

Gender Attitudes and Public Opinion Towards Electoral Gender Quotas in Brazil

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Research on public opinion towards affirmative action shows that citizens often support the principle of equality while simultaneously rejecting policies that promote it in a pattern described as the “principle-policy puzzle.” The scholarship also shows that ideology and prejudice towards the targeted group explain the puzzle with respect to racial affirmative action. In this article, we use unique survey questions included in the 2014 round of the AmericasBarometer in Brazil to show that citizens tend to support electoral gender quotas while rejecting gender-based egalitarianism in a reversed version of the “principle-policy puzzle.” We argue that a different type of gender attitudes, namely benevolent sexism, shapes support for gender quotas as well as for the principle of equality. While benevolent sexism tends to reject gender equality based on views about gender complementarity and stereotypes about women’s purity, they also support quotas as policies to foster such values. Our findings suggest that even though the political and scholarly debates can provide sound normative reasons for the adoption of quotas across different contexts, public support for them often relies on paternalistic views and expectations about the role of women in politics.

KEY WORDS: gender quotas, gender attitudes, ambivalent sexism, public opinion, Brazil

The debate about electoral gender quotas has become increasingly relevant both in academic and public circles during the last few decades. The scholarship on the topic offers a variety of normative and empirical reasons for why electoral gender quotas in parliaments can promote women’s representation, and several legislatures around the world seem to have embraced the idea over time (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005; Norris, 2006). Despite the arguments in favor of electoral quotas and the results achieved by such policies in different contexts, the scholarship on affirmative action suggests that efforts to further public support for such policies are unlikely to succeed. Public opinion studies on racial affirmative action show that citizens are not directly concerned about equality when they form opinions about those policies. Instead, the scholarship shows that ideology and prejudice towards the targeted group are the primary factors driving opinions about affirmative action (Federico & Sidanius, 2002; Jackman & Muha, 1984; Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Sniderman, Brody, & Kuklinski, 1984). Regarding electoral gender quotas, a type of affirmative action that seeks to address the underrepresentation of women in political office (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005, p. 27),

recent public opinion studies find similar patterns (Barnes & Córdova, 2016; Beauregard, 2018; Keenan & McElroy, 2017; Smith, Warming, & Hennings, 2016).

In this article, we examine and expand the theoretical model of public support for electoral gender quotas and show that support for the policy is not entirely explained by ideology and traditional forms of prejudice as suggested by previous scholarship. Building upon the literature on ambivalent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1997, 2001), we show that benevolent sexism, that is, a set of attitudes that are positive in affect but also carry components of paternalism and tokenism towards women, is strongly associated with public support for quotas. More specifically, we show that benevolent sexism tends to reject the principle of gender equality while supporting that gender-targeted policy. The pattern indicates the existence of a reverse “principle-policy puzzle,” where there is a lack of an overall association between support for the principle of gender equality and support for electoral gender quotas. In this sense, part of the public supports such policies not as remedies for overcoming inequalities, but rather as a means for reinforcing gender roles and expectations.

This new insight to the literature on gender attitudes and electoral gender quotas is possible due to original survey questions from the 2014 round of the AmericasBarometer Survey in Brazil (by the Latin American Public Opinion Project—LAPOP). Using a range of items on gender attitudes, we investigate how views about men and women, ideology, and concerns about gender equality shape opinions towards electoral gender quotas. The Brazilian case offers a valuable chance to examine the questions of this article not only due to the unique set of questions about gender attitudes included in the survey, but also because of the salience of discussions about electoral reform in the country. In face of such volatile environment in which the media and the public can shape politicians’ responses to a crisis of representation, the question of what affects support for electoral gender quotas becomes crucial not only in Brazil, but also in other contexts where such policies are under scrutiny.

Public Opinion and Gender Quotas

Research on women’s representation in Latin America and around the world describes and explains different patterns of structural and institutional barriers for women’s descriptive representation across contexts. Resulting from historical gender inequalities at the societal level, factors such as heavier family duties among women (Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 2001; Desposato & Norrander, 2009), political ambition gaps between men and women (Schwindt-Bayer, 2011), segregation to so-called feminine domains (Escobar-Lemmon & Taylor-Robinson, 2009), campaign underfinancing of female candidates (Sacchet & Speck, 2012; Wylie & dos Santos, 2016), and male incumbency advantage (Fréchette, Maniquet, & Morelli, 2008) are shown to work as obstacles that prevent more women from running for office and getting elected.

Because of those disadvantages faced by women in the political sphere, electoral gender quotas have been at the center of a push for new policies and values over the last decades in order to level the playing field and help increase the proportion of women in positions of power around the world (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005; Krook, 2006; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009), and specifically in Latin America (Jones, 2005; Piscopo, 2015).¹ However, although a large body of research examines the effects of negative public attitudes towards women in politics on overall levels of female representation (Morgan & Buice, 2013; Schwindt-Bayer & Reyes-Housholder, 2017), not as much attention has been paid to how those opinions and beliefs can shape what individuals think about gender-targeted policies.

The literature on opinions towards affirmative action focuses primarily on race-related policies in the United States. The scholarship notices that “the massive and wide-ranging liberalization of racial attitudes, while real enough, applies only to principles, not to policies” (Kinder & Sanders,

¹Different types of quotas (reserved seats, lists, and party quotas) are used in Latin America, with varying degrees of success. For more comprehensive examinations, see Franceschet and Piscopo (2013); Piscopo (2015); Krook (2017).

1996, p. 156). Researchers on the topic refer to this pattern as the “principle-policy puzzle” by observing that public endorsement for the principle of racial equality does not extend to support for affirmative action (Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Sniderman et al., 1984). Instead, they find that ideology and prejudice are the main factors driving opinions towards racial affirmative action. According to Sniderman et al. (1984), this puzzle would be explained by the fact that more educated citizens connect their views on the policy with their broader ideological views about the role of government in society. Hence, although highly educated conservatives would acknowledge inequalities and support egalitarian principles, they would disagree that the government should promote policies to address the issues. Less educated citizens would instead rely on affect towards blacks to form opinions on both the principle of racial equality and race-related affirmative action policies, hence displaying an affect-based congruence between principle and policy. Other authors argue that prejudice is the predominant force in opinions towards affirmative action and that ideology would serve as “principled-objections” to cover those underlying intergroup biases, even among more educated individuals (Federico & Sidanius, 2002; Jackman & Muha, 1984; Strolovitch, 1998).

Findings from recent comparative studies on public support for electoral gender quotas are consistent with the earlier studies on race. According to this scholarship, views about the role of the government and attitudes towards women are associated with public support for electoral gender quotas. Using survey data from Latin America and the Caribbean, Barnes and Córdova (2016) show that citizens’ support for the government’s involvement in society has a strong positive association with support for electoral gender quotas in the region. Furthermore, they show that those views tend to be more strongly correlated in countries with higher levels of governance quality. Outside of Latin America, Keenan and McElroy (2017) survey candidates, professionals, and the public in Ireland to show that gender attitudes are associated with support for gender quotas. Beauregard (2018) also finds that partisanship, ideology, and gender attitudes are related to support for gender quotas in Australia.

Different studies explain the dynamics of gender attitudes and views about women holding positions of power. Norris and Inglehart (2001) discuss factors related to the representation of women in politics and show survey evidence that attitudes towards women as political leaders are strongly associated with the proportion of women in parliaments around the world. Morgan and Buice (2013) use cross-national surveys from Latin America to show that some of those attitudes are associated with contextual factors such as elite cues and discredited male establishments in power. Also, gender attitudes not only shape opinions towards women as occupants of positions of power but affect how citizens perceive efforts to promote women’s rights and representation. Cassese, Barnes, and Branton (2015) find that modern sexism—beliefs about the origins and causes of gender inequalities—affects support for fair-play policies in the United States. On the same perspective, the recent study by Barnes and Cassese (2017) shows that modern sexism affects individuals’ opinions on many relevant issues including policies related to abortion and childcare. Recent studies also investigate more directly the sources of public opinion support for electoral gender quotas. Smith et al. (2016) focus on what they call “gendered leadership stereotypes” and show that positive beliefs associated with leadership styles and traits of women are highly correlated with the support for quotas in some Latin American countries. With regards to more negative antiegalitarian attitudes towards women, Kinder and Kam (2009) find that the effects of those attitudes on support for affirmative action tend to be more nuanced. They show that ethnocentrism—a propensity to conceive society as divided between ingroups and outgroups—does not have clear relationships with opinions on abortion, employment discrimination, and gender-targeted affirmative action. They attribute the lack of association to the intimacy and proximity between the ingroup and outgroup that characterize gender relations.

In this article, we propose that the study of public opinion towards electoral gender quotas—as a type of affirmative action—should expand the understanding of categories previously referred to as “prejudice” or (negative) “affect.” In this sense, we take Kinder and Kam’s (2009) suggestion—that

the relationship between gender attitudes and opinions towards affirmative action includes a component of intimacy—to be central in the study of gender and politics. We also take Smith et al.'s (2016) findings on the effects of “positive” gender stereotypes as pointing in the same direction, and we want to further explore its theoretical and normative implications.

Theory and Hypotheses

The literature from social psychology argues that one of the defining aspects of gender relations is that they are marked simultaneously by prejudice and closeness (Glick & Fiske, 1997, 2001). Even though societies are historically characterized by patriarchal control of women, men often subscribe to benevolent views of women. According to Glick and Fiske, this is due to the intimate connections between men and women, which gives gender relations a specificity that is crucial for the understanding of sexism. By considering such specificity, Glick and Fiske propose that sexism—the sentiment of hostility towards women and support for the maintenance of traditional gender roles in society—is fundamentally ambivalent (p. 120).

Because gender relations are marked simultaneously by prejudice and closeness, Glick and Fiske (1997) identify two dimensions of sexism. The first, hostile sexism, corresponds to earlier definitions of sexism, referring to the set of derogatory views of women and the justification of traditional gender roles. Benevolent sexism, on the other hand, refers to the recognition of men's dependence on women, subtle justifications for male dominance, and to the idea that the groups are complementary. This conceptual distinction provides different rationales for understanding how citizens view policies promoting female representation and gender equality. While hostile sexism involves derogatory views of women and tries to justify political inequality because of women's supposed deficiencies as political beings, benevolent sexism involves stereotypes about leadership roles and traits, resulting in beliefs and prescriptions about how women and men have different styles of acting and thinking in politics. In this sense, hostile sexism is exclusionary and justifies women's political disadvantages by connecting those to attributed inabilities as political beings. Hostile sexism necessarily decreases support for gender equality and any attempt to promote it such as electoral gender quotas.

H1: Hostile sexism will have a negative relationship with support for the principle of gender equality.

H2: Hostile sexism will have a negative relationship with support for electoral gender quotas.

On the other hand, benevolent sexism is not associated with biases against women participating and taking leadership positions, but rather with beliefs about complementary leadership roles and styles. As Jost and Kay (2005) point out, such views of women and men as playing distinct and complementary roles in politics serve the goal of increasing system justification, while maintaining basic structures of male dominance. Dixon, Levine, Reicher, and Durrheim (2012) argue that those seemingly positive attitudes towards women can often strengthen rather than disrupt existing patterns of discrimination. Empirically, the work by Barnes, Beaulieu, and Saxton (2018) uses an experimental design to show how hostile and benevolent sexism can increase backlash for a female incumbent when she is accused of involvement in a sex scandal. They show that while hostile sexists react negatively to scandals because the alleged behavior challenges men's dominant position in society and politics, benevolent sexists do so because the behavior violates stereotypes about the purity of women. In a similar vein, Cassese and Holman (2019) explore how Trump's campaign attacks towards Clinton in 2016 made benevolent sexists more supportive of the latter and less supportive of the former, consistent with the idea that those views are focused on protecting women. All in all, the extant evidence on the role of benevolent sexism in shaping political views suggests that it should

foster support for gender quotas as policies that fulfill paternalistic views and expectations about women as politicians.

H3: Benevolent sexism will have a negative relationship with support for the principle of gender equality.

H4: Benevolent sexism will have a positive relationship with support for electoral gender quotas.

Therefore, there is a reversed “principle-policy puzzle” with respect to the views of benevolent sexists. While they reject the principle of equality by defending gender complementarity and the maintenance of traditional gender roles, they support policies to promote women’s representation as a means to promote and reinforce the roles and expectations embodied in benevolent sexism. By including benevolent sexism in the theoretical model of public support for gender quotas, we also help explain the disconnection between support for the principle and support for the policy. Notably, our model also expects political views that are not directly related to gender attitudes, such as support for governmental interventionism, to increase support for quotas, as previously demonstrated by scholarship (Barnes & Córdova, 2016; Sniderman et al., 1984).

H5: Support for government interventionism will have a null relationship with support for the principle of gender equality.

H6: Support for government interventionism will have a positive relationship with support for electoral gender quotas.

Gender Quotas in Brazil

The question of whether the public supports electoral gender quotas, as well as citizens’ reasons for doing so, becomes central in countries where the implementation of electoral reforms is under scrutiny. This article focuses on the Brazilian case, where important electoral reforms have been recently contemplated at the national level.

In 1997, the Brazilian parliament approved Law 9.504 (Article 10 (3)) that stated that parties should “reserve” a minimum of 30% of the candidacies in their list to women. However, parties often took advantage of the ambiguity in the term “reserve” to justify failures to meet the quota by arguing that an insufficient number of women claimed the “reserved” spots in the following election.

In face of the initial failure of the quota law, the Brazilian parliament approved an amendment in 2009, changing the text to state that parties should “fill” (and not just reserve) 30% of their lists with candidates of each sex. Additionally, in case parties failed to fill the requirement, they would not be allowed to transfer unclaimed female spots to male candidates. Despite this change in the quota rule in 2009, the proportion of seats won by female candidates for the Chamber did not increase in the following elections (2010 and 2014). After the 2009 electoral reform, that growth accelerates, with the proportion of candidates increasing from about 13% to 19% in 2010, and then to 29% in the 2014 elections. However, the proportion of women elected in 2010 remained just the same as it was in 2006, at 9%, and showed a very small increase to 10% in 2014. All in all, the new quota provision succeeded in promoting more female candidacies in the last two national elections, but the number of seats held by women did not increase accordingly. The main explanations for these outcomes refer to the persisting inequality in access to campaign resources between male and female candidates (Sacchet, 2011; Sacchet & Speck, 2012; Speck & Mancuso, 2014; Wylie & dos Santos, 2016), and incumbency advantage (Perissinotto & Miríade, 2009).

In addition to the unstable political environment, the lack of success of the quota provision in leading more women into the lower house, along with a recent conservative wave that includes explicit negative rhetoric against affirmative action, raises the possibility that voters and elites consider changing or even removing the existing quota policy in a potential electoral reform. Consequently, the extent to which Brazilian citizens oppose or support the current quota rule and their specific reasons for thinking one way or another become of central importance for the future of women's representation in the country.

Data and Methods

We use the 2014 round of the AmericasBarometer survey in Brazil to examine the role of gender attitudes and other correlates of public support for gender quotas in Brazil. The survey is comprised of 1500 face-to-face interviews with a nationally representative sample of adult respondents. The dataset includes a unique set of survey questions on attitudes about women and men in politics and society, as well as items on gender equality and discrimination.

We use structural equation models (SEM) with the weighted least squares (means and variances adjusted—WLSMV) estimation method to assess the theoretical model of public opinion support for electoral gender quotas. The analyses in the article were conducted in MPlus 7.4 and consider the complex sample design of the AmericasBarometer. Data preparation was performed in Stata 13.1. SEM allow us to use confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to properly assess and measure hostile and benevolent sexism as different dimensions of gender attitudes. At the same time, we can use SEM to specify the direct and indirect causal linkages between ideology, sexism, support for gender equality, and support for electoral gender quotas. We depart from Sniderman et al.'s (1984) model of public opinion support for racial affirmative action, where ideology and prejudice affect views on the principle of equality, which in turn affects opinions on affirmative action. In our model, we hypothesize that, for the case of electoral gender quotas, prejudice towards women takes on two different forms: hostile and benevolent sexism. We also specify direct effects of hostile and benevolent sexism on support for gender quotas.

The measure of support for electoral gender quotas comes from a 7-point agree-disagree question stating that "the state ought to require that political parties reserve some space on their lists of candidates for women, even if they have to exclude some men." The question is asked across countries in the AmericasBarometer and seeks to measure normative support for the idea of gender quotas, rather than support for the existing quota provision in each country. Nonetheless, the fact that Brazil already has a gender quota provision does not change the nature of responses to the question, given that other polls indicate that at least 70% of Brazilians do not know about the rule (Ibope, 2009). Table 1 below displays the distribution of answers. Overall, less than a quarter of respondents

Table 1. Support for Electoral Gender Quotas in Brazil, 2014

Response	Frequency	Proportion	Cumulative
1. Strongly Disagree	95	0.06	0.06
2	110	0.08	0.14
3	149	0.10	0.24
4	238	0.16	0.40
5	58	0.17	0.57
6	216	0.15	0.72
7. Strongly Agree	414	0.28	1.00
Total	1480	1	

Note. Item phrasing: "The state ought to require that political parties reserve some space on their lists of candidates for women, even if they have to exclude some men."

Data: AmericasBarometer Survey in Brazil, 2014.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Gender Attitudes in Brazil, 2014

Item	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	<i>n</i>
(H) In general, men are better political leaders than women	0.36	0.26	0	1	1469
(H) Women are not as good automobile drivers as men	0.39	0.36	0	1	1491
(H) When there is not enough work, men should have a greater right to jobs than women	0.43	0.36	0	1	1490
(H and B) Men are better at handling crime as politicians	0.45	0.5	0	1	1465
(H and B) Women are better at handling education as politicians	0.73	0.44	0	1	1485
(B) Women, compared to men, tend to be sensitive and compassionate	0.78	0.27	0	1	1497
(B) Men are more corrupt as politicians	0.7	0.46	0	1	1454
(B) In a disaster, women ought to be rescued before men	0.68	0.33	0	1	1493

Note. (H): hostile sexism; (B): benevolent sexism.

Data: AmericasBarometer Survey in Brazil, 2014.

indicates disagreement with the statement, while 60% indicate support for gender quotas (by choosing one of the three values on the agreeing side of the scale).

The survey includes items on attitudes towards men and women in society and politics. Some items in the battery either come directly from or consist of slight modifications of existing items in the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1997). The goal of the modifications was to make the items more relatable and understandable to a national sample that includes less educated respondents in a developing country, since the ASI is mostly used in data collection with samples of college students in developed countries. Moreover, we expand the batteries by relying on items already included in the AmericasBarometer about attitudes towards “soft” stereotypes about men and women in politics. We use those since they are already validated and tap similar attitudes to some items in the ASI. Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics for the items. The questions on issue/policy competency and women as more honest are multiple-choice items with the options “men,” “women,” or “both” (not offered to respondents). The remaining items use 7- or 4-point agree-disagree scales. All items are rescaled between 0 and 1.

We use two items from The AmericasBarometer survey in Brazil as proxies for support for gender equality. The first asks respondents whether they agree or disagree that “discrimination against women is no longer a problem in Brazil,” while the second comes from the statement “women are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights.” In the first statement, the rejection of the existence of gender inequalities and discrimination signals that respondents believe in the fairness of the unequal status quo. In the second, agreement indicates that respondents do not see attempts to push for gender equality as legitimate. The items are inverted to indicate support for egalitarian views.² For simplicity, we use the mean score between the two items rescaled to range from 0 to 1 in the analyses that follow. The mean score in the scale is .49, which corresponds to a lower level than the overall support for quotas in the survey. With respect to ideology, we use an item that taps directly into the aspect of government interventionism that relates to affirmative action policies. We use the item on whether respondents support the idea that the government should promote strong policies to reduce inequality, also used in Barnes and Córdova (2016). While ideology is a broader concept, we use the measure of support for government interventionism since it is conceptually closer to the ideological beliefs that drive the reasoning about affirmative action (Sniderman et al., 1984, p. 78). Also, the standard left-right scale has a high rate of nonresponse (17%) and is generally not a strong driver of attitudes and behaviors among Brazilian voters. We include respondents’ wealth (additive

²A CFA model of the two items yields loadings of .47 and .37, respectively, which indicate moderate unidimensionality. Also, although items like the one on women’s demands for equal rights are often used to tap traditional sexism, we find that this item has a low factor loading on hostile sexism (.27).

scale of household assets), years of formal education, age in years, urban residency, and sex as control variables in the structural models (all rescaled from 0 to 1).

The Dimensionality of Gender Attitudes

We use a two-factor CFA model to examine the extent to which the two conceptual dimensions proposed here structure the specific measures of gender attitudes described in Table 2. The model tests the two factors as correlated latent constructs (factors). In the diagram, the unobserved traits and error terms are represented by circles, the items appear as rectangles, and the arrows indicate the standardized factor loadings with standard errors in parentheses. We expect that the items on men as better leaders than women, women drivers not being as good as male drivers, and on men getting employment priority when jobs are scarce will be unambiguous measures of hostile sexism. The items on women being more sensitive and compassionate, men as more corrupt politicians, and women being rescued first in a disaster are expected to be unambiguous measures of benevolent sexism. We expect that the two items on issue/policy (men better at handling crime and women better at handling education) will tap both hostile and benevolent sexism. We argue that hostile sexists will see those items as related to competence, in which they believe men are superior, while benevolent sexists will favor gender complementary, with men being better with crime and women better with education.

Figure 1 corroborates the expectations about the structure of gender attitudes. All factor loadings are in the expected directions and statistically significant. In two alternative specifications, we treated the items on issue/policy competence as manifestations of either hostile or benevolent sexism, and in both cases those structures performed poorly relative to the model presented in Figure 1 (see the

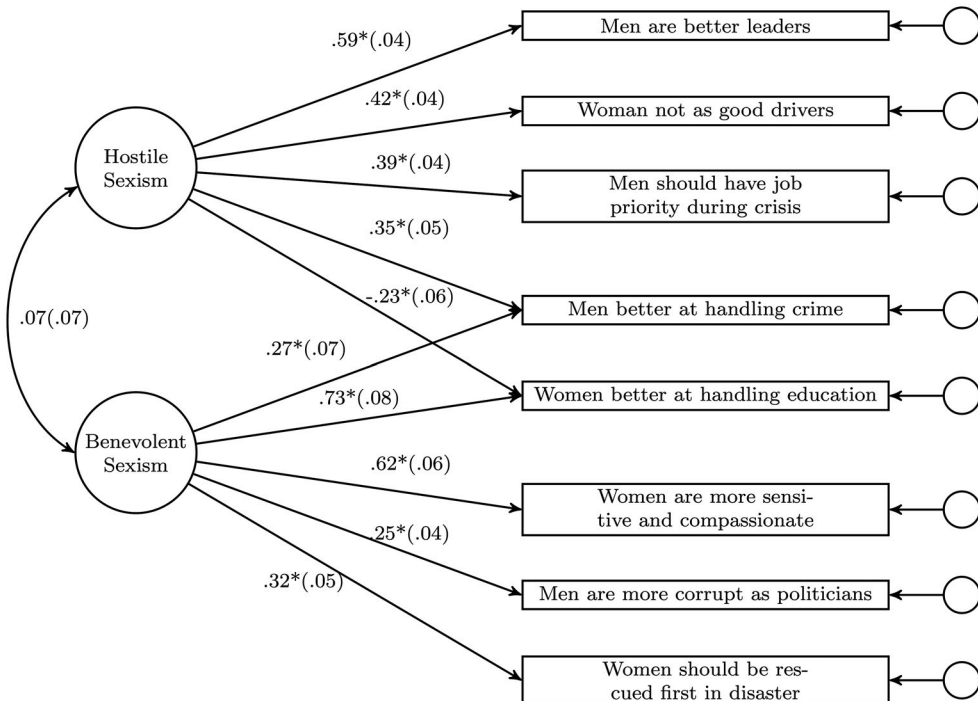


Figure 1. Confirmatory factor analysis of gender attitudes for full sample. Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR) = .05; $n = 1500$. Survey design-based standardized coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses; $*p < .05$. *Data: AmericasBarometer Survey, 2014.*

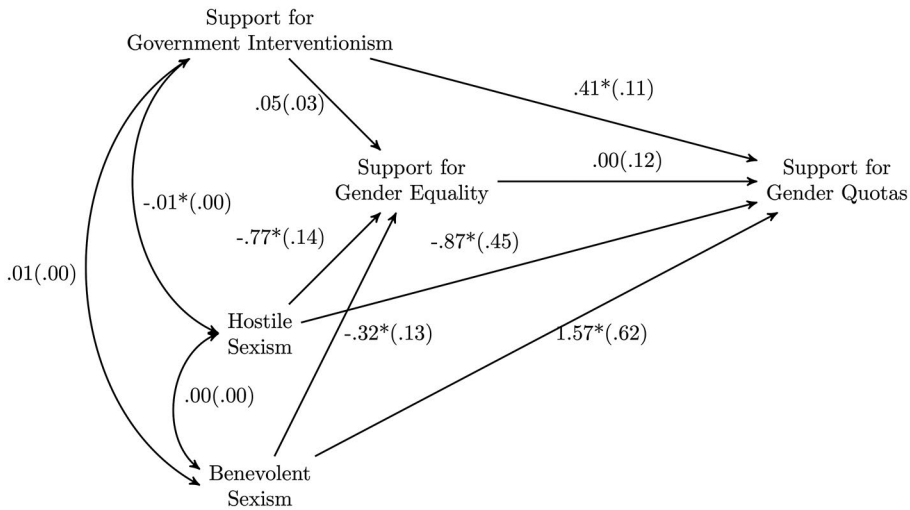


Figure 2. Structural equation model of public opinion support for electoral gender quotas in Brazil, 2014. Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .05; $n = 1463$. Survey design-based non-standardized coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < .05$. Data: AmericasBarometer Survey, 2014.

online supporting information). The estimated correlation between hostile and benevolent sexism is small (.07) and not statistically significant. A structure with a single latent factor for “sexism” yields lower model fit statistics, and several of the factor loadings are not statistically significant under that structure (see the online supporting information). The estimates in Figure 1 are also gender invariant. However, women tend to score on average lower values in hostile sexism.

Results

The first model uses the factor structure for hostile and benevolent sexism examined in the previous section with an added structural component modeling the relationships hypothesized above. In the diagram, the arrows indicate unstandardized regression coefficients (double-headed arrows are correlations) with standard errors in parentheses. The structure indicates that there are two regression models estimated simultaneously. The first regression has “Support for Gender Equality” as the dependent variable, while the second model regresses “Support for Gender Quotas” on its determinants. Figure 2 shows the model results for the full sample.

The results show that support for quotas is associated with both hostile and benevolent sexism, as well as with support for government interventionism. Consistent with Hypotheses 1 and 2, hostile sexism has a negative effect on support for gender quotas and for the principle of gender equality. The new element in the model is the strong positive effect of benevolent sexism on support for gender quotas (supporting Hypothesis 3), as well as its negative effect on support for gender equality (supporting Hypothesis 4). In this sense, benevolent sexism helps us unpack the lack of a correlation between support for the principle and support for the policy, since benevolent sexists tend to support the latter and reject the former. Although one could argue that benevolent sexists support gender quotas in Brazil simply because they know of the policy’s failure in the country, that interpretation is not supported by the fact that most Brazilians are not aware of the policy (Ibope, 2009).

Respondents who believe that the government should promote strong policies to reduce inequalities display higher levels of support for quotas, consistent with Hypothesis 6. We do not find an association between ideology (as support for government interventionism) and support for the principle

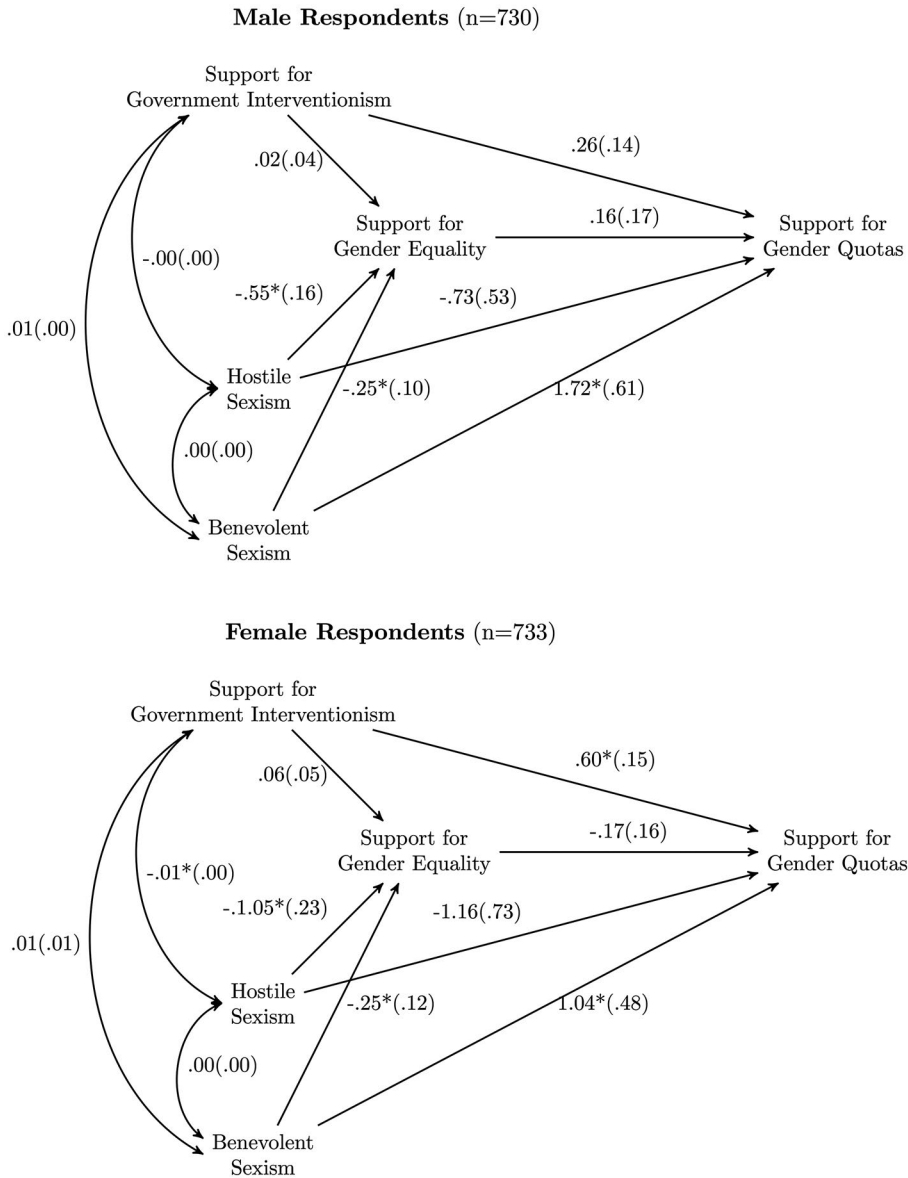


Figure 3. Structural equation model of public opinion support for electoral gender quotas by gender in Brazil, 2014. Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .05. Survey design-based non-standardized coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < .05$. Data: *AmericasBarometer* Survey, 2014.

of gender equality, consistent with Hypothesis 5.³ Another aspect of the model is that the patterns observed in the structural model displayed in Figure 2 seem to vary by gender. Figure 3 shows the results of the same structural model presented above for the full sample split by respondents' gender. Because the measurement model does not vary substantially across genders, we only show the structural model to convey the most meaningful differences to be analyzed here.

³The null relationship between the principle of gender equality and support for quotas in our model indicates that the effects of ideology, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism are direct rather than indirect (through support for gender equality).

The first outstanding feature from Figure 3 is that the main correlate of support for electoral gender quotas among men is benevolent sexism. The effect of support for government interventionism is weak and only statistically significant at lower levels of confidence. The effect of benevolent sexism is also high among women, but considerably lower than for men. Among women, support for government interventionism has a positive and statistically significant effect on support for quotas. Moreover, hostile sexism is negatively associated with support for government interventionism among men and women, but the coefficients are not statistically significant. While the coefficients are less precise than for the main model, the results suggest that although opinions about electoral gender quotas are predominantly based on the affective component of benevolent sexism, the theoretical model for explaining support for the policy may differ between men and women. While the only factor shaping men's opinions seems to be benevolent sexism, ideological concerns also matter among women. With respect to the cognitive component of support for affirmative action, we do not find consistent differences in the models when comparing more and less educated respondents (see the online supporting information).

Conclusion

This article provides a theoretical and empirical assessment of what shapes citizens' support for electoral gender quotas as strategies to overcome inequalities in women's political representation. We argue that instead of treating gender attitudes as unidimensional, ranging from negative to positive attitudes towards women in politics and society, the study of public opinion towards gender-related affirmative action in general—and electoral gender quotas in particular—should take into account the existence of different conceptual dimensions that characterize gender attitudes. We use original survey questions asked in the 2014 round to the AmericasBarometer survey in Brazil to assess the hypothesized structure of gender attitudes and whether those attitudes affect opinions on gender quotas. The main finding from the analyses is that support for electoral gender quotas is strongly associated with benevolent sexism, that is, specific beliefs about women as more honest, caring, and sensitive. Hostile sexism, which denotes more conventional derogatory views of women, is not as strongly associated with opposition to electoral gender quotas. Moreover, the findings corroborate the previous scholarship that finds ideology to be associated to support for affirmative action.

The normative and political debates on quotas provide sound arguments and evidence about quotas as ways to overcome historical gender disparities and to level the playing field between men and women in politics. Even though academics and politicians seem to recognize those merits and some positive results achieved by quotas, the question on whether those same normative concerns shape citizens' opinions is still to be answered. In this article, we show that those normative considerations do not shape public opinion towards quotas. Instead, our evidence suggests that individuals' opinions on whether their country should adopt some form of quota provision is based on views about traits and the roles of men and women in society and politics. More specifically, the views mostly associated with support for gender quotas are grounded on paternalist beliefs and stereotypes of purity about women.

Therefore, the results raise the question about whether citizens have higher expectations about the behaviors and actions of female politicians elected under a quota provision, establishing mandates that create gendered expectations about what constitutes "women's interests" (Franceschet & Piscopo, 2008). Since quotas are perceived by its supporters as promoting such traits like compassion and honesty, it seems crucial to understand whether citizens will expect female politicians to behave according to those stereotypes and whether those female politicians will receive stronger backlash than their male counterparts when their actions fail to meet those standards.

The findings also contribute to the debate on which strategies are likely to foster public support for electoral gender quotas. However, our findings pose a conundrum to advocates of such policies.

On the one hand, since individuals who endorse traditional stereotypes about women as pure, sensitive, and caring show higher levels of support for gender quotas, challenging those views in the public debate could decrease overall levels of public support for gender quotas. On the other hand, the findings suggest that advocates of gender quotas could benefit from devising arguments that help individuals make the connection between the policy and the principle it attempts to address. Because many citizens seem not to see gender quotas as a policy to overcome the structural problem of gender inequality, strategies that successfully help them establish that link could not only increase support for quotas in the long run, but also provide more solid normative bases for such support.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's web site:

Table S1. CFA Factor for Alternative Measurement Models

Table S2. CFA Loadings by Gender

Table S3. Descriptive Statistics for Control Variables

Table S4. Structural Models for Full Sample, by Gender, and Level of Education