

Do Gender Quotas Foster Women's Political Engagement?

Lessons from Latin America

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Gender quotas have been held to have more far-reaching consequences than increasing women's political representation. Some scholars claim that they foster women's overall political engagement. After elaborating a theoretical framework on how affirmative action policies to legislative bodies might be beneficial to constituents of the targeted group, the author tests this hypothesis on women in seventeen Latin American countries. Contrasting previous claims, the author shows that there is no general proof of attitudinal or behavioral effects. The analysis represents an initial attempt to theorize and use large-scale data to examine the more long-term consequences of quota policies on female constituents' political involvement.

Keywords: *quotas; gender; political engagement; Latin America; policy feedback; symbolic representation*

This analysis addresses the question of whether affirmative action measures in candidate selection have empowering effects on citizens of the targeted group. The question has been argued over in the debate on gender quota legislation, which has been perhaps the most radical and intensely debated reform in the area of gender equality in the past fifty to sixty years (Htun and Jones 2002).¹ A number of studies have shown that, within certain limits, these reforms have generated an increase in the number of women in legislative bodies, emphasizing that particular quota designs may be more efficient than others to increase this number (Dahlerup 2006b; Jones 1998; Tripp and Kang 2008). Ultimately, however, it has been argued that gender quotas are meant to generate political advancement of women in all spheres of society and not only produce a numerical increase of women in elected bodies (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005; Htun and Jones 2002; Kudva 2003; United Nations 1995). According to this argument, consequences of quota legislation are more far reaching than affecting the presence of women in elite-level participation, as they could help to empower women citizens and break their long-standing subordination in political life. Initial case study analyses have given some empirical support to such claims, suggesting that quota policies have positive effects on women citizens' political attitudes and

activities. Gender quotas have been claimed to increase "the self-esteem, confidence, and motivation of women in general" (Nanivadekar 2006, 124), to favor women citizens' contacts with their political representatives (Kudva 2003), and to lead "to a shift [in] the political engagement of female constituents" (Krook 2006, 111).

A limitation with these analyses is that they are based on single cases (e.g., analyzing local parliaments in India). This makes it difficult to generalize the findings to a wider population. Because they use qualitative data, a second problem is the lack of control for other factors that might affect the relationship. There is a possibility that women who live in societies with gender quotas are already more politically engaged prior to the adoption of the law; as a result, differences in political attitudes and behavior are because of other factors and not the quota law

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itself. This analysis addresses these issues and fills a gap in the literature by testing the hypothesis on a large data set covering approximately 10,000 women in seventeen Latin American countries. This part of the world suffers from substantial gender inequalities in politics but remains at the core of gender quota legislation. After elaborating a theoretical model on how affirmative action policies might affect the political attitudes and behavior of citizens of an underrepresented group, I analyze the impacts on three political attitudes (political trust, political knowledge, and political interest) and three modes of activities (party or campaign activities, political contacts, and protest activities) (for a description of the variables, see the appendix). More specifically, I test two hypotheses, the first hypothesis claiming that legal quotas—regardless of the specifications of the law—will have positive effects on women citizens' political attitudes and behavior. The second hypothesis takes the differences in successful implementation into account, testing for the possibility that the impact of quotas differs across quota designs. This hypothesis suggests that quotas will have positive effects on women's political attitudes and behavior only when sanctions for noncompliance are specified and there are rules for ranking of the candidate lists (also see Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005; Htun and Jones 2002).

The analysis shows that, in contrast to case studies on the topic, quota legislation appears to not be positively associated with women's political engagement—at least not in Latin America. Attempting to understand these findings, the study assesses the cues that quota laws might send to Latin American women as well as the potential of Latin American women who enter parliament through quotas to be political role models for female constituents.

How Affirmative Action Policies Might Affect Women Citizens' Political Engagement

Drawing on theories of how public policies affect mass publics' political beliefs and behavior (e.g., Soss and Schram 2007; Mettler 2002; Pierson 1993; Mettler and Soss 2004) and on analyses looking at the impact of women representatives on women citizens' political attitudes and behavior (e.g., Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Lawless 2004; Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007), I develop a theoretical framework on how affirmative action policies related to political office could affect the political

attitudes and involvement of citizens of an underrepresented group. Within this work, the empirical focus is on women; however, the model may also be suitable for empirical tests of quotas aimed at extending "protection" to specific minority groups (e.g., indigenous peoples; see Krook and O'Brien 2007). The dynamics behind a possible relationship between gender quotas and women citizens' political engagement have hitherto been scarcely elaborated. Emphasis has mainly been put on the ways quotas create awareness about gender norms and rights (e.g., Htun and Jones 2002) or on the positive reactions of women citizens seeing other women in important decision-making positions (Nanivadekar 2006; Kudva 2003). However, these accounts have rarely been framed in theoretical terms. To overcome the lack of theoretical clarification, I suggest two dynamics—*signal effects* and *role model effects*. These are not mutually exclusive, as both concern the way resources and motivation are fostered as a consequence of the law (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; also see Mettler 2002). However, analytically they should be kept apart.

The first of these dynamics refers to the signals that quota legislation might send to the general public. These effects, which I call signal effects, are elaborated by Pierson (1993) under the label "interpretive effects" in his analysis of how public policy could have an impact not only on organized interests or political elites but also on broader masses. The basic argument is that policies convey meaning and information to citizens, helping citizens to interpret the world around them and providing them with arguments that they use in their shaping of identities and preferences (Pierson 1993). Mettler (2002) develops the argument for empirical analysis. In her analysis of the importance of educational programs for World War II veterans' political activities, she states that through public policies individuals acquire perceptions of their role in the community and their status in relation to other citizens and government. "As a result, policy design shapes citizens' psychological predisposition to participate in public life" (Mettler 2002, 352).

Continuing this line of inquiry, for members of particular social groups traditionally excluded from political decision making, the ascriptive character of one's membership in that group carries—under certain historical conditions—certain meanings of not being fit to rule. As Mansbridge (1999, 648-49) puts it, "Persons with these characteristics do not rule," with the possible implication, 'Persons with these

characteristics are not able to (fit to) rule.’’ Given this importance of social meaning on the polity, carrying through affirmative action measures sends a cue to members of the social group that they indeed are citizens and not subjects, that they could be rulers and not just ruled, and that they could lead and not just be led. Thus, it is suggested that the introduction of gender quotas is an explicit recognition that public space and politics are for both men and women, legitimizing women’s political leadership (e.g., Htun and Jones 2002).² For women citizens, this is hypothesized to generate new perceptions of their roles in the community and of their political identities, giving them more positive attitudes toward politics and stronger incentives to participate in public life.

This dynamic rests, however, on at least two assumptions. First, the salience of the reform is high (i.e., citizens are aware of the law; Soss and Schram 2007). Second, constituents interpret the affirmative action reform in the suggested way. If women perceive that quota legislation is nothing but a symbolic reform developed “as a response to demands from the outside but that is not intended to make any real difference” (Dahlerup 2006a, 12), their perceptions of their roles in the community and in the political sphere are unlikely to change. In such a case, there is unlikely any empowering effect of quotas on women’s political attitudes and behavior (cf. Soss and Schram 2007).³ Gaining knowledge about the validity of these assumptions is crucial when analyzing possible effects of quota policies.

Affirmative action reforms such as gender quotas could also have an *indirect* effect on mass publics, namely, through the increase in female candidates and female representatives that they are to generate.⁴ It has been argued that there are certain benefits that only political elites from a particular social group could bring to constituents of this group. In the case of gender, no male legislator could bring such benefits to women citizens, regardless of his policy preferences and policy agenda. Female politicians stand as symbols, or political role models, for other women (Phillips 1995). They show women citizens that it is not just men who may play an active role in public life. Therefore, scholars have claimed that an increased number of visible female players in the electoral arena will generate more positive attitudes toward politics among women and spur their propensity to engage in political activities. For instance, analyses have shown that there is a positive effect of female candidates on political interest (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001), internal efficacy, and

political discussion (Atkeson 2003) and a positive impact of women’s political representation on external efficacy (Atkeson and Carrillo 2007), confidence in the legislature (Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005), and political activities (Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007). These suggested benefits of women’s presence in elected bodies have been referred to as women’s symbolic representation (e.g., Lawless 2004). Using this terminology, gender quotas are suggested to increase not only women’s descriptive representation but also their symbolic representation.

With respect to this second dynamic, three caveats are in order. First, it is still disputed among scholars if and under what conditions an increased political presence of members of an underrepresented group has a positive impact on political values and political activities among constituents. Some analyses do not support this claim (e.g., Lawless 2004) or support only parts of it (Atkeson 2003). Moreover, in contrast to signal effects, which are likely to be the result of citizens gaining knowledge about the quota adoption, role model effects rest on the assumption that the affirmative action measure is effectively implemented. Thus, it is assumed that the quota law increases political representation of the group. As mentioned above, however, whether or not quota laws increase the number of female legislators depends on the design of the law. Finally, a role model dynamic assumes that members of certain groups have an essential, shared identity. This assumption, giving members of the group common interests, is contested (e.g., Mansbridge 1999); thus, there is the risk that no common traits associate women representatives with female constituents. Therefore, when discussing the empirical results, the implications of these assumptions have to be taken into consideration.

Latin America as Pioneer of Gender Quota Legislation

Ever since Argentina became the first country to pass legislation on gender quotas in 1991, Latin American countries have been in the forefront of the quota debate, and more than half of the countries under investigation here have included such quotas in the electoral code (see below). Some countries, mainly in Scandinavia, have had so-called party quotas for quite some time. In contrast to those investigated here, such quotas are voluntarily introduced by political parties themselves; hence, they are not

forced through in the legislative bodies. In Argentina, on the other hand, a law mandates that a minimum of 30 percent of the candidates on party lists are to be women (so-called candidate quotas). This quota system became a paradigm for other countries in the region, producing contagion effects in other Latin American countries, mainly in the second half of the 1990s (Araújo and García 2006).⁵

There are a number of reasons why Argentina, and later other Latin American countries, adopted quota laws. In Argentina, the law was vigorously promoted by a coalition of elite women from various political parties that was backed up by President Carlos Menem (e.g., Craske 1999). Women had been protagonists in the opposition against the military dictatorships throughout the region; they were then marginalized in the redemocratization period. Repoliticizing the issue of women's political agency was one of the reasons women's movements put quota legislation on the agenda. Other explanations for the adoption of quotas in Latin America include the influences of international norms of gender equality, mainly after the Beijing conference in 1995, and the strategic and pragmatic actions of political elites trying to demonstrate commitment (albeit symbolic) to women's rights in the public discourse (e.g., Araújo and García 2006; Craske 1999).⁶

Taken together, the main reason for focusing on Latin America is its relatively long history of quota legislation. Recognizing that the full effects of quotas are likely to take time to manifest themselves, it is most appropriate to look at the countries in which the legislation has been in place for the longest time.

Presenting the Statistical Model

I use a contextual model to analyze the possible impact of gender quotas on women citizens. The analytic task of such a model is to examine the possible impact of an external factor on an individual's internal political attitudes and behavior. These models rest on the assumption not only that individual characteristics (resources, etc.) determine attitudes and actions but also that the surrounding environment contributes to shape the values of an individual as well as the choices he or she makes. These models are popular among political scientists exploring how political and societal environments (laws, composition of the legislature, area of residence, school environment, etc.) shape the actions taken by an individual (e.g., Huckfeldt and Sprague 1993). For instance, the

analysis of policy feedback and the analysis of women's political representation (highlighted in the theoretical section) are illustrations of contextual analyses (e.g., Atkeson 2003; Mettler 2002; Lawless 2004). In this study, therefore, the main explanatory factor—quota legislation—is at another level (country level) than the phenomena that is explained: women's political attitudes and activities (individual level). Thus, in a sense the primary interest of the analysis is on variation across countries (countries with quotas vs. countries without). Ideally, no other relevant explanatory factors (socioeconomic development, etc.) beside whether or not they live in a country that has adopted gender quotas should differ across the subjects. Statistically, I address this issue by attempting to isolate the effects of such factors.

Some difficulties arise when performing contextual analysis on the impact of a political reform. For instance, ideally longitudinal data are needed to spot differences over time. Such data are, however, scarce in cross-national research on citizen attitudes and behavior. As I do not have access to longitudinal data, I use the cross-sectional data at my disposal. Nevertheless, I use “lagged” control variables (i.e., explanatory factors measured at a point in time *prior* to quota adoption). By using such data, possible non-causal relationships between quotas and women's political engagement may be detected. This is important as a bivariate relationship might be the result of a factor that may account for *both* the adoption of quotas and variation in women citizens' political attitudes and behavior.⁷

For this reason, the study uses data from the Latinobarómetro from 2005 for measuring the dependent variables, that is, women's political attitudes and behavior.⁸ This survey asked questions through home interviews (conducted in August and September 2005) about attitudes toward politics and society and included 20,222 respondents in eighteen Latin American countries.⁹ Of importance, all control variables are measured at the country level, as there is a possibility that certain country-specific characteristics of the political, cultural, and/or economic environment could explain not only variation in individuals' political attitudes and behavior but also why some countries have introduced gender quotas and others have not.¹⁰ Here I use aggregate data from Latinobarómetro 1996 as well as country data from a time prior to the quota reform from the United Nations Development Program, Freedom House, and the International Parliamentary Union (see the appendix).

As the number of countries is restricted to seventeen, I control for only some competing country characteristics. This is done to avoid so-called multicollinearity problems, that is, close relationships between explanatory factors that make the regression coefficients unstable (Gujarati 2003). To some extent, this limitation is counterbalanced by analyzing countries that share some important features, such as religion (Catholicism being the main religion), Spanish colonial history (except Brazil), and electoral system (proportional representation, except in Bolivia, Mexico, and Venezuela; see Araújo and García 2006). This makes it possible already at the outset to roughly control for such factors.¹¹

To perform the analysis I use ordinal logistic regression (when the dependent variable is a single-item ordinal scale variable) as well as ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis.¹² A problem in contextual analyses is that an assumption in OLS regression—the independence of observations (in this case female constituents)—is likely to be violated. Individuals living in the same country are likely to share certain characteristics because of particular country-specific factors (culture, political-institutional arrangements, etc.). I take these so-called autocorrelation problems into account by only treating respondents from *different* countries as independent from each other. Moreover, to validate the results, I have performed multilevel analyses using a so-called random intercept model. In this model, the dependence is not only taken into account but also explicitly modeled (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2005). When not mentioned otherwise, these analyses generated the same results as those presented here. Finally, the analysis includes robust standard errors to correct for another common problem in contextual analyses, heteroskedasticity (i.e., when the error terms are not randomly distributed across an explanatory factor).

Specification of Variables

The focus of the analysis is on three political attitudes and three political activities: political trust, political knowledge, political interest, party or campaign activities, political contacts, and protest activities (for a description of variables, see the appendix). All the attitudes are key virtues in a representative democracy; they are of importance for women's political empowerment, being positive correlates to political activities (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady

1995). Political interest has been claimed to be positively affected by quotas, women's sense of political competence has been hypothesized to be positively associated with a greater number of women in elected bodies (e.g., Lawless 2004), and political trust has been suggested to have a positive relation with both quotas and women's political representation.

Concerning political activities, party or campaign activities, political contacts, and protest activities are three important and well-established modes of participation, and they cover activities that are part of representative democracy (party or campaign activities) and extraparlamentarian activities (protests and political contacts) (e.g., Verba and Nie 1972).¹³ It might, on one hand, be argued that possible effects are stronger on activities relating to representative democracy, that is, on party and/or campaign activities, as quotas are designed to increase the number of women in elected bodies.¹⁴ On the other hand, case studies have shown that quotas increase women citizens' propensity to contact their representatives regarding issues of importance to them. Moreover, political parties in Latin America traditionally have been male bastions, and much work performed by women is done through social movements (e.g., Craske 1999). Therefore, it is important to also look at protest activities, which are commonly performed by those social movements that attempt to influence political decision making (Araújo and García 2006). For these reasons, a positive relationship between quotas and both parliamentary and extraparlamentarian activities is expected.

I measure political interest, (perceived) political knowledge, and party and/or campaign activities with single items and the other three dependent variables with additive indexes, resulting from factor analyses.¹⁵ The political trust variable has two items, the protest variable six items, and the political contact variable four items (for closer details on measurements, see the appendix). I code the main explanatory factor, the quota law, in two ways. First, there is a distinction between respondents living in a country that by August 2005 had introduced a national gender quota law and those who did not live in such a country (for information about national quota laws in Latin America, see Table 1). By creating two dummy variables, I separate, second, the effects of quota systems that have rules about ranking of candidates and sanctions for noncompliance (Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, and Mexico) from those of countries with quotas that do not have such rules (see the appendix for coding). For the group with these rules, it could be argued that the risk is

Table 1
National Quota Laws in Latin America (2005) by Country

Country	National Quotas ^a	Year of Legislation	Quota Provision (%)	Rules for Rank Order ^b	Sanctions for Noncompliance
Argentina	Yes	1991	C: 30, S: 30	Yes (1993)	Yes
Bolivia	Yes	1997	C: 30, S: 25	Yes	Yes
Brazil	Yes	1997	C: 30	No	No
Chile	No	—	—	—	—
Colombia	No ^c	—	—	—	—
Costa Rica	Yes	1997	C: 40	Yes	Yes (1999)
Ecuador	Yes	1997	C: 30	Yes	No ^d
El Salvador	No	—	—	—	—
Guatemala	No	—	—	—	—
Honduras	Yes	2000	C: 30	No	No
Mexico	Yes	2002 ^e	C: 30, S: 30	Yes	Yes
Nicaragua	No	—	—	—	—
Panama	Yes	1997	C: 30	No	No
Paraguay	Yes	1996	C: 20, S: 20	No	Yes
Peru	Yes	1997	C: 30	No	No ^d
Uruguay	No	—	—	—	—
Venezuela	No ^f	—	—	—	—

Source: Araújo and García (2006); Pacari (2002); Quota Project (2006).

Note: C = chamber; S = senate.

a. Party quotas are *not* included in the table.

b. For both rules of rank order and sanctions for no compliance, the figures in brackets represent the year when such rules were enforced, if not the same year as the law.

c. Colombia has quotas for the executive body, which have been effectively implemented.

d. Officially, Ecuador and Peru have sanctions for no compliance. However, in these cases the Supreme Electoral Tribunal has not used its mandate to reject register lists not complying with the law (Pacari 2002; Quota Project 2006). To the author's knowledge, such violations with the law have not been reported in any of the other countries.

e. Already in 1996, Mexico introduced a *recommendation* to the parties to have at least 30 percent women on their candidate lists. However, perceived as insufficient, in 2002 the parties were *required* to do so.

f. Venezuela adopted gender quotas in 1997, and they were practiced in the 1998 elections. However, since the 2000 elections they have not been in force.

smaller that the law is largely toothless (i.e., not generating an increase in the share of female representatives). This suggestion also gains empirical support. A model with female representation *after* quota adoption as a dependent variable shows a statistically significant relationship with quotas that have these rules but no such relationship with quotas that do not have such rules (controlling for level of female representation prior to quota legislation; not presented here).

I have calculated country means of the dependent variables for both countries having and not having quotas. A generally limited level of engagement is indicated, not only in absolute terms but also in relation to men. It is not surprising that for all attitudes and activities women are significantly less politically engaged (at < .05 level) than men (descriptive statistics for both women and men are found as supplemental materials in the electronic version of the

article, in Tables A and B). The average number of protest activities among women citizens is 0.43 activities (of six), with two modes standing out as being by far the most common: petition signing and legal demonstrations. For party or campaign activities, the average rate among women is 0.19 (3-point scale), and regarding political contacts the average among the female population is 0.68 (8-point scale).¹⁶ In general, women citizens are at best a little interested in politics and have “a little” knowledge about politics, with the mean values being 0.82 (on a 3-point scale) and 1.70 (on a 4-point scale), respectively (see the appendix for variable values). Also, political trust appears to be rather limited; the average score is 1.65 on an 8-point scale. Comparing average scores for countries having and not having quotas, the differences across these groups of countries are nonsignificant for all political attitudes and activities but two: political trust

(trust in politicians and in parliament is higher in countries without quotas than in countries that have quotas) and protest activities (women in countries that have adopted quotas tend to participate more in protest actions than do women in other countries; see Table A in the supplemental materials). Thus, based on the descriptive statistics, a bivariate analysis gives quite few indications of differences in political engagement between women in “quota countries” and those in “nonquota countries.” However, a multivariate analysis is needed to gain a more complete picture, as is a focus on different quota designs.

Control variables for the multivariate analysis are, to repeat, selected to identify factors that might account for why quotas were adopted in the first place and for differences in women’s political engagement. For this reason, I chose variables by combining theories of comparative political participation with analyses of quota legislation and women’s political representation (Dahlerup 2006b; Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005; Norris 2002). Departing from Norris’s (2002) theoretical framework on comparative political participation, the study highlights three main contextual factors: socioeconomic modernization, state structure, and mobilizing agents. As for socioeconomic modernization, it has been argued that the better the living conditions for citizens (education, income, etc.), the more inclined individuals will be to participate in politics. Socioeconomic development has also been claimed to generate a cultural shift among the population, who will pay greater attention to immaterial values such as environmental issues, gender equality, and human rights. Analyses on gender gaps in protest activism have shown that the gaps are closing as a consequence of cultural changes (Inglehart and Norris 2003). If this were true, quota legislation could be an effect of a relatively high level of socioeconomic modernization and thus of a relatively gender equal political culture (also see Baldez 2004). To put it differently, these factors might account for both quota adoption and differences in women’s political attitudes and participation at the individual level. Two lagged items capture this suggestion: a gender-related development index (focusing on living conditions of women in a country)¹⁷ and an aggregated variable on gender role attitudes (emphasizing a possible cultural shift among the citizenry) (for a description of control variables, see the appendix).¹⁸

Moving to the state structure and using a gender lens, quotas—as well as women’s political engagement—could be reflections of a country’s democratic development and of the level of women’s political representation. To repeat, interparty coalitions of women in parliament have been crucial for introducing quotas (Baldez 2004). Differences in democratic development have also been held to generate differences in terms of readiness to adopt quotas; at least up to a certain level of democracy, the more democratic a country is, the more willing it appears to be to adopt quota laws (Dahlerup 2007). Moreover, analyses have shown that the gender gap in protest activities closes as the level of democracy increases (Inglehart and Norris 2003, chap. 5). Therefore, the statistical model controls for both the proportion of women in parliament and the level of democracy of each country at a time prior to quota adoption.¹⁹

Focusing on mobilizing agents, and more precisely on the role played by women’s movements for introducing quota legislation (Araújo and García 2006), I want to exclude the possibility that the strength of women’s movements in a country could explain both variation in women citizens’ political attitudes and action and quota adoption. Lacking adequate comparative data on the strength of women’s movements, I use the best data at hand: a lagged proxy variable indicating the proportion of women in a country active in a women’s organization prior to the quota reform.²⁰

Finally, it is possible that positive political attitudes and high levels of participation are not potential *effects* of quota legislation but are *causes* of this legislative reform. Thus, a reversed causal order is possible. As mentioned above, women’s mobilizations were key factors for quota adoption. There is also a close relationship between political attitudes and these activities (e.g., Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). In an attempt to control for this possibility, I use lagged aggregated data of women’s political attitudes and activities (mean values), measured at a time prior to the quota reform.²¹

Results

Presenting the results, I first discuss the general hypothesis that quotas have a positive impact on political attitudes. Model 1 in Table 2 shows that when not separating between different quota systems, there are no significant relationships whatsoever

Table 2
Relationships between Gender Quotas (National Level) and Women's Political Trust,
(Perceived) Political Knowledge, and Political Interest, Respectively (Multivariate Analysis)

	Model 1			Model 2		
	Political Trust	Political Knowledge	Political Interest	Political Trust	Political Knowledge	Political Interest
Quota law	-0.088	(0.072)	0.107	(0.172)	0.225	(0.212)
Quota with rules	—	—	—	—	—	—
Quota without rules	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gender-related development index (lagged)	0.727*	(0.300)	1.620*	(0.708)	2.737**	(0.856)
Gender role attitudes (country; lagged)	-0.088	(0.093)	0.311	(0.251)	0.223	(0.306)
Democracy (lagged)	0.014	(0.039)	0.336**	(0.105)	0.037	(0.106)
Women in parliament (lagged)	-0.405	(0.722)	-3.208	(2.918)	1.098	(3.207)
Women's organization (lagged)	-0.354	(0.632)	-1.386	(1.330)	-1.262	(1.701)
Political attitude (country; lagged)	-0.004	(0.071)	—	—	0.506	(0.546)
R^2	.022		.018		.017	
n	8,305		9,629		9,683	

Source: Latinobarómetro (2005; $N = 20,222$); other sources (see the appendix).

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients; robust standard errors are in parentheses. Checked by variance inflation factor statistics to be free of multicollinearity problems. Ordinal logistic regression is used for political knowledge and political interest. For political trust, ordinary least squares (OLS; linear) regression is used. The R^2 value is pseudo R^2 in the ordinal logistic regression analyses and adjusted R^2 in OLS regression. For exact wording of the questions, see the appendix. Missing = listwise deletion.

*Significant at $< .05$. **Significant at $< .01$.

between gender quotas and a woman citizen's trust in politicians and political parties, perceived political knowledge, and political interest. Thus, when controlling for factors that might account for both the adoption of quotas and differences in women's political engagement, quotas as such do not seem to have an impact on Latin American women's political attitudes.

Model 2 in Table 2 separates quota systems that have sanctions for noncompliance and rules for rank order from those that do not have such enforcements. As mentioned above, quotas have mainly increased the number of women in elected bodies when such rules have been enforced. Thus, in these quota systems not only a signal effect but also a role model effect is possible. The results show, however, that the nonsignificant relationships with women citizens' trust in politicians or political parties and their perceptions of political knowledge remain. In regard to political interest, the separation of different quota systems gives a more qualified picture. There is a positive and significant relationship with quota systems that have rules for rank order and sanctions for noncompliance but a nonsignificant relationship when they have no such rules. Hence, based on Model 2 in Table 2, effectively implemented gender quota rules appear to be associated with increased levels of women's political interest (after controlling for other explanatory factors).

Running alternative models to test the robustness of this finding, however, the analysis shows that the significant relationship between gender quotas and political interest is sensitive to the statistical model and to variable specification. Most important, there is no significant positive relationship when I use an alternative statistical model for contextual analysis (a two-level random intercept model; see above).²² To conclude that particular quota systems have beneficial impacts on women citizens' political interest, we would expect the *same* result regardless of statistical technique. As the results differ across models, and there is no positive relationship with any of the other analyzed attitudes, a more reasonable conclusion is that gender quotas in general—or certain quota provisions—are not positively related to Latin American women's political attitudes.

Moving to the relationship between gender quotas and political activities, I perform a first analysis without separation of different quota systems. Model 3 in Table 3 shows that there are only nonsignificant relationships between quotas and the three modes of political action. Thus, in contrast to theoretical

claims as well as empirical expectations from previous work, gender quotas per se do not seem to be positively related to women citizens' political activities, after the impact of control variables has been taken into account.

Model 4 in Table 3 shows the relationship when quota design is taken into consideration. For two modes of action—party or campaign activities and political contacts—the analysis confirms the picture from the former analysis. Contrary to what has been suggested from case studies, gender quotas thus far appear not to have favored Latin American women's contacts with their representatives, political parties, or public officials,²³ nor have they increased women's involvement in political parties or in campaign activities. Thus, as far as the two suggested dynamics are concerned, women's attention to key activities of representative democracy has not increased as a consequence of possible signals that gender quota legislation might send to women citizens, nor as a consequence of increased levels of women in parliament.

As for one mode of action—protest activities—there is a positive and statistically significant relationship with quota systems that have rules for rank order and noncompliance.²⁴ Looking closer at the size of the relationship, we get a picture also of substantial significance. This is important in the context of the large sample ($n = 9,616$), which makes it easy to get statistically significant results. Model 4 in Table 3 shows that living under a quota regime with rules for rank order and sanctions for noncompliance is associated with a 3.8 percent ($0.23 \div 6 = 0.038$) higher level of protest activities than not living under this kind of quota regime. Although it is in general rather difficult to estimate what is a substantial impact and what is not, I would suggest that in this case the impact is substantially rather small. Thus, taking substantial impact into account, the overall conclusion is similar to that of other political activities: gender quotas in general—or certain quota provisions—do not appear to be associated with increased levels of political involvement among Latin American women.

A word of caution is necessary when drawing the conclusions. As a consequence of methodological limitations with the analysis, the impact of quota legislation might be underestimated. Gender quotas are a fairly new phenomenon. Most Latin American countries adopted them in the late 1990s, some as late as in the twenty-first century. As it is likely to take some time for an increased number of women to

Table 3
Relationships between Gender Quotas (National Level) and Three Modes of Women's Political Action (Multivariate Analysis)

	Model 3			Model 4		
	Party or Campaign	Political Contacts	Protests	Party or Campaign	Political Contacts	Protests
Quota law	0.078	(0.265)	0.046	(0.282)	0.122	(0.078)
Quota with rules	—	—	—	—	—	—
Quota without rules	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gender-related development index (lagged)	0.676	(0.742)	2.064	(1.113)	0.184	(0.291)
Gender role attitudes (country; lagged)	-0.221	(0.387)	0.296	(0.393)	0.216**	(0.074)
Democracy (lagged)	-0.233	(0.131)	-0.045	(0.123)	0.090*	(0.034)
Women in parliament (lagged)	0.884	(2.718)	-1.426	(2.613)	-0.254	(0.925)
Women's organization (lagged)	-3.563	(2.706)	1.776	(1.571)	0.534	(0.776)
Participation (country; lagged)	0.347	(0.948)	—	—	-0.073	(0.229)
R^2	.005	.012	.013	.006	.014	.017
n	9,589	9,796	9,616	9,589	9,796	9,616

Source: Latinobarómetro (2005; $N = 20,222$); other sources (see the appendix).

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients; robust standard errors are in parentheses. Checked by variance inflation factor statistics to be free of multicollinearity problems. Ordinary least squares (OLS; linear) regression is used for political contacts and protest activities. For party or campaign activities, ordinal logistic regression is used. The R^2 value is pseudo R^2 in the ordinal logistic analysis and adjusted R^2 in OLS regression. For exact wording of the questions, see the appendix. Missing = listwise deletion.

*Significant at $< .05$. **Significant at $< .01$.

be elected (Araújo and García 2006) and for women citizens to gain knowledge about the law, it is possible that the time frame in the analysis is too short. In other words, it may take more time for a positive impact on constituents to appear. In an attempt to statistically test for such “lagged” effects, I ran analyses in which the number of years with quota legislation was taken into account. These analyses yielded no signs of such lagged effects (not presented here).²⁵ However, it is also possible that the relationships are overrated; thus, the true impact may be even smaller than what is presented here. There might be control variables missing in the analysis that partly account for why quotas were adopted in the first place and for the differences in women’s political engagement. One such factor might, for instance, be the behavior of political elites. Political elites have responded differently to changes in international gender norms, to pressure from international organizations, and to women activists’ demands. It is likely that political elite sensitivity to popular mobilizations might account (if only somewhat) for differences also in women’s propensity to engage in particular political activities.

Both these possibilities call attention to the need to supplement a statistical analysis with more in-depth qualitative analyses.²⁶ Close attention to the process preceding as well as proceeding from the reform might give details on the reasons why quota laws have not yielded any positive effects. For instance, the extent to which information about the law has been disseminated to women at different levels in society should be examined. Field work experiences from Mexico for this research project indicated that political parties have not prioritized that work (also see Htun and Jones 2002). However, more thorough case study analyses are needed to shed further light on the issue.

Conclusion

Lately, gender quota legislation has been intensely debated in academic and political arenas. Criticized by some theorists, advocates have supported affirmative action such as gender quotas because, as advocates claim, such measures have the potential to foster the advancement of women at all levels in society. After elaborating a theoretical framework, in which I linked policy feedback analyses to analyses of how an increased presence of female legislators shapes women’s political engagement, this article has empirically tested the advocates’ claim.

By analyzing the impacts on Latin American women’s political attitudes and behavior, the analysis suggests that some scholars have perhaps been too quick in drawing conclusions about the attitudinal and behavioral effects of gender quotas. At least in Latin America, there is hitherto little proof of the positive impacts of quotas.²⁷ There was no positive relationship with any of the three analyzed political attitudes. As for the three modes of political action, the only statistically significant positive relationship, with protest activities, proved to be substantially small.

Attempting to understand the absence of statistical support for the hypotheses, it is possible that certain features of the Latin American context might at least partly explain why women citizens might not perceive quotas as empowering. First, recalling that international pressure and female activists have been of importance for the adoption of quotas, women might, as mentioned above, question their governments’ true commitment to gender equality. Second, gender quotas have not interfered with the often centralized and informal nomination procedures in Latin America, in which party leaders often handpick candidates (also see Baldez 2006). Women with close ties to particular leaders are therefore more likely to be selected than qualified women with strong popular support (Baldez 2006). This process might send a cue to women citizens that nothing has changed but the introduction of new players to a political arena with unfair rules and practices. These unfair procedures—and the selection of women loyal to particular leaders rather than to women as a group—might also partly account for a lack of role model effects. It is important that both these explanations assume a high degree of knowledge on the part of women citizens about the causes of the quota law and about the nature of the political system.²⁸ A third and final interpretation, however, suggests that the lack of positive impacts on women’s political engagement is because of the limited information people have about the law. As mentioned above, there are indications that political parties in Mexico have done a poor job disseminating information about gender quotas. If this is a general problem in Latin America, it offers a plausible explanation for why female citizens have not been empowered by the quota law (cf. Htun and Jones 2002; Soss and Schram 2007).²⁹ Taken together, there are doubts about which signals have been sent, not to mention about whether any signals at all have been sent to grassroots women in Latin America. With this in mind, and knowing that role model effects are

dependent on common traits associating women representatives with female constituents, this analysis does not rule out the possibility that the theoretical argument may gain empirical support in other cases,³⁰ nor does it exclude the possibility that any positive impact of quotas in Latin America is lagged and will appear in years to come. In that sense, the analysis should be looked at as an initial large-scale analysis, generating a meaningful but qualified picture.

For these reasons, there is a need for additional analyses to gain a more complete picture of if and under what circumstances gender quotas might affect women citizens' political engagement. In these analyses, having alternative data (preferably longitudinal data) would be useful. Moreover, examining alternative empirical contexts, perhaps focusing on within-country variation in quota legislation (to better control for political-institutional and cultural differences), could be a fruitful strategy for inquiry. For instance, positive experiences from Asia have mostly been from local legislatures, with reserved seats for women. Future work should therefore pay attention to the kind of quota (candidate quota or reserved seats) being implemented and at what level of government it is implemented. It is possible that closer ties between representatives and the represented make quotas at the local level more beneficial for mass public engagement (Soss and Schram 2007).

Finally, large-scale statistical analyses should be supplemented by systematic case studies to shed further light on the issue. For instance, the empirical focus should be put on postreform processes that provide possible links between quota legislation and women's political engagement.³¹ First, by tracing the dissemination process of information about the reform—through media, women's organizations, or political parties—a sharper picture of the public awareness of the law might be possible (cf. Soss and Schram 2007). Second, there is a call for additional analyses on the effectiveness of the law, in numerical terms but also regarding women's substantive representation. The focus should be put on women who enter parliament through quotas, on who they are and the actions they take in the legislature, and on the resulting potential to be political role models for women (e.g., Franceschet and Piscopo, forthcoming; Zetterberg 2008). By combining large-scale analyses with qualitative research on the reform, a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between quota laws and women's political engagement is likely to be achieved.

Appendix

Description of Variables

Dependent variables (source for all dependent variables: Latinobarómetro 2005):

Political trust: Additive index (0 to 6) of two items: "Do you have a lot, some, a little or no confidence . . ." ". . . in congress/parliament?" and ". . . in political parties?" For each item, *a lot* is coded 3, *some* is coded 2, *a little* is coded 1, and *no confidence* is coded 0. Other values were reported as missing (listwise deletion).

Political knowledge: Single item: "How much would you say that you know about political and social events in your country?" *A lot* is coded 4, *a fair amount* is coded 3, *a little* is coded 2, *almost nothing* is coded 1, and *nothing* is coded 0. All other responses were reported as missing (listwise deletion).

Political interest: Single item: "How interested are you in politics?" *Very interested* is coded 3, *fairly interested* is coded 2, *a little interested* is coded 1, and *not at all interested* is coded 0. All other responses were reported as missing (listwise deletion).

Party or campaign activities: Single item: "How frequently do you work or have worked for a political party or candidate?" *Very frequently* is coded 3, *frequently* is coded 2, *almost never* is coded 1, and *never* is coded 0. All other responses were reported as missing (listwise deletion).

Protest activities: Additive index (0 to 6) of six items: "Have you ever taken part in authorized demonstrations?" ". . . signed a petition?" ". . . unauthorized demonstrations?" ". . . riots?" "occupied buildings and factories?" and "blocked traffic?" Each item is coded 1 for *have done* and 0 for *would ever do* and *would never do*. Other values were reported as missing (listwise deletion).

Political contact: Additive index (0 to 8) of four items: "Have you in the past three years never, sometimes or often, for you or your family, in order to solve problems that affect you in your neighbourhood, contacted . . ." ". . . political parties or other political organisations?" ". . . elected legislative representatives at any level?" ". . . local government?" ". . . officials at higher level?" For each item, *often* is coded 2, *sometimes* is coded 1, and *never* is coded 0. Other values were reported as missing (listwise deletion).

Independent variables

National quotas: Respondents from countries having quotas in 2005 were coded 1, and those from nonquota countries were coded 0 (sources: Araújo and García 2006; Pacari 2002; Quota Project 2006).

Quotas with rules: Dummy variable coded 1 for respondents from countries having quotas with rules for rank order and sanctions for noncompliance and coded 0 for all other respondents (sources: Araújo and García 2006; Pacari 2002; Quota Project 2006).

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

Quotas without rules: Dummy variable coded 1 for respondents from countries having quotas but no rules for rank order and sanctions for noncompliance, respectively, and coded 0 for all other respondents (sources: Araújo and García 2006; Pacari 2002; Quota Project 2006).

Gender-related development index (GDI), lagged: Living conditions of women in a country in the year 1995, for Argentina in 1992: the level of education, estimated income, and life expectancy at birth. Each country is given a value between 0 and 1, where the higher the value, the better the living conditions for women. This value was given to each respondent in the country (source: United Nations Development Program 1995, 1998).

Gender role attitudes (country level), lagged: Single item: "It is preferable that a woman concentrates on the home and a man on his work." *Strongly agree* is coded 1, *agree* is coded 2, *disagree* is coded 3, and *strongly disagree* is coded 4. Other responses were reported as missing (listwise deletion). For each country, a country mean was calculated. This value was given to each respondent in the country (source: Latinobarómetro 1997).

Democracy index, lagged: Index of civic liberties and political rights; sum of the values of these two Freedom House measures, divided by 2. Index ranges from 1 to 7. Recoded so 1 is the lowest level of democracy and 7 is the highest possible score. The score of a country was given to each respondent of that country (source: Freedom House 1996).

Women in parliament, lagged: The level of women (0 percent to 100 percent) in national parliament (lower house when bicameral legislature), by January 1997, except Argentina (1991), Honduras (2000), and Mexico (2000) (sources: Araújo and García 2006; International Parliamentary Union 1997; Jones 1998).

Strength of women's movements, lagged: Single item: "Do you take part in a mother's center?" Yes is coded 1 and no is coded 0. Other responses were reported as missing (listwise deletion). For each country, a country mean was calculated. This value was given to each respondent in the country (source: Latinobarómetro 1996).

Protest activities (country level), lagged: Additive index (0 to 3) of three items: "Have you ever taken part in a demonstration?" ". . . occupied land, buildings and factories?" and ". . . blocked the traffic?" For each item, *have done* is coded 1. *Would ever do* and *would never do* are coded 0. Other values were reported as missing (listwise deletion). For each country, a country mean was calculated. This value was given to each respondent in the country (source: Latinobarómetro 1996).

Party or campaign activities (country level), lagged: Single item: "How frequently do you work or have worked for a political party or candidate?" *Very frequently* is coded 3, *fairly frequently* is coded 2, *occasionally* is coded 1, and *never* is coded 0. All other responses were reported as missing (listwise deletion). For each country, a country

mean was calculated, which was given to each respondent in the country (source: Latinobarómetro 1996).

Political trust (country level), lagged: See "political trust." I calculated a mean value for each country, which was given to each respondent in the country (source: Latinobarómetro 1996).

Political interest (country level), lagged: See "political interest." I calculated a mean value for each country, which was given to each respondent in the country (source: Latinobarómetro 1996).

Notes

1. I define "quota legislation" as "an affirmative action measure that establishes a percentage or number for the representation of a specific group" (Dahlerup 2007, 78). However, in the text of a specific law, gender quota provisions may be expressed in gender-neutral terms (a maximum–minimum representation for both sexes).

2. A similar logic seems to operate for ethnic quotas, being symbols of recognition of ethnic demands and of ethno-political groups as legitimate political bases for mobilization (Jarstad 2001).

3. These assumptions are similar to what Soss and Schram (2007) call "visibility" and "proximity": the more visible a policy and the more it is perceived to affect people's lives, the greater its ability to influence citizens' political beliefs. However, I argue that a policy may not necessarily send one single cue to people (if any) but various cues, depending on how citizens perceive policy makers' intentions with the law. For example, a policy itself may be perceived to affect one's life and still not change one's political beliefs.

4. In contrast to signal effects, knowing about the law is therefore not necessary.

5. In some Latin American countries (e.g., Chile), certain political parties have introduced party quotas. The general impression is that these have been rather weakly enforced (Quota Project 2006). Among legislative quotas, there are quotas only for candidate lists, and in no case reserved seats (for an overview of quota types, see Dahlerup 2006b). A limitation with this analysis is therefore that I am not able to analyze whether the impact is similar or not for different kinds of legal quotas.

6. The former account, however, does not explain why Latin American countries have responded *differently* to these global trends, some countries adopting quotas and others not. I test for possible explanations related to different levels of democratic and socioeconomic development in the analysis.

7. It is for this reason not necessary to control for factors at a time *after* gender quotas were adopted. These factors cannot affect the causal relationship between gender quotas and women's political engagement.

8. Latinobarómetro is a survey that has been carried out every year since 1995. It represents the opinions, attitudes, behavior, and values of people in eighteen countries in Latin America, representing approximately 400 million people from the Rio Grande to the Antarctic. In the survey of 2005, there were 20,222 individuals in the sample, and the margin of error was between 2.4 and 3.1 percent. The Latinobarómetro survey is carried out by Corporación Latinobarómetro, a private, noncommercial corporation with its head office in Santiago, Chile (see www.latinobarometro.org).

9. As the Dominican Republic was included in the survey in 2002, and thus data for crucial control variables are missing, respondents from this country are not included in the analysis.

10. I also ran models that included common sociodemographic factors at the individual level: education, age, and language (being a proxy for ethnicity; cf. Lawless 2004). These models generated no significant differences in results from those presented here.

11. For instance, it has been shown that religious beliefs have an effect on attitudes toward gender equality (Inglehart and Norris 2003). As respondents share a main religion, this is unlikely to account for differences in quota legislation and women's political attitudes and behavior, respectively.

12. Models run with ordinary least squares regression also for single-item ordinal scale variables gave similar results to those presented here. Models run with ordinal logistic regression, whenever an index is composed of ordinal scale variables (political trust and political contact), also yielded no substantial differences.

13. I use *political activities*, *political participation*, and *political action* as synonyms, meaning "those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take" (Verba and Nie 1972, 2).

14. For the same reason, there are reasons to expect an effect on voting in parliamentary elections. However, no question about such activities was asked in Latinobarómetro 2005.

15. I carried out a so-called principal components analysis, using varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization. Eigenvalues were well above the critical value of 1 for all three dimensions.

16. Although interpretation of the protest index is rather straightforward, ranging from zero to six activities, interpretation of the contact and political trust indexes is less intuitive. However, I gave priority to the use of all information in the statistical analyses at the cost of less intuitive substantial interpretation.

17. A gender-related development index (GDI) is a widely used measure for analysis on human development, taking inequalities between men and women into consideration. It is therefore suitable for this analysis. GDI was measured for all countries but Argentina in 1995, that is, prior to the quota legislation. For Argentina, no GDI data were found earlier than in 1992, which is one year *after* legislation was carried through. There are, however, few reasons to expect that this substantially affects the results, as GDI rarely alters dramatically from one single year to another.

18. This variable is measured in 1996. As for GDI, this is after Argentina introduced quotas. However, as there are no earlier data, these are the best data at my disposal.

19. The proportion of women in parliament is, with some exceptions (see the appendix), measured on January 1, 1997. For Paraguay this is *after* quotas were put into practice. However, there are few reasons to expect that the proportion of women was substantially different in 1996, as there was no election to parliament in this year.

20. Ideally, I would have used a qualitative measure to capture the effectiveness of women's movements to influence political decision making. Such a measure would have accounted for the relative role of a limited group of (effective) elite women activists. However, no such measures have been found. Therefore, I have looked at the average proportion of women that were active in a so-called "mothers' center" (*centro de madres*) prior to the quota reforms (see the appendix). This measure captures only a part of women's movements. However, traditionally

these organizations have been very politicized, and they were crucial parts of the struggle for democracy in Latin America (Araújo and García 2006; also see Craske 1999). Therefore, the information from this item gives at least an indication of the extent to which women—and gender-based organizations—participate in a country's political life. For similar reasons, I give these organizations the more common label of "women's organization." However, acknowledging the limitation of this variable, I also ran models in which the variable was left out of the analysis. They showed no different results from those presented here.

Because of the fact that the item was included in the Latinobarómetro for the first time in 1996, I measure the variable *after* quotas were adopted in two cases: Argentina and Paraguay.

21. Unfortunately, as for (perceived) political knowledge and for political contacts, no such data are available from a time prior to quota adoption. Thus, these analyses do not include such controls.

22. This result is also dependent on the coding of Colombia. On one hand, this country has not introduced quotas to the legislature. On the other hand, Colombia has effectively implemented quotas to the executive body. This might be equal to a quota system with rules for rank order and sanctions for no compliance (i.e., "effectively implemented quotas") in the sense that both signal and role model effects should be possible. Interpreting and coding Colombia this way, we would expect a positive relationship with this variable specification as well. However, the relationship is nonsignificant.

23. One reason for this finding might be because of the fact that no questions were asked about contacts with *women* legislators in particular (cf. Lawless 2004). There is a possibility that such contacts have increased as a consequence of gender quotas, however not to the extent that they affect the overall level of political contacts.

24. The difference in effect between quota systems with and without rules for sanctions and rank order is statistically significant at the .01 level. No other mode yielded such differences. Moreover, similar results were found when I ran an alternative contextual model: a multilevel random intercept model.

25. I draw conclusions about such nonlinear relationships by looking at the linearity that is induced by the "quota age" models in comparison to the linearity induced by the models presented here ("nonage models"). Differences across models were negligible.

26. Although an important benefit with quantitative analysis is the possibility to see statistical regularities across a large number of similar units, qualitative analysis mainly focuses on processes to answer *why* particular patterns come about. Through such a mixing of methods, logically coherent causal stories can be provided (e.g., Laitin 2002; for a good example of method mixing, see Varshney 2002).

27. Running identical models also on men generated no different results from those presented here.

28. I thank an anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this aspect.

29. In Latin America, both the elite control over candidate selection and the closed-list PR system may make the dissemination process slower. Female party activists are likely to have few incentives to inform female constituents of the law, as their political career is mainly dependent on party elites, not the electorate.

30. Nor does it rule out the possibility that other quotas (e.g., quotas to minorities) might have such effects. Analyses should also be done on these quotas to have a fuller picture of the importance of affirmative action measures on citizen engagement of the targeted group.

31. There are also reasons to examine *pre-reform* processes and their possible links to women's political attitudes and

behavior. For instance, it is possible that the way quotas have been adopted influences their consequences on female constituents; a bottom-up reform (i.e., a strong women's movement being a key actor) might be more likely to generate beneficial effects on women citizens than a top-down reform characterized by low domestic mobilization (cf. Franceschet and Piscopo, forthcoming).

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