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Susan Franceschet · Mona Lena Krook  
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Editors

# The Palgrave Handbook of Women's Political Rights

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## The Impact of Women in Parliament

*Diana Z. O'Brien and Jennifer M. Piscopo*

Most research on women's presence in politics explores the cultural, economic, and political determinants of women's numeric—or descriptive—representation in national assemblies (Paxton et al. 2010; Reynolds 1999; Tripp and Kang 2008). Increasing women's descriptive representation has been justified in terms of both fairness (women are half the population, and thus ought to hold half the seats) and outcomes (women bring their gendered experiences and perspectives into parliaments, thus changing the form and content of politics). Indeed, there are major normative and practical implications associated with women's inclusion in—and exclusion from—national assemblies. The legislature is the branch of government that is explicitly tasked with representing the will of the people. In democratic systems, legislators provide an essential, direct link between citizens and the state, and are expected to give voice to, and act on behalf of, their constituents. National assemblies bear heightened representative burdens as compared to other branches of government, explaining why gender quotas primarily target legislatures.

Bolstering women's presence in these bodies also affects the performance of politics along three dimensions: policies and policymaking; public opinion; and the legislature as workplace. This chapter examines outcomes across each dimension. Collectively, we show that women's presence has yielded positive

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gains alongside setbacks. Those arguing in favor of increasing women's representation based on beneficial outcomes will find the global evidence largely on their side. Female lawmakers diversify the legislative agenda, attending especially to women, children, and the most marginalized; they have changed attitudes toward women leaders; and they have challenged the masculine bias of legislative organizations. Yet, female lawmakers' ability to change policy and influence attitudes and behavior can provoke backlash among both citizens and their colleagues, indicating that patriarchal societies will respond unevenly—and often rancorously—to women's expanded exercise of their political rights.

### POLICYMAKING

The vast majority of scholarship on the impact of female lawmakers has centered on a key question: Does electing more women change the content of policymaking? Specifically, researchers explore whether electing women leads to more substantive representation—i.e., whether female legislators are more likely than men to represent policy areas of interest to women. The underlying theoretical assumption comes from notions of gender difference: Because women belong to a socially constructed (and typically subordinate) group, they will bring unique experiences, behaviors, and preferences into policymaking. While some scholars contest the validity of this assumption, others find that female legislators *do* typically represent women. Yet, the exact measures of this outcome vary depending on the institutional and political context, the phase of the policymaking process, and the presence of gender quotas.

#### *Conceptualizing Women's Interests*

Determining whether female politicians change the content of policymaking first requires knowing which policy interests women *should* be expected to represent. The question of whether women's gender identity influences their policy preferences continues to fuel a lively debate among scholars of gender and politics. Feminist theorist Iris Marion Young (2001) rejects the essentialist notion that all women will view their gender identity in the same way, instead suggesting that women's common experiences as second-class citizens will infuse their worldview. This conceptualization of women as a social group acknowledges intra-group diversity, but still leaves open questions about which policy areas—if any—count as 'women's interests.' Scholars typically use one of three formulations: Women's interests are either those that directly affect women *as women* (e.g., reproductive health and gender-based violence), those connected to women's traditional roles as caregivers (e.g., children), or those tied to the social sphere more broadly (e.g., health care and education).

Scholarship on substantive representation of women in policy-making (2012) concludes that the latter capacity for gender representation in policy-making is argued to be a function of the extent to which women's political rights are expanded.

Empirical studies of their countries, for example, have found that the presence of women's representatives in Congress is associated with greater efforts to

No matter the constraints, lawmakers' decision-making on policy occurs in bills.<sup>1</sup> Pro-women's (Weldon et al. 2012).

Although, legislators, Lovenduski et al. (2012) argue that the number of women in leadership or minimum

Increasing women's representative agenda, attending to the masculine bias in policy-making among both citizens and legislators will respond to the need for their exercise of their

Female lawmakers have changed the content of legislation. The underlying difference: Because of their subordinate group status, preferences into policy-making, other women. Yet, the exact institutional and political presence of gender

Content of policymaking should be expected to be influenced by their gender. (Walsh 2016) rejects the essentiality in the same way, as second-class citizens of women as a social class. Open questions are: 'What are the interests?' Scholars typically are either those that are gender-based or as caregivers (e.g., health care

Scholars also debate whether female legislators must take particular positions on these issues in order for their preferences to 'count' as women's substantive representation. This struggle largely centers on how to conceptualize policies promoted by conservative women. For instance, Celis and Childs (2012) distinguish between feminist interests and gendered interests. The latter captures policy positions that derive from or even reinforce traditional gender roles. As non- and anti-feminist lawmakers still see themselves as representing women as a group, Celis and Childs (2012) contend that their policy advocacy still matters. Dahlerup (2014) takes the opposite approach, arguing that women's interests only 'make sense' when tied to policy preferences that challenge male dominance.

Empirically, how scholars conceptualize women's interests greatly affects their conclusions about whether substantive representation occurs. For example, in a study of Colombia and Costa Rica, Escobar-Lemmon et al. (2014) looked at bills promoting women's rights (feminist) and bills aimed at helping children, family, and the poor (gendered). The authors find sex differences in bill introduction for all three areas in Colombia, but only for women's rights in Costa Rica. They conclude that female legislators in both countries represent women. However, had they narrowed their study exclusively to gendered interests, they would have concluded that female legislators in Costa Rica did *not* represent women. Further, their operationalization of gendered interests leaves open the question of whether female lawmakers' efforts to restrict state aid would count as substantive representation.

#### *Context and Constraints*

No matter which interests women represent, they face institutional constraints. Legislatures are highly controlled environments, reducing lawmakers' ability to unilaterally change policy. Political parties often dominate decision-making, with party leaders setting policy goals and party discipline shaping legislators' behavior. The broader political context also determines policy outcomes. In parliamentary systems, for example, policymaking often occurs in cabinet and individual MPs have few opportunities to introduce bills.<sup>1</sup> Presidents (Piscopo 2014b), international organizations (Walsh 2016), women's policy agencies (Ayata and Tütüncü 2008), and social movements (Weldon 2002) also affect when party and chamber leaders proceed with gender equality legislation. Party control is especially heightened, and lawmaker autonomy severely compromised, in one-party or authoritarian states (Walsh 2012).

Although these constraints should affect both male and female lawmakers, legislatures are structurally biased against women (Duerst-Lahti 2005; Lovenduski 2005). Women remain underrepresented among party and chamber leaders (O'Brien 2015; Schwindt-Bayer 2010). Male leaders also sideline or minimize women's contributions (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Rincker

2009; Wittmer and Bouché 2013). These constraints speak to the legislature as workplace, and the gendered interactions that shape the daily life of parliaments, a point we consider in more detail below.

### *The Policymaking Process*

Attending to context and constraints highlight two difficulties inherent in pinpointing women's policy influence. First, where one looks in the policy process matters. Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) distinguish between substantive representation as *process*—lawmakers' efforts to set agendas and advocate for policies—and substantive representation as *outcome*—lawmakers' ability to win statutory change. Roll call votes usually reflect party discipline, not individual preference. For this reason, many researchers look to substantive representation as *process*, finding that women in both the Global North and South introduce and cosponsor bills addressing feminist and gendered interests (Celis 2006; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Swers 2005). Female lawmakers also intervene more than male legislators during plenary and committee debates on policy areas that matter to women (Piscopo 2011; Xydias 2007). Gender equity committees and women's caucuses especially facilitate female legislators' collaboration on policy change (Barnes 2016).

Second, women's numbers and influence interact in complicated ways, as demonstrated in the debates concerning 'critical mass' and 'critical actors.' Researchers often ask whether increasing women's descriptive representation leads to more substantive representation, finding evidence of a positive correlation between both process and outcome. For instance, under majority rule conditions—the decision rule followed by most parliaments and legislatures—women speak less often when they comprise the numerical minority, but advocate more frequently on behalf of children, families, and the poor as their numbers rise (Mendelberg et al. 2014). On the outcome side, in advanced industrialized democracies, higher proportions of female legislators are associated with lower defense spending and less military engagement (Koch and Fulton 2011), and more family-friendly policies (Bratton and Ray 2002; Kittilson 2008). Similarly, in Latin America, higher proportions of female legislators are associated with greater policy attention to women, children, and families (Barnes 2016; Piscopo 2014a; Schwindt-Bayer 2010). These findings offer evidence in support of critical mass theory, which posits that women need to achieve a threshold descriptive representation—usually set at 30%—in order to change institutional cultures and represent women's interests (Dahlerup 1988).

Yet critical mass theory has fallen from favor, as scholars have contested its underlying essentialist assumptions and highlighted the role of institutional constraints. Some researchers have proposed an alternate framework of 'critical acts,' focusing on individual initiatives rather than collective action (Celis et al 2008). This framework has appeared especially useful in single-country case studies of policy change. Female MPs in Turkey, for example, held only

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8% of the seats but succeeded in overturning customary law and criminalizing sexual harassment in the workplace (Ayata and Tütüncü 2008). A focus on critical acts also helps explain how female representatives change policy outcomes when parties are highly disciplined or authoritarian (Devlin and Elgie 2008; Walsh 2012; Yoon 2011), and when women face considerable sexism in the chamber as a whole (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). Women representatives, for example, overturned customary law in Rwanda (Devlin and Elgie 2008), addressed basic needs provisions in Tanzania (Yoon 2011), and passed landmark sexual health legislation in Argentina (Piscopo 2014a).

The global evidence thus suggests a link between women's descriptive representation and substantive representation, though female legislators may find their ability to enact sweeping changes limited by institutional features beyond their control. Do female lawmakers also affect policymaking beyond gendered or feminist policy areas? Initial evidence suggests that women's presence diversifies the policy agenda (Greene and O'Brien 2016). Beyond policy preferences, gender role socialization also implies that women will have different leadership styles—that they will be more collaborative, inclusive, and sensitive to others' needs. Interviews with female legislators worldwide support this hypothesis (Barnes 2016; Franceschet et al. 2016), but no research has definitively shown that gendered leadership styles alter policy outcomes. Questions about whether female lawmakers deepen deliberation and enhance responsiveness relate not just to substantive representation, but to how the legislature functions as a gendered workplace—a question we return to below.

### *Gender Quotas*

If a positive correlation exists between descriptive and substantive representation, then gender quotas—which increase descriptive representation—should also positively impact women's interest representation. Quotas call attention to the normative importance of women's representation, creating 'mandate effects' that make female lawmakers more likely to represent women (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). In Morocco and Algeria, for instance, deputies elected under quotas provided more services than deputies elected without quotas (Benstead 2016). Female MPs from parties using gender quotas do act on mandates to represent women, both in the UK (Childs and Krook 2012) and Germany (Xydias 2007). Yet quotas could also generate perceptions that female lawmakers lack the necessary qualifications for office, creating 'label effects' that make women reluctant to associate themselves with feminist interests (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Rincker 2009). Despite theorizing about how quotas may generate backlash effects (Franceschet et al. 2012; Krook 2015), scholars still know little about when gender quotas enhance women's substantive representation, and when they work against it—suggesting an urgent need for future research.

## PUBLIC ATTITUDES

As public figures, lawmakers do not just make policy; they embody particular notions about who 'should' lead the polity. Female lawmakers' presence can therefore significantly affect citizens' attitudes about the political system and its leaders. Franceschet et al. (2012) conceptualize symbolic representation—that is, the ideals and values that lawmakers reflect—in terms of its diverse *audience effects*. Female representatives may alter citizens' perceptions about the regime and the government, as well as reshape attitudes toward traditional gender roles, and these effects might differ between female and male audiences. Female representatives may also alter female citizens' political behavior. When women see people 'like them' in power, they may become more politically engaged and ambitious. Quotas could further mediate these dynamics, either increasing favorable evaluations of the political system and of women as political leaders, or generating backlash effects that erode public confidence and trust. Women's presence thus affects citizen attitudes in diverse ways, across outcomes related to the political system, gender roles, and political behavior.

*The Political System*

Arguments for increasing women's descriptive representation often appeal to the normative ideal that the composition of the legislature or parliament should reflect citizens' diverse identities. This notion of 'mirror representation' speaks to the overall legitimacy of the political system, and citizens are indeed more likely to believe that governments are democratic when women are represented in elected office (Atkeson and Carillo 2007; Clayton et al. 2017; Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005). In the UK, Cowley (2014) finds a positive association between female (but not male) survey respondents' estimates of the percentage of seats held by female MPs and their reported satisfaction with democracy and trust in politicians and parliaments. Yet, these effects did not hold for women who did not identify descriptive representation as important. Similarly, Espírito-Santo (2016, p. 53) reports that Portuguese survey respondents who favor descriptive representation also believe that the predominance of male MPs constitutes 'a serious threat to democracy.' Women's presence may positively affect citizens' favorable view of the political system, but especially—or perhaps only—among those who implicitly value mirror representation.

Importantly, these findings come from studies operationalizing women's presence as national-level descriptive representation. Research asking the same question at the subnational or district level typically reports null results (Atkeson and Carillo 2007; Zetterberg 2012). Indeed, Lawless (2004) finds that while female citizens represented by female legislators view the US Congress more favorably, these positive evaluations do not translate into more positive attitudes toward government overall.

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### Women as Leaders

Symbolic representation also addresses attitudes toward women's leadership ability. In a cross-national study, Alexander (2012) finds that national-level descriptive representation positively enhances female citizens' beliefs in their own ability to govern. Other studies examine the municipal level in India, where certain villages are randomly assigned to nominate a female council leader. In villages exposed to female leadership, men and women report less gender bias toward women in public life and are more likely to choose female councilors in future elections (Beaman et al. 2009; Bhavnani 2009). Yet Beaman et al. (2012) caution that male villagers' embrace of female leadership does not loosen their sexist attitudes toward women's traditional roles in the household and in social life. In Rwanda, where gender quotas have propelled women into office at all levels of government, Burnet (2012) finds significant backlash effects, including male resentment and marital discord. These studies suggest that women's increased descriptive representation, particularly under quota systems and/or at the local level, may change attitudes about women's public roles—while leaving attitudes about their private roles intact.

### Female Citizens and Political Behavior

If women's presence in legislatures increases citizens' faith in women's leadership ability, does it also affect female citizens' political behavior? Studies have repeatedly uncovered a gender gap in political engagement (also called political behavior or political participation), with women less likely than men to undertake political activities (Desposato and Norrander 2009; Inglehart and Norris 2003; Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2012). Political engagement can include both *conventional* activities, namely turning out to vote, following politics in the news, discussing politics with friends, or contacting one's representative, and *unconventional* activities, such as participating in protests, demonstrations, or civil disobedience. Desposato and Norrander (2009) found that the percentage of female officeholders lowered the gender gap in Latin American women's conventional political behavior, but not in their unconventional behavior. Most other research emphasizes conventional behavior, echoing Desposato and Norrander's results. In Sub-Saharan African (Barnes and Bouchard 2012) and European countries (Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007), higher numbers of female lawmakers narrow the gender gap in political participation. Scholars in the USA are more skeptical, finding that the gender gap in political engagement does *not* narrow as women's descriptive representation climbs (Lawless 2004). For instance, electing more women to the US Congress does not make female citizens more likely to vote (Broockman 2014; Lawless 2004).

While increasing women's descriptive representation affects women's political behavior, electing women via gender quotas does not provide any



additional boost. In Latin America, Zetterberg (2009) finds that neither women's descriptive representation nor the presence of quotas raises women's political knowledge or political interest. Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer (2012) also find few effects for quotas' impact on women's political engagement: cross-nationally, quotas slightly narrowed the gender gap in persuading others and political campaigning, but in two prominent quota cases—France and Uruguay—quotas had no impact on various measures of political engagement. Barnes and Bouchard (2012) find similar null results in Sub-Saharan Africa, concluding that women's political engagement responds to concrete increases in women's descriptive representation, not the mere adoption of quotas. In fact, Lesotho's quota law *reduced* women's local political engagement (Clayton 2015). Quotas adopted in political systems already seen as exclusionary and illegitimate may undo the positive symbolic effects associated with women's increased descriptive representation.

The presence of backlash effects raises further questions about the relationship between women's presence, gender quotas, and political ambition. Scholars have uncovered a considerable gender gap in political ambition in the USA (Fox and Lawless 2004), and researchers asking whether women's presence in Congress closes this gap have uncovered mixed findings (Broockman 2014; Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007). Yet it remains unclear whether this political ambition gap extends beyond the USA, and whether gender quotas—especially those implemented in democratic systems—can inspire women to run for office. The positive relationship between women's presence in legislatures and parliaments, on the one hand, and citizens' willingness to support women as leaders, on the other, provides indirect—yet tantalizing—evidence that women's presence could also inspire women to seek political careers. The relationship between descriptive representation and political ambition offers a fruitful avenue for future research.

#### LEGISLATURES AS WORKPLACES

Beyond policymaking and public attitudes, do female politicians transform legislatures' internal processes? National assemblies are workplaces with distinct (and often masculine) cultures, and there are gender biases in the personnel, policy, and cultures of these institutions (Duerst-Lahti 2005). Indeed, institutions themselves (re)produce gender (Kenney 1996). Drawing on Acker's (1990) five dimensions of gendered organizations, we examine how women's descriptive representation affects the division of labor within the institution; the symbols, images, and ideologies that shape its work; the gendered nature of men's and women's interactions; the gendered identities that men and women carry within the institution; and the organizational logic of the institution itself.

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berg (2009) finds that neither presence of quotas raises women's political engagement. Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer find that the gender gap in persuading women to support prominent quota cases—France and the Netherlands—measures of political engagement null results in Sub-Saharan Africa. Political engagement responds to concrete incentives, not the mere adoption of quotas. Women's local political engagement in political systems already seen as patriarchal has positive symbolic effects associated with the presence of women.

Other questions about the relationship between quotas and political ambition remain. Researchers asking whether women's political ambition is affected by mixed findings (Broockman and Koolen 2012) remain unclear whether the presence of women in the USA, and whether gender equality in democratic systems—can inspire women's political ambition. The relationship between women's presence in politics and citizens' willingness to support indirect—yet tantalizing—measures to inspire women to seek political representation and political participation remains unclear.

#### PLACES

Female politicians transform workplaces into places where gender biases in the workplace are challenged (Duerst-Lahti 2005). Indeed, research (Kenney 1996). Drawing on research on organizations, we examine how the division of labor within the workplace shapes its work; the gendered identities that shape the organizational logic of

#### *The Division of Labor*

Within legislatures, women are more likely to work on legislative tasks related to the domestic sphere and/or to women as a group, while men address the public sphere and/or men as a group. Greater descriptive representation is sometimes associated with greater gender specialization, with female legislators concentrating on feminine or feminized policy domains. In other cases, it results in more integration, allowing women to work on a broader set of topics (Bolzendahl 2014). Take, for example, committee assignments. In some assemblies—including US state legislatures (Thomas 1994) and the Swedish Riksdag (Wängnerud 2009)—female legislators have been more likely to serve on traditionally male-dominated committees as their numbers grow. In others, women's descriptive representation is associated with women's service on stereotypically female committees. In the German Bundestag, women's increased presence was linked to the creation of female-dominated committees whose 'titles and language reinforce stereotypically feminine constructions' (Bolzendahl 2014, p. 860). In Latin American legislatures, Heath et al. (2005) attribute this phenomenon to male legislators' efforts to isolate their female counterparts on less desirable committees, which are typically those addressing social policy and women's issues.

As the above discussion on women's substantive representation indicates, gendered divisions in legislative labor can reflect gender differences in legislative priorities. In European assemblies, the gender variation that remains in committee assignments is often attributed to representatives' preferences rather than biases against female members (Mateo Diaz 2005). Yet, this explanation does not hold universally. Additional work is needed to establish when differences reflect men's and women's priorities versus women's marginalization. Related research should consider how institutional rules and norms—including candidate selection mechanisms and party discipline—interact with women's increased representation to re-gender or de-gender parliamentary work, for both women and men.

#### *Symbols, Images, and Ideologies*

Acker further posits that organizations are gendered through the 'construction of symbols and images that explain, express, reinforce, or sometimes oppose gender divisions' (1990, p. 146). That is, language, culture, and ideologies link masculinity to work. Case studies and surveys from across the globe reveal myriad symbols and images that reinforce the masculinity of legislatures.

As physical spaces, legislatures typically privilege men and maleness. The design of the buildings themselves often evokes virility (Tamale 1999). Masculine norms are further reinforced both by the presence of subsidized bars, men-only gyms, and recreational sports teams (Ballington 2008), and also via the absence of day care centers, women's bathrooms, or even portraits

of women on the walls (Devlin and Elgie 2008). Parliamentary ceremonies and rituals are likewise gendered (Rai 2010). Work on Sub-Saharan Africa (Bauer and Britton 2006), Argentina (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008), and Chile (Franceschet 2010) suggests that the business of politics is conducted via masculine rules, as is shown in the months and hours during which the legislature sits, and the use of gendered language that maintains male pronouns. Gender divisions are even enforced via formal and informal dress codes, including rules that prohibited women from wearing trousers in Turkey and Zambia (Ballington 2008) and expectations that female MPs 'refrain from a frivolous or revealing dress style' in Belgium (Celis and Wauters 2010, p. 385).

While complaints about individual symbols or images are often dismissed as female hypersensitivity, as a whole they result in institutions that marginalize women while placing male politicians at ease. Legislatures have also been reluctant to adapt to the changing makeup of their membership. A cross-national survey of parliamentarians suggests that women's increased presence had little effect on parliamentary dress codes or the provision of childcare (Ballington 2008). In fact, mothers remain dramatically underrepresented in parliaments, and the timing and pace of parliamentary work send the strong message that caregivers do not belong (Campbell and Childs 2014). Female MPs nonetheless continue to challenge these rules and norms (Childs 2004). More comparative research is needed to ascertain when male legislators cling to gendered symbols and images and when they relinquish these privileges. Likewise, how do female legislators use symbols? Little is known about whether women co-opt masculine norms to their advantage or if they create their own feminized symbols and images. Importantly, scholars should systematically ascertain whether and how these symbols and images affect women's policymaking interventions.

#### *Gendered Interactions*

Gendered organizations are further (re)produced via the interactions between and among women and men. In the legislative context, a large body of research focuses on female legislators' relationships and experiences with both their male and female colleagues. This work has found that women in legislatures are particularly vulnerable to hostility, stigmatization, and even harassment. Increasing women's presence sometimes (though not always) increases women's collaboration with each other, but also exposes female legislators to backlash effects.

Negative interactions between male and female legislators appear widespread globally. When deliberating, women speak substantially less than men in most mixed-gender settings, especially when their numbers are few (Mendelberg et al. 2014). In discussions, female politicians in post-communist states report difficulty making their opinions heard (Galligan et al. 2007).

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or images are often dismissed in institutions that marginalize women. Legislatures have also been criticized for their membership. A cross-section of women's increased presence in politics or the provision of childcare services automatically underrepresented in parliamentary work send the strong message (Childs and Childs 2014). Female legislators and norms (Childs 2004). In many cases when male legislators cling to their privileges, do they relinquish these privileges? Little is known about whether their advantage or if they create a disadvantage. Importantly, scholars should systematically study how symbols and images affect wom-

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via the interactions between women in the context, a large body of research on women's experiences with both men and women found that women in legislatures (though not always) increases exposure to harassment against female legislators to

female legislators appear widely underrepresented—substantially less than men in their numbers are few (Menéndez and Galligan et al. 2007).

In the USA, bills sponsored by women are sometimes subjected to greater scrutiny, hostility, and debate than bills sponsored by men (Kathlene et al. 1991), and legislation related to 'women's issues' succeeds more frequently when sponsored by men (Wittmer and Bouché 2013). Like other women, female legislators also experience sexual harassment in the workplace. A group of female politicians in the US state of California released a statement highlighting their experiences with 'dehumanizing behavior by men with power in our workplaces.' They noted, 'Men have groped and touched us without our consent, made inappropriate comments about our bodies and our abilities' (We Said Enough 2017). Women working in politics across the globe, from the UK to Guyana, have reported similar encounters (Bardall 2016; Phillips 2017).

Increasing descriptive representation can exacerbate backlash against female politicians. In both the USA and New Zealand, as women's presence grows, men become more verbally aggressive and controlling of both committee hearings (Kathlene 1995; Rosenthal 1998) and parliamentary debates (Grey 2002). Focusing on donations to fellow politicians, Kanthak and Krause (2012) find that both men and women devalue their female colleagues as the proportion of women in the US Congress increases. Adverse reactions can be especially acute for women elected via quota policies. Yoon (2011) suggests that quota women in Tanzania feel like 'second-class' MPs whose work is not adequately recognized. Female legislators in Argentina believed the quota law resulted in their political professionalism being called into question (Franschet and Piscopo 2008), and female MPs in the UK elected via their party's all-women shortlists experienced lingering stigmatization (Childs and Krook 2012). New scholarship also has begun examining the growing number of reports of violence against female parliamentarians (Krook 2017). It remains unclear, however, whether women's increased representation causes harassment and abuse to also increase, or whether women draw courage from their greater numbers and become more likely to denounce mistreatment.

In contrast to the backlash effects among men, bolstering women's presence in legislatures has positively affected gendered interactions among women. Women in committees are more likely to be inclusive and collaborative as the percentage of female leaders increase (Rosenthal 1998). Female parliamentarians describe a feeling of camaraderie as their numbers grow (Grey 2002). Within committee hearings, women are better able to control the dialogue and make themselves heard when other women are in positions of authority (Kathlene 1995). More generally, though 'critical mass' may not explain policy representation, female legislators may form coalitions to change their working environments, as in recent efforts to make visible and end the sexual harassment of women politicians. Yet, whether women's presence changes the environment for other women in politics—not just legislators, but women staffers, lobbyists, and journalists—remains an open question.

Female legislators' experience in the workplace and their policy impact is thus shaped by both backlash and collaboration. These phenomena may also be interlinked: women may organize in response to male hostility (or male hostility may emerge after women's coordination). More work is also needed to establish how the institutional context shapes these effects. Barnes (2016) shows, for example, that the impact of increased descriptive representation on female legislative collaboration is conditioned on party strength. Factors including ideology, agenda control, and majoritarian versus consensus-style institutions also likely influence gendered interactions.

### *Gendered Identity*

Together, gendered workloads, symbols, and interactions shape individual identity, including consciousness about (and presentation of) oneself as a gendered member of an organization (Acker 1990). A large body of research broadly examines whether female politicians present themselves as women. Much of the work on women's substantive representation discussed above, for example, implicitly relates to the gender consciousness of female legislators. This concept also extends beyond politicians' efforts to act on behalf of male or female constituents by analyzing feminine and masculine styles of performing politics (Childs 2004; Franceschet et al. 2016; Thomas 1994). British female parliamentarians, for instance, claim that they are 'less combative and aggressive, more collaborative and speak in a different language' as compared to their male counterparts (Childs 2004, p. 14).

Though some women have a uniquely feminine style of politics, this does not hold universally. On the one hand, there can be costs associated with acting in a feminine manner (Childs 2004). To offset these costs, Rincker (2009) points to 'masculinized' women in regional-level Polish assemblies who aim to 'blend in with their male counterparts and avoid challenging the gendered norms of an institution' (p. 47). On the other hand, in US state legislatures, both men and women adhere to a more feminine style of politics, emphasizing 'compromise, consensus-building, getting along with colleagues, being nice, fair, etc' (Reingold 1996, p. 483).

The variation in legislators' gendered presentation styles appears contingent on long-standing institutional norms and behaviors. At the same time, evidence suggests that these gendered identities are affected by women's descriptive representation. Though by no means a guarantee (Childs 2004), bolstering women's presence can allow both women and men to feel less pressured to act in aggressive and masculine ways (Charles 2014). Future work should consider whether, when, and why-raising the proportion of seats held by female parliamentarians makes women more (or less) conscious of their gendered identity. More research is needed, moreover, on male legislators' gender consciousness. Murray (2014) suggests that because men are overrepresented in parliament, they fail to contend with their gender role identity.

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and their policy impact is these phenomena may also include male hostility (or male disapproval). More work is also needed to explore these effects. Barnes (2016) offers a descriptive representation of party strength. Factors include consensus-style

Increasing women's presence in elected office may thus change male legislators' perceptions about their own behavior.

### *Organizational Logic*

Finally, Acker dedicates most attention to the naturalized assumptions and practices that she terms 'gendered organizational logic.' Organizational logic encompasses seemingly gender-neutral practices—including formal evaluations, job descriptions, and career ladders—which managers use to control the workplace. Though different from traditional workplaces, legislatures also rely on taken-for-granted rules. That is, there are (in)formal policies and procedures that gender these organizations.

actions shape individual perceptions (of oneself as a woman). A large body of research shows that women represent themselves as women. This is the situation discussed above, the femininity of female legislators' efforts to act on behalf of their constituents and masculine styles of politics (Barnes 2016; Thomas 1994). In other words, they are 'less combative' and use a different language' as

Many of the factors discussed within this chapter encompass (and contribute to) gendered organizational logic. One clear parallel between Acker and the political realm is politicians' promotion once in elected office. Female politicians often face glass-ceiling effects: discriminatory barriers to career advancement that increase for positions higher in the organizational hierarchy (Folke and Rickne 2016). This glass ceiling results in men's traditional dominance as committee chairs, party leaders, cabinet appointees, and heads of government and state worldwide (Heath et al. 2005; Jalalzai 2013; Krook and O'Brien 2012; O'Brien 2012, 2015). When women do access top positions, moreover, they frequently receive less important and desirable posts. From Latin America to Western Europe, women are less likely to serve on influential committees or to hold high-prestige cabinet portfolios in masculine policy domains.

role of politics, this does not mean the costs associated with these costs, Rincker in the level Polish assemblies do not avoid challenging the status quo. On the other hand, in US state legislatures, the masculine style of politics, along with colleagues,

Though women are often relegated to low-prestige and feminized positions, increasing women's presence in elected office alters this organizational logic. Despite some notable exceptions (Bratton 2005), mounting evidence suggests that increasing descriptive representation is correlated with women's selection as committee chairs (Kerevel and Atkeson 2013), access to the party leadership (O'Brien 2015; O'Brien and Rickne 2016), appointment to cabinets (Krook and O'Brien 2012; Reynolds 1999), and even presence as head of government and state (Jalalzai 2013).

styles appears continuous. At the same time, the political arena is affected by women's representation (Childs 2004), and men to feel less pressure (Barnes 2014). Future work on the proportion of seats held by women (or men) conscious of their gender, on male legislators' perceptions, and on how these cause men are overrepresented in the gender role identity.

Though bolstering women's numeric representation clearly facilitates women's ascension up the political ladder, the relationship between gender and prestige remains under theorized. Cabinet and committee posts associated with feminine issue areas have been marked as both less desirable and prestigious, on the one hand, and also as important venues for women's substantive representation, on the other. Moving forward, scholars should investigate how the gendered nature of these positions emerges, and whether perceptions of 'men's work' and 'women's work' can change over time. This includes assessing how changes in the perceived gender and prestige of a post influence women's access to power (Barnes and O'Brien 2018), and

whether women's appointment to a position affects whether it is subsequently viewed as desirable.

### CONCLUSION

The global evidence reveals substantial positive outcomes associated with protecting and promoting women's right to serve as legislators. Female lawmakers change the policy agenda: They advocate more frequently than men for women's issues and social policies, especially those associated with marginalized or vulnerable populations. Women MPs also lead citizens to perceive democratic institutions as more legitimate, and they inspire female citizens to become more politically active and aware. Both in the legislature and in society at large, women's descriptive representation challenges notions that politics is a 'man's realm' organized according to men's rules.

Taken together, women's impact on policy, public attitudes, and the legislature as workplace draw attention to three central themes. First, numbers *do* matter. Female lawmakers seem best poised to make a difference when their numbers are high, indicating that 'critical mass' retains some explanatory power. When women constitute a larger group in parliament, lawmakers pass more policies friendly to women and citizens update their beliefs about gender roles and the political system. Second, gender quotas matter, and not just because they raise women's descriptive representation and push women's numbers closer to (or even beyond) critical mass. Quotas alter when and how female lawmakers are seen as legitimate politicians, in the eyes of both voters and their peers. Female lawmakers elected via quotas do not universally experience obstacles, but impediments to their success appear more frequently in non-democracies. Third, and related, women's presence provokes backlash. Female lawmakers struggle to become full and equal members of the policy-making process, and their reduced power can further diminish citizens' positive assessments of their role.

In summary, the structure and performance of politics still poses significant obstacles for female lawmakers. These obstacles will only mount as backlash effects occur and deepen. From working hours to dress codes, and from marginalization in committee assignments to verbal aggressiveness in debates, female legislators face gendered barriers in the exercise of their political rights. Advocating for women in politics therefore cannot end with increasing women's descriptive representation. Proponents must inject gender equality into the everyday practice of politics itself.

### NOTE

1. Though some contexts restrict the use of the word parliament to parliamentary systems, we use the terms legislature and parliament interchangeably to refer to the national assembly.

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