

MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF QUOTAS BY SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION: THE CASE OF IRELAND

Sydney Sanders, Xavier University

Over 100 countries across the world operate under some type of national gender quota for their legislature (Rosen 2017). The various types of gender quotas are seen in different regions of the world and across a variety of governmental systems and cultures. The varied contexts in which quotas are implemented makes it difficult to assess which type of gender quota is most successful. Measures of success are often neglected in scholarly works and determining whether the implementation of a gender quota was truly successful is often subjective and rarely well defined. This study aims to articulate measures the success of a gender quota in terms of substantive representation to determine whether the implementation of the quota was successful. The appropriate standards are then applied to the case of Ireland, which implemented political party quotas for candidates to their national legislature in the 2016 elections.

Throughout history, women have been underrepresented in politics for three main reasons: social structure, politics, and identity (Paxton and Kuvonich 2003). In recent decades, more than 100 democratic nations have worked towards correcting the underrepresentation of women through the implementation of gender quotas in their national legislatures (Rosen 2017). The global increase of female elected officials over the past decades has been partly attributed to the increasing presence of gender quotas (Rosen 2017). Gender quotas take many forms, however, and some types of quotas have proven more effective than others at increasing women's representation (Krook 2007). In addition, scholars have noted that the advancement of women to office under a quota is affected by other factors, including the electoral system, the party system, and the degree of public support for the quota (Paxton et al. 2010).

As more and more data is readily available, both quantitative and qualitative studies have been conducted measuring the success of gender quota implementations. One concern, however, is that scholars use the word "success" without defining how success is measured. This paper examines the various types of representation and gender quotas and their success measurements, then applies this knowledge to the Irish quota to evaluate the success, or failure, of the national party gender quota by substantive representation. By looking at qualitative and quantitative measures of success in various gender quota systems, we will be able to analyze the extent that the Irish quota moved the country closer to gender equality.

Literature Review

The low number of women's representation in politics is important because it often shows a supply and demand pattern for female candidates (Paxton and Kuvonich 2003). Supply and demand for women's representation is important because it shows the gendered nature of politics, which can deflect women's interests in running for an elected office (Paxton and Kuvonich 2003, 90). When women are reluctant to run and the demand for women is low, attitudes towards women are often negative and furthers the gender inequalities we see in society. Increasing the number of women who would like to run, the supply factor, is one that we can see gender quotas working in a successful way (Fox and Lawless 2011).

Increasing the demand for women's representation is crucial because it adds significantly more new insights and ideologies that are important to more adequately representing the people in any given nation and governmental system. Throughout feminist movements and the recent addition of women's studies in politics, fields of history, sociology, cultural studies, and more have deepened the understandings of women's importance in society (Lovenduski 1998). Women have added to discussions regarding differences between men and women and the political identities that shape political behavior and power structures in governments (Lovenduski 1998, 335). Gender is an identifying trait to how basic life conditions are treated – health, safety, education, work, access to politics and markets, free expression – to name just a few characteristics dependent on the basis of gender (Celis et al. 2013). Electing women to represent women is a way to advance women's rights and ensure that the neglected half of the population is having their needs met, as well.

Women's representation in politics is not only important because of the various issues that women advocate for, but also because it creates new and more encompassing models of political citizenship (Krook et al. 2009). The fight for gender equality allows women – and men – to participate in society more freely and actively (Panagakou 2017). Social and political freedom creates a new space for critical thinking and enables the development of a more productive public opinion (Panagakou 2017). The principle of equality and the participation by women in politics empowers more membership in political parties and involvement by the public (Phillips 1998). The key to many government structures is public participation and citizen activity. By advocating for more women's representation in politics, the public becomes more engaged with their society and politics. The development of more political ambition by women to elected offices will create more civic participation and creating model citizens is invaluable to the public sphere (Fox and Lawless 2004).

The difference between descriptive and substantive representation of women is crucial to understanding how the inequality of gender representation is addressed. Generally, descriptive representation addresses the who, while substantive representation addresses the how (Martin 2018). Descriptive representation relates to the idea that groups of people should be included in political decision making through representatives who “look like” them (Pitkin, 1967). Descriptive representation is often assessed simply as numerical representation (Beckwith 2007). Descriptive types of representation are often aiming to improve the ratio between men and women (or, alternatively, whites and racial minorities) and is based on improving the numerical statistics aspect of political representation. Descriptive representation is much easier to measure but can complicate the measurement of true equality because it serves more so as a face value measurement (Martin 2018). In contrast, substantive representation is concerned with whether representatives “act for” the interests of different groups in society (Pitkin 1967). As such, substantive representation is more so about the policy and mobilization of women (Beckwith 2007). In a sense, substantive representation could be described as quality over quantity. Substantive representation is important to the ideology of women in political office and the progression of women's issues through quality policies (Martin 2007). Distinguishing the difference between descriptive and substantive representation is crucial to developing a success measurement of women's representation because this difference is often neglected in discussions surrounding gender quota implementations.

There are numerous ways to measure substantive representation. There are five general categories to look at substantive representation: expected effects of increased proportions of women, shifting legislative contexts, identities and interests, definitions of women's issues, and policy-making processes (Childs and Krook 2009). The expected effects of increased proportions of women include shifts in strategic coalitions of women, influencing male behavior, backlash, and an increase in diversity of legislators on a scale broader than gender (Childs and Krook 2009). Shifting legislative contexts encompasses women's power to join political committees, shifts in political ideology, women's empowerment movements, and policy formation (Childs and Krook 2009). Legislators' identities and interests mean that a substantive representation of women have the potential to show similarities and differences among women and men according to more than gender, specifically race, age, party affiliation, and feminist identity (Childs and Krook 2009). Definitions of women's issues show feminist and non-feminist differences and can reveal an alternative conception of women's impact on politics and how time and context effect these definitions (Childs and Krook 2009). Finally, policy-making processes can be measured to show how substantive representation has evolved to include more women's issues and increase women's engagement in political decision making (Childs and Krook 2009).

Various models of gender quotas aim to achieve either descriptive or substantive representation, or even both. Gender quotas are implemented through three general types: reserved seat quotas, electoral candidate quotas, and political party quotas (Rosen 2017). Reserved seat quotas are mandatory quotas set by national legislatures to guarantee women's representation (Rosen 2017). Reserved seat quotas are generally the strictest form of quota and are often the most controversial, too. Electoral candidate quotas are similar to reserved seat quotas because they are nationally mandated quotas (Rosen 2017). Electoral candidate quotas require political parties to select a minimum number of candidates for a national election (Rosen 2017). Electoral candidate quotas are somewhere in the middle in terms of how strict their implications are. Electoral candidate quotas require a minimum number of women to be on the ballot, but not to be on the national legislature (Rosen 2017). Political party quotas are the most common and the most loosely regulated quota. Political party quotas are voluntary quotas that encourage parties to select a minimum number of women for the candidate selection process (Rosen 2017). Though political party quotas are not legally enforced, political parties often face penalties for not complying with general rules for national elections (Rosen 2017). Understanding the various types of gender quotas is crucial to understanding how they function in international cases. The culture and governmental system of a country greatly effects the way that a quota is received or implemented (Hughes and Paxton 2008). Some countries measure the success of gender quotas as purely the increase of descriptive representation while others are waiting for substantive representation results (Schwindt-Bayer 2009).

Where there is a gap in the literature, however, in the way in which authors compare or contrast gender quotas. It is often not explicitly stated leaving us to distinguish how the successes or failures of gender quotas is measured. There are differences in measurements when looking at descriptive and substantive strides made because of gender quotas. One way to look at this difference is by analyzing the equality of opportunity versus the equality of result (Dahlerup 2007). The goal of gender quotas, generally, is to improve the gender inequalities on national legislatures. Equality, however, comes in two concepts when talking about political

representation. Equality of opportunity would be demonstrated through the implementation of political party quotas and electoral candidate quotas while equality of result would be reserved seat quotas (Dahlerup 2007). By ensuring that women are given a certain number of seats, as seen in a reserved seat quota, the equality of results is only progressing the descriptive representation of women in any given system. On the other hand, equality of opportunity doesn't ensure the progression of women on national legislatures and it doesn't ensure that women will gain substantive representation because of equality of opportunity. These factors are often compared as if they are on an equal playing field, but the issue remains that neither one of these systems are coined successes or failures.

The immense amount of controversy and opposition that gender quotas face show the spectrum of language and attitudes surrounding gender quotas. The resistance and variance of gender quotas makes them nearly immeasurable, especially when in comparison with one another. Success for gender quotas, then, varies depending on the type of quota being implemented. Reserved seat quotas are simply measuring for the descriptive representation, making them automatically successful, in a sense. Electoral candidate quotas and political party quotas, on the other hand, must look for different measurements of success because of their aspirations for substantive representation increase. When looking at political party quotas specifically, however, the focus is primarily on party recruitment (Dahlerup 2007). This leaves less room for controversy because women are not guaranteed a seat on a national legislature. The success measurement, in this case, then, is about party resistance to the quota and the number of female candidates who go on to run for an elected official position. Using Ireland, a country where a political party quota has been implemented, as a case study, we can then look towards the success measurements of political party quotas and apply those standards to the Irish case to determine whether or not the implementation of their gender quota was successful.

The Case of Ireland

In 2012, Ireland passed the legislative gender quota that requires each political party to have at least 30 percent male and 30 percent female representation or else 50 percent of that parties funding would be cut (Brennan and Buckley 2017). This type of political party gender quota is a voluntary quota system, but with serious consequences, it is in the best interest of the national parties to meet the general standards. After the implementation of the gender quota in Ireland, the 2016 election was the first to show significant results on a national level: the percentage of elected female parliamentarians increased by 40 percent (Brennan and Buckley 2017). Ireland operates under a Proportional Representation Single Transferable Vote System (PR-STV) electoral system, meaning that they use a hierarchical system in which voters rank their preferred candidates and the votes are trickled down after the preferential candidate is elected (Schwindt-Bayer et al. 2010).

There was major resistance to the gender quota in Ireland by the two predominant political parties: Fianna Fáil and Fina Gael (Brennan and Buckley 2017). Incumbent members of Fianna Fáil, particularly were opposed to the introduction of a quota into the Irish system; as the more conservative party, though, this was no surprise (McElroy 1). Because the two political parties are so large, the cost of ensuring at least 30% of the candidates are female was very high (Keenan and McElroy). The costly consequences of not meeting the minimum number of female

candidates is met with little to no support, as expected. When investigating further as to why resistance is met, the two primary reasons for this are: gender and feminism (Keenan and McElroy 2017). The primary supporters of gender quotas in Ireland are women, to no surprise, but the issue is that there are hardly any women in political offices in Ireland and their support means very little because of this (Keenan and McElroy 2017). It is equally expected that the biggest opposers to the gender quota is the political party of Fianna Fáil, the more conservative political party in Ireland (Keenan and McElroy 2017). Though both Fina Gael and Fianna Fáil met the minimum requirement to the quota and somewhat embraced the quota, there is social resistance and local elections in Ireland show no strong interest for the national quota (Brennan and Buckley 2017).

Before the implementation of the gender quota in Ireland, the average female candidacy rate over nearly 40 years was about 13 percent (Buckley et al. 2017). The gender quota rose that number to 29.6 percent in one single election (Buckley et al. 2017) The numbers in this case show a positive spike in women's representation in Ireland, but the studies on this case still show resistance towards women in office. With the descriptive representation obviously rising in Ireland, the measurement of success lies, then, on the increase substantive representation. The resistance in Ireland shows underlying societal and ideological barriers to women's representation on the national legislature. If Ireland, who's gender quota showed significant results in the first year of its practice, is still resistant to the quota, was it truly successful?

Research Question

Gender quotas often work best in less developed countries where socio-economic climates are still being determined (Rosen 2017). Ireland is a well-developed country, so the resistance to the quota is somewhat expected, but concerning, nonetheless. The basis for my research is to determine if the Irish gender quota was successful in increasing women's substantive representation. Measuring substantive representation can take many forms, as mentioned. For the purpose of this study, I will be measuring substantive representation in terms of shifting legislative contexts, specifically by analyzing the percentage of bills sponsored and co-sponsored by female politicians in Ireland over the course of three time periods. To do this, I will analyze data from the Dáil Éireann, the Irish legislature, pre-quota, during the quota, and post-quota to see how the percentage of women sponsoring or co-sponsoring introduced bills has changed. I will also be looking for trends in women sponsoring and co-sponsoring women's issues bills, specifically, to see if women in politics are restricted to women's issues. For the purpose of this study, women's issue will be considered certain political issues that are more geared toward the private sphere; such as abortion, education, health care, and welfare (Martin 2018). Issues such as these are frequently referred to as "women's issues," by politicians and voters because of the assumption that women are more likely – and best suited – to address these issues (Martin 2018).

This study is important because it aims to reveal if women elected to national legislatures are truly working towards decreasing the gender inequality in politics or if their representation is limited to that of descriptive. According the critical mass theory, "token" women are unlikely to have a major impact on legislation until they have grown into a "considerable minority," or into a "critical mass" (Childs and Krook 2009). By determining how a quota is succeeding,

however, the plan and infrastructure of a gender quota could become more targeted for lasting success for female substantive representation.

It is obvious that women are crucial to have in political positions because they bring forth new perspectives and a variety of crucial outlooks needed to truly represent the people of a nation, and the results need to show this. The improvement of women's substantive representation is necessary on a global scale because of their ideological benefits and the history of sexism in politics. Thus, understanding gender quotas and measuring the success of them with a more finely toothed comb is necessary to improving the systems and creating a sustainable goal for women's substantive representation. In Ireland specifically, this study will contribute to the impact of gender quotas going forward. Ireland is a well-developed country, but their resistance to the gender quota implementation is concerning for the future of the system. By improving the literature and distinguishing a measurement of success in terms of substantive representation, I hope to contribute to the overall success of women's representation in politics.

Research Design

This study relies heavily on the definition of substantive representation that I have presented and how it is measured. There are a number of ways to measure substantive representation including (but not limited too): legislative networks, voting patterns, women's issues, sponsored and co-sponsored bills, and more. I have chosen to the percentage of introduced bills sponsored and co-sponsored by women – because it will provide the most readily available data and largest pool of research. I am including all bills introduced, as opposed to only those bills that were passed. The data will be measured and compared in terms of percentages as opposed to numbers, as well. I will also be looking at the percentage of women's issues introduced. I will run multiple linear probability models to study the collected data.

Sample

In this experiment I will be relying on three time periods: pre-quota, during the passing of the quota, and post-quota. The years I will be studying are 2008, 2012, and 2016, or the first year of the 30th Dáil Éireann, 31st Dáil Éireann, and 32nd Dáil Éireann. The purpose of studying three separate years of data is to supply a more holistic view of change with pre, post, and intermediate time periods for the gender quota.

Variables

The independent variable throughout this study is the gender quota, including the quota type. In this case, Ireland operates under a party quota. The dependent variable in this study is substantive representation. This variable is harder to measure and more subjective; this study will measure substantive representation through the number of sponsored and co-sponsored bills by women but could be measured differently.

The bills that will be included in this study are only from the time period of 2008-2016. Bills in Ireland can be introduced by a private member or by a government minister. I will be including introduced bills of all subject matters from private members and all government ministers for this study, as opposed to solely focusing on 'women's issues.' My hope is that my including as many bills as possible, I will be able to see a larger pool of data.

Hypotheses

My analysis will test two hypotheses about the substantive representation of women in Ireland following the implementation of a political party gender quota.

Hypothesis 1: Following an increasing in descriptive representation, women's substantive representation increased for the time periods of the quota and post-quota. If women's descriptive representation is increased – a highly probable outcome due to the repercussions that follow if parties don't meet their minimum standard – substantive representation is likely to follow suit. More women in office means it's more likely that women are able to sponsor and co-sponsor bills and to prove that the quota was meaningful for women's representation.

Hypothesis 2: Women's issues are significantly more likely to be proposed by women throughout all time periods of the study. Women in politics have been limited to women's issues throughout history; I hypothesize that the percentage of women's issue bills with female sponsors/co-sponsors will decrease, but it will remain statistically significant that more women introduce women's issue bills than men.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to this study, but the main limitation I have found is that the topic of substantive representation is easily subjective. I have provided multiple ways to measure substantive representation and am choosing to study only two ways. The category of women's issue in itself is subjective and controversial because a woman's role is not limited to issues of the private sphere. The definition of women's issues that I have relied on, however, is more universally understood as issues that represent women and contribute to the well-being of women.

Another limitation of my research is the timing of the study. The 32nd Dáil is still in term during the time this study has been conducted, making the data inconclusive and limited. To combat this issue, I have relied on the percentage of women sponsoring and co-sponsoring bills and women's issues introduced, as opposed to the number, to get a better sense of how this session is progressing. The partial session I have studied reflects the enacted quota, but the smaller sample size makes the post-quota data limited and harder to identify patterns and change. There are also may be limitations for this study in terms of variables that I have left out, didn't consider or are immeasurable.

Analysis

The data used throughout this study was collected directly from the Houses of the Oireachtas website and includes bills introduced by the Dáil Éireann and the Seanad Éireann, the Irish Senate. The gender quota was enacted only in the Dáil, and not the Seanad. The first questions I wanted to ask, then, was how has the quota effected the number of female sponsored/co-sponsored overall, and how was the Dáil effected by itself? Has there been any significant changes in introduced bills in the Seanad, as well?

Figure 1: Total Percent Change in Female Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Bills

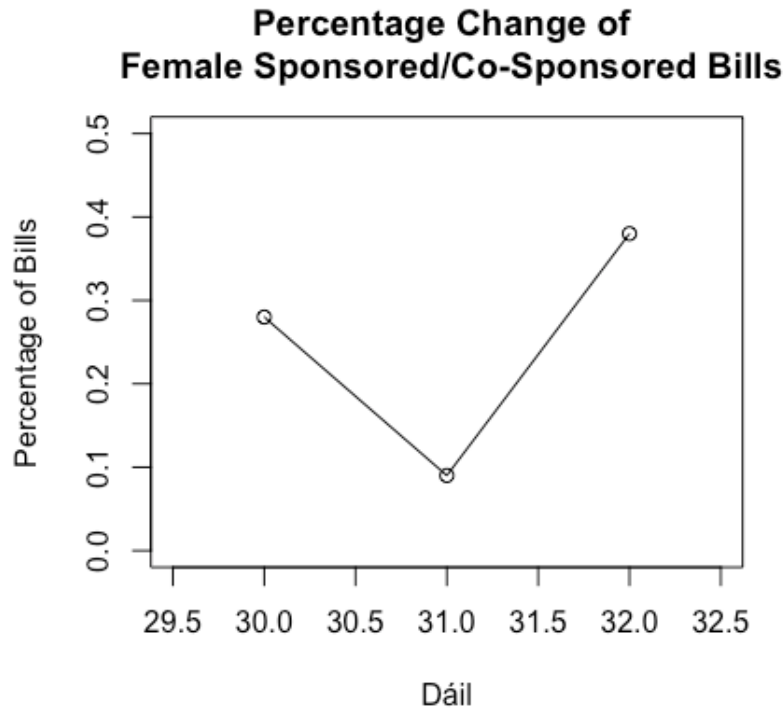


Figure 1 demonstrates how the total percentage of female sponsored or co-sponsored bills changed in the first year of the 30th, 31st, and 32nd Dáil. Ideally, I would have liked to compare the entirety of each Dáil, but due to time constraints, I relied on the data from only the first year of each Dáil. The data in Figure 1 includes all female sponsored/co-sponsored bills, not only women’s issue bills. There is about a 20 percent decline in female sponsored/co-sponsored bills in the first year of the 31st Dáil, the intermediate phase in which the quota was in the process of being passed. In the 32nd Dáil, however, female sponsored/co-sponsored bills increase to about 38 percent of the total number of introduced bills, an all-time high.

Figure 2: Percent Change in Female Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Bills in the Dáil and in the Seanad

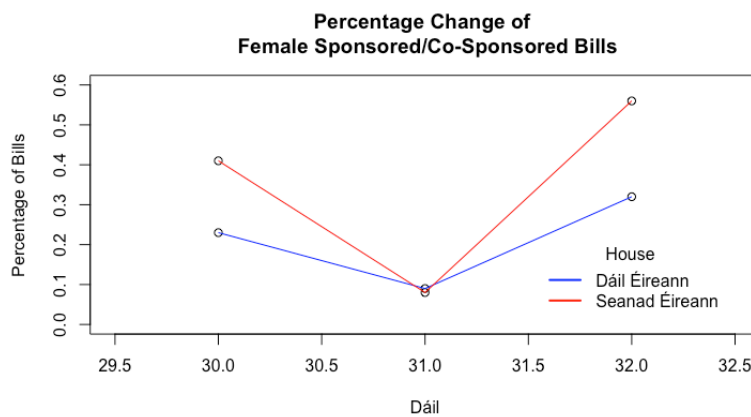


Figure 2 shows a double line graph demonstrating how the percentage of female sponsored or co-sponsored bills changed in 2008, 2012, and 2016 in the Dáil (blue) and in the Seanad (red). By looking at the changes made in the Dáil and in the Seanad separately, we can see a smaller dip in the percentage of female sponsored/co-sponsored bills in the Dáil, specifically, where the quota was implemented. We also see a lower increase in percentage female sponsored/co-sponsored bills after the first year of the 32nd Dáil, at 32 percent. The Dáil proposed 92 bills and the Seanad introduced 34 bills total in 2016.

The next question I wanted to analyze is if there have been any significant changes in the number of private female sponsors/co-sponsors since the implementation of the gender quota. In the Dáil and in the Seanad, a private member or a government minister has the ability to introduce a bill. I was interested in the results of this test because I wanted to see if there was an increase in private member bills sponsored/co-sponsored after the quota. An increase in introduced bills by private-member female sponsors/co-sponsors could suggest a confidence boost in women as private members in the Dáil. To test this question, I ran two very similar linear probability models for this test; one with bills introduced by female sponsors/co-sponsors the Dáil and by the Seanad and one with female sponsored/co-sponsored bills only introduced by the Dáil. Below, Figure 3 shows the total bills introduced by female sponsors/co-sponsors and Figure 4 shows the results from female sponsors/co-sponsors only in the Dáil.

Figure 3: Changes in all Female Sponsored/Co-sponsored Bills by Private Members and Government Ministers

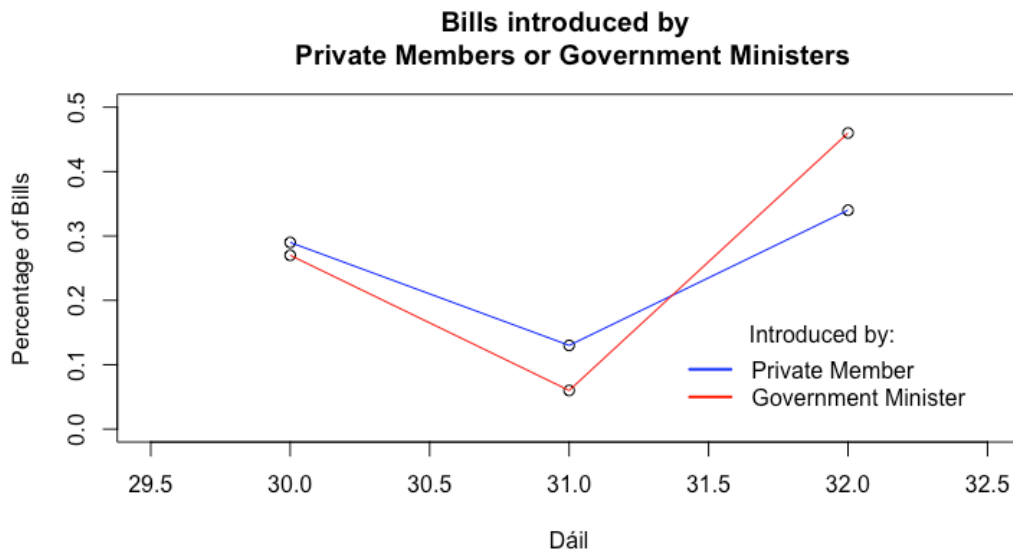
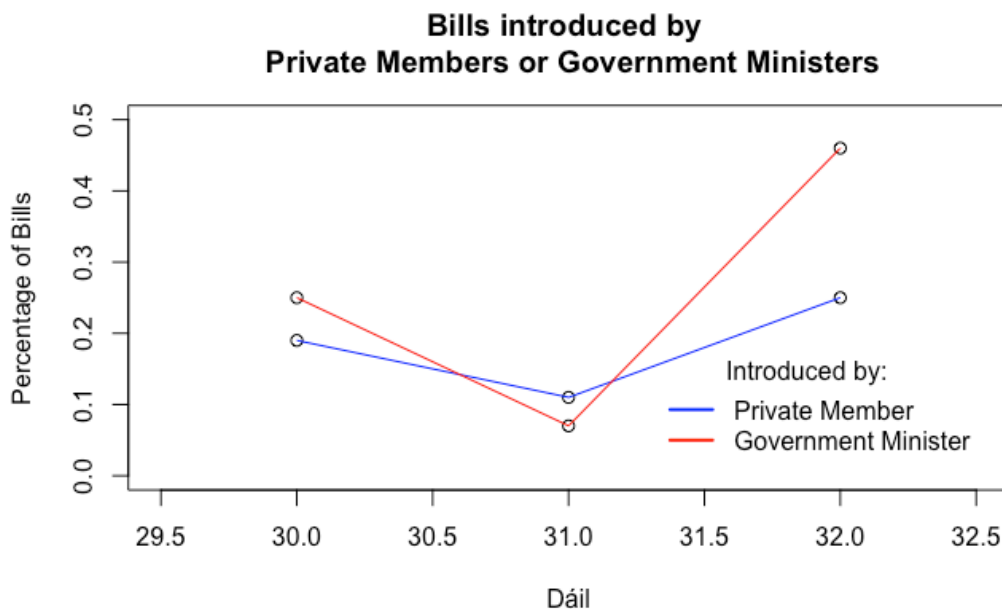


Figure 4: Changes in Female Sponsored/Co-sponsored Bills by Private Members and Government Ministers in the Dáil Only



Comparing Figure 3 and Figure 4, it is evident that the implementation of the gender quota did not affect only the women of the Dáil. When looking at the 32nd Dáil specifically, the total of introduced female sponsored/co-sponsored private-member bills increased to 34 percent. In just the House Dáil, however, 25 percent of introduced bills of the 32nd Dáil had a female sponsor/co-sponsor. The difference in private member bills introduced with a female sponsor/co-sponsor Figure 3 and Figure 4 during the 32nd Dáil suggests that more female private members in the Seanad were sponsoring/co-sponsoring introduced bills, as well. The percentage of female sponsored/co-sponsored bills by government ministers in the 32nd Dáil in Figure 3 and in Figure 4 were at about 46 percent. By 2016, then, nearly half of the introduced bills introduced by government ministers had at least one female sponsor/co-sponsor.

Since the Dáil implemented a political party quota, I wanted to analyze how the percentage of female sponsors/co-sponsors on introduced bills fluctuated by party. When collecting my data, one of the categories I recorded was which party introduced the bill. The third question I wanted to test is whether every political party follows the same pattern seen in Figures 1-4, or not. I organized parties into six categories: 1 = Fine Gael, 2 = Finna Fáil, 3 = Labour, 4 = Sinn Fein, 5 = Small Party (all other parties), 6 = Independent. The independent variable for is still the Dáil for this model. Every party was compliant with the requirements of the quota, meaning that of every party's nominated candidates, at least 30 percent were females. Figure 5 demonstrates the results of the percentage change of introduced bills with female sponsors/co-sponsors by party over the three time periods.

Figure 5: Percentage Change of Introduced Bills with Female Sponsors/Co-sponsors by Party

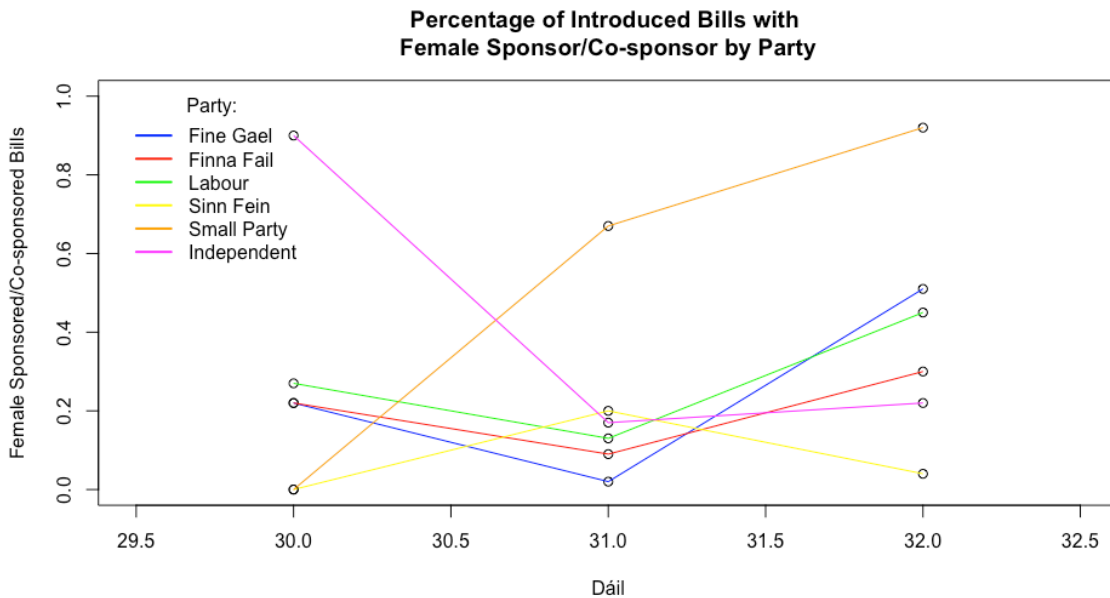


Figure 5 shows that not every party has followed the same pattern in terms of female sponsored/co-sponsored introduced bills. Small Parties and Sinn Fein increased their percentage of female sponsored/co-sponsored introduced bills in the 31st Dáil, while every other party was a decrease. One reason for this may be that Small Parties and Sinn Fein were gaining popularity during this time period, meaning their influx of sponsored bills as a whole was rising. All categories except for Sinn Fein increased their percentage of female sponsored/co-sponsored introduced bills entering the 32nd Dáil, following the implementation of the quota. Small Parties significantly increased their female sponsored/co-sponsored introduced bills in the 32nd Dáil, again, with the rise of their prominence in Irish politics. The more conservative parties – particularly Finna Fáil and Independents – show less of an increase in female sponsored/co-sponsored introduced bills in the 32nd Dáil, though Finna Fáil’s increase remains statistically significant.

I hypothesized that women’s issues bills are significantly more likely to be sponsored/co-sponsored by women throughout all time periods of the study, bringing me to my next question of study. When analyzing the data collected, I first chose to include all women, instead of only women in the Dáil. The overarching data of the study shows that women are about 17 percent more likely to sponsor/co-sponsor a women’s issue bill than a male, a statistically significant value. I wanted to see if that has decreased since the implementation of the gender quota, however, so I created a linear probability model showing the percentage of women’s issues bills introduced by a female sponsor/co-sponsor by Dáil compared to introduced women’s issue bills by a male sponsor

Figure 6: Percentage of Introduced Women’s Issue Bills by Sponsor Gender

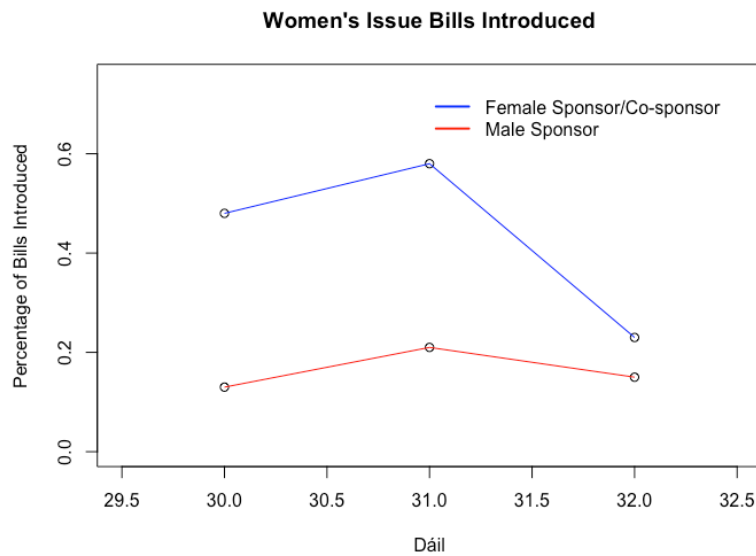


Figure 6 shows the fluctuation of introduced women’s issue bills over the three time periods with female and male sponsors. The data in Figure 6 includes all bills introduced, not only bills introduced by the Dáil. Of the introduced bills by a female sponsor/co-sponsor in the 32nd Dáil, 23 percent were women’s issue bills, a large decrease from 58 percent in the 31st Dáil. Of introduced bills by a male sponsor in the 32nd Dáil, the percentage of women’s issue bills fell to 15 percent from 21 percent in the 31st Dáil. 23 percent of introduced bills by a female sponsor/co-sponsor were women’s issue bills in the 32nd Dáil is still higher than the 15 percent of introduced bills by male sponsors and is statistically significant, the gap dramatically decreased. Figure 6 shows a steep decrease in the percentage of women’s issue bills by female sponsors/co-sponsors following the implementation of the gender quota. This is important because, as we saw in Figures 1-5, after the implementation of the gender quota, female sponsorship/co-sponsorship was at an all-time high.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine if the political party gender quota implemented in Ireland’s Dáil increased women’s substantive representation following the drastic increase of women’s descriptive representation. Hypothesis 1, women’s substantive representation increased for the time periods of the quota and post-quota, was not supported. The data collected showed that women’s substantive representation during the 31st Dáil was significantly lower than substantive representation in the pre-quota time period. Post-quota, however, women’s substantive representation considerably increased.

Hypothesis 2, women’s issues are significantly more likely to be sponsored/co-sponsored by women throughout all time periods of the study, was supported by the data collected in this study. While the percentage of introduced women’s issues bills sponsored/co-sponsored by females decreased greatly in the post-quota time period, it is still significantly more likely that women propose women’s issue bills than men.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

One of main opposition arguments to gender quotas is that women are likely to be token candidates and do not participate in political decisions as much as their male counterparts (Martin 2018). This study shows that women elected in a quota system are more likely to contribute to the political sphere. The substantive representation of women has increased, along with the descriptive representation. This study can theoretically support the claim that gender quotas are successful in the effort to decrease gender inequalities in the political sphere in a more tangible way than just numbers.

One limitation of this study was only studying the first year of the 30th, 31st, and 32nd Dáil. By studying the entirety of the Dáil, we may have seen different patterns or changes in the percentage of female sponsored/co-sponsored bills and women's issues. Another limitation, however, is that we cannot fully study the 32nd Dáil, yet, because it is still in session. The short amount of time that the quota has been implemented limits the results and predictions about long-term success of the quota. Finally, another limitation of this study is that we are unable to prove that the quota is responsible for the increase in women's substantive representation. The Seanad, for example, also showed an increase in women's substantive representation in the 32nd Dáil, but the quota was not applied to the Seanad. While female members of the Seanad may have been inspired by the quota women of the Dáil, substantive representation remains subjective to some degree.

Conclusion

The Irish political party gender quota has increased women's substantive representation in the post-quota time period, but not during the intermediate time period. This study also shows that women's issue bills are significantly more likely to be introduced by a female sponsor/co-sponsor throughout all time periods of the quota. It is important that we acknowledge the implementation of a national gender quota has significantly increased women's descriptive and substantive representation and remains a positive step towards closing the gender inequality gap in the political and public spheres. Women have remained underrepresented in politics for three main reasons: social structure, politics, and identity, and gender quotas are a crucial tool for correcting these disparities. Women's importance and contributions in society have been overlooked and undervalued throughout history. While we still have a long way to go, increasing women's substantive representation through the implementation of gender quotas is a good place to start.

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