Win For Women or Dynasties?

Consequences of Gender Quotas in Taiwan

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Abstract

What are the consequences of gender quotas? This paper investigates the impact of Taiwan's gender quota rule in local council elections. The findings show that the quotas not only increased women's descriptive representation but also elevated the presence of dynastic politicians. Leveraging a regression discontinuity design based on the quota thresholds, I provide causal evidence of these shifts in representation. The interplay between a candidate-centered electoral system and a one-quarter gender quota has improved the electoral viability of dynastic candidates and motivated major parties to recruit from political families, thereby reinforcing their dominance in local politics. In addition, gender quotas can enhance substantive representation even when they benefit political groups traditionally perceived as disengaged from women's issues. The growing number of legislative speeches and bill proposals on women's issues suggests a shift toward a greater focus on women's issues in policy-making.

Keywords: Gender Quota, Political Dynasty, Descriptive Representation, Substantive Representation, Regression Discontinuity

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1 Introduction

Gender representation in politics has become a central issue across the globe, with many countries seeking to address the persistent underrepresentation of women. Gender quotas are a commonly used mechanism to increase the number of female candidates in political decision-making bodies. More than 100 countries have implemented some form of quota system, either through legal mandates or through voluntary adoption by political parties (Krook, 2009; Wängnerud, 2009; Verge and Wiesehomeier, 2019).

While gender quotas are generally intended to advance women's rights by improving their descriptive representation, this objective is not always fully realized. The effects of quota policies, both in terms of descriptive and substantive representation, vary considerably across countries. These outcomes often depend on the interaction between the quota design and the electoral system. In some cases, this interaction can significantly enhance both forms of representation, whereas in others, it may improve descriptive representation while limiting substantive gains (Clayton, 2021). Whether and how the number of women in legislatures (descriptive representation) influences the promotion of women's policy interests (substantive representation) has long been a central focus in the study of gender and politics (Mansbridge, 2003; O'Brien and Piscopo, 2019).

In this paper, I examine the case of Taiwan to assess the consequences of gender quotas. I focus on identifying which types of politicians benefit from quota provisions and whether these groups contribute to substantive representation. The result shows that the introduction of gender quotas increases the descriptive representation of women in local council elections.[1] At the same time, the quota law facilitates the rise of dynastic politicians, who constitute another influential group in local politics. Here, dynastic politicians

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[1] The term "local council" here refers to municipality, city, and county councils.

refer to "politicians who are related by blood or marriage to other individuals formerly holding political office" (Dal Bó et al., 2009; Geys and Smith, 2017). The interaction between gender quotas and Taiwan's candidate-centered electoral system (SNTV-MMD) incentivizes parties to nominate dynastic candidates, given their perceived electoral advantage in quota districts. Because political dynasties are unevenly distributed across parties, this dynamic tends to benefit dominant parties and contributes to an increasingly uncompetitive electoral environment.

Following the entry of more women and dynastic politicians into local councils, a key question is whether they actively promote policies related to women. In particular, dynastic politicians are often perceived as being weakly connected to such issues, with limited motivation to advance a gender-focused agenda. Taiwan presents a valuable case for examining this dynamic. The coexistence of high levels of female representation and the persistent influence of political family provides an opportunity to assess whether the increase in female legislators diversifies political discourse or whether traditional political families merely adapt their strategies to meet quota requirements. This paper contributes to answer this question by analyzing local councils' minutes to examine the substantive effects of gender quotas. The result shows that councilors in constituencies with gender quotas are more likely to propose bills or deliver speeches related to women's interests, supporting the argument that increased descriptive representation can lead to greater substantive representation.[2] Gender quotas raise the salience of women's issues, making councilors have incentives to focus on women-related issues.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. I first review the related literature in

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[2] In Taiwan, local councilors are primarily responsible for overseeing local governments and reviewing budgets through bill proposals and public speeches.Local governments in Taiwan have limited authority to amend regulations, as most laws are enacted at the national level by the legislature. Councilors generally focus on local policy issues during council meetings (Tsui et al., 2024).

the next section. In Section 3, I provide background information on the origins of the current state of gender quotas and political dynasties in Taiwan. In Section 4, I describe the data and the empirical strategy. Section 5 discusses the impact of the gender quota on women and dynastic representation. Section 6 illustrates the policy outcomes resulting from the increased participation of dynastic politicians in politics, and the last section is the conclusion.

2 Literature Review

Numerous studies have demonstrated positive outcomes in the representation of female candidates following the implementation of gender quotas (Tripp and Kang, 2008; Jones, 2009; Paxton and Hughes, 2015). Schwindt-Bayer (2009) further list factors that may determine the effectiveness of the quota, such as the required ratio of female candidates, or whether there exist a punishment for violating the rules. Her research points out that the details of gender quotas matter, and some studies indeed show some conflicting results given different designs of gender quotas (Paxton and Hughes, 2015; Krook, 2009).

Gender quotas may also impact the representation of other politically significant traits, in addition to gender representation. Some previous studies find that political gender quotas may decrease minority representation (Karekurve-Ramachandra and Lee, 2020; Holmsten et al., 2010; Cassan and Vandewalle, 2021; Celis et al., 2014). For example, Karekurve-Ramachandra and Lee (2020) examine the elections in India and find that women from upper castes are more likely to win reserved seats. Hence, the quotas also contribute to an imbalance in the representation of different castes. This result is mainly driven by the socioeconomic status of women in the group and the attitudes of individuals within the same group towards women. Folke et al. (2021) demonstrate a different type

of identity representation change brought about by gender quotas in Sweden and Ireland. They find that women with dynastic ties are more likely to be elected in the initial election, particularly in districts with fewer female representatives in the past. But, this effect only appears in the short term, and people no longer need to rely on this type of information cue after several elections because people have a clear picture of a promising female candidate.

Another important question is whether gender quotas consistently motivate politicians to advocate for more women-friendly or gender-equal policies. Most existing studies find that the introduction of quotas can enhance the substantive representation of women (Clayton and Zetterberg, 2018; Weeks, 2019; Wang, 2023). More specifically, male and female politicians tend to hold different policy preferences. As a result, changes in the gender ratio among politicians brought about by quotas can lead to shifts in policy outcomes (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Beaman et al., 2009). Prior research suggests that female politicians are more likely to advocate for women's interests because they share similar life experiences, which give them a deeper understanding of women's needs and perspectives (Franceschet and Piscopo, 2008; Wängnerud, 2000; Wängnerud, 2009).

However, some studies indicate that a rise in descriptive representation does not necessarily result in greater substantive representation. For example, Weeks and Masala (2023) argue that a higher proportion of women in Italian parliament does not automatically translate into substantive policy change, largely due to structural barriers within the policymaking process that limit their ability to represent women's interests effectively. Bailer et al. (2021) find that the policy priorities of politicians who represent marginalized groups may shift over time. For example, female politicians often focus on women-related issues early in their careers, possibly due to career advancement incentives. However, as

their professional goals evolve, their areas of focus may also change. It remains unclear whether growth in descriptive representation results in greater substantive representation, especially when the descriptive representation of political groups other than women is affected simultaneously.

3 Gender Quotas and Political Dynasties in Taiwan

3.1 The History of Gender Quotas In Taiwan

Like most countries with quota laws, Taiwan had low levels of women's representation before the new law was passed (Clayton, 2021). Although there have been gender quotas at the local level since 1947, the policy was not effective enough to facilitate greater participation of women in politics.[3] In 1998, 53% of districts had no reserved seats, and 46% had only one reserved seat. Only 16% of candidates and 18% of elected candidates were women. Therefore, many people, especially feminists, were dissatisfied with the situation and attempted to make some changes.

In 1998, the national parliament began drafting a new set of local government laws. The revision of the gender quota rule was one of the topics. With the help of women's organizations, the Legislative Yuan passed new gender quota rules for local councils, which were first implemented in the 2002 elections (Hu, 2004; Yang, 2000; Huang, 2016). To explain the gender quota, it must start with the local council electoral system. The electoral system for the local council election is a Single Non-Transferable Vote with Multiple Member Districts (SNTV-MMD). This means that constituencies often have more than one seat. The new rule, which is as known as 1/4 gender quota, implies that

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[3] Districts with 5 to 14 seats have one reserved seat, and districts with 15 to 24 seats have two reserved seats.

if a constituency has four or more seats, one of them must be a reserved seat for women. The constituency with eight seats will have two reserved seats, and the constituency with twelve seats will have three reserved seats. If the four candidates who received the highest number of votes were all men, the fourth-ranked man would be replaced by the highest-ranking woman in terms of votes. Table 1 reports the total number of seats and the number of reserved seats in each local electoral constituency. More than half of the constituencies reserve at least one seat for women, and approximately 20% of districts reserve more than one.

Table 1: Number of Seats For Constituencies in Local Elections (2002-2022)

# of Seats	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
# of Reserved Seats		0			1				2				3	
(Proportion)		(0.47)			(0.32)				(0.17)				(0.03)	
Count	333	129	125	125	111	87	79	71	62	51	28	17	15	1

3.2 Political Dynasties in Taiwan

With the new quota law for local elections, more women are expected to enter politics. However, it is also noteworthy that dynastic politicians, who play a significant role in local politics, have also seen growth during the same period. According to the data, the percentage of dynastic councilors has grown from about 10% to 35% in the past two decades. The current percentage is much higher than 20 years ago (see Figure 1), which shows an opposite trend than several recent studies on political dynasties (Dal Bó et al., 2009; Gertzog, 1995; Folke et al., 2021).
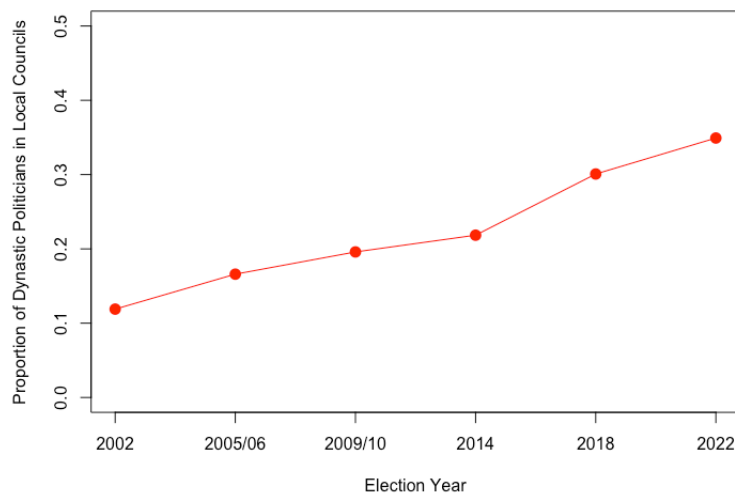
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Figure 1: Proportion of Dynastic Politicians in Local Councils (2002 - 2022)

The prominence of political dynasties in local councils may be related to the electoral system. As mentioned earlier, the SNTV-MMD system implies that there are multiple seats in a constituency. In most districts, parties often nominate more than one candidate. Given that the election outcome is determined by individual votes, it implies that candidates need to compete with candidates from other parties and within the same party.

According to Shugart (2001), this electoral system has several features. Intra-party battles are more prominent than inter-party competition. It is particularly challenging for candidates to receive support from the party when resources are limited, and the party has multiple candidates in the constituency. Second, issues and ideologies play a minimal role in the election because voters find it challenging to identify candidates' positions solely based on the party label. In addition, candidates have a strong incentive to build personal connections with voters through constituency service and pork barrel projects. In short, SNTV-MMD is a highly candidate-centered system, and this type of system is usually correlated with particularistic strategies (Farrell et al., 1996; Norris, 2004; Muraoka, 2018). Hence, candidates who have name recognition, such as dynastic

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politicians, can have a huge advantage. Parties are more inclined to recruit dynastic candidates because of their capacity to amass personal votes (Smith, 2018).

Some people argue that dynastic politicians are typically less educated, which can lead to various negative consequences, including implementing inferior public policies, showing less dedication to politics, and relying on clientelism for their survival (Geys, 2017; Geys and Smith, 2017; Bragança et al., 2015; Rossi, 2017; Cruz et al., 2017). Existing surveys in Taiwan also indicate that the public generally holds negative perceptions of political dynasties (Huang, 2024). Most importantly, the inheritance of political power is considered undemocratic, and the political dynasty demonstrates self-perpetuation among political elites (Putnam, 1976). This self-perpetuating process might pose a challenge to the health of democracy when voters elect incompetent politicians, as their detrimental impact can persist for an extended period when their family members inherit their power.

Nonetheless, the family connection could sometimes be a valuable resource for women to enter politics. For example, we can observe numerous "widow's succession" cases in the US during the early 20th century. Female politicians sometimes entered politics by inheriting their husbands' positions upon their deaths (Dal Bó et al., 2009). This is also a common pathway for women to enter politics in Taiwan. In fact, women outnumber men in the gender distribution among dynastic politicians in Taiwan, which contrasts with the overall gender distribution of politicians.

Table 2 presents the gender distribution of dynastic and non-dynastic politicians in local council elections. First, there were slightly more female candidates than male candidates from political families for every local council election after 2002. Compared to non-dynastic candidates, the distribution is entirely different. There are much more men than women among non-dynastic candidates. This indicates that men are generally more

active in politics, but women with family ties have slightly higher chances of entering politics than their male counterparts. Secondly, there are still more men than women among elected representatives due to the significant disparity between the number of male and female candidates. However, women have a slightly higher chance of winning. For non-dynastic candidates, the probability is 48% for men and 51% for women. The number of dynastic politicians is even higher, with 70% of male dynastic candidates and 72% of female dynastic candidates securing seats, which implies that dynastic politicians are the ones with the advantage. Last but not least, a higher proportion of female politicians (39%) than male (15%) politicians come from dynasties. Similar results can been found in other countries (Dal Bó et al., 2009; Basu, 2016; Smith and Martin, 2017; Nishizaki, 2018).

Table 2: Gender Representation of Candidates and Councilors (2002-2022)

	Men	Women
Dynastic Candidates	820	886
(Councilors)	(571)	(642)
Non Dynastic Candidates	6777	1969
(Councilors)	(3232)	(1012)

3.3 Why Do Gender Quotas Increase Women and Dynasties?

So how does the gender quota positively influence the number of political dynasties? This relationship can be understood from both dynastic and familial perspectives. Folke et al. (2021) propose the "placeholders" hypothesis to explain this phenomenon, suggesting that male politicians may recruit female family members to run for office in order to

comply with gender quota requirements while retaining political power within the family. As discussed in prior studies, the de facto power of these women is often constrained by familial expectations (Labonne et al., 2019; Jalalzai, 2013). They may serve as figureheads, expected to prioritize the interests of their families over independent political agendas. Furthermore, scholars have noted that in India, male relatives of women politicians frequently usurp political roles that gender quota systems were designed to reserve for women (Dean, 2024). Nevertheless, as I will show in a later section, some female dynastic politicians in Taiwan depart from their male predecessors by shifting their policy focus, indicating that the placeholder role does not universally apply.

Parties also have strategic motivations for selecting dynastic women as candidates. The introduction of the gender quota law raises the cost of candidate recruitment, as parties are often compelled to identify new, viable female candidates. This burden is particularly pronounced for smaller parties, which tend to have more limited candidate pools and fewer resources for recruitment (Weeks, 2018). Although the law applies to all parties, those with fewer established female candidates must invest more in identifying new entrants. However, increased recruitment efforts may result in nominating candidates with limited name recognition, which can negatively affect electoral performance. For example, party officials in France anticipated electoral losses due to nominating unknown female candidates following the adoption of gender quotas (Murray, 2007).

In this context, women from political dynasties present an attractive alternative. First, dynastic politicians tend to be competitive in Taiwan due to the resources they inherit, such as political networks, campaign experience, and family reputation (Batto and Read, 2024). Second, female dynastic candidates help parties satisfy the gender quota requirement by occupying reserved seats designated for women. Prior research provides sporadic

evidence, based on interviews with political families, suggesting that nominating women within these families is a strategic response to gender quota requirements (Batto and Read, 2024).

Moreover, parties must consider the number of nominees, the nominee's gender composition, and candidate viability in constituencies with reserved seats for women. Entering too many nominees risks vote splitting and the loss of otherwise winnable seats, whereas entering too few leaves seats on the table. Quotas add a binding design constraint by forcing parties to manage gender composition alongside viability. Although the quota rule does not directly require each party to nominate women, the outcome-level guarantee of at least one female winner creates strong incentives to do so. If a party nominates only men, it risks losing one of its seats when the quota is applied, potentially handing the guaranteed female seat to the rival party. Thus, nominating at least one woman becomes the best response in quota district.

Given that dynastic candidates are typically stronger within each gender because of their inherited resources, name recognition, and organizational base, parties are especially likely to nominate dynastic women once the quota applies. At the same time, quotas reduce the number of male nominations. This crowding heightens competition for the remaining male seat, prompting parties to allocate it to the safest and most electorally viable option, namely dynastic men. Taken together, quotas increase the likelihood of nominating dynastic women through activation and reinforce the preference for dynastic men through crowding. The combined effect is a systematic rise in the overall dynastic share of party nominations.

H1: Constituencies with gender quotas have more women candidates and

councilors than constituencies without gender quotas.

H2: Constituencies with gender quotas have more dynastic candidates and councilors than constituencies without gender quotas.

4 Empirical Design and Data

The identification strategy of this paper is based on the gender quota rule. As stated earlier, only constituencies with more than four seats have reserved seats for women. The number of seats in each district is determined by the following formula:

$$\# \text{ of Total Seats in the local council} \times \frac{\text{Constituency Population}}{\text{Municipality Population}}$$

According to the formula and rounding rule, a constituency with a seat count above 3.5 will receive four seats, with one seat reserved for a woman. Similarly, a constituency with a seat count above 7.5 will be allocated eight seats, with two being woman-reserved seats, and this pattern continues. This discontinuous assignment allowed me to develop a regression discontinuity design. I will compare the representation of dynasties between districts with and without quotas. I am applying the sharp regression discontinuity design here because almost every constituency with more than four seats automatically has one reserved seat for women. In summary, I compare the constituencies around the threshold for applying the gender quota rule (where the formula result equals 3.5). The unit of analysis is the constituency and the running variable is the result of the formula (predicted number of seats).[4] The identification strategy can be described by the following equations:

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[4] There are around 1% (14 constituencies) of overall observations that violate the rule (because of

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Treat_{it} + \beta_2 Pred_{it} + \beta_3 Treat_{it} \times Pred_{it} + \theta_{it} + \epsilon_{it}$$

$Treat_{it}$ is the dummy variable indicating whether the constituency has a reserved seat, while $Pred_{it}$ is the distance from the formula cutoff, θ_{it} represents a set of covariates (voter turnout and number of parties in the constituency). I also include the constituency fixed effects and year fixed effects. Following a standard procedure, observations are weighted using the triangular kernel, and only observations within the bandwidth are included in the estimation (Calonico et al., 2014).

I retrieved the election data of candidates from the Central Election Commission website and information about dynastic politicians from Batto (2018)'s article. He collected data from three major newspapers (United Daily News, China Times, and Liberty Times) in Taiwan by utilizing the local sections of the newspapers for each municipality.[5] Because his dataset only includes elections from 2002 to 2014, I have employed the same approach to update the data to 2022. It is important to note that in coding whether a candidate belongs to a dynasty, I include cases in which the candidate's relatives have been elected to public office at any level of government.

5 Results

Figure 2 and 3 visualizes the impact of gender quotas on several outcomes: (1) the gender ratio of all candidates, (2) the gender ratio of elected officials, (3) the dynastic ratio of all candidates, and (4) the dynastic ratio of elected officials. Table 3 presents the estimated effects of gender quotas on various descriptive representation outcomes. In constituencies with gender quotas, the gender ratio of candidates increases by 13.1 percentage points,

rounding issues) and are dropped from the original dataset.

[5] This method may be the most effective way to gather information on family ties, but it is still likely to under report the overall percentage of family ties.

representing a 52% increase relative to the control group mean of 25%. Similarly, the proportion of dynastic candidates increases by 12 percentage points, an 86% rise from the baseline of 14%. Beyond candidacy, the results also reveal positive and statistically significant effects on electoral success. Further analysis indicates that the proportion of female dynastic candidates and elected officials also increases in constituencies with gender quotas. The share of dynastic candidates who are women is significantly higher in treated constituencies, both among those who run for seats and those who are elected. These findings suggest that gender quotas not only encourage greater participation from women and dynastic candidates but also improve their likelihood of electoral success.[6]

Notably, this finding stands in contrast to evidence from Japan. Smith (2018) shows that, at the national level, institutions that facilitate dynastic representation are associated with weaker women's representation. The case of Taiwan's local elections, however, suggests that a candidate-centered system does not necessarily hinder women's representation. With the implementation of gender quotas, it is possible to accommodate the interests of both dynasties and parties while simultaneously enhancing women's representation. The major difference between Japan and Taiwan is the existence of gender quotas, which motivate dynasties and parties to nominate female dynasties.
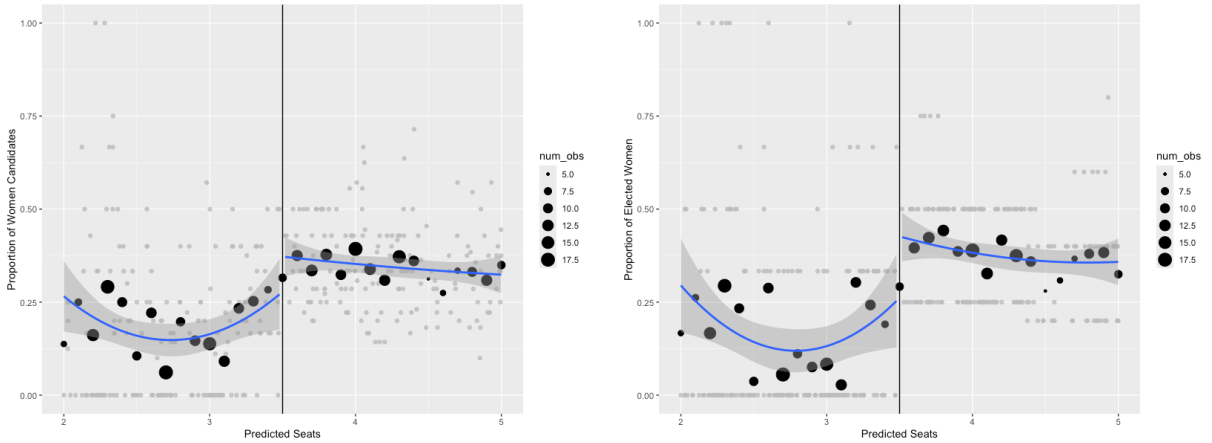

Figure 2: Effect of Gender Quotas on Female Candidates and Councilors

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[6] Table A1 in the Appendix presents the descriptive statistics of the original dataset.
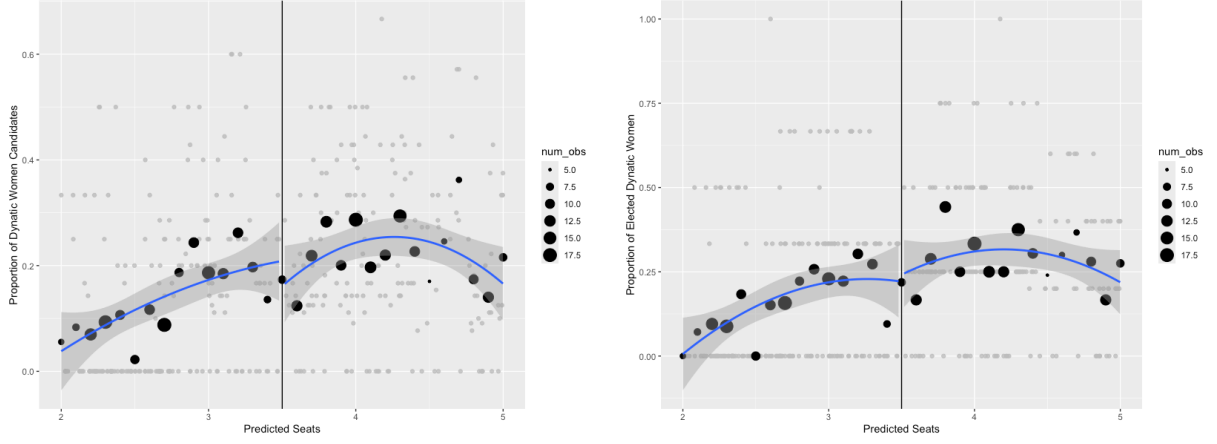
Figure 3: Effect of Quotas on Female Dynastic Candidates and Councilors

Table 3: RD Effects of Gender Quotas on Descriptive Representation

	Women / All Candidates	Elected Women/ All Elected	Dyn/ All Candidates	Elected Dyn/ All Elected
RD Effect	0.131*	0.229***	0.120***	0.152**
	(0.070)	(0.067)	(0.044)	(0.065)
Control Mean	0.25	0.27	0.14	0.18
Observations	146	146	168	169
Bandwidth	0.60	0.60	0.71	0.72
	Dyn Women/ All Candidates	Elected Dyn Women/ All Elected	Dyn Women/ All Dyn	Elected Dyn Women/ All Elected Dyn
RD Effect	0.073*	0.135**	0.373***	0.294*
	(0.039)	(0.055)	(0.136)	(0.153)
Control Mean	0.067	0.084	0.283	0.253
Observations	200	234	263	308
Bandwidth	0.83	0.97	1.14	1.34
Bandwidth rule	optimal	optimal	optimal	optimal
Covariates	Y	Y	Y	Y
Polynomial	linear	linear	linear	linear

$^{*}p < 0.1$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$. Dyn refers to dynastic candidates, Elected Dyn refers to elected dynastic candidates, Female Dyn refers to female dynastic candidates, and Elected Female Dyn refers to elected female dynastic candidates. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity-robust and two-way clustered by constituency and county, reported in parentheses. All regressions include constituency and year fixed effects. Covariates include voter turnout and the number of parties. Observations are weighted using the triangular kernel.

To confirm the robustness of the main findings, I conducted a series of tests. First,

the McCrary test is employed to demonstrate that there was no manipulation around the cutoff. The results of this test are presented in the Appendix (Figure A1). Secondly, a placebo test was conducted to verify the results in Table 3 by using an alternative cutoff. In accordance with the gender quota rule, constituencies with five and six seats are allocated the same number of reserved seats (one seat). Thus, the objective was to ascertain whether there is a notable ratio increase for female dynastic candidates in six-seat constituencies relative to five-seat constituencies. Table A2 in the appendix indicates that the available evidence does not substantiate the assertion that the increased availability of seats is a primary driver of the observed rise in female dynastic candidates. Consequently, it can be inferred that the reserved seats for women, rather than the additional available seats, are a key factor in the increase in female candidates and female dynastic candidates. Third, I also show that the results remain consistent with different bandwidths (see Table A3 in the Appendix).

As discussed earlier, I argue that Taiwan's gender quota rules incentivize the two major parties to nominate women, as this represents the most strategic response under the institutional constraints. If one party fails to nominate a woman, it effectively cedes the reserved seat to its opponent. However, not just any female candidate can secure the seat. She must be electorally competitive. In the Taiwanese context, such competitiveness is often associated with dynastic background (Batto, 2018). Therefore, we should expect to observe higher rates of female and dynastic nominations, particularly dynastic women, in constituencies subject to gender quotas.

To test this claim, I examine the nomination strategies of the two major parties (KMT and DPP). The results, presented in Figure 4, support this argument: both parties nominate more women, more dynasties, and more dynastic women in districts with quotas.

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Notably, this trend is more pronounced for the DPP. While the KMT also shows positive coefficients for nominating women and dynasties, these are not statistically significant. Nevertheless, both parties are significantly more likely to nominate dynastic women when fielding female candidates in quota districts.[7]
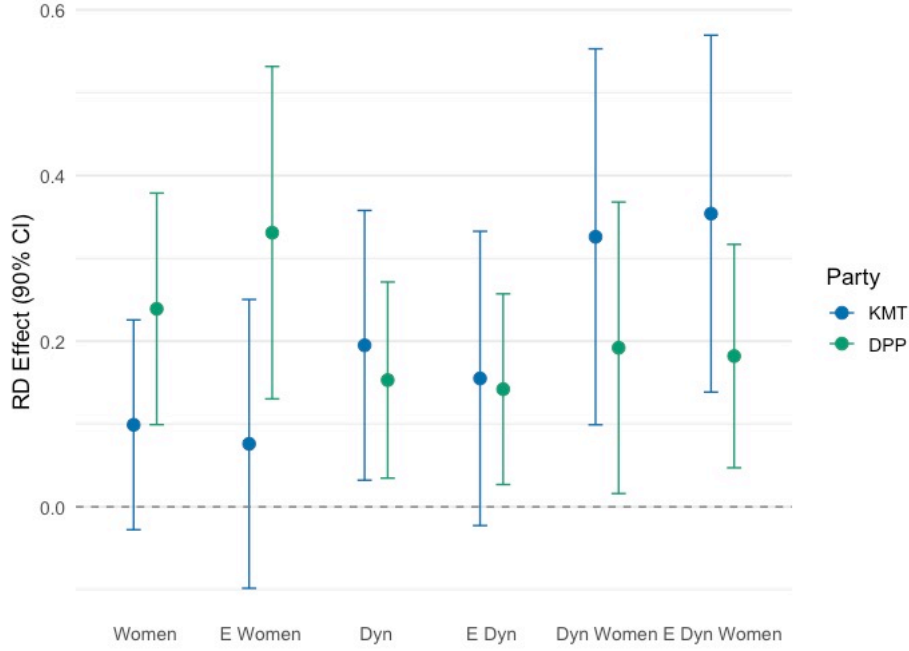

Figure 4: RD Effects of the Gender Quota on Parties' Nomination Strategy

Figure 5 further illustrates the gap in vote share between female candidates from major and small parties in constituencies with quotas. The coefficients for the aggregate major parties and one of the major parties (DPP) are positive and significant. Though the coefficient for the other major party (KMT) is insignificant, it is still positive. The vote share gap between the two major parties and minor parties is aligned with their behaviors during the legislation of the gender quota. In comparison to the KMT, the DPP has experienced a more pronounced advantage following the implementation of a gender quota. However, the KMT did not exhibit a more robust opposition, as they also experienced a slight benefit from the quota. Generally speaking, it is more difficult for small parties to

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[7] See Table A4 in the appendix for the complete table.

find competitive female candidates, so they either do not nominate or recruit candidates with low name recognition. This results in a situation where the stronger parties become even stronger, while the weaker ones become even weaker.[8]
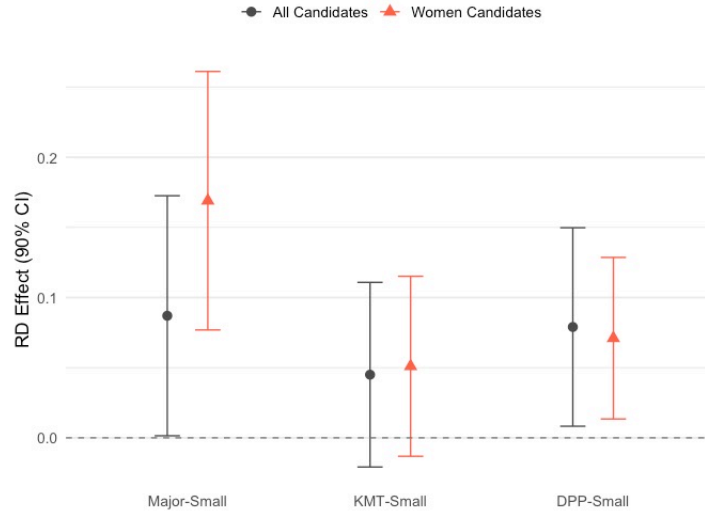

Figure 5: RD Effects of the Gender Quota on Parties' Vote Share

While previous results suggest that major parties can gain strategic advantages in quota constituencies by nominating particular types of candidates, the descriptive statistics in Table 4 indicate that it is not always possible to field a sufficient number of competitive women candidates. In fact, parties are less likely to meet the quota requirement in districts with a larger number of reserved seats. According to media reports, both major parties have occasionally justified their decision to forgo contesting certain women-reserved seats by citing a lack of "suitable" female candidates (Young, 1998). This suggests that the quota law can also pose challenges for major parties. In response, they appear to prioritize nominating fewer but more electorally viable women to maintain a competitive edge. In other words, candidate quality often takes precedence over fulfilling numerical targets.

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[8] See Table A5 in the appendix for the complete table.

Table 4: Gender Deficit Districts of Major Parties

	1 reserved seat	2 reserved seats	3 reserved seats
KMT	18.4%	40.6%	54.5%
DPP	35.0%	74%	91.0%

Notes: % means the percentage of gender deficit districts among all districts in the category. A deficit district indicates that the party nominates fewer female candidates than the number of women-reserved seats that the constituency has.

6 Substantive Representation of Women

Given that the gender quota leads to an increase in certain types of politicians, what are the potential policy implications? Specifically, do gender quotas also have an impact on substantive representation? Some studies suggest that gender quotas may increase attention to women's interests, issues, and priorities (Hughes et al., 2017; Wängnerud, 2009; Pearson and Dancey, 2011; Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Celis, 2007; Dodson, 2006; Esaiasson and Heidar, 2000; Hogan, 2008; Reingold, 1992; Swers, 2002; Thomas, 1994; Carey et al., 1998).

There are several claims to explain the relationship between gender quotas and policy, either to provide more information or to play a more essential role in decision making. The "providing more information" mechanism refers not only to the idea that having more women in councils increases overall awareness of women-related issues but also to the effect that the presence of more women motivates male councilors to recognize the need to care about these issues as well. As for the "essential role" mechanism, it means that when women hold key positions in councils or parties, they gain greater power over agenda-setting, which enables them to prioritize legislation related to women's issues (Clayton,

2021).

However, as demonstrated in previous sections, the implementation of gender quotas led to an increase not only in women's representation but also in the presence of dynastic politicians. Most of the existing literature suggests that dynasties are generally viewed as less attentive to women's interests, even when the dynastic politicians themselves are women (Jalalzai, 2008; Choi, 2019; Thompson, 2022; Ascencio and Malik, 2024). Schwindt-Bayer (2010) also points out that elite women have different life experiences from those of ordinary women. This divergence may shape distinct policy preferences and limit the extent to which they represent broader women's interests.

To assess whether gender quotas still result in policy changes beyond shifts in descriptive representation, I examine the legislative behavior of councilors in local councils. To be more specific, I look at the frequency and context of sponsored bills and speeches that covered women-related issues from 2002 to 2023.[9]

The next question is how to construct the keywords for women-related issues. To build a comprehensive list of women's issues, I draw on several previous studies (Meguid et al., 2025; Burrell, 1996; Gerrity et al., 2007; Lawless, 2015). Generally, issues such as gender equity, child care, employee flex time, and abortion are typically included. The most appropriate approach is to rely on prior studies conducted in the same country. However, because most official surveys in Taiwan provide only broad categories of women's issues without specifying particular keywords, I ultimately draw on the keywords they employ, while making minor modifications to suit the Taiwanese context.[10]

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[9] In the context of local councils in Taiwan, the main difference between bills and speeches lies in the requirement that the former must be seconded by multiple councilors, whereas the latter does not. It is common to see councilors mention the same issues in both their proposals and speeches, and the local governments need to respond if there are some requests or questions in bills or speeches. Moreover, the number of required seconders for a bill is usually low (1–2 councilors). Therefore, in this paper, I treat both as forms of legislative behavior in a broad sense.

[10] For the complete list of keywords and the corresponding descriptive statistics, see Tables A6 and A7 in the appendix.

I utilize the official database of local council minutes as the primary source of information.[11] For cities and counties not included in the database, I supplement with keyword searches on the respective local council websites. And then, I filter the council minutes by searching for relevant Chinese keywords. These keywords are selected to capture speeches or bills related to the topics of interest. I then manually review the context of the filtered paragraphs. Table 5 provides two examples. If a bill is co-sponsored by multiple councilors, every co-sponsor is counted separately. Therefore, for this type of bill, the unit of analysis is the individual councilor.

Table 5: Examples of Bills and Speeches

Councilors	Content	Type	Keyword1	Keyword2	Year	County/City
Tai Ning	For the safety of the learning environment for young children, it is recommended that the Chiayi City Government actively address the "Seismic Reinforcement Project of Chiayi City Wu Feng Kindergarten."	Bills	children	kindergarten	2018	Chiayi City
Huang Tian-Tsai	···Looking back over the past six or seven years, especially in the last two or three years, unemployment among workers in the southern region has increased even more. Disadvantaged groups have also been growing in number, including a worsening situation among single-parent families due to divorce.	Speeches	single parent	divorce	2007	Kaohsiung City

Figure 6 shows the frequency trend of women-related bills and speeches. We can see the related bills and speeches increase over time. Furthermore, Figure 7 visualizes the most popular keywords included in bills and speeches, and the three most popular keywords are kindergarten, children, and women.[12] It is understandable that child-related

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[11] https://journal.th.gov.tw/

[12] Since this study focuses on local councils, laws or regulations about parental leave or women's employ-

issues, such as asking for new kindergartens, have become popular. On one hand, this is a concern shared by fathers and mothers, not just a women-specific issue. On the other hand, advocating for new public facilities is one of the easiest achievements for local councilors to claim credit for. Compared to discussing abstract law or policy changes, new public infrastructure is more visible and tangible to voters. This finding also aligns with previous research, suggesting that gender quotas are more likely to influence policies that transcend party lines or ideological divisions. These issues tend to face less resistance from conservative groups, who are generally more hesitant to adopt progressive policies. (Barnes, 2016; Weeks, 2022; Wiliarty, 2010).

I also conduct the same regression discontinuity design here and also find that districts with quotas have more women relevant bills or speeches (Table 6). This implies that gender quotas also increase the substantive representation.[13]

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ment protection fall outside the jurisdiction of local governments. As a result, local councilors are less likely to address these issues.

[13] Given the number of seats are different, districts with gender quotas have more councilors and thus may increase the number of bills and speeches. Here, I also present the average number of bills and speeches per person.
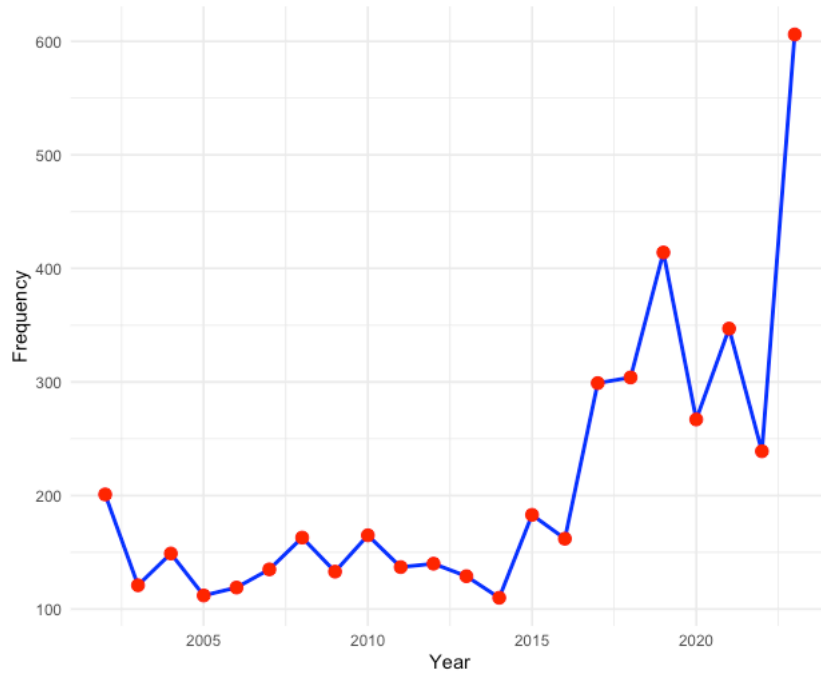
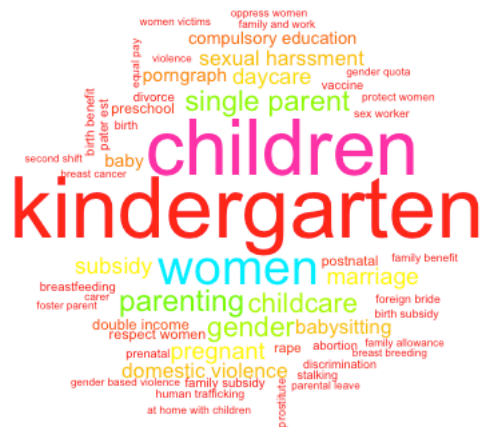Figure 6: Yearly Trend of Women Related Issue Bills and Speeches

Figure 7: Text Cloud of Keywords Included in Bills and Speeches

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Table 6: Substantive Representation

Bills & Speeches	Total Numbers (Aggregate)	Average Numbers (per Councilor)
RD Effects	5.869***	1.238**
	(2.176)	(0.605)
Control Mean	3.75	0.63
Observations	327	321
Bandwidth	1.42	1.38

$^*p < 0.1$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$. The dependent variables are the number of bills and speeches. Column 1 is the aggregated number of bills and speeches for all councilors in the constituencies, and Column 2 is the average number of bills and speeches per councilor. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust (cluster at constituency level) and presented in parentheses. All regressions include fixed effects for the constituency and year. Covariates are voter turnout and the number of parties. Observations are weighted by the triangular kernel.

In addition, Table 7 highlights the fact that women councilors engaged more in relevant bills and speeches. Comparing the constituency with and without gender quotas, I find that women councilors in districts with gender quotas addressed women-related issues than men, but in districts without gender quotas, there is no such gap between women and men. Instead, dynastic councilors in districts without gender quotas are more likely to engage more in women related issues. These results indicate that gender is a stronger predictor of the tendency to speak for women than whether a female councilor comes from a region with gender quotas. This finding also aligns with the earlier study by Clayton et al. (2017).

Analyzing intra-group differences among men and among women, we can see that men councilors in quota districts and those with dynastic ties care more about women relevant issues in general, but there is no such difference among women councilors. Unlike Wang

(2023)'s finding of Taiwan's parliamentary quota system, the result of the local council demonstrates a distinct spillover effect on men. A possible explanation for why male councilors in quota constituencies are more active on women-related issues is that the local elections' quota rule increases the likelihood of the presence of women councilors within the same district. The presence of a gender quota not only guarantees a baseline level of female representation but also makes it highly probable that multiple women will be elected in the same constituency. This enhances the salience of gender-related issues, drawing greater public and political attention and pressuring male councilors in district with quotas to engage with these topics (Weeks, 2018).

I also examine behavioral differences between dynasty seniors and their female juniors. According to the existing literature, kin successors are expected to have continuity in representational style and policy positions, given they want to maintain the family brand and maximize the incumbency advantage Smith (2018). However, I find that 40% of female juniors are more active than their dynasty seniors, meaning they propose 2.01 more bills and speeches than their seniors (the councilors' overall average is 0.82). 42% exhibit the same level of activity, and 18% are less active, implying they have 1.71 fewer bills and speeches than their seniors. The result suggests that female juniors are not merely placeholders for their families. They can cultivate their policy agendas and express divergent policy preferences from senior family members.

Table 7: Bills and Speeches Count Among Difference Groups

	All	w/Quota	w/o Quota	Men	Women
Women	0.671***	0.679***	0.411		
	(0.085)	(0.089)	(0.273)		
w/Quota				1.042**	1.261
				(0.437)	(1.064)
Dynastic	0.037	−0.065	0.635*	0.618*	−0.911
	(0.085)	(0.083)	(0.336)	(0.336)	(0.809)
Women*Dynastic	−0.246	−0.169	−0.393		
	(0.155)	(0.160)	(0.485)		
w/Quota*Dynastic				−0.744**	0.778
				(0.343)	(0.820)
Observations	5,453	4,487	966	3,799	1,654
R^2	0.253	0.253	0.368	0.250	0.347

$^*p < 0.1$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$. The dependent variable is the total count of women-related bills and speeches. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust (cluster at constituency level) and presented in parentheses. All regressions include fixed effects for the constituency and year.

7 Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that gender quotas can generate a range of outcomes, some of which challenge conventional views. While gender quotas are often framed as tools to empower women and reshape the political agenda, the case of Taiwan reveals a more complex reality. Quotas enhanced the descriptive representation of women, but they have also facilitated the continued influence of dynasties in local politics. In particular, dynastic women have emerged as prominent beneficiaries, occupying the reserved spaces created for women while preserving existing familial networks of political power. In addition, major parties also solidify their advantage by nominating dynasties, crowding out the space of other small parties.

Another important finding is that political dynasties, often seen as less attentive to women's issues, also contributed to the rise in substantive representation following the introduction of the quota. Districts with a gender quota have more bills and speeches addressing women's interests, and these initiatives are more likely to be introduced by female legislators. Notably, some junior female members from political families exhibit distinct policy priorities compared to senior members of the same family.

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this study, whether gender quotas represent a win for women or for political dynasties, the evidence suggests that the answer is likely both. The implementation of quotas has increased the proportion of both female and dynastic councilors. At the same time, it has contributed to a higher frequency of discussions on women-related issues in local councils. Dynasties have adjusted their policy priorities in response to the introduction of the new gender quota rule. They may have found a way to balance the preservation of their family's political influence with the institutional demands brought about by the quota. On the one hand, they allocate partial time and effort to address women's issues. On the other hand, they may be able to serve the interests of their loyal constituents. The question of whether and how political families manage this balance deserves closer examination in future research.

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Appendix

Descriptive Statistics of the Original Dataset

Table A1: Summary Statistics

	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
# of All Candidates	1,220	8.470	6.438	1	34
# of All Female Candidates	1,220	2.304	2.117	0	10
# of All Elected Candidates	1,220	4.430	3.249	1	14
# of All Elected Female Candidates	1,220	1.343	1.322	0	7
# of Dyn Female Candidates	1,220	0.719	0.969	0	6
# of Elected Dyn Female Candidates	1,220	0.523	0.795	0	6
Constituency w/ Quota	1,220	0.525	0.500	0	1
Distance From the Cutoff	1,220	0.859	3.327	-3.347	10.121
Voter Turnout	1,220	0.660	0.084	0.363	0.925
# of Parties	1,220	3.250	1.540	1	12

Robustness Checks
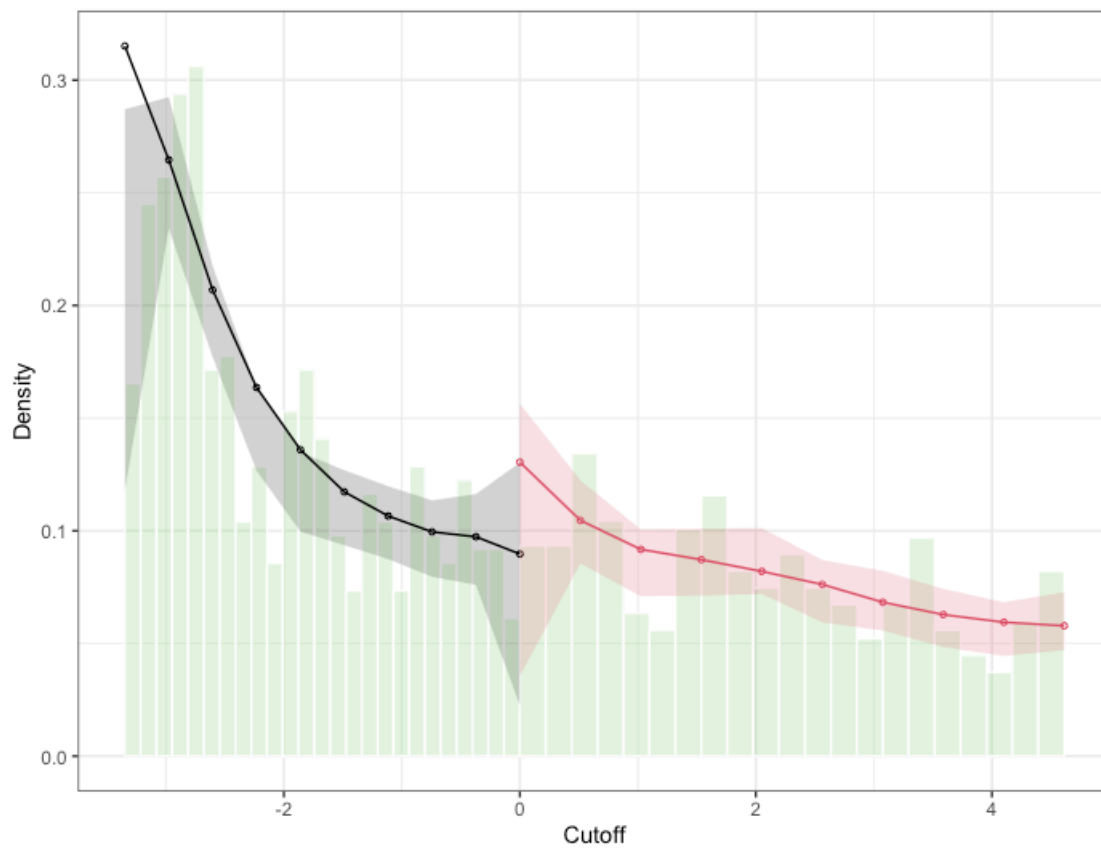
 The confidence intervals overlap and the p-value for the overlap size is 0.6381, which means no manipulation around the cutoff.

Figure A1: McCrary Density Test

Table A2: Placebo Test (Discontinuity Moved to 5.5)

	Women / All Candidates	Elected Women/ All Elected	Dyn/ All Candidates	Elected Dyn/ All Elected
RD Effect	−0.051**	−0.127***	−0.084	−0.169**
	(0.025)	(0.038)	(0.054)	(0.071)
Control Mean	0.24	0.26	0.13	0.16
Observations	216	200	330	325
Bandwidth	1.13	1.05	1.63	1.58
	Dyn Women/ All Candidates	Elected Dyn Women/ All Elected	Dyn Women/ All Dyn	Elected Dyn Women/ All Elected Dyn
RD Effect	−0.023	−0.037	−0.024	−0.069
	(0.040)	(0.062)	(0.220)	(0.223)
Control Mean	0.067	0.089	0.268	0.248
Observations	263	242	303	247
Bandwidth	1.35	1.24	1.50	1.27
Bandwidth rule	optimal	optimal	optimal	optimal
Covariates	Y	Y	Y	Y
Polynomial	linear	linear	linear	linear

$^{*}p < 0.1$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$. Dyn refers to dynastic candidates, Elected Dyn refers to elected dynastic candidates, Female Dyn refers to female dynastic candidates, and Elected Female Dyn refers to elected female dynastic candidates. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity-robust and two-way clustered by constituency and county, reported in parentheses. All regressions include constituency and year fixed effects. Covariates include voter turnout and the number of parties. Observations are weighted using the triangular kernel.

Table A3: RD Effects for Main Results for Varying Bandwidths

	Dyn Women / All Candidates		
RD Effect	0.073**	0.077	0.058
	(0.034)	(0.050)	(0.038)
Observations	200	87	390
Bandwidth	0.83	0.41	1.66
	Elected Dyn Women / All Elected		
RD Effect	0.135**	0.140**	0.091
	(0.052)	(0.056)	(0.056)
Observations	234	110	474
Bandwidth	0.97	0.48	1.94
Bandwidth rule	optimal	manual	manual
	Dyn Women / All Dyn		
RD Effect	0.373**	0.341**	0.306**
	(0.144)	(0.156)	(0.135)
Observations	263	139	555
Bandwidth	1.14	0.57	2.29
Bandwidth rule	optimal	manual	manual
	Elected Dyn Women / All Elected Dyn		
RD Effect	0.294**	0.286**	0.272*
	(0.142)	(0.144)	(0.141)
Observations	308	162	667
Bandwidth	1.34	0.67	2.68
Bandwidth rule	optimal	manual	manual

$^*p < 0.1$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$. Dyn Women refers to female dynastic candidates, and Elected Dyn Women refers to elected female dynastic candidates. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust (cluster at constituency level) and presented in parenthesis. All regressions include fixed effects for the constituency and year. The covariates are voter turnout and number of parties. Observations are weighted by the triangular kernel.

Supplementary Results

Table A4: RD Effects of the Gender Quota on Parties' Nomination Strategy

	KMT Women/ KMT	DPP Women/ DPP	KMT E Women/ KMT Elected	DPP E Women/ DPP Elected
RD Effect	0.099	0.239***	0.076	0.331***
	(0.077)	(0.085)	(0.106)	(0.122)
Control Mean	0.276	0.200	0.264	0.193
Observations	164	232	184	223
Bandwidth	0.68	0.97	0.79	0.91
	KMT Dyn/ KMT	DPP Dyn/ DPP	KMT E Dyn/ KMT Elected	DPP E Dyn/ DPP Elected
RD Effect	0.195*	0.153**	0.155	0.142**
	(0.099)	(0.072)	(0.108)	(0.070)
Control Mean	0.171	0.120	0.170	0.115
Observations	170	276	221	355
Bandwidth	0.73	1.21	0.90	1.57
	KMT Dyn Women/ KMT Female	DPP Dyn Women/ DPP Female	KMT E Dyn Women/ KMT E Female	DPP E Dyn Women/ DPP E Female
RD Effect	0.326**	0.192*	0.354***	0.182**
	(0.138)	(0.107)	(0.131)	(0.082)
Control Mean	0.181	0.147	0.174	0.125
Observations	255	364	304	308
Bandwidth	1.11	1.60	1.33	1.35
Bandwidth rule	optimal	optimal	optimal	optimal
Covariates	Y	Y	Y	Y
Polynomial	linear	linear	linear	linear

$^{*}p < 0.1$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$. Women means women candidates, E Women means elected women candidates, Dyn refers to dynastic candidates, E Dyn refers to elected dynastic candidates, Dyn women refers to dynastic women candidates, and E Dyn women refers to elected dynastic women candidates. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust (cluster at constituency level) and presented in parentheses. All regressions include fixed effects for the constituency and year. The covariates are voter turnout and the number of parties. Observations are weighted by the triangular kernel.

Table A5: Vote Share Difference Between Major and All Small Parties

All Candidates	Major−All Small	KMT−All Small	DPP−All Small
RD Effect	0.087*	0.045	0.079*
	(0.052)	(0.040)	(0.043)
Control Mean	0.56	0.38	0.13
Observations	276	255	235
Bandwidth	1.19	1.09	0.98
Women	Major−All Small	KMT−All Small	DPP−All Small
RD Effect	0.169***	0.051	0.071**
	(0.056)	(0.039)	(0.035)
Control Mean	0.161	0.105	0.042
Observations	170	211	278
Bandwidth	0.73	0.85	1.20
Bandwidth rule	optimal	optimal	optimal
Covariates	Y	Y	Y
Polynomial	linear	linear	linear

*$p < 0.1$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$. The dependent variables are the vote share difference between the two major parties (KMT and DPP) and the aggregated vote share of all small parties. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust (cluster at constituency level) and presented in parentheses. All regressions include fixed effects for the constituency and year. The covariates are voter turnout and the number of parties. Observations are weighted by the triangular kernel.

Table A6: Keyword and Chinese Translation

Keyword	Chinese	Keyword	Chinese	Keyword	Chinese
abortion	墮胎	marriage	婚姻/結婚	rape	強姦/性侵害
at home with children	在家顧孩子	parental leave	育嬰假	respect women	尊重女性
baby	嬰兒	parenting	育兒	second shift	第二輪班
babysitting	保母	pater est	婚生子女	sex worker	性工作者
birth	出生	pornography	色情/情色	sexual harassment	性騷擾
birth benefit	生育津貼	postnatal	產後	single parent	單親
birth subsidy	生育補助	pregnant	懷孕	stalking	跟蹤
prenatal	產前	subsidy	補助	breast cancer	乳癌
preschool	學前教育	violence	暴力	breastfeeding	哺乳
prostitute	妓女	women	女性/婦女	carer	照顧者
protect women	保護婦女	women victims	女性受害者	childcare	托兒
daycare	日間照顧	double income	雙薪	children	幼兒
compulsory education	義務教育	family allowance	家庭津貼	divorce	離婚
domestic violence	家暴/家庭暴力	family and work	家庭工作	equal pay	同工同酬
family benefit	家庭福利	family subsidy	家庭補助	foreign bride	外籍新娘
foster parent	繼父母	gender	性別	gender-based violence	性別暴力
gender quota	性別配額	human trafficking	人口販運	kindergarten	托兒所/幼兒園
oppress women	受害女性	vaccine	疫苗		

Table A7: Keyword Lists

Keyword	Count	Keyword	Count	Keyword	Count
Kindergarten	1197	Respect women	58	Equal pay	10
Children	1082	Postnatal	53	Family benefit	9
Women	628	Rape	48	Protect women	7
Parenting	312	Pater est	38	At home with children	5
Single parent	290	Birth benefit	37	Family and work	5
Gender	279	Divorce	35	Parental leave	4
Childcare	269	Family subsidy	34	Breast cancer	3
Pregnant	213	Breastfeeding	31	Carer	3
Marriage	205	Vaccine	28	Gender-based violence	3
Subsidy	197	Abortion	27	Gender quota	3
Daycare	187	Prenatal	24	Oppress women	3
Sexual harassment	166	Birth	22	Women victims	3
Domestic violence	164	Prostitute	22	Family allowance	2
Babysitting	153	Stalking	22	Foster parent	1
Pornography	126	Discrimination	21	Second shift	1
Baby	119	Foreign bride	16		
Compulsory education	107	Human trafficking	16		
Double income	68	Sex worker	13		
Preschool	63	Birth subsidy	12		