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## **PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR INCREASING WOMEN AND MĀORI MPS IN NEW ZEALAND**

### **ABSTRACT**

Most democracies fail to provide equal representation and tend to have an over-representation of men from upper-class and the majority racial/ethnic group. We investigate public support for increasing the number of women and indigenous Māori MPs in the New Zealand Parliament, both in general and through specific mechanisms such as quotas and reserved seats. We offer three explanations: descriptive (group identity), substantive (issue alignment), and symbolic (socioeconomic and political equity concerns). Using data from the 2014 New Zealand Election Study, we find that shared identity (descriptive) matters for all measures of increased representation, but especially for Māori respondent support of increased Māori MPs. Support for increasing the proportion of Māori MPs is also strongly driven by substantive concerns, as measured by support for keeping the Treaty of Waitangi in law. Support for increasing women MPs is driven most strongly by symbolic concerns (measured as increased government social spending and efforts to reduce income differences). Overall, respondents favor keeping the current number of reserved seats for Māori MP representation, whereas informal efforts (rather than quotas) are strongly preferred for increasing the number of women MPs.

## INTRODUCTION

Legislatures that more fully reflect the composition of their citizenry better achieve the promises of democracy. All democracies, however, fail to provide full political equality. For example, although women have significantly progressed in political representation over the last couple of decades, elected representatives are mainly male, upper-class, and from the dominant ethnic/cultural group in that nation (Hughes 2011; Paxton and Hughes 2007). Parties and selectorates play an important role in explaining inequalities in political representation, but one important factor on the voters' side, which has so far received relatively little attention, is the extent to which voters *want* the composition of legislature to change. Previous research has highlighted the importance of public support as a causal force for policy outcomes (Brooks and Manza 2007; Burstein 2003). More specifically, increased women and other politically marginalized groups in parliament may not be seen as politically legitimate if this comes without substantial public support (Barnes and Córdova 2016; Clayton 2014). Therefore, we ask to what extent citizens support more women and other marginalized groups in legislature, whether they support measures (such as quotas and reserved seats) to increase the representation of women and other marginalized groups in legislature, and what motivates this support?

Among the possible answers to these questions, much of the prior research has focused on a straightforward explanation of descriptive representation: voters engage in identity politics and want a candidate who looks like them. For example, research in the U.S. and Canada suggests a baseline preference among voters for those of the voter's same gender and race (Huddy and Carey 2009; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Dolan 2004) confirming that sociodemographic similarities are "the simplest shortcut of all" when it comes to electoral choice (Cutler 2002). However, citizens' support for increasing the representation of certain groups may also reflect a

desire for symbolic and/or substantive representation. Voters can use gender or ethnic background as a cue for an overall sense that the candidate stands for issues associated with that gender/ethnic group, or to develop expectations that a candidate will be better suited to accomplish certain political goals (DiMaggio 1997). These latter processes usually involve the deployment of a variety of stereotypes (Dolan 2010, 2014; Dolan and Lynch 2014), but nevertheless show the importance of substantive and symbolic alignment of interests between voters and candidates (Campbell and Heath 2017; Huddy and Carey 2009). For these reasons, we argue for the importance of expanding our understanding of public support for the political representation of groups that have been traditionally marginalized and include substantive and symbolic concerns as possible explanations for support for an increased political representation of marginalized groups.

Using the 2014 New Zealand Election Study data, our study compares support for an increase of women and in indigenous Māori MPs.<sup>1</sup> As such, we move beyond the typical focus on only women and include another politically marginalized group (see also Gidengil 1996). Specifically, the current study 1) directly compares generic support for more women and indigenous Māori MPs, and 2) examines support for particular measures to increase the representation of both groups (through informal measures, gender quotas and reserved seats for Māori). New Zealand is a particularly compelling case for comparing support for the representation of women and Māori in the lower house since women are descriptively underrepresented (31.4%) and Māori are, thanks to reserved seats, well-represented (20.7% MPs versus 15% in the population) (Barker and Coffé 2018).

## **CRAFTING SUPPORT FOR GREATER FORMAL AND INFORMAL EQUALITY IN REPRESENTATION**

Despite the importance of demographically representative parliamentary bodies (Phillips 1995), all democracies tend to have elected members drawn more heavily from the male ethnic/religious elite of society (Hughes 2011; Htun 2004). Moving toward equality takes multidimensional change, and one important factor is public opinion, especially support for increasing equality in representation for minority<sup>2</sup> and marginalized groups. Much of the research in this vein has focused on support for increasing women's representation through various types of quotas. Despite the growing use of gender quotas around the world, and evidence of their effectiveness for increasing women's representation (Paxton et al. 2010; Xydias 2007; Krook 2006), research suggests that public support for gender quotas is quite mixed across nations (Keenan and McElroy 2017; Barnes and Córdova 2016; Gidengil 1996; Vowles et al. 2017; Zetterberg 2009). A lack of enthusiasm for formal measures, may, however, not mean an overall lack of support for increasing diversity. Indeed, people may support an increase of the number of MPs of marginalized groups and/or groups that have been traditionally underrepresented, but they may at the same time not support the introduction of any formal measures (e.g. in the form of quotas or reserved seats) to achieve that goal.

The most thoroughly investigated mechanism for explaining support for increasing some group of MPs (mainly women) is identity congruence, i.e., people want MPs who look like them (Cutler 2002). Thus, voters belonging to a certain group will be supportive of increasing the number of MPs belonging to the same group. Based on theories of political representation, voters may, however, have a number of ways they can assess the importance and value of increased women and minorities in parliament, in particular based on factors derived from descriptive, substantive, and symbolic representation (Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005; Pitkin 1967).<sup>3</sup> Applied to the case of public opinion, each of these may reflect reasons why voters do or do not

think changes are needed in the *de jure* or *de facto* representation of a particular group. These can also be used as a foundation for understanding how citizens may differentially assess the importance of electing more women or minorities.

### *Identities Matter*

Research shows evidence for the importance of *descriptive representation* in shaping voters' opinions. Voters prefer representatives who 'look like them' (Cutler 2002), indicating that voters engage in identity politics or "political allegiances formed on the basis of some demographic similarity" (Plutzer and Zipp 1996, p.31). Looking at race, U.S. research concludes that voters strongly favor racial in-group candidates and disfavor racial out-group candidates (Huddy and Carey 2009; Hutchings and Valentino 2004; McDermott 1998; Dawson 1995).

Women are much likely to support the increased representation of women in general and through quotas (Sanbonmatsu 2003; Gidengil 1996; Espírito-Santo 2016; Rosenthal 1995; Cowley 2013; Barnes and Córdova 2016; Allen and Cutts 2016), though the evidence for the women-centered effect is overall much less consistent than for race (Huddy and Carey 2009). Based on this, descriptive representation should support for increased representation of each group, and thus, our second hypothesis reads that, net of all other controls:

H1: Respondents belonging to a group will be more supportive of an increased representation of that same group in parliament.

### *Substance Matters*

Alternatively, or in addition to the above, some *issues* are seen as 'belonging' to a group, e.g., abortion as a women's issue or minority economic programs as a racial/ethnic minority issue (Gwiazda 2019; Swers 2002; Brown 2014). In this case, regardless of the voters' own identity, voters may be supportive of an increased number of representatives who they believe

will *substantively* represent their concerns with that issue because of the assumed congruence between the MP's identity and the issue-type (i.e., women MPs and abortion rights as a 'women's' issue).

Research has indeed indicated that electing more women can lead to greater government investment in issues seen as particularly relevant to gender equality (Bolzendahl 2011; Wängnerud 2009; Cowell-Meyers and Langbein 2009; Celis 2006; Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005), suggesting that substantive representation is at play. Public opinion research in Northern Ireland also found support for the belief that increasing women's descriptive representation would improve the representation of women's interests, and this effect was particularly strong for women (Allen and Cutts 2016). A British public opinion study revealed that respondents tended to disagree that women can better represent 'women's interests' than men, though women, more than men, were more inclined to believe that women could (Campbell and Heath 2017). Some U.S. findings link supporting a woman candidate to respondent's sense that the candidate will be a better representative on abortion views and show that stereotypes about women's substantive representation matter in shaping support for women candidates (Dolan 2010, 2014; Dolan and Lynch 2014).

Similar results based on racial/ethnic minority candidates have been found (Hutchings and Valentino 2004), and in the U.S., there is a strong linkage between legislators that are black and Latino and their intervention on policies favorable to black and Latino constituents (Minta 2009; Broockman 2013; Griffin 2014; Preuhs 2007). In a study of 47 nations, Hänni (2017) found that minority groups can effectively influence policy outcomes when power and size are in their favor (see also Lončar 2016). This relationship between representatives' ethnic or racial background and their policy focus and opinions is echoed in public opinion research. In U.S.

surveys, respondents are more likely to see black candidates as dealing more centrally with issues affecting minorities (McDermott 1998; Tate 1994, 2003; Huddy and Carey 2009; Preuhs 2006), as are respondents in Great Britain (Saalfeld and Bischof 2013). Given that citizens seem to see specific policy issues and opinions as belonging to a marginalized group, we hypothesize that:

H2: Respondents who are more supportive of issues associated with the interests of a marginalized group will be more supportive of an increased representation of that group in parliament.

### *Symbols Matter*

Although women or ethnic minorities may be seen as better able to represent constituents on issues substantively associated with that group, respondents can also see the increased election of women or minorities as *symbolic* of their overall views of government and social issues. To the extent that symbolic representation is “concerned not with who the representatives are or what they do, but how they are *perceived* and *evaluated* by those they represent” (Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005, p. 409), women or minority candidates may reflect stereotypes about governance, inequality, and social inclusion (Sigelman et al. 1995; McDermott 1998; Krysan 2000; Lefkofridi et al. 2018). This contrasts with substantive representation above, where we expect public opinion to be based on a view of representatives as uniquely qualified to deal with group-specific *policy issues* (Gwiazda 2019). In the case of symbolic representation, the respondent may associate a representative with larger (and vaguer) *social concepts* (Barnes and Córdova 2016; Krysan 2000). In particular, given that representatives of marginalized groups are often seen as social and/or political outsiders, citizens may believe that these representatives will be more supportive of addressing economic inequality and of increasing



social investment (McDermott 1998). For example, in their study of support for gender quotas in Latin America, Barnes and Córdova (2016) found that support for greater government involvement was a strong predictor of overall support for quotas.

Hence, public support for increasing representation of marginalized groups may be linked to overall concerns with economic equality, social inclusion, and democratic performance. Public opinion studies have shown that women are *perceived* as better suited to make social policies handling issues of equality and equity (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993), being less corrupt (Goetz 2007), and as helping strengthening the government (McDermott 1998; Sanbonmatsu 2002). In part this is built from stereotypes about gender traits (e.g., women as expressive or emotional) (Lefkofridi et al. 2018; Bauer 2018), but these can also be interpreted as perceptions of women and minorities as symbolic tokens of equity. This process is further supported by U.S. research suggesting that voters are much more likely to see Black politicians as more competent with general equality-related issues such as civil rights, health care, welfare programs, poverty, and unemployment than White politicians (Schneider and Bos 2011; Enders and Scott 2019; Tesler 2012, 2015). Based on these findings, we hypothesize that:

H3: Support for issues tied to socioeconomic and political inclusion will increase the support for greater representation of marginalized groups.

## **THE NEW ZEALAND CASE**

In 1996, New Zealand replaced its First Past the Post (FPP) electoral system by a mixed-member proportional (MMP). In this system, each elector has two votes: one for a specific candidate in the constituency (electorate vote) and one for a party list (list vote). The overall distribution of seats in parliament reflects each party's share of the nationwide party list vote. Party groups in parliament comprise all those elected as electorate MPs, plus MPs taken from the

party list to bring that party up to its overall seat entitlement in parliament (Miller 2015). Having been the first country granting women the right to vote in 1893, the representation of women in the New Zealand parliament has stabilized around 30 per cent since the introduction of MMP in 1996, but reached its highest level after the 2014 elections with 31.4% women.<sup>4</sup>

The issue of gender quotas and women's political equality was hotly debated in 2013, when the Labour Party initially proposed and then rejected the adoption of an all-women shortlist option for candidate selection in electorate seats (Vowles et al. 2017). Following the 2011 election defeat, the party established a Selection Working Group to provide recommendations about reforming its processes, with a view to increasing women's representation as electorate candidates. A constitutional remit on the issue was planned for the Annual Conference in November but leaked to a right-wing blog site Whale Oil in early July. A media frenzy followed, with the proposed policy labelled a 'man ban' and commentators accusing Labour of discrimination, failing to select on the basis of merit, and looking "out of touch" with its rank and file. Within a week of the leak, then leader David Shearer said the Party was dumping the 'quotas' but would retain its target of 45% women MPs in 2014, a goal that was confirmed after the leadership moved in September 2013. The other major party, National, has not adopted formal gender quotas either, but does apply the principle of balance in its nomination process. The Green party is the only party with gender quotas, stipulating that women and men alternate up and down the order of their party list, and therefore exactly half of the MPs are women.

Seven of the 71 New Zealand electorates are dedicated seats for indigenous Māori. These seats overlay the General electorates, and candidates of any political party and any race or ethnicity may stand for election in a Māori electorate (Electoral Commission 2014a). Since 1993, the number of Māori seats has been allowed to vary, depending on how many voters of Māori

descent choose to enroll on the Māori roll, rather than the General roll.<sup>5</sup> Based on this provision, the number of Māori seats has grown from five in 1996 to the current seven. Thanks to these seats, Māori are well represented in parliament. With 20.7 per cent of the MPs identifying as Māori after the 2014 elections, the representation of Māori is higher in parliament than in NZ society where, according to the 2013 census, one in seven people (14.9 per cent) belong to the Māori ethnic group (Barker and Coffé 2018).<sup>6</sup>

## **DATA**

To answer our research questions, we rely on the 2014 New Zealand Election Study ([www.nzes.org](http://www.nzes.org)). The study was conducted via post (but respondents did have the opportunity to complete the survey online) among a representative sample of registered electors immediately after the elections held on 20 September 2014. Data were weighted to correct for oversampling by gender, age, and Māori electorates on a cell by cell basis, and on top of that by education, reported vote and validated turnout, on the basis of iterative weighting on the marginal frequencies. Missing data was addressed through multiple approaches depending on the variable in question and these are discussed below. The final sample size for our study is 2,423.

## **MEASURES AND METHODS**

### *Dependent Variables: Support for Increased Representation of Women and Māori*

We assess support for increased representation of women and Māori in two ways: general support and opinions on efforts to increase their representation. Although we anticipate that the hypotheses will be similarly applicable to both types of measures, we include both measures to gain a more comprehensive empirical perspective on support for equality in representation.

*General support* for an increase of women and Māori MPs is measured by asking: “Looking at the types of people who are MPs, do you think that there should be more, fewer, or

about the same number as now who are [women/ Māori]?” The provided answer categories in the survey were: (1) More, (2) Same as now, (3) Fewer and depends on candidate.<sup>7</sup> Given that initial tests indicated that the main differences for both women and Māori were between those who want (1) more women or Māori MPs versus (0) other responses, we use the latter operationalization in the analyses below.

Support for *specific efforts and measures* to increase women’s representation is measured by three different categories: (0) No Efforts - there is no need to increase the number of women MPs or it will happen naturally; (1) Informal Efforts – by political parties making their own voluntary commitments to increase the number of women MPs or by encouraging more women to participate in politics; or (2) Formal Efforts - Legally requiring all political parties to select more women candidates by means of 'quotas'. The middle category is the reference category. Support for the introduction of measures to increase the representation of Māori distinguishes those who support (0) abolishing the seats, (1) keeping the seven currently in place, or (2) increasing the number of reserved Māori seats.<sup>8</sup> The middle category is the reference category in the analyses below.

#### *Explanatory Variables: Expectations of Representation*

Gender and ethnic identity are the main measures of *descriptive*, or identity-based, representation. Gender is a dichotomous variable: (1) women and (0) men. Māori group membership is coded as (1) Māori versus (0) European and other ethnicities.

Policy issues seen as “belonging” to women and Māori, thus *substantive* concerns, are abortion rights and the Treaty of Waitangi. Debates over women’s access to safe and legal abortion in New Zealand are ongoing, and have highlighted sexism inherent in the current wording of the law.<sup>9</sup> Currently abortion is legal only in cases of a danger to the mother or if the

foetus has developmental problems. We measure support for abortion rights as ranging from (0) strongly agree abortion is always wrong to (4) strongly disagree abortion is always wrong.

Supplementary analysis confirms that women are significantly more favorable to abortion rights than men.<sup>10</sup> An issue highly relevant to the Māori population concerns the Treaty of Waitangi, the founding document of the nation and the cooperation between the British and Māori.<sup>11</sup>

Although differing uses and interpretations of the Treaty have led to conflict, the treaty forms the basis for the protection of Māori rights. The survey asks respondents whether “reference to the Treaty of Waitangi should be removed from the law.” Responses range from (0) Strongly agree to (4) Strongly disagree. Higher values thus indicate support for keeping reference to the Treaty of Waitangi in the law, and Māori are significantly more opposed to removing the Treaty from law.<sup>12</sup>

The effect of *symbolic concerns* on respondents’ likelihood of supporting an increase of women and Māori MPs is examined by the extent to which respondents support broader ideals/interests in equity and social investment and concerns about the well-functioning of democracy. First, for socioeconomic equality, respondents were asked if the government should spend (0) much less, to (4) much more on health, education, unemployment, superannuation (pension), and welfare benefits. Responses were summed into an index (Cronbach’s Alpha=.66), and respondents who did not answer any of these questions are dropped. Second, for inequality, respondents were asked whether they (0) strongly disagree to (4) strongly agree that “government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels.” Third, for government function, respondents were coded as to whether they are (1) not very or not at all satisfied versus (0) very or fairly satisfied with “how democracy works in New Zealand.”<sup>13</sup> Additional analyses revealed that on each of these three topics, women are not significantly

different from men in their views. Māori tend to be more supportive of social investment, ameliorating income inequality and dissatisfied with democracy than non-Māori. As detailed above, however, symbolic associations mean that regardless of the link between respondents' gender and ethnic background on attitudes towards these issues, these issues may still stereotypically associate such interests with women or Māori elected representatives (Bauer 2018; Enders and Scott 2019).

### *Control Variables*

Our analyses below also include various political and socio-economic control variables: political ideology (left, center, right, don't know), education (low, middle, high (university)), political interest (very interested vs. others)<sup>14</sup>, age, born in NZ, having a partner, having children, religious attendance, religion, employment status, occupation, and urban residence. Descriptive statistics for all explanatory and control variables included in our analyses are available in the Appendix, Table A1.

### *Methods*

We begin our analysis with a variety of descriptive statistics to provide a foundational understanding of the patterns in opinions which we go on to analyze inferentially. Our inferential binary and multinomial logistic models allow us to simultaneously test the relationships between our key dependent and explanatory variables. In the tables, logit coefficient effects are confounded with variance of the errors and can thus not be directly compared. Therefore, we illustrate the substantive relationships in marginal predicted probability for key values of interest.

## **RESULTS**

### *Descriptive Patterns of Support*

Figure 1 presents the descriptive information for support for increasing women and Māori MPs in parliament. The left panel of Figure 1 presents overall support for an increase of women and Māori MPs. The middle and right panels show the results for support for the introduction of measures to increase the number of women and Māori MPs. The results presented in the left panel indicate that most respondents do not support increasing the number of women in parliament overall. Only 28% of the respondents believe that the number of women in parliament should be increased. Support for increasing the number of Māori MPs is even lower: 19%. This may reflect an awareness of women's greater underrepresentation in the NZ parliament.

The middle panel of Figure 1 shows that the vast majority of the respondents (58%) believes that no efforts should be done to increase the number of women MPs. When efforts are supported to increase the representation of women MPs, these are mainly informal and only four percent of respondents favor quotas. Looking at the panel on the right, respondents seem to be willing to accept the continued use of the reserved seats for Māori representation. This may suggest that respondents are more comfortable with the formal efforts in place for this group compared with women. The greater support for reserved seats for Māori compared with formal efforts to increase women's representation may also relate to the fact that while reserved seats for Māori exist, only one party has formal gender quotas in the NZ parliament. While 50% of the respondents want to keep the reserved seats for Māori, a sizable group (38%) also advocates abolishing these seats.

\*\*\*Figure 1 About Here\*\*\*

In order to better understand the relationship between general support for an increase of women and Māori MPs and the introduction of measures to increase their representation, Figure 2 investigates patterns in cross-cutting support. Overall, we can see that those who generally

want more women elected strongly prefer informal efforts over formal efforts. Yet, among this group support for quotas is nevertheless much higher than for those who wish to keep or reduce the number of women MPs (12% compared with 1%). The pattern is quite different when looking at those who support increasing the number of Māori MPs; the majority (50%) of those respondents who favor *increasing* the formal efforts though more reserved seats. Those who want to see the number of Māori MPs stay the same or decrease generally still favor keeping the formal reserved seats rather than abolishing them (52% compared with 45%).

\*\*\*Figure 2 About Here\*\*\*

### *Inferential Tests of General Support for Increasing Women and Māori MPs*

We now move on to test our hypotheses using binary logit (for general support for an increase the number of women and Māori MPs) and multinomial logit (for support for the introduction of measures to increase the number of women and Māori MPs) regression models.<sup>15</sup> Starting with the explanations for general support for an increase of the number of women and Māori MPs in Parliament, the results presented in Table 1 indicate a strong effect of identity: women are significantly more likely to support increasing women MPs and Māori are significantly more likely to support increasing Māori MPs. However, in each case support is also cross-cutting such that both groups wish to see increases in both types of MPs. Favoring substantive policies linked to women or Māori MPs is also positively associated with greater support for increasing the representation of these groups. We find positive evidence in favor of our second and third hypothesis regarding expected links between symbolic issues and support for more women or Māori MPs. The one exception is dissatisfaction with democracy, which is unrelated to support for more women MPs, but positively related to support for more Māori MPs.

\*\*\*Table 1 About Here\*\*\*



Figure 3 presents marginal predicted probabilities for key explanatory variables, with all other variables held at their means. Percentages in these figures are the percent change in support between the two groups or levels being discussed. For example, in the case of “R is woman” the percentages reflect the *difference* between women and men respondents in their support for increasing women and Māori MPs. Marginal predicted values for all key findings are discussed in text and available in the Appendix, Table A2. Women have a 30% predicted probability of wanting more women MPs and men have a 16% predicted probability, thus women are 14% more supportive of increasing the number of women MPs as compared to men in our sample. The illustrations show that Māori respondents are 19% more likely to support electing more women MPs than non-Māori, thus, the cleavage in support for increasing women MPs is wider by ethnic status rather than gender. In this case Māori respondents had a 39% predicted probability of wanting increased women MPs, versus 20% for non-Māori. Māori respondents thus have an overall greater predicted probability to support an increase of the number of women MPs than women.

Respondents who believe abortion is not always wrong are 11% more likely to support women MPs than those who think it is always wrong. Opinions about social spending and income differences are much more strongly linked to supporting increased women MPs. In this case, those who support “much more” social spending are 25% more likely to support more women MPs than those who support (on average) “less” social spending.<sup>16</sup> Those who “strongly agree” the government should work to ameliorate income differences are 24% more likely to than those who “strongly disagree” with that policy. Overall, the three largest predicted probabilities of support for more women MPs were being Māori (39%); wanting much more social spending (39%), and wanting the government to ameliorate income inequalities (35%). A

wish for more government involvement in economic social policy is thus strongly tied to support for an increased representation of women.

\*\*\*Figure 3 About Here\*\*\*

Examining similar changes in probabilities of support for increasing the number of Māori MPs, Figure 3 shows that identity politics and substantive concerns are the major factors at play. Respondents who are Māori are 33% more likely than non-Māori to call for increasing the number of Māori MPs. Māori have a 37% probability of wanting more Māori MPs, compared with a probability of only four percent among non-Māori. Although women are statistically significantly more supportive than men to support an increase of Māori MPs (see Table 1 above), women's support amounts to only an eight percent probability (versus three percent among men). The largest gap in support for an increase of Māori MPs is between those who wish to keep the Treaty of Waitangi in the law versus those who wish to remove it: a 40% difference. The strongest supporters of the treaty have a 41% probability of wanting more Māori MPs and those least supportive have only a one percent probability of wanting more Māori MPs. Further analysis (available upon request) shows that this cleavage is magnified when looking also at ethnic group membership. Namely, Māori who wish to keep the treaty have a 61% probability of wanting more Māori MPs. In comparison, non-Māori who strongly support keeping the treaty in law have only a 28% probability of wanting more Māori MPs. Clearly, Māori respondents who want to protect the treaty's place in law strongly link it to their support for Māori legislative representation. Despite findings for significant relationships in Table 1, few of the other cleavages have a strong substantive effect on support for more Māori MPs. The strongest gap is between those who strongly agree that the government should work to ameliorate income

differences compared with those who strongly disagree with that policy. Those who support this are 13% more likely to support increasing the number of Māori MPs.

*Inferential Tests of Support for Formal Efforts to Increase Women and Māori MPs*

We next turn to our multinomial logit analyses investigating support for efforts to increase the representation of women and Māori. As mentioned above, the “informal efforts” category is the comparison or base category in the analysis for support for efforts to increase women’s representation. With regard to formal efforts towards the representation of Māori, the current reserved seats provide numerical equity. Keeping the status quo is thus the base category for that dependent variable.

\*\*\*Table 2 About Here\*\*\*

The results of this measure of support shows the importance of identity politics for an increase of women and Māori MPs. Women are significantly more likely to support both informal and formal efforts to increase women MPs. Māori significantly support an increase the existing number of reserved Māori seats and are opposed to the abolishment of these seats. Contrary to general support for an increase of Māori MPs (see Table 1 and Figure 3), being a woman does not distinguish opinions on reserved seats for Māori MPs.<sup>17</sup> Although Māori respondents are slightly more likely to support informal efforts rather than no efforts to increase women MPs than non-Māori respondents, Māori respondents do not differ from non-Māori in support for quotas (compared with informal measures). Although there were cross-cutting sources of support when studying general support for an increase of women and Māori MPs (with women being significantly more likely to support an increase of Māori MPs than men, and Māori being significantly more likely to support an increase of women MPs compared with non-

Māori), this does not hold when looking at the introduction of specific measures to increase their representation.

Looking at the effect of substantive concerns, those who say that abortion is not always wrong are more likely to support the introduction of informal efforts to increase women MPs than those who do not say that abortion is not always wrong. Support for keeping the Treaty of Waitangi in law strongly relates to a wish to keep or expand the number of reserved Māori seats.

Symbolically, the results for efforts to have increased women MPs echo those in Table 1. Those who want more government socio-economic policy involvement are more likely to want informal efforts to increase women MPs compared with no efforts than those who do not want governmental involvement. However, dissatisfaction with democracy slightly undermines support for any efforts to increase women MPs. The desire for keeping or increasing the Māori reserved seats is also linked to a desire for more government socioeconomic policy involvement. However, those dissatisfied with democracy want more reserved seats for Māori MPs (compared with keeping the same number of seats) than those who are satisfied with the way democracy is working. This effect is conditional on controlling for opinions on the Treaty of Waitangi, such that without controlling for opinions on the Treaty, dissatisfaction with democracy is positively linked to both abolishing and increasing seats, suggesting a wide cleavage in opinions on the Treaty.

Overall, the only significant source of support for quotas to increase women parliament is among women themselves. In contrast, respondents who are Māori, support the Treaty of Waitangi, support increased social spending, and/or are dissatisfied with democracy are all advocates of increasing the number of Māori seats.

To put these effects in context, we present cleavages in marginal predicted probabilities for the key variables in our analysis in Figure 4. As with Figure 3, these number are the *difference* in the effects (e.g., probability for women-probability for men). Marginal predicted values for all key findings are discussed in text and available in the Appendix, Table A2. Looking at the top panel, Figure 4 shows that there is consistently little to no support for quotas. Where variables matter, they are linked to a preference for informal efforts or a rejection of a “no efforts” model. Women are 18% more likely to support the introduction of informal measures to increase women’s representation than men are, and they are more than 20% less likely to believe that no effort should be done than men. In general, models predict that women have a 45% probability of wanting informal efforts to elect women (compared with 27% among men).

Support for abortion rights is also a cleavage for the categories of no effort and introducing informal efforts. The overall gap between these two extremes is 19% for the support of introducing informal efforts. Abortion right supporters have a 45% probability of wanting more informal efforts to elect women. However, as seen for overall support for an increase of women MPs (Figure 3), the largest cleavages are between those who want greater government involvement socioeconomic policy (in particular to decrease income differences) and those who want less or none. More specifically, 48% of those who want much more social spending, and 49% of those who strongly support the government’s involvement in ameliorating income inequality, want more informal efforts to elect women. This is respectively 20% and 32% higher than those who do not want more social spending and more involvement of the government in ameliorating income inequality. Dissatisfaction with democracy has little substantive ties to views on efforts to increase women MPs, but the effect found is polarized. Those who are dissatisfied are more likely to both want no efforts or quotas, rather than informal efforts.

\*\*\*Figure 4 About Here\*\*\*

Moving on to respondents' opinions about keeping, increasing or abolishing the reserved seats for Māori, the bottom panel of Figure 4 indicates that - similar to the general support for increasing Māori MPs (Figure 3) – support for keeping and increasing the number of reserved seats is shaped strongly by being Māori and support to keep the Treaty of Waitangi in the law. Māori respondents are 31% more likely to prefer increasing the number of seats and 10% more likely to wanting to keep the current number of seats than non-Māori respondents. In this case, being Māori was associated with a 32% probability of wanting the number of seats expanded and a 64% probability of wanting to keep the current seats. Those supporting keeping the Treaty of Waitangi in the law are 75% more likely to reject an abolishment of the seats and are more in favor of keeping (52%) or increasing (22%) the number of seats than those who do not believe that the Treaty should be kept in the law. If a respondent opposes keeping the treaty in law, they have a 79% probability of wanting to abolish the reserved seats (compared with four percent among those supporting keeping the treaty in the law). Those who support keeping the treaty in the law have approximately 76% probability of wanting to keep the current number reserved seats. Support for expanding the seats among treaty backers is 23% (compared with one percent among those not supporting to keeping the treaty in the law). The main symbolic policy issue tied to support for keeping the current reserved seats is the desire to have the government work to ameliorate income differences. Those who want government intervention in income inequality, there is a 76% probability of wanting to keep the current reserved seats. This is a difference of 44% in predicted probability compared with those who do not want such intervention of the government.

## **CONCLUSION**

Political power has long been dominated by men and members of majority ethnic groups. This is slowly changing and support for more equitable representation – and actual equality in representation – has increased for women and many other marginalized and/or minority groups (Hughes 2011; Paxton et al. 2006). The question of *why* the public believes we need more representatives from minority groups, however, is complex. As Pitkin (1967) and those building off her work have noted, representation is multidimensional. When it comes to popular support for the principle of increasing the number of representatives from marginalized groups, we cannot assume that all persons are motivated by the same reasoning or that the reasons matter equally for all group or in all nations. In this paper we interrogate these concerns by evaluating a set of competing explanations (descriptive, substantive and symbolic) for support for increasing the number of women and Māori MPs and for the introduction of efforts to increase their numbers in New Zealand. Our findings suggest that the different dimensions of representation matter for understanding support for an increase in the representation of both groups of MPs and for both general support and support for the introduction of measures to increase their representation, but also highlight crucial differences in explanatory patterns.

Our first hypothesis focused on descriptive representation and argued that identities matter. Our results suggest that identities do indeed matter. Women are significantly more likely than men to want more women MPs and support formal and informal efforts to achieve this, and Māori are more likely to want more Māori MPs and support efforts to maintain or increase their representation than non-Māori. Women are also more likely to want more Māori MPs than men, and Māori are more supportive of an increase of the number of women MPs than non-Māori. Predicted probabilities even suggest support for increasing women MPs is greater among Māori than among women. In any case, being from an underrepresented group seems to increase

support for an increased representation of one's own group but also for an increase of the representation of other social groups who have traditionally been underrepresented. In general, the identity cleavage is larger between Māori/non-Māori than between women and men. Although Māori are significantly more likely to support increasing the number of reserved seats, women have quite weak support for the introduction of quotas. Yet, women are substantially more likely than men so support the introduction of informal efforts to increase women's representation.

Hypothesis 2 examined concerns over substantive representation, choosing two political issues and positions seen as characteristic of women and Māori MPs. First, viewing abortion as not always wrong meant significantly more support for women MPs in general, and with regard to support for informal efforts to increase women MPs. This seems to suggest that for many voters increasing the number of women elected is tied to substantive concerns over women's reproductive rights. Second, support for increasing Māori representation in general and through keeping or expanding reserved Māori seats is strongly tied to substantive concerns over keeping the Treaty of Waitangi in the law. Voters clearly see Māori presence in government as a key correlate of this policy issue, and the correlation is particularly strong for Māori respondents. In general, then, we can conclude that substantive issues are linked to support for more equitable gender and ethnic representation, though the connection is strongest for models of Māori MP support.

Our third and final hypothesis suggested that measures of symbolic representation – defined as overall concerns with socioeconomic equity and democratic performance – would play a significant role in support for an increase of the political representation of traditionally underrepresented and marginalized groups. This hypothesis is largely confirmed. We did not find



that dissatisfaction with democracy is important in supporting increased representation of women or Māori and measures to increase their support, but we found overwhelming evidence in favor of a link between support for an increase in social spending and governmental efforts to ameliorate income difference and generally wanting more women or – to a lesser extent – Māori MPs. The interest in government backed efforts to address socio-economic equality, and in particular efforts to decrease income differences, were also strongly tied to positive support for informal efforts to increase women’s representation and for keeping the Māori seats. Voters thus seem to see minority MPs as symbolically linked to concerns over social investment and economic inequality, and those who are concerned about these issues are more likely to support an increased representation of minority MPs than those who are not concerned about these issues.

## **DISCUSSION**

Our findings have important implications for theories on representation and public opinion. People do seem to want representatives that “look like them” (Plutzer and Zipp 1996) and sociodemographic similarities provide an easy cognitive shortcut for voters (Cutler 2002). Nevertheless, in a competitive model, controlling for a wide array of individual characteristics – including political ideology – identities are *not* the largest driver of support for candidates from these marginalized groups. Cleavages among respondents in terms of support for substantive policies and concerns about general socio-economic equality have the largest effects. These results suggest that well beyond descriptive representation, voters use political candidates or MPs’ marginalized status (women or Māori) as a short-hand for major policy concerns, regardless of whether the voter is a woman or man, Māori or not. This is an important reminder that gender and race exist far beyond individual identities, and are cultural shortcuts voters seem

to use to assess candidates on a much broader scale (Ridgeway 2011; Hutchings and Valentino 2004; McDermott 1998; Preuhs 2006).

Although general patterns occurred for support to increase the representation of women and Māori MPs, support for increasing their representation was not equal in general and with regard to efforts to achieve or maintain representation. Respondents were more supportive of increasing women's presence than that of Māori, perhaps reflecting women's under-representation relative to the parity of Māori representation. This support did not carry over to formal efforts however. Most want no effort to increase women and if anything, only informal measures. By contrast, support for continuing reserved seats for Māori is robust, and a sizeable group would like to see this legal mandate increased. We do not find any substantively meaningful support for gender quotas. Indeed, although our findings above complement those of Barnes and Córdova (2016) for Latin America and suggest that support for an increase of women MPs is related to a demand for greater government involvement (Hypothesis 3), even among those demanding greater governmental involvement in reducing income differences and an increase of social spending, support for gender quotas is small.

General support for Māori MPs and for keeping or increasing the number of reserved Māori seats is more strongly linked to issues specific to this racial/ethnic group (see also Huddy and Carey (2009) – in this case keeping the Treaty of Waitangi in law – and descriptive representation than is the case for support for a greater number of women MPs and for the introduction of measures to increase their representation. Support for women MPs (at least informal efforts) are tied to issues of symbolic representation.

In sum, we conclude that support for the increased presence of women/minority politicians is motivated by similar concerns over descriptive, substantive, and/or symbolic

representation. Yet, the level of importance respondents assign to these issues when assessing an increase of women or Māori MPs are not the same. Our findings suggest that symbolic explanations matter most for women, whereas descriptive and substantive-related explanations have the greatest impact for support for increasing the number of Māori MPs. One explanation for this difference in effects may be linked to the diversity inherent in the social group of “women” and in the understanding of issues relevant to women MPs. By contrast, a longer shared history of group marginalization, may have strengthened solidarity among Māori in New Zealand, similarly to processes documented in the United States with regard to Native Americans and Blacks (James and Redding 2005), and resulting in a strong effect of identity.

Despite the paucity of support for gender quotas, the robust support for keeping the number of Māori reserved seats raises the possibility that institutionalizing quotas could lead to acceptance of these measures to increase women’s legislative presence in the future (Kittilson 2006). At the same time, however, support for reserved seats may differ from support for quotas. To that end, and given that the quotas for Māori is not referred to as “quotas,” future research could productively explore how the term “quota” may prejudice voters against such formal efforts. For example, survey experiments could manipulate the type of suggested formal effort (e.g. reserved seats versus quotas) to assess whether support for formal efforts to increase the representation of underrepresented groups differs depending on the type of formal effort suggested, and investigate to what extent that may interact with which underrepresented group the efforts are aiming at.

Finally, while the current study was mainly interested in investigating to what extent descriptive, substantive and symbolic concerns help explaining overall support for increasing women’s and Māori’s representation in parliament overall, future research could investigate in

greater detail why Māori and women are particularly supportive of increasing the representation of respectively Māori and women MPs: substantive or symbolic issues. Such analysis could involve structural equation modeling and mediation analysis, allowing to unpack group members' likelihood of supporting increased representation of members of their own group in greater depth.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Most work on minority racial/ethnic representation has focused on racial/ethnic minority groups in general and not indigenous populations such as the Māori population, in particular. Both groups however tend to share a similar place in their society as a group that has experienced social, economic, and/or political marginalization, by law or custom (see e.g. Hughes 2011).

<sup>2</sup> The usage here refers to group access to power, and not necessarily numerical presence in society (see also Hughes 2011).

<sup>3</sup> While Pitkin has strongly shaped contemporary understandings of political representation, her insights have not gone without critique. Schwindt-Bayer and Mischler (2004) highlight the neglect of interconnections among all the categories. Dovi (2002: 738) argues that Pitkin draws a too firm distinction “between what a representative looks like and what a representative does.” While recognizing the critique, Pitkin’s theory is one of the most influential theory on the study of political representation, and offers a useful starting point for the theoretical framework of our study.

<sup>4</sup> Source: <http://www.stats.govt.nz/>

<sup>5</sup> When people first enroll as a voter they are asked whether they are of Māori descent and, if so, on which electoral roll (General or Māori) they wish to register. In 2014, 55% of 413,348 electors of Māori descent chose to be on the Māori Roll ((Electoral Commission 2014b).

<sup>6</sup> Government statistics refer to being of ‘Māori descent’, and self-identification is central. ‘Māori’ thus includes some MPs who are not ‘visible’ in the sense of ‘visible minority’ or who do not highlight their ethnic identity politically, but who nonetheless have at some time identified as of Māori descent.

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<sup>7</sup> Only 59 respondents reported wanting fewer women, and 182 reported wanting fewer Māori. Model testing indicated that these categories could be combined in both cases (results available upon request).

<sup>8</sup> Approximately two percent and eight percent of respondents replied “don’t know” regarding efforts to increase women in parliament and reserved seats for Māori, respectively. Respondents who wanted fewer Māori MPs were coded as favoring abolishing reserved seats, those who wanted the same number were coded as keeping reserved seats, others were dropped as missing. For women those who wanted the same or fewer women MPs were coded as wanting no formal efforts. This did not affect the results regardless.

<sup>9</sup> The 2017 Abortion Supervisory Committee appointed by the government told MPs that “Current wording in New Zealand's abortion law is offensive and not updating it is an ‘indictment’.”

([https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=11819495](https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11819495))

<sup>10</sup> In ordered logit models predicting whether abortion is “always wrong” and including survey weights, women were significantly more likely than men ( $p=.023$ ) to disagree that abortion is always wrong.

<sup>11</sup> See for more information on the Treaty of Waitangi: <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/treaty-of-waitangi>

<sup>12</sup> In ordered logit models including survey weights predicting support for removing the Treaty of Waitangi from law, Māori were significantly more likely to disagree ( $p=.000$ ).

<sup>13</sup> The original scale has four categories: (1) very satisfied; (2) fairly satisfied; (3) not very satisfied; (4) not at all satisfied. A more elaborated coding produced the same results.

<sup>14</sup> Test showed very interested versus all else to be the major schism. The reference category includes 24 missing values. Dropping these does not change any results. As an alternative approach, we also tested models that included a scale of political knowledge based on the number of correct answers on knowledge of the Minister of Finance, the unemployment rate, the second largest party, and the Secretary-General of the UN. This measure was never significant and inclusion of the measure did not affect the results. The New Zealand Election Study does not include a variable measuring respondents’ knowledge of the number of women or Māori MPs.

<sup>15</sup> Results for the effects of our main explanatory variables were similar in models where these variables were introduced separately. This holds for the models explaining general support for an increase of the number of women and Māori MPs, and for the models explaining efforts to increase the representation of both groups.

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<sup>16</sup> We did not use the actual minimum value of this variable, which represents respondents who say they want much less of every kind of spending. Only four respondents had this view and it was thus not a realistic representation of the variation in opinion.

<sup>17</sup> Women are somewhat more likely to support increasing as opposed to abolishing the reserved Māori seats (p=.04).

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