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Gender Quotas and Women's Political Participation in Latin America

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Abstract

Gender quotas are a recent and important regional phenomenon in Latin America. In addition to increasing women's representation in national legislatures, quotas may offer a partial solution to women's marginalization in mass political participation. Gender quotas symbolize a more legitimate and inclusive political system, are an example of women-friendly policies, and can mobilize women during the quota adoption process, all of which could lead to greater political participation by women and smaller gender gaps in political activity. In this paper, I articulate a theory for why quotas could affect political participation and then test this hypothesis empirically in two ways. First, I conduct a cross-national statistical analysis of the relationship between gender quotas and the gender gap using the Americas Barometer 2010 survey data in 24 countries. Second, I present a case study of the differences between men's and women's participation before and after the adoption of a gender quota in the most recent Latin American country to pass such a law—Uruguay. I find that quotas have had little effect on gender gaps in mass participation in Latin America. Gender quotas have done exactly what they are designed to do—increase women's representation in elected office. Their benefits for women, however, do not extend to the masses.

Gender Quotas and Women's Political Participation in Latin America

In 1991, Argentina became the first country in the world to pass a law that would require all political parties running candidates for the Chamber of Deputies to include women in at least 30% of the list positions on party ballots. Since that time, over 30 countries in the world have passed similar laws or constitutional amendments for national legislative elections—14 of them in Latin America.¹ Although gender quotas are specifically designed to increase women's representation in politics, scholars often argue that quotas can have much broader consequences. They may shape the kinds of women elected to office and what they do once there (Murray 2010), increase the legitimacy of government both internationally and domestically (Dahlerup 2006; Krook 2009), improve the image that female citizens have of government (Kittilson 2005; Vincent 2004), and more generally, serve to promote women's equality in society. As of yet, however, little empirical evidence exists to support or refute these claims. In this paper, I focus on one of these and examine the extent to which quotas work to decrease women's long-standing marginalization in mass political participation.

Women have been largely excluded from the political process in Latin America for years. Although women got the right to vote and run for office in most countries in the middle of the 20th century, they have not yet achieved parity with men in elected office in any country. Many of the transitions to democracy that swept the region in the 1980's relied heavily on women's participation in mass movements (Baldez 2003; Jaquette 1994), but after the transitions, women were not incorporated into the formal political process to the extent that many had hoped (Escobar and Alvarez 1992). Women's underrepresentation in government has been mirrored by levels of women's political participation being lower than men's across a range of activities from simply being interested in politics to protesting to working on political campaigns (Desposato and Norrander 2009; Morgan, Espinal, and Hartlyn 2008). Of course, gender gaps in political participation are not constant across countries. Some Latin American countries have much wider gaps than others, suggesting that characteristics of the countries

¹ Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela (eliminated in 1999).

themselves could explain women's lower levels of participation. Most existing research has emphasized cultural and socioeconomic explanations (Inglehart and Norris 2003), but political and institutional explanations may also be important (Karp and Banducci 2008; Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2010; Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007).

In this paper, I articulate a set of theoretical mechanisms by which gender quotas may improve women's political participation in Latin America and thus explain the smaller gender gaps in political participation in some countries. I then test the relationship between quotas and the gender gap empirically using data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project's Americas Barometer.² The empirical analyses take two forms. First, I conduct a cross-national statistical analysis using data from 24 countries included in the 2010 Americas Barometer to determine whether gender gaps in nine different types of political participation are smaller in countries with gender quotas. Second, I present a case study of these forms of political participation in one country, Uruguay, to compare the gender gaps before and after the recent adoption of a gender quota in 2009.

This research makes several important contributions to research on gender politics, electoral studies, and mass behavior. First, existing research has shown that women participate in politics at lower levels than do men and that wide variation exists in this pattern across countries around the world. However, we have very few studies of the gender gap in Latin America (Desposato and Norrander 2009; Morgan, Espinal, and Hartlyn 2008; Zetterberg 2009). Second, these studies have focused on single countries, have studied women only, or have overlooked the role that the adoption of gender quotas may play in explaining differences in the gender gap across countries. Finally, although scholars, activists, and politicians have all touted quotas as having an important symbolic effect for women in society, the empirical basis for these claims is limited. This project is an opportunity to assess this political consequence of a new and important regional phenomenon, and at the same time, provide one of the first academic studies of Uruguay's new gender quota law.

² For additional information on this survey, please see <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/>.

Gender Quotas and Women's Political Participation

Research from countries around the world has found that women are marginalized in political participation (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Inglehart and Norris 2003; Karp and Banducci 2008; Norris 2007; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978). Women have lower levels of interest in politics than men, sometimes vote less frequently than men, and are less likely to run for political office, among other forms of political participation. Although existing explanations for these phenomena have focused on cultural, socioeconomic, and recently, political differences across countries, institutional explanations, such as gender quotas, are new.

Some of the most dominant explanations for gender gaps rest upon cultural and socioeconomic theories. Early studies suggested that a country's religious traditions could influence women's levels of political participation. Margaret Inglehart (1981), for example, suggests that cultural traditions stemming from Catholic and Protestant heritage influence aggregate rates of political interest among women. More recently, Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris (Inglehart and Norris 2003) argue that perceptions of appropriate roles for women and men in politics are shaped by broader patterns of societal values and priorities, which in turn, rest on economic development and religious traditions. More economically developed and secular countries are associated with more egalitarian gender attitudes. Similarly, Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (2001) argue that as women gain access to educational and economic resources they should become increasingly interested in and involved in politics.

Political explanations tend to emphasize the representation of women in government as important for explaining why women in some countries participate in politics more often than in others. As women have entered government in increasing numbers, their presence may motivate more women in society to get involved in politics. Yet, empirical evidence to support this has been mixed. Some studies have found that the presence of women in politics, particularly how visible they are, increases women's political engagement (Atkeson 2003; Atkeson and Carrillo 2007; Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006; Desposato and Norrander 2009). Others, however, find little relationship between the election of women to office and women's political participation in society (Dolan 2006; Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2010; Lawless 2004).

An additional explanation may lie in the recent adoption of gender quotas (Zetterberg 2009). Around the world, over 100 countries have experimented with some kind of affirmative action measure aimed at increasing the number of women elected to legislatures in recent years. Some countries reserve seats for women who campaign on women-only ballots for those seats (Krook 2009). In other countries, political parties have adopted their own measures requiring that their ballots incorporate women (Caul 2001). Still others have amended their constitutions or passed laws requiring *all* political parties running candidates for certain offices to include women on their ballots (Jones 2009; Krook 2009; Schwindt-Bayer 2009).

Gender quotas are designed specifically to increase the number of women elected to office. Yet, quotas can have consequences above and beyond this. Scholars studying the adoption of gender quotas have highlighted an array of reasons for why quotas *should* be adopted and why countries have actually passed quota policies (Bacchi 2006; Krook 2007). These justifications often include implicit implications for the consequences that quotas could have above and beyond getting more women into office. For example, some scholars have highlighted the symbolic roles that quotas can play increasing a country's democratic legitimacy (Araújo and García 2006; Bush 2011; Krook 2007; Tripp, Konate, and Lowe-Morna 2006) or increasing fairness and justice in society (Araújo and García 2006; Bacchi 2006). Quotas may be "empty gestures" whereby elites can rally behind a quota that they have engineered in such a way as to have little effect in hopes of making women in society "feel better" about their political system (Krook 2007). Along these lines, Kittilson (2005, 644) argues that gender quotas have two important, but sometimes overlooked effects: they "reshape attitudes, values, and ideas toward women's roles in politics" and "can be a powerful symbol for democracy and justice beyond national borders." By altering women's attitudes about government, quotas could lead to a female electorate that is more supportive of democracy, more trusting of government, and more politically active (Schwindt-Bayer 2010; Zetterberg 2009).

At the same time, quotas have been tools that elected parties and politicians use to garner greater support from women in the masses (Krook 2007), highlighting that elites view quotas as having potential consequences for women in society. In Uruguay, for example, feminist deputies in their efforts to get the quota law passed through congress used a recent

evaluation report conducted by the U.N. Committee for the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) that recommended Uruguay pass a quota law in part to “promote a change in ‘attitudes and perceptions’ among women and men in regards to the respective roles in the home, the family, work, and society” (Johnson and Moreni 2009, 37). The Committee also recommended that Uruguay “take ‘special measures of a temporary character’ to accelerate the establishment of equality between men and women” (Johnson and Moreni 2009, 37).

I suggest three mechanisms by which the adoption of gender quotas could boost women’s political participation and close gender gaps in men’s and women’s political involvement—symbolic representation, substantive representation, and women’s mobilization.³ The symbolic representation argument is that gender quotas may symbolize a more open and inclusive political process that invites women’s political participation. The idea that gender quotas serve as symbols for a government in addition to a rule that produces a desired political outcome fits with much of the literature on the adoption of gender quotas. As just noted, quotas have often been viewed as symbols that can generate greater domestic and/or international legitimacy for a country and make women feel that government is attending to problems of gender inequality. If quotas symbolize a more democratic, legitimate, and inclusive government, then this could generate greater feelings of support for the political system by women and spur participation in the political process (Kittilson 2005).

The substantive representation argument highlights the fact that quotas are a government policy targeted at expanding women’s rights and increasing gender equality. It is a policy similar to those aimed at protecting women from domestic violence or improving women’s reproductive health that specifically highlights women’s long-standing subordinate status in society and outlines a mechanism by which to overcome that within government. Governments that pass women’s issue policies, such as gender quotas, and use policy to improve women’s equality in society make women in society feel more represented in the political process and may improve their attitudes toward government and boost their political

³ In this paper, I do not attempt to determine which of these three mechanisms is most important but simply suggest that these are three possible ways in which quotas could affect women’s political participation.

participation (Schwindt-Bayer 2010). Additionally, the “quotas as policy” argument gives political parties a tool to reach out to women in the electorate and garner greater support. When pushing for the adoption of quotas, parties often viewed quotas as a mechanism to access the “women’s vote” (Krook 2009). If parties successfully reached out to women who heretofore had not participated in politics, this could result in more women getting politically involved and decreasing the size of the gender gap in political participation.

The final mechanism by which quotas could boost women’s political participation is through mobilization. Studies on the adoption of gender quotas often argue that one of the primary actors in the adoption process is female leaders, women’s groups, and women’s movements (Araújo and García 2006; Johnson and Moreni 2009; Krook 2007; Tripp, Konate, and Lowe-Morna 2006). Quota adoption campaigns have become a source for political mobilization of women in civil society in many countries. This works to increase public awareness of quotas, women’s underrepresentation, and gender inequality, more generally, providing a mechanism to mobilize women. If quota debates have re-energized women’s movements or highlighted gender inequality for women in the masses, then they may also serve as a catapult to greater participation in politics even after the quotas have been adopted.

In sum, quotas could decrease gender gaps in political participation in Latin America through their symbolic, substantive, and mobilizing effects on women. Existing research has tended to focus on cultural, socioeconomic, and political explanations, but quotas offer a distinct set of incentives that could on their own mediate women’s participation relative to men’s. Whether quotas actually have effects on women’s political participation or function specifically to augment women’s political representation is still an open question.

Research Design

I test the relationship between quotas and women’s political participation with two types of analyses—a cross-national statistical analysis using the 2010 Americas Barometer and a case study analysis of Uruguay using the 2008 and 2010 Americas Barometer. In both parts of

the empirical analysis, the dependent variable is political participation. The Americas Barometer provides survey questions that measure a range of types of political participation. In this study, I use nine measures of participation: political interest, political knowledge (Uruguay analysis only), voting, persuading others to vote, working for a political campaign, protesting, petitioning government officials for assistance, attending a local government meeting, attending political party meetings, and attending women’s group meetings (cross-national analysis only). Please see the appendix for details on the survey questions and coding of these dependent variables.

Cross-National Analysis: Quotas and Political Participation in Latin America

Latin America is an excellent region in which to test the effects of quotas on political participation. Thirteen countries (including Guyana) currently have gender quotas for the national legislature and all of those quotas were enacted in laws or constitutional amendments such that they apply to all political parties in the system.⁴ Although some political parties in the region have adopted quotas, those have been overshadowed by the national quota laws. Table 1 provides a list of the countries with quotas, when quotas were adopted, and the legislative chambers to which the quotas apply.

Table 1: Latin American Countries with Gender Quota Laws

Country	Year Adopted	Legislative Chamber to which Quota Applies
Argentina	1991	Lower and Upper
Bolivia	1997	Lower and Upper
Brazil	1997	Lower
Costa Rica	1996	Unicameral
Dominican Republic	1997	Lower
Ecuador	1997	Unicameral
Guyana	2000	Unicameral
Honduras	2000	Unicameral
Mexico	2000	Lower and Upper

⁴ Venezuela had a quota from 1997 to 1999. Colombia has a gender quota but it is for appointed positions, such as the president’s cabinet, not for the legislature.

Country	Year Adopted	Legislative Chamber to which Quota Applies
Panama	1997	Unicameral
Paraguay	1996	Lower and Upper
Peru	1997	Unicameral
Uruguay	2009	Lower and Upper

Source: Schwindt-Bayer (2010).

Latin America is also a region where many countries have significant gender gaps in political participation (Desposato and Norrander 2009; Morgan, Espinal, and Hartlyn 2008; Zetterberg 2009). Using data from the 2010 Americas Barometer, Figure 1 shows the gender gap in political interest across countries.⁵ In all countries except Costa Rica, a larger percentage of men are interested in politics than women. In Costa Rica, slightly more women than men have high levels of political interest. The difference is -0.8%. The gender gap is largest in Nicaragua where the difference between men’s and women’s political interest is nearly 16 percentage points. Similar gaps appear in other political activities. In just about every Latin American country, for example, significantly smaller percentages of women than men report attending party meetings. The gap is largest in Suriname (13%), Honduras (11%), the Dominican Republic (10%), and Haiti (10%). Voting, however, is an exception. For voting, only 8 countries have statistically significant gender gaps, and in some countries, a larger percentage of women responded that they voted in the last election than men whereas in others the gap is reversed. The largest gap is 12% in Guatemala where more men responded that they voted than did women. In Argentina, however, a larger percentage of women than men voted—a statistically significant gap of 5%. One reason that gaps in voting may be more minimal than other forms of activity is that many Latin American countries have compulsory voting.⁶

⁵ “High” interest in politics refers to the question response categories of “a lot” or “some” interest in politics. Men’s and women’s interest levels are statistically different from one another (i.e., significant at the $p < 0.10$ level) in all countries except Guatemala, Panama, Argentina, and Costa Rica, based on the chi-square test statistic.

⁶ Of course, some countries enforce their compulsory voting laws more than others. The models below estimating the effect of gender quotas on voting include a variable measuring compulsory voting (www.idea.int).

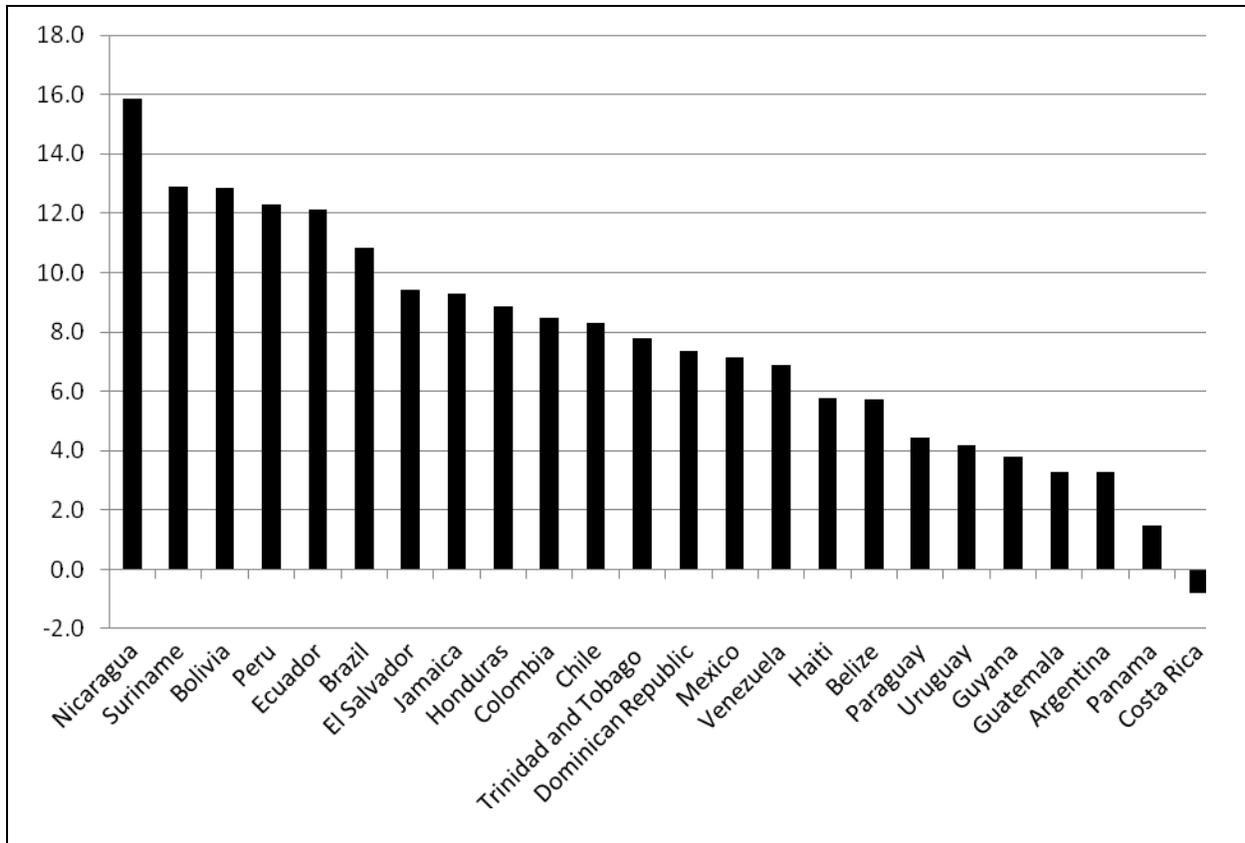


Figure 1: Gender Gap in Political Interest across Latin American Countries

To determine the role that gender quotas play in explaining the gender gaps in political participation across Latin America, I conduct a cross-national analysis includes 24 countries surveyed in the 2010 Americas Barometer.⁷ The survey respondents in each country are the “unit of analysis,” and I use pooled logit models with standard errors clustered around country to statistically estimate the effect of respondent-level and country-level variables on the nine different types of political participation described above.⁸ At the respondent level, the key variable is the gender of the respondent. The analyses also control for other characteristics of the respondents that have been found to affect political participation: age, education, income level, marital status, support for the incumbent president, and citizen perceptions of the country’s

⁷ I exclude the United States and Canada.

⁸ Following Primo et al. (2007), I use pooled models with clustering around the standard errors rather than conducting the more complex, but in this case unnecessary, Hierarchical Linear Modeling. As the appendix notes, survey questions with ordinal responses were collapsed into a dichotomous dependent variable for consistency of presentation and ease of interpretation. Results were comparable when coded according to their original scale and analyzed with an ordered logit model.

economy. At the country level, the key variable is a dichotomous measure of whether or not the country employs a gender quota for national legislative elections. Additional country-level control variables include the percentage of the legislature that was female as of December 31, 2009 (www.ipu.org), level of economic development (GDP per capita logged in 2008) (U.N. Statistics Division), and the type of electoral system—specifically the average district magnitude for the lower or only house of the national legislature (Johnson and Wallack 2005).⁹

Perhaps most important to determining the relationship between quotas and women's and men's participation are interaction terms between the respondent's gender and gender quotas. It is the interaction terms that reveal whether the effect of gender (i.e., the "gender gap") is statistically different in countries with quotas than in countries without them. To present the effects more intuitively, I calculate the marginal effects and conditional standard errors for gender in countries with quotas and without them and present them as predicted probabilities (Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006).

The Effect of Quotas on the Gender Gap in Political Participation

Statistical analyses on the role that gender quotas play in closing the gender gap across countries reveal that quotas play a very limited role, if any. As described above, I analyzed the effect of quotas on nine different forms of political activity. Even after accounting for other explanations for political participation, the interaction between the respondent's gender and the presence of a gender quota yielded few statistically significant results. It had no significant effect for voting, persuading others to vote in a particular way, working for a political campaign, attending local government meetings, or attending women's group meetings (models not shown).¹⁰ For voting, no significant gender gap exists in most countries to begin with so it is not surprising the quotas would do nothing to mediate that "gap." The other

⁹ I also tested alternative country-level variables: women's workforce participation levels and whether the country has had a female president within the past five years. Neither was statistically significant in any models and their inclusion does not change the results presented below. Because of the small number of degrees of freedom at the country level and the correlation between these variables and others already included in the model, I excluded them from the final analyses.

¹⁰ Because these models show no significant effect for the gender*quota interaction, I simply discuss these results in the text rather than reporting the results in tables.

political activities do still have significant gender gaps, on average, even after accounting for all of the variables mentioned above, but quotas do little to reduce the size of those gaps.

Quotas do play a borderline statistically significant role in explaining the gender gap in political interest, attending party meetings, and petitioning government for help, and they have a near-significant effect on both men and women's probability of protesting. Table 2 shows the results of the logit models predicting the likelihood that respondents will do each of these four activities. The interaction term between gender and quota is borderline significant for political interest ($p=0.16$), party meetings ($p=0.12$), and almost reaches significance at the 95% level for petitioning government. For all three, quotas have a positive effect on the size of the gender gap. Figure 2 illustrates this more clearly. It shows the predicted probabilities that men and women will have high levels of political interest, attend party meetings often, and petition government in countries with quotas and without quotas, all else equal. Most importantly, the figure shows that there is a smaller difference between the predicted percentage of women and men who participate in these activities in countries with quotas than without quotas. The predicted percentage of women with high interest in countries with quotas, for example, is 31% compared to 37% for men—a gap of 6%.¹¹ The difference in countries without quotas is a bit larger—9%. For attending party meetings, 16% of men are predicted to attend compared to 13% of women, all else equal, in countries with quotas. In countries without quotas, the gap is 5%—only 15% of women are predicted to attend party meetings compared to just over 20% of men. For petitioning government officials for assistance, the gap between men and women actually disappears in countries with quotas. The estimated gap is near zero, 0.4%, and not statistically significant. The gap in countries without quotas is 3% and is statistically significant.

¹¹ Probabilities can be translated into percentages by multiplying the predicted probability by 100.

Table 2: Statistical Models Explaining Political Activity in Latin America

	Political Interest	Attend Party Meetings	Petition Government	Protest
Gender (female=1)	-0.42*** (0.05)	-0.40*** (0.05)	-0.17** (0.07)	-0.34*** (0.06)
Age	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00*** (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)
Education	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.06*** (0.02)	-0.08*** (0.01)	0.03 (0.05)
Income	0.10*** (0.02)	0.06** (0.03)	-0.03*** (0.01)	0.04 (0.03)
Married	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.15** (0.07)	0.06 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.05)
Support for President	0.15*** (0.03)	0.03 (0.05)	0.10*** (0.03)	-0.04 (0.05)
Economic Perceptions	0.12*** (0.03)	-0.08** (0.03)	-0.12*** (0.03)	0.00 (0.04)
Women in Legislature	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
GDP per capita (logged)	0.09 (0.07)	-0.17** (0.08)	0.08 (0.08)	-0.29* (0.15)
District Magnitude (logged)	-0.15 (0.09)	-0.11 (0.12)	0.10 (0.06)	-0.24* (0.13)
Quota	0.07 (0.18)	-0.25 (0.36)	-0.50*** (0.15)	0.25 (0.18)
Gender * Quota	0.12 (0.08)	0.14 (0.09)	0.17* (0.09)	0.05 (0.09)
Party Attachment		1.23*** (0.12)		
Constant	-2.56*** (0.63)	-0.20 (0.66)	-1.66** (0.69)	0.25 (1.24)
N	34115	33456	31765	33159
X ²	1371.79***	574.74***	301.70***	116.02***

Logit estimates with robust standard errors clustered around country in parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

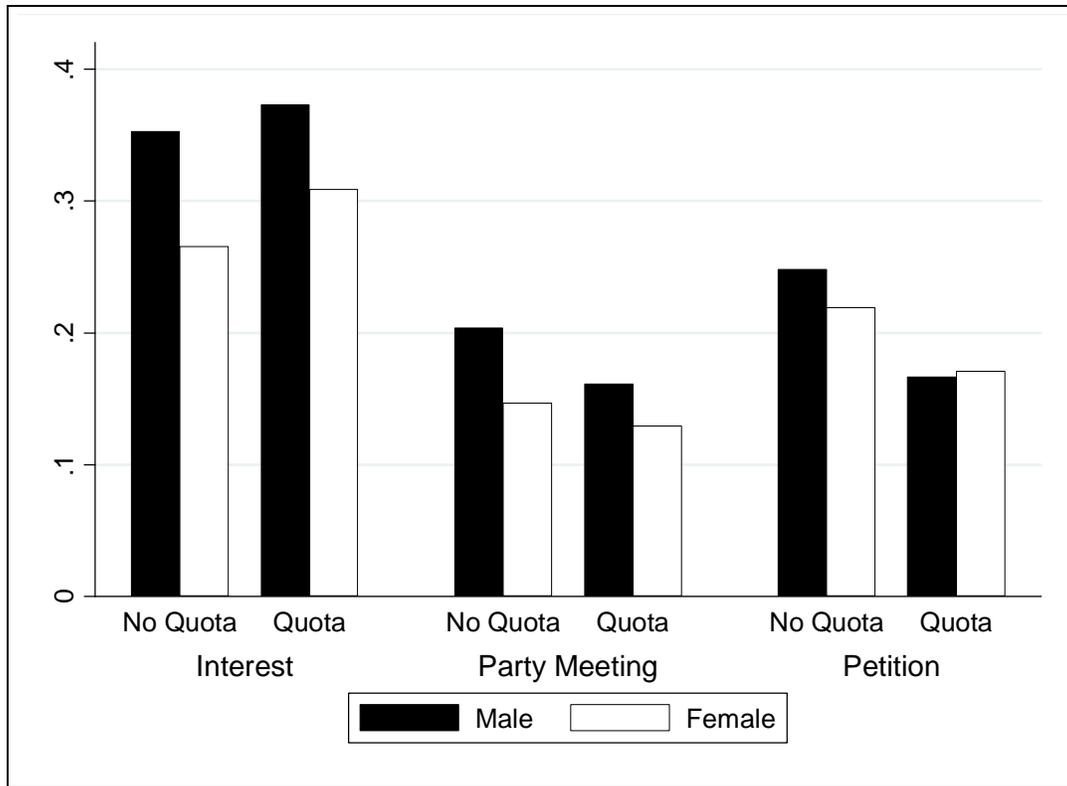


Figure 2: Predicted Probabilities for Men's and Women's Political Participation in Latin America

Looking at the fourth political activity in Table 2, protesting, the analysis shows that the interaction between gender and quotas is not significant, but the quota variable itself is near-significant ($p=0.15$). Although quotas do not significantly change the gender gap in protesting, both men and women in countries with quotas are more likely to protest than those in countries without quotas. The predicted probability that respondents will protest, all else equal, is relatively small but a difference does exist between quota systems and non-quota systems. Where quotas are in place, the predicted percentage of respondents who are likely to protest is 7.7% compared to 5.8% in countries that do not have quotas.¹²

Although the main focus of this paper is the extent to which quotas mediate the gender gap, other factors do help to explain levels of political participation. The effects for the control variables reported in Table 2 are similar to the effects for the other measures of political

¹² Predicted values are computed holding dichotomous variables at their modes and continuous variables at their means. In this case, the prediction is for unmarried females with all other measures of respondent and country characteristics at their average levels.

participation. In general, age and marital status have little effect on political participation in Latin America. Education and income affect some activities more than others. Less educated people are more likely to attend political party meetings and petition government for assistance while education level matters not at all for political interest or protesting. Wealthier people are more likely to be interested in politics and attend party meetings and are less likely to petition for help. Support for the president makes people more likely to be interested in politics and petition government officials for assistance with problems. Having negative perceptions of one's economic situation makes people more likely to attend party meetings and seek help from the government.

Among the country-level variables, women's legislative representation has no effect on any forms of political participation. The state of the economy has a negative effect on the likelihood that citizens will attend party meetings, local government meetings, women's group meetings, and protest, but it has no effect on the other forms of political activity. The average number of representatives that citizens elect to the legislature often has a negative effect on participation, but it is only statistically significant for protesting. The more representative the district is, the more likely people are to protest—not exactly the effect one might expect unless people are very unhappy with the way the political process works.

In sum, significant gender gaps in political participation do exist across Latin America, but the size of the gaps varies widely across countries. Although some scholars and activists tout the role that quotas might play in reducing these gaps and getting more women interested in and involved in political activities, this empirical analysis suggests that the effects of gender quotas on the gender gap in political participation in Latin America are quite minimal. Quotas only decrease the size of the gender gap in political interest, attending party meetings, and petitioning government, and for the first two we are a little less than 90% confident that the change in the gap exists outside this sample of respondents and countries. For petitioning government, the effect is stronger and more significant. For the remaining activities, the gender gaps in countries with gender quotas are no different than the gaps in countries without them.

Case Study: Quotas and Political Participation in Uruguay

The previous section analyzed the effect of gender quotas on gender gaps in political participation across countries. In this section, I focus on one specific country—Uruguay—to present a clearer picture of whether and how quotas affect participation. Uruguay is the most recent country in Latin America to adopt a gender quota and did so in 2009. Did the quota adoption process mobilize women into political participation? Have quotas symbolically spurred changes in women’s engagement in politics? Or, are the effects of quotas more limited than scholars and activists often suggest, and in this way, mirror the cross-national findings just presented?

The Adoption of Gender Quotas

On April 3, 2009, Uruguay joined eleven other Latin American countries with passage of a law that mandates gender quotas. Ley 18.476 requires that political parties include women on ballots, both as primary candidates and substitutes, for elections to both chambers of the national legislature, departmental assemblies, local assemblies, mayoral posts, election boards and within the political party leadership. The law requires that “people of both sexes” must be included in “every three positions” on the party ballot, and where ballots have only two candidates, at least one must be filled by a person of a different sex.¹³ Departmental election boards and the national electoral tribunal have the authority to ensure that parties comply with the quota, and if they do not, ballots are rejected. The electoral system in Uruguay facilitates the implementation of this gender quota. Congressional elections to both houses employ closed-list

¹³ The law additionally states that the quota applies to the entire ballot or the first fifteen positions on the ballot. Given that electoral districts comprise the entire chamber for both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, this could be problematic. However, Uruguay’s rather unique tendency for parties to run multiple lists means that most lists are unlikely to award seats below the fifteenth position anyway. If parties really wanted to avoid the quota, they could reduce the number of ballots they run and lump women at the bottom of the list below position 15. Women would still be guaranteed at least 5 positions at the top of the ballot, however.

proportional representation, whereby political parties nominate a slate of candidates that cannot be disturbed by voters.¹⁴

The passage of this quota law in Uruguay was a long time coming. Early efforts in the 1980's on behalf of the Network of Female Politicians failed as did three bills introduced into the legislature in 1988, 1992, and 2002 (Archenti and Johnson 2006; Johnson 2008). A handful of small political parties in Uruguay adopted quotas over the years but the large and most-dominant parties in the Uruguayan party system never followed suit (Archenti and Johnson 2006). While most Latin American countries who have adopted quotas did so in the late 1990's and very early 2000's, it was not until 2009 under the center-left government of Frente Amplio and President Tabare Vazquez (2004-2009) that Uruguayan feminists were able to push quota legislation through congress.

The adoption of quotas in Uruguay, as in many countries, was not a process limited to political elites or one obscured from society. Women from civil society, feminist groups, feminist sections of political parties, and academics were part of the efforts to push quotas through the congress (Johnson and Moreni 2009). Quotas debates were reported in the media—television, radio, newspapers—such that a wide segment of the population had access to information about the quota adoption process. Both women and men in society have been quite supportive of gender quotas and the need to increase women's representation in politics for many years. A survey conducted in 2007 by the Gender and Politics Center of the Political Science Institute at University of the Republic (APG-ICP) in Uruguay found that 60% of Uruguayans think the congress needs more women, with 73% of women responding that way compared to 56% of men (Johnson and Moreni 2009). That survey also found that 76% of respondents with an opinion on a gender quota for elected office supported the idea. Only 35% of citizens had no opinion of quotas. Four years earlier, 69% of Uruguayans supported quotas, and in even in 1997, 53% did (Johnson and Moreni 2009). Thus, Uruguay's gender quotas were

¹⁴ It is not yet clear what effect the use of multiple lists within parties yielding what some consider to be quite personalistic elections will have on the implementation of the gender quota (Carey and Shugart 1995). Technically, if men wanted to ensure they were at the top of the list, they could simply defect and create their own list within the party. That said, in the 2009 election, nearly 48% of candidates in the primaries were female (Altman 2010), which may counter the incentive to do this.

not only widely known but widely supported when the legislature finally passed the quota law in 2009.

For many women in Uruguay, the absence of a gender quota had left a glaring hole. Women's levels of political representation in Uruguay have historically been low. This became particularly evident in recent years when comparing Uruguay to other countries in Latin America. Uruguay is near the bottom of the list of Latin American countries in terms of the percentage of the national legislature that is female (IPU 2011). Figure 3 shows the percentage of the Uruguayan legislature that is female since the return to democracy in 1984. Women's representation has been below the regional average consistently since 1995. In 1995, the regional average was 12.7% and by 2011, it was ten percentage points higher, 22.3% (IPU 2011; IPU 1995). It is this abysmal record with women's representation that drove Uruguayan feminists to push the General Assembly to join the ranks of the twelve other countries with gender quotas.

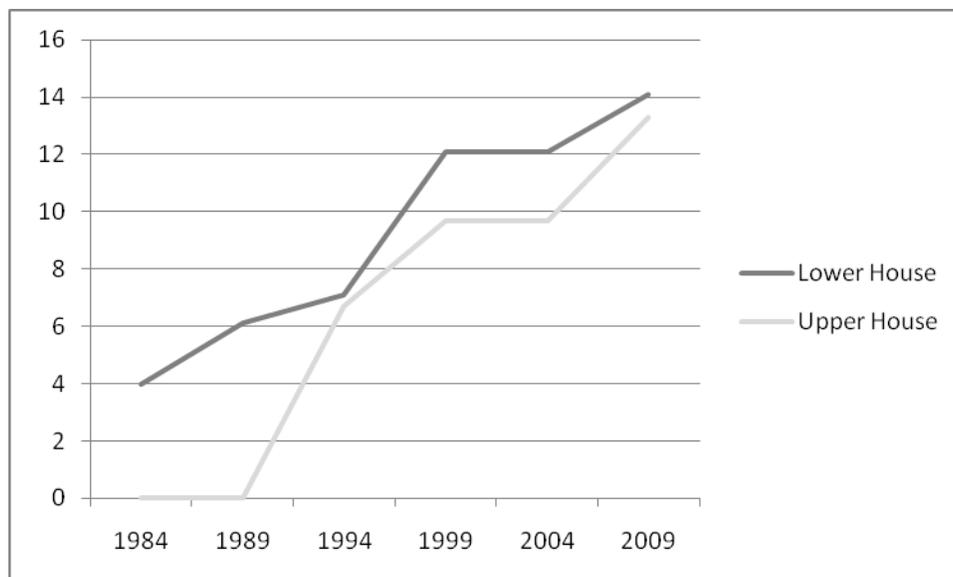


Figure 3: Percentage of the Uruguayan General Assembly that is Female, 1984-2009

The slow progress toward adopting a quota law matches the struggles that feminists have faced in other efforts to move women's rights policies forward in recent years. Uruguay was one of the first Latin American countries to grant women suffrage in 1932 and granted them a wide range of civil liberties in 1946 (Johnson 2002). These early years also saw passage of female-friendly laws on divorce, maternity leave, and women's labor and educational rights (Johnson 2002). However, economic crises after the Great Depression and WWII dealt Uruguay

a crippling blow as did the military coup in 1973 and subsequent 11-year rule by the military, such that its reputation as a model country declined (Sapriza 1994). The second wave of feminism emerged in Uruguay around the same time as the transition to democracy and women's concerns were often swept up in the broader struggle for democracy (Sapriza 1994). Once democracy was restored, feminists struggled to push through revisions to these laws and other reforms to protect women and advance women's equality (Johnson 2002).

Why Uruguay?

Uruguay provides a strong case for a more in-depth analysis of the relationship between quotas and women's political participation for three reasons. The first reason is data availability. The Uruguayan quota law was the most recently passed quota law in Latin America (adopted in 2009), and as such, is one of the few quotas for which public opinion data are available both before and after adoption of the quota. The Americas Barometer was conducted in Uruguay in 2006, 2008, and 2010, allowing me to use the 2008 and 2010 surveys to analyze changes in women's and men's political participation. The second reason is theoretical. Uruguay offers a test of the effect that a gender quota may have on women's political participation distinct from accompanying changes in women's level of political representation. Although Uruguay's quota law was passed in April 2009, six months before the 2009 legislative elections, it did not apply to that election.¹⁵ This makes it possible to disentangle any effect that the passage of a gender quota has on women's political participation from the effect of a change women's representation resulting from the law. Women's representation in the Uruguayan congress has hovered around 13% since 2004 (IPU), such that any changes in women's political participation cannot be a result of changes in women's representation in government.¹⁶ The third reason is that since Uruguay is one of the most recent countries to adopt quotas, research on its quota is minimal at this point. This study offers one of the first academic analyses of the quota law in Uruguay.

¹⁵ Uruguay held national legislative elections on October 25, 2009, but the quota law (Ley 18.476) exempts national legislative elections from the quota until 2014 (articles 2 and 5). It also exempts departmental elections until their next round in 2015, but it applies to all other offices immediately.

¹⁶ After the 2004 lower house election, women won 12 of the 99 seats (12%) (www.ipu.org). In the 2009 election, 14 women won seats (14%) (www.ipu.org).

A case study, such as this, allows me to hold constant many of the things that scholars have found typically affect political participation—culture, the large-scale socioeconomic environment, and political institutions—because they do not change in Uruguay between 2008 and 2010. Culture and political culture are slow-moving phenomena, in general, and follow this pattern in Uruguay, more specifically. Women’s socioeconomic status in Uruguay has long been near the top across Latin American countries. The 2009 Gender-related Development Index ranked Uruguay 45th in the world with a score of 0.862, just behind Chile (41st) and just ahead of Argentina (46th), Costa Rica (47th) and Mexico (48th).¹⁷ Women comprised nearly half of the paid labor force in 2009, 44%, but only 54% of women are in the paid labor force compared to 76% of men.¹⁸ Women outnumber men in institutions of higher education—63% of students were female¹⁹—yet, they earn 30% less than men in the workforce (Cariboni 2009). These statistics have been this high for many years.

Political institutions have been very stable in Uruguay, almost since 1918 (González 1995). Yet, political factors do change from year to year. In between 2008 and 2010, Uruguay held presidential and legislative elections. Party primaries were in June 2009, legislative and presidential elections were held in October 2009, the presidential run-off was in November 2009, and municipal elections occurred in May 2010 (Altman 2010). Thus, using surveys from 2008 and 2010 could induce bias from political changes that occurred that this research design cannot control for. Fortunately, one of the primary variables that could be problematic—changes in the party system—actually remained relatively constant with the 2009 elections. The Frente Amplio retained the presidency, albeit under José Mujica, and again held a narrow majority in the congress—50 of 99 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 16 of 30 Senate seats.

Quotas and the Gender Gap

In terms of political participation, Uruguay ranks near the top of Latin American countries. Uruguayan citizens have high levels of political interest, vote in large numbers, and

¹⁷ Source: Human Development Report 2009. The rankings of these countries on the Human Development Report’s new Gender Inequality Index in 2010 is comparable.

¹⁸ Source: U.N. Statistics Division, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/tab5a.htm>

¹⁹ Source: U.N. Statistics Division, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/tab4d.htm>

participate in protests more often than citizens in many other countries in the region (Queirolo and Boidi 2010). Both women and men participate in these activities such that the gender gap in political participation in Uruguay is by no means the most exaggerated in the region. However, in 2008, significant gender gaps in political participation existed in four of the nine activities under study here: political interest, persuading others to vote in one way or another, attending meetings of political parties, and petitioning government officials for assistance (see Figure 4).²⁰ For interest in politics, persuading others, and attending party meetings, women reported doing these things less often than men. The gaps were not huge, however.²¹ The largest gender gap was in political interest where only 39% of women report being interested in politics compared to 46% of men—a gap of 7 percentage points. The gap was 4 percentage points for persuading others and 3 for attending party meetings. The one case where the gender gap favors women is petitioning government. Women were significantly more likely to petition government officials for help—24% of women compared to 18% of men, a gap of 6 percentage points. A gender gap in working on a political campaign (2.5 percentage point gap) and protesting (3 percentage point gap) may exist but confidence in the presence of that gap outside the survey sample is just below the 10% level ($p=0.17$ and $p=0.13$, respectively).

²⁰ The figure presents the results of bivariate cross-tabulations. The “significant” variables were statistically significant according to the chi-square test statistic at less than the 0.10 level.

²¹ The large number of respondents who report having voted in the last election is high because voting in legislative and presidential elections is compulsory.

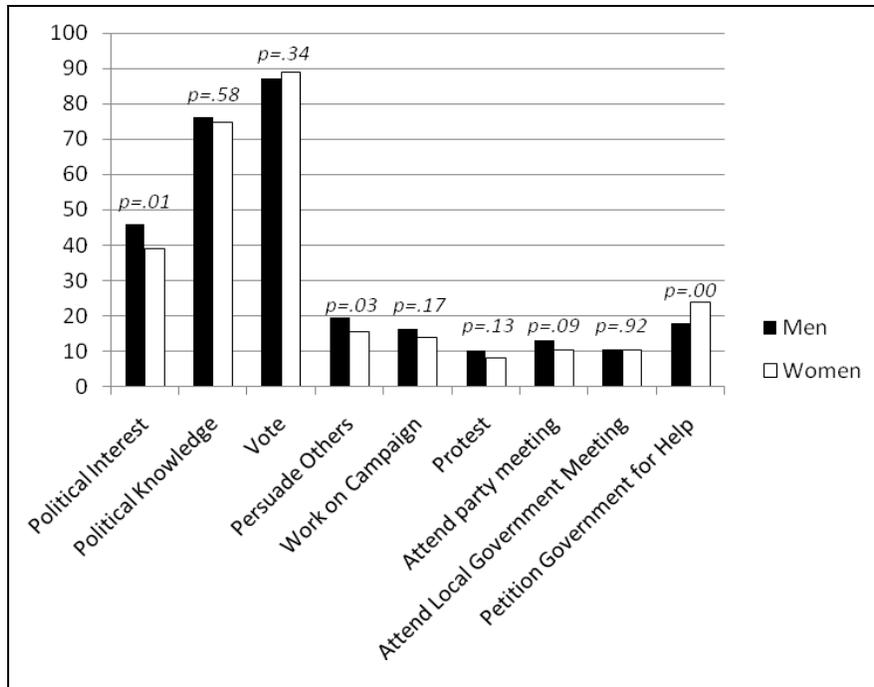


Figure 4: Percentage of Women and Men who Participate in Various Political Activities in Uruguay

Note: p-values are for the Pearson chi-square test statistic.

To analyze how quotas affect these gender gaps, I ran statistical models that predict the gender gap in 2008 while controlling for the respondent’s age, education, marital status, and income level.²² I also control for support for the incumbent president, Tabaré Vazquez in 2008 and José Mujica in 2010, to account for any effect that the election of a new president might have on citizens. I then compare the predicted effect of gender (i.e., the gender gap) with the predicted effect of gender in identical models from the 2010 survey.

Figure 5 presents the results of this analysis. It plots the predicted probability of a gender gap and the accompanying confidence interval in each of the nine different statistical models in 2008 and 2010, respectively.²³ The figure shows that, overall, quotas had only a minimal effect, if any. The models predict that the gender gap does close slightly in several political activities (as discussed in detail below), but the estimated gaps are often not statistically significant and the change in the size of the gap from 2008 to 2010 is never

²² The models are logit models, and just as in the cross-national models, all dependent variables are dichotomous.

²³ In other words, the figure plots the point estimate for the gender variable in each statistical model transformed into predicted probabilities. I do not present the results for the control variables here.

significant.²⁴ In other words, we cannot be more than 90% confident that there is a gender gap in either 2008 or 2010 outside the survey's sample nor can we be confident that the gender gap shrinks from 2008 to 2010. That said, I will briefly discuss the minimal changes that did occur.

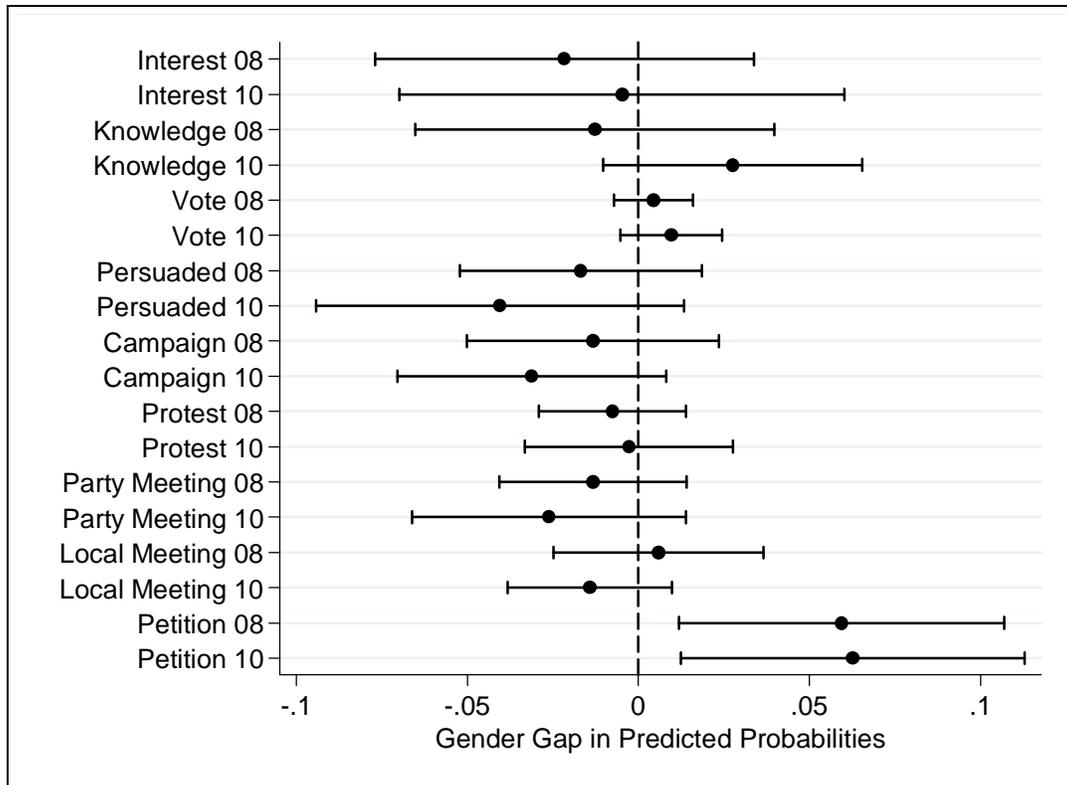


Figure 5: Gender Gap in Predicted Probabilities for Political Participation in Uruguay

Note: Predicted probabilities generated from multivariate logit models holding all other variables at their means.

Two activities where the gender gap decreases from 2008 to 2010, albeit not significantly, are political interest and protesting. Both gaps, however, still favor men. In other words, men were more likely to do these things than women in both years. For political interest, the gap in predicted probabilities drops from 0.02 to 0.005. For protesting, it decreases very slightly from 0.01 to 0.003.

²⁴ I determined the statistical significance of the change in the gap from 2008 to 2010 with a set of models that included interaction terms. More specifically, I ran models that pooled the 2008 and 2010 surveys together and included a dummy variable for the 2010 survey that I then interacted with gender. The interaction terms were not statistically significant for any of the political activities. In other words, no significant difference exists in the gender gap between 2008 and 2010.

The gender gap also changes in the expected direction for three other activities—political knowledge, voting, and petitioning, but again, the change is not statistically significant. For these activities, women actually become more likely than men to participate. Women's political knowledge was estimated to be less than men's in 2008, albeit not statistically significantly, but in 2010, the models predict that men's probability of being knowledgeable about politics will be 0.89, all else equal, compared to 0.92 for women—a gap of 0.03 in favor of women. The estimated gender gap is near-statistically significant in 2010 ($p=0.16$). Women were more likely to vote than were men in 2008, but the effect was quite small (predicted probability = 0.005) and not statistically significant. It grows to 0.014 in 2010 and the gender estimate approaches significance at $p=0.19$. Women were significantly more likely than men to petition public officials for assistance in 2008 and remained that way in 2010. The gap between women and men is only slightly larger in 2010, however, highlighting that the difference in those gaps across those two years is not significant.

In the remaining four areas of political participation, the gender gap for women worsens slightly from 2008 to 2010. The gender gap in the probability that citizens will attend party meetings is predicted to increase from 0.02 to 0.03, in favor of men. The gap in attending local meetings increases from 0.01 to 0.02, that for working on a campaign grows from 0.01 to 0.03, and the difference between the probability that men will try to persuade others to vote a particular way and the probability that women will increases from 0.02 to 0.04. None of these gaps are statistically significant, however, nor are the differences in the gaps between 2008 and 2010. Thus, we cannot be confident that the gaps actually exist in the Uruguayan electorate or that quotas played any role in altering the nature of the gap.

These results show that quotas have not had any significant impact on the gender gaps in participation in Uruguay; at least, not yet. It is possible that quotas could have a delayed effect as citizens slowly learn more about the quotas and their consequences. However, the theory outlined in this paper focused on how the adoption process itself might shape women's political engagement and that clearly does not have empirical support in Uruguay. The findings for Uruguay confirm much of what the cross-national analysis indicated as well.

Conclusion

Although quotas are often thought (or hoped) to have effects above and beyond increasing the number of women elected to the national legislature, this study shows that quotas do not produce significantly smaller gender gaps in men's and women's political participation in Latin America. Quotas play little role mediating the gender gap across countries and their adoption in Uruguay did not lead to a significant change in women's participation relative to men's. Some effects, but not strongly significant ones, did appear for political interest, attending party meetings, and petitioning government cross-nationally, and those were mirrored in Uruguay, with the exception of party meetings. Uruguay also showed a small increase in the gender gap favoring women in voting and political knowledge, but even though the gaps were near-significant the change in the gap after the adoption of the gender quota was not.

These null findings are not inconsequential. They match those of two related studies, Zetterberg (2009) and Schwindt-Bayer (2010), and begin to build a body of evidence that contradicts the oft-heralded vision of quotas as a *pièce de résistance*. Zetterberg (2009) studied seventeen Latin American countries, and using the Latin Barometer 2005 survey, found no effect for quotas on women's political attitudes or three areas of political participation: campaign activities, political contact, and protest activities.²⁵ Schwindt-Bayer (2010) similarly argued that quotas can serve a symbolic role and increase women's support for democracy, diminish perceptions of corruption and increase trust in government in Latin America. Yet, that study too found little effect for quotas. During a time when gender quotas are being hailed as a grand solution to women's inequitable levels of political involvement, these findings importantly suggest that quotas have limits. When implemented correctly, they do increase women's political representation (Jones 2009; Schwindt-Bayer 2009). However, their impact on women does not translate into most areas of political participation, at least not in Latin America.

²⁵ Note that Zetterberg (2009) only studies women. His analyses do not include men.

Appendix

Dependent Variable	Description
Political Interest	Question: "How much interest do you have in politics?" (POL1) Survey Responses: 1=a lot, 2=some, 3=a little, 4=none Coding: Collapsed into dichotomous coding of 0="low interest," 1="high interest"
Political Knowledge (Uruguay only)	Variable measures how many of the three political knowledge questions the respondent answered correctly. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GI1: who is the president of the U.S.? • GI3: how many departments in Uruguay? • GI4: how long is the presidential term? Variable Range: 0 to 3
Vote	Question: "Did you vote in the last presidential election?" (VB2) Coding: 0=no, 1=yes
Persuade Others	Question: "During the elections, how frequently do you try to convince others to vote for a particular party or candidate?" (PP1) Survey Responses: 1=frequently, 2=sometimes, 3=rarely, 4=never Coding: Collapsed into dichotomous coding of 0="rarely," 1="often"
Work on Campaign	Question: "Did you work for a candidate or party in the last presidential election?" (PP2) Coding: 0=no, 1=yes
Protest	Question: "In the last 12 months, have you participated in a demonstration or public protest?" Coding: 0=no, 1=yes
Petition Government	Question: "To resolve problems sometimes, have you asked for help or cooperation from..." <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP2: a parliamentary deputy? • CP4A: a local authority such as a mayor, president of local board or community center? • CP4: A minister or ministry, public institution, or state office? Coding: Combines the three questions into one such that if a respondent sought help from any public official (responded "yes" to any of the three questions), the variable is coded 1. If not, it is coded 0.
Attend Local Government Meeting	Question: "Have you attended a meeting of the "junta departamental, junta local o centro communal zonal" in last 12 months? (NP1) Coding: 0=no, 1=yes

Attend Party Meeting	Question: "How frequently have you attended meetings of a political party or movement?" (CP13) Survey Responses: 1=1 time per week, 2=1 or 2 times a month, 3=one or two times a year, 4=never Coding: Collapsed into 0="rarely," 1="often"
Attend Women's Group Meetings (cross-national only)	Question: "How frequently have you attended meetings of women's or housewives' associations or groups?" (CP20) Survey Responses: 1=1 time per week, 2=1 or 2 times a month, 3=one or two times a year, 4=never Coding: Collapsed into dichotomous coding of 0="rarely," 1="often"

Source: All variables are from Americas Barometer 2010 (or Americas Barometer 2008 for Uruguay 2008 analyses). Survey was translated by the author.

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