


RESEARCH ARTICLE

## The Growth of a Field: *Politics & Gender* and Research on Gender Quotas

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### Abstract

In its first twenty years, *Politics & Gender* has played a key role in the development of a robust and thriving literature on electoral gender quotas. This article reviews the 76 articles published on this topic in the journal between 2005 and 2024. It first takes a chronological view, analyzing publication patterns over time to show how the field has expanded through research articles, Critical Perspectives essays, book reviews, and Notes from the Field. As part of this survey, it identifies publications that have been particularly influential in shaping knowledge on quotas and their various impacts. The article then takes a thematic view, showing how work published in *Politics & Gender* has advanced knowledge in the fields of comparative politics and international relations. It focuses on five main literatures: candidate selection, electoral reform, political careers, policy-making processes, and stereotypes and public opinion. The final part of the article reflects on the broader integration of quota research into political science. Quota scholars are increasingly publishing their work in top disciplinary journals, at the same time that quotas have attracted growing interest among authors who would not consider gender to be a central axis of their research program. The article concludes by advocating a dual strategy of engaging debates at multiple levels and across intellectual arenas.

**Keywords:** gender quotas; women and politics; gender and politics; electoral reform; political representation

In the very first issue of *Politics & Gender*, founding editors Karen Beckwith and Lisa Baldez explained that the journal was launched “with the conviction that the study of women and politics, and the gendered analysis of politics, benefit and strengthen political science,” at the same time that “the tools of political analysis advance and strengthen our understandings of women and of gender” (Beckwith

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and Baldez 2005, 1). Over the last twenty years, the journal has played a key role in creating a sub-discipline of research on women, gender, and politics (Krook 2023; Tripp 2025). It has also contributed to the emergence of new fields of study, which have expanded the reach of feminist work in political science beyond the gender and politics community.

One such area of research is the continually expanding literature on electoral gender quotas, which was only in its infancy when the journal began in 2005. That same year, I earned my doctoral degree after defending my dissertation on the adoption and implementation of gender quotas around the world (Krook 2005). To develop my theoretical framework, I read most – if not all – of the existing research at the time, which consisted mainly of unpublished conference papers and reports posted on the publications page of the *Global Database of Gender Quotas*, a joint initiative of Stockholm University and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).<sup>1</sup> Today, it would be impossible to claim that that I had read nearly everything on the subject, as the sheer volume of the literature is overwhelming. A search of “gender quotas’ politics” on Google Scholar at the end of 2024 yields 17,500 hits.<sup>2</sup> In *Politics & Gender* alone, a search for “quotas” returns 368 articles.<sup>3</sup>

The exponential growth of this field of research is largely a reflection of the rapid diffusion of gender quotas to diverse contexts around the world. In 2007, I published one of my first political science articles on the topic in the *European Journal of Political Research* (Krook 2007a). While the manuscript was under review, I wrote that more than 80 countries had witnessed the adoption of some form of gender quota. When I revised and resubmitted the article, it was more than 90. As I was editing the final proofs, the figure had risen to 100. While the number of states with quotas has now plateaued at around 140 countries,<sup>4</sup> efforts by scholars to study these policies show no sign of slowing down. Since 2020, 27 papers on quotas have appeared in the pages of *Politics & Gender*, compared to 49 articles in the fifteen previous volumes of the journal. Work on quotas has also appeared in every single journal format: research articles, Critical Perspectives essays, Notes from the Field, and book reviews.

Scholars are – and will continue to be – fascinated by gender quotas, which can be studied from a range of different angles and engage a host of literatures in political science. Analyzing quota campaigns can tell us about strategies of feminist activism (Dahlerup 2006; Inhetveen 1999; Lovenduski and Norris 1993), interactions between social movements and political parties (Kittilson 2006; Verge and de la Fuente 2014), and dynamics of transnational policy diffusion (Bush 2011; Edgell 2017; Hughes, Krook, and Paxton 2015). Exploring quota design and implementation opens up opportunities to learn more about mechanics of electoral systems (Jones 2009; Schmidt 2009; Tremblay 2008), candidate selection procedures (Celis, Erzeel, Mügge, and Damstra 2014; Kenny 2013; Krook 2009), and voter bias (Clayton 2018; Murray, Krook, and Opello 2012). Finally, asking what quotas mean beyond numbers offers new insights into various dimensions of political representation (Barnes 2016; Clayton 2021; Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo 2012; Weeks 2022) and political engagement (Kerevel and Atkeson 2017; Zetterberg 2009). In comparative politics, at least, it is also no longer possible to study certain topics, like elections or political parties,

without touching in some way on gender quotas. As a result, scholars publishing on this topic today do not necessarily come with training or a commitment to feminist political science.

In this essay, I explore how articles published in *Politics & Gender* have contributed to our knowledge of gender quotas and their various impacts, with implications for academics as well as practitioners. In the first section, I analyze publication patterns over time to provide a better sense of how the literature has expanded with each volume of the journal. I also identify key publications that, based on citation counts, have been particularly influential in the broader quota literature. In the second section, I categorize these articles thematically to understand in more concrete terms how this research has contributed to knowledge of broader questions in political science. In the third and final section, I offer reflections on the integration of gender into “mainstream” (I prefer the term “non-feminist”) political science through the lens of research on gender quotas. I conclude that the journal has been a critical actor in engendering political science, both in adding gender as a category of analysis and in producing better political science (cf. Hawkesworth 2005).

### Publication Patterns and Influential Articles

I identified articles on gender quotas published in *Politics & Gender* by first reviewing the table of contents of all issues published between 2005 (volume 1) and 2024 (volume 20). I noted all articles with “quotas” in their titles, as well as book reviews with a central focus on gender quotas. I then did a search on the journal website for all articles where the word “quotas” appeared. I added to my list those articles that referred to quotas in their abstracts. I excluded articles where quotas were mentioned only briefly, for example as one of many variables in the analysis. I did one final check using the term “parity,” which yielded one further piece not captured by previous methods.

This search yielded 76 articles overall. The number of research articles in the pages of *Politics & Gender* grew quite substantially over time, with four articles appearing between 2005 and 2009, five articles between 2010 and 2014, thirteen articles between 2015 and 2019, and twenty articles between 2020 and 2024.<sup>5</sup> There have been four Critical Perspectives sections dedicated to the topic of gender quotas, appearing in volume 1, number 4 (Gender Quotas I, 2005); volume 2, number 1 (Gender Quotas II, 2006); volume 9, number 3 (Gender Quotas and Comparative Politics, 2013); and volume 11, number 1 (Quotas and Non-Quota Strategies in East Asia, 2015). Only a handful of book reviews have discussed books primarily or exclusively on gender quotas, which was surprising, but the first Notes from the Field essay (a new article type introduced in 2022) focused on gender parity initiatives.

While all of these articles have contributed to the broader literature, a number have been especially critical to advancing our collective knowledge in new and important ways. I identified these articles using three approaches. First, I checked the journal’s most cited list,<sup>6</sup> which provides titles and citation counts in descending order for all articles published in *Politics & Gender* since its founding

in 2005. Among the first twenty articles listed on the first page, three are pieces on gender quotas. Second, I went to the page for each individual article. At the top right, a “cited by” count is available, based on data provided by Crossref, an organization which enables cross-platform citation linking in online academic journals.<sup>7</sup> A tab on the pop-up also offers a link to a Google Scholar search for the same article, which is often higher than the Crossref count but is deemed as a less consistent and lower quality measure by Cambridge University Press.<sup>8</sup>

Third, for articles published in the last five years, I checked both citation counts and Altmetric scores. The latter tracks online engagement with each piece, showing how many times (and where) the research has been referenced in news stories, policy documents, X posts, Wikipedia pages, and recent academic articles.<sup>9</sup> Older publications in the journal tend to have low Altmetric scores, largely because they were published prior to the widespread use of social media. For later publications, however, Altmetric scores provide a means for getting a sense of interest in an article based on the attention it has received. For articles published in the last five years, I place greater emphasis on Altmetric scores compared to citation counts for the sake of equity, as citation counts rely on academic articles citing that work to be published – placing the most recent articles at a disadvantage. These various methods yield a list of influential articles that largely concur with my own assessment of key contributions to research on gender quotas.

### 2005–2009: An Emerging Field of Research

Between 2005 and 2009, sixteen articles on gender quotas were published in *Politics & Gender*: four research articles, eight Critical Perspectives essays (six across two sections dedicated to quotas), and four book reviews. The two Critical Perspectives sections, Gender Quotas I (volume 1, number 4) and Gender Quotas II (volume 2, number 1), were novel in asking scholars to answer normative questions deriving from their research in a wholly unapologetic way – unusual for a political science journal, but reflective of feminist commitments to do work that “matters” outside of academia. The editors asked the authors to weigh in on three questions: Are quotas a good idea? Should more countries adopt them? Should the United States consider them? Being able to be part of this conversation as a junior scholar left a deep impression that has shaped my entire academic career. It is also behind our editorial team’s decision to create a new article type, Notes from the Field, featuring stand-alone pieces on efforts to cross the theory-practice divide to advance gender equality.

**Table 1.** Research on quotas in *Politics & Gender*, 2005–2009

Research Articles	Luciak (2005), Krook (2006b), Irvine (2007), Franceschet and Piscopo (2008)
Critical Perspectives Essays	Jones (2005), Kittilson (2005), Mansbridge (2005), Baldez (2006), Krook (2006a), Nanivadekar (2006), Childs and Krook (2006), Kang (2009)
Book Reviews	Montoya (2007), Ruchet (2007), Krook (2007b), Schwindt-Bayer (2007)

Two pieces published during this period appear near the top of the journal's most cited list. The second most cited article in the history of the journal is "Gender Quotas and Women's Substantive Representation: Lessons from Argentina" (volume 4, number 3) by Susan Franceschet and Jennifer M. Piscopo (2008). This study is influential for two main reasons. First, it makes a methodological contribution to the study of political representation, calling on scholars to think about the process of representation and not just the outcomes of representation. Through data from Argentina, the authors show that quotas have led to a rise in the number of bills proposed on women's issues, but little change in the numbers of bills actually passed on these questions. Second, the article makes a theoretical contribution to the quota literature by hypothesizing two ways that quotas might shift existing gendered dynamics of descriptive and substantive representation. The authors identify a mandate effect, whereby women elected through quotas might feel a special obligation to advance women's interests, as well as a label effect, whereby women elected through quotas might be particularly wary of promoting feminist concerns.

The other article in the most cited listing is my own piece, "Reforming Representation: The Diffusion of Candidate Gender Quotas Worldwide" (volume 2, number 3) (Krook 2006b). It is one of the first articles I ever published, and it remains among my most cited articles, according to my Google Scholar profile. I think the reason this article is widely read is that it was one of the first in this literature to think about gender quotas as a global phenomenon. This helped shift this body of work in two new directions: building on case studies to engage in broader comparative analysis and integrating a focus on international norms and transnational networks. The first is consistent with efforts that were happening around the same time in the journal and beyond to map out a "comparative politics of gender" (Critical Perspectives, volume 2, number 2, 2006). The second involved thinking outside the theoretical and empirical toolkit of comparative politics to more explicitly engage with new-at-the-time debates and frameworks in international relations. In other words, the article cuts across theoretical and empirical silos in political science.

### **2010-2014: Second Generation Research Questions**

Between 2010 and 2014, thirteen articles on gender quotas were published in *Politics & Gender*: five research articles, seven Critical Perspectives essays (five in one section dedicated to quotas), and one book review. The Critical Perspectives section on Gender Quotas and Comparative Politics (volume 9, number 3) was innovative in trying to spur quota scholars to reframe their work more explicitly as contributions to comparative politics. In our opening essay, Andrea Messing-Mathie and I (2013) noted that the "first generation" of quota research analyzed policy design, paths to quota adoption, and contextual factors influencing quota success. Such studies, we argued, provide insights for comparative literatures on candidate selection, electoral reform, and transnational policy diffusion. A "second generation" of quota research was beginning to explore the impact of quotas beyond numbers, focusing mainly on descriptive, substantive, and symbolic representation (cf. Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo 2012). We proposed

that these dynamics could also inform work on topics as vast as political careers, legislative behavior, policy-making processes, public opinion, and mass mobilization. The next three essays discussed how the study of gender quotas might reorient how scholars have traditionally thought about citizenship and representative democracy (Murray 2013), democratic principles of equality (Franceschet and Piscopo 2013), and dynamics inside political parties (Zetterberg 2013). A fourth contribution, however, struck a more skeptical note, arguing that engaging with the “mainstream” may come at the risk of abandoning feminist commitments driving our research (Walsh 2013).

**Table 2.** Research on quotas in *Politics & Gender*, 2010–2014

Research Articles	Murray (2010), Burnet (2011), Lépinard (2013), Anderson and Swiss (2014), Xydias (2014)
Critical Perspectives Essays	Phillips (2012), Krook and Messing-Mathie (2013), Murray (2013), Franceschet and Piscopo (2013), Zetterberg (2013), Walsh (2013), Mackay and Waylen (2014)
Book Reviews	McBride (2011)

An article published during this interval appears on the journal’s most cited list, as the eighth most cited article in our history: “Women Have Found Respect: Gender Quotas, Symbolic Representation, and Female Empowerment in Rwanda” (volume 7, number 3) by Jennie E. Burnet (2011). This piece has found a wide readership for several reasons, in my view. First, it takes up the case of Rwanda, which – as anyone who has had to teach a course on gender and politics in global perspective knows very well – has led the world rankings in the share of women in parliament since 2003. Yet few scholars have studied the Rwandan case in depth, making such research invaluable from the outset. Second, the article explores the symbolic impact of quotas in Rwanda to ask what they have meant for ordinary women. The analysis, derived from focus groups with women around the country, shows that quotas do seem to have changed social norms, both empowering women in their daily lives as well as leading to backlash from some men. Third, Burnet herself is an anthropologist, bringing a novel disciplinary perspective to debates that had, up until that point, mainly concerned political scientists.

A second highly influential article from this period, based on citations and Altmetric scores, is “Second Among Unequals? A Study of Whether France’s ‘Quota Women’ Are Up to the Job” (volume 6, number 1) by Rainbow Murray (2010). This paper was one of the first to empirically assess the claim that quotas undermine “merit” in candidate selection processes. As all quota scholars and practitioners will know all too well, questions about merit almost always feature among the first objections to gender quotas. Focusing on the case of France, Murray measures qualifications in two ways: legislators’ backgrounds, with regard to their professions, ages, and levels of prior political experience, and their parliamentary activities, in terms of the numbers of bills, reports, and

questions introduced. The findings are highly compelling. The main difference in backgrounds relates to levels of experience, which is a gendered barrier that the quota law was designed to overcome. On the second measure, Murray (2010) finds that women and men are equally active as legislators – and, indeed, the least active legislators are all men. Work on quotas and merit has subsequently become a flourishing area of research, of interest to anyone seeking to defend quotas as a mechanism to bring more women into the political sphere.

**2015-2019: Expanding Dimensions of Quota Research**

Between 2015 and 2019, twenty articles on gender quotas were published in *Politics & Gender*: thirteen research articles, six Critical Perspectives essays (five in one section dedicated to quotas), and one book review. The Critical Perspectives section on Quotas and Non-Quota Strategies in East Asia (volume 11, number 1) took the discussion to a region of the world that had not yet been the subject of much quota research. Departing from the existing literature on gender and politics in East Asia, which tended to focus on cultural factors, the contributors to the symposium centered the role of electoral institutions and reforms in shaping patterns of women’s political representation across the region (Tan 2015a). Through case studies of Taiwan (Huang 2015), South Korea (Yoon and Shin 2015), Singapore (Tan 2015b), and Japan (Gauder 2015), the authors map quota commitments and trace how they interact with electoral systems to open or close opportunities for women to be nominated and elected. The historical account of reserved seats in Taiwan by Huang (2015) is particularly interesting, as the country was one of the first in the world to adopt quotas in the 1940s but events in the 1990s provoked a reconsideration and expansion of these measures, in line with growing international norms on women’s political representation.

**Table 3.** Research on quotas in *Politics & Gender*, 2015–2019

Research Articles	Folke, Freidenvall, and Rickne (2015), Ben Shitrit (2016), Chandler (2016), Tripp (2016), Westfall and Chantiles (2016), Wylie and dos Santos (2016), Clayton, Josefsson, and Wang (2017), Funk, Morales, and Taylor-Robinson (2017), Marien, Schouteden, and Wauters (2017), Swiss and Fallon (2017), Arendt (2018), O'Brien (2018), Jankowski and Marcinkiewicz (2019)
Critical Perspectives Essays	Tan (2015a), Gauder (2015), Yoon and Shin (2015), Tan (2015b), Huang (2015), Childs and Hughes (2018)
Book Reviews	Haas (2018)

More generally, this time period is associated with expanding directions in quota research. Articles investigate quota reforms in new contexts (Arendt 2018; O'Brien 2018; Swiss and Fallon 2017; Tripp 2016), delve more deeply into interactions between quotas and the mechanics of electoral systems (Jankowski and Marcinkiewicz 2019; Marien, Schouteden, and Wauters 2017; Wylie and dos Santos 2016), bring in questions of intersectionality more explicitly (Childs and Hughes 2018; Folke, Freidenvall, and Rickne 2015), consider new ways of



measuring quota impact beyond numbers (Ben Shitrit 2016; Clayton, Josefsson, and Wange 2017; Funk, Morales, and Taylor-Robinson 2017; Westfall and Chantiles 2016), and address the phenomenon of quotas for women on corporate boards (Chandler 2016).

The most cited of these articles is “Quotas and Women’s Substantive Representation: Evidence from a Content Analysis of Ugandan Plenary Debates” (volume 13, number 2) by Amanda Clayton, Cecilia Josefsson, and Vibeke Wang (2017). This piece is innovative in several ways. First, it involves an absolutely colossal original dataset covering fourteen years of parliamentary debates in Uganda, consisting of more than 150,000 unique speeches over 40,000 pages. Prior to this study, very few researchers had attempted such a large-*n* analysis to test hypotheses regarding gender quotas. Second, given the design of the quota policy in Uganda, where women can run for reserved seats for women as well as for constituency seats open to all, the authors are able to disentangle the effects of gender versus the effects of quotas on women’s legislative behavior. This is often simply not possible in other cases, making Uganda a fascinating case for exploring these dynamics. Third, the article was one of the first to consider quotas in a semi-authoritarian context, a topic that has since become one of the leading research areas in this field as scholars have sought to explore the impact of regime type on the meanings and achievements of quota policies.<sup>10</sup>

The next most cited article is a tie between “A Law on Paper Only: Electoral Rules, Parties, and the Persistent Underrepresentation of Women in Brazilian Legislatures” (volume 12, number 3) by Kristin Wylie and Pedro dos Santos (2016) and “Voting for Women in Belgium’s Flexible List System” (volume 13, number 2) by Sofie Marien, Anke Schouteden, and Bram Wauters (2017). Notably, both of these pieces address interactions between quotas and electoral systems, albeit in different contexts and through distinct lenses. Focusing on the case of Brazil, Wylie and dos Santos (2016) unravel how the open-list proportional representation system, combined with a decentralized party system and women’s absence from subnational party leadership structures, come together to undermine the effectiveness of gender quotas. Analyzing local elections in Belgium, Marien, Schouteden, and Wauters (2017) investigate how opportunities for preference voting interact with gender parity provisions. Presented with equal numbers of candidates of both sexes, women are more likely than men to cast their preference votes for women, but men are far more likely than women to engage in same-sex voting. This finding challenges frequent claims that women do not want to vote for women candidates, when instead the problem lies with men.

### **2020–2024: A Consolidated But Still Innovative Field of Research**

Between 2020 and 2024, 27 articles on gender quotas were published in *Politics & Gender*: twenty research articles, two Critical Perspectives essays (none in a section dedicated to quotas), two book reviews, and one Notes from the Field. In addition, there were two response essays focused on methodological questions in Jankowski and Marcinkiewicz’s (2019) article. That there were no Critical Perspectives sections on quotas is partly due to the fact that no such sections, on any topic, were published during the 2019–2022 editorial term. However, two



essays on quotas did appear in a Critical Perspectives section on Gender Equality and Authoritarian Regimes (volume 20, number 1), adding a further new perspective. Carolyn Barnett and Marwa Shalaby (2024) argue that turning the focus to quotas at the local level can provide invaluable insights for understanding authoritarian politics, for example, in relation to the role of clientelism and the dynamics of regime survival. They also point out that the local level provides a rich data source for both quantitative and qualitative research on quotas. Noh (2024) makes the case for studying public opinion to better understand long-term consequences of gender quotas and other women’s rights reforms in authoritarian contexts. These contributions show that there is still a great deal of room to ask new questions about quotas and their broader meanings for women, politics, and society.

**Table 4.** Research on quotas in *Politics & Gender*, 2020–2024

Research Articles	Gendźwiłł and Żółtak (2020), Einarsdóttir, Rafnsdóttir, and Valdimarsdóttir (2020), Ramos and da Silva (2020), Prihatini (2020), Bolzendahl and Coffé (2020), Aldrich and Daniel (2020), Teigen and Karlsen (2020), Ruf (2021), Turnbull (2021), Kusche (2021), Berry, Bouka, and Kamuru (2021), Bjarnegård, Håkansson, and Zetterberg (2022), Schwindt-Bayer, Vallejo, and Cantú (2022), Radojevic (2023), Thames and Bloom (2023), Miura, McElwain, and Kaneko (2023), Kim and Fallon (2023), White et al (2024), Shiran (2024), Baker et al (2024)
Response Articles	Górecki (2021), Jankowski and Marcinkiewicz (2021)
Critical Perspectives Essays	Barnett and Shalaby (2024), Noh (2024)
Book Reviews	Matfess (2021), Clayton (2024)
Notes from the Field	Suárez-Cao (2023)

Articles published over the last five years offer new insights on longstanding questions in the quota literature, like interactions between quotas and electoral rules (Gendźwiłł and Żółtak 2020; Górecki 2021; Jankowski and Marcinkiewicz 2021), differences among parties in terms of quota implementation (Prihatini 2020; Ruf 2021), and effects of quotas on the professional and political backgrounds of elected politicians (Aldrich and Daniel 2020). They also bring the study of quotas to well-established literatures on gender and politics, examining how quotas shape women’s campaign strategies (Kusche 2021), how quotas affect the importance of family ties to women’s political careers (Schwindt-Bayer, Vallejo, and Cantú 2022), how actors in the judicial system influence quota effectiveness (Ramos and da Silva 2020), and how elites interpret the need for quotas for women on corporate boards (Einarsdóttir, Rafnsdóttir, and Valdimarsdóttir 2020; Teigen and Karlsen 2020). Further, they take up new questions like connections between quotas, backlash, and violence against women in politics (Berry, Bouka, and Kamuru 2021; Bjarnegård, Håkansson, and Zetterberg

2022; Shiran 2024). Notably, a sizeable number of articles published during this period analyze quotas through the lens of public opinion (Baker et al 2024; Bolzendahl and Coffé 2020; Kim and Fallon 2023; Miura, McElwain, and Kaneko 2023; Radojevic 2023; Thames and Bloom 2023; Turnbull 2021; White et al 2024), helping us better understand how quotas change as well as reinforce stereotypes about gender and leadership.

The article published during this time with the highest Altmetric score is “Blessing in Disguise? How the Gendered Division of Labor in Political Science Helped Achieved Gender Parity in the Chilean Constitutional Assembly” (volume 19, number 1) by Julieta Suárez-Cao (2023). This essay was our very first Notes from the Field, a new article type introduced by our Rutgers-based editorial team to enable greater engagement across the fields of theory and practice.<sup>11</sup> In this piece, the author shares insights on the role of feminist political scientists in shaping the debate on constitutional reform in Chile, including how she – together with two colleagues from the Red de Politólogas #NoSinMujeres (the Network of Women Political Scientists #NotWithoutWomen) – designed a mechanism to ensure gender parity among constitutional assembly delegates. High levels of attention to this article are due to multiple factors, but perhaps the most important, in my view, stems from our inherent interest as gender and politics scholars in finding ways to bring our research into the “real world” to change reigning patterns of gender inequality.

The piece with the next highest Altmetric score is “Making Women Visible: How Gender Quotas Shape Global Attitudes toward Women in Politics” (volume 19, number 4) by Jessica Kim and Kathleen M. Fallon (2023). As someone who follows our social media activity quite closely, I have witnessed firsthand the excitement generated by this article, as it receives a high number of re-tweets and likes every time we post it. Using a global sample, the authors find that robust quotas, compared to weak quotas, have a significant impact on public approval of women in politics, especially in democracies. In other words, quota design does not only make a difference for the numerical impact of gender quotas. It also matters for their broader symbolic impact on society. Two further articles with only slightly lower Altmetric scores are also worth mentioning, namely “Implementing Inclusion: Gender Quotas, Inequality, and Backlash in Kenya” (volume 17, number 4) by Berry, Bouka, and Kamuru (2021) and “Gender and Violence against Political Candidates: Lessons from Sri Lanka” (volume 18, number 1) by Bjarnegård, Håkansson, and Zetterberg (2022). Both present some of the first systematic analysis of connections between quotas and violence against women in politics, using qualitative and quantitative methods, respectively.

## Themes and Contributions to Political Science

Research on gender quotas provides a wide range of insights for gender and politics scholars interested in better understanding the gendered dimensions of political life. While not always recognized, this work also advances knowledge in the fields of comparative politics and international relations. Although articles

published in *Politics & Gender* make various contributions, I focus here on five major literatures: candidate selection, electoral reform, political careers, policy-making processes, and stereotypes and public opinion. The impact of quota research in the journal is not limited to these areas, but their range shows how quotas can provide fresh perspectives that help us answer big questions in political science.

### **Candidate Selection**

One of the largest bodies of research on gender quotas explores how they influence, or are undermined by, prevailing patterns of candidate selection (Bjarnegård and Zetterberg 2016; Bjarnegård and Kenny 2015; Kenny and Verge 2016; Krook 2009). Studies published in *Politics & Gender* bring new theories and data to bear on our understandings of political recruitment. Articles like “For Women Only? Gender Quotas and Intersectionality in France” (volume 9, number 3) by Éléonore Lépinard (2013) and “Gender Quotas and Ethnic Minority Representation: Swedish Evidence from a Longitudinal Mixed Methods Study” (volume 11, number 2) by Olle Folke, Lenita Freidenvall, and Johanna Rickne (2015) explore how quotas for women have affected the selection of ethnic minority candidates, creating potential trade-offs between the representation of these two groups. While Folke et al (2015) find little evidence that gender quotas have helped or hindered intersectional representation, Lépinard (2013) argues that the centrality of gender in French debates on parity has created obstacles to more intersectional approaches. In both cases, measures for women and provisions for ethnic minorities sit uncomfortably side-by-side rather than interacting in more dynamic ways to open paths to participation for ethnic minority women.

Other work delves more deeply into elite calculations regarding candidate nominations in the face of quota requirements. In “Islam, Parties, and Women’s Political Nomination in Indonesia” (volume 16, number 3), Ella S. Prihatini (2020) explores whether religious ideology plays a role in shaping how parties implement gender quotas. Against expectations, she finds that Islamist and pluralist parties adopt similar strategies: they are equally good in nominating the required 30% share of women candidates, as well as equally poor in placing women at the top of party lists. This is because quotas do not disrupt practices whereby candidates must purchase these top positions, and women are generally at a disadvantage due to less access to the necessary capital to do so. In “Quotas as Opportunities and Obstacles: Revisiting Gender Quotas in India” (volume 17, number 2), Brian Turnbull (2021) observes similar resistance by political parties to nominate women to non-quota seats, even as voters have become more willing to support women candidates.

In their study of Ukraine, Frank C. Thames and Stephen Bloom (2023) address the reverse puzzle: why parties comply with quotas when there are few or no costs to non-compliance. In “When Are Gender Quotas Fulfilled? Party Strategy and Historical Memory in Ukrainian City Elections” (volume 19, number 2), they discover that parties were more likely to comply with quota requirements in areas that were more urbanized, as well as in places where there were women

incumbents. In contrast, there were lower levels of compliance in cities with more Ukrainian speakers, which they attribute to historical associations between quotas and Soviet rule. Viewed together, these articles point to a complex mosaic of considerations shaping the degree to which quotas can, in fact, transform women's opportunities to be nominated and elected.

A related area of research, which has attracted the interest of both feminist and non-feminist scholars, concerns interactions between quotas and electoral systems (Jones 2009; Krook 2018; Tremblay 2008). Articles published in *Politics & Gender* have focused on the effects of quotas in open-list proportional representation (PR) systems, exploring how electoral rules combine with elite calculations, as well as voter biases and gendered voting patterns, to influence women's electoral prospects. In "Voting for Women in Belgium's Flexible List System" (volume 13, number 2), Sofie Marien, Anke Schouteden, and Bram Wauters (2017) examine votes in local elections in Belgium, where parties must nominate equal numbers of women and men on their candidate lists. Using this case as a laboratory for exploring gender biases in voting, they find that while women vote more than men for women candidates, men are more likely to engage in same-sex voting.

Two articles take up the case of Poland. In "Ineffective and Counterproductive? The Impact of Gender Quotas in Open-List Proportional Representation Systems" (volume 15, number 1) by Michael Jankowski and Kamil Marcinkiewicz (2019) and "Do Parties and Voters Counteract Quota Regulations? The Impact of Legislative Gender Quotas on Ballot Ranking and Preference Voting in Poland" (volume 16, number 1) by Adam Gendźwiłł and Tomasz Żółtak (2020), the authors use different methodological strategies to determine the role of preferential votes in shaping the impact of gender quotas in electing more women. Jankowski and Marcinkiewicz (2019) find that, despite claims that ballot placement does not matter in open-list PR system, the quota was associated with an increased number of women nominated in high ballot positions, which were not altered in any meaningful way by preferential voting patterns. Gendźwiłł and Żółtak (2020) employ counterfactual analysis to estimate how much quotas changed prior voting behaviors. Their data suggests that more women ran for office after the quota was introduced, but parties and voters became more likely to support men candidates, even taking incumbency into account. This gap became even more evident as women accumulated more political capital and experience across subsequent elections. While these two studies provide contrasting views on the importance of preference voting, they highlight in similar ways the importance of considering factors beyond policy design and the mechanics of electoral systems in translating the quota into practice.

To further articles consider the case of Brazil. In "A Law on Paper Only: Electoral Rules, Parties, and the Persistent Underrepresentation of Women in Brazilian Legislatures" (volume 12, number 3), Kristin Wylie and Pedro dos Santos (2016) draw on quantitative and qualitative data to understand why the quota law and later reforms have not changed party strategies for the election and nomination of women. Similar to the studies above on Poland, they find that other factors are vital to take into account. Quota regulations in Brazil, they argue, are undermined by decentralized party structures and the absence of

women in subnational party leadership teams. In other words, political parties must be placed front and center when analyzing how electoral rules interact with quota policies. In “The Gender Gap in Brazilian Politics and the Role of the Electoral Court” (volume 16, number 2), Luciana de Oliveira Ramos and Virgílio Afonso da Silva (2020) identify a further actor vital to understanding dynamics of quota implementation in Brazil. Similar to other Latin American countries, Brazil has an electoral court system charged with receiving and adjudicating election-related complaints, including in connection with the quota law. The authors find that while the Brazilian Superior Electoral Court generally makes decisions supportive of women’s political participation, they are relatively restrained in the face of difficult cases that would strengthen quota impact. Together, these two studies draw attention to actors who play an underappreciated but crucial role in advancing and undermining the implementation of gender quotas.

### **Electoral Reform**

Another way to think about quota policies is in terms of the literature on electoral reform (Celis, Krook, and Meier 2011; Freidenberg 2020; Htun 2004). Two articles published in *Politics & Gender* theorize the political conditions under which quotas may be adopted, providing insights into the origins as well as the broader meanings of electoral reforms. In “From Critical Mass to Critical Leaders: Unpacking the Political Conditions behind Gender Quotas in Africa” (volume 14, number 3), Christie Marie Arendt (2018) compares quota adoption trajectories in eighteen countries across Africa. Her research highlights how the interests of political parties guide reform decisions as well as the design of quota policies, in relation to whether they empower women or serve to reinforce party control. In contrast, in “Women’s Movements and Constitution Making after Civil Unrest and Conflict in Africa: The Cases of Kenya and Somalia” (volume 12, number 1), Aili Mari Tripp (2016) emphasizes the importance of women’s movements, arguing that women’s mobilization has been vital in advancing gender quotas and other women’s rights reforms in contexts of civil unrest and conflict. While this is not the only work to suggest that women’s movements matter to quota adoption (Kang and Tripp 2018; Krook 2009), it lends further credence to calls to look beyond only the interests of political elites when seeking to explain paths to electoral reform.

A further contribution of quota research to work on electoral reform has been to highlight the role of international and transnational factors in promoting quota adoption around the globe (Bush 2011; Hughes, Krook, and Paxton 2015; Krook 2009; Towns 2010). Three articles published in *Politics & Gender* have advanced these debates by bridging literatures on policy adoption and on the diffusion of international norms. In “Reforming Representation: The Diffusion of Candidate Gender Quotas Worldwide” (volume 2, number 3), I argue that a focus on international and transnational factors provides the greatest potential for understanding how and why quotas have diffused so rapidly to diverse contexts around the world (Krook 2006b). I identify four ways in which these factors shape national debates, through international imposition, transnational emulation, international tipping, and international blockage. Focusing on developing

countries, Liam Swiss and Kathleen M. Fallon (2017) take this agenda a step further in “Women’s Transnational Activism, Norm Cascades, and Quota Adoption in the Developing World” (volume 13, number 3). Using event history modeling, they statistically demonstrate the importance of international conferences and developments both regionally and globally in spurring quota adoption. In “Peace Accords and the Adoption of Electoral Quotas for Women in the Developing World, 1990–2006” (volume 10, number 1), Miriam J. Anderson and Liam Swiss (2014) focus on the related factor of peace accords, which have served as a crucial entry point for gender quotas across the Global South.

### **Political Careers**

Research on the impact of quotas has been particularly interested in investigating the backgrounds of women elected via quota policies (Barnes and Holman 2020; Besley, Folke, Persson, and Rickne 2017; Nugent and Krook 2016; Weeks and Baldez 2015). Articles published in *Politics & Gender* include both seminal and more recent contributions to this literature, offering a variety of approaches for measuring “merit” and “qualifications” among elected officials. In “Second Among Unequals? A Study of Whether France’s ‘Quota Women’ Are Up to the Job” (volume 6, number 1), Rainbow Murray (2010) explores differences between women and men in the French parliament in terms of their backgrounds and levels of parliamentary activity. The main difference she finds in terms of backgrounds is in relation to prior political experience, which is not surprising: prior to the introduction of quotas, women had far fewer opportunities than men to be nominated and elected. With regard to activity levels, she also finds relatively few differences between women and men – except in the “least active” category, consisting entirely of men. Although framed as a test of claims about merit, this work offers valuable insights for understanding political careers, in terms of gendered differences in ambitions, career paths, and opportunities for advancement (cf. Galais, Öhberg, and Coller 2016; Muriaas and Stavenes 2024).

Two more recent articles take these questions in new directions. In “The Consequences of Quotas: Assessing the Effect of Varied Gender Quotas on Legislator Experience in the European Parliament” (volume 16, number 3), Andrea S. Aldrich and William T. Daniel (2020) explore how quotas alter the composition of legislatures in terms of the professional and political qualifications of their members. They find that quotas eliminate gendered differences in political experience, suggesting they level the political playing field, especially when quotas are well-designed. In “Gender and Family Ties in Latin American Legislatures” (volume 18, number 1), Leslie A. Schwindt-Bayer, Agustín Vallejo, and Francisco Cantú (2022) revisit claims that elected women are more likely than their male colleagues to have family ties in politics. Similar to Aldrich and Daniel (2020), they discover that gendered differences in family ties have been eliminated in countries with gender quotas, while they continue to endure in states without quotas. In addition to their short-term impact on the election of women, quotas thus also have important long-term implications, expanding the eligibility pool of potential candidates by lessening barriers to women.

### Policy-Making Processes

Links between the descriptive and substantive representation of women are the subject of a large and continually growing literature on gender and politics, including that on gender quotas (Clayton 2021; Hughes, Paxton, and Krook 2017). As a result, it is perhaps not at all surprising that *Politics & Gender* has published a good number of articles on quotas and policy-making. As noted in the previous section, “Gender Quotas and Women’s Substantive Representation: Lessons from Argentina” (volume 4, number 3) by Susan Franceschet and Jennifer M. Piscopo (2008) is truly a landmark contribution to studies of political representation. In addition to making an important theoretical distinction between the process and outcome of representation, relevant beyond the quota literature, the authors offer two original concepts to capture dynamics created by quotas that might mediate the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation. One is a “mandate effect,” where women elected through quotas feel a special obligation to women, making them more likely than their non-quota counterparts to advance women’s interests in public policy. The other is a “label effect,” where women elected via quotas seek to overcome the stigma of quotas by deliberately focusing on other issues, leading them to be less likely than their non-quota colleagues to advocate for women. These dynamics suggest that insights on representation gleaned from cases where quotas do not exist may not generalize well to quota contexts.

Other scholars use elements of quota design to further parse the relationships between gender, quotas, and policy-making. In “Women’s Rights in Germany: Generations and Gender Quotas” (volume 10, number 1), Christina Xydias (2014) compares members elected to the German parliament from parties with and without gender quotas. She finds that legislators from quota parties are more likely than those from non-quota parties to speak in debates on women’s issues, but this effect is restricted mainly to men from quota parties – suggesting that these measures socialize men to be more open to engaging in women’s substantive representation, even as they have no effect on women’s engagement. In “Quotas and Women’s Substantive Representation: Evidence from a Content Analysis of Ugandan Plenary Debates” (volume 13, number 2), Amanda Clayton, Cecilia Josefsson, and Vibeke Wang (2017) compare the debate participation of women elected with and without the quota to disentangle the effects of gender versus the impact of the quota itself. They find few differences between women parliamentarians, however, indicating that gender is a stronger determinant of legislative behavior. Despite focusing on very different contexts, the shared insight across these articles is that quotas do not appear to alter women’s proclivities to substantively represent women, either positively or negatively, but gender does make a difference.

Two final articles consider additional factors that might condition quota impact. In “The Political Cure: Gender Quotas and Women’s Health” (volume 12, number 3), Aubrey Westfall and Carissa Chantiles (2016) explore whether the effects may depend on the type of quota introduced. Using data from 1995 to 2012 from all countries recognized by the United Nations, the authors find that quotas are associated with higher levels of women’s descriptive representation and that this is linked, in turn, with positive conditions for women’s health. The strength



of the relationship, however, is connected to the type of quota implemented: candidate quotas have more consistent but weaker effects on women's health compared to reserved seats policies. In "The Impact of Committee Composition and Agendas on Women's Participation: Evidence from a Legislature with Near Numerical Equality" (volume 13, number 2), Kendall D. Funk, Laura Morales, and Michelle M. Taylor-Robinson (2017) consider whether institutionalized gender discrimination may also play a role, due to the fact that women tend to have lower levels of seniority and are often excluded from leadership positions that would enable them to set the legislative agenda. Examining the case of Costa Rica, where norms of seniority are absent due to a prohibition on immediate reelection and where quotas are also applied to leadership posts, the authors find that women participate actively in debates in committees on stereotypically feminine and masculine policy jurisdictions. However, they are the most active when the gender composition of the committee is less skewed. In other words, the equal presence of women in all areas of policy-making – not simply the addition of more women – is needed to reduce differences in women's and men's legislative activity levels.

### **Stereotypes and Public Opinion**

An extensive literature maps the existence and effects of gender stereotypes on perceptions of women as candidates and elected leaders (Barnes and Beaulieu 2014; Dolan 2014; Kantorowicz-Reznichenko, Dabrowska, and Kantorowicz 2025; Lucciola 2023). Quota scholars have been most interested in understanding how quota adoption may change or reinforce these stereotypes, fostering greater acceptance or hostility towards women in positions of political power (Allen and Cutts 2018; Beaman et al. 2009; Meier 2008; Krook 2020). Articles published in *Politics & Gender* bring various types of evidence to bear on questions about how quotas interact with ideas about gender and leadership. Some of this work uncovers positive effects. In "Making Women Visible: How Gender Quotas Shape Global Attitudes toward Women in Politics" (volume 19, number 4), Jessie Kim and Kathleen M. Fallon (2023) find that visible and robust quotas have a significant impact on public approval, especially in democracies.

Other authors focus on the attitudes of political elites and how they express and bolster acceptance of quotas. In "The Subjective Effects of Gender Quotas: Party Elites Do Not Consider 'Quota Women' to Be Less Competent" (volume 19, number 2), Marco Radojevic (2023) finds that quotas do not impart a negative sheen to the women who benefit from them. In experiments with 1,000 party elites in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, he discovers that only elites on the radical right view "quota women" in a negative light. In "Authenticating Representation: Women's Quotas and Islamist Parties" (volume 12, number 4), Lihi Ben Shitrit (2016) traces campaign rhetoric and policies of Islamist parties in Palestine, Egypt, and Israel, which have historically been strong opponents of quota policies and women's political participation. In the face of national quota requirements, however, these parties not only nominate women, but also work to convince their voters that women are fit and able leaders. They do so by

arguing that quotas are not a foreign imposition, but consistent with indigenous Islamist principles.

Recent studies published in the journal offer a more tempered assessment, arguing that the introduction of quotas does not necessarily erode traditional stereotypes about women as leaders. In “Tradition Meets Democracy: Perceptions of Women’s Political Leadership in Samoa” (volume 20, number 4), Kerry Baker and her collaborators (2024) draw on public opinion data to show that, despite the introduction of a gender quota and the election of a woman prime minister, political norms and practice continue to equate masculinity and leadership. In “Voting against Women: Political Patriarchy, Islam, and Representation in Indonesia” (volume 20, number 2), Sally White and her co-authors (2024) uncover continued opposition to increasing the gender quota, as well as lower levels of voting for women candidates, among those holding patriarchal views.

Several articles take this analysis one step further to map various sources of resistance to gender quotas, potentially undermining their impact on public attitudes about women’s leadership and gender equality more broadly. In “Women Have Found Respect: Gender Quotas, Symbolic Representation, and Female Empowerment in Rwanda” (volume 7, number 3), Jennie E. Burnet (2011) finds that quotas have influenced popular perceptions of women’s roles in politics and society. Some of these effects have been positive: women have greater access to education, autonomy in decision-making in the family, and opportunities to speak and be heard in public forums. Other effects have been more negative, like growing conflicts with husbands and male siblings, who are less accepting of women’s new rights and roles.

In “Implementing Inclusion: Gender Quotas, Inequality, and Backlash in Kenya” (volume 17, number 4), Marie E. Berry, Yolande Bouka, and Marilyn Muthoni Kamuru (2021) observe similar forms of patriarchal backlash, raising questions about quotas as a sufficient mechanism to empower women in the absence of more grassroots strategies to transform gendered power relations. In “Backlash after Quotas: Moral Panic as a Soft Repression Tactic against Women Politicians” (volume 20, number 3), Myriam Shiran (2024) draws on news articles to map how elites use “moral panic” to frame women’s political participation as detrimental to gendered hierarchies and thus social order. She finds that this tendency is particularly prevalent in countries with reserved seats policies, where elites have less control over electoral outcomes. The potential of quotas to disrupt prevailing power relations is thus not a given, but can instead provoke new forms of resistance undermining women’s leadership.

## Reflections on “Mainstreaming” the Study of Gender Quotas

Research on gender and politics has traditionally been criticized as being too “narrow” in focus, offering insights that are not of broader interest to political scientists (Lovenduski 1998; Tolleson-Rinehart and Carroll 2006). Feminist scholars, however, have rightfully noted that incorporating a gender lens can improve the field of political science (Ackerly and True 2010; Kantola and

Lombardo 2017). As Mary Hawkesworth observes, “gender as an analytic category functions as a heuristic device that illuminates areas for inquiry, frames questions for investigation, identifies puzzles in need of exploration, and provides concepts, definitions, and hypotheses to guide research” (2005, 144). To make these connections clearer to the discipline at large, some have called on gender scholars to build bridges to non-feminist literatures in political science (Caraway 2010; Kittilson 2010; Schwindt-Bayer 2010; Tripp 2006; Tripp 2010).

Over the last twenty years, researchers have heeded this call. Work on gender now appears regularly in the pages of the top-ranked general political science journals. Studies of gender quotas, more specifically, have been published in the *American Political Science Review* (Bhavnani 2009; Bush, Donno, and Zetterberg 2024; Hughes 2011; Murray 2014; Noh, Grewal, and Kilavuz 2024; O’Brien and Rickne 2016), the *American Journal of Political Science* (Bush and Zetterberg 2021; Goyal 2024; Karekurve-Ramachandra and Lee 2020; Latura and Weeks 2023), and the *Journal of Politics* (Aldrich and Daniel 2024; Barnes and Córdova 2016; Barnes and Holman 2020; Caul 2001; Clayton and Zetterberg 2018; Fernandes, Lopes da Fonseca, and Won 2024; Kerevel 2019). Research on quotas is also particularly visible in the major comparative politics journals, including *Comparative Politics* (Bjarnegård and Zetterberg 2016; Bush and Gao 2017; Hughes, Paxton, Clayton, and Zetterberg 2019; Kang, Kim, and Kim 2025; Krook and O’Brien 2010; Randall 2006; Zetterberg, Bjarnegård, Hughes, and Paxton 2022) and *Comparative Political Studies* (Clark, Blackman, and Şaşmaz 2024; Clayton and Zetterberg 2015; Franceschet and Piscopo 2014; Jones 1998; Jones 2009; Karekurve-Ramachandra and Lee 2024; Krook 2014; Noh and Shalaby 2024; Schmidt and Saunders 2004; Tripp and Kang 2008; Weeks 2018).

Notably, expanding attention to gender quotas has not been limited to feminist scholars. It has also attracted the interest of authors who would not consider gender to be a central axis in their research program. On the one hand, this is a very welcome development, illustrating how a focus on a gendered policy reform can help answer big questions in political science. On the other hand, non-feminist researchers often lack broader familiarity with the gender and politics literature, not to mention basic training on gender theory. Why this matters is well-illustrated by an article, possibly the first on gender quotas to appear in a top political science journal, written by three economists on the French parity reform (Fréchette, Maniquet, and Morelli 2008). The authors argue that quota adoption is in the interests of male legislators, because voters prefer to vote for men over women. Yet because they do not cite any gender literature, or even any work on parity in France, they make a series of important errors in the analysis, overlooking the role of party elites in selecting candidates as well as in disciplining their legislators to vote along party lines (Murray, Krook, and Opello 2012). The result is a well-cited but inaccurate and misleading analysis, which not only gets the “story” wrong but also perpetuates harmful myths about women’s electoral viability.

There is also value to centering feminism in our research and continuing to publish in more specialized journals, like *Politics & Gender* (76 articles on quotas); the *International Feminist Journal of Politics* (14 articles); the *Journal of Women, Policy & Policy* (14 articles); *Politics, Groups, and Identities* (14 articles); and the *European Journal of Politics and Gender* (6 articles). Feminist tools and perspectives help us

“see” different things, shaping our concepts and definitions, the questions we ask, the ways we go about collecting our data, and the theories we draw on to interpret our findings (Hawkesworth 2005; Kenny and Mackay 2009; Walsh 2013). Advancing knowledge is thus not a one-way street but, instead, requires a dual strategy of engaging debates at multiple levels and across intellectual arenas. As the field continues to grow, I look forward to reading new research on quotas published in a wide range of venues. I will always look to *Politics & Gender*, however, as *the* central source for pathbreaking research on gender quotas and gender and politics more broadly.

## Notes

1. The Global Database of Quotas for Women was originally available at <http://quotaproject.org>. It is now hosted by International IDEA at <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas-database>.
2. Google Scholar search, January 14, 2025.
3. Search results at <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/politics-and-gender/listing?q=quotas&searchWithinIds=7DE2C645F007C3B59362A873FC051EC3&fts=yes>, January 14, 2025.
4. Counts of gender quotas vary widely due to different definitions of what a “quota” is (Krook 2014). My definition includes both state- and party-level measures, which is also the approach used by International IDEA’s Gender Quotas Database at <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas-database>. In contrast, UN Women’s new Gender Quota Portal at <https://genderquota.org/> restricts its focus to state-level measures.
5. This shift is also a relict of the journal growth over time. Early issues tended to include only three or four research articles, while our target in recent years has been eight – with a few years in the middle, where as many as twelve research articles appeared in a single issue.
6. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/politics-and-gender/most-cited>
7. <https://www.crossref.org/>
8. Personal correspondence with Cambridge University Press staff.
9. <https://www.altmetric.com/>
10. See the recent Critical Perspectives on Gender Equality and Authoritarian Regimes in volume 20, number 1, especially the essays by Bush and Zetterberg (2024), Barnett and Shalaby (2024), and Noh (2024).
11. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/politics-and-gender/information/author-instructions/preparing-your-materials>

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