

**Complications at the Intersection: Overcoming the Challenges of Cross-National Research
on Minority Women's Legislative Representation***

MELANIE M. HUGHES

PHD CANDIDATE

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

*A previous version of this paper was presented at the Section on "Intersectionality and Representation: Women of Color and the Path to Public Office" at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 30-September 2, 2007 in Chicago, IL. I thank Pamela Paxton for her comments on earlier drafts of this paper. I also gratefully acknowledge the support of the National Science Foundation, P.E.O. Sisterhood International, and the Coca-Cola Critical Difference for Women Program at Ohio State. To contact author: Melanie Hughes, Department of Sociology, The Ohio State University, 300 Bricker Hall, 190 North Oval Mall, Columbus, OH 43210-1353; hughes.919@osu.edu.

Complications at the Intersection: Overcoming the Challenges of Cross-National Research on Minority Women's Legislative Representation

ABSTRACT

In recent decades, scholars have successfully identified political, structural, and cultural factors that influence women's political representation across a wide range of countries. But feminist scholarship emphasizes that women are far from a monolithic group. Differences such as race, ethnicity, religion, and language not only impact women's identities and interests, but form intersecting social hierarchies that shape women's access to power. Yet even at a descriptive level, we do not understand how politics at the intersection of these identities impacts the legislative representation of minority women across different structural, political, and cultural contexts. In this paper, I investigate the conceptual and methodological challenges to collecting and analyzing data on minority women's representation worldwide. Identifying salient divisions across diverse societies, achieving comparability of cases, choosing measures and methods that capture the multiplicity of women's identities around the world, and finding reliable sources of data are just a few of the obstacles to overcome. I extend theories of intersectionality, which are often applied to qualitative, highly contextual research of individuals at the intersections of particular identities, to quantitative, macrostructural cross-national analysis. And to further shed light upon the complications of this research, I draw upon preliminary data from an ongoing project collecting cross-national information about minority women's legislative representation.

Complications at the Intersection: Overcoming the Challenges of Cross-National Research on Minority Women's Legislative Representation

In recent decades, scholars have successfully identified political, structural, and cultural factors that influence women's political representation across a wide range of countries (e.g., Kenworthy and Malami 1999; Norris and Inglehart 2001; Kunovich and Paxton 2005). But feminist scholarship emphasizes that women are far from a monolithic group. Differences such as class, race, ethnicity, religion, language, and sexuality not only impact women's identities and interests, but form intersecting social hierarchies that shape women's access to power (Collins 2000). Accordingly, women facing the double barrier of being both female and a minority may face more significant obstacles in politics than both their male and majority group counterparts.¹

Research suggests that minority women are "situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas" (Crenshaw 1994:99). Thus, if minority women are not politically represented, they risk further marginalization. If only women benefiting from the privilege of majority status are represented in the policymaking arena, policy interventions targeted towards women as a group may ineffectively serve the special needs of minority women. Similarly, if minority group rights are articulated by only male voices, the culture that is receiving protection or advancement may be anti-feminist (Okin 1999).² Taken together, these statements suggest the importance of ensuring that the political voices of minority women are heard.

¹ I adopt Gurr and Scarritt's (1989:380) definition of minorities as including "groups within larger politically-organized society whose members share a distinctive collective identity based on cultural and ascriptive traits recognized by them and by the larger society." Thus, across the world, "minorities" includes indigenous peoples; groups defined by common race, ethnicity, religion, caste, or language; as well as immigrants and their offspring. Individuals from groups that are numerical majorities in a population but face discrimination or marginalization are still included here under the umbrella term "minority."

² Even scholars that disagree with Okin (1999) –arguing that rights for disadvantaged or marginalized ethnic or religious groups should trump feminist concerns over women's rights—agree with Okin that minority women must have a political voice. For instance, Spinner-Halev (2001:113) argues that women from oppressed groups "must have a say in their own liberation."

Yet the political representation of minority women has received little empirical attention. Indeed, only a handful of studies in Western countries like the US and Canada have explored the dynamics of minority women's political representation (e.g., Black 2000; Smooth 2001; Bedolla, Tate, and Wong 2005; Fraga et al. 2005). Thus, across countries we have limited information about which women are gaining power, which women remain excluded, and why. Without comparative research scholars cannot understand how the intersecting identities of minority women influence their legislative representation across different political, structural, and cultural contexts.

Cross-national studies on minority women, however, face a slew of obstacles. Identifying relevant and comparable social divisions; collecting sensitive and sometimes highly contested data; and tackling problems of measurement are only a few of the barriers researchers must cross to study minority women across countries. In this paper, I focus on three general areas of concern. First, I consider challenges of sample selection. How do we identify "minorities" across countries? Second, I tackle problems of comparison, largely with a theoretical focus. To date, research on politics at the intersections of gender and minority status has focused on single groups or on multiple groups within a single country. But I argue that taking a comparative approach informs theories of intersectionality. Finally, I focus on problems of measurement and methodology. I argue that research on minority women's political representation cross-nationally requires both multi-level and multi-method analyses.

Throughout the paper, I provide concrete examples from newly collected data on minority women's legislative representation. Data sources include parliamentary websites, human rights reports, published case studies, local news sources, and communications with

foreign scholars.³ The data span more than 250 racial, ethnic, and religious groups in 75 countries around the world. Data from four of these countries—Lebanon, Bangladesh, Romania, and Burundi—are included in this paper. I also draw on scholarship in sociology, women’s studies and political science to identify obstacles to research on minority women’s political representation and to inform how scholars may overcome the impediments to this research.

Who are the Minorities?: Identifying Salient Divisions across Diverse Societies

A first challenge to research on minority women across countries is determining which groups should count as “minorities” in a given society.⁴ One clear obstacle is simply the magnitude of diversity that exists across the world. During the early 1990s, Fearon (2003) identified more than 822 distinct ethnic groups making up at least 1% of the population across 160 countries. The number of smaller groups is exponentially higher— Nietschmann (1987) estimates as many as 5,000 different communities worldwide that could claim to be “national peoples.” Papua New Guinea alone has more than 850 distinct indigenous groups, each making up less than 1% of the population. The racial, ethnic, religious, and linguistic composition of societies also differs widely from one country to the next, even for neighboring states. Given this diversity, it should come as no surprise that sources of data on minority groups disagree, focusing on different social cleavages and aggregating data in different ways.

³ I hired research assistants to collect information on the gender and minority status of national legislators in 14 languages (Arabic, Bulgarian, Dutch, French, German, Hindi, Kiswahili, Mandarin Chinese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, and Turkish). These assistants also helped to contact numerous country and regional experts at universities around the world.

⁴ The term “minority” is applied both to numerical minorities—groups that make up less than a majority of the populace—as well as disadvantaged groups—those that have experienced social, economic or political marginalization. In this project, I use the term minority to describe disadvantaged groups, except when qualified. For example, in some cases, I describe “advantaged minorities,” which make up a numerical minority, but have historically been socially, economically, and/or politically dominant.

Even if scholars could agree on an exhaustive list of distinct racial, ethno-linguistic, and religious groups that captures the diversity of populations across countries, not all social cleavages are equally relevant across time and space. In broad terms, some societies are largely organized along linguistic lines, while in other countries the most salient divisions are religious. In most countries, several axes of disadvantage contribute to the social and political marginalization of individuals. In a single country, the term “minority” could include indigenous peoples, racial minorities, as well as the descendents of specific immigrant populations.

Within these broad categorical distinctions, contextual factors determine which groups are considered “minorities.” For example, across much of the West, ethnic minority status is determined, in part, by patterns of immigration and the historical relationships between countries of residence and countries of origin (Bird 2004). The salience of ethnic and religious divisions also changes significantly across time. For instance, although Irish Catholic immigrants faced widespread discrimination in the United States during the 19th and early 20th centuries, contemporary research often includes the descendents of Irish Catholic immigrants as part of the English-speaking, Christian, Caucasian majority. Overall, conceptualizations of ethnicity remain rooted to specific geographic and historical contexts (Bird 2004).

A further problem identifying “minorities” is that group size does not necessarily translate to group advantage or marginalization. While most small groups can be considered “minorities,” some small groups are socially, economically, and/or politically dominant. Two well-known historical examples include whites of European descent in South Africa and Sunni Muslims in Iraq. In some countries, no single group constitutes a majority. If groups are equally sized, majority/minority dynamics can be even more difficult to determine.

Despite the obstacles to identifying salient social divisions across countries, there is a vast array of available data and research that can inform decisions about which groups are “minorities.” Encyclopedic sources such as the CIA World Factbook provide preliminary information about the racial, ethnic, and religious make-up of different countries. These sources also provide brief historical accounts of social upheaval or armed conflict that may indicate key societal fault lines. Human rights reporting has also increased dramatically in recent years. Thus, human rights reports published by the US Department of State, international organizations such as Amnesty International, and the United Nations define marginalized groups facing discrimination and other forms of abuse worldwide. A third source of information is case study and comparative research on social or political inequalities around the world. Research across a range of disciplines, including political science, sociology, anthropology, history, and linguistics, can inform decisions about which groups in a society could be classified as “minorities.” One particularly useful source of data is the Minorities at Risk project, which provides group-level data for disadvantaged groups across 115 countries.

In spite of a wide range of available data, identifying contextually-sensitive social divisions across societies remains no easy task. Below, I discuss the political representation of minority women in Lebanon, a case that demonstrates the challenges of identifying minority groups but also how these challenges may be overcome.

Example: Lebanon

Lebanon is politically organized along religious and sectarian lines under a system called confessionalism. Following the provisions of the Taif Agreement, which was negotiated to end decades of civil war in Lebanon, Christians and Muslims are each entitled to 50% of seats in the

country's National Assembly. Christian and Muslim sects also share political leadership: the President is a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister is Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the National Assembly is Shiite Muslim (US Department of State 2007a). In addition to these three sects, the government officially recognizes 15 other religious sects—11 Christian, 3 Muslim, and 1 Jewish—ranging in size from 5-6% to less than 1% of the population. However, the absolute and relative size of all religious groups in Lebanon is widely disputed. Due to political sensitivities, a national census has not been conducted since 1932, prior to Lebanese independence (US Department of State 2007b).

Maronite Christians, estimated to be the third largest sect in Lebanon, have historically been politically dominant (CIA Factbook 2007). France separated Lebanon from Syria in part to create a state in the Middle East with a dominant Christian majority, and Lebanon continues to have the largest population of Christians in the region. During French administration of Lebanon in the early 20th Century, Maronite Christians were allocated the majority of political positions, including the presidency and command over the military. Following the Taif Agreement, some of the political power afforded to Maronite Christians during French colonialism was shifted to Muslims. But Maronites continue to benefit from the constitutionally-guaranteed division of political positions.

Different Muslim sects have distinct political histories in Lebanon. During French colonization and the transition to nationhood, Sunni Muslims—the second largest sect in Lebanon—actively fought for resources and patronage. Thus, historically, leaders from the Maronite Christian and Sunni Muslim sects together formed the central governing structure of the country (Ajami 1986). Shiite Muslims, on the other hand, are numerically the largest of Lebanese religious sects, but historically, they have been marginalized. When Lebanon emerged

as a new country, “The Shia had long been impoverished, uneducated, isolated, and politically quiescent;” thus, “the Shia...were accorded almost no political relevance by leaders of the other sects” (Corstange 2001:11). Although Shiite Muslims fought for and gained greater representation over time, power-sharing in Lebanon today still reflects many of the social and institutional inequalities of yesterday.

Focusing on religious divisions alone may mask other important cleavages. For example, in addition to religious differences, several distinct ethnic groups are present in Lebanon, including Arabs, Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, Kurds, and Persians. But these groups are largely positioned in Lebanese society based on religion, rather than ethnicity. For example, Kurds in Lebanon are identified almost exclusively as Sunni Muslims. One exception to the dominance of sectarian divisions in Lebanon involves the Palestinian refugee population. In 2005, the UN Relief and Works Agency registered 402,582 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, approximately 10% of the country’s population. The vast majority of Palestinian refugees are Sunni Muslim, but they are denied citizenship and face numerous social and economic restrictions.

So, who are the “minorities” in Lebanon? Without regard to historical context, identifying the minority in Lebanon is quite difficult. Taking a cursory look at demographic data, it is clear that Muslims make up a majority of the country and the region. Thus, one could argue that Christians are the minority. Broken down by sect, however, no single group constitutes a majority of Lebanon’s population. Large sects such as the Maronites, Sunnis and Shi’a could be considered the majority, while smaller sects like the Druze and Protestants the minority. Once accounting for Lebanon’s history, however, neither of these initial options seems acceptable. Instead, Maronite Christians and non-Palestinian Sunni Muslims appear to be the

dominant groups, while all other religious sects, as well as Palestinian Sunni Muslims, could be classified as “minorities.”

Table 1 presents population estimates and political representation by religious group and by gender for Lebanon’s 2005 National Assembly. Because no official demographic data has been collected in Lebanon since 1932, I report the range of population estimates identified by different sources. Maronite Christians held the greatest share of seats of any sect, 27%, while Shia and Sunni groups each held about 21% of seats in the National Assembly. Overall, therefore, Shiite Muslims were underrepresented compared to their share of the population, while Sunnis and Maronite Christians were both slightly overrepresented. Some religious sects received no representation at all. Only 11 of the 18 officially recognized sects in Lebanon were elected to the National Assembly in 2005.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Only 6 women were elected to Lebanon’s National Assembly in 2005, just 4.7% of seats. Interestingly, all the women elected were members of the historically dominant groups. Four of the women elected were Maronite Christians, and two were Sunni Muslims. Neither Shiite Muslim women nor any women representing small Christian or Muslim sects were elected in 2005. The representation of both Muslim and Christian women in Lebanon suggests that broad religious differences alone cannot account for patterns of women’s political representation. Instead, the power structure in Lebanon appears to shape the demand for women from different sects. In a country in which women hold only a few seats, those seats are occupied by women from dominant groups.

But Can We Compare? Intersectionality in a Cross-National Framework

The distribution of political power in Lebanon suggests that research on women in politics may benefit from questioning essentialist notions of women's representation. Differences such as gender, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and sexuality not only affect the lived experiences of minority women, but combine to form intersecting social hierarchies that shape access to power (Collins 2000). These intersections create a "matrix of domination," through which individuals may experience both privilege and marginalization or experience multiple oppressions (Collins 2000).

Given the universality of intersecting social structures and identities, the theories and methods of the intersectional paradigm could apply to research across a broad range of disadvantaged groups (Bedolla 2007; Hancock 2007). Indeed, the multiple oppressions faced by minority women have long been articulated by feminists worldwide. Terms such as "double burden," "double whammy," "double jeopardy," and "double minority" are not limited to the American context (Black 2000:147). The concept of multiple oppressions has even been integrated into United Nations resolutions on human rights (Yuval-Davis 2006).⁵

But to date, research on intersectionality in electoral politics has largely been limited to studies in the United States and other Western industrialized countries (Takash 1993; Black 2000, Smooth 2001; Bedolla, Tate, and Wong 2005; Estherchild and King 2006; Scola 2006).⁶ Furthermore, existing research often focuses on a single group, such as Black women, Latinas, or

⁵ For example, in a 2002 resolution on the human rights of women, the United Nations, "recognized the importance of examining the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination, including their root causes from a gender perspective" (Resolution E/CN.4/2002/L.59; cited from Yuval-Davis 2006:194).

⁶ Research on minority women has covered a range of topics, including minority women's attitudes and opinions (Mansbridge and Tate 1992; Montoya 1996; Gay and Tate 1998; Bird 2001; Simien 2006), political activism (Hardy-Fanta 1993; Prindeville and Bretting 1998; Springer 1999; Simpson 2007), representation in state and national legislatures (Takash 1993; Black 2000; Bedolla, Tate, and Wong 2005; Estherchild and King 2006; Scola 2006), and legislative behavior or influence (Barrett 1995; Smooth 2001, 2006; Hawkesworth 2003; Fraga et al. 2005; Orey et al. 2006).

Native American women (e.g., Smooth 2006; Fraga et al. 2005; Prindeville and Bretting 1998). As Jordan-Zachery (2007:261) argues, “The context of the lived experience of black women, or any other marginalized group, provides us with a deeper understanding of both structural and political intersectionality.”

Although existing intersectionality research often focuses on the political experiences of a singular group of minority women, much of this research is comparative, looking for similarities and differences across interstices within marginalized groups. For example, Montoya (2000) compares the rates of political participation for bilingual and Spanish-speaking Latinas and Latinos of different nationalities in the United States, elucidating intersections of nationality, ethnicity, language and gender. Some intersectional research draws comparisons across distinct minority groups or across majority-minority divides. Black (2000), for example, explores the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, and gender by comparing the characteristics of “visible minority” women to majority groups in Canadian electoral politics.

In addition to drawing comparisons within and across minority groups, some intersectional research is comparative across place. For instance, Smooth and her colleagues investigate the legislative influence of African American women across state legislatures (Smooth 2001, 2006; Orey et al. 2006). This research finds that contextual factors that vary across states, such as the level of professionalization of a legislature, shape how race and gender intersect to affect Black women’s legislative influence (Smooth 2006). To date, however, research adopting an intersectional paradigm does not compare across national borders.

The prospect of intersectionality research across countries raises a number of concerns. How can we compare, for example, the experiences of Tutsi women in Rwanda to the experiences of Maori women in New Zealand? Does studying Arab women in Israel have

anything to teach us about the experiences of Kurdish women in Turkey or Hindu women in Bangladesh? Cross-national analyses of intersectionality may not help to elucidate the multidimensionality of minority women's identities or lived experiences. But comparing the above groups may contribute to understanding how structural and institutional factors shape political outcomes for individuals with intersectional identities. As S. Laurel Weldon (2006:236) explains, "comparative analysis is key to illuminating the range of variation in structures of gender, race, class, and other axes of domination, the ways these structures interact, and the wide array of strategies for resistance and reform."

Cross-national research may be especially useful for research on "political intersectionality." This research demonstrates how political "strategies on one axis of inequality are mostly not neutral towards other axes" (Verloo 2006:213). In other words, a policy or strategy designed to remedy one social inequality may exacerbate inequalities along another dimension. Across countries, policies designed to address gender and ethnic inequalities in national legislatures are grounded in different logics and take on different forms (Htun 2004; Krook and OBrien 2007). But research has not yet examined how the adoption of these policies affects individuals at the intersection. To explore how cross-national analyses may inform political intersectionality, I discuss institutional policies and minority women's political representation across three very different countries: Bangladesh, Romania, and Burundi.

Example: Bangladesh, Romania, and Burundi

Overall, Bangladesh, Romania, and Burundi appear to have little in common. Located on separate continents, Bangladesh, Romania, and Burundi range widely in population size and demographic composition. The majority of Bangladeshi citizens are Sunni Muslims, most

Romanians are Christian Orthodox, and in Burundi, Catholicism is the dominant religion.

Romania's economy, though battling corruption and disinflation, has a GDP per capita three times higher than Bangladesh and more than 13 times higher than Burundi (CIA Factbook 2007).

Politically, Bangladesh, Romania, and Burundi could not be more different. Following decades of communist rule, Romania today is a stable democracy with close ties to the West, joining both NATO and the EU in the last few years. Bangladesh, on the other hand, has had experienced only interrupted periods of democratic rule, peppered by coups and martial law. Burundi's first democratically elected president was assassinated in the early 1990s, resulting in a 12-year civil war fought along ethnic lines. After international parties helped to negotiate a ceasefire in 2003, Burundi held regular elections in 2005. Table 2 compares the three countries using broad indicators of cultural, economic, and political difference. The table also includes each country's policies regarding the political representation of women and minority groups.

As Table 2 indicates, Bangladesh, Romania, and Burundi have adopted different institutional rules governing the incorporation of women and minority groups. All three countries have some sort of rules facilitating women's inclusion. Bangladesh and Burundi both have reserved seat quotas that allocate a certain percentage of parliamentary seats to women: 13% in Bangladesh and 30% in Burundi (IDEA 2007). Romania does not reserve seats for women, but all political parties are required to include women on party lists. Further, in 2004, the largest political coalition in Romania, the Social Democrats, began requiring that at least 30% of its candidates be women. Across the three countries, women's political representation is the highest in Burundi (31%), followed by Bangladesh (15%), and then Romania (11%).

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Only Burundi and Romania have formal rules regarding the representation of minority groups. Burundi mandates a 60%-40% majority-minority split, in addition to reserving three seats for the Twa, or pygmies. All political parties compete for 101 seats, but following the elections additional members are co-opted to ensure that the quotas are met. In 2005, for example, 18 additional seats were co-opted after the election. In Romania, if a minority ethnic group's political organization does not receive 5% of votes, the threshold required to earn seats outright, the ethnic group is still afforded a representative in parliament (US Department of State 2007). Bangladesh, by contrast, has adopted no formal mechanisms to facilitate the representation of minority groups.

Despite broad historical, political, and socio-demographic differences, Bangladesh, Romania, and Burundi have similar majority/minority structures. All three countries have a dominant majority group that makes up 80-90% of the country's population (Muslim Bengalis, ethnic Romanians, and Hutus), as well as a significantly sized minority group that makes up at least 5% of the population (Hindu Bengalis, ethnic Hungarians, and Tutsis). Each of the countries also has one or more small minority groups. Table 3 presents data on the principal religious and ethnic cleavages in each country, sorted by population size.

Table 3 also summarizes political representation by gender, ethnicity, and religion for Bangladesh, Romania, and Burundi. These statistics suggest that policies on the political representation of women and minority groups intersect to shape the political outcomes of minority women. First, in Bangladesh, Hindus are significantly underrepresented compared to their share of the population. While approximately 16% of Bengalis are Hindu, they hold only 1.7% of seats. When Bangladesh adopted a quota to increase women's numbers, Hindu women did not benefit from the measure. The case of Bangladesh suggests that the adoption of gender

quotas without regard to ethnic and religious differences may contribute to the exclusion of minority women.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Romania, unlike Bangladesh, adopted policies to facilitate the political representation of both women and minorities. But again, these rules combine in ways that do not advance the political representation of minority women. The Hungarian minority is politically organized as the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) and in 2005, the party reached the 5% threshold required to achieve representation in the legislature. In the absence of a national-level gender quota, however, UDMR included no women in winnable positions on its party list. So, of the 22 seats occupied by the Hungarian minority, not a single seat is held by a woman. Unlike the Hungarian minority, the Social Democratic Roma Party did not reach the 5% threshold. Since the Roma make up about 2.5% of the population, the provision of a single seat means that the Roma are underrepresented in the Romanian parliament. Further, the single Roma seat is occupied by a man. So, again, minority women in Romania are excluded.

Two minority women were elected to the national legislature through the rule promoting minority representation—1 Albanian woman and 1 Macedonian woman. Thus, of the 17 seats allocated to small minority groups (<1% of the population), 12% went to women. But it is unclear how to evaluate the representation of these small groups. For example, Albanians make up less than 0.001% of Romania's population. Overall, the combination of gender and ethnic provisions in Romania does not advance the political representation of women from the country's two significant minority populations—the Hungarians and the Roma.

Like Romania, Burundi regulates the political representation of women and minority groups. Unlike Romania, however, Burundi balances both gender and ethnicity through the

same mechanism: co-opting seats. Because Tutsi or Twa women can meet both the ethnic and gender requirement while filling only a single seat, the combination of ethnic and gender quotas has increased their political numbers. In fact, of the female members of Burundi's National Assembly, 57% are minorities (Tutsi or Twa). Further, of the 18 co-opted positions, more than half are minority women.⁷ In this context, the dual identities of minority women benefit them politically.

Including more minority women ensures that the greatest number of majority group males continue to hold seats in the legislature (Paxton and Hughes 2007). However, the greater participation of Tutsi and Twa women has meant that Hutu women are underrepresented. Hutu women make up over 40% of the population, but they only hold 14% of the seats in the Assembly. The case of Burundi challenges the assumption that when women enter national politics, they will always predominantly be members of dominant racial, ethnic, or religious groups. Where similar provisions regulating gender and ethnicity exist together, women from minority groups may benefit.

In sum, Bangladesh, Romania, and Burundi are different along an infinite number of dimensions. But comparing the effects of different policies regarding the political incorporation of women and minority groups improves our understanding of intersectionality. Bangladesh and Romania both demonstrate that the different logics and structures of gender and ethnic quotas can leave minority women behind. But, Burundi also shows that the multiplicity of minority women's identities may provide them with strategic advantages in certain contexts (see Fraga et al. 2005 for examples of "strategic intersectionality" in the American context).

⁷ Of the 101 elected positions, 11 (11%) female minorities and 24 (24%) male minorities were elected; 13 (13%) were females from the majority ethnic group, and 52 (51%) were males from the majority ethnic group. Of the 18 co-opted positions, 10 (55%) were female minorities, 4 (22%) were male minorities, 3 (17%) were females from the majority ethnic group, and 1 (6%) was a male from the majority ethnic group.

Intersectionality, Measurement and Methodology

In addition to the theoretical and conceptual challenges of identifying relevant and comparable interstices, cross-national research on minority women faces numerous methodological challenges. The cases presented thus far illustrate several of these obstacles. Lebanon, for instance, has no recent official statistics on the sizes of majority and minority groups. But most quantitative research investigating the political representation of multiple minority groups in a legislature assesses descriptive representation, or the degree to which the legislature matches the gender and racial/ethnic composition of the population (e.g., Pantoja and Segura 2003; Hardy-Fanta 2006). Without accurate population data, it is difficult to quantify overrepresentation or underrepresentation.

Collecting accurate and consistent population data faces numerous challenges. As observed in Lebanon, some governments may not collect data on race or ethnicity, or even outlaw the identification of individuals by ethnicity altogether (e.g., France). Even in countries with a regular and sophisticated population census, individuals from some groups are difficult to identify. Across Europe, for example, Romani populations are often underestimated in official statistics (Vermeersch 2003). In Austria, statistics on minorities are difficult to obtain because almost all of the country's citizens identify as "Austrian" (US Department of State 2007). In other cases, census data are quickly outdated by the differential fertility rates of majority and minority groups.

Romania also raises the question of how to assess the political representation of small minority groups. Research on minority groups often focuses only on groups that comprise more than 1% of a country's population (e.g., Fearon 2003). How, then, should we assess the political representation of small minorities? For instance, Romania distributed 17 seats across small

minority groups. But if only small groups that gain political representation are included in analyses, selection bias may distort results. Further, if all small minority groups are aggregated into a generic “other category,” meaningful group-level variation may be lost.

Along these lines, differences in the collection and aggregation of population data may also create considerable gaps between concepts and measures. In some cases, for example, statistics may be available regarding the number of “foreign-born” individuals, but discrimination against these individuals varies by national origin. Or, data may be available regarding the percentage of the population that is Muslim, Hindu, and Christian, but conflicts largely arise between members of different sects within the same religious tradition. In other cases, highly specific and disaggregated data may be available. But because single individuals may cross multiple categories of difference, disaggregated data may not combine in straightforward ways.

In addition to these measurement problems, intersectionality research is often critical of methodological designs that do not capture the *mutually constructed* nature of intersectional identities. For example, in the case of African American women, Mansbridge and Tate (1992:488) argue that race and gender cannot be understood separately; instead, “race constructs the way Black women experience gender; gender constructs the way Black women experience race.” Methodological techniques that separate out the effects of race and gender, or that simply add these effects together, are theoretically inappropriate for the study of political intersectionality (Crenshaw 1994). Scholars, therefore, employ a range of innovative and mixed-method approaches to understand the experiences of minority women (Simien 2007).

Below, I address these measurement and methodological concerns not by presenting country examples, but by describing possible research strategies. I explore how using a multi-

level approach can best mediate the complexities of political research at the intersections of gender and minority status.

Example: A Multi-Level Research Design

Summary measures of minority women's parliamentary representation at the national level can be difficult to construct. The percent of legislative seats held by minority women will vary considerably by the structure of majority-minority divisions. Differences in how data are collected and aggregated complicate the production of a uniform and comparable measure of "descriptive representation" across countries. Furthermore, a summary measure of descriptive representation across states does not generate leverage over questions of intersectionality. Therefore, in contrast to existing studies of women's representation across countries, I argue that the legislative outcomes of minority women are likely better explained by multi-level quantitative techniques.

Analyzing the representation of women within groups, nested within countries, has numerous methodological advantages. For example, by modeling women's representation by group, measurement error in population statistics is not built into the dependent variable. Models may be estimated with missing population data, or researchers can use auxiliary analyses to test for the sensitivity of models to changes in population estimates.

Theoretically, current research suggests that cultural, structural, and political factors influence the percentage of women elected to a national legislature (e.g., Paxton 1997; Kenworthy and Malami 1999). But when moving to analyses of minority women, it is important to acknowledge variation in these factors at both the country and group level. For example, national-level ethnic quotas may not reserve seats for all minority groups in a country,

suggesting that group-level measures of such policies may be more appropriate. But some ethnic provisions, like those in Romania, are more appropriately modeled at the country level.

When considering the political representation of minority women, existing theories of women's representation are inadequate. Research suggests that for oppressed groups, minority status may matter more politically than gender. As Htun (2004) argues regarding ethnicity, "In countries where it is mobilized, ethnicity is a central, if not *the* central principle of political behavior; gender, though occasionally a consideration, almost never defines how individuals vote and what parties they affiliate with." Similarly, in the United States, intersectionality research tends to agree that "race trumps gender" (Mansbridge and Tate 1992; Philpot and Walton 2007). Thus, various new group-level measures such as minority group size, group type (e.g., indigenous, religious), and indicators of social or economic marginalization could be important predictors of minority women's legislative outcomes.

We can also consider how quantitative models may be able to capture political and strategic intersectionality. As demonstrated by Burundi, the combination of national-level gender and ethnic quotas may strategically advantage minority women. Other countries also follow this pattern. In Tanzania, for example, simultaneous quotas for women and Zanzibaris ensure that a full 40% of Zanzibaris in the Tanzanian parliament are women. Still, whether these cases are generalizable to cases outside of sub-Saharan Africa remains an open question.

Table 4 provides a generalized example of what a multi-level model predicting the election of minority women might include. Of course, the factors theorized in Table 4 as predictive of minority women's legislative representation are far from an exhaustive list. For instance, the Minorities at Risk (MAR) project provides a range of group-level quantitative measures of collective mobilization and group disadvantage that can be used to analyze how

gender and minority status intersect in the political arena. Further, multi-level modeling techniques allow for interactions across levels. Thus, future research could explicitly test how country- and group-level factors interact to shape the political representation of minority women.

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Conclusions

Today, researchers are unaware, at even a descriptive level, of how the intersecting identities of minority women influence their legislative representation across different political, structural, and cultural contexts. Investigating politics at the intersection of gender and minority status across countries faces many challenges. But in this paper, I have demonstrated that many of the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological complications of this research can be addressed. First, I argued that by taking contextual factors into account, it is possible to identify salient social divisions across societies and to define a set of disadvantaged or “minority” groups. The case of Lebanon shows that numerical size is not necessarily the best way to determine minority status. Instead, researching historical and contemporary social and political inequalities across countries informs how to interpret the representation of women from different ethnic or religious groups.

I also maintain that theories of intersectionality would benefit from drawing comparisons across countries. Existing intersectional research that compares minority women’s political representation across US states shows how contextual factors shape politics at the intersection of gender and minority status (Smooth 2006). Despite the complexities of minority women’s identities and experiences, comparative research can inform our understanding of political and strategic intersectionality. Exploring institutional differences across Bangladesh, Romania, and

Burundi, I demonstrated how certain institutional configurations exclude minority women, while others provide minority women with strategic advantages.

Finally, I discussed some of the specific measurement-related challenges to research on minority women. Multi-level research designs that account for both country-level and group-level differences may best address these challenges. But to understand minority women's legislative outcomes, scholars must also move beyond traditional theories of women's political representation to consider new explanations. I also provided a conceptual example of what a multi-level model predicting minority women's legislative representation across countries might look like. In all, this research suggests that despite many obstacles, cross-national research on minority women's political representation can and should move forward.

References

- Ajami, Fouad. 1986. *The Vanished Imam; Musa Al-Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Barrett, Edith J. 1995. "The Policy Priorities of African American Women in State Legislatures." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 20(2):223-47.
- Bedolla, Lisa G. 2007. "Intersections of Inequality: Understanding Marginalization and Privilege in the Post-Civil Rights Era." *Politics & Gender* 3(2):232-47.
- Bedolla, Lisa G., Katherine Tate, and Janelle Wong. 2005. "Indelible Effects: The Impact of Women of Color in the U.S. Congress." Pp. 152-75 in *Women and Elective Office: Past, Present, and Future*, 2nd ed. Editors Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Beisel, Nicola and Kay Tamara. 2004. "Abortion, Race, and Gender in Nineteenth-Century America." *American Sociological Review* 69(4): 498-518.
- Bird, Karen. 2004. "Comparing the Political Representation of Ethnic Minorities in Advanced Democracies." *Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association* (Winnipeg, Manitoba).
- . 2001. "Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite, Parite...and Diversite? The Difficult Question of Ethnic Difference in the French Parity Debate." *Contemporary French Civilization* 25(2):271-92.
- Black, Jerome H. 2000. "Entering the Political Elite in Canada: The Case of Minority Women As Parliamentary Candidates and MPs." *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 37(2):143-66.
- Brah, Avtar and Ann Phoenix. "Ain't I a Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality." *Journal of*

- International Women's Studies* 5(3):75-86.
- Central Intelligence Agency. 2007. "CIA World Factbook" [Web Page]. Accessed 22 July 2007.
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>.
- Collins, Patricia H. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*. London: HarperCollins.
- Corstange, Daniel. 2007. "Institutional Preferences in Lebanon: 'Islam and Democracy' With Control Groups."
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé W. 1994. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." Pp. 93-118 in *The Public Nature of Private Violence*, Editors Martha A. Fineman and Rixanne Mykitiuk. New York: Routledge.
- Esterchild, Elizabeth and Jen King. 2006. "So Much to be Done: Black, Hispanic and White Women in State Legislatures, 2003." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association.
- Fearon, James D. 2003. "Ethnic Structure and Cultural Diversity around the World: A Cross-National Data Set on Ethnic Groups." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association.
- Fraga, Luis Ricardo, Valerie Martinez-Ebers, Linda Lopez, and Ricardo Ramirez. 2005. "Strategic Intersectionality: Gender, Ethnicity, and Political Incorporation." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association.
- Gay, Claudine and Katherine Tate. 1998. "Doubly Bound: The Impact of Gender and Race on the Politics of Black Women." *Political Psychology* 19(1):169-84.
- Hancock, Ange-Marie. 2007. "Intersectionality as a Normative and Empirical Paradigm." *Politics & Gender* 3(2):248-53.

- Hardy-Fanta, Carol. 1993. *Latina Politics, Latino Politics: Gender, Culture, and Political Participation in Boston*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Hardy-Fanta, Carol, Pei-te Lien, Dianne M. Pinderhughes, and Christine Marie Sierra. 2006. "Gender, Race, and Descriptive Representation: Findings From the Gender and Multicultural Leadership Project." *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 28(3/4).
- Hawkesworth, Mary. 2003. "Congressional Enactments of Race-Gender: Toward a Theory of Raced-Gendered Institutions." *American Political Science Review* 97(4):529-50.
- Htun, Mala. 2004. "Is Gender Like Ethnicity? The Political Representation of Identity Groups." *Perspectives on Politics* 2(3):439-58.
- IDEA. 2007. "Global Database of Quotas for Women" [Web Page]. Accessed 22 Jan 2007. www.idea.int/
- Jordan-Zachery, Julia S. 2007. "Am I a Black Woman or a Woman Who Is Black? A Few Thoughts on the Meaning of Intersectionality." *Politics & Gender* 3(2):232-47.
- Kenworthy, Lane and Melissa Malami. 1999. "Gender Inequality in Political Representation: A Worldwide Comparative Analysis." *Social Forces* 78(1):235-68.
- Krook, Mona Lena and O'Brien, Diana. 2007. "The Politics of Group Representation: Quotas for Women and Minorities Worldwide." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association.
- Kunovich, Sherri and Pamela Paxton. 2005. Pathways to power: The role of political parties in women's national political representation. *American Journal of Sociology* 111:505-552.
- Mansbridge, Jane and Katherine Tate. 1992. "Race Trumps Gender: The Thomas Nomination in the Black Community." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 25(3):488-92.
- McCall, Leslie. 2005. "The Complexity of Intersectionality." *Signs: Journal of Women in*

- Culture and Society* 30:1771-1800.
- Montoya, Lisa J. Carol Hardy-Fanta and Sonia Garcia. 2000. "Latina Politics: Gender, Participation, and Leadership." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33(3): 555-561.
- Okin, Susan M. 1999. "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?" Pp. 9-24 in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women? Susan Moller Okin with Respondents*, Editors Joshua Cohen, Matthew Howard, and Martha C. Nussbaum. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Orey, D'Andra, Wendy G. Smooth, Kimberly S. Adams, and Kisha Harris Clark. 2006. "Race and Gender Matter: Refining Models of Legislative Policy Making in State Legislatures." *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 28(3/4).
- Paxton, Pamela. 1997. "Women in National Legislatures: A Cross-National Analysis." *Social Science Research* 26: 442-464.
- Paxton, Pamela and Melanie Hughes. 2007. *Women, Politics and Power: A Global Perspective*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Philpot, Tasha S. and Jr. Hanes Walton. 2007. "One of Our Own: Black Female Candidates and the Voters Who Support Them." *American Journal of Political Science* 14:49-62.
- Prindeville, Diane-Michele and John G. Bretting. 1998. "Indigenous Women Activists and Political Participation: The Case of Environmental Justice." *Women & Politics* 19(1):39-58.
- Scola, Becki. 2006. "Women of Color in State Legislatures: Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Legislative Office Holding." *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 28(3/4).
- Simien, Evelyn M. 2006. *Black Feminist Voices in Politics*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- . 2007. "Doing Intersectionality Research: From Conceptual Issues to Practical

- Examples.” *Politics & Gender* 3(2):264-70.
- Smooth, Wendy G. 2001. *African American Women State Legislators: The Impact of Gender and Race on Legislative Influence*. Dissertation. University of Maryland College Park, College Park, MD.
- . 2006 “A Case of Access Denied? Gender, Race, and Legislative Influence.” Paper presented at the Institute of Government Studies and Center for Politics 2006 Conference.
- “Women in Politics: Seeking Office and Making Policy.” University of California-Berkeley.
- Spinner-Halev, Jeff. 2001. “Feminism, Multiculturalism, Oppression, and the State.” *Ethics* 112(1):84-113.
- Springer, Kimberly. 1999. *Still Lifting, Still Climbing: Contemporary African American Women's Activism*, Editor K. Springer. New York: New York University Press.
- Takash, Paule C. 1993. “Breaking Barriers to Representation: Chicana/Latina Elected Officials in California.” *Urban Anthropology* 22(3-4):325-60.
- Verloo, Mieke. 2006. “Multiple Inequalities, Intersectionality and the European Union.” *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13(3):211-28.
- Weldon, S. Laurel. 2006. “The Structure of Intersectionality: A Comparative Politics of Gender.” *Politics & Gender* 2(2):235-48.
- Yuval-Davis. 2006. “Intersectionality and Feminist Politics.” *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13(3):193-209.

Table 1. Unofficial Population Estimates and 2005 Election Results for Lebanon's Chamber of Deputies by Religious Sect and Gender

	Population ¹	Political Representation			
		<i>All</i>		<i>Women</i>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Muslim					
Sunni Islam	25-30%	27	21.1%	2	2.0%
Shi'a Islam	41-49%	27	21.1%	0	0.0%
Druze	4-7%	8	6.3%	0	0.0%
Alawite	1%	2	1.6%	0	0.0%
Ismaili	<1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
<i>Sum</i>		<i>64</i>	<i>50.0%</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2.0%</i>
Christian					
Maronite Christian	16-25%	34	26.6%	4	4.0%
Greek Orthodox	5%	14	10.9%	0	0.0%
Greek Catholic	3-5%	8	6.3%	0	0.0%
Armenian Orthodox	<1%	5	3.9%	0	0.0%
Armenian Catholic	<1%	1	0.8%	0	0.0%
Protestant	<1%	1	0.8%	0	0.0%
Other Christian ²	<1%	1	0.8%	0	0.0%
<i>Sum</i>		<i>64</i>	<i>50.0%</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>4.0%</i>
Other					
Jewish	<1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

¹Since no official data on the religious composition of Lebanon has been collected since 1932, these numbers reflect the range of unofficial estimates from the CIA and the World Bank, supplemented by additional sources.

²Including Assyrian Church of the East, Chaldean Catholic, Copts, Roman Catholic, Syriac Catholic, and Syriac Orthodox

Table 2. Selected Country-Level Data for Bangladesh, Romania, and Burundi¹

Country	Population Size (2007 est.)	GDP per capita	Electoral System ²	Gender Quotas	% Women in Parliament	Ethnic / Religious Quotas
Bangladesh	150,448,339	\$2,300	FPTP	national-level; 13% reserved seats	15%	None
Romania	22,276,056	\$9,100	PR-PL	party-level; dominant party has 30% quota	11%	Ethnic minority parties not reaching 5% vote threshold still afforded representation
Burundi	8,390,505	\$700	PR-PL	national-level; 30% reserved seats	31%	Mandated division of seats by ethnicity: 60-40%, except 3 reserved seats for indigenous minority

¹ Data sources: CIA Factbook (2007); IDEA (2007); US Department of State (2007)

² FPTP: First-past-the-post system, PR-PL: Proportional representation-party list system

Table 3. Population and Political Representation by Gender, Religion and Ethnicity for Bangladesh, Romania, and Burundi, 2004-2005¹

	Population	All		Men			Women		
		N	%	N	% Group	% All	N	% Group	% All
Bangladesh									
Muslim	82%	336	97%	284	85%	82%	52	15%	15%
Hindu	16%	6	2%	6	100%	2%	0	0%	0%
Buddhist ²	0.5%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Christian	0.3%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Indigenous Muslims	<0.1%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Bihari	<0.1%	0	0%	0	n/a	0%	0	n/a	0%
Romania									
Romanian	89.5%	281	85%	246	88%	77%	35	12%	11%
Hungarian	6.6%	22	7%	22	100%	7%	0	0%	0%
Roma	2.5%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
German	0.3%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Ukrainian	0.3%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Russian	0.2%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Turk	0.2%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Serb	0.1%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Tatar	0.1%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Albanian	<0.1%	1	0.3%	0	0%	0%	1	100%	0.3%
Armenian	<0.1%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Bulgarian	<0.1%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Croatian	<0.1%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Czech	<0.1%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Greek	<0.1%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Italian	<0.1%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Jewish	<0.1%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Macedonian	<0.1%	1	0.3%	0	0%	0%	1	100%	0.3%
Polish	<0.1%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Rusyn	<0.1%	1	0.3%	1	100%	0.3%	0	0%	0%
Burundi									
Hutu	85.0%	69	58%	53	77%	45%	16	23%	14%
Tutsi	14.0%	46	39%	26	57%	22%	20	43%	17%
Twa	1.0%	3	3%	2	67%	2%	1	33%	1%

¹Population data are from the CIA World Factbook (2005), the Encyclopedia of Nations (2007), and Alionescu (2003).

²Most members of the Chittagong Hill tribes (indigenous minorities) in Bangladesh are Buddhist and are captured in this category.

Table 4. Independent Variables for Sample Multi-Level Model Predicting % Women in Group

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Measure</i>
<u>Country-Level</u>	
Structural Factors	
Gender Development	Gender Development Index, 2000
Ethnic Heterogeneity	Ethnic Heterogeneity Index based on three separate indicators of ethnic division: 1) racial; 2) national, linguistic, or tribal; and 3) religious
Political Factors	
Political Rights	Political Rights Index
PR Electoral System	Presence of PR electoral system
Cultural Factors	
Religious Dominance	Series of dummy variables coded 1 if over 50% of population (Catholic, Christian Orthodox, Mixed, Muslim, Protestant, Other)
Strategic Factors	
Gender Quotas	Presence of national-level gender quota
Minority Quotas	Presence of special electoral mechanism to elect a minority group; e.g., reserved seats, separate districts or electoral lists
Minority*Gender Quotas	Gender and minority quota interaction
Controls	
Economic Development	Log of GDP per capita, 2000
<u>Group-Level</u>	
Structural Factors	
Minority Group Size	Size of minority group as a percentage of the total population
Discrimination	Summary index of past and present discrimination
Group Size*Discrimination	Group size and discrimination interaction
Political Factors	
Special Reserved Seats	Presence of special reserved seats for group
Party Representation	Dummy variable indicating the presence of a nationally organized political party that represents or claims to represent the group
Cultural Factors	
Dominant Religion	Series of dummy variables coded 1 if over 50% of group's population (Catholic, Christian Orthodox, Mixed, Muslim, Protestant, Other)
Strength of Group Identity	Summary indicators of group identity, cultural identity, and socio-historical identity