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## **Female political representation in the aftermath of ethnic violence**

A comparative analysis of Burundi and Rwanda

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**Abstract:** We study the impact of electoral gender quotas in post-war Burundi and Rwanda on women's political representation. First, we look at descriptive representation by studying the number of female representatives and the prestige of their positions in the legislative and executive branches of government. Second, we focus on political representation as perceived by ordinary women, before, during, and after the introduction of gender quotas. We find that, both in Rwanda and Burundi, descriptive female political representation significantly increased with the introduction of gender quotas, with the share of women in parliament and ministries consistently exceeding 30 per cent. While women still disproportionately end up in ministries of relatively lower prestige, the gap with men is closing as more women have joined the executive branches of power. We do not find any tangible effect on women's perceived political representation. Among the possible explanations, we discuss the authoritarian nature of the regime and the crowding out of gender identity by ethnic identity. We argue that these explanations are not entirely consistent with our data and put forward a third explanation, i.e. that the perception of political representation depends on the implementation of policies—thus substantive representation, not descriptive representation—and that men and women are to a very large extent appreciative of the same policies.

**Keywords:** female political representation, gender quota, Rwanda, Burundi, life histories

**JEL classification:** D72, D74, K38, N47, Y8

**Figures and tables:** provided at the end of the paper.

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## 1 Introduction

In its end-line evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the United Nations announced that the average proportion of women in parliament had nearly doubled since 1995, such that by 2015 about one in five members of parliament (MPs) were women (UN 2015). This progress is rooted in the Fourth World Conference on Women, and the 1995 Beijing declaration that followed, in which UN member states made the commitment to advance women's participation in decision-making bodies, if need be by the introduction of gender quotas (UN 1995). At present, 128 countries have some form of gender quota (International IDEA et al. 2015b).

At the target date of 2015, sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) lagged behind on all MDGs except female political representation (PR), for which it was on a par with the rest of the world. This relatively solid performance of SSA countries can be related to the extra stimulus for post-conflict states, in the form of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on 'women and peace and security', which urged post-conflict member states to 'ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions' (UN 2000).

This UN resolution combines favourably with the fact that war often means political transition, and thus an opportunity for previously excluded groups to be included. In many post-war countries, national women's movements, seeking to address the dire needs (of women) after the devastation of war, became active agents of change. These movements, perceived as politically neutral rather than antagonistic, managed to be included in the process of crafting a new constitution and drafting new laws, often supported by international organizations, and gaining further leverage with the 1325 UN Resolution (Bauer 2012). Thus, while women suffer during and in the aftermath of war, post-war reconstruction can offer a window of opportunity for changing gender roles on the political scene (Wood 2008). Empirically, in a sample of 63 developing countries, it has been demonstrated that every additional year of internal war increases female parliamentary participation by 1.2 per cent (Hughes 2009).

Partly because of this war-induced change, many African countries have introduced gender quotas in order to guarantee female representation in their political systems, and they have consequently experienced a large upturn of women in their national and subnational legislatures (Muriaas et al. 2013). To date, 27 African countries have introduced legislated candidate quotas or reserved seats for female politicians in parliament, and Africa features seven times on the list of the world's top-20 countries with the largest share of female legislators.<sup>1</sup> Also in the executive branch of African governments, female representation has made impressive strides: the proportion of women appointed as cabinet ministers has increased from 4 per cent in the 1980s to 20 per cent in 2005, placing Africa ahead of Europe (Arriola and Johnson 2014).

The increase in female PR is largely seen as instrumental for equal gender rights and development. The general theoretical argument that descriptive representation affects substantive representation, was made as early as 1861 by John Stuart Mill (1861) in his publication *Considerations on Representative Government*, where he argues that 'in the absence of its natural defenders, the interest of the excluded is always in danger of being overlooked: and, when looked at, is seen with very different eyes from those of the persons whom it directly concerns'. The argument was further developed

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<sup>1</sup> For updates of these classifications, see International IDEA et al. (2015b) for the quota policies, and Inter-Parliamentary Union (2017) for the share of female legislators.

by Hanna Fenichel Pitkin (1967) in her book *The Concept of Representation*. In recent years, this view has found empirical support in several studies that have documented positive policy outcomes of gender quotas in India (Beaman et al. 2009; Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004; Ghani et al. 2014; Iyer et al. 2012). But, the findings of other studies on India, e.g. Ban and Rao (2008) and Bardhan et al. (2010) have tempered enthusiasm.

There is also scepticism about the instrumental role of gender quotas in Africa. The scepticism relates to four arguments. First, while the rationale for gender quotas is embedded in the democracy discourse, many of the African regimes in which gender quotas have been introduced are de facto authoritarian (Muriaas et al. 2013). Although featuring the formal institutions associated with democratic regimes, the actual political power in these regimes is highly centralized in the executive, the actions of which are largely unconstrained by other branches of government (Bratton and van de Walle 1997). In this context, gender quotas cannot influence policy, unless they apply to the highest echelons of executive power (but they do not).

Second, in a patriarchal society, ethnic politics may crowd out gendered politics. If different ethnic constituencies need to be catered to, high-profile appointments are used ‘to build patronage-based alliances with politicians who act as advocates for ethnic constituencies’, the so-called ‘big men’ (Arriola and Johnson 2014). In Africa’s patriarchal societies, these ‘big men’ are men, not women. Hence, Arriola and Johnson (2014) empirically demonstrate that in African societies with more important ethnic cleavages, women are less likely to become cabinet ministers or to receive high-prestige appointments in areas such as finance or defence.

Third, ethnic identity can crowd out gender identity. More generally, in countries with important class, racial, or ethnic divisions, the women elected may still differ in essential dimensions from the female constituency. This argument is an application of the concept of ‘intersectionality’ and was first made by black feminists, who felt that the rights of Afro-American women could not be represented by white middle-class women (Thompson 2002). Similarly, in the ethnically divided societies of Africa, a woman of ethnicity X may feel better represented by a man of ethnicity X than by a woman of ethnicity Y.

A fourth reason for the scepticism relates to another feminist strand in the literature that argues that a rights-based approach to women’s empowerment may fail to change the underlying social structures that produce women’s subordination (Berry 2015; Brown 2000). In other words, while one may be able to engineer formal institutions, engineering the informal institutions that go with them is a very different ball-game. Hence, even if a change in formal PR results in changes in the formal rules of the game, it may leave the situation largely unaltered for women on the ground.

In this study, we look at the cases of Burundi and Rwanda, two countries that introduced quotas in the aftermath of large-scale inter-ethnic violence. The arguments of the sceptics could apply in the context of these countries. First, while *de jure* democratic, they have not been perceived as such. For instance, in the years in which gender quotas were introduced—2003 in Rwanda and 2005 in Burundi—Freedom House considered Rwanda to be ‘not free’ and Burundi to be only ‘partly free’ (Freedom House n.d.). Second, while both countries tried to design—each in their own way—policies to appease ethnic rivalry, ethnicity still dominates the hearts and minds of many, and continues to influence politics (Ingelaere 2010; Lemarchand 1994; Longman and Rutagengwa 2004; Mclean-Hilker 2009). Third, in a not so distant past, women were kept in a subordinate position, both by law (e.g. as recently as the 1980s Rwandan women did not have the legal right to start a business without their husband’s consent) and by cultural norms (e.g. a ‘virtuous’ women should not speak in public). While laws were changed, the stickiness of attitudes and social norms may continue to hold back the effective empowerment of women (Berry 2015; Jefremovas 1991; Uwineza and Pearson 2009).

On the other hand, especially in Rwanda, the dramatic shock of massive ethnic violence provided the circumstances for rapid cultural change and the reconfiguration of gender relations. Most clearly, since many men were killed, imprisoned or on the run, women were left to fend for themselves and take up roles that were previously preserved for men (Burnet 2008). In addition, as Uwineza and Pearson (2009) argue, ‘the cultural belief that women naturally make peace and seek to resist and prevent violence has resonated particularly well in post-genocide Rwanda’, and has further marshalled social support for women’s unprecedented political involvement. Finally, while several authors argue that the Rwandan Patriotic Front’s (RPF) active promotion of gender balance in PR is a way to please donors and divert attention away from the lack of ethnic balance, they also acknowledge that the RPF had already internalized the promotion of women early on at its conception in exile in Uganda. This was influenced both by the promotion of women in Ugandan politics and by growing up as refugees, often in female-headed households (Burnet 2008; Debusscher and Ansoms 2013; Longman 2006; Reyntjens 2010). In 2013, Rwanda set a world record when elections resulted in a 63.8 per cent share of women in parliament. This was far above the required 30 per cent quota, thus not appearing to be just the result of an externally driven process. These reasons push Berry (2015) to argue that ‘if we were to see progress towards women’s empowerment anywhere in the world, we would expect it here’.

It is in this context that we study the influence of gender quotas on:

- a) the trends in the *level and nature of female political representation* in the legislative and executive branches of the Burundian and Rwandan government; and
- b) the *change in perceived political representation* by female citizens, before, during, and after the first elections with gender quotas.

In terms of Hanna Pitkin’s (1967) different concepts of representation, the first question looks at so-called ‘descriptive’ representation’, i.e. whether a representative resembles those being represented; in particular whether he/she represents the descriptive characteristics of the represented that are politically relevant, such as occupation, ethnicity, geographical area of birth, or gender (Pitkin 1967). To capture descriptive representation, we look both at the ‘level’ and ‘nature’ of female political participation. The ‘level’ is concerned with the number of women, as a percentage of the total number of representatives. In our specific case, ‘nature’ is concerned with the ethnicity of women who take up these positions, as well as with the relative prestige of their positions compared to the positions taken up by men. The second question looks at perceived PR, as derived from life story interviews, in which respondents were asked to systematically rank their PR throughout their adult lives. When asked to formulate their own understanding of ‘political representation’, the shared understanding that emerged pointed to so-called ‘substantive representation’, or whether the representative acts in the interest of the represented (Pitkin 1967).

To study the trends in female PR in the legislative branch, we rely on information from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (n.d.a) on the share of women MPs in the Rwandan and Burundian parliaments. For the executive branch we turn to a dataset on the composition of the Rwandan and Burundian cabinets from 1996 to 2016 (De Roeck et al. 2016; IOB n.d.). To study citizens’ perception of PR and changes therein, we rely on a dataset of over 700 life stories, in which perception of PR was systematically coded throughout the life story years. The large-N aspect and the systematic coding of perceived PR allow us to determine *whether* and *by how much* perceived PR changed for ordinary men and women. The narratives in the life stories allow us to provide insight into *why* perceived PR evolved over time.

This research is expected to meet the interests of both academics and development practitioners. The ultimate goal is to inform the design of gender-sensitive policies, specifically in post-inter-

ethnic-conflict situations, and better understand the impact of those already in place. This is important, also in light of the recently launched Sustainable Development Goals, in particular goal 5.5: 'Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life' (UN n.d.).

## 2 Background

Burundi and Rwanda are two small neighbouring countries in Africa's Great Lakes Region. The Ruanda-Urundi territory, once part of German East Africa was ruled by Belgium from 1916 till 1962. To extract resources from the territory, mainly coffee, Belgium implemented indirect rule, favouring the Tutsi minority over the Hutu majority as rulers.<sup>2</sup> This approach, along with the issuing of ethnic identity cards institutionalized and rigidified ethnic identities.<sup>3</sup> The 1962 independence gave way to the nations of Rwanda and Burundi. In Burundi, after a turbulent few years, a Tutsi-led military dictatorship took control. In Rwanda, independence went hand in hand with the emancipation of the Hutus, and the instalment of a Hutu-dominated republic. In both countries, the decades following independence were marked by discrimination of the ethnic group deprived of power and by waves of ethnic violence. The last decade of the century, the 1990s, would turn out to be the most dramatic for both countries.

After years of demands for power-sharing by Hutus in Burundi, and pressured by the international community, the Tutsi-led Burundian government opened the way for a multi-party system with a new constitution in 1992. The first democratic elections, held in 1993, were won by Melchior Ndadaye, who became the first Hutu head of state. But, just a few months into his term, he was assassinated by Tutsi soldiers. The assassination triggered massive killings of Tutsi civilians and years of violence between Hutu rebels and the Tutsi-dominated army. Three presidents, a coup d'état, several years of peace talks, and three years of transitional government later, a ceasefire was signed in 2003 between the Tutsi-controlled Burundian government and the largest Hutu rebel group (Uvin 2008).

In Rwanda, the Hutu power monopoly gave rise to the RPF, founded mainly by Rwandan Tutsis living in exile in Uganda. In October 1990, the RPF attacked Rwanda and demanded a share in power. Around the same time, multiparty politics were introduced in the context of an international call for democratization. As we argue elsewhere, in Ingelaere and Verpoorten (2014), both war and multiparty politics 'constituted a threat to the privileges of Rwanda's Hutu political elite. To close ranks and safeguard their power monopoly, the elite played the ethnic card. By early 1994 intensive media and government propaganda had identified every single Tutsi citizen living in Rwanda as the enemy'. Once the violence was set in motion after the shooting down of president Habyarimana's plane on 6 April 1994, the call to ethnic violence harvested massive popular support (Prunier 1998; Straus 2006). In a timespan of barely 100 days, the genocide against the Tutsis created an estimated 500,000 to 800,000 victims, while several hundreds of thousands of Hutus lost their lives in other forms of violence and while fleeing the country (Verpoorten 2005; 2012).

In Burundi, two years after the signing of the 2003 ceasefire, voters backed a new constitution in which quotas assured ethnic power-sharing at different levels (De Roeck et al. 2016; Vandeginste

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<sup>2</sup> According to the CIA World Fact book (CIA n.d.), both Burundi and Rwanda count around 85 per cent Hutu, 14 per cent Tutsi, and 1 per cent Twa.

<sup>3</sup> Tutsis are often considered as cattle herders who migrated to Rwanda and subjugated the indigenous Hutu agriculturalists, but, rather than different people, 'Tutsi' and 'Hutu' designated different social classes of the same people (Chrétien 2003; Vansina 2004).

2014). Ministerial positions were to be divided among Hutus (60 per cent) and Tutsis (40 per cent) (Article 129), and the same 60 per cent/40 per cent division was to apply to the National Assembly (Article 164). This was a drastic turnaround compared to the pre-war power monopoly of the Tutsi minority. The same constitutional articles also introduced a 30 per cent gender quota for Ministers and MPs, materialized through a 30 per cent party list quota and co-optation of seats should the party list quota not result in 30 per cent elected women. Parliamentary and presidential elections occurred in the same year, and Pierre Nkurunziza, once a leader of a Hutu rebel group, was elected president.

In Rwanda, the RPF put an end to the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis, and defeated the Rwandan government forces whose remnants fled to eastern Congo, from where they conducted insurgency operations till the late 1990s. In May 2003, Rwanda adopted a new constitution. Three months later, Paul Kagame, commander in chief of the RPF, was elected president. In contrast to Burundi, the Rwandan policy was to remain silent on ethnicity and promote the idea of 'Rwandanicity', or the union of all Rwandans (Ingelaere 2010; Longman and Rutagengwa 2004; Mclean-Hilker 2009). In practice, ethnicity does play a role, not least in politics. For instance, in 2016, 13 out of the 21 Rwandan ministers belonged to the Tutsi minority (De Roeck et al. 2016). This ethnic constellation thus constitutes a reversal of the pre-war situation, when politics was dominated by the Hutu majority. The Rwandan constitution did introduce gender quotas, i.e. a guaranteed 30 per cent of posts in *all* decision-making bodies (Article 9). In the case of the Rwandan parliament, this materialized through voluntary party quotas, as well as 24 reserved seats in parliament. But, even earlier, at the time of the 2001 local-level elections, reserved seats were created for women at the cell, sector, and district levels, and, as early as 1998, elections of grassroots women's structures took place. These elections led to an unprecedented rise of female representation in local government (Burnet 2008, 2011).

In sum, both Burundi and Rwanda experienced an important political transition in their post-war period. The post-war transitions in Rwanda and Burundi were accompanied by gender quotas, but at the same time also implied a reversal of ethnic power relations. In Rwanda, the reversal was in favour of the Tutsi minority, which now holds 62 per cent of ministerial positions in Rwanda. In Burundi, the reversal meant that the Tutsis lost their monopoly on power. Through a quota system, they now hold 40 per cent of cabinet positions and seats in parliament.

The post-war political transitions did not result in 'democratic' governance. According to the World Bank governance indicators (World Bank n.d.), both states score very low on voice and accountability, and, Freedom House currently characterizes both states as 'not free' (Freedom House n.d.); however, at the time of the 2005 elections, it characterized Burundi as 'partly free'. One reason why Burundi received a better rating at that time, had to do with the more genuine nature of their multi-party system, which was characterized by actual competition between parties, whereas in Rwanda the RPF dominated and the handful of other parties were considered to be satellite parties of the RPF. At the time of writing (October 2016), Rwanda's freedom status trend was downward due to the approval of a constitutional amendment that would allow President Kagame a third seven-year term in 2017 and two additional five-year terms. In 2015, Burundi's freedom status had been degraded from 'partly free' to 'not free' and its 2016 status trend was downward, mainly because of President Pierre Nkurunziza's decision to run for a constitutionally dubious third term and the increased repression of freedom of speech and political opposition that went with it.

### 3 Data and method

We set out to study the impact of the constitutional gender quotas on:

- a) the trends in the *level and nature of female PR* in the legislative and executive branches of the Burundian and Rwandan government; and
- b) the *change in perceived PR* by ordinary female and male citizens, before, during, and after the first elections with gender quotas.

Studying the level of female PR in the legislative and executive branches of power allows us to verify to what extent the quota policy was respected. We derive the number of female parliamentarians from the database of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (n.d.a). The information on the number of ministerial portfolios held by women is derived from a database that is compiled from the annexes of the *Annuaire des Grands Lacs* (De Roeck et al. 2016; IOB n.d.). These annexes give information on the identity of individuals in the executive branches of power in Rwanda and Burundi. We also rely on these annexes to determine the ethnicity of the female executive power holders and the relative prestige of their portfolios. To determine the prestige of cabinet positions, we start from a common classification scheme (Krook and O'Brien 2012) that ranks minister posts as being of 'low', 'medium', or 'high' prestige, but we make two adaptations to the scheme: because of the specific context, the Ministries of Justice in both countries and the Ministry of Human Rights in Burundi are re-classified as high prestige (De Roeck et al. 2016).

For the second research question, we turn to our life story dataset. Life stories are among the favourite tools of anthropologists as they allow deep insights to be obtained into the life events, perceptions, and motivations of an individual (Atkinson 1998). Our life story dataset is, however, unusual, because of five unique aspects.

*First, whereas researchers usually collect just a few stories, we have stories of over 700 individuals—302 in Burundi and 412 in Rwanda.* At the time of the first interview round (2007–08), all respondents selected were over 30 years old, a criteria that assured that they had lived through the turbulent 1990s consciously.

*Second, the respondents are part of a sample that was stratified geographically across communities and ethnic subcategories.* Seven communities were chosen in Rwanda and six in Burundi. These communities were chosen based on the principle of maximum variation to obtain a large variance in conflict and post-conflict experiences. Figure 1 indicates their locations on a map. In Rwanda the sample was stratified across five ethnic subcategories:<sup>4</sup> Tutsi 'genocide survivors', Tutsi 'old caseload returnees',<sup>5</sup> Hutu 'released prisoners', Hutu 'accused in *gacaca*'<sup>6</sup> and Hutu 'not accused and never

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<sup>4</sup> Since the use of ethnic markers is strictly policed by the post-genocide regime the stratification across ethnic subcategories was based on alternative markers that underlie ethnic categories and that are commonly used by Rwandans to identify themselves and others. Besides, although ethnicity is a sensitive topic in contemporary Rwanda, Rwandans do speak about ethnicity in private settings. All interviews were conducted in the house of the respondent without onlookers present in order to avoid reservation in response.

<sup>5</sup> Contrary to 'genocide survivors', 'old caseload returnees' are Tutsis who were not living in Rwanda at the time of the genocide, but who themselves or whose parents or even their grandparents fled Rwanda after 1959 and returned to Rwanda after the RPF takeover in 1994.

<sup>6</sup> The *gacaca* is an ambitious transitional justice programme that takes the form of a modernized version of a longstanding grassroots dispute resolution mechanism. This programme operated nationwide between 2005 and 2012

imprisoned'. In Burundi the stratification was made across four Hutu and four Tutsi subgroups: Hutu 'never moved', Hutu 'repatriate', Hutu 'former prisoner', Hutu 'demobilized', Tutsi 'former displaced', Tutsi 'displaced', Tutsi 'demobilized soldier', and Tutsi 'never moved'. Table 1 gives an overview of the observations by ethnic subgroup.

*Third, the stories were structured by a ranking exercise in which the respondents were asked to systematically comment on political presentation and rank it on a scale of -5 to +5 for every year in their life story, starting with the first year of adulthood.* Figure 2 shows the 'ladder of life' used for the ranking exercise. Prior to the ranking, it was verified that respondents had a shared understanding of PR, '*Guhagarirwa*'. This inquiry revealed that PR is considered good if authorities are aware of the needs of the population and take care of those needs, and if they govern in an impartial way and prevent the suffering of any kind of injustice that remains unpunished.

*Fourth, when the ranking changed, respondents were asked to explain the change. These 'narratives of change' were systematically asked and coded for the more recent years, since 2000.* Each narrative of change could receive up to three codes. For instance, a Burundian Hutu woman aged 54 explains that her PR increased in 2005 because: 'we elected ourselves our representatives and the security increased'. This explanation received the codes 'elections' and 'peace/security'.<sup>7</sup>

*The fifth unique aspect of this life story database is that the respondents were revisited.* The first waves took place in 2007 in Rwanda, and 2008 in Burundi; the second waves took place in 2011<sup>8</sup> and 2015, respectively. In the second round of interviews, the respondents were asked to pick up their life story in 2000, so we have an overlapping period of life story years and coding of PR, namely 2000–07/08. This allows us to assess recall bias, one of the main threats to the quality of our data.

Figure 3 shows the data points for these overlapping periods, indicating that the gap between perceived PR for the overlapping period 2000–08, as recalled by our Burundian respondents in 2008 and 2015, is on average 0.17, while the gap for the period 2000–07 as recalled by our Rwandan respondents in 2007 and 2014, is 0.11. These are relatively small discrepancies, reducing concerns of large recall bias.

Besides recall bias, our data come with two more common challenges: attrition bias and social desirability bias. To investigate attrition bias, we compare the level of PR as reported in the first round across the dropouts (16.8 per cent of the Burundian sample and 12.5 per cent of the Rwandan sample) and the traced respondents. Figure 3 shows that the reported levels of PR by these two subsamples are not far apart, 0.14 units on average for Burundi for the period 1986–2008, and 0.07 units on average for the period 1989–2007 in the Rwandan case. In our baseline results, we rely on the subsample of the respondents that could be traced over time. Using instead the full unbalanced sample gives very similar results (not reported but available on request).

Finally, in the absence of incentives for responding truthfully, other motives may take the upper hand, most importantly social desirability. On the other hand, the reporting is imbedded in the respondent's life history, imposing a 'consistency constraint', namely the reported PR needs to be

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with the objective of judging alleged participants in the 1994 genocide. Over 11,000 courts processed 1,958,634 cases of alleged participation in the genocide (Clark 2010; Ingelaere 2016).

<sup>7</sup> A detailed discussion of the systematic coding of narratives of change and its results is beyond the scope of this paper and is, instead, left for future work on political representation in Rwanda and Burundi. In this paper, we restrict our focus to narratives of change that relate to female political representation.

<sup>8</sup> For the second round interviews in Rwanda, 38 respondents were interviewed in 2015 instead of 2011, because they were not available in 2011 (being in prison or in re-education camps or just visiting family).

compatible with other events in the life story and its PR-related narratives of change. While not completely ruling out biases, the use of a calendar approach through which event history data are collected has proven to be more reliable than ‘ordinary’ survey approaches (Belli et al. 2001).

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Level and nature of female political representation

Table 2 shows the share of women MPs in the Rwandan and Burundian parliaments. For both countries, it is clear that the timing of the new constitution coincided with a surge in women MPs. In 2005 the share of women in the Burundian parliament reached 30.5 per cent, compared to only 9.9 per cent in 1993, the last election year without a gender quota. In Rwanda, the share of female MPs jumped from 17.1 per cent in 1988 to 48.8 per cent in 2003. The fact that Rwanda reached well above 30 per cent is because, besides party list quotas of 30 per cent, Rwanda also had 24 reserved seats for women (out of a total of 80). So, women got a minimum of 30 per cent through the reserved seats and could add further seats by competing via party lists (Powley 2007). In the 2008 and 2013 election years, women MPs in Rwanda attained 56.2 per cent and 63.8 per cent, respectively, breaking records worldwide. Burundi has not been breaking records, but has consistently scored above 30 per cent, attaining 32.1 per cent in 2010 and 36.4 per cent in 2015. Unlike in 2005, when 12 women had to be co-opted to fulfil the quota rule, in these more recent years, no co-optation was required to pass the 30 per cent threshold (Inter-Parliamentary Union (n.d.c)).

Table 3 provides the number and share of women in cabinet positions, taking into consideration ministers and secretaries of state. It shows that, on average, prior to the introduction of quotas, this share stood at 10.2 per cent in Burundi (1996–2004) and at 10.0 per cent in Rwanda (1996–2002). After the introduction of quotas, it reached an average of 34.3 per cent in Burundi (2006–16) and 31.2 per cent in Rwanda (2004–16). Figure 4 sets out the share of women in cabinet positions over time (1996–2016), illustrating the upward trend and the clear surge just after the introduction of the quota system in 2003 for Rwanda and 2005 for Burundi.

Table 4 gives the number of cabinet positions by prestige, across gender and across the years 1996–2016. On average, women had a higher probability than men of ending up in low-prestige ministries that deal for instance with youth, culture, sports, tourism, and women’s affairs. For Burundi this probability was 43.1 per cent for women against 9.2 per cent for men; for Rwanda it was 36.5 per cent against 12.3 per cent. This gap has, however, narrowed with the arrival of more women. For Burundi, the gap shrunk from 57 percentage points prior to the quota policy to 10 percentage points after the policy, whereas for Rwanda it shrunk from 46 to 12 percentage points. The situation for high-prestige positions shows, instead, that men have a higher chance of occupying a high-prestige position, but here too the gap has declined over time.

Gender is just one aspect of social identity. Given the historically polarizing role of ethnicity in Burundi and Rwanda, any investigation of descriptive representation should also take ethnicity into account. Hence, we verify to what extent the ethnic make-up of the ministers and secretaries of state has evolved over time and to what extent it reflects the ethnic make-up of the population. Until the early 1990s, the Burundian government was largely Tutsi while the Rwandan government was largely Hutu, and ‘largely’ can be interpreted in both cases as holding about 85 per cent of positions (Lemarchand 1994). For Burundi, we find that Tutsis no longer dominated in the period 1996–2016, but reached a share of about 40 per cent, as specified in the constitution. Looking only at women, 41 per cent were Tutsi from the second half of the 1990s onwards. This share was well

above the 15 per cent population share of Tutsis, but constitutes a loss compared to the pre-war Tutsi power monopoly. In Rwanda, the Tutsi minority considerably increased its influence over the government after the military victory of the RPF. According to the 1996–2016 database, they account for 50 per cent of governmental positions. Looking only at women, we find a percentage of 48 per cent Tutsis for the period 1996–2016. These shares largely surpass the 15 per cent population share of Tutsis, and also signify a complete turnaround with respect to the pre-war period when Tutsis were politically marginalized.

If the ethnic content of descriptive representation plays a role in how people assess their representation, we expect that Hutus in Burundi and Tutsis in Rwanda report a relative increase in PR over time. If, in addition, gender identity plays a role, we would expect the largest increase in PR to be reported by Hutu women in Burundi and Tutsi women in Rwanda. To investigate the trend in perceived PR, we turn to the life stories of our 302 Burundian and 412 Rwandan respondents.

## 4.2 Change in perceived political representation

Figure 5A gives the perception of PR as reported by our Burundian respondents throughout their life story years. We focus on the years 1986–2015, set out on the horizontal axis. The year 1986 is a natural starting point in Burundi, as it is the last relatively peaceful year before the turbulent 1990s. The solid line represents the perception of women, the dashed line the one of men. For both women and men, there is a dip of PR in 1988, a year in which ethnic violence engulfed two northern communes and fear spread throughout the country (Chrétien et al. 1989). This dip was followed by a rather rapid recovery of PR until PR took a dive in 1993. The recovery in 1988–92 was probably due to a political process set in motion to reduce ethnic conflict in the country.<sup>9</sup> Eventually, however, the planned move to multipartism and ethnic power-sharing dramatically failed. In 1993, Melchior Ndadaye was elected as president. He was not only the first elected president of Burundi, he was also the first Hutu president. His reign only lasted a couple of months. He was killed by Tutsi elements in the army on 21 October 1993. The news of the assassination of president Ndadaye resulted in the killing of thousands of Tutsi civilians throughout the country. Retaliation by the army—still mono-ethnically Tutsi—followed. The army was accompanied by bands of Tutsi youths. Apart from tens of thousands of casualties, the episode resulted in thousands displaced and others seeking refuge outside Burundi. It is at this time that PR reached a low point. Thereafter, PR starts a gradual recovery process, to which we return below.

Figure 5B gives the perception of PR as reported throughout the life story years of Rwandan women (solid line) and men (dashed line) in our dataset. The natural starting point is 1989, the year before the start of the RPF invasion. This invasion in 1990 marks the beginning of a civil war between the RPF and the Rwandan government, and triggers a decline in PR. The Arusha peace accords of 1993 bring some stabilization in perceived PR, but also this move to multipartism fails and, after the shooting down of the plane that carried both the Rwandan and Burundian presidents in April 1994, Rwanda plunges into chaos. The genocide against Tutsis lasts for about 100 days and claims an estimated 500,000 to 800,000 Tutsi lives (Verpoorten 2005, 2012). Hutus unwilling to side with the extremists are also killed, and the civil war with the RPF continues to claim a high toll. In July 1994 the RPF puts an end to the genocide against Tutsis, and takes control of the country. PR reaches its low point in 1994, but then starts its recovery in 1995, despite the fact that

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<sup>9</sup> This process was kick-started by a broad-based ‘National Commission to Study the Question of National Unity’ that worked on the drafting of a new power-sharing constitution. The ‘Unity Charter’ was accepted in a referendum in February 1991. In the next referendum, the 1992 new constitution was accepted. During this whole process, however, violence and displacement continued.

reprisal killings take place, hundreds of thousands are imprisoned, and an insurgency and counter-insurgency war rage in the northwest.

Thus, the perceived PR of our Burundian respondents reaches a low in 1993, and then starts a recovery process, and PR in Rwanda recovers after an all-time low in 1994. In both countries the recovery trajectory of PR is characterized by a striking non-linearity, which suggests the importance of macro-level events and policies. The non-linearity is even more clearly born out in Figures 6A and 6B, where we focus on the recovery period and put changes in PR instead of levels on the vertical axis. The grey bars give the average movements for women and the black lines depict those for men. The figures reveal that, apart from the recovery of PR in the years immediately following its absolute low point, there are some clear peaks that stand out later on—most notably 2000 and 2005 for Burundi, and 2000 and 2003 for Rwanda. In Burundi, 2000 is the year of the signing of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. In Rwanda, 2000 marks the end of the insurgency war in the northwest and the start of a reconciliation and unity narrative in public discourse (Ingelaere and Verpoorten 2016). The peaks in 2005 and 2003 coincide with the years in which a new constitution was launched and the first national-level elections with gender quotas were held.

In our analysis of descriptive representation, we see that these gender quotas resulted in a surge of female MPs and ministers in both countries. Looking at our life story data, we note a concurrent increase of PR as reported by female respondents. However, for men there was also an increase in reported PR in these years. In Burundi, men reported an average increase of 0.79 in 2005 versus 0.51 for women. In Rwanda, the increases were very close to each other: 0.60 for men and 0.62 for women. One could argue that the impact of the gender quota was not immediately visible, and women only came to be aware of their increased descriptive representation once the female parliamentarians were effectively in place. However, in the year just following the elections, men indicate a higher increase in PR than women: 0.35 vs. 0.12 in Burundi, and 0.32 vs. 0.04 in Rwanda.

One could also argue that the perception of PR of our life story respondents is not so much influenced by the identity of national politicians, but relates more to the local administrators with whom they are in contact in their daily lives. In this case, the 2001 district-level elections in Rwanda may have had a larger impact than the new constitution with gender quota. In those local elections, about 30 per cent of seats were reserved for women at the cell, sector, and district levels of government. This led to an unprecedented increase in female representation in local government. However, we do not find that perceived PR for Rwandan women increased more than for Rwandan men in the years 2001–02. The year 1998 is another landmark year for Rwandan women because it saw the launch of the first elections of grassroots women’s structures and the passing of a law granting equal inheritance rights to daughters. However, as is evident from Figure 6B, in 1998, Rwandan women do not report a larger increase in PR than men. For the case of Burundi, little information exists regarding local implementation of gender quotas. A study (Simons et al. 2013) that focuses on the effects of power-sharing arrangements at the local level in Burundi—without discussing the gender dimension, however—suggests that the local level to a great extent mirrors national-level dynamics given the small size of the country and the historically centralized state structures.

We can establish this ‘non-result’ more formally, by estimating the following equation:

$$PPR_{it} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 year_t + \alpha_2(year_t * female_i) + \alpha_3(year_t * Tutsi_i) + \eta_i + \varepsilon_{it} \text{ (Eq. 1)}$$

where  $i$  indicates an individual respondent,  $t$  indicates a year in the period 1989–2011, PPR stands for perceived political representation,  $\eta_i$  are individual fixed effects, and  $\varepsilon_{it}$  is the error term. We control for the entire set of year dummies, and interact the year dummies with an indicator variable

for female and an indicator variable for belonging to the Tutsi ethnic group.<sup>10</sup> We estimate this equation separately for Burundi and Rwanda. Columns 1 and 3 in Table 5 give the results. Our ‘non-result’ is borne out by the estimates for  $\alpha_2$ , which indicate that in no single year did women experience a significantly higher surge in PR than men.

This ‘non-result’ begs the question of whether women’s perceived PR was not at all influenced by descriptive representation, or whether it was, but men’s perceived PR rose as well, for other reasons, thereby cancelling out the difference between women’s and men’s perceived PR. This is the tricky issue of the counterfactual: What would have happened in the absence of gender quotas? Would women’s perceived PR have risen by significantly less than men’s? While we cannot observe the counterfactual, we can verify whether, in their narratives, women referred to the gender quota, or to the increased female descriptive representation following from it.

To do so, we investigate the narratives of change in the life stories, i.e. the self-reported reasons that respondents gave to explain a change in their perceived PR. For Burundian women, we have a total of 89 narratives of change, of which 18 are in the election year 2005. For Rwanda, the respective numbers are 221 and 25.

Of the 18 Burundian women who gave a narrative of change to explain their change in PR in the election year 2005, only the following two mentioned the representation of women: ‘The president gave women the right to speak’ (Hutu woman, aged 51), and ‘We had a lot of competent authorities to represent us because even the women who used to fear our husbands were represented’ (Hutu woman, aged 61). Looking at the entire 2001–15 period, we find just one more such narrative out of a total of 89 narratives by women: ‘We the women received the right to be represented’ (Hutu woman, aged 61, on PR change in 2010).

In Rwanda, none of the 25 Rwandan women providing a narrative of change in the 2003 election year mentioned female descriptive representation. Studying all their 221 narratives for the 2001–11 period, we find only the following narrative that explicitly refers to the representation of women: ‘After the elections of authorities at the level of the *Umudugudu*, there is no longer corruption and we women are well represented’ (Hutu woman, aged 48, on PR change in 2005). However, six narratives of women explain their PR increase as a result of their own nomination. Here is one example: ‘I was well represented because I myself was *chefaine* of the village’ (Hutu woman, aged 54, on PR change in 2007).

In sum, very few narratives of change in PR make direct reference to a greater descriptive representation by women: one out of 221 for Rwanda (or seven when including those referring to own nominations), and three out of 89 for Burundi. We now explore possible reasons for the sparseness of such tangible traces in the life story data.

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<sup>10</sup> We control for the interaction term between year and ethnicity because ethnicity is an important confounding variable, and the share of Tutsis is higher for women than for men in our sample (because killings targeted Tutsi men especially, and because former combatants and imprisoned are mostly Hutu men).

## 5 Discussion

### 5.1 Authoritarian nature of the state

A first possible explanation for the lack of a considerable impact of gender quotas on perceived PR by women, is that citizens can hardly influence policy. Elections do take place, but—especially in Rwanda—they are ‘staged events with predetermined outcomes’ (Burnet 2011: 315). Since the show is run by a small elite in the executive, there is little or no accountability from the ‘elected’ (women) towards the citizens (Ingelaere and Verpoorten 2014). However, Figure 6 clearly shows that PR increased in the election years—2003 in Rwanda and 2005 in Burundi. Indeed, taking all respondents together, PR increased on average by 0.87 units in Rwanda (from 1.27 to 2.14) and by 1.59 units in Burundi (from 0.45 to 2.04).

What exactly is it about these elections that affects perceived PR? Among the narratives of the 18 Burundian women that reported a change in PR in 2005, the following six narratives mentioned the elections explicitly:

- (Hutu woman, aged 58) ‘We were having an elected president, we had peace, we were free’.
- (Hutu woman, aged 49) ‘The elected president brought us peace and security’.
- (Hutu woman, aged 57) ‘We were completely free after the presidential elections’.
- (Tutsi woman, aged 30) ‘After the election of the president I was well represented, I was in total peace’.
- (Tutsi woman, aged 48) ‘Because in this year they announced elections to me’.
- (Hutu woman, aged 54) ‘Because we had ourselves elected our representatives and the security had increased’.

These narratives in ‘partly free’ Burundi in 2005 mention the elections in association with peace and security, but also with freedom and the fact of having been able to freely choose their representatives.

Of the 25 Rwandan women providing a narrative of change for 2003, ten explicitly mentioned the elections as part of the reason for an increase in PR.<sup>11</sup> Looking closer at these narratives, we notice that they mention the elections in association with security, the consultation of the population, service delivery, anti-corruption, and upward accountability (from local-level administrators to higher-level administrators).

- (Hutu woman, aged 52) ‘Very reassuring election of the president. The authorities wanted the best for the people and consulted them’.

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<sup>11</sup> One woman mentioned the elections as part of the reason for a decline in political representation: (Tutsi, aged 54) ‘Segregation between the authorities. Especially the contradictions between the authorities according to whether one is *rescapé* [Tutsi survivor] or *non-rescapé*. The *dirigés* [those directed] lined up after a RP [*responsable* of administrative cell] according to subjective factors such as the belonging to *rescapé* or *non-rescapé*’.

- (Hutu woman, aged 57) ‘We elected our authorities and the security returned, if the authority committed errors it was punished’.
- (Tutsi woman, aged 62) ‘Election of the president of the republic and of the other authorities that can listen to the problems of people’.
- (Tutsi woman, aged 38) ‘After the elections the authorities had started to work on the development of the population and the maintenance of the roads and the health of the people’.
- (Hutu woman, aged 53) ‘We elected our president’.
- (Tutsi woman, aged 54) ‘After the presidential elections there was a big change’.
- (Tutsi woman, aged 74) ‘We elected our leaders who raised our awareness about development’.
- (Hutu woman, aged 51) ‘We elected the president. He gives us peace’.
- (Tutsi woman, aged 44) ‘Because there were elections, the authorities came closer to us’.
- (Hutu woman, aged 60) ‘After the presidential elections, things changed a bit’.

Thus, despite the authoritarian character of the Rwandan regime, and the staged nature of its elections, citizens do associate elections with increased representation. The narratives reveal that this result relates to some form of accountability, i.e. greater accountability of the local ‘elected’ towards the higher echelons of power (Ingelaere 2014). This upward nature of accountability could explain why elections matter but why, aside from own nominations, the gender identity of those elected does not seem to matter. After all, in a system of upward accountability, female local administrators and female legislators are led by the agenda of the higher echelons of power in the executive branch rather than by the preferences and needs of their constituents.

This explanation is, however, unsatisfactory for two reasons. First, the highest echelons of executive power in Rwanda very openly advocate for female empowerment. As mentioned above, from its very conception, the RPF has embraced women in leadership positions, and President Kagame constantly stresses the need for female empowerment. In this context, when the authoritarian leader himself is a ‘gender champion’,<sup>12</sup> upward chains of accountability do not necessarily rule out increased perceived PR by women. Second, the ‘authoritarian nature of the state’ as an explanation does not square with the relatively poor result of women’s PR in Burundi, compared to Rwanda. At the time of elections, Burundi was judged ‘partly free’, a label that is confirmed by the reference to ‘freedom’ in the Burundian life stories. While this relative freedom in Burundi is consistent with a larger increase in PR at election time in Burundi (1.59 units compared to 0.87 units in Rwanda), it fails to translate into a higher increase in PR as perceived by women than by men. Taken together, these facts make it difficult to consistently argue for the authoritarian nature of the regime as a reason for the non-result.

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<sup>12</sup> In July 2016 President Kagame received the gender champion award, issued by African Women Movements, a coalition of women’s groups on the continent (Muyagu 2016). In 2007, he received the African Gender Award (Munyaneza 2007).

## 5.2 Ethnic identity crowds out gender identity

In the previous section we concluded that the gender identity of representatives was rarely mentioned in the narratives of change. In contrast, ethnic identity was mentioned rather frequently. Focusing on women, we find that Rwandan women explicitly mentioned ethnicity in 17 out of their 221 narratives of PR change, and Burundian women did so in six out of 89 narratives. Here is one example for each of these samples:

- (Burundian Hutu woman, aged 54, 2001) ‘[because] our Hutu children also became soldiers whereas before the soldiers were all Tutsi, they said that a Hutu could not become a soldier’.
- (Rwandan Hutu woman, aged 60, 2011) ‘With the new election the authorities have not yet changed. Maybe they will change later on. It are the rescapés [Tutsi] that are well represented’.

The implicit mentioning of ethnicity was also rather common. For instance:

- (Burundian Tutsi woman, aged 61, 2005) ‘We started to be excluded by our current regime’.
- (Rwandan Hutu woman, aged 37, 2004) ‘The authorities received instructions to treat all people at the same level’.

Another way to illustrate that ethnic identity is more salient than gender identity is by plotting the evolution of perceived PR across gender as well as ethnicity. Figure 7 shows that, both for Rwanda and Burundi, the trajectories are more synchronized within ethnic groups than within gender. Put differently, the within-ethnicity correlation of PR movements is higher than its within-female correlation. For instance, for Rwanda, the correlation coefficient of the change in PR for Tutsi male and Tutsi female is 0.93, and that between Hutu male and Hutu female is 0.95, while the correlation of the series between Hutu female and Tutsi female is lower, at 0.79. For Burundi, we also obtain higher within-ethnicity correlations than within-female correlations, at 0.97 for within-Tutsi correlation and 0.92 for within-Hutu correlation, compared to 0.83 for within-female correlation. These correlation results indicate that perceived political representation is driven more by ethnic identity than by gender identity.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, for our sample of respondents, ethnicity is more salient than gender in matters of PR. This means that a Hutu woman will feel more represented by a Hutu man than by a Tutsi woman. But the dominance of ethnicity does not necessarily imply that gender becomes entirely irrelevant, i.e. that the Hutu woman will feel indifferent towards a Hutu female representative and a Hutu male representative.

We can imagine three different scenarios for the interaction of ethnicity and gender in shaping individual preferences. In the first scenario, ethnicity dominates, but does not crowd out gender. This means that an individual has preferences for both same-ethnicity and same-gender representatives. If this was the case, we should expect that women’s PR increases more than men’s PR, and is more prominently mentioned in the narratives of change. This does not appear to be supported by the life story data.

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<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, looking back at equation (1) we find that the estimated coefficients on the interaction terms  $year_t * Tutsi_i$ ,  $\alpha_3$ , is highly significant for several years for both Burundi and Rwanda, thus sharply contrasting with the insignificance of the estimated coefficients on the interaction terms  $year_t * female_i$  (see columns 1 and 3 of Table 5).

In the second scenario, ethnicity dominates, and nullifies gender, but only for the ‘other’ ethnic group. This means that there is a preference for same-gender representatives from one’s own ethnic group, while the gender of representatives from the other ethnic group does not play any role. In other words, the gender of the ‘other’ is overshadowed by ‘otherness’. To verify this scenario in the data, we focus in both Rwanda and Burundi on the ethnic group that gained power in the post-war transition, i.e. Hutu in Burundi and Tutsi in Rwanda. When restricting to these subsamples, our null-result remains: we do not find that Hutu women in Burundi (Tutsi women in Rwanda) reported a stronger increase in PR than Hutu men in Burundi (Tutsi men in Rwanda) at a time when their descriptive representation increased (see columns 2 and 4 of Table 5).

Finally, in the third scenario, ethnicity dominates and nullifies gender irrespective of the ethnic group. This means that there is only a strong preference for representatives from the same ethnicity and not for representatives from the same gender. In practice, this scenario cannot be distinguished from an alternative scenario in which, even in the absence of the confounding ethnicity factor, the gender identity of the political representatives does not matter at all. While it is impossible to test the likelihood of nullification over non-existence, it is possible to probe into the possible ‘other reasons’.

### 5.3 Policy responsiveness, social norms, and sociotropy

Another reason for the lack of a relatively larger increase in women’s perceived PR could be that this perception does not respond to descriptive female representation but, rather, to women’s substantive representation, or whether women experience policy responsiveness that noticeably changes their day-to-day lives for the better. When asked about their understanding of ‘*Gubagarirwa*’, our life story respondents indeed pointed towards substantive rather than descriptive representation.<sup>14</sup>

In Rwanda there have been several high-profile gender laws, most notably the 1998 inheritance law that granted equal inheritance rights to women and girls, and the 2008 gender-based violence (GBV) law that, among other things, outlawed domestic violence (Burnet 2011). There have also been various policies to protect the most vulnerable, who count a disproportionate share of women and female-headed households. These include, among others, the introduction of free primary education, subsidized public health insurance, and the ‘one cow one family’ (*girinka*) policy (Verpoorten 2014). In Burundi, no specific gender policies were introduced apart from the quota system, but President Nkurunziza launched policies of free primary education, and free health care for children under the age of five and pregnant women (Sommeiller and Wodon 2014; UNICEF 2008).

In the narratives of change of Rwandan women, we do not find references to land inheritance or GBV. The silence on GBV may be explained by its sensitive nature, but land conflicts are mentioned in several instances, just not in the context of inheritance. One reason could be that the feminist literature referred to in the introduction applies here: that social norms are sticky even when formal law changes.

Women did refer to policy issues, but then in areas that belong more to the public than to the private sphere, such as reconciliation, justice, rule of law and security, as well as free schooling and health care—two areas that are considered as especially important for girls and women. In Burundi, as many as 19 out of the 89 narratives referred to the peace accords, the resettlement (of refugees)

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<sup>14</sup> Of course, as suggested by John Stuart Mill (1861), theorized by Hanna Pitkin (1967), and empirically demonstrated by (Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005), these two forms of representation are likely to be related.

and reconciliation policies, to explain upward movement in PR. For instance, in 2003, a Tutsi woman, aged 43, mentions: ‘The Arusha accords were signed and a call was launched for the refugees to return home’. In Rwanda, we count 22 positive narratives on these themes. For instance, a Tutsi woman, aged 64, explains her positive PR movement in 2004 as follows: ‘The security was total. The authorities had mastered the situation. They worked well’.

Despite the introduction of free health care in Burundi, only the following narrative of a Burundian Hutu woman, aged 64 in 2010, refers to health policies: ‘I saw my grandchildren receiving free health care as well as pregnant mothers; I appreciated this’. In Rwanda, six women mentioned the health care policies as a reason for upward PR. For example, a 42-year-old woman mentions for 2008 that ‘I was happy because I received health insurance as an aid from the authorities’. Featuring high in the Rwandan narratives is the housing policy that includes moving people to *imudugudu* (small agglomerations) and obliges people to construct their roofs with modern building materials (Ingelaere 2014). As a driver of upward PR, it featured 11 times. But, with almost the same frequency, it was a reason for downward PR movements. To grasp the two sides of the coin, the following two narratives of women who did not change PR are illustrative: ‘Even though they destroyed my house, I am still contented because I was also given sheet metal’ (Hutu woman, aged 72, on PR level of 5 in 2010); ‘There is no problem even if last year they destroyed my house but it were the rules; it was my fault’ (Tutsi woman, aged 33, on PR level of 5 in 2011).

These narratives illustrate that many women make mention of policies as reasons for changes in PR, so substantive representation certainly plays a role in perceived PR. However, the policies referred to are mostly not exclusively female-friendly policies.

Men’s PR seems to be responsive to the same policies. For instance, four Burundian men mentioned the policy of free maternal care during pregnancy, and several more mentioned more support for the health care system in general. For instance, a Hutu man aged 43 narrates: ‘The new leaders have understood the problems of the population and they restored free health care and schooling’. Also in Rwanda, the policies that are mentioned as triggers for PR by men are very similar to the policies mentioned by women. One man even mentions equality between women and men as being among the reasons for his increase in PR. This Hutu man of 71 years explains: ‘The president of the republic has taken the lead to establish development programs such as *girinka* [one cow per poor family], and the equality between women and men’.

Thus, while some policies may clearly have a gendered aspect, such as Rwanda’s inheritance and GBV laws, many other policies that are women-friendly are also men- or family-friendly, and men respond equally positively in terms of perceived PR to these policies. In this sense, gender is not as potentially divisive as ethnicity and can be interpreted in the spirit of so-called ‘sociotropy’, or the idea that citizens—both male and female—care about the best representation for the well-being of the nation rather than their own (Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005). This is also the argument that has been used to advertise female empowerment to the Rwandan population, i.e. that the advancement of women benefits the entire society: it is good for men, their daughters, their mothers, and their wives, and it is good for peace (Uwineza and Pearson 2009).

Sociotropy has also been put forward in the broader literature on female political representation. For instance, in a dataset of 31 democracies, Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005) find that:

Men respond to the representation (or misrepresentation) of women almost identically as do women. Men’s confidence in the legislature is just as sensitive to the proportionality of the electoral system and to the proportion of women holding seats in the legislature. Far from undermining the integrated nature of women’s representation, this unexpected finding corroborates the feminist

argument that the promotion of women's rights inevitably advances the rights of men as well. (Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005: 425)

#### 5.4 Our data collection method and shifting expectations

The non-result can also flow from our data collection method. We used a semi-structured interview guide to collect the life histories. This means that respondents had considerable freedom to tell their story. The structuring device of the PR coding exercise was also left largely open, in the sense that we did not probe or suggest reasons for changes in PR. This lack of 'fishing' may explain why we do not find an effect of female descriptive representation on perceived PR. Put otherwise, while our method reveals that, for our Burundian and Rwandan respondents, female descriptive representation is not the first thing that comes to mind, it may play a role, in second or third lieu, or lie at the back of the mind, and only come to mind when suggested in some way (by researchers), or when asked for an exhaustive list of reasons for changes in PR.

But even then, i.e. when gender policies are explicitly mentioned, previous research indicates that the benefits mentioned point to symbolic rather than to substantive representation. In particular in ethnographic research, Burnet (2011) interviewed Rwandan women, asking explicitly about the impact of gender quota: *'What changes in Rwandan society or your daily life have resulted from the government's gender quota policy? 1) Anything else? 2) You mentioned many positive changes; have there been any negative changes? 3) You mentioned several negative changes; have there been any positive changes?'* (Burnet 2011: 307). Whereas she finds that gender quotas have shifted the social and cultural imagination on gender roles and on what women can achieve, she concludes that gender quotas have not increased perceptions of the government as a more democratic institution, nor have they affected substantive representation 'because increased formal representation has not transformed the governance style' (Burnet 2011: 331).

Finally, one could also argue that the non-result is inherent to the subjectivity of our measure of PR. Exposed to a public narrative on women's empowerment, the expectations and aspirations of women in our sample may have gradually shifted upward. No longer willing to settle for less, women may not express increased perceived political representation as long as these high expectations have not been met. As a result, any objective increase in female PR may not be recognized as such, because the public narrative on gender equality has left women longing for more. Although this is possible in theory, there is no indication in the life stories of these high expectations.

## 6 Conclusion

Rwanda holds the world record in share of female MPs, reaching 64 per cent in 2013. Burundi is also a good performer in women's descriptive political representation, with over 30 per cent female MPs. The share of female ministers is also consistently above 30 per cent and, while female ministers still disproportionately occupy lower-prestige cabinets, the gap with male ministers is closing. What does this surge in female descriptive representation mean for political representation as perceived by ordinary female citizens? We do not find a sizeable effect in our life story data.

The first and most obvious reason is that power lies with the executive elite, and increasing women in the legislative body or even in ministries may therefore have no actual impact. Second, ethnic identity may dominate the hearts and minds of people, and possibly crowd out gender identity. Third, it could be that an increase in female descriptive political representation yields no significant improvements for women because sticky social norms perpetuate the dominant gender roles.

The first explanation is not supported by our data. Despite the authoritarian character of the regime, elections do trigger an increase in perceived PR. In Rwanda, respondents appreciate how elections strengthen the upward chains of accountability that in turn keep lower-level corruption in check and guarantee some quality of service delivery. Given that the highest echelons of executive power in Rwanda have championed female empowerment, these upward chains of accountability should not stand in the way of increases in women's perceived PR. Burundian respondents stress that they chose freely in the elections. Yet, we do not find an effect of gender quotas on perceived PR by Burundian women, and—if anything—Rwandan women report a higher increase of PR relative to men.

We find that ethnic identity clearly matters more than gender. There is also a possibility that ethnic identity nullifies gender: even when controlling for ethnicity, and focusing on the ethnic group that increased its share in power, the gender quota does not seem to be a factor in perceived PR. While this could indicate that ethnicity fully crowds out gender, it could also be the case that gender does not matter for other reasons.

One such reason may be that there is no change in the day-to-day lives of women in particular. While the most high-profile gender policies are not mentioned, many narratives refer to everyday policies and attitudes of authorities. But the same policies that matter for women are also mentioned by men. In fact, in line with a sociotropic preference, men are appreciative of female-friendly policies.

These findings do not mean that gender quotas have not had any effect on ordinary women and men in Burundi and Rwanda. First, in line with the sociotropy argument, the effect on PR could be similar for women and men, which results in a failure to detect the effect in a comparison between men and women. Second, if not on perceived PR, gender quotas could have an effect on so-called 'symbolic representation' (Pitkin 1967),<sup>15</sup> i.e. it could change the norms and attitudes towards women through role-modelling.

That the mindset towards women and the place they occupy in the Rwandan 'cultural imagination' is changing is also argued by Burnet (2011: 303). Studying 'symbolic' representation, relying on an ethnographic method, Burnet (2011) finds that 'while Rwandan women have made few legislative gains, they have reaped other benefits, including increased respect from family and community members, enhanced capacity to speak and be heard in public forums, greater autonomy in decision making in the family, and increased access to education'.

There is also a more down-to-earth effect that emerged from our narratives, namely the effect on the individual lives of the numerous women nominated in the Rwandan local administration. On this topic, Burnet (2011: 305) writes: 'The top-down policies that brought large numbers of women into government improved women's career and economic opportunities, thereby improving social mobility among women. Because quotas apply to national, regional, and local levels, their impact has been broad and deep'.

While the many individual nominations of women have a direct impact in the short run, for a number of individuals, the symbolism that goes with this could plant the seed for a slow but more fundamental societal transformation. Maybe it is in this area that the true value of gender quotas lies.

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<sup>15</sup> Pitkin explains symbolic representation as 'the symbol's power to evoke feelings or attitudes' (Pitkin 1967: 97).

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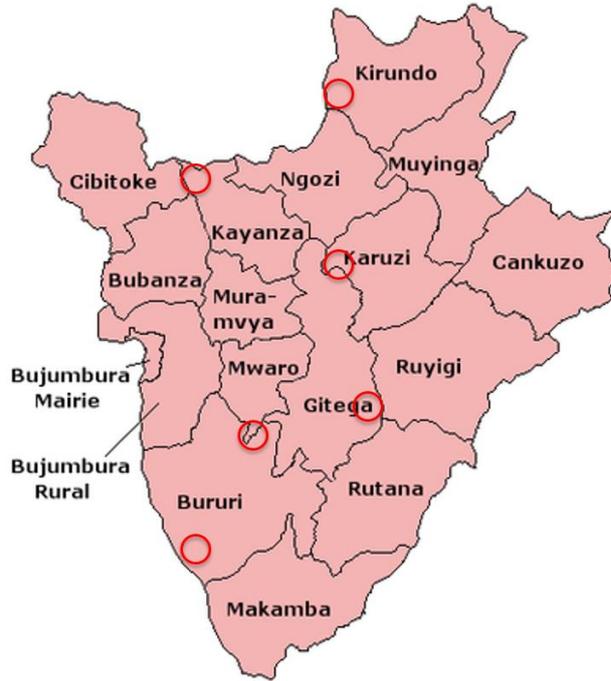
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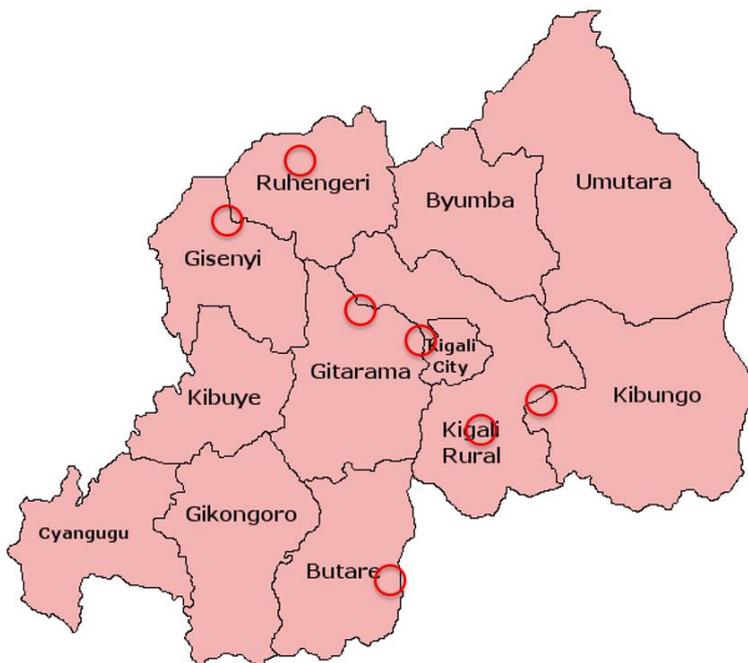
## Figures and tables

Figure 1: The location of research sites

### A. Burundi



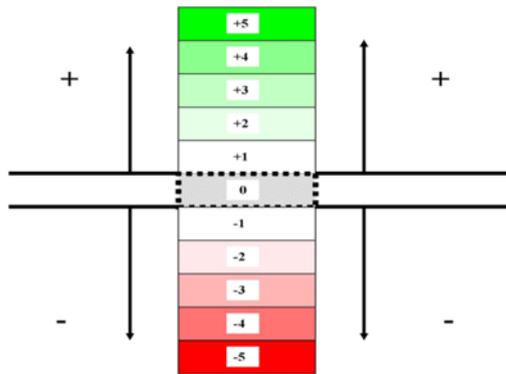
### B. Rwanda



Note: The locations correspond to small administrative sectors.

Source: Authors' compilation.

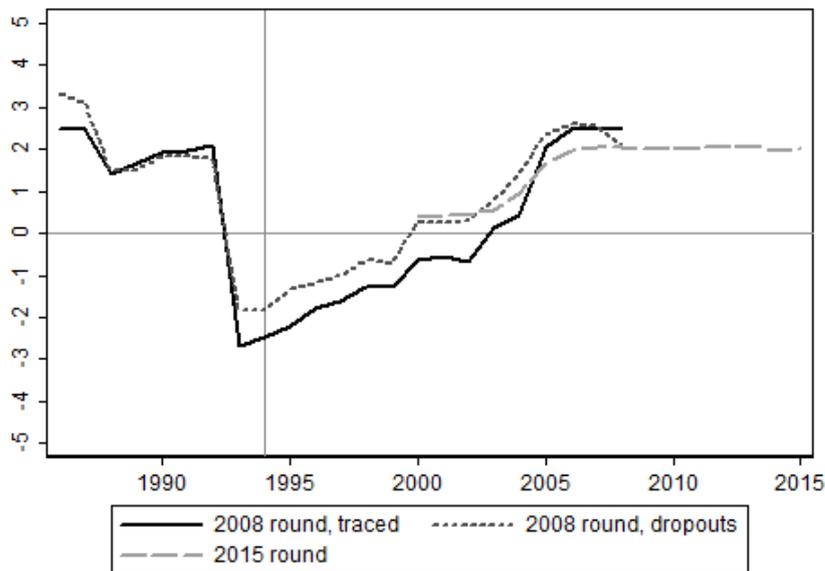
Figure 2: Ladder of life, on which respondents indicate their level of perceived political representation



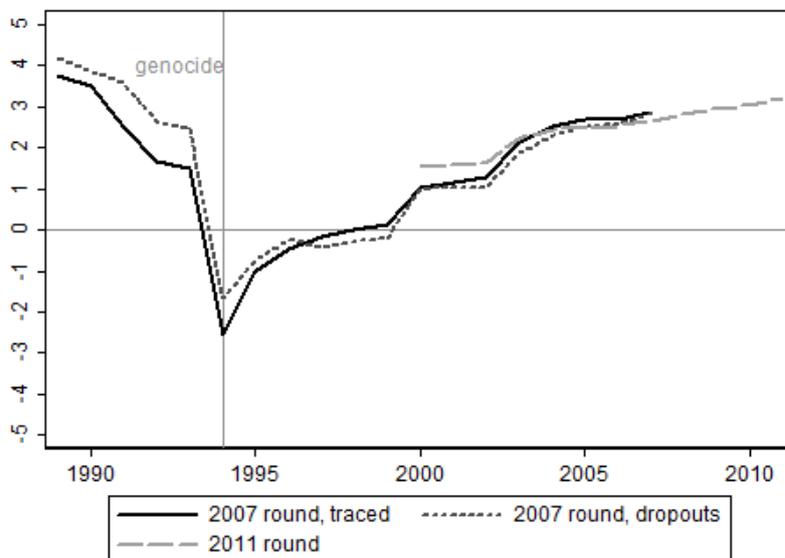
Source: Authors' interview guide.

Figure 3: Assessing average recall and attrition bias in self-reported political representation

A. Self-reported perceived political representation in Burundi, 1986–2015



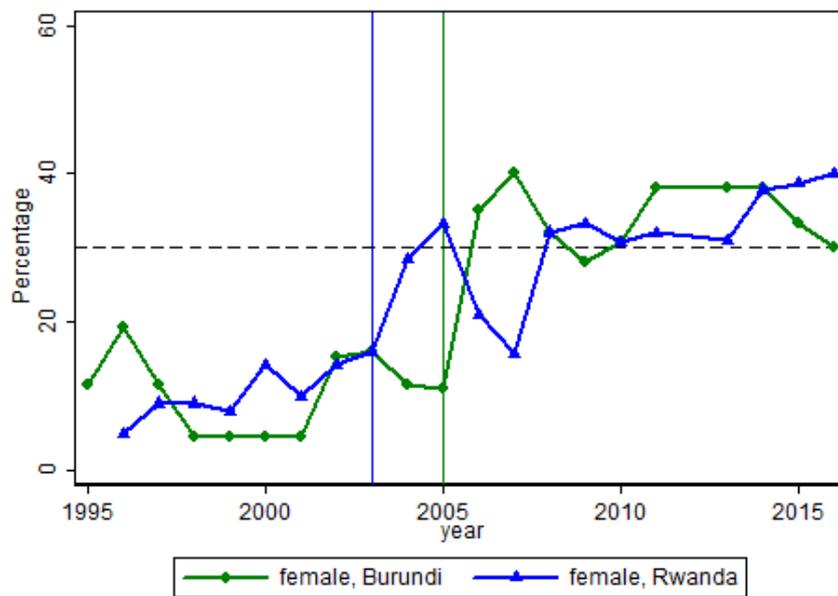
B. Self-reported perceived political representation in Rwanda, 1989–2011



Notes: The figures give the average levels of political representation as reported by respondents for each year in their life story. In the case of Burundi, the traced subsample includes 302 respondents; the sample of drop-outs includes 61 respondents. In the case of Rwanda, the traced subsample includes 412 respondents; the sample of drop-outs includes 59 respondents.

Source: Authors' compilation based on the life history dataset described in Section 3 of this paper.

Figure 4: Female ministers and secretaries of state, % of total

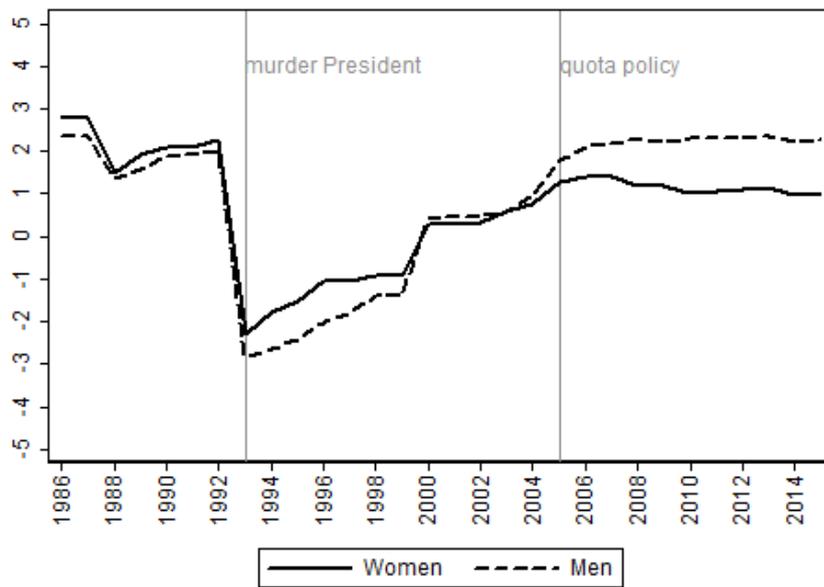


Notes: President, vice-presidents, cabinet directors, general directors, vice-ministers and secretaries general are omitted from the analysis. The y-scale represents the percentage of all ministerial positions and those of secretary of state occupied by women.

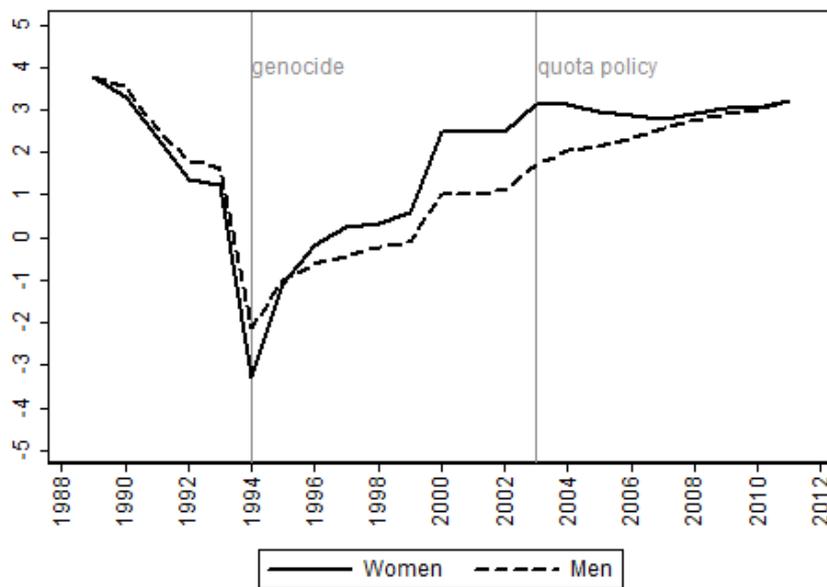
Source: Authors' compilation based on the life history dataset described in Section 3 of this paper.

Figure 5: Perceived political representation as reported in life stories, by gender

A. Burundi, 1986–2015



B. Rwanda, 1989–2011

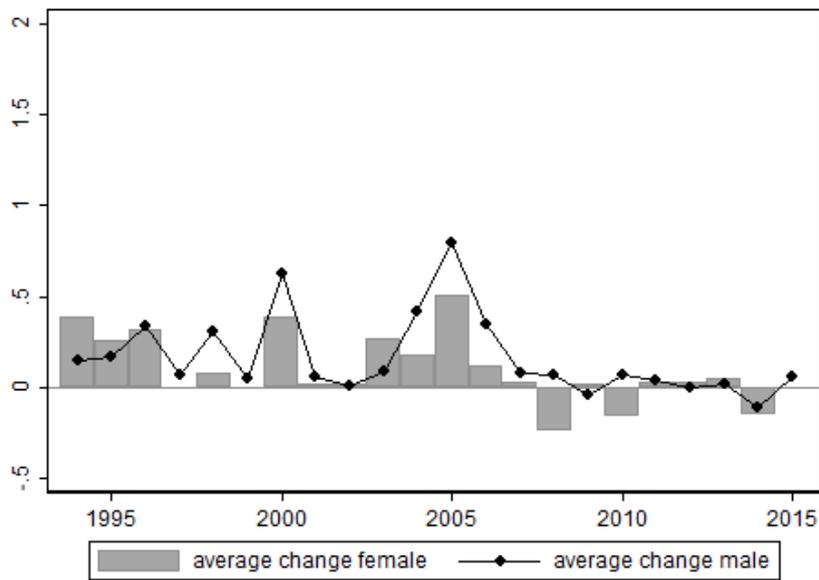


Notes: Based on the life story rankings of 302 traced Burundian respondents (235 men and 67 women) and 412 traced Rwandan respondents (260 men and 152 women).

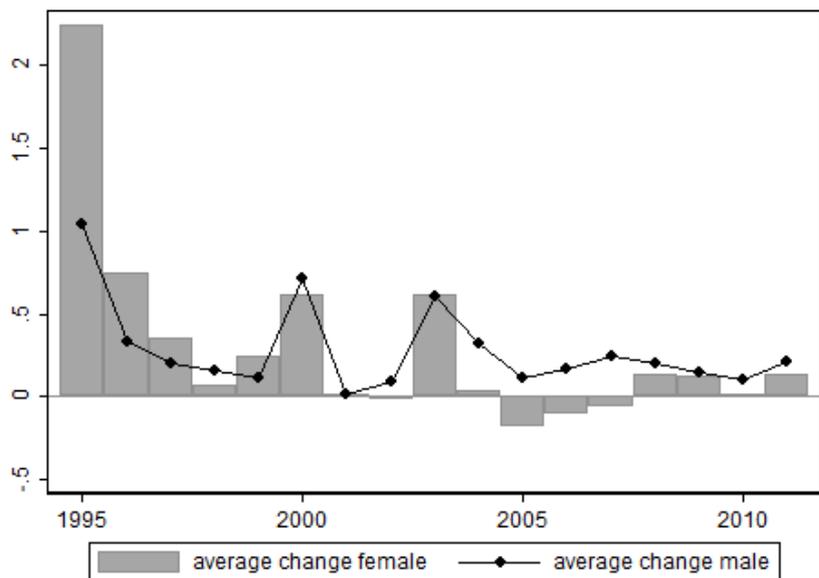
Source: Authors' compilation based on the life history dataset described in Section 3 of this paper.

Figure 6: Change in perceived political representation, for women and men

A. Burundi, 1994–2015



B. Rwanda, 1995–2011

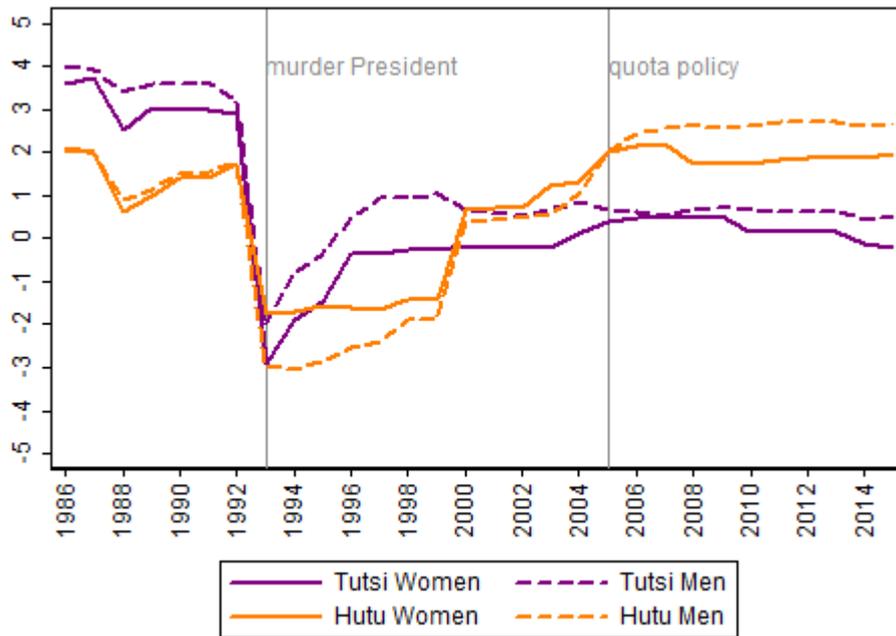


Notes: Based on the life story rankings of 302 traced Burundian respondents (235 men and 67 women) and 412 traced Rwandan respondents (260 men and 152 women).

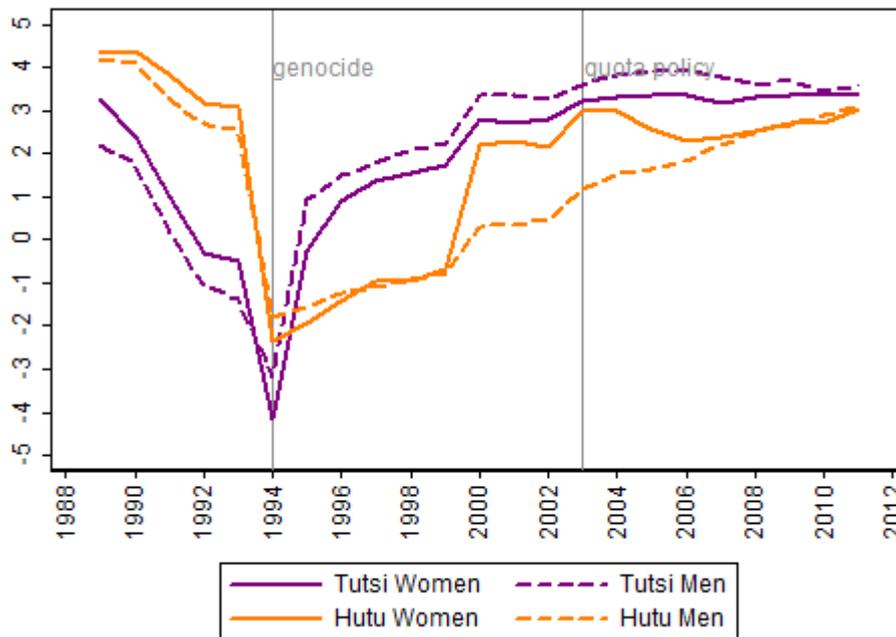
Source: Authors' compilation based on the life history dataset described in Section 3 of this paper.

Figure 7: Perceived political representation as reported in life stories, by gender and ethnicity

A. Burundi, 1994–2015



A. Rwanda, 1995–2011



Source: Authors' compilation based on the life history dataset described in Section 3 of this paper.

Table 1: Sample observations by gender and ethnic subcategory, and across interview rounds

A. Burundi							
	Round 1 (2008)			Round 2 (2015)			Attrition (%)
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Hutu never moved	127	30	157	110	27	137	12,7%
Hutu repatriate	47	11	58	34	10	44	24,1%
Hutu former prisoner	25	0	25	24	0	24	4,0%
Hutu demobilized	23	0	23	21	0	21	8,7%
Tutsi former displaced	11	5	16	8	3	11	31,3%
Tutsi displaced	20	22	42	13	18	31	26,2%
Tutsi demobilized soldier	9	0	9	9	0	9	0,0%
Tutsi never moved	23	10	33	16	9	25	24,2%
All respondents	285	78	363	235	67	302	16,8%

B. Rwanda							
	Round 1 (2007)			Round 2 (2011/14)			Attrition (%)
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Tutsi survivor	39	62	101	36	57	93	7,9%
Tutsi old-caseload returnee	27	26	53	23	22	45	15,1%
Hutu not accused / no prison	81	63	144	70	61	131	9,0%
Hutu accused in gacaca	86	13	99	66	12	78	21,2%
Hutu released prisoner	73	1	74	65	0	65	12,2%
All respondents	306	165	471	260	152	412	12,5%

Notes: Most of round two Rwanda interviews took place in 2011. Only 38 were conducted in 2015, with respondents who could not be interviewed in 2011.

Source: Authors' compilation based on the life history dataset described in Section 3 of this paper.

Table 2: Women MPs in Burundi and Rwanda

Year	Men	Women	Total	% Women
Burundi				
1993	73	8	81	.099
<b>2005</b>	82	36	118	.305
2010	72	34	106	.321
2015	77	44	121	.364
Rwanda				
1981	60	4	64	.063
1983	61	9	70	.129
1988	58	12	70	.171
<b>2003</b>	41	39	80	.488
2008	35	45	80	.562
2013	29	51	80	.638

Note: The years listed in the table are the election years for which PARLINE provides information on the Parliament's gender composition. The years in bold are when a new constitution with gender quotas was introduced.

Source: PARLINE database on national parliaments (Inter-Parliamentary Union n.d.b).

Table 3: Number and share of women in cabinet positions (ministers and secretaries of state)

Year	Burundi					Rwanda				
	Minister	Secretary of State	Total	Female	Female (% total)	Minister	Secretary of State	Total	Female	Female (% total)
1996	24	2	26	5	19,2%	20	0	20	1	5,0%
1997	24	2	26	3	11,5%	18	4	22	2	9,1%
1998	22	0	22	1	4,5%	17	5	22	2	9,1%
1999	22	0	22	1	4,5%	20	5	25	2	8,0%
2000	22	0	22	1	4,5%	17	4	21	3	14,3%
2001	22	0	22	1	4,5%	17	3	20	2	10,0%
2002	26	0	26	4	15,4%	17	4	21	3	14,3%
2003	25	0	25	4	16,0%	<b>17</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>16,0%</b>
2004	26	0	26	3	11,5%	18	10	28	8	28,6%
2005	<b>27</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11,1%</b>	18	9	27	9	33,3%
2006	20	0	20	7	35,0%	19	0	19	4	21,1%
2007	20	0	20	8	40,0%	19	0	19	3	15,8%
2008	18	7	25	8	32,0%	22	6	28	9	32,1%
2009	25	0	25	7	28,0%	23	4	27	9	33,3%
2010	26	0	26	8	30,8%	23	3	26	8	30,8%
2011	21	0	21	8	38,1%	21	4	25	8	32,0%
2013	21	0	21	8	38,1%	21	8	29	9	31,0%
2014	21	0	21	8	38,1%	21	8	29	11	37,9%
2015	21	0	21	7	33,3%	21	10	31	12	38,7%
2016	20	0	20	6	30,0%	21	9	30	12	40,0%
Average	22,7	0,6	23,2	5,1	22,3%	19,5	5,2	24,7	6,1	23,0%
- pre-quota	23,7	0,4	24,1	2,6	10,2%	18,0	3,6	21,6	2,1	10,0%
- post-quota	21,3	0,7	22,0	7,5	34,3%	20,6	5,9	26,5	8,5	31,2%

Note: As in Arriola and Johnson (2014), we consider not only ministers but also secretaries of state. The drop in the share of female cabinet positions in Rwanda in 2006 and 2007 is due to the fact that for those years information on secretaries of state is missing.

Source: Own compilation of dataset provided by De Roeck et al. (2016).

Table 4: Cabinet positions by prestige, across time and gender

Year	Sex	Burundi						Rwanda					
		Nr			%			Nr			%		
		low	medium	high	low	medium	high	low	medium	high	low	medium	high
1996	male	2	12	7	9,5%	57,1%	33,3%	2	11	6	10,5%	57,9%	31,6%
	female	1	3	1	20,0%	60,0%	20,0%	1	0	0	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%
1997	male	3	13	7	13,0%	56,5%	30,4%	1	12	7	5,0%	60,0%	35,0%
	female	0	2	1	0,0%	66,7%	33,3%	1	0	1	50,0%	0,0%	50,0%
1998	male	2	14	5	9,5%	66,7%	23,8%	1	11	8	5,0%	55,0%	40,0%
	female	1	0	0	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1	0	1	50,0%	0,0%	50,0%
1999	male	2	14	5	9,5%	66,7%	23,8%	1	12	10	4,3%	52,2%	43,5%
	female	1	0	0	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1	1	0	50,0%	50,0%	0,0%
2000	male	2	14	5	9,5%	66,7%	23,8%	1	9	8	5,6%	50,0%	44,4%
	female	1	0	0	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1	2	0	33,3%	66,7%	0,0%
2001	male	2	14	5	9,5%	66,7%	23,8%	1	9	8	5,6%	50,0%	44,4%
	female	1	0	0	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1	1	0	50,0%	50,0%	0,0%
2002	male	1	16	5	4,5%	72,7%	22,7%	1	9	8	5,6%	50,0%	44,4%
	female	2	2	0	50,0%	50,0%	0,0%	1	2	0	33,3%	66,7%	0,0%
2003	male	1	15	5	4,8%	71,4%	23,8%	1	12	8	4,8%	57,1%	38,1%
	female	2	2	0	50,0%	50,0%	0,0%	1	1	2	25,0%	25,0%	50,0%
2004	male	1	16	6	4,3%	69,6%	26,1%	2	10	8	10,0%	50,0%	40,0%
	female	2	1	0	66,7%	33,3%	0,0%	1	3	4	12,5%	37,5%	50,0%
2005	male	1	17	6	4,2%	70,8%	25,0%	2	9	7	11,1%	50,0%	38,9%
	female	2	1	0	66,7%	33,3%	0,0%	1	4	4	11,1%	44,4%	44,4%
2006	male	1	9	3	7,7%	69,2%	23,1%	3	6	6	20,0%	40,0%	40,0%
	female	2	3	2	28,6%	42,9%	28,6%	1	1	2	25,0%	25,0%	50,0%
2007	male	1	9	2	8,3%	75,0%	16,7%	3	6	7	18,8%	37,5%	43,8%
	female	2	3	3	25,0%	37,5%	37,5%	1	1	1	33,3%	33,3%	33,3%
2008	male	4	10	3	23,5%	58,8%	17,6%	4	8	7	21,1%	42,1%	36,8%
	female	1	5	2	12,5%	62,5%	25,0%	3	4	2	33,3%	44,4%	22,2%
2009	male	2	11	5	11,1%	61,1%	27,8%	4	7	7	22,2%	38,9%	38,9%
	female	2	4	1	28,6%	57,1%	14,3%	3	4	2	33,3%	44,4%	22,2%
2010	male	2	11	5	11,1%	61,1%	27,8%	5	7	6	27,8%	38,9%	33,3%
	female	2	5	1	25,0%	62,5%	12,5%	2	3	3	25,0%	37,5%	37,5%
2011	male	1	8	4	7,7%	61,5%	30,8%	4	7	6	23,5%	41,2%	35,3%
	female	2	4	2	25,0%	50,0%	25,0%	2	3	3	25,0%	37,5%	37,5%
2013	male	1	6	6	7,7%	46,2%	46,2%	4	9	7	20,0%	45,0%	35,0%
	female	2	6	0	25,0%	75,0%	0,0%	2	4	3	22,2%	44,4%	33,3%
2014	male	1	6	6	7,7%	46,2%	46,2%	2	9	7	11,1%	50,0%	38,9%
	female	2	6	0	25,0%	75,0%	0,0%	4	4	3	36,4%	36,4%	27,3%
2015	male	2	6	6	14,3%	42,9%	42,9%	1	10	8	5,3%	52,6%	42,1%
	female	1	6	0	14,3%	85,7%	0,0%	5	4	3	41,7%	33,3%	25,0%
2016	male	1	8	5	7,1%	57,1%	35,7%	1	4	6	9,1%	36,4%	54,5%
	female	0	5	1	0,0%	83,3%	16,7%	4	3	3	40,0%	30,0%	30,0%
Average	male	1,7	11,5	5,1	9,2%	62,2%	28,6%	2,2	8,9	7,3	12,3%	47,7%	40,0%
	female	1,5	2,9	0,7	43,1%	46,2%	10,6%	1,9	2,3	1,9	36,5%	35,3%	28,1%
-pre-quota	male	1,8	14,2	5,6	8,3%	66,0%	25,7%	1,1	10,4	7,9	5,9%	53,6%	40,5%
	female	1,2	1,1	0,2	65,2%	28,9%	5,9%	1,0	0,9	0,3	52,4%	33,3%	14,3%
-post-quota	male	1,6	8,4	4,5	10,6%	57,9%	31,5%	2,9	7,7	6,8	16,7%	43,5%	39,8%
	female	1,6	4,7	1,2	20,9%	63,2%	16,0%	2,4	3,2	2,8	28,2%	37,4%	34,4%

Notes: To define prestige, we relied on the classification scheme by De Roeck et al. (2016). The cells highlighted in grey indicate for which positions (low, medium, or high) the row percentage for women exceeds that for men—in other words, where the relative share of a certain level is higher for women than for men.

Source: Own compilation of dataset provided by De Roeck et al. (2016).

Table 5: Fixed-effects estimation of the determinants of perceived political representation

	Dependent variable: perceived political representation			
	Burundi		Rwanda	
	Total sample	Only Hutu	Total sample	Only Tutsi
female*year1990	-0.094	-0.127	-0.083	-0.526
female*year1991	-0.129	-0.171	0.200	-0.304
female*year1992	-0.026	-0.160	0.117	-0.396
female*year1993	0.578	1.094	0.209	-0.221
female*year1994	0.606	1.203*	-1.194***	-2.100***
female*year1995	0.521	1.143*	-1.166***	-2.341***
female*year1996	0.426	0.804	-0.802**	-1.710***
female*year1997	0.133	0.610	-0.541	-1.543**
female*year1998	-0.072	0.252	-0.704*	-1.688***
female*year1999	-0.126	0.207	-0.578	-1.636**
female*year2000	-0.091	0.016	0.460	-1.718***
female*year2001	-0.084	0.009	0.477	-1.748***
female*year2002	-0.059	-0.012	0.380	-1.604**
female*year2003	0.145	0.402	0.505	-1.483**
female*year2004	-0.056	0.017	0.229	-1.644***
female*year2005	-0.087	-0.276	-0.122	-1.674***
female*year2006	-0.217	-0.576	-0.402	-1.683***
female*year2007	-0.221	-0.636	-0.594	-1.750***
female*year2008	-0.598	-1.147*	-0.575	-1.449**
female*year2009	-0.558	-1.090	-0.585	-1.445**
female*year2010	-0.734	-1.173*	-0.608	-1.183*
female*year2011	-0.708	-1.154*	-0.607	-1.382**
Tutsi*year1990	-0.497		-0.626	
Tutsi*year1991	-0.515		-1.406***	
Tutsi*year1992	-1.094**		-2.070***	
Tutsi*year1993	-2.203***		-2.198***	
Tutsi*year1994	-0.998*		0.005	
Tutsi*year1995	-0.662		3.668***	
Tutsi*year1996	0.050		4.100***	
Tutsi*year1997	0.259		4.173***	
Tutsi*year1998	-0.064		4.334***	
Tutsi*year1999	-0.044		4.299***	
Tutsi*year2000	-2.450***		3.501***	
Tutsi*year2001	-2.623***		3.397***	
Tutsi*year2002	-2.675***		3.368***	
Tutsi*year2003	-2.769***		3.006***	
Tutsi*year2004	-2.896***		2.980***	
Tutsi*year2005	-3.821***		3.156***	
Tutsi*year2006	-4.174***		3.187***	
Tutsi*year2007	-4.334***		2.791***	
Tutsi*year2008	-4.092***		2.504***	
Tutsi*year2009	-4.026***		2.430***	
Tutsi*year2010	-4.219***		2.200***	
Tutsi*year2011	-4.347***		1.959***	
Constant	1.606***	1.040***	3.791***	2.779***
Individual fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	6753	5145	9373	3146
R-squared	0.363	0.398	0.383	0.388
Number of individuals	302	231	412	138

Standard errors omitted for reasons of presentation; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

We restrict the time period to 1989-2011; the year 1989 is the basecategory

Source: Authors' analysis of the life history dataset described in Section 3 of this paper.