Article

Quotas and Party Priorities: Direct and Indirect Effects of Quota Laws

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Ana Catalano Weeks[1]

Abstract

In light of increasing numbers of women in politics, extant research has examined the role of women in the parliamentary party on agenda-setting. This paper complements that literature by exploring the effect of a gendered institution theorized to promote both numbers of women and awareness of women's interests: gender quota laws. I suggest that after a quota law, parties could have incentives to either reduce (*backlash effect*) or increase (*salience effect*) attention to women's policy concerns. Using matching and regression methods with a panel data set of parties in advanced democracies, I find that parties in countries that implement a quota law devote more attention to social justice issues in their manifestos than similar parties in countries without a quota. Furthermore, the paper shows that this effect is driven entirely by the law itself. Contrary to expectations, quota laws are not associated with increases in women in my (short-term) sample; it is thus no surprise that no evidence of an indirect effect through numbers of women is found. I interpret the findings as evidence of quota contagion, whereby quotas cue party leaders to compete on gender equality issues.

Keywords

gender quotas, political parties, agenda-setting, representation

> I had to fight to have a chapter in the program for instance. For gender equality . . . I wrote it, and then I presented it, there were no questions, no one made any comments. And it was one of the texts since the beginning everybody said, OK, that text is OK. So after that I had to proofread it myself to see if there were any mistakes or so on. I don't think anybody read it.
>
> —Viviane Teitelbaum, Belgian politician (MR)[1]

> The issues of inequality are now a political problem. Even people of the right wing that didn't agree with the [quota] law, they now talk about the effects, how they will affect women, of several measures that are adopted by the government.
>
> —Maria de Belém, Portuguese politician (PS)[2]

Do gender quota laws matter to parties' policy agendas, and if so how? As the channels that link a people to a government, political parties are perhaps the most important mechanism of representation (Sartori 2005). Decisions about party priorities set the bounds for future policy change. Recent examples are illustrative: in the United States, President Obama fulfilled his party's campaign pledge to reform health care with the passage of the Affordable Care Act. In the United Kingdom, the Conservative Party promised to hold a referendum on whether to leave the European Union and respect the outcome, and they have. Although not deterministic (more on this later), party positions matter.

Previous literature suggests that environmental factors like public opinion, ideology, and organizational structure are the most important determinants of party priorities. Recently, several authors have contributed to this literature by demonstrating the significant role of descriptive representation, women in the party (Greene and O'Brien 2016; Kittilson 2011; O'Brien 2012). Gender quota laws are electoral laws or constitutional provisions requiring all parties to include a certain percentage of women in their party lists. This is the first study to address the link between quotas and party priorities. The contribution of this study is to address two key questions: (1) Do parties change their priorities after a quota law is

[1]University of Bath, UK

Corresponding Author:
Ana Catalano Weeks, Department of Politics, Languages & International Studies, University of Bath, 1 West North, Claverton Down, Bath BA2 7AY, UK.
Email: a.c.weeks@bath.ac.uk

implemented and (2) Is the effect of a quota law independent from the effect of additional numbers of women?

The distinction between *quotas* and *women* is not trivial, and there are reasons to believe quotas could either dampen or reinforce the representation of women's policy priorities. On the positive side (*salience effect*), quotas can change the political culture to be more accepting of women in politics, in both parliaments (Burnet 2011; Galligan, Clavero, and Calloni 2007; Xydias 2014) and among the general public (Beaman et al. 2008). They can also lead women elected via a quota to feel they have a mandate to act "for" women, making them especially likely to support women's policy interests (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). On the negative side (*backlash effect*), quotas might also lead to women elected via a quota feeling stigmatized and avoiding women's issues (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008) and there is a fear of resentful male politicians trying to prevent "quota women" from exercising political power (Hawkesworth 2003; Heath, Schwindt-Bayer, and Taylor-Robinson 2005). In light of this, can and will women elected after a quota act to pursue women's interests? Will (predominantly male) party leaders act differently with regard to women's interests?

This paper provides the first cross-country evidence that quota laws affect party agendas. Although the question of whether other types of quotas like internal party quotas also lead to change is interesting, for the sake of this paper I focus on laws. This is because the imposition of quotas on parties that did not support them offers a good context to explore causal effects, using party-level data. The imposition of a national level law might also shift the national debate and public opinion in ways that a party quota does not. I consider the possibility of positive and negative effects of a quota law on three positions characterized by a gender gap in preferences in advanced democracies: (1) social justice, (2) welfare state expansion, and (3) left–right position. To better understand the mechanisms driving the results, I conduct mediation analysis to tease apart direct and indirect effects; that is, effects of the law itself versus those channeled through women in the party. The quotations from interviews with politicians above indicate that after a quota, women might be better able to exercise power over the party program (as in the Teitelbaum quote) and party leaders might be more likely to see gender equality as a "political problem" that they can no longer ignore (de Belém).

To test this argument, I analyze party positions as set out in manifestos, which come from the The Manifesto Project (Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006; Volkens et al. 2016). Studying the causal effects of quota laws is difficult because quotas are not randomized, and countries that pass a quota (or parties that propose one) could differ from those that do not. To deal with this issue, I use statistical matching to match parties in countries that adopt a quota law to parties in countries that do not. Matching improves balance in the data set, reducing the dependence of the findings on statistical modeling assumptions. I then use this pruned data in models employing a difference-in-difference approach, which compares "treated" parties in countries that get a quota law to "control" parties that do not. As a robustness check, I remove parties that proposed the quota law, so that for the parties remaining the quota law can be seen as an exogenous change imposed on the party. The pruned data includes forty parties in sixteen countries from 1969 to 2011. I also show that results are similar using regression without matching.

I find no evidence of a backlash effect, and support for increased salience to some of women's policy concerns after a quota. Quotas increase party attention to social justice, but not welfare state expansion or the party's overall left–right position. Quota laws lead to a sizable 5.6 percentage point increase in party attention to social justice; that is, a party that spent 10 percent of its manifesto discussing social justice would be expected to spend 15.6 percent of its manifesto on social justice after a quota law is implemented. The effect is driven entirely by the law itself. Contrary to common assumptions, I find no evidence that quotas increased numbers of women within the parties in my short-term sample. It is thus unsurprising that I also find no evidence of an indirect effect through numbers of women. I interpret these findings as evidence for quota "contagion" on gender equality policies. After a quota law, parties increase competition on gender equality issues to target or retain women voters.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, I review the literature on party agendas and gender. I then propose two sets of hypotheses linking quotas and policy change, focusing on the direction of the effect and causal mediation. I test these claims using party manifesto data. The results present consistent evidence that quotas shift party attention to social justice issues, and that the (short-term) effect is direct rather than mediated by women. I conclude by discussing quotas as not only outcomes in the political process but also important instigators of attitudes and behavior.

Quotas, Women, and Party Priorities

Party positions, as set out in manifestos, represent an early but crucial stage in the policy process: where the agenda is set. The manifesto provides a program for the winning party to follow and be held accountable for once in office. Although parties are not bound by the contents of the manifesto, generally behavior in office correlates with manifesto promises (Klingemann et al. 1994; Mansergh and Thomson 2007; Naurin 2014; Walgrave, Varone, and Dumont 2006). Previous work suggests that

parties are more likely to keep their campaign pledges when they have more control over the government, but even parties in opposition can fulfill pledges (Thomson et al. 2012). Manifesto decisions are significant not just for the party's electoral success but because they dictate the topics of political debate in a society. They have important implications for the quality of political representation afforded to women (and other groups). I focus on advanced democracies in this study because my theory is based on gender differences in policy preferences, which are well-established in developed democracies but not elsewhere. I also note that investigating party-level policy change is important in this context of generally strong parties, but would not be as relevant in countries where parties are weak.

Existing scholarship suggests that parties change their positions in response to environmental factors, such as shifts in public opinion (Adams et al. 2004, 2006; Ezrow 2007; McDonald and Budge 2005), economic conditions (Adams, Haupt, and Stoll 2009; Burgoon 2012; Haupt 2010), and how the party did in the last election (Somer-Topcu 2009). Thus far, only a handful of studies have focused on the impact of women on party positions, and no study has considered the role of gender quotas. Notably, Kittilson (2011) finds that the share of women and women's organizations in the party are associated with increased attention to social justice, but not welfare or education, in party platforms. More recently, Greene and O'Brien (2016) find that parties with greater shares of women are associated with increased diversity of issues in the manifesto, and tend to shift leftward. Informed by this literature, the main contribution of this study is to measure the effect of *quotas*, rather than gender, on party priorities.

It is often difficult to distinguish quotas from gender; quota laws typically apply to all candidates, for example (Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo 2012; Hughes, Paxton, and Krook 2017). Yet several studies have made progress on this question using natural experiments or methodological advances. For example, in their work on quotas and qualifications Weeks and Baldez (2015) use a unique institutional setup in Italy whereby the quota law applied to only one part of the electoral system to distinguish quotas from women. In a study of party leadership, O'Brien and Rickne (2016) use a natural experiment in Sweden whereby the quota was imposed by the national party on local branches, impacting numbers of women in some branches more than others. Continuing in this vein, this study endeavors to assess quota effects on party priorities. Below, I build on the literature on gender quotas and critical mass theory to suggest two alternative hypotheses: quotas might have either a *salience effect* or a *backlash effect*.

Quota laws apply to all political parties in a country, theoretically leading to an increase in women that is more balanced across parties than typical "organic" growth (which tends to be driven by parties on the left). If women's interests transcend party—and many studies find that gender gaps in policy preferences persist even within parties (Barnes and Cassese 2017; Poggione 2004)—then the quota opens up a wider group of parties to change. Quotas also lead to greater numbers of women in leadership positions (O'Brien and Rickne 2016), and party leaders typically have a great deal of influence on the agenda and encourage other women to participate (Blumenau 2017). The women elected via a quota might also feel a particular "mandate" to act for women (Childs and Krook 2012; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). Finally, as I discuss in more detail below, by raising the issue of gender equality in politics to the national stage, quota laws can also shift political culture, encouraging more attention to gender equality concerns. Thus, quotas might lead to better representation of women's interests:

Hypothesis 1a (H1a): Salience effect: Quotas increase party attention to women's policy priorities.

The opposite might also be true: quotas might elicit a backlash among those who disagree with their imposition. Increasing numbers of women may prompt resistance from the traditional majority, men. According to "intrusiveness" theory (Blalock 1967), when minorities like women in politics are small in number they are perceived to be nonthreatening. As minority numbers grow, majority groups are more likely to feel threatened and react negatively (see also Krook 2015). Quotas might cause particular consternation because they necessitate men being replaced by women, rather than simply increasing numbers of women. We see early examples of quota resistance in the creative loopholes that parties find to avoid implementing a quota within their party (e.g., Baldez 2007; Fréchette, Maniquet, and Morelli 2008).

Quota scholarship also suggests that resistance can persist after the quota law successfully increases numbers of women. In Uganda, for example, women from reserved seats are less likely to be recognized in debate compared with their male and female colleagues elected via open seats (Clayton, Josefsson, and Wang 2014). A survey of Flemish politicians, a decade after the first quota law passed, reveals men and women have polar opposite views on the legitimacy of quotas in politics and their effects on candidate quality (Meier 2008). This kind of resentment could easily bleed into formal and informal party rules and behavior. In a study of parties in Catalonia, Verge and de la Fuente (2014) find that myriad informal intraparty practices contribute to women's lack of agency

within the party after a quota law. Thus, quotas could lead to less attention to women's policy priorities:

> **Hypothesis 1b (H1b):** Backlash effect: Quotas decrease party attention to women's policy priorities.

I propose two alternative mechanisms through which quotas might shift policy priorities. First, increased numbers of women might influence party agendas in several ways. A "critical mass" of women after a quota law could have more leverage to negotiate and push the party toward their collective preferences (Kanter 1977). In a more gender-balanced environment, women may feel more comfortable expressing "gendered" preferences, and men more likely to be receptive to their views. Mendelberg, Karpowitz, and Goedert (2014) find that as numbers of women increase so does their authority, and that with a critical mass women begin discussing different issues (such as caring responsibilities). Additional numbers of women could also influence party manifestos through their ascent to positions of power within the party (O'Brien and Rickne 2016). Over time, quotas are likely to increase the number of female party leaders, who can then influence the content of the manifesto more directly. Of course, an influx of women might also be more threatening to male politicians than the status quo, leading them to resist women's interests. Thus, the first potential mechanism through which quotas influence policy priorities is *indirect*:

> **Hypothesis 2a (H2a):** The effect of quota laws on policy priorities is mediated by the increase of women in the parliamentary party.

The second way in which quotas can influence intra-party decisions is through changes to expectations and norms about women in politics. Quota policies increase public awareness and support for women in politics, which might cue party elites to prioritize women's concerns. Studies suggest that quotas attract media attention to (the lack of) women in politics (Sacchet 2008; Sénac-Slawinski 2008). Rather than being an "one-off" change, quotas tend to highlight the issue of women in politics repeatedly at every subsequent election, with media coverage comparing how parties are faring (which are not complying?) and who the female candidates are. For example, Portugal passed a quota law in 2006. In the most recent 2015 federal election—the third since the quota law—national newspapers covered the share of female candidates and elected MPs, referencing the 2006 law specifically. Some of the headlines include "Men continue to dominate electoral lists. Only 25 percent of the 2015 heads of lists were women" (*Espresso*, October 5, 2015) and "History was made. One-third of the seats will be occupied by women" (*Observador*, October 5, 2015). Media also paid particular attention to whether specific parties complied with the quota requirements.[3]

Initial evidence suggests that quotas can lead the public to change their views about the role of women in politics in a positive direction (Beaman et al. 2008; Burnet 2011), although I note the need for more research in this area. Such shifts in media attention and public attitudes are likely to affect the incentives and strategies of party leaders. Specifically, elites might use party manifestos to associate the party with women's policy concerns to raise their visibility on these issues and claim credit from female constituents (Mayhew 1974). It is also possible that changing norms are internalized by party elites themselves (coming to believe that more balanced representation is normatively appropriate), regardless of electoral incentives. Because existing research fails to link quota laws to negative public attitude or media shifts, I note that this mechanism is more likely to explain a positive shift in party policies (salience effect) than a backlash. Thus, the second mechanism through which quotas might affect policy agendas is *direct*:

> **Hypothesis 2b (H2b):** The effect of quota laws on policy priorities is driven by the institution of the quota law itself, rather than channeled through women.

Figure 1 presents a visual depiction of the argument, showing various predictions for how direct or indirect mechanisms could link quota laws to party agendas. As the left column of the figure shows, if the effect of a quota law is positive (salience), it could be due to direct or indirect mechanisms. A quota law, and the positive public attention it generates around women in politics, could signal parties to increase competition on women's issues (top left cell). Alternatively—or additionally—the effect of quotas could be driven by increased numbers of women (bottom left cell). The right column shows that if quota laws instead have a negative impact on women's policy priorities (backlash), the indirect mechanism is likely driving the effect. There is little reason to believe that a quota law which does *not* disrupt party selection procedures or displace men would lead to backlash. In this case, the party can simply ignore the law and no change in emphases is expected (top right cell). A backlash is more likely to be precipitated by unwanted "shocks" to women in the party (bottom right cell).

Data and Method

The discussion so far suggests that we should see a relationship between quota laws and party attention to women's policy preferences. However, quota laws are not randomly assigned to countries, and the concern for

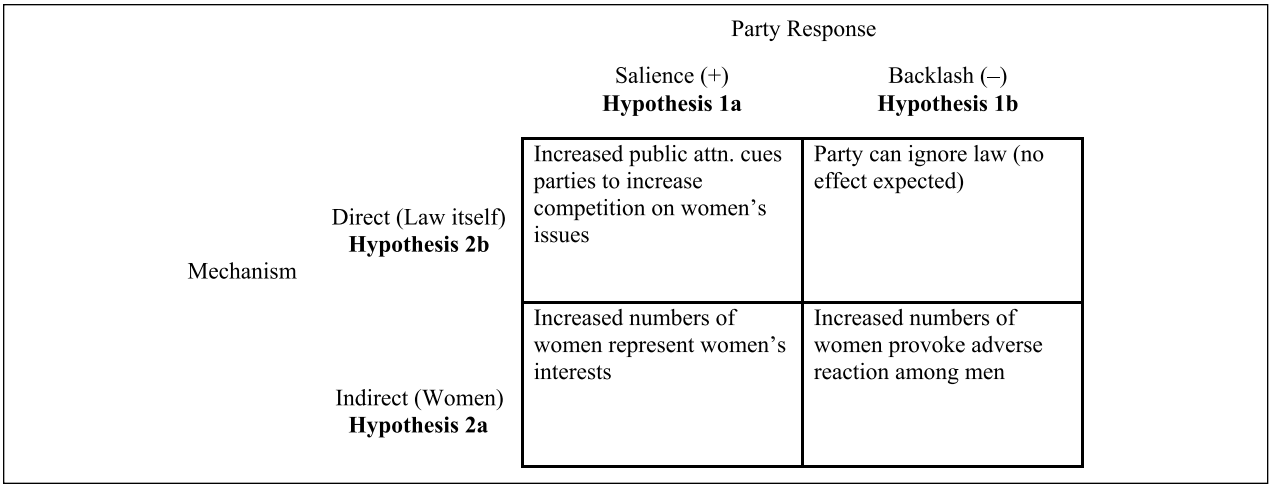

Figure 1. Predicted effects of quota laws on policy priorities.

causal inference is that countries that adopt quota laws, or parties that propose them, may be self-selecting based on some observable or nonobservable factors. Endogeneity is possible at both country and party level. At the country level, countries that pass quota laws might be characterized by different culture or attitudes toward women, which might also influence party priorities. At the party level, similarly, parties that propose a successful quota law might be characterized by different cultures and ideologies (e.g., they tend to be more left-wing), and this could also influence subsequent priorities.

To deal with potential endogeneity at party level, I use statistical matching to preprocess the data and match parties in countries that adopt a quota law to parties in countries with no quota (Ho et al. 2007). The goal of matching is to reduce imbalance of potential confounders between "treated" and "control" groups (Stuart 2010). More balanced data more closely approximate data that might have resulted from a randomized experiment, reducing model dependence and improving the argument for causal inference (Ho et al. 2007; Imai, King, and Stuart 2008; King and Nielsen 2016). Because the units to be matched are panels rather than observations (i.e., parties and not party-election-years), I use a procedure applied in previous studies using matched panel data (Hollyer and Rosendorff 2012; Simmons and Hopkins 2005). For a party in a country that gets a quota law in election-year *t*, I average observed covariates in all years prior to *t*. For all parties in countries that do not get a quota law, I average observed covariates for all election-years available. Using this compressed data set, where the unit of observation is the party, I match parties that get a quota law to parties that never get a quota law. Nearest neighbor Mahalanobis matching is employed, conducted without replacement. This means that each pair consists of a party in a country that implements a quota law, and a party in a country that does not. I then decompress the (cross-sectional) data, so that the unit of observation is again the party-election-year (time-series cross-sectional).

Using the pruned data set, I then employ a difference-in-difference approach by estimating regression models that include both party- (which in linear combination are equal to country-fixed effects) and year-fixed effects. The coefficient estimates measure the link between quota laws and priorities within parties over time, relative to parties that do not get a quota law. The "treated" group is parties in countries that get a quota law and the "control" is matched parties that do not get a quota law. Fixed effects models control for any party- or country-specific omitted variables (observable and unobservable) that are constant over time—a potentially large source of omitted variable bias. The difference-in-difference approach thus helps to address endogeneity concerns at the country level, given the parallel trends assumption holds—that trends in policy priorities would have been the same across parties and countries in the absence of a quota law. I test for the validity of this assumption by estimating a dynamic panel model with leads and lags on quota implementation and including unit-specific time trends. In addition, I show that the results hold estimating the same models using the full data set (without matching).

The baseline model with party and year fixed effects can be written as follows:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_1 Quota\ Law_{it} + \beta_2 \mathbf{Z}_{it} + \alpha_i + \eta_t + \mu_{it},$$

where Y_{it} is the outcome of interest and measures party positions in party *i* in the year *t; Quota Law* is a dummy variable equal to 1 after the implementation of a quota law and 0 otherwise, and β_1 is the coefficient for this

main independent variable; $\mathbf{Z}_{it}$ represents a vector of covariates, and β_2 the coefficients for these covariates; α_i and η_t are party and year fixed effects, respectively; and μ_{it} is the error term. All right-hand side variables are lagged by one election-year because party manifestos are written before the election. I use robust standard errors clustered by election to address the concern that unobserved election-specific factors may influence all parties' policy priorities in a given election, leading to correlated errors among the parties standing in that election (Rogers 1994; Williams 2000).

I analyze party priorities using party manifestos data from the The Manifesto Project (Manifesto Research on Political Representation, MARPOR). MARPOR measures party positions on particular policy issues in the party's election-year manifesto. MARPOR coders match up "quasi-sentences" (which can be a full sentence, a clause, or a bullet point) in the manifesto with a category of policy. Each category is standardized by taking the total number of quasi-sentences coded in the same document as a base. The resulting percentage can be taken as a measure of the party's policy priorities (Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006; Volkens et al. 2016). Manifestos are only coded in election years (observations are not retained through the inter-election period).[4]

The full data set includes 132 parties in twenty-one countries from 1969 to 2011.[5] The matched data set is generated from this using the MatchIt package in R version 3.3.1 (Ho et al. 2011). To specify the covariates to be used in matching, I consider how the adoption of quotas is related to well-established determinants of policy priorities. The key issue is whether there is something else that contributes to both a quota being adopted and a shift in policy priorities, for example, an underlying cultural norm shift in favor of women. I match on five variables potentially linked to quota laws and party priorities: *Women in Party, Party Family, Party Quota, Vote Share*, and *Year*. The resulting data set consists of twenty "treated" parties that get a quota, and twenty "control" parties that do not, from sixteen countries. The matching process reduces the multivariate imbalance statistic from 0.95 to 0.75, significantly improving the balance of the sample. Technical details of the matching procedure, a discussion of all variables used and considered for matching, and results on balance are reported in Online Appendix A.

To operationalize the main dependent variables, I consider how existing data on party priorities relate to women's policy concerns, as measured using survey data of gender gaps in policy preferences. Women are more liberal and favor more government spending overall compared with men across developed countries, even controlling for class and party (Barnes and Cassese 2017; Edlund and Pande 2002; Huber and Stephens 2000; Iversen and Soskice 2001; Iversen and Rosenbluth 2006; Lott and Kenny 1999; Svallfors 1997). Specifically, analysis of ISSP (International Social Survey Programme) survey data finds large gender gaps in preferences on the issues of maternal employment, government intervention, and social spending (including health care, pensions, and unemployment), with women being more progressive than men in advanced democracies. These gender gaps might derive from the decline of marriage and corresponding higher rates of poverty for women over recent years, or because of women's increasing labor force participation (and associated need for affordable care services; Edlund and Pande 2002; Iversen and Rosenbluth 2010). Similarly, survey data show that women are more likely to support gender equality than men—for example, to disagree with statements like, "a woman's job is to look after the home" (ISSP Family and Changing Gender Roles Survey; Weeks 2016). Accordingly, I would expect women's preferences for social policies and gender equality to be reflected more accurately after a quota law is passed.

The main dependent variables are the share of party manifesto devoted to three MARPOR policy categories capturing women's preferences: (1) *Social Justice*, (2) *Welfare State Expansion*, and (3) *Left–Right Position*. The *Social Justice* includes any mention of social justice and the need for fair treatment of all people, including the end of sex-based discrimination, as well as equality for other underprivileged groups including race, class, sexuality, and disability. *Welfare State Expansion* includes favorable mentions of the need to introduce, maintain, or expand any social service or social security scheme, and support for social services such as child care, health care, retirement, and unemployment benefits. *Left–Right Position* is the left–right position of party, as given in Lowe et al.'s (2011) log ratio scale (found to better reflect the importance a party attaches to policy areas than the original composite version). According to the theory, we should expect political parties to either increase (H1a) or decrease (H1b) the attention they devote to *Social Justice* and *Welfare State Expansion* after a quota law is passed, and to move to the left (H1a) or right (H1b) on the *Left–Right Position*.

The key independent variable is *Quota Law*, a binary variable coded "1" for parties in countries which have a national quota law, after the law was implemented (including and after the first election in which the quota was in operation). In my data set, five countries have passed a quota law: Italy (since repealed), Belgium, France, Spain, and Portugal. It is important to note here that, because quota laws are relatively recent and it was necessary to lag this variable, the parties included in this study had a quota law for up to three consecutive election-years.[6] Thus, the

Table 1. Effects of Quota Laws on Party Priorities.

	Dependent variable:		
	Social justice (1)	Welfare state expansion (2)	Left–right position (3)
Quota Law$_{(t-1)}$	5.643***	1.596	0.430
	(1.481)	(2.374)	(0.284)
Party Quota$_{(t-1)}$	0.466	−0.277	0.113
	(0.944)	(1.173)	(0.157)
Female Labor Force Participation$_{(t-1)}$	0.085	0.179	0.002
	(0.211)	(0.232)	(0.028)
Vote Share$_{(t-1)}$	0.011	−0.129*	0.020*
	(0.031)	(0.055)	(0.007)
Effective number of parties$_{(t-1)}$	−0.134	0.079	0.160*
	(0.586)	(0.652)	(0.081)
Log(GDP per capita)$_{(t-1)}$	−10.864**	−2.471	−0.230
	(3.384)	(4.147)	(0.508)
Constant	105.961***	13.345	2.781
	(30.129)	(37.313)	(4.672)
Observations	282	282	282
R^2	.651	.551	.736
Adjusted R^2	.500	.357	.621
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Party fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors clustered around election in parentheses.
$^{\dagger}p < .1$. $^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

results should be interpreted as short-term effects of a quota law.

Relevant covariates used in matching preprocessing are retained as controls in regression analysis (*Vote Share* and *Party Quota*).[7] The fixed effects account for many time-invariant confounders which would otherwise be included, including party family, electoral system, and history of religious conservatism in a country. I also control for *Log(GDP per capita)* and *Female Labor Force Participation*, both variables hypothesized to transform sex roles and attitudes toward women as societies shift away from materialist values (Inglehart and Norris 2000; Norris 1985). I control for *Effective number of parties* because party systems with a greater number of parties might be more responsive to new issues than two-party systems (where there is less likely to be competitive diffusion; Kittilson 2011; Matland and Studlar 1996). Online Appendix B shows the summary statistics for all parameters used in analysis, and provides details about data sources.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 reports the results showing the effects of quota laws on party positions. The models in Table 1 control for omitted variable bias both across time and political parties, and should be interpreted to estimate within-unit changes in treatment. The analysis uses matched data; analysis using the full data set returns similar results and is available in Online Appendix D. I find no evidence for a *backlash effect* (H1b); quotas do not significantly decrease attention to women's policy concerns nor do they cause parties to move to the right. Providing some support for H1a (*salience effect*), the estimates imply that after a quota is implemented parties shift their positions on social justice, but not welfare state expansion or left–right position. The coefficient of 5.6 on *Quota Law* indicates that a one-unit change in *Quota Law*, that is, going from not having a quota to implementing a quota, is associated with a 5.6 percentage point increase in party attention to social justice. For example, a party that devotes 5 percent of its manifesto to social justice (the mean) would be expected to spend double the amount—10.6 percent—of its manifesto on social justice issues after a quota law. Using regression without matching, the effect of a quota law is slightly smaller (4% increase; see Table D1 in Online Appendix D); although as previously discussed, because the matching results rely less on untestable modeling assumptions (such as which parametric model to choose), I believe them to be more credible (see Online Appendix A for more).

The coefficient estimates for *Quota Law* in models 2 and 3, however, are not significant. Parties that get a quota law are no more likely to prioritize welfare state

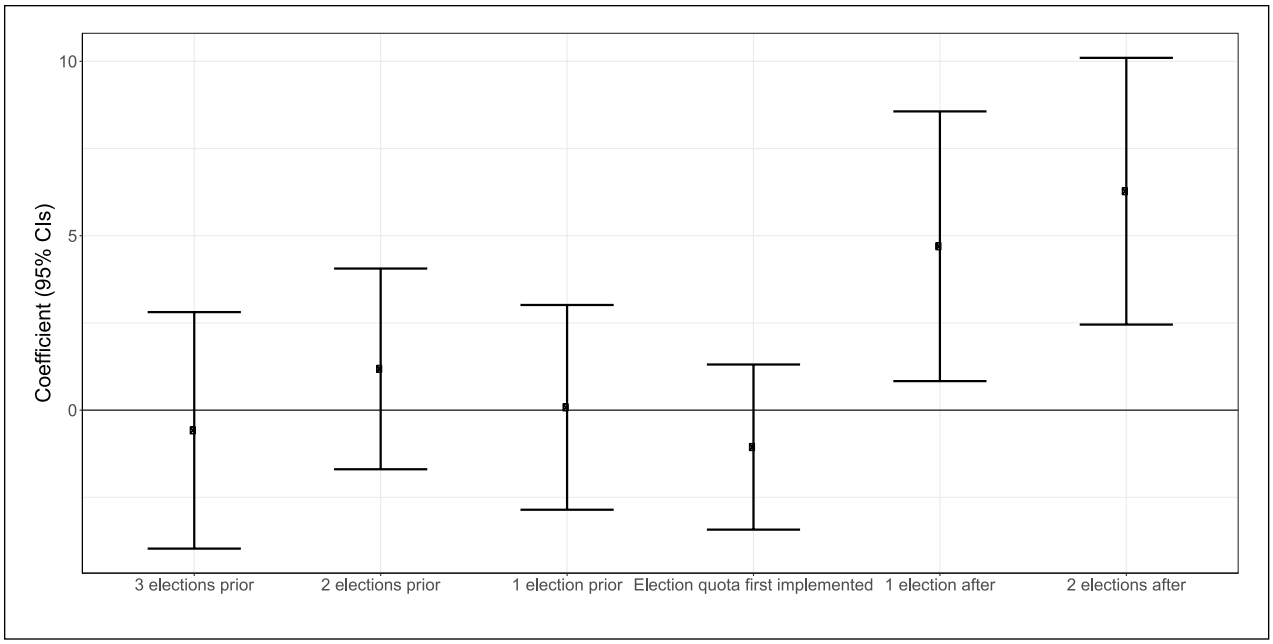

Figure 2. Effect of quota laws on social justice priorities (election-years before/after quota law implemented).
Estimates with 95% CIs (based on robust standard errors clustered by election) from dynamic panel regression including party- and year-fixed effects and indicator variables for three leads and two lags (matched data). Recall that because manifestos are written before the election, the first election-year in which quotas ought to have an impact is the election after implementation, and this is what the figure shows. CI = confidence interval.

expansion or shift left–right direction than parties without a quota law.[8] This suggests that quota laws do not lead parties to change positions on more traditional issues like welfare, issues that have long been fundamental to left–right politics (Allan and Scruggs 2004; Bartolini and Mair 2007; Benoit and Laver 2006; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). This finding aligns with evidence from Kittilson (2011), who demonstrates that the share of women in the party is a significant indicator of social justice mentions in the manifesto, but not welfare state expansion.

As a robustness check, I estimate a dynamic panel model, which estimates the treatment effect on social justice in the time periods before and after quota implementation (leads and lags). Figure 2 plots the coefficients and 95 percent confidence intervals from a model including three leads and two lags of the quota law variable (in addition to the full set of fixed effects and covariates). The results show no "placebo" effect before the law was implemented, strengthening the plausibility of the parallel trends assumption and a causal interpretation of results. Recall that because manifestos are written before the election, the first election-year in which quotas ought to have an impact is the election after implementation, and reassuringly this is what the figure shows.[9]

The next hypotheses focus on the mechanisms driving the link between quotas and policy priorities. Models 1 and 2 of Table 2 investigate whether women in the party accounts for the relationship between quotas and social justice policy (H2a), or the effect is instead direct (H2b).[10] To investigate the indirect effect of increased women's representation due to a quota law, I follow Kenny and colleagues' three steps for showing mediation effects (Baron and Kenny 1986; Judd and Kenny 1981, 2010). These can be summarized as follows: (1) show that the causal variable is correlated with the outcome, (2) show that the causal variable is correlated with the mediator, and (3) for partial/complete mediation, show that the effect of the causal variable on the outcome while controlling for the mediator is reduced/zero.

Model 1 of Table 1 shows that the causal variable (*Quota Law*) is related to the outcome. Yet model 1 of Table 2 fails to provide evidence that the causal variable is correlated with the mediator, *Women in Party*. The coefficient is negative although not statistically significant at the conventional level ($p = .07$). I attribute this finding to both the short-term nature of this study (recall that parties in this study had a quota law for up to only three consecutive election-years, and most for two) and the structure of quota laws in these countries. For example, in France parties notoriously shirked the quota for years because they could pay a fine instead (Fréchette, Maniquet, and Morelli 2008; Murray, Krook, and Opello 2012; see also Schwindt-Bayer 2009). This is not due to the lagged quota variable (which does not capture effects in the year of quota implementation); in Online Appendix D, I run models where the right-side variables are not lagged, and results do not

Table 2. Mediated Effects of Quota Laws on Party Priorities.

	Dependent variable:	
	Women in party$_{(t-1)}$ (1)	Social justice (2)
Quota Law$_{(t-1)}$	−7.764	5.674***
	(4.076)	(1.487)
Women in Party$_{(t-1)}$		0.004
		(0.025)
Party Quota$_{(t-1)}$	6.448*	0.419
	(2.073)	(0.999)
Female Labor Force Participation$_{(t-1)}$	0.415	0.083
	(0.391)	(0.212)
Vote Share$_{(t-1)}$	0.074	0.010
	(0.106)	(0.032)
Effective number of parties$_{(t-1)}$	0.091	−0.135
	(1.074)	(0.589)
Log(GDP per capita)$_{(t-1)}$	−0.087	−0.108**
	(0.067)	(0.034)
Constant	67.903	105.686***
	(62.278)	(30.119)
Observations	282	282
R^2	.628	.651
Adjusted R^2	.467	.497
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes
Party fixed effects	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors clustered around election in parentheses.
$^{\dagger}p < .1$. $^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

change. Model 1 of Table 2 suggests that, on average, the short-term effects of quotas on women within parties in these countries were minimal.

The final step in mediation, model 2 of Table 2, shows that the potential mediator *Women in Party* is not a significant predictor of social justice emphasis, and its inclusion does not reduce the size of the effect of *Quota Law* at all (compare to model 1 of Table 1). Causal mediation analysis using the potential outcomes framework (Imai, Keele, and Tingley 2010), similarly, shows no evidence of indirect effects.[11] In addition, I fit models including the variable *Quota Impact*, defined as the change in women's descriptive representation following quota implementation (rather than a binary variable; O'Brien and Rickne 2016). While the quota impact variable has a large range (–40 to 50), the mean is close to zero (0.6), again suggesting that overall quotas in these countries had minimal impact on women in the party. The coefficient on *Quota Impact* is close to zero and not significant at conventional levels in these models (see Table D2 in Online Appendix D).

In line with H2b, this suggests that the (short-term) effect of quota laws is direct, rather than channeled through increases of women in the party (H2a). The quota law itself cues parties to devote more attention to social justice issues. Given that quota laws were not successful at increasing numbers of women in this sample of parties, it is no surprise that the effect of quotas is not driven by women. Of course, over the long-term and as quota laws gain stricter placement mandates and enforcement mechanisms, this could change. Overall, the results here suggest that parties prioritize social justice after a quota, whether the quota increases numbers of women or not. This finding provides some of the first evidence that, as a gendered institution, quotas affect party behavior independently of their influence on party demographics.

I take several steps to ensure that findings are not the result of model misspecification. Robustness checks include estimating models that include a lagged dependent variable rather than fixed effects, models that drop political parties responsible for proposing quota laws, and models that exclude one country at a time to ensure results are not driven by a single country. My findings are robust to these alternative specifications, which are presented in Online Appendix D to save space.

The Direct Effect of Quota Laws on Social Justice Emphasis

What can explain why quotas influence social justice priorities but not other issues that women prefer, and what

drives the effect if not women in the party? To unpack these findings, in this section I propose a contagion mechanism driving the direct effect, whereby the quota law cues parties to ramp up competition on gender issues. I provide initial evidence to support this theory from statistical tests and interview data.

Welfare state expansion and overall left–right position are issues that structure the fundamental divide over politics in most countries, which is still typically class-based. Parties have well-defined positions on these issues, and they might be particularly sticky given the constraints of ideological reputation and issue ownership (Budge, Robertson, and Hearl 1987; Downs 1957). The issue of social justice for underprivileged groups (beyond class) has not traditionally structured party competition, and parties might therefore have more flexibility on this issue, particularly when cued by events and changing public opinion to address it. In addition, it could be easier for parties to prioritize social justice policies that have smaller budgetary implications than welfare expansion. The quota law, and subsequent related media coverage, thus could signal to parties that gender equality is an important political issue and spur further competition on comparatively flexible and "cheap" gendered policies.

Past studies have demonstrated a similar type of "contagion," where parties shift policies to respond to pressures from other parties and the electorate, including specifically on the issue of gender quotas (e.g., Kittilson 2006; Kolinsky 1991; Matland and Studlar 1996). One example is further legislation on gender quotas. In author interviews with party leaders and politicians in Belgium, the 2011 law adopting gender quotas for boards of listed and state-owned companies was frequently brought up across parties as a specific example of how quota laws shifted the political agenda.[12] Support for the 2011 quota law was widespread, backed by parties across the left and mainstream right. One plausible reason for this is that the initial quota law garners sympathetic media support over time. It establishes a norm in gender equality that paves the way for similar arguments in another sector (Meier 2013). One politician commented, "We will win in public opinion because the media writes in favor of us. And that is different also because in the past they weren't supportive of us, but now there are more women in the media also."[13] A minister's adviser in Belgium commented that her country was also supporting EU-level board quotas (the Reding Directive), while many countries with high levels of women (but no quota law; for example, Sweden) were opposing it. "I think France and Belgium and the countries with the quota law are the ones supporting it," she said.[14] Although this is just one example of how quotas can shift policy priorities, it highlights the potential role of a norm shift, media support, and public opinion in driving parties to prioritize equality issues after a quota law.

We might expect contagion particularly among parties of the left, due to increasing competition on gender equality promotion with the rise of "New Left" parties (Caul 1999; Keith and Verge 2018). In Online Appendix C, I consider whether party ideology conditions the effects of a quota law. The effect of a quota law on social justice positions is larger for left parties (the coefficient increases to 6.9, compared with 4.4 for right parties), although the interaction between quota and party ideology is not statistically significant. Similarly, I consider whether effects might be moderated by whether the party has an internal quota provision; perhaps those parties with voluntary quotas are exactly the ones likely to ramp up competition on gender issues after the quota law. I find some borderline significant evidence of this in Online Appendix C; the interaction is significant at the 0.1 level. The coefficient for parties with voluntary quotas is 7 compared with 4.6 for those without such provisions (very similar to left and right parties). These tests suggest that effects are partially driven by progressive parties which already compete on gender equality issues.

While progressive parties might see a quota as a signal to ramp up competition on gender equality, parties that did not support the law might feel an added incentive to develop their positions addressing women's interests to compensate for past opposition. One interesting finding from the robustness checks is that the effect of quota laws on social justice emphasis is slightly larger when parties that proposed the quota law are excluded (the coefficient for quota law is 5.92 for this sample compared with 5.65 in the original sample). This is consistent with the idea that parties are overcompensating for quota opposition after the fact by paying more attention to "women's issues." In short, the contagion mechanism applies across parties—evidence suggests it might be slightly larger for those who already compete on gender issues (those with an internal quota), but that it also holds for right parties and those that did not support a law. The results can be interpreted as cross-party evidence for quota "contagion" in priorities although not necessarily restricted to the expansion of *quotas* alone. Because the category of social justice is broader than quotas or gender equality, additional research is necessary to understand exactly how quotas affect the variety of social justice policies.

Conclusion

This article examines the impact of quota laws on party positions in advanced democracies. It finds that parties in countries with gender quota laws increase the attention they give to social justice. Gender quota laws increase coverage of social justice issues even after using statistical matching to reduce concerns about endogeneity, including party and year fixed effects, and controlling for

time-varying potential confounders. The findings reject the notion that quotas have a *backlash effect*, and generally support the theory of a *salience effect*. The effect of a quota is driven directly by the institution of the law itself, rather than by associated increases in numbers of women. I interpret these results as evidence for quota-driven "contagion" on equality. At least in the short term, quotas affect party positions by cueing party leaders to compete on gender equality.

The findings are important for three main reasons. First, gender quotas are increasingly being introduced in countries across the world. This study confirms that quota laws are an effective tool to increase women's substantive representation at an important stage of the policy-making process: agenda-setting. Quotas can expand the scope of decision making beyond standard issues of importance to dominant groups. Yet the question of whether party priorities translate into policy outcomes remains. The quotation from Belgian politician Viviane Teitelbaum at the start of this paper—the gender equality chapter goes in the party program, but no one in the party reads it—leaves room for doubt. And does the public discern these shifts? Some research finds that there is lingering public doubt about whether parties will fulfill their campaign promises (Naurin 2011). A natural extension of this work is to explore the effects of quotas on public opinion, such as survey data about which party is best able to handle social justice concerns, and actual policy outcomes, such as legislation and spending on issues related to social justice policies (e.g., Clayton and Zetterberg 2018).

The findings also suggest caution in interpreting the potential scope of quotas' effects across policy areas. National quota legislation is an effective mechanism for increasing women's substantive representation within parties, but only on issues directly related to equality. I find no evidence that quotas lead to changes on important, "sticky" issues at the core of a party's identity: welfare policy or overall left–right position. The second key implication is that not all women's interests are alike. The translation of women's policy demands into outcomes depends on how those demands map onto traditional (class-based) political cleavages, or perhaps how costly they are to implement.

Finally, this research has potential implications beyond gender quotas, adding to the growing evidence that gender-related institutions can have significant impacts on policy agendas and outcomes that warrant further exploration (Kittilson 2010). To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first study to find a direct effect of quota laws on party priorities. The results complement work that shows women in the party matter (Greene and O'Brien 2016; Kittilson 2011), suggesting that the imposition of a quota law itself can also have spillover effects on other policies. More research is needed to test the contagion mechanism proposed here, and the conditions under which party leaders respond to women's policy preferences. Future studies might dig deeper into these questions through more fine-grained text analysis of manifestos, media analysis before and after quota implementation, and interviews with key actors in the manifesto creation process.

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Notes

1. Personal interview, Brussels, Belgium, October 23, 2013.
2. Personal interview, Lisbon, Portugal, November 7, 2013.
3. Some examples are as follows: "For the first time, the list of PSD/Azores has more women than men" (*Publico*, June 16, 2015), "List of PS in Santarem violates parity law" (*Espresso*, August 28, 2015), and "Setúbal is the district with most women elected as heads of lists" (*Espresso*, October 6, 2015).
4. The MARPOR data have been criticized by many scholars for how it estimates policy positions and scales the data into left–right positions; however, because this paper evaluates change in relative policy emphasis over time (what the data were originally intended for), these concerns are not as relevant (Gemenis 2013).
5. The countries included are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United States.
6. In the matched data, of the twenty parties included that get a gender quota law, observations are included for all twenty in the first election-year (year of implementation), nineteen of the twenty in the first election-year after implementation, and six in the second election-year after implementation.
7. Note that *Quota Law* and *Party Quota* are not strongly correlated; the correlation coefficient is .26.
8. In robustness checks, models using the original left–right score from the comparative manifesto data showed similar results (quotas not statistically significant).
9. I also run models with party-specific time trends, which is an alternative way to test the robustness of the

difference-in-differences identification. When these trends are included, the identification relies on there being a sharp change in the outcome at the date of treatment rather than an effect that grows gradually (Pischke 2005). I expect a more gradual change as numbers of women and the salience of the law increase, and in fact the coefficient on quota law is positive but no longer significant in this model ($p = .2$; Online Appendix D). While gradual changes are hard to pick up with party-specific time trends, these results also suggest that it is not possible to fully disentangle underlying trends from the causal effect of quotas.

10. Additional specifications (not shown to save space) looking at the dependent variables of Welfare State Expansion and Left–Right Position returned no significant findings for mediation. I also investigated including women in party leadership as a mediator. Although Greene and O'Brien (2016) recently collected excellent data on gender and party leadership, unfortunately there are large gaps in the data for many of the parties included here.
11. To estimate the mediated effects of women in the party on social justice policy positions, I use the mediation package in R (results not shown to save space; Tingley et al. 2014).
12. Els Van Hoof, personal interview, October 16, 2013, Brussels, Belgium; Niki Dheedene, personal interview, October 8, 2013, Brussels, Belgium; Viviane Teitelbaum, personal interview, October 23, 2013, Brussels, Belgium; Sabine de Bethune, personal interview, September 5, 2013, Brussels, Belgium.
13. Els Van Hoof, personal interview, October 16, 2013, Brussels, Belgium.
14. Niki Dheedene, personal interview, October 8, 2013, Brussels, Belgium.

Supplemental Material

Replication data for this article can be viewed at https://dataverse.harvard.edu/. Supplemental materials for this article are available with the manuscript on the *Political Research Quarterly* (PRQ) website.

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