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Section: Power and Representation (Fiona Buckley and Amy Alexander)

*Paper Title*

**Debunking a Myth: Are female "quota MEPs"  
less active?**

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*Abstract*

Gender quotas influence the parliamentary behavior of elected politicians. Several studies have explored how quotas interact with legislators' behavior (e.g., Murray 2012; Wang 2014), but hardly any of them shed light on its effect in the European Parliament. The European Parliament is especially interesting to study because quotas vary not only on the national but also on the party level. Besides the focus on this new parliamentary arena, the paper contributes to the literature in several ways: first, a novel, comprehensive dataset allows us to provide a descriptive overview of the type of gender quotas employed in European elections and their distribution across countries, party groups, and electoral systems. Second, a more theoretical contribution lies in the conceptualization of the impact of different types of gender quotas on parliamentary behavior. Based on a dataset of party level information, electoral rules, and individual behavioral data of all Members of European Parliament (MEPs) of the 7<sup>th</sup> legislative period, we explore the effects of gender quotas on different, more symbolic and more substantial, measures of parliamentary behavior. Our results debunk the myth that gender quotas deteriorate the quality political institutions by leading to the election of inferior (less active) (female) candidates.

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