Do Gender Quotas Produce a Different Class of Politician?

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ECPR Bordeaux 2013

NB For personal reasons it was not possible to produce a full written paper in time for the conference. The findings outlined in this presentation will be fully written up later in 2013 as a chapter of my forthcoming book. Please email me if you would like to see this written version once it is available: rainbowmurray@gmail.com
Quotas and Qualifications

• Different theories on the kind of women who will be elected through quotas
  – Similar to men i.e. elite, unrepresentative
  – Less qualified than men – undermining meritocracy
  – Different to men – bringing unique qualities to representative process

• Creates equality/difference double bind – how to compete with elites while being descriptive representatives
French case study

- Quotas ("parity") introduced in 2000 – set at 50% but weak implementation
- Women in parliament:
  - 1997: 10.9%
  - 2002: 12.3%
  - 2007: 18.5%
  - 2012: 26.9%
- Facilitates study of deputies elected pre/post parity
- Part of larger study on impact of parity on French parliament
Data

• Covers 3 parliaments
• Collected from French parliamentary website and additional biographical sources (Who’s Who, Wikipedia, MPs’ websites etc)
• Focuses on empirically measurable qualities ie age, prior political experience, education, profession etc
• Recognition that these may not be best measures of ability to represent
• High levels of renewal in 2012: 37.8% of deputies elected for the 1st time
  • 60% of newbies are men – below parity even without incumbency
Career life-cycle

• Prior research (Murray 2010) shows high-flyers start young, access parliament quickly, may acquire local office after, become future leaders
• Slow-starters build up local profile for many years then culminate in national backbench role
• Women more likely to be in latter group
• New focus on specific routes into power: elite education, career politicians, family ties etc
Age

- Mean age of deputies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean age</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>54.74</td>
<td>55.12</td>
<td>53.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>52.34</td>
<td>53.30</td>
<td>52.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- So women are younger on average

- Age distribution previously skewed – women clustered around 50s, men wider range – but both sexes now normally distributed with similar standard deviations (ie convergence)
Starting age

- Mean age is misleading – higher proportion of women are first-timers (56% compared to 31% for men)
- Better measure is mean age upon first election: men 45, women 48.5 (highly significant difference)
- So women start later, not earlier – younger only because they are new (men have served 2.5 times more terms on average)
- Matters because early starters more likely to rise to top
- But 2012 new entrants (both sexes) starting later than their predecessors
Experience

• Local politics is important in France – combined with national politics to build power base
• Men have slightly more experience on average than women when first elected – gap continues to grow
• Key difference is executive level – still dominated by men:
  – 2/3 men are/have been mayors - less than ¼ of women
  – More than 20% of men are mayors of large towns - 4% of women
  – 22 men current/former departmental (county) president – only one woman
  – 9 men current/former regional president – no women
• Where parity is not legally enforced, barriers continue
Profession

• Similar proportions of men/women from certain professions (civil servants/aides, managers, farmers)
• High proportion of school teachers are women but most academics are men
• Men more likely to run a business, almost 2x as likely to come from liberal profession (doctor, lawyer...)
• Women 3x more likely to be skilled non-manual (eg midwife)
Profession

• In 2012 cohort, some differences wash out eg liberal professions BUT big gaps in civil servants/aides (men 50% more), teachers (women almost 2x more), skilled non-manual (women almost 3x more)

• The proportion of civil servants/aides is high and increasing: 24% for those elected pre-2012, but 32% for new women and 43% for new men

• No longer any deputies from manual backgrounds – some deputies speak proudly of working-class roots, but all have risen up social ladder before entering parliament
Career politicians

• People who:
  – Have only worked in politics (as political civil servants, special advisors, parliamentary assistants etc)
  – Have no meaningful alternative profession
  – Have worked in directly political roles for years prior to entering parliament

• Proportion of career politicians is high and growing:
  – Pre-2012 cohort, 38% men, 31% women
  – New entrants, 54% men, 34% women
Career politicians - consequences

• In interviews, female deputies said male career politicians had an advantage
  – Better networked
  – More familiar with unwritten rules of the game – more strategic from outset with eg committee placement

• BUT bad for representation
  – Little to no experience of “real world”
  – Scant representation of most professions, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds
  – A route that seems to be more open to men
  – Nepotism eg assistants inheriting seats
Other ways to inherit a seat

• Be a *suppléant* (reserve MP)
  – Always more women *suppléantes* than deputies – currently 44%
  – New deputies more likely than older cohorts to have female *suppléante*
  – Women more likely than men to “balance ticket” – 92% of women have male *suppléant*, only 57% of men have female *suppléante*
  – 2\textsuperscript{nd} class position but can be route in - 14% of current male MPs and 11% of female MPs are former *suppléants*

• Be related to another politician (child/partner etc)
  – Absolute numbers favour men but proportionally, women more likely to a “daughter of/wife of”
  – 6% of deputies have family ties
Education

• A higher proportion of women than men are educated to postgrad level; gap has widened with the 2012 cohort
  – Negates hypothesis of under-qualified women
• More than 90% of deputies educated to at least degree level (4x more than population)
• “Quota women” are the most highly educated of any group – very qualified, though unrepresentative
• But men far more likely to benefit from elite education:
  – 15% attended Sciences Po Paris (3% women)
  – 6% attended l’Ecole Normale d’Administration (1.3% women)
  – 3.1% attended exclusive Parisian schools (1.3% women)
Discussion

• Some gender gaps (education, profession) are narrowing – “quota women” are more like male elites
  – But still somewhat more diverse, eg wider range of career backgrounds
• Growing professionalisation of politics, especially by men
  – Bad for representation – no experience of “real world”
  – Places non-career politicians, including women, at disadvantage
• Some springboards (elite educational institutions, local executive office) still used far more by men
• Politics is becoming more feminised (+ slightly less white), but still far from descriptive representation – eg class becoming less representative
Conclusion

• Quota women: equal and/or different?
  – Bit of both
  – Highly qualified with professional backgrounds
  – Less well embedded in politics – less insider/executive experience, but more “real world” experience
  – Bring in different perspectives but may take longer to learn rules of the game (supported by interview data)
  – Whether considered as good depends on definition of quality (which itself is gendered and needs reconceptualising – but that’s a whole other paper!)