

# Closing the gender gap:

## How can levels of female political leadership at the national level increase?

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*Women make up roughly half of the world's population, yet this is not reflected in the level of female political officeholders worldwide. The disparity in the descriptive and substantive representation of women is a problem that warrants closer examination. This thesis explores the gender gap in politics with in-depth case studies of the United States, Mexico, Rwanda, Spain, and Denmark, analyzing the factors leading to high (or low) female held political offices at the national level in the respective countries. The presence of quotas and proportional representation electoral systems largely explain the level of female political leadership in these countries. Implementing these measures across the globe will help increase the number of female politicians thus working to achieve gender parity in the political sphere.*

**A**merican women's rights activist, Susan B. Anthony, once said, "The day will come when men will recognize woman as his peer, not only at the fireside, but in councils of the nation. Then, and not until then, will there be the perfect comradeship, the ideal union between the sexes that shall result in the highest development of the race" (Harper, 1898). Anthony's hope that men will one day recognize women as their equals in government is unfortunately still far away from becoming a reality. Women have long been fighting to have equal rights and there are women who are still doing so in less developed countries in the world.

The age-old struggle is far from over especially in the political arena where women are not adequately represented. Women make up nearly half of the world's population yet they are noticeably absent from serv-

ing as heads of states, heads of governments, and/or members of parliament. In fact, according to statistics from UN Women and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, only ten women have served as Head of State, merely nine women served as Head of Government, and less than a quarter, 22.9%, of the world's parliamentary seats are currently held by women. The broad gender gap in politics is disconcerting and needs to be closely examined as to why this is the case. Women have been underrepresented in the economic, political, and social sectors and relegated into subservient roles compared to that of men's for far too long.

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The age-old struggle is far from over especially in the political arena where women are not adequately represented. Women make up nearly half of the world's population yet they are noticeably absent from serving as heads of states, heads of governments, and/or members of parliament. In fact, according to statistics from UN Women and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, only ten women have served as Head of State, merely nine women served as Head of Government, and less than a quarter, 22.9%, of the world's parliamentary seats are currently held by women. The broad gender gap in politics is disconcerting and needs to be closely examined as to why this is the case. Women have been underrepresented in the economic, political, and social sectors and relegated into subservient roles compared to that of men's for far too long.

Although the modern era has ushered in many new opportunities for female advancement, there is still much progress that needs to be made and one of the most effective ways to promote women in today's society is through direct political participation, particularly by holding political office. Female political empowerment is key to addressing the underlying issues obstructing women from reaching their full potential. Women are a distinct group in society with their own specific interests and therefore must hold roles in political leadership to ensure that they are properly represented. After all, women hold a discernable, different point of view than men on policy issues (Swers, 1998). Gender is also only second to ideology on its level of influence regarding legislative votes (Frederick, 2009).

This thesis aims to further the discussion on and raise awareness about the gender disparity present in governments around the globe by answering the following question: How can levels of female political leadership at the national level increase? The lack of female political leaders at the global stage is a pressing issue that needs to be addressed and can only be addressed by the passing policies that facilitate an

increase in female representation. This will result in more representative governments around the world as well as a higher platform for women's issues to be voiced and resolved. The paper seeks to make policy recommendations on what actions that countries interested in working towards achieving gender parity in their parliaments or parliamentary equivalents can take.

In order to ascertain and recommend the most effective policy options to increase female political leadership at the national level, this paper will consist of five sections following the introduction and clarification on "female leadership at the national level". The paper will first examine the scholarly literature on the importance of why women need to be adequately represented in politics to establish why policies should be passed to address the gender discrepancy in modern-day governments. Moreover, within the literature review, five country case studies- Rwanda, Sweden, Mexico, United States, and Denmark- will be referenced to as well as the benefits and the limitations of policies- quotas and proportional representation electoral systems- in increasing female political representation. Following the literature review, the paper will proceed to identify the policies in these chosen countries which have led to either high or low levels of women present in their respective parliaments. Once the policies have been explained, the methodology utilized to select the countries as case studies as well as the chosen policies. With the use of case studies, this paper largely utilizes a qualitative approach to testing the paper's research question and argument. The paper will then analyze the impact of the policies in increasing female representation in the countries featured in the case studies. Lastly, the paper will close with the conclusion, which will make policy recommendations and identify what future research is needed in order to further advance the presence of women in national government across the globe.

In the context of this paper, female political leadership at the national level refers to the amount of women serving in parliament in their respective governments as opposed to women serving as the heads of state or heads of government. The head of state is defined as the highest representative of a sovereign state whose primary role is to serve as its representative but may also serve as the head of government whereas the head of government is defined as the person in charge of running the state but that does not necessarily always mean the head of state. Although

heads of states or heads of government can be considered as female leadership at the national level, this paper does not include women who have served in that capacity due to the low numbers of women in those positions along with the difficulties in determining their influence in those roles. Consequently, this paper is focused on the women in parliament. In this context, parliament is defined as any national assembly which, according to domestic law, is endowed with the power to legislate and oversee the executive. Parliament for countries may consist of a lower house and an upper house or just a single house. Every country has a parliament or parliamentary equivalent and the parliament's role is essentially the same throughout the world so it is easier to evaluate the impact of women who serve on parliaments. In addition, it is more impactful to prescribe policy recommendations that can be applied more readily.

## II. Literature Review

This literature review is intended to the academic discourse between scholars over the female political representation. The first section will highlight the importance of involving women in the political process especially serving in elected positions. The second section will concentrate on the country case studies- Rwanda, Sweden, Mexico, United States, and Denmark into more detail along with references to the aforementioned countries throughout the literature review. The third and final section will examine the benefits and detriments on commonly suggested policies designed to increase the amount of women serving on the national level.

### *The Importance of Female Presence in Politics*

The significance of having and the impact of female legislators at the national level must first be established before delving in the various policies that countries may undertake to address the gender imbalance in their political systems. After all, unequal representation of women compared to that of men's is not a vital concern and does not warrant action unless the representation leads to substantively disparate policy outcomes. Women have distinctly different views on many issues compared to that of men's especially on gendered issues such as education, reproduction, and welfare. Swers examines whether the greater presence of women in the U.S. Congress would translate into substantive poli-

icy differences as opposed to just increasing equity. The results of the regression analysis on the votes of the U.S. Representatives in the 103rd Congress (the year 1992 was known as Year of the Woman) concerning women's issues "indicates that gender exerts a significant and major effect on voting for women's issues in the face of controls for other major influences on congressional voting" (Swers p. 435). Regarding the factors contributing to the influence on parliamentary votes, gender comes in second only to party ideology. Frederick (2009) delves further in the issue of whether women truly are more liberal and tend to support women's issues more than their male counterparts since studies with these findings were conducted before larger numbers of conservative women took political office. The study examines roll-call votes from 13 past Congresses to find that the women in the Democratic and Republican parties are the most partisan in years even more so than their male colleagues. As time passed, there was a marked, decreased influence on voting solely based off of gender in the Republican Party but this can be attributed to the Republican women elected to Congress who desire to show their party loyalty to move up in the ranks or do not see a need to substantively represent women. Going beyond traditionally designated women's issues, Boles and Scheurer (2007) find that the substantive representation of women in government does increase support for gendered, but not necessarily labeled as women's, issues such as the arts. Political party evidently played an important role in influencing the resulting vote but Republican women were more likely to support art bills compared to their male counterparts. Analysis from the House of Representatives' voting records from 1983 to 2002 was also analyzed to come to this same conclusion. Lawless and Fox (2010) conducted the Citizen Political Ambition Panel Study among professionals most likely to go into politics which provides additional support the idea of women having a different policy concerns than men. The potential female political candidates were "more liberal and feminist than men; they are also more likely than men to prioritize "women's issues" as motivating forces behind their political engagement" (Lawless et. al p. 92). When asked about policy issues that motivate them to be politically engaged, the female respondents named abortion, education, health care, gay rights, and the environment as important issues and four out of these five issues are women's issues. They also value each of the issues as equally important whereas no pattern of importance existed for the male respondents. It is clear that women truly do have a different perspective, although this may be tempered by other factors



*Women in the U.S. Congress 2018. In 2018, 106 (79D, 27R) women hold seats in the United States Congress, comprising 19.8% of the 535 members; 22 women (22%) serve in the United States Senate, and 84 women (19.3%) serve in the United States House of Representatives.*

such as party identification, than men do and it is essential that their point of view is taken in account on policies affecting the general populace. It is clear that women truly do have a different perspective, although these this may be tempered by other factors such as party identification, than men do and it is essential that their point of view is taken in account on policies affecting the general populace.

The effect of women in politics is not limited to legislative measures but also can be extended to influencing party issues. Greene and O'Brien (2016) tested three diversity hypotheses with data on the gender makeup of parties' parliamentary delegations and their manifestos for 110 parties from 20 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development democratic countries between 1952 and 2011. Parties are the primary actors in today's democracies and the parties addressed a greater diversity of issues in correlation with the increasing percentages of women in the party itself. In addition, a larger female presence in political parties is associated with a more left-leaning manifesto. Male and female parliamentarians may view themselves as ideologically similar but the women's presence can indirectly lean their

parties leftward since female politicians' preferences on gender equality policies tend to be to the left of their male colleagues Kittilson (2010) also provides a more comprehensive analysis on the impact of women on party agenda and policies by analyzing 142 political parties in 24 post-industrial democracies in the time period of 1990 to 2003. She finds that increasing female representation among a party's parliamentary delegation and among its leadership committee helps emphasize the issue of social justice in the party program and the adoption of gender quota policies. There is also a considerable impact on welfare state expansion. However, women appear to have little direct effect on the issues that political parties have traditionally structured themselves around. These scholars show that women bring their own perspective with an emphasis on issues deemed as women's issues and they should be more directly involved to ensure a more equitable representation of the population as a whole.

The effect of females on the political process is evident even from the impact of legislator fathers' daughters on their vote regarding liberal and women's issues. Washington (2008) states that sociolo-

gists have found a link between the gender of offspring and parental beliefs on political issues as seen in studies done in Canada and the United States. She further supports the assertion by analyzing the voting records of U.S. representatives and found that “conditional on total children parented, each female child parented is associated with a score increase of that is approximately one-quarter of the difference in score accounted for by legislator’s own gender” and the influence of female children affects voting in all sectors especially in regards to reproductive rights (Washington p. 313). Conley and Rauscher (2013) support this sentiment by running a data analysis of nationally representative data from the 1994 General Social Survey (GSS) survey. However, their findings suggest an opposite effect- the proportion of “girls significantly increase Republican Party identification in the United States... for high-status parents” and “daughters are related to more pro-choice abortion attitudes and disapproval of teen sex” (Conley et. al p.705). Despite the differences in results with Washington finding that daughters liberalized their fathers’ political stance and Conley et. al discovering that having daughters tended to result into more conservative attitudes for their parents, it seems as the merely raising female children impacts how their parents will identify and vote which gives credence to the idea of females being an important group to be incorporated in the political process as legislators. To be fair, Lee and Conley (2016) reexamine the relationship between the gender of offspring and the political orientation of the parents to explain the discrepancy behind the contradictory results. They used independent samples across different countries and time periods. Then, they proceeded to utilize Bayesian Additive Regression Tree models as well as multilevel analysis to conclude that all findings are null. Yet it is acknowledged that their findings do not disprove previous studies and may be due to limitations in the analysis or the issues with estimating small effects.

Furthermore, more female politicians at the national level increases the visibility of women in politics which in turn inspires women to be more politically involved and aspire to run for office one day. This perpetuates a cycle of female political empowerment and organically encourages women to run in the absence of policies designed to promote women to office. Political ambition for women is rather low so encouragement in any way can help as well as normalize the idea that women, not just men, can also serve as leaders in the political field. The same goes for political engagement as people are more likely to be more invested if they see some-

one representing them actively involved. Analyses done by Wolbrecht and Campbell (2007) on three cross-national European datasets find that adolescent girls and adult women are more likely to discuss politics when there are more female MPs. This effect on female political activity is constant regardless of age but it is more pronounced for the younger generation. This role model effect of female politicians is especially important since only girls in 11 of the 20 countries surveyed in the Civic Education Study, as mentioned in the article, are far less likely to see themselves as politically active adults compared to boys. Atkeson (2003)’s research generates additional evidence supporting the view that visible female political candidates raise increase political engagement among their fellow female citizens. Her models based off of Senate and gubernatorial races from American National Elections Studies (ANES) from 1990 to 1998 show that women are more likely to be more politically engaged with female candidates are running but there appears to be no effect on their level of engagement if it is a noncompetitive contest. The presence of women running, who are viable and more than a token candidate, appears to have a positive effect on engaging roughly half of the electorate which is a major achievement. Beaman, Dufflo, Pande, and Topalova (2012)’s randomized natural experiment in India clearly showed that female leadership, stemming from a 1993 law reserving leadership positions for women in village councils, ended the education attainment gender gap between girls and boys as well as shorter hours for girls to be spent on chores. They surveyed over 8,000 adolescents and parents in nearly 500 villages to find that, compared to villages with no reserved leadership positions, the gender gap in aspirations closed by 20% in parents and 32% in adolescents in villages assigned a female leader for two election cycles. Broockman (2014) employs regression discontinuity to analyze the effect of female leadership on political engagement of women in the United States in response to Beaman et. al.’s study. Yet he does not find any significant impact but this can be attributed to the differences in between the two countries and that there are other underlying barriers to equal female political participation. Despite mixed findings in the United States, female political officeholders and candidates gives the impression that their presence does increase female political engagement which is positive. At worse, there is no change in the level of political engagement so there is no harm but only benefits in promoting more qualified women to run for office.

### *Country Case Studies*

As a developing sub-Saharan African country with uncharacteristically high levels of female political representation in parliament, Rwanda is an intriguing case and the large numbers of women in government can mainly be attributed to its quotas in place. These quotas were the byproduct of the Rwandan genocide in 1994. In a short time period, the Hutu majority slaughtered approximately a million people, predominantly male and the Tutsi minority, were killed which devastated the nation. Women were in the majority, making up to 70% of the population, and they had to step up to fill in traditionally male roles, such as merely holding a job, in place of the men who were killed or were being tried for their crimes against humanity. In the aftermath of the genocide, women stepped into leadership roles which resulted in legislation on providing more rights and protections to women, such as the ability to own and inherit land, to pass. Their efforts also led to gender quotas to be enacted in 2003 which propelled Rwanda to become the first country in the world with a majority-female, national legislative body in 2008. Yet there are still significant progress to be made as Burnet (2011) clearly states that “more detailed analysis of the Rwandan case reveals that increased representation of women has not led to a greater statutory protection of women’s rights, nor has it led to a more democratic political terrain” (Burnet 3). Nonetheless, she contends that it has had other positive impacts such as promoting women’s social mobility and helped overturn the patriarchal gender paradigm where women are subservient and dependent on men. Bauer and Burnet (2013) utilized Botswana and Rwanda as two divergent country case studies to understand what conditions can best represent women’s interests. They found that “‘taking the fast track’ to parliament [as seen in Rwanda] – through the adoption and use of electoral gender quotas – has come to replace the ‘incremental approach’ (waiting for cultural, political and socioeconomic developments over time) to gaining access to women’s increased political representation” in the world today (Bauer 12).

Sweden and Denmark will be discussed in tandem with one another since both are Nordic countries which have enjoyed a reputation for being strong proponents for gender equality and their governments have typically featured high numbers of women in government. Additionally, Nordic countries have generally seen steadily increasing proportions of women serving in parliament since World War II although there were slight decreases recently. The

explanation for the relatively high female political participation in the Nordic countries can be attributed to several factors: institutional factors, such as electoral systems and party ideology; socioeconomic factors such as women’s labor force participation and women’s educational level; and cultural factors such as religion and public attitudes on gender equality influence and positively impact women’s participation in parliament. In fact, the Nordic countries have long reigned on the top of the list for women’s representation in the world following an “incremental track of gradual, step-by-step increases in women’s representation” till global South countries began to the top the list by going on the “fast track” through implementation of gender quotas (Dahlerup 146).. Legislated quotas are not in use in Nordic countries but there are party quotas instituted in some of the Nordic countries such as Sweden while no quotas are in use in Denmark.

Dahlerup and Leyenaar (2013) designate the last 1800s as the time when the process towards women’s access to political institutions in Sweden began. The big breakthrough came in 1921 when suffrage was granted to women and led to the election of women to parliament. Legislative reforms, such as maternity leave, was first enacted around this time helping to pave the way and these reforms would be heavily expanded upon later, particularly in the so-called bloodless revolution in the 1960s due to the amount and ease of passage, to be more female-friendly. Women activists were highly active in campaigning for nomination of female candidates within parties as well as in national women’s federations. Coupled with the growing support for gender equality beginning in the 1960s, notably with the Group of 222 which was a think tank on the issue, and the second-wave women’s movement in the 1970s led to the 1974 elections where the percentage increase of women in parliament raised by 7%, from 14% to 21%, which was the “largest increase ever in the history of women’s political representation” (Dahlerup 100). The decrease in the proportion of women in parliament, from 38% to about 33% in the 1991 elections raised concerns and reignited discussion on female representation. Sweden has continuously promoted gender equality since and has proudly declared itself to be a feminist government today.

Danish women gained the right to vote incrementally first for Parish Councils in 1903 then finally for parliament in 1915. Dahlerup states that the male monopoly (the 10% threshold) ended after World War II with substantial increases in the 1970s and 1980s - the 25% threshold was passed in 1984. Although the 35% threshold was passed in 1998, female rep-

resentation ended up being stagnate in the 1990s and 2000s. Formation of women's lists in elections emerged in 1908 but faded away when the view that women should prove political maturity by joining political parties to run against men became dominant which led to the increased presence of women in the more mainstream parties. The Socialist People's Party, established in 1960, and has emerged as the most female friendly political party in Denmark as the first party to adopt a feminist program in 1974 and the first party in parliament with a majority of women in 1979. The 1970s and 1980s were crucial times for gender equality with many new developments with the prime minister establishing a Commission on Women in 1963, "thereby for the first time constituting gender equality as a policy issue in its own right" (Dahlerup 155). Due to several important legislations advancing gender equality, such as the 1921 law on women's access to public offices, forming the base for further reforms despite the lackluster presence of women in parliament, Denmark was on track to transform into one of the most progressive, gender equal countries in the world now. Gender equality remains the Danish government and political parties' goal to achieve. There is certainly much to be done especially concerning female representation in leadership roles on parliament as well as to ensure that the women's representation does not stagnate or decrease.

The next and final two cases are on developed countries that are both located in North America and are - Mexico and the United States. Mexico has drastically improved its percentage of women on parliament in recent years. Its transition from an authoritarian one-party system governed by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional to a democracy today happened over a long period of time and reforms were passed in the 1990s to establish a more competitive, inclusive multi-party system. Several of the main political parties in Mexico adopted quotas at the party level which was purely voluntary in the early 1990s and the Mexican Congress, in line with promoting gender equality, passed a considerably weak quota law in 1996 which only recommended that neither gender should exceed the 70% threshold for candidate slots. Yet the quota law allowed parties to comply by designating women to serve as alternates or placing them on the bottom of the party list. New reforms in 2002 have increased the quota requirement for female candidates to 50%, with more stringent rules related to how the quota is implemented, like the candidate and replacement both have to be female, so political parties are pushed to put in

more effort into recruiting female candidates. Mexico's actions in advancing female political power is commendable but it also raises a few questions as Baldez (2004) brings up like how it is strange for a country notorious for its machismo culture in which masculinity is prized. However, this can largely be explained by the Supreme Court's ruling on the constitutionality of gender quotas which was done in part to support women but also to carve its independence from the other branches and women's overwhelming support for the policy which mobilized effectively to lobby for the quotas.

Despite being lauded as the land of freedom and opportunity, the United States has not been the friendliest place for women to seek political office in evident in the large majority of male Congress members let alone a bastion for gender equality. Women were first able to gain universal suffrage in 1920 with the passage of the 19th Amendment after mobilization from women organizations and their contributions in World War I. Yet women hardly occupied any major elected positions as of the 1970s. Lawless and Fox (2012) find that there were gradual, steady increases in the percentage of women running for elected office in the 1980s which surged in the early 1990s most notably with 1992 dubbed the Year of the Woman where a number of women were elected to the Senate, and the early 1990s experienced a sharper surge. However, the last several election cycles have experienced a plateau and the 2010 congressional elections resulted in the first net decrease of women in the House of Representatives since 1978. Furthermore, the United States does not have many policies in place designed to promote women unlike the Nordic countries. In fact, the United States is the only developed country without a national law on paid maternity leave and the Equal Rights Amendment, stating that rights guaranteed by the Constitution apply equally to all persons regardless of their sex, failed to be ratified by the required 38 states by 1982. It also does not have any form of quotas in place. This shows the United States' commitment or, rather, lack of commitment in addressing the gender disparity in government.

### *Policies Aimed At Increasing Women Officeholders*

Many obstacles face women when they seek political office simply because of the fact they are female. One notable pitfall is the stereotypes of women such as not being able to handle the strenuous duties as a politician, women are too overly emotional, and women should leave politics to the men. This is compounded with the additional responsibilities tra-

ditionally held by women of taking care of the family and home coupled being held to higher standards compared to their male counterparts and the lack of political ambition which may be attributed to the aforementioned reasons. There are certainly more barriers for women who wish to hold office compared to men and this needs to be addressed to level the political playing field. Consequently, there is a demonstrated need for countries to pass policies ensuring that women are not overlooked in favor of men for elected political office.

A popular option to increase the number of female political officeholders and therefore the descriptive representation of women is through establishing quotas. Quotas are policies which set aside a certain amount or percentage of seats for women in office and are widely agreed by scholars to be the most effective way to increase the number of women in office but this policy is not without its flaws. Krook (2008) discusses the emergence of female quotas in politics (party quotas, reserved seats, and legislative quotas), how to establish these quotas, and the impact of quotas. Civil society, the state, and the international and transnational spheres are the actors in play for quotas and motivations for quotas are principled stands, electoral considerations, empty gestures, promotion of other political ends, and extension of representational guarantees, international pressure, and transnational learning. Issues regarding quotas stem from increasing separation between political empowerment and social and economic empowerment, election of women that uphold the status quo, makes women a political category, and reduce effectiveness of female political actors. Feminist groups hold mixed feelings about quotas but the quotas do result in concrete gains in female political representation. Rwanda, as mentioned earlier in the paper, ranked 1st in the world by the Inter-Parliamentary Union for its gender inclusive parliament, is a prime example. Devlin and Elgie (2008) find mixed results on the effect of women in parliament- they do bring a different perspective to the policy agenda but there is no significant support that they change policy outputs. This also seems to be the case in Rwanda where female politicians consider themselves more concerned with grassroots politics and it is easier to raise women's issues. Only one gender-related major piece of legislation concerning violence passed since quotas were established in 2003. The effect of female representation in Rwanda was similar to that of Western countries but there is strong sense of solidarity leading to coordinating with other women and the presence of a gender agenda that should produce more female friendly legislation in the future. Devlin and et. al.'s findings are supported

by Gray (2003) who also found that gender quotas are generally seen to increase women's representation and make it easier for women to raise gender issues in policy through the comparison of the electoral quotas' impact in increasing female representation in Argentina and Chile. Quotas are clearly seen as a positive force for growing representation in when they are implemented well in Argentina as opposed to the situation in Chile.

Yet female gains in office have not translated into greater gendered policy outcomes. Nevertheless, this is may be due to the fact that women are a minority coalition and there are partisan divides. Zetterberg (2008) looks into the possible negative effects of quotas that can arise by analyzing Mexican state legislatures, Zacatecas and Michoacán. There has been some empirical support in regards to women who gain political office due to quotas face more legislative constraints compared to women who do not. There are three obstacles- tokenism, marginalism, and invisibilization- that women from quotas get more than women who do not. There does not appear to be any significant evidence supporting the claim that female representatives entering parliament from gender quotas face more discrimination than female representatives who did not. All political candidates struggle not to be a token and future political career in Mexican politics seems to be dependent on ties and loyalty to dominant leaders and groups which pits all female legislators against their male colleagues. But women are expected to focus on particular issues and men on other issues due to the "machista" cultural norm. Adding to the criticisms of quotas, Kerevel and Rae (2013) explore why women seem to be marginalized in legislatures or denied access to resources that reduced their ability to be effective legislators when elected. They analyze data from the Mexican Chamber of Deputies regarding gender differences in bill sponsorship, bill passage rates, and committee assignments both before and after the gender quota was established. They found no significant impact on how effective female legislators are although they held less leadership positions and were placed on less prestigious committees. Yet this disparity in leadership roles within the organization and placement on less prestigious committees can be explained by lack of experience since the gender quota was implemented relatively recently.

Electoral systems also play a role in determining whether women will be elected to office. As mentioned earlier, Gray analyzed the impact of quotas but found that national electoral quotas work best at gaining female political representation in a closed list, PR system. Roberts, Seawright, and Cyr (2013) sought



to understand why there are significant differences in female political representation in different countries. They postulate that a possible explanation for this divide is due to electoral systems since countries with party based proportional systems are found to elect far more women compared to countries with candidate based plurality systems. Three separate methods are used to more accurately estimate the effect of electoral rules on female representation. Their findings do not suggest that electoral laws are the answer to address low female representation although they may with certain factors. However, Fortin-Rittberger and Rittenberger (2014) seems to disprove the notion of PR systems as being “friendlier” to women through analysis of the types of PR rules used in European countries and how it shapes the European Parliament (EP) which is composed over a third female members of parliament. Their results suggest that documented empirical connection between electoral rules and descriptive representation is possibly due to an endogenous rather than a causal relationship.

Party recruitment is also vital in ensuring that women run for office and its influence cannot be underestimated. Women lack political ambition compared to men so an external push might be what they need to start running for office. Cheng and Tavits (2011) emphasizes the importance of party recruitment in increasing female held political offices and argue that local party gatekeepers’ recruitment of female candidates by parties is the most important out of all the informal influences on whether a woman will run for office so more female political gatekeepers would help. Female party gatekeepers are more likely to recruit people who are like them, provide direct support to candidates, have vast social networks with qualified female candidates, and inspire women to be politically active. They test their argument by studying gatekeepers in five significant political parties (BQ, Conservatives, Liberals, NDP, and Greens) in Canada’s 2004 and 2006 elections. The local party president’s gender did have a positive and significant, albeit small, effect on the gender of the party candidate. This thus gives credence that more female party gatekeepers lead to more female political candidates. Affirmative action policies in the BQ, NDP, and Liberal parties are also found to be statistically significant in increasing the number of female candidates. Lawless also advocates for party recruitment since encouragement from anyone can be critical in initiating a candidacy but “electoral gatekeepers are strategic in their recruitment efforts and that recruitment to public office is a selective process that reflects various dimensions of social stratification” (Lawless p. 95). Female respondents in the study, as mentioned

before, were less likely to receive encouragement to run showing that there is a gender gap in party recruitment that needs to be addressed. Of course, the level of recruitment may vary depending on the region and type of office but the overall gender gap is still noteworthy. Furthermore, gatekeepers’ networks are still overly male dominated and past surveys done by other people have revealed gender bias on the part of male party leaders who preferred male candidates to run.

There are more radical, albeit not implemented, policies that are conducive to increasing women’s representation in politics such as job-sharing. Job-sharing is essentially splitting a full-time position into two part-time jobs and is an increasingly popular flexible work arrangement. Campbell and Cowley (2014) state that job-sharing has been raised as a possibility in the House of Commons but failed to become a stature. Nevertheless, it enjoys the support of feminist groups and is endorsed by the Liberal Democrat party. Due to traditional gender roles of women being the homemaker and the caretaker in the family, many women do not possess enough time or resources for other pursuits such as political office. The issues with policies such as gender quotas are that these policies simply address the demand-side of the issue but not the supply-side which job-sharing does. Job-sharing is an attractive policy which can potentially lower the barriers for women to run and serve in political office since it would shorten the hours required and the duties needed to be fulfilled. This may be strange in a political setting and there are certainly issues that need to be worked out before implementation but job-sharing is rather common in the workplace. Additionally, although job-sharing may increase women’s representation, it is not gender-specific in who it benefits. In fact, it can also assist other members in society who also have time-heavy constraints but wish to serve. Their study finds that the public seems to be rather ambivalent about the idea of job-sharing parliamentarians. Nevertheless, “most of the public appear to make judgements on the basis of the candidates offered, rather than automatically rejecting job-share set-ups out of hand” and there is more support for “offering [members of Parliament] MPs the opportunity to job share among women than men” (Campbell pg. 444 - 445).

### III. Methodology

This paper looks into what actions can be undertaken to increase the presence of women in parliament and the methodology utilized for the paper is

relatively straightforward. To identify the policies which can be passed to increase female representation, the paper uses qualitative research, mainly in the form of case studies. Since this paper is focused on the level of political leadership at the national level, the paper looks at the amount of women currently serving in parliament. There is a sample size of 193 United Nations recognized countries but this number is too large to evaluate in detail so only a select few countries were picked. A total of 5 specific countries (Rwanda, Sweden, Mexico, United States, and Denmark) are featured and analyzed in detail for this thesis project. The case studies utilize a most similar system and a most different system approach along with a special case study to determine what accounts for the levels of female national political officeholders. The presence or absence of measures, namely quotas (whether it be legislated or party) and proportional representation electoral systems, will be closely examined in conjunction with the country case studies to determine their impact on the number of women serving in parliament in the respective countries. Essentially, the independent variables that the paper is looking at are quotas and electoral systems and the dependent variable is the percentage of women in parliament. Statistics from the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the international organization of parliaments, on election results in respect to gender is used to evaluate how countries stand on proportion of women in government compared to the rest of the world. Data on quotas is obtained from the Quota Project, which is a joint project among the International IDEA, Inter-Parliamentary Union, and Stockholm University aiming to provide up-to-date information on gender quotas worldwide. Figures on electoral systems were taken from the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, which is a collaborative effort between the International IDEA, EISA, Elections Canada, the National Electoral Institute of Mexico, IFES, The Carter Center, UNEAD, and UNDP to disseminate comprehensive information on electoral processes.

From these countries, the characteristics that appeared to explain the high or low amounts of female representation in parliament stems from mainly the presence or the absence of two policies- quotas and proportional representation electoral systems. There are also other measures that countries can implement that are not related to either quotas or electoral systems such as party recruitment. These measures will be briefly discussed but not in detail due to the difficulties in measuring their impact on increasing percentages of women on parliament.

Quotas are chosen as one of the policies given their indisputable effectiveness of quotas in increas-

ing female representation on parliament. According to the Quota Project, quotas establish a percentage or number for the representation of a certain group, which, for the purpose of this paper, are women. Quotas usually are in the form of a minimum percentage, for instance, 20% percent of candidates in national elections must be female. The purpose of quotas is to increase the representation of historically excluded or underrepresented groups in politics. Quotas can be mandatory or voluntary as well as legislated or party. There are 3 areas that quotas are able to target- the potential candidates, the candidates running in the election, and/or the elected members of parliament and their equivalents.

Legislated quotas are enshrined in a country's constitution or in its law, usually electoral law, making it a mandatory quota. This type of quota regulates political party actions within the country and can possibly apply sanctions in case of non-compliance.

The other form of quotas is party quotas which are decided upon and implemented on a voluntary basis by political parties in a country. This allows parties wishing to demonstrate their support for women in politics to institute quotas but also gives parties the freedom to determine whether they would want quotas or not.

Electoral systems were picked since certain types of electoral systems have been proven to facilitate representation of marginalized groups in society such as women. As defined by the ACE Electoral Network, electoral systems are a specific catalogue of norms and procedures used in an election to determine how to choose the next elected officials. In essence, electoral systems transmute votes into either offices or seats. For the purpose of this paper, the electoral systems mentioned refer to the electoral system at the national level as electoral system at the state or local level may vary. One of the hallmarks of democracy are fair elections so one of the most important decisions for democratic countries is to choose the right electoral system since electoral systems tend to remain constant once picked. Yet most electoral systems have not been deliberately selected by the countries until recently. Instead, the resulting electoral systems for countries were often due to circumstances in place or history such as the influence of colonialism or powerful neighboring countries. There are many types of electoral systems but only the ones mentioned in the country case studies will be discussed in detail.

Proportional representation electoral systems are intended to limit the disparity between the party's share of the national vote and its share of the parliamentary seats which incentivizes political parties to run in the elections. It is not possible to utilize a pro-

portional representation system with only one member in each electoral district since one seat cannot be divided. The system works best with as many seats as possible and through the use of party lists specifying the candidates that they are putting forth to voters on the national level. There are 2 major types of proportional representation system- List PR and Single Transferable Vote. The biggest benefit to a proportional representation electoral system is that it creates a more representative legislature and does not waste votes compared to plurality or majority electoral systems. However, the issues with proportional representation systems include the likelihood of forming fragmented party systems and coalition governments which would make it harder to govern.

List PR electoral systems are most likely to elect minorities and women since it encourages parties to put up a diverse slate of candidates where specific characteristics of these groups are not singled out so people are more focused on voting on policy stances. Yet List PR systems may propagate weak links between elected legislators and their constituents and the power that political parties hold in forming those lists.

Mixed electoral systems attempt to mesh the best qualities of proportional electoral systems and plurality or majority electoral systems. There are two systems in place during elections for countries with mixed systems- one is usually a single-member district system while the other a List PR system. There are 2 forms of mixed systems- Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system and Parallel system.

In MMP systems, proportional representation seats are given to compensate for any disproportionality seen in district seat results which retains the benefits of proportional representation electoral systems but it also links the elected representatives to geographical districts. The disadvantages in the MMP systems are the same as the ones for the proportional representation electoral systems.

Plurality or majority electoral systems simply award seats to the candidates or parties with the most votes. There are five common types of these electoral systems: the First Past the Post (FPTP), Block Vote, Party Block Vote, Alternative Vote, and the Two-Round System. In the FPTP system, also known as a plurality single-member district system, the winner is the candidate who receives the most votes and that does not necessarily mean the absolute majority of votes. The advantages of the FPTP system are that it is simple for voters to understand, established a more effective government that is not fragmented due to minority parties, allows voters to establish a closer relationship with the candidates, and excludes ex-

tremist parties from gaining seats. Nevertheless, the FPTP has its drawbacks as well since it is dependent on electoral boundaries which can be manipulated, makes it difficult for minorities, women, and small parties to gain representation, and wastes people's votes.

## IV. Results

### *Most Different Case Studies: Rwanda & Sweden*

Rwanda and Sweden are chosen as the most different case studies due to their divergent paths leading to the same outcome- the Inter-Parliamentary Union ranks both of these countries in the top ten for their percentage of women in government in the world. Rwanda is ranked 1st and Sweden is ranked 6th in the world. The high level of female participation despite the numerous differences between these two countries makes for an interesting comparison. Rwanda, more formally known as the Republic of Rwanda, is a less developed country located in central Africa while Sweden, more formally known as the Kingdom of Sweden, is a developed, northern European country. Furthermore, both countries have extremely different histories leading them to develop into the states that they are today. In line with many African countries, Rwanda was colonized by Europeans, which was Belgium in its case, to exploit their abundant resources. Despite having few, short-lived colonies, Sweden played the role in colonizing other countries and was not colonized. The structures of their respective governments are also dissimilar. Rwanda is a presidential republic where the power lies within the people and their elected representatives as well as the president being independent of the legislature. Its legislature is a bicameral parliament consisting of two houses- the lower house, also known as the Chamber of Deputies (Chambre des Deputes) and the upper house, or the Senate (Senat). The Chamber of Deputies is made up of 80 seats with 53 members directly elected through proportional representation vote, 24 women elected through special interest groups, and 3 members selected by the youth and disability organizations to serve 5-year terms. The Senate is made up of 26 seats and 12 of these seats are indirectly elected by local councils, 8 are appointed by the president, 4 are appointed by the Political Organizations Forum, and 2 are chosen by the institutions of higher learning to serve 8-year terms. On the other hand, Sweden has a parliamentary constitutional monarchy meaning that it is ruled by the parliament and the monarch serves a more symbolic role with their power constrained

by the constitution. Sweden has a unicameral parliament consisting of only one house known as the Riksdag. The Riksdag has 349 seats in which 310 of its members are directly elected in multi-seat constituencies through proportional representation vote and 39 members in at-large seats are directly elected by proportional representation vote to serve 4-year terms. For electoral systems, both Rwanda and Sweden have list proportional representation (List PR) systems which are conducive to electing minorities and underrepresented groups like women.

### *Most Similar Case Studies: Mexico & United States*

In contrast, Mexico and United States were selected as the most similar case studies since both countries share many of the same characteristics. However, Mexico is ranked significantly higher than the United States, in 8th place, while the United States is ranked at 104th place globally. Mexico, more formally known as the United Mexican States, and the United States, more formally known as the United States of America, share many similarities, most notably their proximity to one another in North America which has led them to become close allies. In addition, they share a similar history of being the European powers' colonies as Mexico was colonized by Spain and the United States was colonized by the United Kingdom. This led them to develop similarly although the United States is a more developed, wealthier country compared to Mexico. Both countries have federal governments in place. Mexico has a federal presidential republic in which its government is made up of states with power to self-govern to a certain level and its people elect their representatives with the president being independent of the legislature. The United States virtually has the same government except the division of power between the three branches of government is codified in its constitution. Mexico has a bicameral National Congress (Congreso de la Union) that is composed of the lower house, also known as the Chamber of Deputies (Camara de Diputados), and the upper house, also referred to as the Senate (Camara de Senadores). The Chamber of Deputies has 500 seats in total where 300 of its members are directly elected into single-seat constituencies through simple majority vote and the remaining 200 members are directly elected in a single, national constituency through proportional representation vote to serve 3-year terms. The Senate has 128 seats with 96 of its members directly elected into multi-seat constituencies through simple majority vote and 32 of its members are directly elected

into a single, nationwide constituency through proportional representation vote to serve 6-year terms. Likewise, the United States has a bicameral Congress that is made up of the lower house, also known as the House of Representatives, and the upper house, also known as the Senate. Its House of Representatives has 435 seats and all states, excluding Georgia, directly elected their representatives which are proportioned according to the states' populations into single-seat constituencies by simple majority vote to serve 2-year terms. Georgia is the only state to require an absolute majority to obtain the seat. The Senate has 100 seats meaning 2 seats for each state and their representatives are directly elected to represent their individual state constituencies through simple plurality vote to serve 6-year terms. The only exceptions are Georgia and Louisiana which require an absolute majority. Concerning electoral systems, Mexico has a mixed-member proportional (MMP) system while the United States has a first past the post (FPTP) system.

### *Special Case Study: Denmark*

Denmark, more formally known as the Kingdom of Denmark, is a special country in this regard since it has relatively high percentage of women in parliament compared to the rest of the world and is currently ranked at 22nd place. Yet its placement is rather low for a Nordic country and it has been criticized for not doing more to promote women into governmental positions. Similar to Sweden, Denmark is parliamentary constitutional monarchy where the monarch's power is limited and the parliament has the real power in making as well as passing legislation. Its legislature is unicameral and consists of only the People's Assembly (Folketing) which has 179 seats which includes 2 seats representing Greenland and 2 seats representing the Faroe Islands. The members are directly elected in multi-seat constituencies through proportional representation vote to serve 4-year terms unless the People's Assembly is dissolved earlier. Denmark also has a List PR electoral system.

### *Impact Of Quotas & Electoral Systems*

Rwanda's high proportion of women in government can mainly be attributed to the quotas and its List PR electoral system. There are quotas present in its lower house, upper house, and at the sub-national level. Currently, women hold 51 out of the 80 seats in the Chamber of Deputies which means that women constitute 64% of the lower house after the

2013 elections. The lower house has legislated quotas in place. The constitution states that “The State of Rwanda commits itself that women are granted at least 30 per cent of posts in decision making organs’ (Constitution, Article 9 [4]). The 80 members of the Chamber of Deputies are elected as follows: 53 members elected by direct universal suffrage through a secret ballot using closed list proportional representation, of which at least 30% must be seats reserved for women; 24 women (2 elected from each province and from the city of Kigali by an electoral college with a women-only ballot); 2 members elected by the National Youth Council; and 1 member elected by the Federation of the Associations of the Disabled (Constitution, Article 76)”. The electoral law sets up provisions for the election of 24 women deputies ‘Twenty four (24) female Deputies shall be elected by specific organs in accordance with national administrative entities. A Presidential Order shall determine a national administrative entity and the number of women Deputies to be elected at each entity. At each entity through which election has been conducted, candidates who obtain more votes shall be considered as elected’ (Article 109 of Organic Law 03/2010/OL of 18 June 2010 governing presidential and legislative elections)”. However, there are no legal sanctions for non-compliance or rank order/placement rules for party lists in voting.

After the 2011 elections, women hold 10 out of the 26 seats or 38% of the seats on the Senate. For Senate elections, reserved seats are set up and people are both indirectly elected and appointed to office. As set up in the constitution, “The State of Rwanda commits itself that women are granted at least 30 per cent of posts in decision making organs’ (Constitution, Article 9 [4]). The total of 26 members of the Senate are either indirectly elected or appointed. Article 82 of the Constitution (2005) states that ‘within the 26 members in the senate at least thirty percent (30%) should be women’. (Constitution, Article 82). However, just like for the lower house, there are no legal sanctions for non-compliance or rank order/placement rules for party lists in voting so issues with enforcement can possibly arise.

At the sub-national level, “at every Sector, one female member and one male member of Council shall be elected through direct and secret ballot” (Article 155 of Law 27/2010 of 19/06/2010 on elections) In addition, ‘... at least thirty percent (30%) of all District Council members shall be women and shall be elected through indirect and secret ballot as well as by the members of the Council Bureau of Sectors’ (Article 156). Political party legislation: ‘Each political

organization shall ensure that at least thirty percent (30%) of posts that are subjected to elections are occupied by women” (Article 5, Organic Law 16/2003 of 27/06/2003 governing political organizations and politicians as amended by Organic Law 19/2007 of 04/05/2007).

The adoption of the 2003 constitution which instituted a mandatory minimum of 30% gender quota in all decision-making institutions and the 2007 amendment for the Law on Political Organizations and Politicians established that party lists for all elective offices must contain at least 30% women candidates along with the edge that List PR electoral systems have accounted for its position as first in the world for gender representation.

Sweden’s considerably high level of female political representation is mainly due to its pro-feminist policies, party quotas, and List PR electoral systems. There are no legislated quotas in the lower house or at the sub-national level but some of its political parties have voluntary gender quotas in place. After their 2014 elections, 152 of the 349 seats or 44% of their seats were held by women. For the parties represented in parliament, the Social Democratic Party, the Left Party, the Green Party, and the Moderate Party all have some form of quotas or policies in place to encourage female political participation. The Social Democratic Party has had internal quotas since 1978 and has instituted the zipper system which alternates candidates based off their gender since 1993. The Left Party first had internal quotas in 1978 which led to the first party quota law to be implemented in 1987, paving the path for the 50% minimum of candidates on party lists to be women in 1993. On the other hand, the Green Party started with internal quotas in 1981 leading to the introduction of the first party quota rule in 1987 and the 50% gender quota on party lists in 1997. The Moderate Party simply has two women and two men have to be placed in the top 4 positions on the party list for the European Parliament elections since 2009.

Mexico has quotas at all levels; it has legislated quotas for the lower house, upper house, at the sub-national level and political parties. Mexico’s lower house has 500 seats and 212 of those seats are held by women meaning that they constitute 42% of parliament after the 2015 elections. Article 41 in its Federal Constitution mandates that political parties develop “...rules to ensure gender parity in the nomination of candidates in federal and local congressional elections.” As Mexico has a MMP electoral system, their elections are not as straightforward. 300 of the seats in its lower house are elected in single-member constituencies by plurality vote while the rest of the

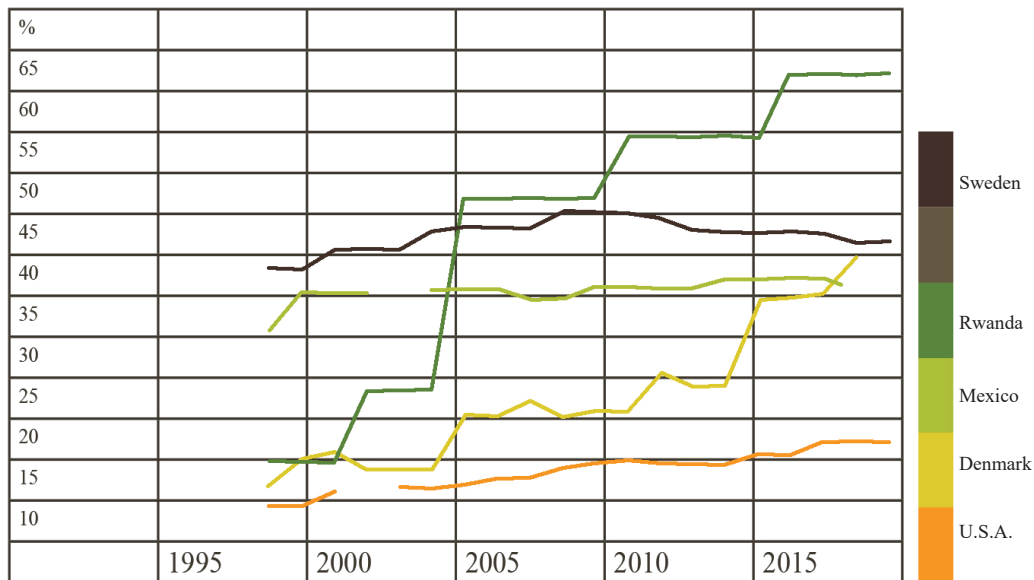
**Table 1: Comparison of the Countries**

	Rwanda	Sweden	Mexico	US	Denmark
Legeslated Quotas	Yes		Yes		
Party Quotas		Yes	Yes		
Electoral System	List PR	List PR	MMP	FPPT	List PR
Women in Parliament	63.8%	43.6%	42.6%	19.1%	37.4%
	38.5%		36.7%	21.0%	

200 seats are elected by proportional representation in five 40-seat constituencies. With the most recent Senate election in 2012, 33% of the seats or 42 of the 128 seats are held by women. 96 of these Senate seats are elected in single-member constituencies by plurality vote with the remaining 32 members elected by proportional representation in a single nationwide constituency. Mexico’s electoral law requires political parties to guarantee that a minimum 40% of the candidates on the lists to be of the same gender for the constituency and the proportional representation lists. The only exemptions would be for political parties that democratically elect their candidates. (Código Federal de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales, COFIPE, Article 219). Specifically for

the proportional representation elections, every section of 5 candidates must have 2 candidates of the same sex with male and female candidates alternating (COFIPE, Article 220). Unlike in Rwanda, there are legal sanctions in place to address non-compliance. Political parties that are not complying with Articles 219 and 220 have 48 hours to amend their lists. The parties will be publicly reprimanded by the General Council of the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) and given an extra period of 24 hours to rectify their list if they are still found to be non-compliant. The party’s electoral list will then be rejected by the IFE if it is still not compliant after the extra 24 hours grace period (COFIPE, Article 221). This puts immense pressure on political parties to recruit women

**Graph 1: Line Graph of Women in Parliament (1995 – 2016)**



**Graph 2: Bar Graph on Political Parties in the Swedish Parliament**  
 \*denotes parties with gender quotas



but it certainly explains Mexico’s high ranking for female political representation. One Mexican political party has taken promoting gender equality one step farther by establishing its own party quota. As stated in its party statute in Article 38, the Institutional Revolutionary Party has a 50% quota for women. Furthermore, Mexico also takes the extra step in promoting women with funds specifically intended for gender-related activities. 2% of political parties’ yearly public funding must be directed to train, promote, and develop women leaders. Mexico’s quotas do not seem to be working as effectively as it ranks below Rwanda and Sweden despite its extensive use of quotas. There are certainly other factors in play but perhaps, given more time, the effect of the quotas will truly be felt. After all, Mexico only amended its constitution to advocate for gender parity in February 2014 and the deadline for additional electoral amendments was set in April 2014. Also, Mexico’s electoral system MMP may also explain why since List PR electoral systems are most likely to promote women.

In stark contrast with the countries discussed as case studies, the United States does not have any form of quotas, legislated or party, and its electoral system is not favorable towards the election of women. After

the 2016 elections, women hold 83 of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives which means that make up only 19% of the lower house. Women do fare slightly better in the Senate where they consist of 21% or hold 21 out of the 100 possible seats in the upper house. For majority systems, like the FPTP in the United States, parties face pressure to support the “best” candidate which is usually not a minority or female since there is only one seat that can be won which is a lot at stake. Women have gradually started running for more seats in the United States but progress is slow and there are still considerable barriers to women running. The United States can certainly do more to support women in their pursuit of political office. After all, politics is still seen as mainly a man’s world especially in the United States.

Denmark’s case is of particular interest since it also does not have any legislated or party quotas. That is, Denmark no longer has any quotas but some of its political parties have had quotas in place. In 1977, the Socialist People’s Party was the first political party in Denmark to introduce a 40% quota only to end up abandoning it in 1990. They also previously had candidate quotas for the European Parliament in 1983 which ended in 1990 and only had these quo-

**Graph 3: Bar Graph on Political Parties in the Mexican Parliament**  
 \*denotes parties with gender quotas



tas for parliament and local elections from 1988 to 1990. Likewise, the Social Democratic Party adopted 40% party quotas in 1983 as well as candidate quotas for local and regional elections in 1988 but left these quotas behind in 1996. Although it is no longer an active party, the Left Socialist Party did have party and candidate quotas that called for 50% quotas in elections. The parties abandoned the quotas after they determined that the quotas were unnecessary in promoting women in politics. While Denmark can certainly work on improving female political representation nationally, it is currently doing very well compared to the rest of the world since it is ranked in the top 25 for women in parliament. This shows that countries can still have relatively high percentages of women in parliament without quotas and that quotas can be phased out if it does not appear that women need a boost in the election process anymore. However, Denmark is one of the Nordic countries where women generally enjoy a high standard of living and it also has a List PR system which does help propel women into government. (See Table 1 and Graph 1)

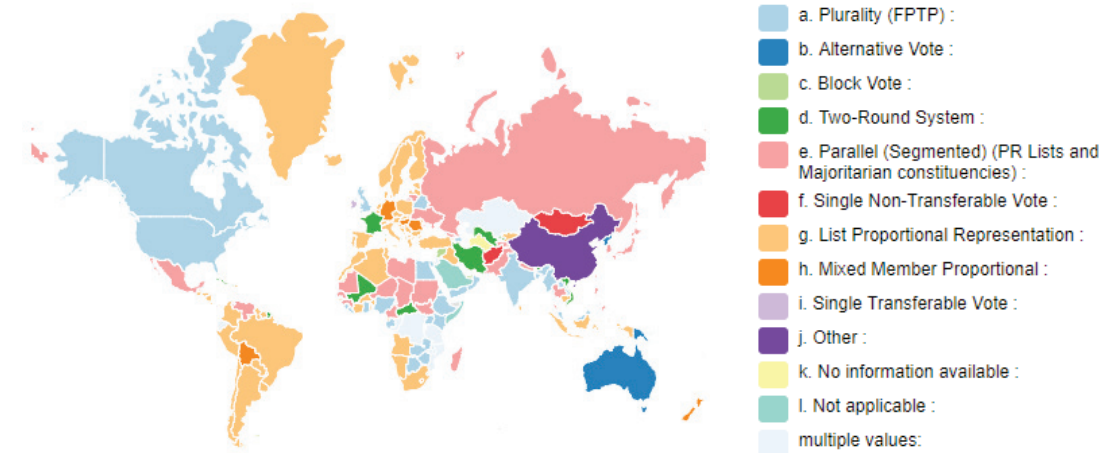
This clearly shows the impact of the quotas and/or electoral systems have on the percentage of women in parliament for Rwanda, Sweden, Mexico, United States, and Denmark. There is no doubt that insti-

tuting quotas are the easiest and most effective way to increase women's representation descriptively. However, despite the mixed impact on policy, having more women in government shows that the government is more representative, validates women's unique perspective on issues, and encourages more women to be actively engaged in politics. Legislated quotas may be difficult to implement and would depend on a country's political climate. But party quotas are relatively easy to implement and can be done by the political parties themselves. This type of quota may be less effective in comparison to legislated quotas but they are still impactful. The parties have free reign to decide the minimum percentage of women they would like to include as candidates. It does not matter too much exactly what party quotas may entail since the very action of setting up quotas show the public that the political parties and hence the political system welcomes women's participation.

This line graph is constructed with the data provided on elections results from the Inter-Parliamentary Union for the time period of 1990 to 2016. There are some missing data on some of the elections so it is not the most accurate graph but it still paints a clear picture of the increasing representation of women in parliament due to instituted gender quotas and

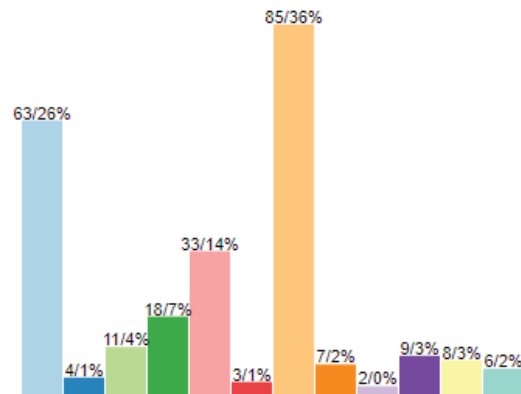


**Graph 4: Electoral Systems of the World from ACE Electoral Knowledge Network**



electoral reforms. There are slight dips in the amount of women serving on parliament but this can be explained by complacency on the government and political parties that they have done enough to encourage women to run.

Overall, all of these countries have experienced momentous increases since 1990 due to increased promotion of women into politics. Some of these countries have significantly improved thanks to the combination of gender quotas implemented and their electoral systems. Rwanda's parliament was composed of only 17.1% women back in 1990 but its current parliament has skyrocketed to being 63.8% women. The Nordic countries, Sweden and Denmark, have not shown as much growth but they did have the higher percentages of women in government back in 1990 and have slowly progressed since then. Sweden started with 38.4% of its parliament being women in 1990 and this has grown to 43.6% in 2016. Similarly, Denmark's parliament was made up of 30.7% women in 1990 which has become 37.4%. Mexico's parliament was 12% women in 1990 and it has jumped to 42.4% nowadays. The United States, lowest out of all the mentioned countries, started off at a mere 6.6% of its parliament being women in 1990 but has grown to being 19.4% women today. This may be a big increase over time despite the lack of quotas and the non-proportional representation system. However, the United States is considered a world power and a more developed country so the percentage is not as impressive as it could be. (See Graph 2 and Graph 3)



Graphs 2 and 3 demonstrate the effect of gender quotas just within political parties and it is a substantial impact. Graph 2 is a bar graph depicting the current political parties and their elected members in the Swedish parliament. The Swedish political parties (Social Democratic, Moderate, Green, and Left parties) with an asterisk all have some form of quotas and at least or more than 50% of all the members in the respective political parties are female. It is no coincidence that the political parties with gender quotas have higher female political representation than the other parties. With 57.1% of its party members in parliament as female, the Left Party leads the other Swedish political parties in gender equality. It is followed by the Green Party whose elected members

are 56% female, then the Social Democratic Party at 51.3%, and finally the Moderate Party at 50%.

Another good example illustrating the power of party quotas can be seen in Mexico. The only political party with a quota in place, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, has the second highest number of women in office from its party. In fact, 34.6% of its elected members are women. The Labor Party has a higher percentage of women elected, at 40%, but this may be accounted for by its rather low numbers in parliament to begin with. (See Graph 4)

Changing a country's electoral system is a difficult and highly unlikely task since most countries in the world have established electoral systems in place. However, if countries were to embark on electoral reform and one of their goals is to increase female representation, then proportional representation electoral systems, especially List PR, would be a great system to consider. As seen in Graph 4, List PR electoral systems are the most single most used electoral system in the world. Adding up all electoral systems with a proportional representation element like the Single Transferable Vote, Parallel, and MMDP systems, it is clear that countries recognize the advantages of a proportional representation system as it is a better reflection of voting overall.

## V. Conclusion

The status of women in the world has undoubtedly improved over the years. Women are becoming more involved in politics and winning seats in elections. In fact, the Inter-Parliamentary Union states that women's average share of parliamentary membership almost doubled in the time period of 1995 to 2015, from 11.3% in 1995 to 22.1% in 2015. Women have increased their numbers in parliament in almost 90% of the 174 countries which had data for this time period. This had led to greater diversity in the top 10 rankings which previously featured 8 European countries in 1995 but now includes 4 Sub-Saharan African countries and 3 American countries as well as Europe. The shifts over time are heavily due to the adoption of electoral gender quotas around the world. A record of over 120 countries had some form of quotas in 2015 which is far cry from the small number of countries in 1990.

With all of these positive developments, it may appear that there is nothing that needs to be done concerning the state of female representation in parliament. However, progress is a never-ending cycle and the number of women in parliament can certainly improve. In 2015, there were still 5 all-male parliaments and only 5 countries managed to reach or

surpass the 50% threshold of women in government. The truth is that it is still a challenge to elect women to government even in today's society. Women continue to be bombarded with gender stereotypes, lack time and resources due to their duties, and are hard on themselves which makes it difficult for them to even think about running for office. Yet it has been well established that women do bring a fresh, different perspective to policy matters than men and their focus on more gendered issues like welfare only makes sense. Furthermore, their presence in such high office of government serves as role models to the next generation of women and encourages them to be politically involved as well as possibly run for office themselves in the future. Consequently, governments and political parties need to step up and actively work to encourage women to serve on parliament to ensure that they are doing their best to serve the population.

As seen in the country case studies of Rwanda, Sweden, United States, Mexico, and Denmark, gender quotas, which can be either legislated or party, play a large role in increasing the percentage of women in parliament for the countries which have these quotas enacted. Quotas, in particular party quotas, can be generally easy to introduce to countries seeking to improve their own female representation with results in the upcoming elections although the full effect will take time to show. Electoral systems also have a large part in facilitating the election of women to government. Generally proportional representation electoral systems, especially List PR, work the best. Although having a proportional element in the electoral systems might be best overall if countries do not want to contend with some of the issues of a sole proportional representation such as a more fragmented government. Gender quotas, in conjunction, with proportional representation electoral systems will lead to a more gender representative government in countries.

Yet other methods such as party recruitment and possibly job-sharing should be further researched. Political parties are the gatekeepers to elected office so parties have immense influence into choosing which candidates to support. Actively recruiting female candidates can also help since women tend to have lower political ambition than men and having the support of a political party would greatly increase their chances of running. Also, more female leaders in the political parties themselves will help make the parties more welcoming to women and make it easier to identify women to run. Job-sharing is a fascinating area to explore since it is common in the workplace but its effectiveness in a political setting is still untested. Nevertheless, these factors along with gender

quotas and proportional electoral systems will help usher more women into politics to ensure that women

are properly represented and have a voice in deciding on what is best for the country.

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