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Gender quotas: an interdisciplinary scoping review

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Gender quotas: an interdisciplinary scoping review

Abstract

Gender quotas have proliferated worldwide as a major tool of gender equality policies, first in the electoral arena and then expanding to other socioeconomic spheres, notably corporate boards. The ensuing rich body of scientific literature on gender quotas so far remains split across disciplines, with a main partition between political science and economics. This scoping review aims at fostering an interdisciplinary dialogue between research on gender quotas conducted from different disciplinary and methodological perspectives. To this effect, we compiled an original bibliographical database of 379 peer-reviewed articles, which we coded according to a series of variables including discipline, geographical area, quota domain, methodology and research question. Drawing on this database, this review presents an overview of the main findings regarding the genesis and the impact of this policy tool, and offers ideas for the further development of interdisciplinary quota research.

Keywords: quotas, gender equality, political representation, corporate boards, evaluation, scoping review.

Introduction

Gender quotas are increasingly used as a public policy tool to address gender inequality. Over the past decades, they were first widely enacted in the electoral sphere and have been expanded to other socioeconomic spheres, particularly corporate boards, but also higher education, sports or trade unions. Gender quotas most often mandate that a minimum percentage of women be named in the instances to which they apply. These policies can take various forms: they vary in size (that is the share of women they require), some include placement mandates such as zipper systems (particularly quotas for elections using proportional representation), and sanctions for non-compliance widely vary from voluntary quotas to mandated quotas imposing more or less strict sanctions.

This policy tool has been characterised by its worldwide spread since the 1990s. The first nationally legislated electoral quota was indeed enacted in 1991 in Argentina and many other countries followed suit in the 2000s and well into the 2010s. In 2021, eighty-five countries across all continents had national-level legal provisions to increase women's representation in elected offices – of which fifty-seven had implemented quotas and twenty-five reserved seats – according to the IDEA Gender Quotas database¹ which provides more details about country-specific legislation including quota type and size. Gender quotas on corporate boards are more recent and less widespread: in 2006, Norway became the first country to introduce a substantial quota requiring that there be at least 40% of women on the boards of public and state-owned companies. Over the past few years, several countries, such as Belgium, France, India, Italy, or Pakistan, have implemented similar legislation. Even though more and more organisations are issuing recommendations for gender quotas on corporate boards, they have yet to become the norm since they often remain conditional to individual companies' willingness to implement them. To date, no initiative like that of the IDEA for electoral gender quotas provides an inventory of quota measures across countries and domains, which would be of great interest in the case of quotas for corporate boards.

The diffusion and the effects of quotas have attracted the attention of many scholars. Mirroring the policy's diffusion across spheres, the subject was firstly and overwhelmingly tackled in the field of political science before reaching the fields of management and economics as quotas became increasingly frequent on corporate boards. However, despite this progressive disciplinary spread, research on gender quotas remains compartmentalised as only a limited number of studies compare quotas across spheres. This scoping review aims at bridging these so far largely separate bodies of literature in view of a broader evaluation of gender quotas as a policy tool: why are quotas adopted in different spheres? How are they implemented, and with what effects on gender inequalities? We argue that an interdisciplinary approach, taking into account the inputs of a diversity of disciplines (addressing different questions, and using different methods leading to complementary findings) leads to a more comprehensive evaluation of how quotas function and the change they bring about.

¹ Available online: <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas> [22/12/2021].

To this effect, we have compiled and made publicly available online² a database of 379 references of peer-reviewed academic articles on gender quotas in all their domains of application, produced by scholars of diverse disciplines. This database includes 12 variables which, for each article, describe the quota domain and geographical zone under consideration, the research question, methodology and discipline, amongst other characteristics. Based on descriptive statistics and a qualitative analysis of this database, we offer a systematic and interdisciplinary scoping review of gender quotas as a public policy tool³. To our knowledge, this is the first paper of its sort considering that, thus far, 17 out of the 18 literature reviews published in peer-reviewed journals that we have identified in our bibliographical search focus on a single quota domain⁴.

This article is structured around four parts. In the first section, we present our methodology, that is the search protocol and the selection criteria that we applied to the construction of our sample and database, along with an explanation of the coding of variables and a brief description of our sample. The next two sections offer a comprehensive and comparative overview of the literature's methods and results, organised around the two main research questions that arise, that is the genesis and the effects of gender quotas. Finally, we discuss the state of the existing literature and formulate future avenues for research on quotas as a policy tool.

I. Methodology

I.1. Bibliographic search protocol

The present literature review is based on the analysis of nearly four hundred peer-reviewed journal articles in the French and English languages that were gathered through several bibliographical searches on interdisciplinary scholarly databases.

The main body of the literature was collected through searches executed on July 1, 2019. On the Scopus database, utilising the search string [title(*quota**) AND title (*women* OR *gender* OR *sex*)], three hundred and sixty-four results were obtained, and two hundred and eighty-five references remained after removing non-anglophone or francophone results, books and book chapters, articles from non-peer reviewed medias, and off-topic references. A second set of searches was performed through the JStor database on the same day using the following search strings: [ti: (“gender quota*”)] yielded four results, [ti: (“gender quota*”) AND ti: (*women* OR *gender* OR *sex*)] forty-six results, and [ti: (“quota*”) AND ti: (*women* OR *gender* OR *sex*)] forty results. Much of the references hence obtained overlapped with the former, the second search however brought several new references to our attention.

A second set of searches was later performed using the Dimensions database with the intention of extracting those most recent references regarding gender quotas. Two searches

² Available online: <https://polquotas.hypotheses.org/bibliographies/base-de-donnees-bibliographiques-quotas-de-genre-gender-quotas-bibliographical-database> [22/12/2021].

³ This project benefited from the financial support of Sciences Po's Scientific Advisory Board from 2019 to 2021. It was hosted by the Observatoire sociologique du changement (OSC) and the Laboratory for Interdisciplinary Evaluation of Public Policies (LIEPP), as part of its “Discrimination and category-based policies” research group.

⁴ To the exception of Hughes, Paxton and Krook (2017) who look into both electoral and board quotas.

were executed on October 27 and November 02, 2020 using the search string [title or abstract: “gender quotas”] and subsequently applying in-built filters for publication type and year of publication so as to limit the search to articles published in 2019 and 2020. Eighty-one results were hence obtained for 2019 and sixty-seven for 2020, of which forty-four and forty-eight were retained after manually filtering those references we already had and those that did not respond to the aforementioned criteria. It is to be noted that this second search yielded a larger proportion of articles looking into non-electoral gender quotas such as quotas in sports, higher education, or corporate boards, coming for a greater variety of disciplines, as compared to the previous searches which predominantly bore results from the field of political science looking into electoral gender quotas.

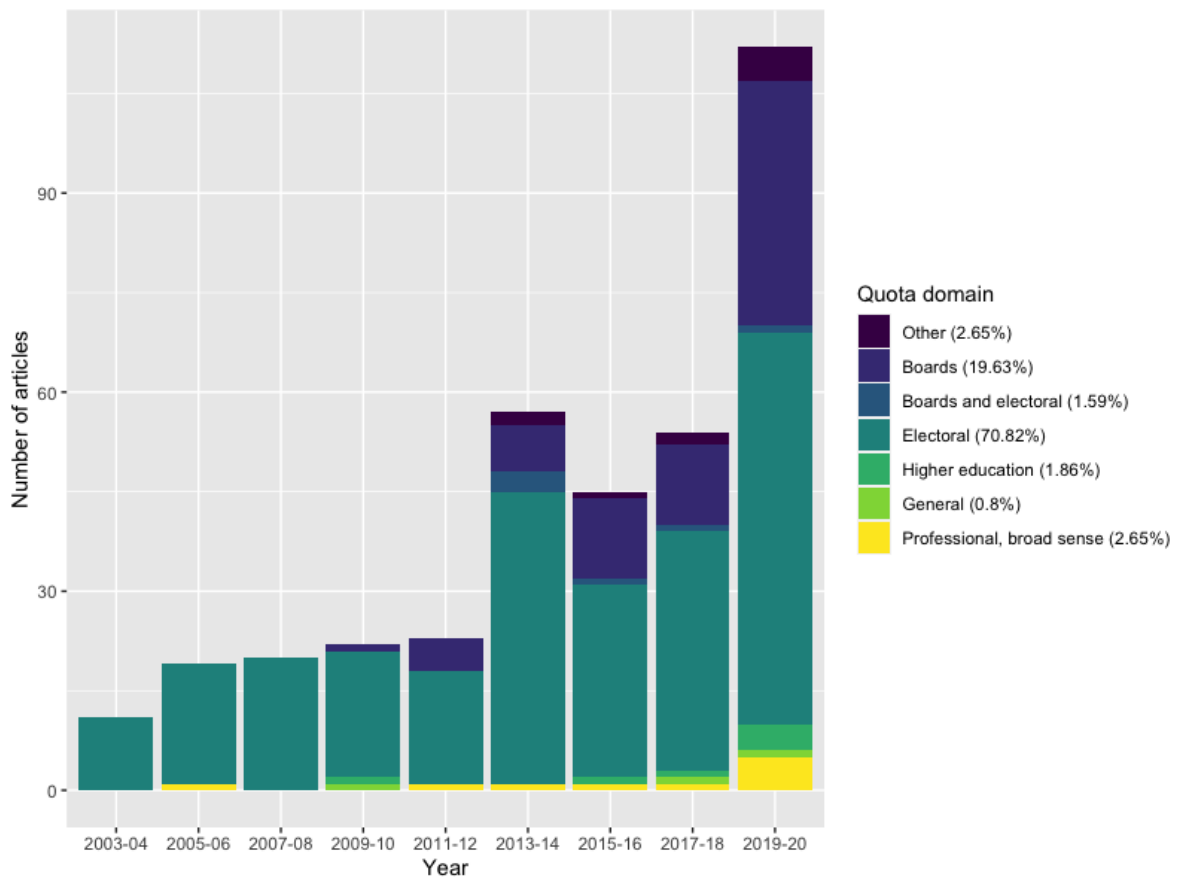
Other references that did not appear in these searches and which we believed to be useful were also added to our database. These were mostly in French and concerned with the keyword “parity”; they brought the total number of articles up to three hundred and seventy-nine.

1.2. Variable definition and sample description

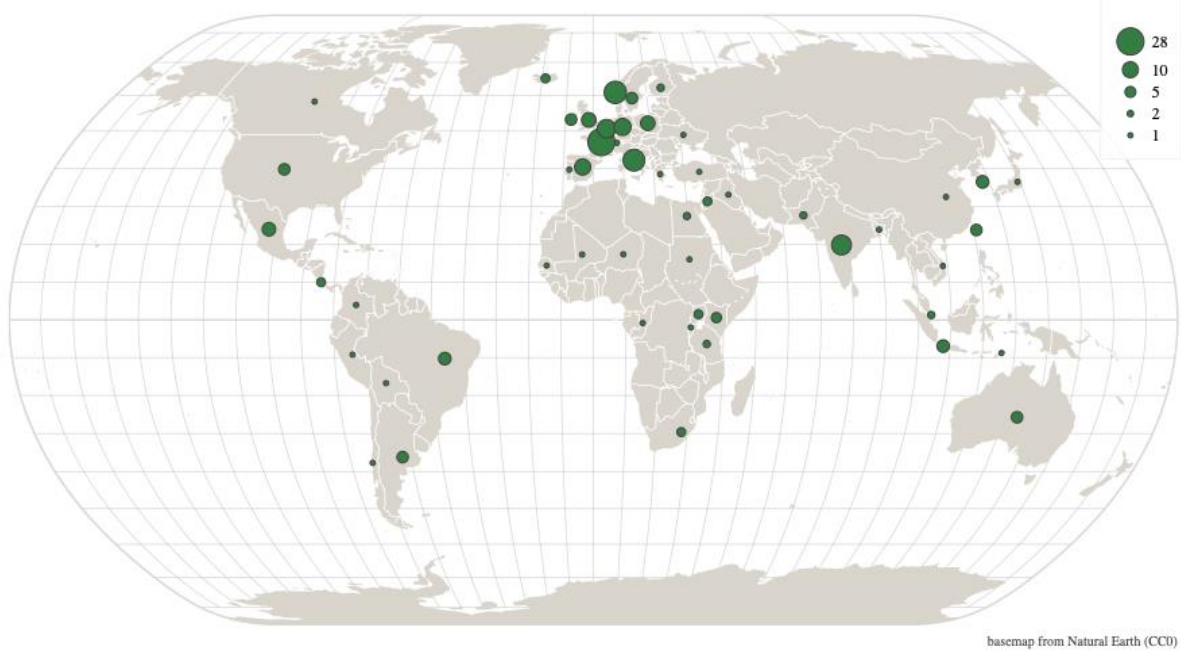
Variable name	Variable description
Code	First author’s surname followed by the year of publication
Complete reference	American Sociological Association style citation
Year	Year of publication
Domain	Quota’s domain of application: electoral, boards, higher education, etc.
Geographical zone	Country, countries, or region under consideration in the article
Geographical comparison	Dummy variable separating case-studies from articles comparing two or more geographical zones
Question	Research question addressed by the article: genesis, effects, attitudes towards quotas, etc.
Method	Type of method: quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, literature review, legal analysis, or theoretical discussion
Discipline	Academic discipline of the article
Quota comparison	Whether gender quotas are compared to other types of quotas (ex. quotas for ethnic minorities)

All the references hence gathered were compiled into an Excel spreadsheet and ten variables were defined. The first three are descriptive variables corresponding to article metadata, and aim at facilitating the navigation in the database and the citation of the references. The “code” variable (1) is composed of the first author’s surname, followed by the year of publication, and a small-case letter if the author published more than one paper in the same year. The “complete reference” variable (2) gives the full reference of the article in the American Sociological Association citation style. The “year” variable (3) details the year of publication for each entry and ranges from 1988 to 2020. Only fourteen articles (3.71%) were published before 2003 with up to a three year interval between articles. It is only from 2003 onwards that articles on gender quotas are published yearly and, as can be seen in Figures 1 and 4, publications trend upward since then, reaching 64 in 2019.

A second set of variables describes the focus of the articles. These variables were inductively coded by the two authors of this review based on the content of the articles. The “domain” variable (4) details the field in which the studied gender quota operates. This variable admits seven categories: “electoral” for those legislative quotas and political party quotas, “boards” for quotas implemented in corporate boards, “boards and electoral” when the former two types of quotas are discussed, “higher education” for quotas concerning hiring committees in universities or admissions to university, “professional, broad sense” for articles generally discussing quotas in non-electoral settings, “general” usually for theoretical discussion of gender quotas, and finally “other” gathers those articles which domain did not fall within the aforementioned categories. The latter category includes quotas in domains such as agricultural cooperatives, labour unions, sports, police forces and government agencies. A large majority of the references (70.82%) look into the case of electoral gender quotas. However, as shown in Figure 1, an increasing share of articles (19.63%) are discussing gender quotas on corporate boards. This difference is most likely linked to the chronology of gender quota implementation considering that electoral quotas spread before and more widely than quotas in other spheres.

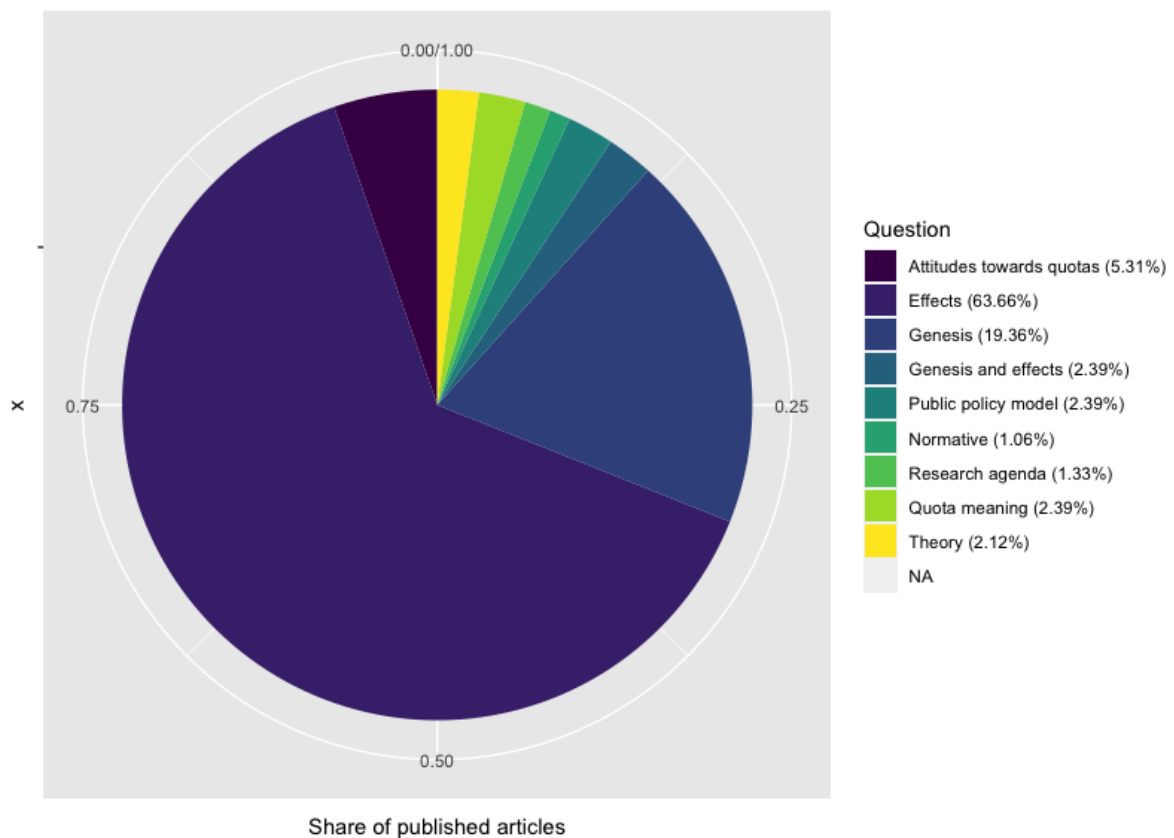
Figure 1. Number of articles per domain, 2003-2020

The “geographical zone” variable (5) details the country, countries, or region that the article takes into consideration. A dummy variable, “geographical comparison” (6), was also introduced to assess the importance of comparative perspectives in the literature. Excluding the twenty-two articles that developed only theoretical discussions of gender quotas, there are 242 single-country studies (64.19%) and 113 articles that consider two or more countries (29.97%). Figure 2 is a cartographic representation of existing studies: it shows a large concentration in Western Europe – mostly France (28), Italy (18), and Norway (18) – Poland apart, which stands out with a score of eight. Despite the relative predominance of European based studies, the map shows studies across all continents with a few countries standing out: Mexico (7), Brazil (6), Indonesia (6), South Korea (6), Argentina (5), Taiwan (5), amongst others. Lastly, amongst the 113 articles adopting a comparative perspective, 34 (30.09%) compare two to six cases and 79 (69.91%) deliver regional or worldwide comparisons - of the former, nineteen exclusively focus on cases from the global North and fifteen on cases of the global South.

Figure 2. Geographical distribution of single-country studies

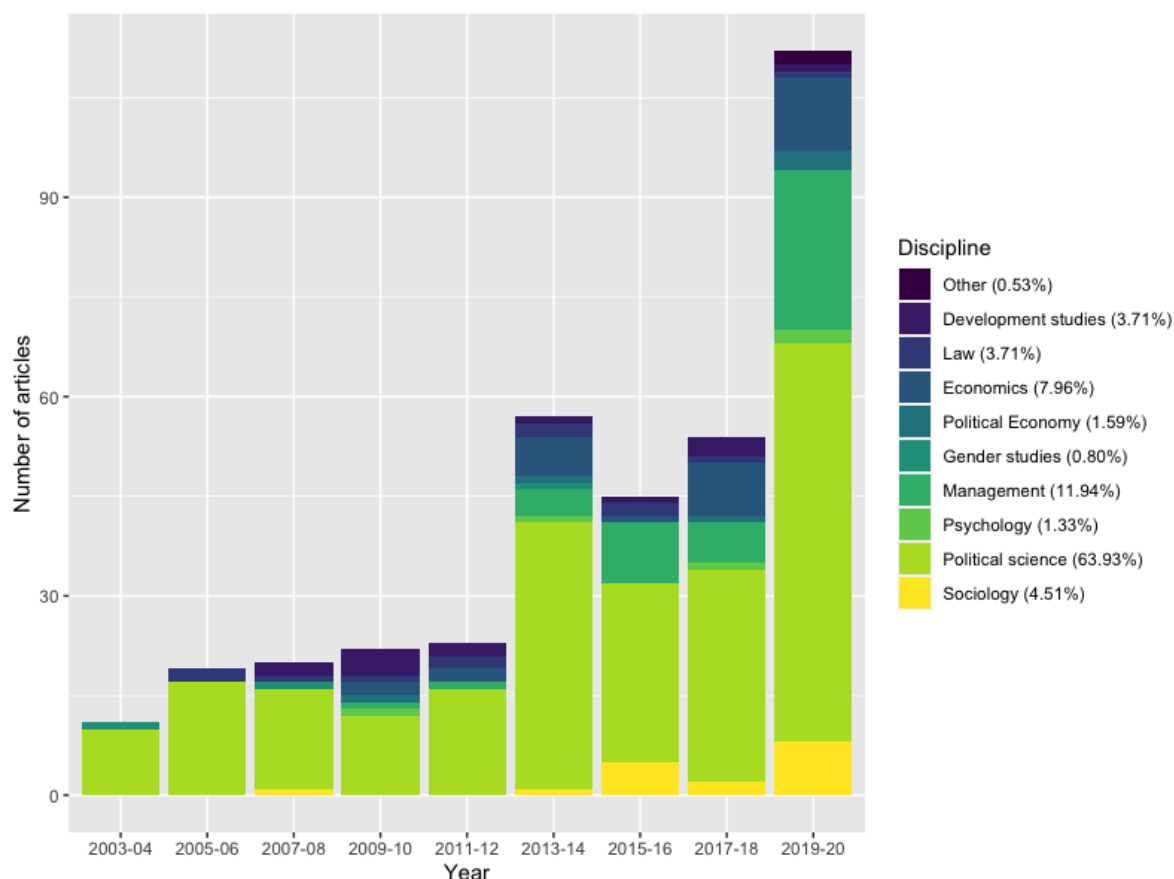
Methodologically speaking, quantitative approaches represent the greatest share for both single-country studies (117/242, 48.35%) and international comparisons (67/113, 59.29%). There is however a substantial share of qualitative approaches in both cases - respectively 92/242 (38.02%) and 26/113 (23.01%). Mixed methods approaches are less common as they concern 18 single-country studies (7%) and 4 international comparisons (3%).

The “question” variable (7) is made up of nine categories stating the main research question guiding the articles (Figure 3). A vast majority (63.66%) looks into the effects of gender quotas, most of which aim to assess quota efficiency, generally measuring either the number of women benefitting from the quota or companies’ market value, and using quantitative methods (Figure 5). The second most common question relates to the genesis of the quota under consideration (19.36%), with a preponderance of works using qualitative methods in this category. The questions of quotas’ effects and genesis are simultaneously addressed by a handful of articles (2.39%). The third most common question concerns attitudes towards quotas (5.31%) and is mostly addressed using survey data.

Figure 3. Share of articles per research question

The “method” variable (8) describes the methodology used in the article. It comprises six categories including quantitative analyses using survey data or country-level indicators, qualitative approaches based on interview data or discursive analyses, mixed methods, as well as literature reviews, legal analyses, and theoretical discussions. Most entries either fall in the “quantitative” (50.40%) or the “qualitative” (31.83%) category. It is to be noted that there is a rather substantial amount of literature reviews (5,04%, i.e. 19 articles), though most of them are exclusively concerned with electoral quotas (14) or board quotas (4), and only one looks into both of these quota domains.

The “discipline” variable (9) states the academic discipline to which the paper belongs. This was usually deduced from the journal name or else from the lead author’s academic department. Though political scientists have been most prolific (63.93%), recent studies tackling gender quotas come from increasingly diverse disciplines (Figure 4). Notably, more and more scholars of management and economics are addressing the topic: they respectively produced 27.08% and 12.5% of the articles published in 2020.

Figure 4. Number of articles per discipline, 2003-2020

Lastly, the “quota comparison” variable (10) states whether gender quotas are compared to quotas for other groups in the article which is the case for only 17 articles in our sample. These are mostly concerned with quotas for ethnic and/or racial minorities which are the most common type of electoral quotas after gender quotas.

Beyond these ten variables which were systematically coded, more detailed variables were created for parts of the corpus in order to systematize the analysis that follows. For example, for all the articles dealing with the effects of quotas, a variable was created to categorize the criteria used to evaluate quota impact, and another to characterize the overall effect assessed by the study (leading to often mixed results given the frequent use of more than one criterion of evaluation).

The classification of articles according to the aforementioned variables allows for the identification of trends in the literature. Particularly, it is now evident that research on gender quotas was first developed in the field of political science and concentrated on electoral quotas, scholars of economics and management are progressively broadening the scope of research as they tackle gender quotas on corporate boards. To expand the quantitative analysis of this body of literature, mosaic graphs are available in the appendices. These provide more detail about what research questions are addressed and what methods are used for each quota domain, as well as what methods are adopted for each type of research question. This vast body of literature is generally organised around two main research questions, focusing respectively on the genesis and on the effects of gender quotas.

II. The genesis of gender quota

In our sample of peer-reviewed articles looking into the genesis of gender quotas, qualitative approaches and cases-studies are dominant: we have identified 39 case-studies (55%) and 50 articles based on qualitative methods (68%), of which 33 are qualitative case-studies (37.08%). Nonetheless, international comparative approaches, adopting various methods and conceptual approaches, make up a substantial part of the literature (for example, see (Krook and O'Brien 2010) for the comparison of four case-studies).

Discursive analyses have particularly contributed to understanding the logics behind the enactment of quotas in different countries (see (Achin 2001) for France, (Axelsdóttir and Einarsdóttir 2017) for Iceland, (Dutoya and Sintomer 2019) for a comparison of India and France, (Piscopo 2016) for Mexico, or (Krook, Lovenduski, and Squires 2009) for an overview of Western countries) and across domains (only (Meier 2013) has written on this topic taking the case of Belgium).

Though quantitative approaches concern a minority of this literature (15/73), it is noteworthy that event history modelling techniques have been increasingly used in recent years to understand the spread of electoral quotas worldwide (7/73). The first such approach was used to identify the determinants of quota adoption within European parties (Caul 2001). Subsequently, it has been developed to assess the importance of a variety of factors that may give impetus to the adoption of a national-level quota in developing countries and/or in post-conflict contexts (Agerberg and Kreft 2020; Anderson and Swiss 2014; Bush 2011; Hughes, Krook, and Paxton 2015; Kang and Tripp 2018), as well as to identify the most significant dynamics at play according to quota type (Swiss and Fallon 2017). In what follows, we successively tackle the genesis of electoral and non-electoral quotas.

II.1. Electoral quotas genesis

II.1.1. Explaining the adoption of quotas

In the array of policies fighting gender inequalities, gender quotas are a fast track method to improve women's representation in decision-making bodies (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005). A vast majority of the literature looking into the genesis of such measures seeks to identify the factors that enhance the chances of a quota being adopted. Though the literature is mostly based on cases of adoption, some cases of non-adoption cast light upon the dynamics at play and the explanatory power of certain factors (see (Baker 2014) for Papua New Guinea, (Freidenvall and Hallonsten 2013) for Sweden, (Gauder 2015) for Japan, (Palici di Suni 2012) for Italy, (Tønnessen and Al-Nagar 2013) for Sudan). This large body of literature confirms, adds to and nuances Mona Lena Krook's framework identifying four main explanations for the adoption of gender quotas: demands for quotas from women's movement, the support of political elites who may see some strategic advantage in supporting quotas, the adequacy of quotas with conceptions of equality and representation, and the influence of international norms (Krook 2007).

◇ **Women's movements/mobilisations**

Militancy in favour of gender quotas, be it within the electoral sphere or in non-partisan settings, is often the first step for the adoption of such a policy for gender equality promotion. Several case-studies of both quota adoption and non-adoption, as well as a handful of cross-national quantitative studies, cast light upon the relationship between policy changes and women's involvement in politics, both in and out of the partisan sphere.

Women party elites. The presence of women in the highest ranks of a party is significantly correlated with in-party support for gender quotas and, subsequently, the adoption of party quotas (Caul 2001). For when women holding feminist values attain influential positions in political parties, then the issue is more likely to be appropriated by their party and pushed onto its political agenda (see (Campbell, Childs, and Lovenduski 2004) for the example of the Conservative party in the UK). Partisan women activists have also been successful in pushing for quotas within their own parties (Bruhn 2003). Furthermore, cross-partisan mobilisation of women legislators in favour of quotas raises the cost of opposing the policy and hence facilitates its adoption (Baldez 2004).

Non-partisan mobilisations. In Poland, mobilisations in favour of party quotas outside of the electoral sphere have allowed to override strong partisan divides that paralysed the debate (Gwiazda 2015). According to Kang and Tripp's analysis of quota adoption in fifty African countries, a local women's movement is the most important determinant for quota adoption (Kang and Tripp 2018) (see also (Moon et al. 2008)). Non-partisan mobilisations have a crucial part to play, their success in pushing gender quota policies is however strongly linked to their internal cohesion. Consensus amongst women activists on quotas as a policy solution for gender equality is critical ((Hughes et al. 2015) for an event history analysis, Htun 2013 for a comparison of women's and indigenous peoples' claims for political inclusion in Bolivia). Failure to adopt gender quotas is often linked in the literature to the lack of a strong and united women's movement (see (Tønnessen and Al-Nagar 2013) for the case of Sudan and (Gauder 2015) for Japan).

As local and international feminist expertise on political representation grew, gender quotas and parity became key revindications for feminist activists around the world (see (Bereni 2007) for the case of France). Scholarship looking into both cases of adoption and non-adoption highlight the importance of women party elites supporting these demands and of a united women's movement. These demands' success can furthermore be influenced by their interaction with other structural and conjunctural factors.

◇ **Political environment**

Political regime/electoral regime. As regime type shapes local politics, it can influence the likelihood of quota adoption considering the varying weight that is given to international norms and the space given to both quota advocates and detractors (David and Nanes 2011). Despite quotas being oftentimes introduced as a means to improve political representation, democratic institutions do not necessarily favour their adoption (Bauer and Burnet 2013). In democracies, legal quotas have indeed faced resistance by political parties questioning their adequacy with democratic principles (Moon et al. 2008). These concerns may however be lifted when courts validate the constitutionality and democratic character of affirmative action (Piscopo 2016). In developing countries, democracy may even weaken incentives to buckle

under international pressures pushing for the implementation of gender quotas (see (Randall 2006) for the case of India).

At the party-level, an internal democratic organisation is thought to favour the adoption of a quota (Bruhn 2003). Though informal candidate recruitment mechanisms may hinder newcomers' chances of entering electoral competition, in some circumstances, such features can benefit women (Piscopo 2016).

Reformative contexts/political (in)stability. In democratic systems, reformative contexts initiated by demands for better representation and the subsequent consultation of civil society, have offered a propitious environment for the adoption of gender quotas (see (Buckley, Mariani, and White 2014) for Ireland and (Meier 2012) for Belgium). Likewise, quota advocacy has been successful in post-conflict contexts where electoral laws, if not political regimes, were undergoing profound transformations (see (Tajali 2013) for the cases of Rwanda and Afghanistan). Quantitative cross-national data further sustain the argument that post-conflict contexts represent political opportunities for gender quotas (Bush 2011), especially when gender equality becomes a pillar for post-conflict reconstruction (Agerberg and Kreft 2020; Anderson and Swiss 2014). If political instability can open up political opportunities for quota advocates, political stability has been identified as a positive factor for quota adoption in other contexts as it may facilitate the translation of quota campaign into the passage of bill (Baker 2014).

Electoral competition. There is a rather broad consensus in the literature that a competitive electoral setting increases parties' incentives to support and apply gender quotas, especially at the party level. Party quotas are likely to be adopted when a party faces electoral uncertainty, for internal factions pushing for quotas may then have more leverage (Baldez 2004). Furthermore, for leftist parties usually, adopting quotas can be a strategy to attract more women voters when their electoral success is threatened by another, ideologically close, party (Weeks 2018). Quotas may also be a measure for party leaders to hold sway over recruitment when their position is threatened by intraparty competition (*ibid.*). Finally, in a context where party and legal quotas are already enacted and electoral competitiveness is strong, they may mutually reinforce each other as parties constantly seek to surpass their competition (Meier 2005).

Why do men support quotas ? Considering that decision-making bodies are systematically dominated by men before the enactment of quotas, their adoption may seem paradoxical : why would men support a policy potentially jeopardising their ascendancy over elected offices ? Scholarship on the French case has suggested that gender quotas may be seen as a political opportunity for men. In turn to gender-based measures - which include quotas at all levels -, party officials' decisions would not depend upon women making a compelling case, but rather on party officials' electoral incentives to support these women (Opello 2007). Game theorists have argued that men's support for gender quotas can in fact be rational and self-interested when political opportunity arises from the rules structuring the electoral game. In single-member constituencies, quotas would heighten men's chances of running against a woman and, therefore, of winning a constituency (Fréchette, Maniquet, and Morelli 2008). However, reacting to the latter account, (Murray, Krook, and Opello 2012) suggest that key actors in quota adoption are not individual legislators but political parties and that a larger

range of incentives should be taken into account to understand quota support. They argue that it can be explained by “party pragmatism” in light of ideological, electoral, and strategic incentives which allow identifying and weighing actors’ trade-offs besides the policy’s sole direct effects.

Political values. Political inclination can affect individuals’ and parties’ propensity to support quotas, as well as the logic that may eventually guide the adoption of a quota. Left-wing parties have usually been precursors supporting and implementing this kind of gender equality policy (see (Bruhn 2003)) in a concern for improved political representation; whilst right-wing parties have most often adopted quotas after they became an international norm (Simón and Verge 2017). Though parliamentarians who support state intervention in the economy and hold anti-clerical values are more likely to support gender quotas (Dubrow 2010), left-wing organisations do not systematically support gender quotas as illustrated by the Polish case (Gwiazda 2015).

◇ Quota diffusion and contagion

International diffusion. International organisations have set new normative expectations in the past decades regarding the adoption of measures to redress gender inequality, and particularly of electoral gender quotas. The rapid and worldwide diffusion of quotas in the 1990s and early 2000s owes in large part to international influence exerted over national quota policies (Krook 2006)b, resulting in a “norm cascade” whose mechanisms and effects differ according to structural and conjunctural factors (Swiss and Fallon 2017). In this regard, different narratives are usually put forward for countries of the global North and of the global South.

Countries receiving international aid are particularly permeable to normative pressures as quota adoption signals their commitment to democracy, which is oftentimes a condition to aid (Bush 2011; Edgell 2017). As such, quotas have been the object of *international imposition* (Krook 2006)b as they became one of the tenants defining state modernity (see (Dutoya 2016) for the cases of India and Pakistan, (Al-Tamimi 2018) for the Iraqi case) and are hence used as “signaling devices” to show countries’ commitment to democracy (Edgell 2017).

The diffusion of quotas has also been fed by *transnational emulation* (Krook 2006)b as local and national feminist movements were inspired by quota campaigns worldwide. The Latin American case, which has seen two waves of quota adoption in the 1990s and 2000s, illustrates the importance of transnational influences in the timeline of policy enactment (Piatti-Crocker 2019). European Union parity debates have also contributed to opening up dialogue on the topic of gender quotas in its member states (MacRae 2012; Palici di Suni 2012).

International NGOs promoting affirmative action for women have also played a significant role in this regard, albeit in contexts where a larger programme for gender equality was already in place (see (Prihatini and Zein Br Siregar 2019)d for the case of Indonesia). This logic corresponds to *international tipping* (Krook 2006)b, wherein international events influence the success of national quota campaigns.

International influence, however, does not necessarily encourage quota adoption (*international blockage* (Krook 2006) examples of East Timor and Iraq).

Party quotas' contagion effect. The enactment of a gender quota in one instance may facilitate and/or encourage the adoption of quotas in other parties or at the country-level through a logic of contagion (Meier 2005). Besides holding leftists values and having women in high-ranking positions, the previous adoption of a gender quota by a party heightens the likelihood of quota adoption by another (Caul 2001). Depending on the party's political leaning, different logics and chronologies may follow in quota adoption as left-wing parties tend to adopt quotas in a concern for the quality of representation and right-wing parties tend to adopt them after they have already become the norm (Simón and Verge 2017). Contagion does not only occur between parties, those that have already adopted an internal quota may play a crucial role in the adoption of a similar measure at the national level - this partly owes to the fact that such parties counted more women in their ranks (see (Verge 2012) for the case of Spain).

Cross-domain diffusion. Though debates over gender quotas have crystallised contentions over the means to achieve equal representation, they have opened up debate over issues going beyond women's political representation, such as the inclusion of civil society in democratic regimes (see (Lenoir 2001) for the French case) and other social and cultural issues (see (Marshall 2010) for the Turkish case). Even when they don't yield substantial results over women's descriptive representation, quotas may contribute to mainstreaming gender issues in the public sphere (see (Śledzińska-Simon and Bodnar 2013) for the case of Poland). Furthermore, the enactment of legislated gender quotas signals states' commitment to being guarantors, rather than mere promoters, of gender equality, notably through the diffusion of new norms to achieve gender equality (Franceschet and Piscopo 2013). The "broadening" of quota measures to other decision-making bodies, whether in the political or economic sphere, and their "deepening", that is the refitting of quota laws to include a higher share of women or more coercitive sanctions for non-compliance, signals states' commitment to gender inclusiveness (*ibid.*).

II.1.2. Policy formulation and design

Policy formulation inevitably influences its outcomes and, as Guldvik argues, a clear definition of a gender quota's goal is an important condition to its efficacy (Guldvik 2011). A smaller portion of the literature concerned with the genesis of gender quotas looks into the meanings that are given to gender quotas and their implications for implementation. We here draw from articles whose main research question was classified as "quota meaning" and "public policy model", as well as a part of the "genesis" literature mostly based on discursive analyses.

◇ Meanings of quotas in terms of political representation

Debates over gender quotas - that may have led to their adoption or not - reveal different conceptions of political representation across countries (see (Dutoya and Sintomer 2019) for a comparison of India and France) and within countries depending on one's political philosophy (Krook 2008). A common denominator in quota advocates' discourse consists in

redefining a group's underrepresentation as a collective rather than an individual issue (Freidenvall 2005), as the subjective notion of merit as a condition for access to elected office is put into question by feminist critiques (see (Jaramillo Ruiz 2019)). As such, the core values defining a country's model of citizenship can affect the likeliness of it adopting any form of gender quota (Krook et al. 2009)⁵. For example, in Belgium, though there were gender-specific resistances to the adoption of quotas (Meier 2005), conceptions of citizenry emphasising its collective aspects have generally facilitated quota debates (Meier 2012). To the contrary, individualist conceptions of citizenship have slowed down the adoption of quotas in many English-speaking countries (Krook et al. 2009), which may favour incremental measures - as opposed to fast track measures such as quotas (see (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005)).

Though they thrive for a seemingly similar goal, quota advocates may put forward distinct if not contradictory arguments in support of gender quotas, usually depending on the extent to which they embrace feminist ideas (Krook 2008). For instance, while quotas are often framed as a measure to fight gender discrimination, such discourse has been dismissed in the French debate leading to the definition of the principle of parity (Bereni and Lépinard 2004). Rather, affirmative action was justified through rhetoric asserting the universality of differences between the sexes (Achin 2001). While it allowed to reconcile a universalist conception of political representation with the enactment of an electoral quota - though framed as parity -, this differentialist discourse runs the risk of interfering with other struggles against discrimination by reiterating supposed differences between the sexes (Achin 2001; Bereni and Lépinard 2004).

Atypical trajectories and timelines in quota adoption, as well as cases of non-adoption, reveal their different meanings in terms of political representation and in regard to women's status in a country. For example, considering later opposition to the re-enactment of a gender quota, India was surprisingly enough the first country to adopt such a policy. In this case, initial quota enactment was instrumental to strengthening colonial rule for its role was to legitimise existing political institutions rather than promoting women's representation (Dutoya 2016). Discursive shifts can also lead to policy changes after the initial enactment of a quota as was the case in several Latin American countries that replaced quotas for parity laws : gender balance became a prerequisite for democracy and was hence integrated as a permanent measure (Piscopo 2016)b.

⁵ Looking into the case of Western countries, Krook, Lovenduski and Squires (2009) identify four models of citizenship whose inherent characteristics make it more or less likely to adopt gender quotas in efforts to remedy gender inequality. Those countries with a liberal model of citizenship, which emphasises individuals' responsibility, are least likely to adopt gender quotas; whilst those countries with a corporatist-consociational model, based on the principle of social partnership and group representation, are most likely to adopt such measures. The republican model, built upon a universalist understanding of citizenship as transcending group boundaries, does not make it very likely to adopt gender quotas which may be seen as a reiteration of said group boundaries. Finally, betwixt and between, those countries with hybrid models of citizenship are likely to have enacted gender quotas but in highly differentiated forms.

◇ Quotas, but for whom ?

Gender quotas legally divide the population into two mutually exclusive groups: women and men. As their design needs be rather straightforward, it supposes that each of these groups is relatively homogenous and, therefore, they generally do not include any measure for any particular subgroup. Considering their straightforwardness and the complex set of inequalities quota policies aim to tackle, they run the risk of producing essentialising legal effects (Mansbridge 2005). It has been suggested that reframing the policy problem that is tackled could curb some of these negative side-effects. For example, Rainbow Murray argues that rather than addressing the underrepresentation of women, hence suggesting a shortfall on the part of half of the world, gender quotas should tackle the overrepresentation of men in decision-making instances. She argues that, in place of quotas for women, the enactment of quotas for men would provoke a normative shift by highlighting the problem of overrepresentation rather than that of underrepresentation (Murray 2014).

As a policy tool solely promoting gender equality, gender quotas are formally oblivious to other social hierarchies (see (Kapotas 2010)) that affect individuals' chances of accessing elected office or other decision-making roles. For an accurate appreciation, their role and effects should thus be considered in relation to other unequal social relations as they may affect women in differentiated manners. Oftentimes, the group "women" is considered as a whole with no or little regard for intragroup differences. Scholars have called for more intersectional approaches analysing quotas as policies affecting a heterogenous group of individuals crossed by various dynamics of domination, especially race and class relations (Lépinard 2013). It has been further suggested that, for quotas to truly promote equality and not merely serve as tokens, they should be thought in conjunction with measures to fight other forms of discrimination (Rai 1999).

Quotas as an equality policy tool may also be directed towards other segments of populations whose underrepresentation is linked to distinctive characteristics. And, as is the case with comparison across domains, comparison between quotas aiming different peoples provides fertile ground to assess their use as a policy tool to fight inequality (Meier 2004). Particularly, in countries with important ethnic divides, debates leading up to the adoption of quotas for women and/or minority groups evidence important divergences in seemingly similar policies. In our sample, we have identified 15 articles comparing gender quotas to quotas or reserved seats for racial or ethnic minorities and 2 articles comparing gender quotas for other groups - electoral quotas for youths (Stockemer and Sundström 2020) and employment quotas for disabled persons (Stock 2006).

In a comparison of countries in which claims for quotas have been formulated to address the underrepresentation of both women and minority groups, Krook and O'Brien show that understandings of what group characteristics may define "relevant" political identities⁶ - and may hence prompt group recognition and justify the adoption of a quota -

⁶ Also see Dutoya and Sintomer (2019) for a discursive analysis of parliamentary debates and press articles on gender quotas in India and France. Particularly, the Indian case shows that resistance to gender quotas may be linked to greater consideration given to minority groups, based upon caste or religion in this case, whose claims

varies according to historical practices and transnational influence (Krook and O'Brien 2010). Furthermore, the form that these policies take suggests that they seek to attain different goals: gender quotas usually mandate a minimal given proportion of women on candidate lists, hence pushing for the inclusion of women in regular electoral politics, whilst minority quotas most often entail the creation of a separate constituency and/or the reservation of seats, hence granting minority groups more political autonomy (*ibid.*).

Distinct policies lead to differentiated representational guarantees given to women, on the one hand, and minority groups, on the other hand (Bjarnegård and Zetterberg 2014). Though both type of measures aim to include underrepresented groups into the electoral process, they correspond to distinct logics : whilst candidate quotas may encourage the integration of new representatives into existing political parties by erasing lines of difference, reservations grant groups with the recognition of their particularism and may prompt the creation of new parties (Htun 2004). The enactment of different policies to meet seemingly similar claims formulated by women and ethnic minorities can be linked to their placement along existing partisan lines - considering that, as a rule of thumb, women are more transversal than ethnic minorities who tend to be concentrated in fewer parties (*ibid.*).

II.2. The genesis of board and other non-electoral quotas

Though an overwhelming majority of the literature has hitherto exclusively looked into the implementation of gender quotas in electoral settings, such policies have also been adopted in other spheres. Non-electoral gender quotas mainly concern corporate boards, they are however not as widespread as the former and are mostly concentrated in European countries. Nonetheless, gender quotas adopted in other domains are also dealt with in the literature – though vastly in minority. Namely, some attention has been given to quotas in higher education (Bagues and Esteve-Volart 2010; Checchi, Cicognani, and Kulic 2019; Deschamps 2018; Lemercier 2015; Park 2020; Popp et al. 2019; Voorspoels and Bleijenbergh 2019), in public service (Bereni and Revillard 2015; Bui-xuan 2015; Jacquemart, Revillard, and Bereni 2020; Stock 2006), as well as in experimental tournaments (Czibor and Dominguez Martinez 2019) and chess tournaments (De Sousa and Niederle 2022). It is to be noted that the adoption of a quota as a gender equality policy mostly concerns decision-making bodies.

Dynamics of gender quota enactment can be linked to a “diffusion” (Teigen 2012) or “contagion” (Meier 2013) effect operating at several levels: from an individual organisation to another, from a country or region to another, from the electoral to the corporate sphere. In a comparison of the genesis of gender quotas in the political, social, and economic spheres in Belgium, Petra Meier posits that gender quotas are fairly akin across domains in terms of the rationale they are based on, the most significant factor of difference being that of time (Meier 2014). If timeframes of implementation contrast, it is not necessarily due to fundamental differences in the policy itself, but rather to the specific ways in which the problem of gender inequality is framed in each domain: based on the example of Sweden, Lenita Freidenvall suggests that distinct discursive developments around the issue within electoral and corporate

for representation have already imprinted local politics. Those may be seen as incompatible with gender quotas for they rely on intersecting lines of difference.

spheres account for the fact that quotas have been adopted in the former but not the latter (Freidenvall and Hallonsten 2013).

Institutional factors are thought to influence said discursive developments as they may, or not, prepare a favourable public policy terrain. Adopting a cross-national perspective, Siri Terjesen and Ruth Sealy identify three such institutional factors: firstly, gendered welfare provisions for they increase the share of women in the labour market and hence possibilities and demands for women's participation on corporate boards; secondly, the political leaning of the governing coalition can influence public policy rationales and thus opportunities for the adoption of quotas laws; finally, pre-existing quotas in the electoral sphere leading to a form of path-dependency (Terjesen and Sealy 2016). While continental European countries have chosen an exogenous path to gender equality on corporate boards, namely the implementation of board gender quotas, the United States and United Kingdom have adopted endogenous measures to insure gender equality, that is shareholder diversity proposals for example. To (Dobson, Hensley, and Rastad 2018; Dobson and Rastad 2018), the latter strategy yields more substantial results than the former. These differences in the identification of policy solutions for similar policy problems may stem from institutional distinctions.

Economic, social, or political conjunctures may also play a part in the adoption of gender quotas for they may influence how the problem is framed, and hence the solution that is envisaged. Taking the case of Iceland, (Axelsdóttir and Einarsdóttir 2017) argue that the implementation of quotas on boards followed the framing of their use as a solution to the economic crisis. As such, quotas are not considered as intrinsically necessary nor good, but as a palliative to economic decline.

Besides documenting strategies that are used to fight for gender equality in the public policy realm, the study of the genesis of gender quotas gives insights into the nature and some of the causes of their limitations. A recurring argument in the literature points out the potential nefariousness of differentialist postures that are oftentimes endorsed by quota supporters (Axelsdóttir and Einarsdóttir 2017; Bender, Berrebi-Hoffmann, and Reigné 2015). For normative justifications for the implementation of gender quotas putting the emphasis on purely descriptive aspects of representation or on supposed inherent differences between the groups concerned by the quota ignore this kind of policy's potential to influence unequal social relations - gender relations in this case - and may paradoxically contribute to reinforcing them through reiteration.

III. Analysing quota impact

The literature on the effects of gender quotas is composed of a majority (65%) of quantitative studies, drawing on a diversity of quantitative methods. A variety of experimental and quasi-experimental methods have notably been implemented in this area, including natural experiments, difference-in-difference and regression discontinuity methods. In what follows, before turning to the analysis of the impact of electoral and board quotas, we first offer a focus on a distinct body of literature on attitudes towards quotas, which include (but are not limited to) lab experiments. These are treated separately since, in practice, they can be implemented in countries with or without quotas (in the latter case, in a more prospective manner).

III.1. Attitudes towards quotas

Before the development of quota research *per se*, research in social psychology had investigated attitudes towards affirmative action - particularly, that oriented towards women (Heilman et al. 2004; Heilman, Block, and Lucas 1992; Heilman, McCullough, and Gilbert 1996). Concerning gender quotas, twenty articles in our sample tackle the question of general attitudes towards quotas. Proportionally, it is more often addressed in the literature on board quotas (7/74, 9.46%) than on electoral quotas (10/267, 3.74%). These (mainly quantitative⁷) studies generally explore attitudes in the general public. Nonetheless, some studies focus on specific groups - notably those directly or indirectly impacted by the quota under study - such as managers (in relation to board quotas (Einarsdóttir, Rafnsdóttir, and Valdimarsdóttir 2019)), politicians and political parties (in relation to electoral quotas (Meier 2008; Meier and Verlet 2008)) or higher civil servants (in relation to quotas in the higher administration (Bereni and Revillard 2015)). Keenan et al. compare attitudes towards electoral quotas among three groups: local election candidates, professionals, and the general public (Keenan and McElroy 2017).

Gender is a substantial determinant of quota support as women tend to be more supportive than men ; especially those who consider themselves to be feminists (Keenan and McElroy 2017). Nonetheless, important differences exist among each sex group. For example, in the German case, Möhring et al. show that board quotas enjoy more support from single women in upper management positions (Möhring and Teney 2020). One's perception of the causes of gender inequality also matters. For example, a survey of 1,300 Icelandic managers supports the argument that people who provide structural rather than individual explanations for gender inequality tend to be more supportive of quotas (Einarsdóttir et al. 2019). Likewise, experimental evidence shows that variations in the interpretation of gender inequality affects support for quotas, especially amongst men and economic elites (Teigen and Karlsen 2019).

Other determinants include political orientation and political values, as well as institutional performance (good governance) (Barnes and Córdova 2016; Beauregard 2018). Citizens tend to be more favourable to quotas in the most interventionist as well as in the most egalitarian countries (Möhring and Teney 2020).

Two studies show that, although hostility towards quotas is generally connected to sexism, support for quotas can also be underpinned by a specific form of sexism : “benevolent sexism” offers a pro-quota rationale on the basis of women being in need of protection (Beauregard and Sheppard 2020; Pereira and Porto 2020). These studies call attention to the fact that support for quotas should not be conflated with support for gender equality. In the case of gender quotas, people may be in favour of affirmative action without endorsing the principle of gender equality⁸. This “principle-policy puzzle” is rather common in the field of

⁷ Only four out of the 20 identified references resort to qualitative methods.

⁸ A parallel can be drawn with the field of disability, where employment quotas have been put in place in many countries since the beginning of the 20th century without being connected to an egalitarian rationale.

anti-discriminatory policies, where people tend to support the principle of equality without supporting the policies that help make it real (Pereira and Porto 2020).

Faniko et al. reciprocally analyse the impact of different forms of affirmative action policies, including quotas, on gender stereotypes and on how the beneficiaries of these policies are perceived. They show that quotas may have a reinforcing effect on gender stereotypes, leading to a perception of female beneficiaries as more “communal” unless “agentic” (Faniko et al. 2017). Santos and al. analyse the impact of quotas on the perception of candidates’ skills (Santos, Amâncio, and Alves 2013). These studies confirm concerns that were emitted by scholars looking into the genesis of gender quotas : differentialist discourses, even if in support of quotas, run the risk of eventually curbing their contribution to dismantling gender hierarchies (see (Achin 2001; Axelsdóttir and Einarsdóttir 2017; Bender et al. 2015; Bereni and Lépinard 2004)).

Attitudes towards quotas can also be understood in relation to their implementation modalities, and notably through their “reception”. For example, in a qualitative study, (Holli, Luhtakallio, and Raevaara 2006) conduct interviews with local politicians concerning their reception of the 1995 Finish electoral quota. The authors develop the notion of “quota trouble”, which highlights resistance and hidden conflicts surrounding the implementation of quotas.

III.2. Electoral quota impact

In a call to bridge gender quota research and mainstream comparative politics research, Krook and Messing-Mathie distinguish two generations of electoral quota research. They draw this distinction according to the criteria that are used for evaluating quota impact : while the first generation solely considered their impact on the number of women gaining access to elected office, the second generation integrates several factors such as the “impact on legislative diversity, policymaking behavior, public opinion, and mass mobilization” (Krook and Messing-Mathie 2013:299). Four main criteria stand out in the literature : descriptive, symbolic, substantive and sustainable representation.

◇ Descriptive representation

In turn to the assessment of quotas’ impact on descriptive representation, criteria may differ according to the quota type, its interactions with other elements of the political system, the degree of parties’ involvement in the quota framework, etc. However, evaluations tend to be generally positive. Furthermore, Högström argues that quotas are becoming increasingly efficient in terms of descriptive representation (Högström 2016).

Beyond their sole effectiveness in terms of the number of women elected to office, several studies also look into the impact of quotas on the individual characteristics of candidates and/or elected officials - often in terms of professional skills (Murray, 2010), sometimes labelled “quality” in economic terms (Baltrunaite et al. 2019; Besley et al. 2017; Júlio and Tavares 2017). Other works have also evidenced that quotas encourage profile diversity in terms of personal, political, and professional trajectories (Aldrich and Daniel 2019; Barnes and Holman 2020). Gender quotas however seem to have limited effects in age

diversity, particularly concerning the election of younger women (Stockemer and Sundström 2020).

The conjunction of gender quotas with ethnic quotas can also lead to greater proportions of ethnic minority women being elected as compared to ethnic minority men. This effect is likely the result of parties' "double-duty" strategy : parties select candidates who fulfill more than one quota at once (Celis et al. 2014). The possibility of adopting this strategy, and hence its effects on the characteristics of elected individuals, depends on the structure of the quota system : its effects are curbed in "mixed systems" where gender and ethnic quotas operate at different levels, when national ethnic quotas are combined with party quotas for example (Hughes 2011). Along with individual stances, these institutional criteria affect intra-party support for minority women and hence their chances of gaining elected office (Jenichen 2020).

Together, these articles evidence the differentiated effects of gender quotas, depending on institutional like circumstantial factors, on the election of women belonging to different groups. They thus foment intersectional approaches highlighting the necessity of considering women as a heterogeneous group crossed by multiple dynamics of power (Lépinard 2013).

◇ Symbolic representation

Beyond descriptive representation, several authors study the broader impact of quotas on inequalities in the political sphere generally-speaking. The diagnoses established by these authors are more or less connected to the notion of symbolic representation - for example, when quota impact is assessed in terms of greater "respect" gained by women (Burnet 2011). While the adoption of quotas has favoured the creation of legislative women's caucuses in various parliaments (Adams, Scherpereel, and Wylie 2019), women elected through quotas or reserved seats may be granted less respect and authority in plenary parliamentary debates, as illustrated by the Ugandan (Clayton, Josefsson, and Wang 2014). According to Achin and Lvéque, the French parity law has had little effects on gender hierarchies in the political field (Achin and Lvéque 2014). In some cases, like that of Kenya, quota design has had the effect of amplifying inequalities amongst women in the electoral sphere and quota implementation was met with stronger patriarchal backlash as more women entered the electoral arena (Berry, Bouka, and Kamuru 2020).

The effects of gender quotas in terms of symbolic representation thus contrast with evaluations considering descriptive and substantive forms of representation that tend to put forward more positive results. Nonetheless, as shown by Allen and Cutts' comparison of 48 countries, outside of elite politics, quotas have had a positive effect on general attitudes towards women as political leaders, especially amongst women (Allen and Cutts 2018). Beyond the political sphere, quotas can also be evaluated in terms of their impact on gender stereotypes and attitudes towards women more broadly (Clayton 2018).

Relatedly, several studies look into the effects of quotas on various dimensions of political participation, be it electoral participation (De Paola, Scoppa, and De Benedetto 2014), women running for elected positions (Johnson 2019; Nanes 2015), or political participation at large, that is people's involvement in diverse forms of political activities. Based on a study of 18 European countries, Beauregard contends that the implementation of quotas has reduced the gender gap in political participation by encouraging women's

participation (Beauregard 2017). Beyond the level of participation, some studies have looked into how quotas affect electoral behaviours, notably in terms of electoral bias towards female candidates and its evolution within a quota system (Bonomi, Brosio, and Di Tommaso 2013; Eyméoud and Vertier 2020).

◇ **Substantive representation**

While measures of descriptive representation can be quite straightforward, the endeavour of measuring substantive representation is extremely intricate and vastly puzzling. Researchers embarking on this venture have developed various indicators to approximate women's substantive representation : women's participation in parliamentary agenda definition and legislative outcomes, that is the enactment of women's rights laws (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008), the share of time spent discussing women's interests in parliamentary debates (Clayton, Josefsson, and Wang 2017; Xydias 2014), constituency service provision to women (Benstead 2016), government spending on public health as opposed to other policy priorities (Clayton and Zetterberg 2018), health spending and reduced infant and child mortality (Mechkova and Carlitz 2020), improvements in health policies ("the political cure") as measured by women's health (Westfall and Chantiles 2016), the integration of social justice issues on party platforms (Weeks 2019), the reduction of gendered import tax discrimination (BETZ, FORTUNATO, and O'BRIEN 2020). It is worth pointing out that, despite the diverse nature of measures that are used to capture women's substantive representation, these studies mostly provide positive assessments of quota impact.

Some contradictory mechanisms may however be at play in regard to quotas' effects on women's substantive representation : whilst, on the one hand, elected women may feel a mandate to push policies favouring women's rights and interests; on the other hand, they may be deterred to do so considering the previously mentioned stigma they face as "quota women" (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). Nonetheless, in an analysis of cross-sectional data from 139 countries, Clayton and Zetterberg identify a "quota shock". They argue that sudden increases in women's descriptive representation tend to induce increases in health spendings and, parallely, decreases in military spendings (Clayton and Zetterberg 2018).

Some studies explore the possibility of a spillover effect ((Lee 2019) also talks about a pipeline effect) according to which quotas can positively affect the election of women beyond their perimeter of application; for example, from quota tiers to non-quota tiers in South Korea (Lee 2019; Shin 2014), from reserved to non-reserved seats in India (Turnbull 2019) or in Tanzania (Yoon 2016). At the interface between the notion of spillover effect and the transformation of inequalities in the political sphere, several studies tackle the question of elected women's promotion and possibilities of access to leadership positions, with limited results notably in the case of France (Lassébie 2019; Lippmann 2018).

◇ **Sustainable representation**

Most research evaluates the impact of quotas at a given point in time, but it should also be assessed over a period of time. The notion of "sustainable representation" has been coined to account for the durable effects of quotas (Darhour and Dahlerup 2013; Edgell 2018). Bjarnegård et Zetterberg offer a theoretical discussion around quota type and its likeliness to durably affect parties' recruitment practices; they argue that party and legislative quotas with

rank order specifications are more likely to have long-term positive effects after their retraction than reserved seats (Bjarnegård and Zetterberg 2011). In a quantitative study addressing the effects of quotas that are still implemented (as is mostly the case worldwide), Rosen shows that effects vary according to countries' levels of socioeconomic development with voluntary party quotas being more efficient in rich countries and reserved seats in poorer countries (Rosen 2017).

Research looking into the case of India give other insights into quotas' effects over time⁹. Beaman et al. point to self-reinforcing effects in the implementation of quotas : such policies increase the share of elected women and hence people's exposure to women leaders, this in turn affects electoral behaviour through the weakening of gender stereotypes (Beaman et al. 2009). Another study suggests that having had a previous experience of a quota system in a constituency favours women's chances of winning an election, even after the quota is withdrawn (Bhavnani 2009).

III.3. Evaluating the effects of quotas on corporate boards

The impact of board quotas has been much more investigated than their adoption - with 51 articles out of 74, as opposed to 7 on adoption. This body of literature has mostly been developed by scholars of economics and management.

Interestingly, the criteria used to assess the impact of board quotas rapidly expand beyond the immediate goal of the quota, which is to increase the number of women on boards. This dimension is not systematically investigated considering that, in many cases under study, the quota is mandatory and hence presumed to be immediately effective in this regard. However, it is important to stress that, regardless of the domain in which they are implemented, quotas are not necessarily self-fulfilling. As for other gender equality policy tools, their effectiveness in terms of encouraging women's access to corporate boards depends on several of their characteristics, and the ways in which they are implemented (Engeli and Mazur n.d.).

As for electoral quotas, the type of board quota regulation at play influences its impact in terms of increased presence of women on boards. In a comparison of France, Italy, and the United Kingdom, Bennouri et al. shows that the introduction of board quotas have a stronger effect on the share of women on boards in France and Italy where they are mandatory, as opposed to the UK where they are merely advisory (Bennouri, De Amicis, and Falconieri 2020). These findings are further confirmed by several studies based on broader European comparisons (Cabeza-García, Del Brio, and Rueda 2019; Clark, Arora, and Gabaldon 2019; Humbert, Kelan, and Clayton-Hathway 2019)), as well as (Casey, Skibnes, and Pringle 2011) who compare Norway and New Zealand.

Firms' characteristics may also influence quota impact. Firms may opt for a symbolic or substantive form of compliance (Arora, Gabaldon, and Clark 2020). Firms that choose the former option, and are hence further away from the quota target, tend to be those that are most satisfied with their financial performance. Besides performance concerns, it has been observed

⁹ It is worth recalling that India offers an interesting natural experiment considering that randomly chosen seats are reserved for women from one election to the next one.

that quotas tend to be more respected in countries with overall low gender inequality and in firms with strong social consciousness ((Clark et al. 2019) looking into 10 European countries). The environment in which a quota is implemented matters considering that strong resistance can cause policy failure, as illustrated by the case of board quotas in Spain (Verge and Lombardo 2019).

One of the logics often invoked to justify quota adoption are their potential spillover effects: quotas could be self-reinforcing as a higher number of women in high management positions encourages a higher acceptance of women within this male-dominated area. However, using simulation methods to analyse the Standard & Poor's 1,500 firms, Dezso et al. argue that women already face an implicit quota (Dezso, Ross, and Uribe 2016). While these firms tend to be favourable to including women in high management positions, this inclusion remains highly limited considering that "the presence of a woman on a top management team reduces the likelihood that another woman occupies a position on that team" (Dezso et al. 2016). Furthermore, drawing on social identity theory, Huang et al. show that, in the German case, men who sit on multiple corporate boards tend to oppose resistance to the inclusion of female board members (Huang, Diehl, and Paterlini 2020).

Some studies have also looked into the impact of quotas on the characteristics of board members. Particularly, they have assessed their effects on the presence of dependent or independent members - the former usually come from the firm, they are hence involved in its daily management and they hold material interest within it; whilst the latter are otherwise exterior to the firm. Striking the right balance between dependence and independence is usually an important issue for corporate governance: it is one of the mechanisms through which the enforcement of the quota may influence firm performance. In Norway, the implementation of a 40% quota led to significant increase in the percentage of independent directors, women being more often independent (Bøhren and Staubo 2016). In France, the positive impact of the quota on firm performance seemed to be mediated by the appointed women's independence (Loukil, Yousfi, and Yerbanga 2019).

Besides quotas' effects on the percentage of women on boards and on their characteristics, the most common criterion to assess the effects of board quotas is their impact on firm performance - it is used in 16 out of 58 articles in our sample. This concern for performance mirrors how justifications for quotas are framed in policy making, such as in EU directives (Leszczyńska 2018). These evaluations often lead to mitigated, if not negative assessments of quota impact (Ahern and Dittmar 2011; del Carmen Valls Martínez, Cervantes, and Rambaud 2020; Comi et al. 2019; Dale-Olsen, Schøne, and Verner 2013; Greene, Intintoli, and Kahle 2020; Leszczyńska 2018). Facing this prevailing "business case" approach, Humbert, Kelan and Clayton-Hathway stress the need to reassert gender equality as a rights issue (Humbert et al. 2019).

Some evaluations, most of which look into the Norwegian case, focus on women's inclusion to corporate boards and their experience on said boards. Quotas, as fast-track measures as opposed to incremental measures for gender equality (cf. (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005)), hold the advantage of yielding fast results but they may also exert pressures on women who are propelled into boards at the time of enactment (Casey et al. 2011). With a new quota being set up, "rookie" women directors are appointed to boards

having no or little board experience and they hence have limited access to top board positions (Rebérioux and Roudaut 2017). This effect however seems to tame after the measure has settled and more women have gained experience and promote other women's access to top leading positions (Wang and Kelan 2013). Nonetheless, women on boards still report feeling less included and holding less influence over board decisions than their male counterparts (Storvik and Gulbrandsen 2016). Mandatory quotas may indeed hinder women board members' image as they are perceived as "quota-filling members" rather than as members appointed for their qualifications (Casey et al. 2011).

Despite these mitigated observations regarding the effects of gender quotas on corporate boards, based on interviews with managers, Seierstad et al. point to a slow, structural effect of the quota in changing expectations and norms, and thus "challenging gendered ideas of suitability" (Seierstad et al. 2020:1). In terms of quotas' effects on the pay gender gap and the enrollment of women in business degrees, Bertrand et al. find that the Norwegian 2003 40% quota had little effect beyond its immediate target as the pay gap reduced for women sitting on boards but not for the women who were not appointed to boards (Bertrand et al. 2018). Nonetheless, Burzynska et al. find that quotas have contributed to fostering women's access to relevant professional networks; they argue that "binding gender quotas make director networks a more salient tool for hiring women and may help in leveling the playing field in the way these networks are used for achieving top management positions" (Burzynska and Contreras 2020:19). Furthermore, in terms of aspiring board members' human capital investment, some studies have found a positive effect of gender quotas on women's investment which even tends to surpass men's (Hyll 2017; Stark and Hyll 2014).

Spillover effects may derive from quota adoption as it may affect the firms' standards and board appointment practices beyond the quota's sole scope of application. Empirical tests of this hypothesis provide mixed and even contradictory results. In the Norwegian case, Seierstad et al. talks about a "quota silo": as the quota only applies to particular firms, some have changed status to avoid having to comply (Seierstad et al. 2020). In France, the proportion of women of corporate boards had increased following the 2008 constitutional reform promoting gender equality, and so prior to the corporate quota law of 2011 (Singh, Point, and Moulin 2015), hence suggesting that a policy environment favourable to quotas can have an impact on women's appointment to boards.

Research on board quotas mirrors that on electoral quotas in that it intends to measure quality of output in their respective fields: while the latter focus on quotas' effects on policy making and thus on forms of substantive representation, the former mostly consider their effects on firms' performance, though not exclusively. For instance, Matsa shows that Norwegian firms falling under the quota regime tend to conduct fewer labour force reductions despite concerns for short-term profit (Matsa and Miller 2013). In the Italian case, Provasi shows that quotas do not necessarily affect firms' performance but that they were significantly and positively associated with corporate sustainability and ethical scores (Provasi and Harasheh 2020). Likewise, looking in the case of 285 commercial banks, Tapver et al. find a positive association between women's presence on corporate boards and corporate social responsibility after controlling for gender quotas (Tapver, Laidroo, and Gurvitš-Suits 2020).

IV. Discussion

Gender quota research represents a very dynamic and interdisciplinary body of literature. Given the worldwide diffusion of gender quotas as a policy tool, notably in the electoral sphere, this literature is very international - even though this is less so in the case of board quotas which are more concentrated in European countries. This body of research draws on a rich diversity of methods, from case studies to experimental and quasi experimental designs. The implementation of quotas in different domains, paired with the development of new data streams and data analysis methods, substantially enlarges the set of natural experiments and empirical material that are available to social scientists. This literature is highly comparative : about a third of the articles considered two or more countries in their empirical analysis. Among them, more than two thirds (69.91%) included regional or worldwide comparisons, nearly half of which were global (49.37%) and the other half either considered countries of the global North (31.64%) or the global South (18.99%).

Taken together, this body of literature addresses a diversity of research questions which can be generally organized as relating either to the genesis or to the effects of gender quotas, with a few papers addressing both questions. The genesis of gender quotas has been much more studied in the case of electoral quotas than for other types of quotas. Reciprocally, research on board quotas focuses on their effects rather than analyses their genesis. Regarding the genesis of electoral quotas, the multiplication of case studies has led to the identification of three main series of explanations, pertaining to the role of women's movements, the political environment, and mechanisms of diffusion. Criteria used to evaluate the impact of electoral gender quotas usually follow the triptych of descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation. Studies generally identify positive effect in terms of increase in descriptive and substantive representation, yet draw more nuanced conclusions regarding symbolic representation. Research on the impact of board quotas looks into quotas' effects on the percentage of women on boards and on their characteristics (with generally positive results), as well as their impact on firm performance (with more mitigated results).

While taken together, research on gender quotas is very diverse, it nonetheless remains strongly segmented according to quota domains, research questions, methods and disciplines involved. The two main research questions addressed in the gender quota literature, genesis and effects, largely correspond to a partition between qualitative and quantitative methods. This corresponds to a broader feature of studies of policy adoption (with a dominance of qualitative methods) as opposed to studies of policy impact (dominated by quantitative approaches), beyond the case of gender equality. It is to be noted, however, that the case of gender quotas led to the development of original methodological approaches which differ from this usual alignment, for example with an increased use of history modelling techniques in the case of gender quota adoption. The case of gender quotas could, in this perspective, function as a laboratory for methodological innovations in policy evaluation. While research on quotas has been a breeding ground for methodological innovations in various directions, notably in comparative analysis and experimental methods, these approaches so far however remain quite separate.

Moreover, these two main research questions on the genesis and effects of quotas are most often treated separately. This also corresponds to some extent to a partition in terms of disciplines, with economics and management limiting their approach to the question of impact while political science includes the study of quota genesis. The bodies of research on quotas developed in economics and management on the one hand, and political science and sociology on the other, would gain from further dialogue since the different approaches complement themselves. Disciplinary frontiers thus tend to limit the possibility of more encompassing approaches. This is to be deplored, since a better understanding of the modalities and rationale of quota adoption and implementation would often improve the quality and relevance of the analysis of quota impact. The genesis of electoral gender quotas is the object of abundant scholarly literature which evidences the importance of understanding the context for the enactment of a quota - from framing a policy problem, to finding a policy solution and implementing it - so as to address the question of its effects and to proceed to its evaluation. In light of this, it is rather astounding that the genesis of board quotas is only tackled by a handful of articles (7 articles out of 74 on corporate board quotas) and that it is hardly ever considered in studies looking into their effects. In efforts to evaluate such policies, scholars should be attentive to the political conditions in which they are adopted for they contribute to shaping policy design and, hence, outcome (Arendt 2018). A quota's modalities of implementation should be carefully considered in order to assess its effects with discernment¹⁰.

The literature also remains very segmented according to quota domains: not only is there a limited number of studies including both electoral and board quotas, but the two bodies of literature do not refer much to each other. In the case of quota genesis notably, this constitutes an important blindspot in academic production for, as evidenced by existing research, similar if not directly interrelated mechanisms oftentimes lead to their adoption. Cross-domain comparison is a propitious tool for scholars of public policy and gender equality. Firstly, through a shift in focus, it allows for a multiplication of viewpoints over similar policy problems; as such it contributes to curbing any narrow-sightedness resulting from the exclusivity of domain-specific research on gender quotas. Secondly, in terms of public policy evaluation, the identification of cross-domain dynamics and mechanisms provides for a more holistic approach to the assessment of quotas as a gender equality policy, thus giving more accurate directions to policy-makers and gender equality activists alike.

Finally, research on gender quotas has largely developed in isolation from research on quotas concerning other groups. To be sure, there has been something very specific to the diffusion and globalization of the quota as a gender equality policy tool. However, gender is not the only domain where quotas have been put in place, and quota research would greatly benefit from further comparison between gender quotas and other quotas. In existing literature, this comparison is generally scarce. Among existing initiatives, one can mention (Krook and O'Brien 2010) comparing theoretical debates around electoral quotas for women and minorities, or (Htun and Ossa 2013) comparing the gender parity system for women in

¹⁰ In 2003 Mexico, for example, the three main parties relied on primary elections to select the candidates they would put forward and had to abide by the national gender quota law. These modalities of candidate selection interacted and affected the effects of the quota law : if the number of elected women substantially rose, parties often bypassed the quota law arguing that candidates had been selected through "direct" votes to avoid being sanctioned by the electoral authority for non-compliance (Baldez 2007).

elections to the 5% quota for indigenous groups in Bolivia. The “PolQuotas” project, of which this scoping review is part, compares gender quotas with disability quotas¹¹. Future research would greatly benefit from more such comparisons.

While this scoping review has included the broadest possible array of research questions, methods and disciplines on gender quotas, there are still limits to its scope. For feasibility reasons, this review limited itself to articles published in peer-reviewed journals. The exclusion of edited books from the scope of the review represents a limit of this study, given the importance of book based publications notably in political science, a discipline which has been the main source of research on gender quotas. Book-based contributions for example include (Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo 2012; Lépinard and Rubio-Marin 2018), which should be included in further investigations in order to complement the map of current research on gender quotas. Moreover, we have included only English-speaking and French-speaking references, to the detriment of other languages. The inclusion of references in Spanish, for example, would certainly lead to a more complete picture as all Latin American countries have legislated electoral quotas and Spanish-speaking scholars have been particularly prolific on the subject. Finally, given the timeframe between the initial search and the publication of the review, the present review is necessarily already outdated at the time of its publication. This, of course, is a difficulty all scoping reviews are faced with, but it is particularly salient in the context of this body of research which has been characterized by an exponential growth.

Conclusion

The study of gender quotas not only represents a rich body of empirical literature, but has also contributed to methodological innovations and important theoretical contributions. The 379 articles selected as part of this review reflect this diversity, as well as the exponential growth of this body of literature in the past few years. By taking into account the broadest possible array of disciplines and methods, we were able to shed light on the diversification of this body of literature in terms of disciplines, methods, and quota domains under study (even though electoral and board quotas remain the two main domains of investigation). We have also identified gaps or imbalances in the literature, such as the lack of analysis of the genesis of corporate board quotas compared to the volume of research devoted to the genesis of electoral quotas.

This diversity of approaches on an aggregate level however masks persisting segmentation of the literature, in terms of disciplines involved, methods and research questions. This scoping review and the regrouping of references coming from different disciplines in a single database are a first step in order to favour a more systematic dialogue. Indeed, the synthetic format of the scoping review aims to facilitate the acquisition by researchers belonging to a given discipline of the inputs of research from other fields. The complementary database provides easy access to the main references and research results from various disciplines on more specific topics or research questions that may be of interest to

¹¹ <https://polquotas.hypotheses.org/> Accessed December, 22nd, 2021.

researchers. Based on our analysis of existing gaps in the literature, we highly encourage researchers to go beyond their initial research question when taking grounds of the existing literature: for example, impact assessment can be considerably improved, in terms of choice of criteria and the analysis of the mechanisms at play, by an understanding of the genesis of the quota in a given context, where it comes from and the way its objectives were politically framed.

Expanding the scope of the literature review within a given quota project thus is the first simple step towards a more integrated and interdisciplinary evaluation. Eventually, research would greatly benefit from a more systematic integration of qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as different disciplinary perspectives, within the same project. This scoping review is a first attempt to open a dialogue between these different approaches and facilitate their cross-fertilization.

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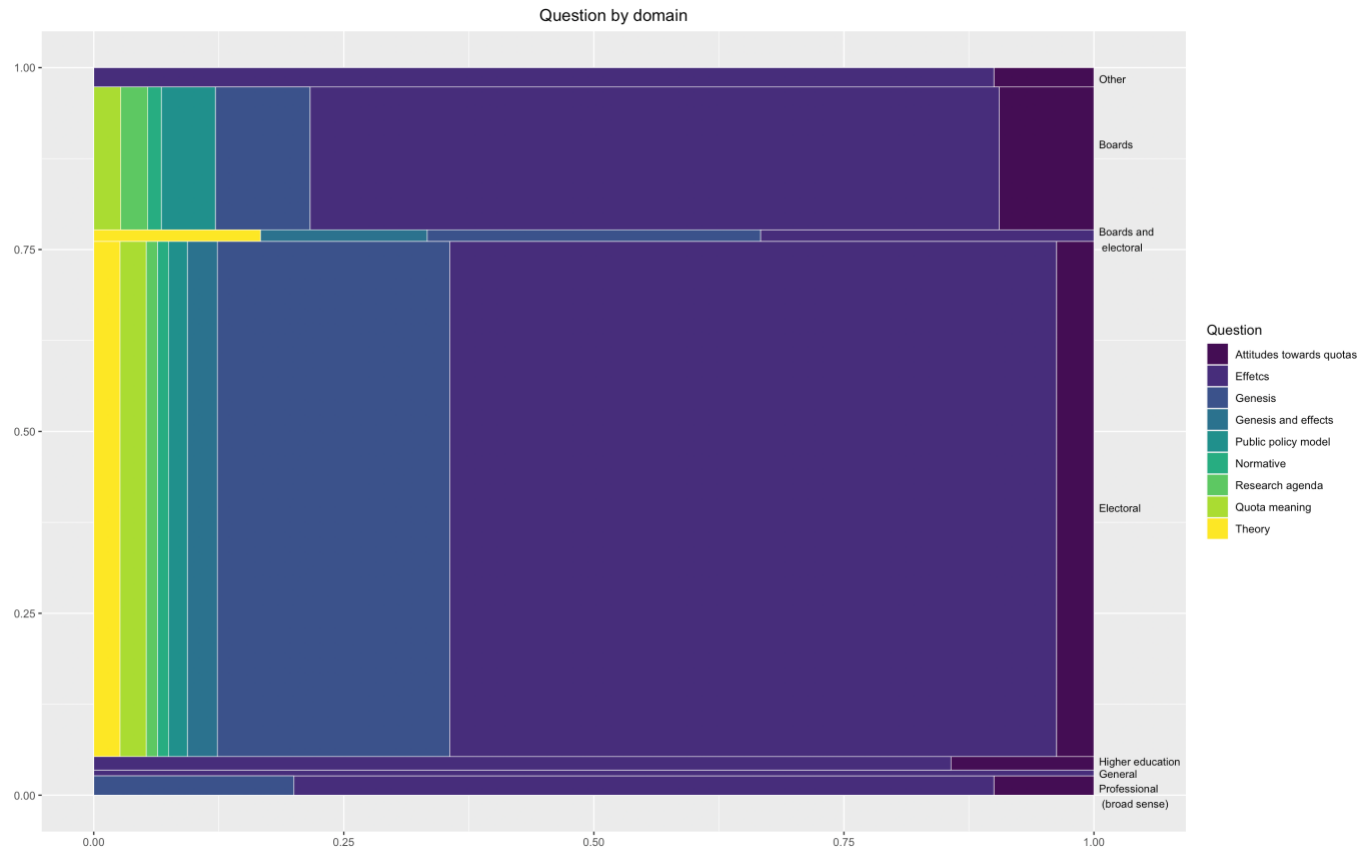
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Appendices

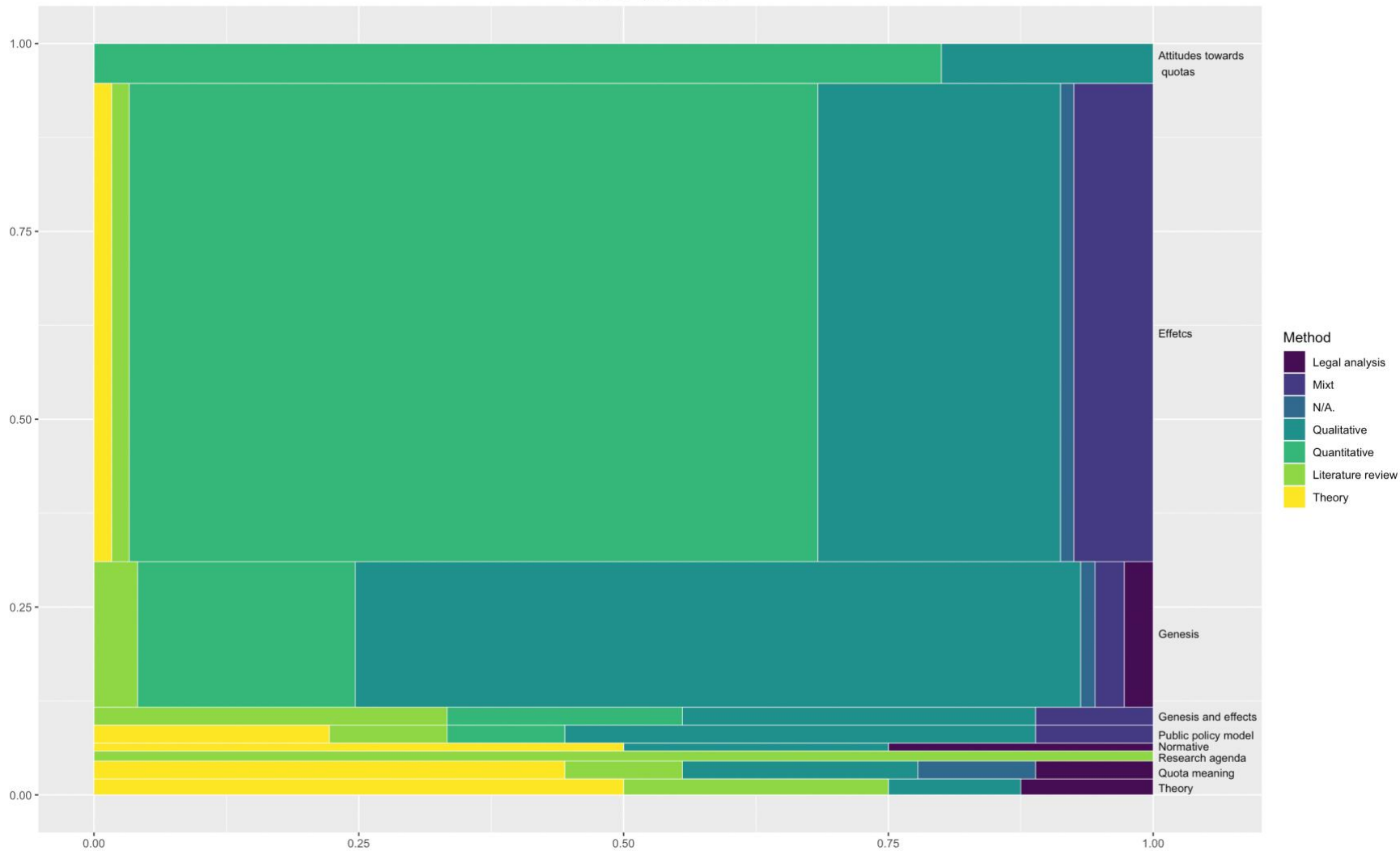
Appendix 1. Mosaic graph, research question for each quota domain¹²



¹² The x-axis represents the "question" variable and the y-axis represents the "domain" variable. Read (lower left): 2.65% of articles look into quotas applying to the professional (broad sense) domain, of which 20% ask the question of their genesis.

Appendix 3. Mosaic graph, method for each research question

Method by question





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