governments, Europe. More research ought to be done on the connection between international influences and quota agency type.

The second factor potentially affecting the success of quotas is the type of quota instituted. I examine countries that feature legislated candidate quotas (N=32), reserved seats (N=17), and voluntary candidate quotas (N=11). Under legislated candidate quotas, a certain percentage of candidates must be of a particular gender (usually women). This type of quota can also mandate in what order men and women should appear on ballots (for example, a legislated candidate zipper quota mandates that the ballot alternate between genders). Under reserved seats as a quota, a certain percentage of the positions in the legislature must be filled by women. If men win more votes than women, they may lose their seats to women in order to fulfill this quota. Under voluntary candidate quotas, parties choose a certain percentage of their own candidates from a specific gender (usually women). Within these samples, Europe is most represented (at 36% of this sample) in voluntary candidate quotas, perhaps for the same reasons
that it is most represented in countries where the party is the imposing agency as mentioned above. Africa and Asia were predominant in countries that use reserved seats quotas (at 53% and 41% respectively of that sample), with America and Europe were far less likely to use reserved seats quotas (at 6% and 0% respectively).

The third factor affecting the success of implementing gender quotas for national legislatures is type of electoral system. I grouped the many types of systems into four groups because, while each of these systems vary in important ways, one separation in particular may influence the election of women differently. That separation is list systems as opposed to plurality systems. List systems, in which there are or can be multiple winners from a single race, included Single Transferrable Vote, Single Non-Transferrable Vote, Alternative Vote, Mixed Member Proportional, and List Proportional Representation Systems (N=37). Plurality systems, in which only one candidate can win a given race, include First Past the Post and Two-Round Systems (N=12). Systems that use a combination of list and plurality systems include those who use a Parallel System or multiple systems, combining the results (N=8). Lastly, three systems had such limited data available on their electoral processes that it was not possible to classify them in one of the three aforementioned types of electoral system (N=3). Countries in the region of Africa tended toward plurality systems (making up 58% of that sample), but the other systems were distributed fairly evenly among the regions.

**Analysis**

I expected quotas instituted by electoral law to be more successful in increasing the number of women in the legislature than quotas instituted by parties (H1). My results were consistent with this hypothesis. Countries that imposed quotas by law saw an average increase of
7.7 percentage points more women in their legislatures over the six year time period surrounding the institution of the quota (see Figure 1 below). Countries in which parties voluntarily imposed quotas saw a smaller average of a 4.4 percentage point increase in the number of women in their legislature during the same time frame. This suggests that legislated quotas, imposed through constitutions or electoral laws, are more effective in placing women in the legislature than are voluntary party quotas, perhaps because of the larger scope of a legislated quota or because of the more definite consequences of not fulfilling a legislated quota.

![Figure 1. Impact of Imposing Agency on Percentage of Women in Legislature.](image)

I hypothesized that reserved seats would be the most effective type of quota in increasing the number of women in the legislature (H2). The results I found were once again consistent with that hypothesis. Countries that instituted reserved seats quotas boasted an 8.5 point average increase in the percentage of women in the legislature, while legislated candidate quotas
followed with a 7.2 point gain (see Figure 2 below). Voluntary candidate quotas showed a much smaller 4.4 point increase. These numbers may be indicative of many of the same phenomena that are at work regarding the question of imposing agency, as the two more effective types of quotas are both legislated while the third is voluntarily adapted by the party. The small difference between the changes in reserved seats and in legislated candidate quotas, compared to the larger drop-off of voluntary candidate quotas, would support the idea that imposing agency plays a role in type of quota as well. However, the small variation between reserved seats and legislated candidate quotas indicates that the override of voter choice may have a positive impact on the number of women in the legislature.

I expected that list electoral systems would increase the percentage of women in the legislature to a greater extent than plurality or mixed electoral systems (H3). I did find a small
difference between list and plurality systems. The average list system increased the number of women in the legislature by 6.8 points, while the average plurality system did so by 5.4 points (see Figure 3 below). However, the hypothesis was not supported regarding mixed electoral systems. These eight systems averaged an 11.0 point increase in the number of women in their electoral systems, significantly higher than either list or plurality system averages. It seems that systems that incorporate aspects of both list and plurality manage to find the best of both worlds in regard to gender quotas. Especially as this is a step away from the current common consensus, this is an area where further research is needed.

In sum, electoral law and reserved seats were associated with more successful quota implementation. With regard to electoral system, however, the imposition of a quota in a mixed system was most consequential.
Conclusion

Even as half of the people on the planet, women systematically have less access to and opportunity to shape government in their countries than men do. One clear manifestation of this inequality is visible in the proportion of men and women in national legislatures. Despite the advances being made by the women’s equality movements around the globe, the number of women legislatures is an area that still has marked inequality. This inequality causes women to have less access to political power and causes the government to have less representation of women’s interests and a less diverse and descriptive perspective within the legislature.

One proposed solution to this problem is the implementation of gender quotas. While implementing quotas does not necessitate better representation of women’s issues or an improved general societal view of women’s capabilities in public roles, research indicates that implementing quotas does increase the number of women in legislatures.

My analysis suggests that those interested in the representation of women should be very attentive to the design of quotas and the impact that has on the success of such quotas. The vast variations among quotas, such as imposing agency, quota type, and electoral system, prompt significantly different results for different quotas. If the goal of activists is to see more women elected to the legislature, it is important to understand under what conditions quotas are more or less successful at achieving that goal. I find that quotas imposed by law were more successful than quotas imposed by individual parties; that reserved seats quotas were more successful than legislated candidate quotas or voluntary candidate quotas; and that quotas in mixed electoral systems were more successful than quotas in either list or plurality systems.

A number of key questions remain unanswered. First, what effect do other factors have on the presence of women in the legislature? Possible other factors include the presence of a
women’s movement, prevalence of religions with restrictive gender roles, presence of media which opposes the election of women, higher education levels for women, higher workforce participation rates for women, and funding differences between male and female candidates.

Second, do women elected through quotas legislate differently from women elected through traditional methods? If so, how? Possible differences may include the number of coalitions or connections formed with other legislators, the confidence level of the legislator, the number of bills the legislator introduces and how many of those bills are heard, and the issues the legislator focuses on.

Third, does society punish women elected through quotas through approval ratings or chances of reelection? Is there a general view of a woman elected through a quota as being less capable as a legislator than a woman elected through traditional methods? If so, does this view change? Factors that may prompt a change in the perception of women in the legislature and may also vary depending on how the woman was elected include time passed since the election, the level of activity of the legislator in the legislature, the level of activity of the legislator in the district, and success of bills introduced or supported by the legislator.

Fourth, are quotas a political tool that is most effective when it is imposed consistently over time, or are quotas better used as a stimulus or shot of adrenaline that will no longer be necessary someday? In other words, are quotas more effective when permanent or temporary?

Fifth, what effect do quotas have on racial, ethnic, and religious minorities? Especially in cases where these minorities face a lack of political power, how do women in those minority groups interact with the political system? How does it interact with them? What would impact the success of a double quota designed to elect candidates who are doubly discriminated against, such as a woman in a minority religion?
Given the variety among quotas, we should not be surprised that the differences in factors that affect their implementation can be significant. The particular aspects of a given quota can and do shape its success or failure. As activists continue to promote the adoption of quotas, they should keep in mind factors that will affect their desired outcomes, such as the imposing agency, the type of quota, and the electoral system in which the quota is implemented. Understanding the contexts of these quotas can mean the difference between Pakistan’s 19% post-quota increase and Kyrgyzstan’s post-quota 2.3% decrease in the percentage of women in the national legislature.
Appendix 1

Table A1. Countries in sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Year of Quota</th>
<th>Agent Imposing Quota</th>
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Note: Information on quotas from Quota Project’s website and the Inter-Parliamentary Union’s website.

Notation: RS – Reserved Seats, CQ – Legislated Candidate Quotas, VCQ – Voluntary Candidate Quotas
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