Political Representation of Women and Indigenous: Evidence from the Peruvian Quotas

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Introduction

For a long time, men have ruled the Peruvian political arena. At the same time, they were middle-class white men representing indigenous population and women. During the last decade, there was a shift on the number of female and indigenous representatives in the Peruvian Congress. Peru represents an interesting case of analysis because it shows an impressive evolution of women’s political participation, and at a lesser degree, inclusion of indigenous representatives. From 1978, when the universal suffrage was enacted, to an implementation of a gender and indigenous quota, these representatives have increased in the parliamentary arena. The Peruvian case provides a particular and rich context to examine the effectiveness of such quotas. First, universal suffrage including women and illiterate population, mostly indigenous, and quota laws to enhance political representation of such groups were granted in a relative short period of time.

Second, there has been an alternation of democratic and authoritarian regimes during the last decades. In addition, major advancements on women role in politics occurred during authoritarian governments such as the enactment of a gender quota law (1997), or women’s suffrage (1956) or the creation of the Ministry of Women (1997). Taken together, features from the Peruvian political system contrasts with well-established democracies, where most of studies on this topic have been carried out.

Substantive representation of women or ethnic minorities in a political system is said to be a good test for its commitment to democracy. In this light, enfranchisement of traditionally marginalised groups such as women or indigenous is therefore an important step toward equality and justice within societies.
However, inclusion of women’s or indigenous interests into legislatures, national governments and policy-making processes has been a slow-paced progression.

There is extensive literature on increasing percentages of marginalised groups facilitated by a wave of quotas worldwide during 1990s. It is argued that marginalised groups’ political representation has increased worldwide. However, initial enthusiasm has diverted attention from the impact on more representatives of such groups in public office in terms of policy changes or promotion of identity groups’ agenda. Motivated in large part by these concerns, this paper will discuss whether quotas are the best mechanism to promote greater political participation of these groups.

Scope and structure

This paper seeks to advance the analysis of substantive representation of marginalised groups through a critical assessment of quotas in the Peru. The first chapter begins with a review of theoretical underpinnings and key concepts of political representation of disadvantaged groups. It also examines relevant literature and empirical findings on the subject. Moreover, it presents electoral aspects of quotas and their influence on policy outcomes.

The second chapter focuses on the Peruvian country case. It provides the political context and background of quota laws. In addition, it gives an account of the evolution of electoral quotas and problems associated with its implementation. Finally, it assesses other alternatives to improve representation of marginalised groups.

It is worthwhile to point out the lack of evidence of minority groups such as indigenous and Amazonic population in the Peruvian case. This paper therefore draws on examples from the Bolivian and Ecuadorian cases, as well as, minority groups in well-established democracies such as Canada.
Conceptualising identity groups' political representation

Reviewing mainstream theories of political representation of women and indigenous groups

While a variety of definitions of political representation has been discussed, this paper will use the multidimensional concept first presented by Hanna Pitkin in “The concept of representation” of 1972. This seminal work develops four categories of analysis which include a formal, descriptive, symbolic and substantive aspect of representation. The first aspect refers to a set of institutional rules and procedures that regulate the system of election of representatives (Pitkin 1972:47). The second dimension alludes to similarities of composition, or ‘a mirror’, between representatives and represented according to criteria such as gender or ethnicity (Pitkin 1972; Schwindt-Bayer and Mischler 2005). The next dimension is the symbolic representation which refers to an evocation of feelings or attitudes (Pitkin 1972). For instance, a considerable number of women in office could reflect inclusiveness, but this is hard to study because it requires subjective elements of measurement. Finally, the most relevant dimension for this paper is substantive representation which is defined as “acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them” (Pitkin 1972:209). This aspect refers to the capacity of women or ethnic legislators to be responsive to demands or interests of the group they represent.

Having said that, a formal dimension of identity groups’ political representation relates to implementation of electoral rules that increase efficacy of quotas. For example, it is argued that proportional representation is the most favourable electoral system for women (Htun 2004; Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2010). Additionally, other elements that have impact in quota effectiveness are placement mandates in a closed-list system, a moderate to high average district magnitude, and, above all, party compliance (Htun and Jones 2002; Schmidt & Saunders 2004). A descriptive aspect of representation is based on the degree of correspondence between women or indigenous as a social group, and officeholders in diverse governmental organisms such as parliaments, cabinets, local governments and executive offices. This aspect has been the most studied because it is highly visible and allow cross-regional and inter-temporal comparisons (Schwindt-Bayer and Mischler 2005:409). Equally important, but less studied by the literature, symbolic representation focuses on perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of the represented (i.e. women or ethnic minorities), towards their
representatives (Schwindt-Bayer and Mischler 2005; Childs 2008; Celis et al. 2008). Finally, substantive representation is manifested through the promotion of identity groups’ interests or agendas in a responsive manner (Phillips 1995; Weldon 2002; Reingold 2006; Childs 2008).

In the case of quota laws, the idea that women or indigenous legislators better represent the interests of other women or indigenous citizens was one of the main arguments behind the approval and enactment of quota legislation in many countries. Nevertheless, after 20 years of its implementation in Argentina for the first time, it is still troublesome to determine whether more women representatives have brought gains for women.

Electoral aspects of quotas

It is necessary to review briefly the set of electoral rules, or Pitkin’s formal representation, to fully understand the effects of quotas in Latin America. There are certain elements that can enhance or undermine the efficacy of quotas. For instance, it is argued that proportional representation is the most favourable electoral system for minority groups (Htun 2004, Schmidt & Saunders 2004; Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2010). Other variables that have an impact on quota effectiveness are characteristics of the candidate list (whether it is open or closed), placement mandates and district magnitude. For example, a placement mandate dictates that female candidates should be ranked in electable positions. This measure prevents clustering of minority candidates at the bottom of party lists where they do not have realistic chances of getting elected. Bolivia and Paraguay establish that every certain number of positions must be occupied by a woman, whereas Dominican Republic, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela do not stipulate a placement mandate (Htun and Jones 2002:39). Also, the size of the district magnitude determines the number of seats allocated to each party. In small district magnitude, parties win one or two seats. Usually, men occupy the top positions of the candidates’ lists. Thus, large district magnitude facilitates the presence of women and indigenous representatives because if parties get more than one seat, the chances of getting one of them are greater (Htun & Jones 2002; Schmidt & Saunders 2004). The Argentinean and Paraguayan cases highlight three elements of success of their gender quotas: utilisation of placement mandate in a closed-list system, a moderate to high average district magnitude, and party compliance (Htun and Jones 2002:40).
It is noteworthy to point out another challenge faced by ethnic and female candidates in Peru. The preferential vote within a candidate list intensifies intra-party competition (Schmidt & Saunders 2004; Del Aguila 2004; Llanos & Sample 2008a). Although Peruvian electoral system is a closed-list, there is the possibility to vote individually for one or two candidate within a list. However, candidates from marginalised groups do not have the same resources as other candidates. For example, Peruvian male candidates in 2006 Elections spent “an average of 4.6 times the amount spent by female candidates on advertising in private media (television, radio and print)” (International IDEA & Asociacion Civil Transparencia 2007 in Llanos & Sample 2008a:38). There is no evidence for the amount spent by indigenous population.

**Impact of quotas on policy outcomes**

This section will present linkages between descriptive and substantive representation of women mostly, given the lack of empirical evidence on minorities or ethnic groups. The idea that a significant percentage of women can achieve substantive policy changes is first developed by Kanter (1977). According to the author, a ‘critical mass’ will produce an enabling and supportive environment, thus facilitating the introduction of gender issues into the debate. Drawing upon this notion, a ‘critical mass’ is reached when a percentage between 15 – 30% hold decision-making positions are women (Reingold 2006). Nonetheless, a lower percentage constitutes a ‘token’ minority, giving an apparent diversity to the institution, but maintaining the overrepresentation of the same group. Reingold explains that the idea of ‘critical mass’ has first indicated that ‘token minority’ will be too weak to resist pressures and collective power of the overrepresented group. Moreover, the real transformation of “state politics by, for women will be more likely to occur, according to this ‘critical mass’ theory, when women constitute at least a substantial minority (20-30%) of state legislators” (Reingold 2006:28)

Evidence suggests that gender interests are represented when there are women in office (Thomas 1991; Swers 2002). To illustrate this point, Thomas (1991:958) shows that women legislators in states with highest percentage of female representatives “introduce and pass more priority bills dealing with issues of women, children, and families than men in their states and more than their female counterparts in low representation legislatures”. Similarly, Swers (2002) claims that women are more likely to vote in favour of a set of women issues. However, there are control variables such as party line, constituency factors, personal
characteristics, and ideology. She presents a logit analysis on individual votes to determine the significance of gender in bills on family planning, women’s health, education, sex education and abortion. The influence of gender was significant only in matter related to abortion and women’s health. Mansbridge (1999) goes on to say that women and black representatives in the US Congress tend to support bills presented by those groups.

Nevertheless, studies focused in the Latin American region might indicate otherwise. Two studies on policy priorities of congresswomen in Argentina and Peru (countries with the highest percentage of female MPs) reveal that there is not a dramatic difference between men and women in bill introduction or committee membership on gender-related issues. Htun and Jones (2002) show there is significant gender policy difference only in women’s rights, childhood and family issues in the Argentinean Parliament. On the other hand, Rodriguez (2011) reveals gender was only relevant for the bill introduction on violence against women in the Peruvian Congress in the past fifteen years. Furthermore, important policy changes have taken place during the first post-quota periods in both countries which indicate an episodic commitment to women-oriented agenda (Htun 2004; Rodriguez 2011). In contrast, Htun and Jones (2002) argue that similar policies were implemented in Chile and Colombia without quota systems, and with less percentage of congresswomen.

Overall, findings demonstrate that gender differences in legislator policy priorities investigated in previous research cannot be generalised. Studies in well-established democracies such as United States have shown that women do represent other women. However, evidence from Latin America has proven that critical mass is neither necessary nor sufficient for the transformation of state politics or enactment of gender policies (Studlar & McAllister 2002; Htun & Jones 2002). Consequently, presence of women does not always transform long-standing institutions or practices, nor represents a more enabling environment (Celis et al. 2008).

Gender and ethnic quotas in Peru

Introducing the Peruvian country case

Women and indigenous are underrepresented groups in Peruvian politics. Although men and women have the same rights, these groups have suffered a long-time exclusion embedded in a patriarchal society. Since early debates about
women’s enfranchisement, they have been associated to a feminine mystique, and prone to religious suggestions in order to disqualify them as citizens (Movimiento Manuela Ramos 2010:21).

Furthermore, Peru, as well as other Latin American countries, has experienced an alternation of civil or military authoritarian and democratic regimes. Particularly, military governments reinforced traditional views of women in society (Htun 2003). In contrast, post-authoritarian and transitional governments have facilitated an enabling environment for demands of democracy and justice, including women and indigenous’ rights (Molyneux & Lazar 2003). Contrary to general assumption, the most important events in the history of women’s political agency in Peru occurred during authoritarian governments. For instance, women’s suffrage was granted during the military government of Manuel A. Odría in 1956. In spite of his lack of democratic credentials, Odría attempted to appeal women’s vote by enacting the Law 1239 which recognised the right to vote and be elected to literate single women older than 21 years-old, and literate married women older than 18 years-old.

Likewise, a reformist military regime in 1969 attempted to include ‘native communities’ from long-time exclusion. General Juan Velasco Alvarado proscribed the use of indigenous and Indian from official discourse (Htun 2004:449). This government promoted political participation of ‘native communities’ into the National Social Mobilisation Support System (Sistema Nacional de Apoyo a la Movilización Social – SINAMOS). Along with the National Commission on the Peruvian Woman (Comisión Nacional de la Mujer Peruana – CONAMUP), this regime facilitate mobilisation of excluded groups such as the poor, indigenous and women (Vargas 2008, Rousseau 2009). CONAMUP was a privileged space that promoted women’s participation established *ad portas* the first United Nations’ World Conference on Women in 1975. Moreover, many feminist women who worked in CONAMUP also continue working for women’s rights after the return to democracy in 1979 (Rousseau 2009:71). Nevertheless, the period of democratic transition did not facilitate women’s political participation.

In 1990, a convergence of a neoliberal regimen and armed conflict entailed a step backward in women and indigenous role in formal and informal politics. Alberto Fujimori, a political outsider, won the presidency and two years later, led a self-coup. He took over the legislative and judiciary branches with the support of

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1 Translations of quoted material originally in Spanish are the author’s.
military forces and public opinion. Furthermore, the Peruvian party system collapsed, and grassroots organisations were coopted by his government. As a result, intermediation of interests through traditional channels (political parties and social movements) was no longer the predominant model. Political parties, interest groups and social movements were not longer perceived as legitimated actors (Tanaka 1998). Moreover, during the period of political violence between 1980 and 1995, anyone who worked as an intermediary between the state and the people became a target of the terrorist group Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso), especially female leaders of food kitchens (Thorp 2009:9). Consequently, mobilisation at a popular level was also weakened. For these reasons, party politics are not expected to have a significant role in marginalised groups’ policies.

Evolution of quotas in Peru

Gender quota

The Quota Law of 1997 was enacted under an authoritarian regime. It is worthwhile to give an account of the complex and contradictory relationship between Alberto Fujimori and Peruvian women. His government used welfare programmes to gain popular support through clientelistic networks (Boesten 2003, Thorp 2009). According to Kitschelt (2008:849), this type of clientelism of ‘vote-rich’ but ‘resource-poor’ constituencies operates through material incentives (e.g. alimentary support) to get their support, and their votes. Moreover, in some cases, clientelistic governments offer job positions in governmental agencies, as well as candidacies in electoral lists. Indeed, some leaders of food kitchens were persuaded to participate as candidate for Fujimori’s party after the Quota Law.

It was first implemented in the municipal elections of 1998 (at least 25% of women in candidate lists). Now, there is a legal percentage of at least 30% of women in candidate lists for the Congress, Regional and Local Governments, the Andean Parliament and directives positions in political parties. Currently, 21% of Peruvian legislators are women.
Chart 1: Percentage of congresswomen in Latin America

According to the chart, despite the quota legislation in Brazil (8%) and Panama (8%), there are much larger percentages of congresswomen in countries without quotas such as Nicaragua (40%). Evidence suggests that local elites and less monitoring of quota compliance at a local level have a negative impact on descriptive representation (Llanos & Sample 2008a). Regarding ministerial cabinets, there are 24% of female ministers in Latin America (Llanos & Sample 2008b:11). Apparently, women have better chances to hold decision-making positions when they are appointed, rather than being selected within political parties. This is a distinctive characteristic of women’s political representation in Latin America.

Moreover, as Table 1 shows, the share of congresswomen doubled immediately after the application of the quota. There is slight decrease when the electoral
system changed from single national district to multiple districts. To this effect, when the right combination is being used, the chances of increasing the number of women in public office are greater. Nevertheless, there is little evidence of democratisation of parties’ processes and structures, and overall commitment to greater political representation equality.

Table 1: Parliamentary representation of women 1980 – 2006

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<th>Single National District</th>
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<th>Multiple District</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Lower chamber</td>
<td>CCD</td>
<td>Unicameral Congress</td>
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<td>Gender Quota</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<td>1985</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<td>2001</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>39%</td>
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Elaborated by the author from ONPE data and Schmidt (2003).

Ethnic quota

The use of the denomination ‘ethnic groups’ in Peru is not clear as in neighbour countries such as Ecuador, Brazil or Bolivia. Usually, it is overlapped or replaced by a ‘poor’ or ‘peasant’ consciousness reinforced throughout the years. Ethnic discrimination is perceived or disguised as class discrimination (Htun 2004: 449). Although the term ‘minority group’ has been used throughout this paper, indigenous and Amazonic population comprise over the 40% of the Peruvian population. The term minority alludes to the condition of underrepresentation of this population.

The Ethnic Quota Law was enacted in 2002 under Alejandro Toledo’s government which was receptive to indigenous claims. He was an indigenous himself, although he was an economist educated in the United States. His government created a

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2 This change poses a challenge for women because the district magnitude changed dramatically. Instead of being part of a large national list, female candidates had to struggle with smaller district magnitude which has been proved as a major difficulty for women candidates (Jones 2009).
high-level commission and reinstated regional elections. Thus, empowerment of local governments was given.

The Ethnic Quota Law of 2002 stipulates a minimum of 15% of ‘native communities’ or ‘original people’ in the regions where they lived (11 out of 25 regions mainly in the Amazon basin and the Andean regions). It comprises around 350 000 people speaking over 40 different dialects and languages (Htun 2004:449).

Unlike Bolivia, there is not a major political organisation to integrate indigenous claims. Many indigenous leaders were recruited by mainstream parties just to comply with electoral legislation. Htun (2004) present an interesting case in favour of reserved seats in the case of indigenous population. According to the author, this affirmative action facilitates reinforcement of group consciousness and claim-making. For instance, native communities in Peru aim for collective land rights, use of customary law and bilingual education in Quechua or Aymara. However, quotas seem to divide and create a false equality which does not promote greater indigenous political participation.

Data on the number of candidates and elected officials is not available because there are not mechanisms which indicate who is an indigenous candidate after the candidate list is registered in the electoral office. Also, it is hard to distinguish who belong to that 15% without further information. Therefore, statistics on the number of indigenous in the parliament and the evolution of the ethnic quota is not available to the public via online.

Problems associated with affirmative actions

Quotas and seats reservations are implemented to address equality and justice within political systems. However, there are serious problems associated with such measures. Mechanisms for group representation might serve for ‘in-group essentialism’ (Phillips 1995; Squires 2008) failing to acknowledge diversity within those groups. Regarding women’s representation, there are ideological, partisan or even religious factors which influence their support to certain issues (Htun & Power 2005; Schwindt & Bayer 2005). The risk associated to framing diverse characteristics of a group into a specific identity could “marginalise those group members who differ in other aspects of their identity” (Hancock 1998 cited in Squires 2008:189). Besides usual ideological and partisan cleavages, Latin
America society is highly influenced by the Catholic Church. Although Latin American countries are secular states, legislation on family planning or abortion is subject of debate outside the legislative arena. For instance, no country except the City of Mexico has liberalised its laws on abortion since the 1940s (Htun 2010: 268). In addition, Chilean Catholic church opposed to the legalisation of divorce until it was finally approved in 2004.

On the other hand, although ethnic interests might be less controversial to configure given certain territoriality or long-standing claims, they are still a disputed subject within the field of substantive representation. Moreover, the identification of ethnic minority is troublesome itself. There are objective distinctions based on place of birth, their parents or grandparents' place of birth or languages (Bird et al. 2011). Also, complex measures of ‘ethnic and racial self-identification’ have been advanced. For example in Canada, ethnic origin is a reflection of each respondent’s perception of their ethnic ancestry. Each individual have different degree of ethnic or racial consciousness, capacity for mobilization, level of poverty or official languages. Some groups might prefer mechanisms of self-government rather than inclusion in traditional politics. The Peruvian National Census stops including questions on race and ethnicity because many people identified themselves as white despite the fact that they were not. Ethnic discrimination and self-consciousness prevented from accurate accounts on the number of ethnic population or where do these groups actually live. Some studies use proxies such as language of parents (e.g. Quechua or Aymara) to determine whether a person is indigenous given the volume of urban migration.

Under such circumstances, the configuration of ethnic demands is blurry. To the contrary, gender-based claims are cross-cutting and present among different parties, whereas ethnic demands tend to cluster in a single organisation or party. Despite male dominance intra-party, there are women present in every political organisation. In contrast, the presence of ethnic members is less obvious. Many times, there is a risk of tokenism to include ethnic leaders in party lists to comply with legislation.

One of the reasons for the failure of marginalised groups’ substantive representation in Latin America is the reproduction to the political arena of social and cultural patterns deep-rooted in the society. For example, according to the Latinobarometro, an annual public survey conducted in 18 Latin American countries, 43% of the population believes that it is better for women to concentrate on the home, and men to concentrate on work. To a lesser extent, 30% agreed that
men are better political leaders than women. Certainly, women not only struggle to access politics but they also need to reconcile their duties as elected authorities, mothers and workers. Another aspect closely related to this issue is the negative connotation of being associated to feminist claims. Most of them do not campaign nor promote issues such as domestic violence, child care, equal opportunities or reproductive health. Overall, the term ‘feminist’ (still) carries a negative social stigma in Latin America because it is linked with a denial of sex difference and a rejection of femininity” (Htun and Jones 2002:50). Regarding ethnic groups, they face discrimination and exclusion which cannot be reconciled with a legal formula.

Implementation of gender quotas is a fast track to get more female officeholders, it is not equivalent or an automatic cause of women’s political empowerment. Increase of minorities’ representatives could leave them relatively powerless and turn them into tokens without capacity-building (Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2010). Underrepresented groups still face problems inside political parties in terms of access, nomination and leadership, their presence in parliament will continue to be a simple legal requirement.

Highly centralised party nomination process in Peru prevents real changes in intra-party politics. There is evidence of these problems in other Latin American countries. For instance, the electoral quota led the Institutional Revolution Party (PRI) to adopt primaries replacing the ‘dedazo’ (handpicking). This Mexican party was notorious for the lack of transparency in its candidate selection (Baldez 2006; Llanos & Sample 2008a). Nonetheless, in countries with weak and diffuse parties, gender quotas just provide a ‘mantle of legitimacy’ to the same old process. For instance, there was a case of ‘transvestite candidates’ during Bolivia’s 1999 municipal elections. According to Llanos and Sample, “parties altered the names of male candidates so they looked like the names of women” (2008b:19). Consequently, effectiveness of quota legislation largely depends on its implementation and monitoring. Since political parties are the real gatekeepers of representation, and many of them have adopted voluntary quotas, the definitive results rely on ‘good faith party compliance’.

Overall, Peruvian political parties have no substantial platform to adhere or articulate interests. Most of them are ad hoc electoral lists that break up once the election is over. Therefore, they are not programmatic parties. Also, they lack democratic structures to select their candidates and leaders (Tanaka 1998, Rousseau 2009).
Rethinking quotas: from descriptive to substantive representation

Amidst political pragmatism, few women and indigenous manage to gain access to political power. And those who actually become representatives, do not campaign on women’s issues. Female politicians avoid being identified as feminist because it implies a negative social stigma, and indigenous representative face discrimination within the parliament itself.

Major policy changes for both underrepresented groups occurred outside the parliamentary arena. To illustrate this point, many women-friendly policies were introduced during military rule (e.g. Argentina 1983 and Chile 1989) and authoritarian regimes (e.g. Peru 1958 and 1995). Many of these changes were implemented because of ‘issue networks’. According to Htun, an ‘issue network’ is an “elite coalition of lawyers, feminist activists, doctors, legislators and state officials” (2010:268). Therefore, chances for policy change increase dramatically when these ‘issues networks’ operate, rather than the existence of a critical mass. Broad-based alliance with NGOs, state agencies and social movements advances minority groups’ claims. These alternative agents of representation provide structures of intermediation of interests and resources to advocate for group-specific claims.

Other organisation such as women’s movements, state agencies or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are identified as effective agents of representation, especially alliances or coalition around specific group issues. For instance, broad-based alliances with NGOs and the Ministries of Women have proven to be more efficient promoting a gender agenda than the ‘critical mass’ (e.g. quota laws in many Latin American countries, legislation on violence against women in Peru). Nevertheless, these ‘sites of representation’ require “[having] a degree of independence, some of its own resources, and positional authority in order to be consistently effective in representing women” (Weldon 2002:1160). Certainly, none of these actors have enough resources to achieve major advancement in minority rights in the Peruvian case.

Peruvian NGOs have the degree of professionalization and expertise to undertake research and policy influence on these issues but they need support from legislators or other officeholders. On the other hand, collective food kitchens were undermined after Fujimori’s regime and political violence period. They could not crystallise interests of indigenous women, and only served as alleviation to food shortage, heavily dependent on the state provision. Finally, although Catholic
Church is known for being an advocate of conservative views of women and against sexual and reproductive rights, its influence framing public debate and policy making-processes turn it into a critical actor. In the case of ethnic claims, NGOs managed to better represent and frame the debate rather than the indigenous legislators.

Certainly, quotas served as the easiest and most political effective remedy for marginalised groups. However, association and confluence of other agents outside the legislative arena provide better levels of women and indigenous’ substantive representation. During the past decades, advancements of women and indigenous rights in Peru were possible because of windows of opportunities and a confluence of critical actors, not social movements. Unlike indigenous movements which are broad-based nation-wide in Bolivia or Ecuador, Peru does not have a movement that have ethnic claims. Neither do the feminist movements in Peru have conducted major policy changes.

As it was mentioned previously, the best example is of policy change the enactment of gender quotas in the region. Despite the importance of women’s organisations during the 1990s, the implementation of gender quotas was not the result of their claims. Whereas demands for policy change on domestic violence or rape where achieved through advocacy, electoral quotas were implemented because they had the support of the (male) head of state. For example, female representatives in Argentina pushed for its implementation. At first, they were ridiculed by men, but after President Carlos Menem’s support, they overcame the initial resistance. Similarly, after a conference in Beijing in 1995, a special commission was installed in Peru. As in the Argentinean case, they faced indifference and scepticism from male politicians and society, but eventually received support from President Alberto Fujimori, the only head of state that attended this conference. Indeed, one of the first challenges of women’s political representation in Latin America started with the need of male support for the enactment of quota legislation.

Thus, analysis of identity groups’ representation should include other actors with resources to influence state responsiveness on policy agenda. Such analysis need to include as well, feature of policy environment that frame policy debates, and ultimately leads to policy reforms. In this manner, interactions between actors and contexts in specific issues allows further analysis of the conditions and variables aiming to improve marginalised groups’ status in society, economy and politics.
Conclusions: Towards better group representation policies

This paper has discussed effectiveness of quotas as the best mechanism to improve political representation of women and indigenous in the Peruvian case. Apparently, quotas brought an inclusive and more representative aspect to Peruvian politics. But after its implementation, it is hard to expect great changes when the state, society, electorate and even the church are not receptive to gender and ethnic issues. Additionally, a prevailing masculine and excluding model in every aspect of Latin American society is a burden that women and indigenous will need to overcome in order to achieve real political empowerment.

Evidence suggests that the problems associated to identity groups’ political representation relate to institutional and political opportunities structures. Though this paper has shown that women and indigenous political representation in Latin America has progressed in numeric terms, further research needs to be done to assess whether they brings a different perspective to the political arena. At the same time, the lack of data on indigenous representative limits the analysis of this issue and potential policy outcomes.

It is important to conduct analysis of political representation of these groups in terms of the chances of success in enactment of group-specific related laws, or the role of public administration offices and other policy agencies as 'sites of representation' of gender and ethnic interests. Due to the limitations of the scope and length of this paper, it was not possible to go further on the role of women and indigenous in other public offices, or conduct a comparative study with other countries.

Though cross-regional comparisons reveal that women's political representation (i.e. descriptive representation) has improved in numeric terms, they still cast doubts on the position of identity groups in office bringing a different perspective to the political arena. Only an essentialist point of view leads to determine the role of officeholders in general as agents that are expected to be representative of and accountable to one's group. As the phrase says, “being a woman does not guarantee having gender consciousnesses”, and it could apply to the indigenous issue as well.

As final remarks, many questions arise from this. First, how does a relation between women and indigenous as a social group and representatives can be configured? Then, what type of interests does women and indigenous
representatives need to represent? Next, although women have established a set of interests primarily identified as women's interests, do more women in office will automatically lead to more women's concern on public debate or policy changes? At the same time, regarding ethnicity, how can be determined who is an ethnic representative?
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