

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

PERCEPTIONS OF THE POLITICAL GENDER QUOTA
DEBATE IN LEBANON

by
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for the degree of Master of Arts
to the Department of Political Studies and Public Administration
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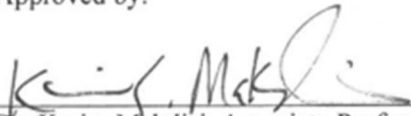
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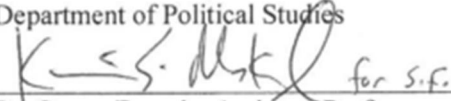
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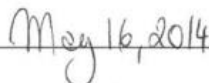
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Chloé Alain Benoist for Master of Arts
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Title: Perceptions of the Political Gender Quota Debate in Lebanon

This thesis explores the debate in Lebanon on political gender quotas through the use of semi-structured interviews with some of the country's civil society and political elite. It first analyzes the academic literature on the concept of citizenship in light of women's exclusion from the public sphere and the debate on the definitions and theories of political gender quotas. This thesis then explores the evolution of Lebanese women's historical participation in national politics before turning to their positions and socio-economic status in modern Lebanese society.

The thesis analyzes the results of interviews with ten prominent members of Lebanon's civil society and political sphere with regard to their perceptions of women's role in the public sphere in the country, as well as their opinions on the feasibility and desirability of a political gender quota in Lebanon. The respondents stand largely in favor of such quota, although some raise fears that the legislation would not necessarily benefit women's broader political inclusion. However, they overwhelmingly believe that gender quota legislation was unlikely to be implemented in the near future. The respondents identified two main obstacles to political gender quotas: entrenched patriarchal mentality in Lebanese society, and a resilient political system concerned with preserving elite power at the expense of Lebanon's citizens. Their responses confirm many of the arguments on citizenship put forward by Arab and Islamic feminists.

This research concludes that the civil society organizations concerned with women's rights should either work to create broad momentum and awareness of political gender quotas or table the issue altogether until the hurdles to its application are addressed.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CAS: Lebanese Central Administration of Statistics

CIA: Central Intelligence Agency

CSO: Civil Society Organization

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women

ESCWA: Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

IFPO: Institut Français du Proche-Orient

KAFA: Enough Violence & Exploitation

MENA: Middle East and North Africa

MP: Member of Parliament

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

UNDP: United Nations Development Program

UNIFEM: United Nations Development Fund for Women

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

A. Introduction and Context

Ahead of Lebanon's parliamentary elections, initially scheduled for June 2013 before being postponed to late 2014, many civil society actors repeated long-standing calls for electoral law reforms spanning a range of issues, from the prevalence of district gerrymandering to the precise role of Lebanese emigrants in the voting process. One such proposal for reform was the introduction of a parliamentary gender quota, an initiative that had been suggested in previous parliamentary election campaigns, notably in the 2005 Boutros Commission proposal. Much like in the 2009 elections, however, a majority of political decision-makers dismissed the idea out of hand,¹ claiming that the existing regional political context wasn't suited for a discussion on women's political representation. Nevertheless, the likelihood of a re-emerging debate over electoral law reform ahead of the next election cycle means that the question of political gender quotas remains pertinent.

Since the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, women's rights, including female political participation, and the struggle to achieve these rights have become legitimized on a global scale. CEDAW affirms that discrimination against women not only "violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity," but is also "an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hamper[ing] the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficult the full development of the

¹ "Liban : Pas de quota de femmes pour les élections," *Courrier International*, October 10, 2008, <http://www.courrierinternational.com/breve/2008/10/10/pas-de-quota-de-femmes-pour-les-elections>, accessed May 2013.

potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity.² The 2004 Arab Regional Conference ó which marked the ten-year anniversary of the Beijing World Conference on Women ó reiterated in its Beirut Declaration õthe importance of the empowerment of women, which [í] has become a fundamental element in the Arab vision of reform,ö calling for legislative changes to õguarantee an increase in their participation in political activity,ö including political gender quotas.³

Much progress has been made globally in the past three decades to include women at all levels of politics. Scores of women are currently assuming the role of head of state, leading government cabinets or prominent political parties. As of February 2014, of the 19 incumbent female heads of state, seven were in Europe, four in Africa, five in Latin America and the Caribbean, and three in Asia,⁴ showing the global nature of the evolution of women's political inclusion. Some political scientists, like Drude Dahlerup, claim that gender quotas have played a role in bringing about this transformation as they have become the norm in many countries: õAs a consequence of gender quotas, a dramatic change has taken place recently in the global ranking order of countries based on their level of female political representation.ö⁵

While Lebanon is often seen as one of the most liberal countries in the Middle East, particularly when it comes to women's rights, the virtual absence of women in politics is a glaring testament to the continued struggle of Lebanese women to be

² United Nations, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (UN, 1979), www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm, accessed December 2013.

³ UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, *Arab Regional Conference, Ten Years after Beijing: Call for Peace* (UN, 2004), http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/div_editor/Download.asp?table_name=ecw_other&field_name=id&FileID=210, accessed March 2014.

⁴ Filibuster, "Female World Leaders Currently in Power," www.filibustercartoons.com/charts_rest_female-leaders.php, accessed February 2014.

⁵ Drude Dahlerup, "Increasing Women's Political Representation: New Trends in Gender Quotas" in *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, edited by Julie Ballington and Azza Karam (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2005), p.145.

properly represented in the political sphere. Like many of their male counterparts, most of the women who have made it into high-level government positions have entered politics thanks to their family connections— MPs Bahia Hariri, Sethrida Geagea and Nayla Tuani being current examples of women coming from prominent political families. Lebanon’s political class dismissed a ten percent women’s quota in parliament even as several countries in the Middle East have undergone popular upheavals in the past several years from citizens desirous of being more included in their countries’ political processes. At the same time, the ruler of Saudi Arabia— a country known for its severe restrictions on women’s autonomy in public life— issued a decree in 2013 to guarantee 20 percent of Shura council seats to women.⁶ As such, the dearth of female participation at the higher levels of politics is seen as particularly vexing for some women’s rights activists in Lebanon, as many wonder whether a political gender quota would be the most effective way to redress the imbalance.

B. Exploring the Literature

The current political sidelining of women in Lebanon raises academic inquiries into the meaning of citizenship and political gender quotas. While these topics will be addressed more in depth in chapter two, a succinct overview of the theoretical debates at play in this case will inform the research and help explain the reasoning behind its methodology and framework.

The gender disparity in Lebanese politics puts into question women’s status as fully-fledged citizens, as one of the most defining spheres of public influence remains

⁶ “In historic first, 30 women appointed to Saudi Shura Council,” *Al-Akhbar English*, January 11, 2013, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/14630>, accessed May 2013.

seemingly closed off to them. The notion of citizenship described by liberal theorists as an egalitarian, unifying identity within one's nation is weakened by evidence seen in practice, not just in Lebanon, but across the world. This observation is tied to efforts by some academics to redefine citizenship to better reflect the dynamics at work in modern-day democratic states. The idea of gender-neutral citizenship is contradicted by the existence of biases in the ways men and women are encouraged to contribute to their societies as citizens. For example, the domains of the military and politics, firmly rooted in the public sphere, are overwhelmingly coded as masculine, whereas women are typically encouraged to fill supporting roles as wives, mothers and caretakers. The acknowledgment of this discrepancy paves the way for broader discussions on what citizenship could aspire to be. As we will see in more depth in the literature review, academia has seen an extensive debate on the axes of oppression perpetuated by existing views of citizenship, and remedies to these entrenched inequalities. Many academics, including Arab authors and political scientists, tie the marginalization of women to the marginalization of a majority of citizens regardless of gender, who are all shut out from political systems which are exclusionary by nature. As such, their calls for inclusive citizenship extend beyond gender, acknowledging the ways in which citizenship as a construct has failed citizens.

Solutions to this issue include a push for inclusive citizenship models which would grant broader access to the public sphere for women and other marginalized groups. Political gender quotas have emerged as tools which aspire to towards more inclusion in the political realm, acknowledging the reality of "gender-biased" citizenship and attempting to correct this imbalance. However, the literature review will reveal the complexity behind political gender quota policies, whether in the efforts to define them

or in the extensive discussions between its supporters and detractors. The varying theoretical definitions of political gender quotas show the complexities behind such legislation and the myriad of forms they might take. The extensive theoretical argumentation surrounding the merits of political gender quotas shows that they are not necessarily a consensual solution, and that opposition or support of such policies reveal deeper concerns about the ways in which women's political inclusion is constructed and brought about. Taking into account the theoretical analyses summarized in this section, this research will examine to what extent the specific case of Lebanese women fits or not within existing conceptions of citizenship and perceptions of political gender quotas.

C. Research Question

While scholars have generally explored political gender quotas in depth, the literature on the topic is rarely able to adequately relate theoretical considerations to practical and political realities, and remains firmly rooted in US- and Euro-centrism. When research turns to other regions, such as South America, Asia or the Middle-East/North Africa region, it has mainly focused on analyzing the effects of gender quotas in countries where they have already been installed. Moreover, there has not been an in-depth assessment of the perceptions of political gender quotas by scholars and civil society actors in Lebanon and how the country's specific context is seen in terms of its possible impact on the effectiveness, or counter-productivity, of such quotas. Their input, as we will see later in the research methodology section below, may be one of the best indicators of the state of the gender quota debate in Lebanon. While gender studies are making strides, especially as academics from the Global South explore the field on

their own terms, this thesis seeks to modestly contribute to this expanding research which highlights localized perspectives of these theoretical debates.

In light of the existing societal and academic debate, this research will therefore **investigate the debate on political gender quotas by Lebanon's civil society and political elite**. Research will determine which aspects of the gender quota debate are seen as particularly relevant in Lebanon by the actors most likely to bring about or block such legislation, and evaluate the perceived value of pushing forward with gender quotas in the country.

D. Theoretical Framework

At the core of the quotas debate are assumptions about the meaning of citizenship within democracies, and the role citizens are able to play within them. The argument behind implementing any quota is that existing institutions are not including certain segments of the population at a level deemed satisfactory by the quota advocates. Recognizing the gendered assumptions behind the mainstream conceptions of citizenship discussed in the literature review – focusing especially on the contrast between liberal theories and more Marxist and post-colonialist views – this research will analyze how gender quotas fit into the broader discussion on women's citizenship within democratic systems. Do the individuals interviewed for this research see citizens as a liberal egalitarian concept, or do they ascribe to the "gender-biased" view of citizenship? Where do they fit women's citizenship rights within a broader spectrum of social justice issues within Lebanon and the Arab world? What do they envision as an alternative to the existing citizenship framework, if any? This research will not focus on

one specific theoretical framework, but observe how the empirical evidence matches various existing positions within this debate.

The research then turns to whether these quotas are perceived as a solution to issues of political exclusion. In order to properly assess the gender quota discussion as a whole and in the Lebanese context, one must analyze citizenship and, more specifically, inclusive citizenship, to better understand the stakes at play in the debate. How is the role of Lebanese women as citizens perceived? Is gender seen as a factor of exclusion in the public sphere? Do they think political gender quotas are capable of improving inclusivity? These are some of the questions this thesis will attempt to answer. Because this thesis does not aim to be prescriptive, but rather to understand the positions of actors on the ground, the analysis of inclusive citizenship theory helps frame their positions based on the existing academic debates.

E. Research Methodology

In order to reach a comprehensive understanding of the particular implications of political gender quotas in Lebanon, this thesis's literature review will delve into the academic debate on the topic to uncover the broad arguments in favor or against the issue. The most recurrent variables seen as impacting quotas's efficiency and desirability will be explored in depth in the fourth chapter to see their relevance in Lebanon's specific historical, social and political context.

This research will take the assumptions drawn from the academic debate and tests them out on political and civil society actors pertinent to Lebanon. The research's focus on expert sources rather than a broader survey of Lebanese citizens on the issue is due to these individuals's unique positions. Their stance on a given policy can have a

large impact on the type of campaigning to enact change. As argued by sociologist C. Wright Mills, "neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both,"⁷ meaning these individuals' points of view help contribute to a better comprehension of their society. These civil society actors and other intellectual opinion-makers also provide crucial insights, as their roles allow them to raise awareness and organize social demands in a manner that could prove to be a decisive factor in influencing policy and public discourse. Researchers Teresa Odendahl and Aileen M. Shaw have noted that these elites "are integral to every community, government, occupation, and religion, as well as to other institutional spheres,"⁸ making them particularly relevant sources when observing policy decision-making. More specifically, non-governmental organizations are identified by Paul Wapner as "cultural agents that shape the way vast numbers of people understand themselves and the world around them."⁹ Social movements have a long history in Lebanon, academic Karam Karam wrote, and have "benefited from pre-existing associative structures in order to develop themselves" during the 1990s after the end of the civil war.¹⁰ NGOs are also seen as a powerful lobbying force, as described by Tala Nabil Hasbini in her thesis exploring the policy impact of environmental organizations in Lebanon.¹¹ She notes that these actors have a crucial role in connecting international standards and policies to the national stage: "International, national, and local stakeholders all have their share in the

⁷ C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1959), p.3.

⁸ Teresa Odendahl and Aileen M. Shaw, "Interview Elites" in *Handbook of Interview Research*, Sage Publication, 2001, pp. 299-316.

⁹ Paul Wapner, "Horizontal Politics: Transnational Environmental Activism and Global Cultural Change," *Global Environmental Politics* 2, no. 2 (2002): 38, 37-61.

¹⁰ Karam Karam, "Civil Associations, Social Movements, and Political Participation in Lebanon in the 1990s," in *NGOs and Governance in the Arab World*, edited by Sarah Ben Nefissa and Carlos Milani (Cairo : American University in Cairo Press, 2005) p.326.

¹¹ Tala Nabil Hasbini, "Environmental Non-governmental Organizations as Mediators in the Policy-making Process: Exploring the Establishment of Nature Reserves in Lebanon" (Master's thesis, American University of Beirut, 2009), pp.42-43.

process, but seemingly [environmental NGOs] play an essential role by linking them altogether, thus ‘catalyzing’ change in environmental policy.¹² A parallel can be made between these Lebanese environmental organizations and women’s rights activism, which uses Lebanon’s status as a CEDAW signatory to apply pressure on the government to enact legislation promoting women’s rights. The use of elite sources draws on their experiences as experts in their fields who have personally witnessed and participated in the debate on women’s political rights in Lebanon. But this research also examines the respondents as objects of the study to some extent, analyzing how their answers are linked to their specific positions in the public sphere.

Ten relevant actors were interviewed about their perception of gender quotas, what factors might hinder or foster their effectiveness in this country and why, so as to gauge their levels of support for such policies for Lebanon. They were first asked to give their assessment of the current status of Lebanese women, in order to provide background information on what shaped their views on the topic of gender quotas. The interviews, lasting between 20 minutes to an hour, took place between October 2013 and March 2014. The study population covered several target groups likely to instigate momentum and awareness regarding issues they feel concerned with. These civil society activists, political figures, NGO workers and academics have all been involved in their fields for years or decades, in some cases with high-profile organizations within Lebanon, both producing and disseminating knowledge on women’s political and social issues in Lebanon. As a numerical reference, some 59 civil society organizations in Lebanon claim to focus at least part of their programs on women’s status and gender

¹² Ibid, p.106.

issues, according to civil society portal Daleel Madani's directory of 1240 NGOs.¹³ It is important to note that while Lebanon is thought to have at least 1,000 women's organizations, "women's groups seem largely unwilling to engage in activities that go beyond their primary focus on charity and social welfare," thus not making them very relevant candidates for this research.¹⁴ The research sample included individuals from several generations, their ages spanning from mid-twenties to sixties. While the interviewees originated from different parts of the country, most were based in Beirut. This geographical bias can be explained by the capital's position as the country's biggest urban, political, economic and academic center, and as the home of the Lebanese Parliament. Beirut is also in close proximity to the presidential palace in Baabda. This location near national centers of power makes it easier for activists to garner attention when pushing for reform at a national level.

The interview subjects were all given the option to remain anonymous and be referred to by their initials, an opportunity most of them took advantage of, with the exception of politician Sethrida Geagea, who agreed to being identified by name due to her very specific circumstances which would have made it easy for her to be identified even if her name hadn't been used. Geagea was also the only respondent to request access to the interview transcript for review. The reasoning behind offering the option of anonymity was to guarantee that interviewees could speak their minds without fear of repercussions. When discussing touchy subjects such as the state of a nation's political system, researchers have argued that "the interviewee may share information that could jeopardize his or her position in a system. This information must remain anonymous

¹³ Daleel Madani, "The Civil Society Directory," <http://daleel-madani.org/directory>, accessed April 2014.

¹⁴ Lina Khatib, "Gender, Citizenship and Political Agency in Lebanon," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 35:3 (2008): 442, http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/23869/Gender_Citizenship_and_Political_Agency_in_Lebanon.pdf, accessed April 2014.

and protected from those whose interests conflict with those of the interviewee.¹⁵ The option of anonymity therefore may result in opportunities for individuals to vent their frustrations and share their experiences.¹⁶ The language barrier was circumvented in most cases as many involved in organized civil society, higher learning and politics in Lebanon speak either English or French, my native language. In the case where an interviewee was not comfortable using either language, an Arabic interpreter was used.

The ten interviewees are as follows:

- F.S., the president of a Lebanese NGO tracking the country's implementation of CEDAW goals (Full transcript in **Appendix A**);
- L.A., the director of an organization specialized in advocacy and electoral campaigns which assists NGOs in Lebanon and the MENA region (Full transcript in **Appendix B**);
- L.H., the executive director for a regional organization working on gender issues, citizenship and political participation (Full transcript in **Appendix C**);
- M.H., a Lebanese university professor specialized in political science (Full transcript in **Appendix D**);
- N.M., a Lebanese lawyer and independent parliamentary candidate (Full transcript in **Appendix E**);
- R.M., a program manager for an NGO focusing on gender equality in the Middle East (Full transcript in **Appendix F**);
- R.Y., an activist in Lebanon (Full transcript in **Appendix G**);
- S.A., a program manager for a Lebanese NGO working on electoral reform and election monitoring (Full transcript in **Appendix H**);

¹⁵ Barbara DiCicco-Bloom and Benjamin F Crabtree, "The qualitative research interview," *Medical Education* Volume 40, Issue 4 (April 2006): 319.

¹⁶ Ibid.

- Sethrida Geagea, a politician of the Lebanese Forces party and one of the current women parliament members (Full transcript in **Appendix I**);
- And T.Q., a Lebanese-Palestinian journalist and activist (Full transcript in **Appendix J**).

The interviewees were chosen specifically for their diverse experiences and areas of expertise as individuals concerned with politics, whether insiders or outsiders in the Lebanese political sphere. Through these ten people, this research gathered information on the opinions of elite sources knowledgeable of politics, women's issues, gender inequality, citizenship rights, political campaigning and law. Six of them qualified as leaders in their fields or organizations, while the rest – R.M., S.A., R.Y. and T.Q. – had mid-level or volunteer positions in civil society. Whether long-time veterans – notably F.S. and M.H. – or relative newcomers – the youngest interviewees being R.Y. and T.Q. – in their fields, their backgrounds informed their positions, and provided an interesting outlook on how wide – or narrow – the gap in opinions could be between interviewees.

The use of semi-structured interviews revealed what factors are seen as most important by the sources, before further questioning them on some aspects brought up during the previous research portion if interviewees haven't brought them up themselves. The interviewees who support women's rights shared what issues were important to them: political representation, gender discrimination, gender-based violence or family law for example, but also broader human rights issues regarding class, sexuality or civil liberties. How did they think these issues will be affected, if at all, by a gender quota? What did the interviewees perceive as the greatest obstacles or facilitating factors for a gender quota law to pass? What did they hope to achieve

beyond a numerical increase of female visibility in politics? Following visions of feminism and specifically Arab feminism within the broader struggle against oppression, the interviewees were also asked about their perception of the Lebanese political class as either a permeable or closed elite system, which would influence the number and type of women who would be affected directly by a political quota.

The interviews will be analyzed in the fifth chapter in order to identify recurring answers and themes depending on which side of the gender quota issue the interviewee claimed to be on. The pattern of answers or lack thereof should indicate whether there lie certain consensuses on the issue. Specific insights emerging from the interviews can also illuminate certain aspects of Lebanese society which could impact gender quotas in ways unforeseen by theoretical writings.

F. Research Limitations

We have seen above the efforts to contact a range of individuals, but like all research, this study has its shares of limitations which I will now discuss. Less than one quarter of organizations and individuals contacted belonging to politics, academia and civil society agreed to participate in the research, hence determining to some extent the study's population. The slant within the research population can be explained by what scholars David Collier and James Mahoney described as *derivation* from the self-selection of individuals into the categories of an explanatory variable, which can systematically distort causal inferences if the investigator cannot fully model the self-

selection process.¹⁷ Having identified a form of self-selecting or non-response bias, this study will not attempt to make generalizations about the nationwide, or even civil society-wide, desire for a political gender quota. However, the low response rate among people contacted for participation in this study could possibly be interpreted as a sign of low general interest within Lebanese civil society, academia and politics, and the impact of this factor will be explored in further detail in the thesis research analysis.

Of the ten interviewees, only one (S.A.) was a man. The high gender disparity can be explained by the general perception that women's rights are "women's work,"¹⁸ meaning that the larger population of civil society actors concerned with women's issues skews largely on the feminine side. Most men contacted seemed either uninterested in the topic or unconvinced that they were either qualified or informed enough to participate in the research. The decision to opt out by a number of individuals and organizations less well-versed in women's issues likely skewed the results of the study in favor of participants who view women's rights as an important topic of advocacy. These women's rights advocates tended to be secular and left-leaning, a position that cannot be assumed to represent the broader Lebanese population. However, we have seen earlier that these elites' views on the importance of quotas are a significant factor in mobilizing a social movement to change legislation. The selection bias present in this study can in fact be used to gauge whether the actors most likely to favor women's rights saw gender quotas as one of their priorities, or worth the time and effort to become a focus of their activist, academic and/or political efforts.

¹⁷ David Collier and James Mahoney, "Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research," *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Oct., 1996): 59, www.jamesmahoney.org/articles/Insights%20and%20Pitfalls.pdf, accessed March 2014.

¹⁸ Melissa McEwan, "Woman's Work," *Shakesville* (blog), April 4, 2011, <http://www.shakesville.com/2011/04/womans-work.html>, accessed March 2014.

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Citizenship, Inclusivity and Women

The debate surrounding political gender quotas in Lebanon fits within a broader discussion on citizenship and inclusivity in a democratic system. Citizenship is seen as one of the cornerstones of the modern state, and particularly crucial to the proper functioning of a democracy. However, the definition of citizenship is highly contested by scholars who consider inclusivity one of the foundations of democratic citizenship.

In general, the minimal features of democratic systems include, according to political philosopher Iris Marion Young: the rule of law, promotion of civil and political freedoms and fair elections,¹⁹ while noting that not all democracies fill these requirements to the same degree. British sociologist T.H. Marshall defines citizenship within a democratic system as ‘a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community,’ adding that ‘all who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed.’²⁰ Citizenship, beyond being a merely legal process, is seen by anthropology professor Aihwa Ong as a ‘cultural process of subjectification,’²¹ through which the citizen is self-made through power relations with the state.

For scholar Valentine Moghadam, the concepts of citizenship and human rights are intimately related:

‘Conceptually and politically, citizenship and human rights overlap, and both are linked to the state, inasmuch as rights are defined in contradistinction to the

¹⁹ Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000, p.5.

²⁰ T.H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950 pp.28-29.

²¹ Aihwa Ong, ‘Cultural Citizenship as Subject-Making,’ *Current Anthropology*, Volume 37 Number 5 (December 1996): p. 737.

power of the state, while the state is also expected to be the guarantor of the civil, political and social rights (or human rights) of citizens.²²

Swedish academic Olof Petersson, much like Marshall, describes citizenship as the right to have equal possibilities to participate in the governing of society.²³ But while scholars like Marshall and Petersson highlight the equality they see as inherent to citizenship, other political scientists question the liberal assumption that citizens are intrinsically considered equals.

Chantal Mouffe, one such post-Marxist scholar, denounces liberalism for having constructed modern citizenship as the realm of the public, identified with men, and for having excluded women by relegating them to the private realm of child-rearing and homemaking.²⁴ If women choose to enter the public realm, Nawal el-Saadawi wrote, men attempt to imprison it [the women's movement] within the confines of social work (in the same way as individual women have been confined to domestic and family service within the home).²⁵

British professor Ruth Lister also considers the existing conception of citizenship to be in itself deeply biased. For her, the philosophy of citizenship has provided a means of reconciling the collectivist tradition of the left with a notion of individual rights and responsibilities.²⁶ However, the existing understanding of citizenship, she claims, is gender-blind, and therefore gender-biased,²⁷ having been

²² Valentine Moghadam, "Women, Citizenship and Civil Society in the Arab World," in *Human Rights in the Arab World: Independent Voices* edited by Anthony Chase, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, p. 89.

²³ Olof Petersson, *Medborgerskab och makt (Citizenship and power)*, Stockholm: Carlssons, p.16.

²⁴ Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* London, UK: Verso, 1993, p.79.

²⁵ Nawal el-Saadawi, *The Nawal El-Saadawi Reader* (London: Zed Books, 1997), p. 239.

²⁶ Ruth Lister, *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives*, New York University Press, 1997, p.2.

²⁷ Ibid, p.ix.

defined by mostly male decision-makers without taking into account the specific needs of certain groups based on gender, race, sexuality or disability.

The first Arab Feminist Conference in 1944 called for the construction of a new model of citizenship, not articulated on a male model, under which the female citizen is subsumed, recognizing the inherent bias of mainstream definitions of citizenship.²⁸ Academic Suad Joseph expresses a similar sentiment, saying that citizenship is mandatory in the modern nation-state, then the modern nation-state has mandated a masculine citizen.²⁹ Joseph goes further, analyzing the discursive association of the nation with motherly attributes, as opposed to the more masculine state. Such links, she says, have reinforced the reproduction of gendered hierarchy, facilitating the institutionalization of gendered citizenship in state-building projects.³⁰ Saadawi notes that the struggle of women to claim their rights as political citizens has been dismissed even within socialist Arab nationalist movements, who believed that women do not constitute a social class and therefore they cannot constitute a political party.³¹ The negation of women as a social class with its own demands, she wrote, erases their specific experience as citizens in favor of a masculine perspective.

Although many theorists agree on the limited nature of the existing conceptions of citizenship, disagreements arise when it comes to offering an alternative. Some, like Sara Ruddick, focus on maternal thinking, which elevates the identity of women as mothers and grants moral superiority to the familial domain over the public sphere of

²⁸ Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 242.

²⁹ Suad Joseph, "Gendering Citizenship in the Middle East," *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East* edited by Suad Joseph (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), p.4.

³⁰ Ibid, p.7.

³¹ Saadawi, p. 241.

politics³². Jean Bethke Elshtain offers a similar theory with her “social feminism,” in which she affirms that “the feminism I seek is the affirmation of moral imperatives and their insertion into the heart of feminist politics.”³³ The rationale behind Elshtain’s social feminism is summarized by professor Mary G. Dietz as the belief that “the social practice of mothering generates a mentality that emphasizes attentiveness toward others and is personal, empathetic and loving,” which would “purge feminism’s soul of its antifamilial and matrophobic specter and restore an authentic and unique identity to women”³⁴ that should be emulated in the public sphere.

Dietz rejects the claims made by Elshtain, arguing that the arguments for social feminism do not take into account the existing diversity of family models, not all of which place empathy and motherhood on a pedestal. Dietz also notes that for some women, motherhood might not be a defining feature of their identity, either by choice or by circumstance. According to Dietz, Elshtain’s social feminist ideal as a model for democracy means that “the special and distinctive aspects of mothering emerge out of a decidedly unequal relationship,” echoing Joseph’s perspective. Democratic citizenship, Dietz argues, should be “collective, inclusive and generalized.”³⁵

Mouffe also rebuffs Ruddick and Elshtain’s as essentialist conceptions of a monolithic category of womankind. Instead, she pushes for a radical democratic project in which “the deconstruction of essential identities should be seen as the necessary

³² Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (Beacon Press, 1995)

³³ Jean Bethke Elshtain, “Feminism, Family and Community,” *Dissent*, Fall 1982, p.447.

³⁴ Mary G. Dietz, “Citizenship with a feminist face: the problem with maternal thinking,” *Political Theory* 1 (February 1985): p.23.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 31.

condition for an adequate understanding of the variety of social relations where the principles of liberty and equality should apply.³⁶ Mouffe defines citizenship as

“A form of political identity that consists of an identification with the political principles of modern pluralist democracy, that is, the assertion of liberty and equality for all. It would be the common political identity of persons who might be engaged in many different enterprises and with differing conceptions of the good, but who are bound by their common identification with a given interpretation of a set of ethico-political values.”³⁷

Her vision stands in contrast with liberalism’s vision of citizenship as “one identity among others” and civic republicanism’s citizenship as “the dominant identity that overrides all others.”³⁸

While many Western scholars see gender roles within traditionally patriarchal systems such as religion and the family as predominantly harmful to women in terms of human and citizenship rights, it is important to note the objections to such notions by Arab and Muslim feminists, who confirm Mouffe’s exhortations to look beyond essential identities and explore the specificities of Arab women’s experiences. Many Arab women reject the orientalist perception that they are all oppressed by religion and their male counterparts, claiming the right to define by themselves what they see as the main issues impeding their rights as women and citizens. For these post-colonial feminists, like Chandra Talpade Mohanty, there is no such thing as a universal woman’s experience, as the “category of women is constructed in a variety of political contexts that often exist simultaneously and overlaid on top of one another.”³⁹ Notably, the critique of family and motherhood is not seen as a “litmus test” like in Western feminism, Joseph argues:

³⁶ Mouffe 1993, p. 76.

³⁷ Ibid, p.83.

³⁸ Ibid, p.84.

³⁹ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Duke University Press, 2003), p.32.

Arab feminism will take on critical analyses of 'self' and 'family,' but within the context of the issues as experienced locally. Arab feminism, for example, may not critique family from the perspective of its failure to produce the individualistic (female) self as promised in liberalist or 'modernist' political philosophy. Rather, Arab feminism may critique family for its failure to fulfill the promises of care, love, and connectivity which succumb to the patriarchal power and control that also make up the kin contract.⁴⁰

Fatima Mernissi sees the patriarchal structure of family as intimately linked to that of the state, noting that 'the complementarity of an authoritarian political structure and the authoritarian power of the husband and father seems to be a feature of transitional societies unable to create an effective development program to face change with effective planning.'⁴¹ Therefore, Mernissi rejects the orientalist view which ascribes Arab misogyny solely to indigenous cultural or religious temperaments, pointing instead to how the political system traps both men and women into rigid gender roles. On the other hand, Global Fund for Women program officer Zeina Zaatari argues that, far from restraining women, motherhood provides women in southern Lebanon "uncontested access to the public domain as mothers of all,"⁴² thus refuting claims that familial roles close women off from the public sphere.

Feminists like Saadawi link Arab women's rights to the broader struggle for Arab nationalism:

'The Arab socialist movement is also progressive in nature since it is mobilizing resistance to international capitalism, imperialism and class oppression, whether exercised by internal or external forces. Nevertheless, its arena is limited to the class struggle. The feminist movement however, in consequence of its specific nature and the triple oppression exercised on

⁴⁰ Suad Joseph, "Familism and Critical Arab family studies," in *Family in the Middle East: Ideational Change in Egypt, Iran and Tunisia* edited by Kathryn Yount and Hoda Rashad (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), p.35

⁴¹ Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 172.

⁴² Zeina Zaatari, "An Avenue for Women's Civil Participation in Southern Lebanon," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 2.1 (2006), p.33.

women, qualifies as the most progressive and revolutionary of all movements since it included the struggle against national, class and sex oppression.⁴³

In addition to tying Arab feminism to Arab self-determination, Saadawi called on Arab feminists to base their movement on their own cultural background, instead of copying the West. "The Arab feminist movement will then acquire substance and flesh, develop its own contours, feed on its own roots, and rise from the soil of Arab lands," she wrote.⁴⁴

While secular feminism has a strong presence in women's rights circles in the Middle-East, religion also has its place in the debate. The concept of Islamic feminism is defined by historian Margot Badran as "a feminist discourse and practice that derives its understanding and mandate from the Qur'an, seeking rights and justice within the framework of gender equality for women and men in the totality of their existence."⁴⁵ Islamic feminists chose to re-interpret religious texts to replace patriarchal readings rather than discard them altogether, thereby giving specific cultural legitimacy to claims of equal citizenship rights between genders and inclusion of women as public citizens. Those supporting a feminist reading of Islam contrast it with Western cultures, which they say are inherently antagonistic to women. Egyptian thinker Mohammad Abduh is thought to be one of the first to claim that Islam recognized the fundamental equality between genders long before the West.⁴⁶ According to Mervat Hatem, Western modernization theories also carried such gender divide, which were then passed on to emerging Middle Eastern states who then adopted "the asymmetrical definitions of

⁴³ Saadawi, p. 242.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 247.

⁴⁵ Margot Badran, "Islamic Feminism Revisited" *Countercurrents*, February 10, 2006, <http://www.countercurrents.org/gen-badran100206.htm>, accessed March 2014.

⁴⁶ Hala Ramez Dimechkie, "Julia Tu'mi Dimashqiyyi and al-Mr'a al-Jadida: 1883-1954" (Master's thesis, American University of Beirut, 1998), p.34.

gender roles and relations within the family.⁴⁷ The equality seen as enshrined in Islam can mean Muslim feminists will aim for a different trajectory than their Western counterparts, Mernissi argued:

“The Muslim image of women as a source of power is likely to make Muslim women set higher and broader goals than just equality with men. The most recent studies on the aspirations of both men and women seem to come to the same conclusion: the goal is not to achieve equality with men. Women have seen that what men have is not worth getting.”⁴⁸

Huda Shaarawi emphasizes the concern for both men and women at the center of Islamic feminism, highlighting the benefits of an active female citizen to all of society:

“Let me assure you all that if depriving women of the political and civil rights that they demand, and that men oppose, would benefit the country, or would increase men’s rights, we would relinquish them with pleasure, but, unfortunately, they would be lost rights that men could not use for themselves or for their country. These rights, buried alive, are of no benefit to society.”⁴⁹

Ghada Samman bases her demands for an active Muslim woman citizen on Islam’s injunction against women being “dolls.” Instead, Samman says, “the liberated woman believes that as a human being she has the right to be responsible for herself and her society. She insists on the right to responsibility, because responsibility is what distinguishes humans from animals.”⁵⁰

Meanwhile, constructivist academics sees citizenship as a tool both of inclusion and exclusion by not only delimiting the grounds by which one individual might be encompassed within a given society, but also by favoring one section of citizens, and one mode of engaging with society over another. Like aforementioned

⁴⁷ Mervat Hatem, “Toward the Development of Post-Islamist and Post-Nationalist Feminist Discourse in the Middle East,” in *Arab Women: Old Boundaries, New Frontiers* edited by Judith Tucker (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 39.

⁴⁸ Mernissi, pp. 175-6.

⁴⁹ Huda Shaarawi, “Pan-Arab Feminism,” in *Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing* edited by Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke (London: Virago Press, 1990) p. 339.

⁵⁰ Ghada Samman, “Our Constitution – We the Liberated Women,” in *Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing* edited by Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke (London: Virago Press, 1990) p.141.

authors, Lister is critical of the gendering of the public and private spheres and the elevation of the former over the latter. She advocates for a new policy framework that incorporates both the "citizen-the-carer" and "citizen-the-earner," concepts that tend to be highly gendered, in a way that does not undermine progress towards gender equality, thereby balancing practical and strategic gender interests.⁵¹ While Lister attacks the ways in which citizenship can be used as a tool of exclusion of women and other minorities, she also sees it as providing "an invaluable strategic theoretical concept for the analysis of women's subordination, and a potentially powerful political weapon in the struggle against it."⁵² Afsaneh Najmabadi cited, as an example of alternative citizenship, Iran under Reza Shah, who constructed the citizen as a "servant of the state, providing the possibility for women to break out of the trap that can now indeed be named domesticity."⁵³

Young herself has dedicated several volumes to the issue of inclusive citizenship, with a particular focus on women and cultural minorities. She raises questions on understanding the plurality of identities like that of "woman," and discusses the issue of communication in civil society to broaden inclusion. More so than many other authors, Young explores ways to rectify the exclusive nature of the existing conception of citizenship. In *Inclusion and Democracy*, Young notes that "the normative legitimacy of a democratic decision depends on the degree to which those affected by it have been included in the decision-making process."⁵⁴ Therefore, she argues, it becomes essential for a government to consider all of its citizens' needs in

⁵¹ Lister 1997, p.201.

⁵² Ibid, p.195.

⁵³ Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Crafting an Educated Housewife in Iran," in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, edited by Lila Abu Lughod (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 114.

⁵⁴ Young 2000, p.6.

order to be considered a true democracy, a legitimacy which feminist and other progressive authors see as compromised by the exclusion of women and other minority populations. Without specifically calling for quotas, Young envisions "institutionalized self-organization" as the solution to bias in politics and justice, by implementing inclusive "principles of group representation in national and local politics"⁵⁵ to ensure that all sections of society contribute to their own inclusion in the public sphere.

The debate surrounding citizenship shows the complexity of the concept, as well as the variety of ways in which it can be interpreted as exclusive or inclusive, neutral or gendered. As political gender quotas are intended to work as tools of inclusion into the public sphere of citizenship, the academic debate is expected to inform and reflect the discussions taking place amongst actors on the ground in Lebanon. As we will see later on in this research, the theoretical discussions on the meaning of inclusive citizenship reflect in the ongoing debate in Lebanon, as some concepts and arguments appear in both academic and layman discussions.

B. Defining Political Gender Quotas

Political gender quotas are an established field of research in political science and gender studies, both of which study it in the context of policy, political theory and case studies of numerous countries. Abundant literature has served to define different political gender quotas and foster a significant debate on the pros and cons of such legislation. This section will cover existing works on the topic, both in the realm of theory and in pertaining to the debate in Lebanon.

⁵⁵ Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton University Press, 1990, pp.190-191.

Dahlerup defines political quotas as the set-up of a percentage or number for the representation of a specific group, here women, most often in the form of a minimum percentage.⁵⁶ The intended purpose of these quotas, as summarized by Dahlerup, is to be used as a measure to increase the representation of historically excluded or under-represented groups.⁵⁷

These political quotas come in different forms depending on the method used to achieve representation of a given population. Mona Lena Krook distinguished three main types of political quotas: party quotas, legislative quotas and reserved seats. For Krook, party quotas can be summarized as measures that are adopted voluntarily by individual parties that commit the party to aim for a certain proportion of women among its candidates to political office [í] They alter party practices by setting out new criteria for candidate selection that require elites to recognize existing biases and consider alternative spheres of political recruitment.⁵⁸ In contrast, she identifies legislative quotas as similar to party quotas, except for the fact that political parties are compelled to include women by law, thus mandatory provisions that apply to all political groupings, rather than only those that choose to adopt quotas.⁵⁹ Finally, Krook defines reserved seats as policies often established through reforms to the constitution and occasionally the electoral law that create separate electoral rolls for women, designate separate districts for female candidates or distribute seats for women based on each party's proportion of the popular vote.⁶⁰ The latter reservation of parliamentary seats is the policy most recently suggested in Lebanon.

⁵⁶ Drude Dahlerup, ed. *Women Quotas and Politics*. New York City, USA: Routledge, 2006, p.19.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.19.

⁵⁸ Mona Lena Krook, *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide*. USA: Oxford University Press, 2010, p.7.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.8.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.6.

Mercedes Mateo Diaz, on the other hand, distinguishes four different types of quota policies according to how strongly they hold political entities accountable in obtaining results. The first type she describes is the "enabling quotas for political parties [í] in which the use of a quota is permitted, but is neither recommended nor binding,"⁶¹ similar to what Krook calls party quotas. She defines the next level of quota legislation as "requiring quotas for electoral candidates,"⁶² equivalent to Krook's legislative quotas. Mateo Diaz's third classification is "enabling quotas for the composition of parliament," a case in which "legislation strongly favors the equal representation of men and women in all decision-making bodies,"⁶³ beyond elected seats. Her final type of gender quotas is called "requiring quotas for the composition of parliament [í] a formal requirement for the effective distribution of the parliamentary seats,"⁶⁴ which corresponds to the reserved seats defined by Krook.

In *The International IDEA Handbook of Electoral System Design*,⁶⁵ Ben Reilly put forth a differentiation system for gender quotas, as quoted by Mateo Diaz, which he divides between: statutory quotas, electoral law and informal quotas. The statutory quotas, much like Krook's reserved seats, "require a minimum portion of women among the elected representatives."⁶⁶ Electoral law quotas, on the other hand, compel political parties to present a certain proportion of female candidates during elections. Finally, informal quotas designate the non-compulsory decision by certain political parties to include a minimum number of women.

⁶¹ Mercedes Mateo Diaz, *Representing Women? Female Legislators in West European Parliaments*, (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2005), p.24.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p.25.

⁶⁵ Ben Reilly and A. Reynolds, *The International IDEA Handbook of Electoral System Design*, (Stockholm: International IDEA, 1997).

⁶⁶ Mateo Diaz, p.24.

While Krook, Mateo Diaz and Reilly's cataloguing systems reveal the unsuspected complexities that lie beneath the term "gender quota," this thesis will use Krook's definitions as reference, as her classification most closely mirrors the types of legislation being advocated in Lebanon. However, the differentiations between different types of quotas can help understand nuanced opinions about political gender quotas in Lebanon.

C. The Debate Surrounding Gender Quotas

Like all affirmative action policies, gender quotas have their supporters and detractors alike, who have detailed major arguments to support their opinions. The main points brought up by quota proponents include: quotas as an instrument of justice to repair the imbalance between genders; the importance of bringing different voices into politics and of women representing their own interests; women as untapped political potential; and how quotas mark the first step to higher female political participation. Meanwhile, opponents of quotas issue several criticisms of such legislation, as will be seen later: its impact on the notion of merit; its failure to fully challenge elite systems; identity politics as a threat to "the common good"; the ill-timing of gender quota proposals; and quotas' insufficient capacity to remedy gender discrimination. All these arguments will be detailed below.

Proponents of gender quotas argue that such legislation is a matter of righting longstanding wrongs. Minority populations, including women, have been historically excluded from the political sphere on a global scale, despite the fact that they constitute a large part of a given country's population. Scholars like Bernard Manin in his book *The Principles of Representative Government* highlight the inherent elitism of

democratic systems, which tend to keep only a small sample of citizens in the highest realms of power. Meanwhile, Anne Marie Goetz, the chief adviser of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), points to the globally low level of female political participation, dismantling the notion that older democracies are more likely to have women in politics. This exclusion, Goetz claims, is not simply a 'deficit of democracy, but indicative of fundamentally gendered conditions for political participation,'⁶⁷ echoing discussions on gendered citizenship seen earlier.

Pushing for broader political representation is hence framed as an issue of restoring justice. In a speech quoted by scholars Mala Htun and Mark Jones, Brazilian congresswoman Marta Suplicy argued that a political gender quota in Brazil is 'more than a new instrument in women's struggle for equality and the construction of true democracy, it is an imperative of justice.'⁶⁸ Suplicy frames political gender quotas as a positive step, not just for women, but for the entire democratic system as well. Similarly, Qasim Amin, describes as one of the first Arab feminists, wrote in 1899 that he saw the sidelining of women as detrimental to society as a whole:

'Our present situation resembles that of a very wealthy man who locks up his gold in a chest. The man unlocks his chest daily for the mere pleasure of seeing his treasure. If he knew better, he would invest his gold and double his wealth in a short period of time.'⁶⁹

Though the phrasing, seen through 21st century eyes, might come off as instrumentalist, it nevertheless highlights the belief that women can play a productive role in the public

⁶⁷ Anne Marie Goetz, "Women's Political Effectiveness: A Conceptual Framework" in *No Shortcuts to Power: African Women in Politics and Policy Making*, (London: Zed Books, 2003), p.49.

⁶⁸ Mala N. Htun and Mark P. Jones, "Engendering the Right to Participate in Decision-Making: Electoral Quotas and Women's Leadership in Latin America" in *Gender and the Politics of Rights and Democracy in Latin America*, New York, NY: Palgrave, 2002, p.34.

⁶⁹ Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women and the New Woman* (Cairo, Egypt: American University of Cairo Press, 2000), p. 13.

sphere. Not only is political participation seen as just, it has also been declared a universal human right by the Asia Pacific Forum in 2001.⁷⁰ Moreover, proper citizen representation is also seen as more justifiable than employment quotas in democratic systems, according to political scientist Carol Bacchi, as “the government should be tied to the people to some degree.”⁷¹

Young, among other scholars, claims that including more voices in politics would ultimately benefit democracy. She rejects the notion that “political participants must put aside their particular interests and affiliations to form a deliberative public,” adding that the dichotomy between “common good” and “special interests” contrasts with the notion that “socially situated interests, proposals, claims and expressions of experience are often an important resource for democratic discussion and decision-making.”⁷² For Young, the concept of a “common good” can often be biased “in ways that favor dominant social groups and position women, or indigenous people, or Blacks, or homosexuals, or Muslims as deviant Other.”⁷³

Consequently, the entry of more dissonant voices in the political sphere can ultimately bring about changes that benefit usually marginalized populations. This perspective critiques the liberal theory “reliance on abstract, disembodied individuals.”⁷⁴ Quota supporters argue that this recognition of the specific needs of women citizens is one of the first steps leading to growing advocacy for higher female political representation. In conjunction with recognizing women’s historical exclusion

⁷⁰ Carol Bacchi, “Arguing for and against quotas” in *Women, Quotas and Politics* edited by Drude Dahlerup, New York, NY: Routledge, 2006, p. 40.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 33.

⁷² Young, 2000, p.7.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 81.

⁷⁴ Bacchi, p.37.

and their special needs as citizens, some scholars see women as untapped political potential, just like Amin. For Dahlerup, women's political marginalization means that they are "incorporated into the industrial-military complex and the government systems of the world"⁷⁵ to a lesser degree than men. This relative detachment from the most controversial sources of power could mean that women as a whole are perceived as less corrupt or more detached from violent conflicts than men. Rwanda is often touted as an example of high levels of female political participation in a post-conflict society, where women now hold 64 percent of parliamentary seats, as opposed to 18 percent before the 1994 genocide.⁷⁶ Another argument in favor of higher numbers of women in power is the claim that they are the best suited to represent female interests. For Goetz, the "characteristics of gender relations"⁷⁷ have a strong impact on women's political engagements, even suggesting that women might be more likely to turn to local issues and survival projects. Htun and Jones cite women-coded social issues "such as health, education and children" as most likely to galvanize women into political action.⁷⁸

Ultimately, gender quota supporters argue that while the policy might not be the end-all solution to women's woes, it is a necessary starting point to solving entrenched inequalities. For Bacchi, arguing for quotas is not "the end-point of claims for citizenship rights" and does not deny "the context-specific conditions that may well mean that women in some situations will see no urgency for [quota policies]."⁷⁹ For Goetz and academic Shireen Hassim, "descriptive representation may be a necessary

⁷⁵ Drude Dahlerup, "Women in Political Decision-making: From Critical Mass to Critical Acts in Scandinavia" in *Gender, Peace and Conflict*, London: Sage, p.105.

⁷⁶ Minna Salami, "African women are blazing a feminist trail – why don't we hear their voices?" *The Guardian*, September 23, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/23/african-women-rwanda-feminism>, accessed December 2013.

⁷⁷ Goetz, p.38

⁷⁸ Htun and Jones, p.35.

⁷⁹ Bacchi, p.43.

first step to the institutional representation that is required if substantive representation is to be achieved.⁸⁰ For Mark el-Makari, political gender quotas can represent a more realistic and easier solution than awaiting a radical change in culture and in society's attitudes towards women.⁸¹ Lebanese academic Azza Baydoun sees political gender quotas as aspiring to shift the prevalent standpoint vis-a-vis decision-making positions from an exclusive perspective to an inclusive one where the interests of women as well as the interests of all social groups [] are included in the development process of our society.⁸² While scholars in favor of political gender quotas acknowledge the limitations of counting on these quotas alone to improve the fate of female citizens, they claim that such policy would help pave the way for other changes that could benefit women and help them achieve equal status with men in many fields.

While the quota supporters believe the above arguments to make a compelling case for pushing laws to make space for women in politics, many others point to the flaws in gender quotas and perceive them as undesirable or shortsighted legislation. The most recurrent criticism is how political quotas undermine the notion of candidate merit. In his book *The Measure of Merit*, John Carson explores the notion of political merit in post-revolutionary France and United States of America, positing that while both countries based their newly founded democracies on the notion of equality amongst citizens, distinctions among them would no longer be based on aristocratic lineage, but on individual merit. Merit, it was argued, would become the "true" distinguisher of worthiness, "reflecting fundamental aspects of a person's nature" and forming the new

⁸⁰ Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim, "Introduction: Women in Power in Uganda and South Africa" in *No Shortcuts to Power: African Women in Politics and Policy Making*, London: Zed Books, p.5.

⁸¹ Mark el-Makari, "The Proposed Gender Quota in Lebanon: Legal Crisis or Democratic Transformation?" *Al-Raida* Issue 126-127 (Summer-Fall 2009): 42.

⁸² Azza Baydoun, "Women in Power and Decision-Making Positions: Conditions and Restraints," *Al-Raida* Issue 126-127 (Summer-Fall 2009): 57.

baseline of democratic societies hierarchies.⁸³ Electoral quotas, like other affirmation action policies, are therefore accused of “bypassing competitive processes” and “ignoring the merit principle which, it is argued, ensures that the best person will be selected for the job.”⁸⁴ Women candidates can be perceived as inherently inferior or less qualified than their male counterparts who gained parliamentary seats without the need for affirmative action measures. Irish politician Joanna Tuffy has also condemned political gender quotas, arguing that “quotas treat women as if they can’t hack it at a party’s selection convention, like a man can. They decree that women must be selected on the basis of their gender, and this does them a disservice. Women, just like men, should be chosen on the basis of their qualities as individuals and their ability to persuade voters.”⁸⁵ For Tuffy, gender quotas implicitly undermine the perception of women’s candidates’ merit. For quota detractors, installing quotas is a way for women to bypass the competitive process, hence undermining the legitimacy of women who access the political sphere through them.

Bacchi noted that because gender quota legislation is typically phrased to explicitly promote higher female participation “except for some instances of gender-neutral phrasing in some countries like Iceland and Norway”^{86,87} “opponents can also claim that the quotas represent “a form of discrimination against men.”⁸⁸ Tuffy adds to the sentiment, writing that gender quotas “are likely to be used to discriminate against

⁸³ John Carson, *The Measure of Merit: Talents, Intelligence, and Inequality in the French and American Republics, 1750-1940*. Princeton, USA: Princeton University Press, 2007, p.2

⁸⁴ Bacchi, p.33.

⁸⁵ Joanna Tuffy, “Gender quotas do women no favours – and undermine democracy,” *The Journal*, November 22, 2011, <http://www.thejournal.ie/readme/column-gender-quotas-do-women-no-favours-%E2%80%93-and-undermine-democracy-284733-Nov2011/>, accessed December 2013.

⁸⁶ Quota Project, “Iceland,” <http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?ul=en&country=109>, accessed January 2014.

⁸⁷ Quota Project, “Norway,” <http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?ul=en&country=165>, accessed January 2014.

⁸⁸ Bacchi, p. 33.

both women and men. The proposed quotas will mean that candidates will be ruled out on grounds of gender, and legislation will make such discrimination mandatory.⁸⁹ These arguments on merit and male discrimination are contradicted by the “gender-blind, hence gender-biased” view, which suggests that the conventional notions of merit might not take into account the specificities of women’s experiences and how these might affect their performance in the competitive process.

One of the most prominently used arguments for the dismissal of gender quota legislation is the claim that there are more pressing issues to address than women’s rights. National or international crises are often used as pretexts to brush aside quota policies or postpone them indefinitely. This argument was used by the US President’s Commission on the Status of Women in 1963, in the midst of the civil rights movement. The commission concluded that “a constitutional amendment need not now be sought to enshrine gender equality into law, implying that the issue was not seen as a pressing matter at the time.”⁹⁰ In the case of Lebanon, Hala Maksoud observed how women’s issues fell to the wayside in times of conflict:

“When abstract concerns such as feminism persist in the consciousness of a society at war, the level of purpose in the debate has diminished, because to have a purpose beyond survival becomes in the minds of people a factor interrupting their quest for self-preservation. In such an atmosphere, there invariably develops a diminishing of political and social consciousness, which is what happened in Lebanon.”⁹¹

⁸⁹ Tuffy.

⁹⁰ Leslie W. Gladstone, “The Long Road to Equality: what Women Won from the ERA Ratification Effort,” *American Women: A Library of Congress Guide for the Study of Women’s History and Culture in the United States* (2001), accessed January 2014.

⁹¹ Hala Maksoud, “The Case of Lebanon,” in *Arab Women: Between Defiance and Restraint*, edited by Suha Sabbagh (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1996), p. 93.

In another example, Algerian women were politically active when the nation claimed its independence from France and during its civil war in the 1990s, but the conflicts and their aftermaths were used to justify paralysis on the women's rights front. According to researcher Fatiha Talahite, "insecurity, instability and violence undermine this possibility [of women's rights improvement]. But stability is never acquired once and for all, and the foundations of a society are generally fragile."⁹² Therefore, Talahite implies, the fragilities of a society can be used to justify stagnation in terms of rights. In a similar vein, a speaker at a 2013 panel discussion notably lamented that in the case of women's rights in war-torn Syria, "the not-now debate turns into never. Women's issues are continuously cast aside, making it more difficult to include women in the national political discussion once Syria stabilizes."⁹³

While the above argument is typically used by policymakers who display little to no interest in women's issues, others worry that despite the quota's goal of including a broader portion of the population into the political system, they far too often maintain an elite system in place. The high costs of electoral campaigning "may be beyond the reach of many women, mainly those who lack financial independence,"⁹⁴ Lebanese academic Marguerite el-Helou observed. In their research on female members of parliament in India and the European Union, Catherine Hoskyns and Shirin Rai found that the majority of them belonged to the middle or upper-middle class and did not

⁹² Fatiha Talahite, "Femmes et violence dans le conflit armé en Algérie," *Algeria Watch*, September 9, 2000, <http://www.algeria-watch.de/farticle/tolede.htm>, accessed January 2014.

⁹³ Sidney Balman, "Women in the Syrian Revolution," *Peacefare*, September 30, 2013, <http://www.peacefare.net/?p=17037>, accessed January 2013.

⁹⁴ Marguerite el-Helou, "Women Quota in Lebanon: A False Promise?" *Al-Raida* Issue 126-127 (Summer-Fall 2009): 64.

identify as feminists.⁹⁵ Hoskyns and Rai refer to this phenomenon as the "globalization of elite politics," suggesting that gender quotas are not sufficient to overcome the obstacles in the way of women who experience intersecting axes of marginalization. A political gender quota is not guaranteed to increase income or class diversity in politics, therefore limiting its impact on large sections of the female population.

The second point brought up by Hoskyns and Rai, as well as gender theory professor Anne Phillips, is whether female politicians' gender would really affect their political stances. Phillips presents the models of "politics of ideas" versus "politics of presence"⁹⁶ to distinguish two theories on the influence of identity on politicians' actions. Because elected representatives are expected to show a degree of impartiality from any specific group, there are no guarantees that a female parliamentarian will push for women-friendly legislation, just like male politicians might be more committed to pushing policies to improve the women's rights situation in his country. Baydoun brings up the example of the civil law bill in 1998, which would have granted an optional civil personal status in Lebanon and benefited women, but was voted down, including by female parliamentarians.⁹⁷ In a similar case in 2009, the political debate over Lebanese women's ability to pass on their nationality to their children saw women parliamentarians positioning themselves along sectarian lines, as MP Bahia Hariri of the majority Sunni Future Movement spoke in favor of a change in the law, whereas Christian MP Gilberte Zwein of the March 8 coalition and MP Sethrida Geagea of the March 14 alliance both spoke out against such reform, which some believe would give the Lebanese nationality to many Muslim Palestinians and changed the confessional

⁹⁵ Catherine Hoskyns and Shirin Rai, "Gender, Class and Representation: India and the European Union," *The European Journal of Women's Studies* 5 (1998): pp.345-366.

⁹⁶ Anne Phillips, *The Politics of Presence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995)

⁹⁷ Baydoun, p. 56.

-balance in Lebanon.⁹⁸ However, this liberal view of a 'politics of ideas,' with neutral participants uninfluenced by their social backgrounds as well as their gender, has been challenged by minority advocates, who defend what Phillips has dubbed a 'politics of presence,' which calls for minority political representatives to introduce their groups' perspectives in the political discourse. In practice, however, the debate between 'politics of ideas' and 'politics of presence' is not necessarily so clear cut, hence not guaranteeing that more female politicians would mean a stronger political stance on women's issues.

For feminist opponents of gender quotas, these are seen as a compromise of feminist goals, which could undermine the long-term efficiency in terms of improving the status of women in politics. Quotas, they fear, could serve as a mere façade of inclusion to legitimize an exclusionary government. For scholars Maxine Molyneux and Nikki Craske, who researched gender in the context of Latin American politics, 'collaboration with flawed democracies might serve to arrest rather than to advance more general democratic reform.'⁹⁹ As such, quotas represent a shift towards less confrontational feminist politics, perhaps at the expense of more substantive changes. Bringing up these concerns about the co-option of the feminist political struggle, Bacchi asks: 'Will women simply be incorporated? Will they be turned into political men?'¹⁰⁰ Should these cases materialize, the achievements of political gender quotas would

⁹⁸ Lara Khattab, "Civil Society in a Sectarian Context: The Women's Movement in Post-War Lebanon" (Master's thesis, Lebanese American University, 2010), pp. 145-7.

⁹⁹ Maxine Molyneux and Nikki Craske, "The Local, the Regional and the Global: Transforming the Politics of Rights," in *Gender and the Politics of Rights and Democracy in Latin America*, edited by Nikki Craske and Maxine Molyneux (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002), p.12.

¹⁰⁰ Bacchi, p.39.

ultimately be very limited in their scope without the addition of gender quotas in other decision-making fields like the legal, corporate and media sectors.¹⁰¹

In this regard, opponents and supporters of political gender quotas agree that this type of policy alone is not enough to trigger a massive improvement of women's rights at a national level. Speaking of Latin America, sociologist Virginia Vargas noted that "those who campaign for political rights while neglecting or ignoring social or cultural rights" sustain and legitimize the exclusionary character of existing democracies and formulations of citizenship.¹⁰²

Some of the most prominent arguments against quotas tend to ignore the historical discrimination against women (and other marginalized groups) on a global scale, which undermines the arguments' strength in the eyes of those who recognize the influence of a misogynistic context on women's status in society. Many of those speaking out in favor of gender quotas see such measures as a way to rectify the imbalance cause by this misogynistic framework. However, Molyneux and Craske's observations on women in politics in Latin America indicate that context has a strong influence on the effectiveness or counter-effectiveness of measures meant to improve women's political inclusion. As such, theoretical support for political gender quotas should be tempered by knowledge of the specific political, economic, and social contexts in which such policies are being discussed.

In this chapter, we have covered the academic literature surrounding women and citizenship and political gender quotas. While this section will inform the results of

¹⁰¹ Young 2000, p.152-3.

¹⁰² Virginia Vargas, "The Struggle by Latin American Feminisms for Rights and Autonomy," in *Gender and the Politics of Rights and Democracy in Latin America*, edited by Nikki Craske and Maxine Molyneux (Houndmills : Palgrave, 2002) p.215.

this research by making it easier to compare and contrast responses with academic discourse, women's status in Lebanon need to be explored to fully understand the context of these interviews and explain the logic behind the respondents' answers. In the following chapter, we will see more about women's standing in Lebanon in the country's modern history.

CHAPTER III SETTING THE CONTEXT OF WOMEN'S STATUS IN LEBANON

A. A Demographic Portrait of Lebanese Women

In order to fully understand the context in which the Lebanese political gender quota debate is taking place, one must first have an idea of the demographic, economic, social and political situation of women in the country.

Demographically speaking, women represent somewhat more than half of Lebanon's 4.26 million inhabitants, with an average ratio of 0.95 men for each woman.¹⁰³ The CIA World Factbook put Lebanon's general gender ratio at 0.96, compared to 1.01 men for each woman worldwide. It also broke down data by age, and estimated that the ratio at birth in Lebanon is of 1.05 males for each female, only to fall to 0.93 males for each female for the 25-54 age bracket.¹⁰⁴ This drop can be attributed to the high level of Lebanese emigration, which is 76 percent male according to official

¹⁰³ World Economic Forum, "The Global Gender Gap Report 2013," p.254, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2012.pdf, accessed January 2014.

¹⁰⁴ "Lebanon," January 7, 2014, CIA World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html>, accessed January 2014.

Lebanese statistics,¹⁰⁵ meaning women represent a much larger proportion of the population than they would otherwise.

Lebanese women's life expectancy at birth is 74 years old, compared to men at 70 years old.¹⁰⁶ This gender disparity is close to the global trend, as women across the world tend to have a life expectancy five to ten years higher than men.¹⁰⁷ Lebanese women are therefore seen as representing a distinct, if slight, majority of the nation's population, an important point to take into consideration when observing their roles in differing aspects of Lebanese society, as we will see in the following sections.

B. The Economic and Social Status of Lebanese Women

1. Women's Education and Economic Participation

When discussing women's status, education is often shown as a sector in which Lebanese women thrive. According to the 2013 Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum, 86 percent of Lebanese women are literate, compared to 93 percent of men.¹⁰⁸ However, according to a 2011 UNICEF report, boys and girls are enrolled in primary schools at very similar rates – 91 and 89 percent respectively.¹⁰⁹ Later on, enrollment rates skew largely in women's favor at higher levels of education. UNICEF says 79 percent of girls are enrolled in secondary school, compared to 71

¹⁰⁵ Najwa Yaacoub and Lara Badre, *Population and Housing in Lebanon*, Statistics In Focus (SIF), Central Administration of Statistics, Lebanon, Issue number 2, April 2012.

¹⁰⁶ UNICEF, "Lebanon: MENA Gender Equality Profile," October 2011, p.1, <http://www.unicef.org/gender/files/Lebanon-Gender-Eqaulity-Profile-2011.pdf>, accessed April 2014.

¹⁰⁷ Laura Blue, "Why do Women Live Longer than Men?" *Time Magazine*, August 6, 2008, <http://content.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1827162,00.html>, accessed April 2014.

¹⁰⁸ World Economic Forum, p. 254.

¹⁰⁹ UNICEF, p. 4.

percent of boys, whereas World Economic Forum statistics reveal that 62 percent of women reach a tertiary level of education, as opposed to 54 percent of men.¹¹⁰

While female citizens' strong presence at higher levels of education might suggest that they are investing in future careers, Lebanon has an abysmal record in terms of women's economic status at every level. From their participation in the workforce to financial remuneration, Lebanese women trail far behind their male counterparts. Women only make 25 percent of the Lebanese workforce, as only 22 percent of women aged 15 and older are formally employed.¹¹¹ This figure is in line with regional trends, where women constitute 26 percent of the workforce¹¹², but pales in comparison to the global average of women representing 40% of the world's workforce.¹¹³ The discrepancy between genders can be seen not only in the vastly different levels of economic participation, but in the work hierarchy as well. While the "professional and technical workers" category is fairly gender-equal, being constituted of 52 percent of men and 48 percent of women, only 8 percent of "legislators, senior officials and managers" in Lebanon are women.¹¹⁴ This substantial gap reveals that, of the few women involved in the formal economy, only a small fraction manage to climb to the higher echelons of the professional hierarchy, a notable fact given this research's focus on women in public decision-making.

¹¹⁰ World Economic Forum, p. 254.

¹¹¹ UNICEF, p. 4.

¹¹² World Bank, "Middle East and North Africa: Women in the Workforce," <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/EXTMNAREGTOPPOVRED/0,,contentMDK:22497617~pagePK:34004173~piPK:34003707~theSitePK:497110,00.html>, accessed May 2014.

¹¹³ World Bank, "WDR 2012 Home Page," <http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/EXTWDRS/EXTWDR2012/0,,menuPK:7778074~pagePK:7778278~piPK:7778320~theSitePK:7778063~contentMDK:22851055,00.html>, accessed May 2014.

¹¹⁴ World Economic Forum, p. 254.

Furthermore, working women earn 61 cents for every dollar a man makes at a similar job in Lebanon.¹¹⁵ The World Economic Forum estimates that Lebanese women earn an average yearly income of \$ 6,154, while men earn \$22,776 on average, a striking gender disparity. In its 2013 Gender Gap report, the World Economic Forum ranked Lebanon as 126 out of 136 countries regarding women's economic participation, reflecting the levels of exclusion and discrimination to which they are subjected.¹¹⁶

2. Lebanese Women and the Family

As discussed earlier, women's citizen status is often closely linked to their perceived duties in the private sphere of the family, hence explaining to some extent the low female participation in the workforce. By analyzing data on the Lebanese family, we can have a clearer picture of many women's lives and day-to-day responsibilities. It is important to note that lesbian, bisexual and transgender women tend to be rendered invisible in Lebanon due to remaining cultural and legal prejudices regarding non-conforming sexualities and gender identities.¹¹⁷

According to the Lebanese Central Administration of Statistics (CAS), the average age for women's first marriage was 27.7 years old in 2009.¹¹⁸ A 2006 survey by the Ministry of Social Affairs put the average age of marriage for Lebanese men was 32.8.¹¹⁹ The marriage age has significantly increased since the 1970s, when women married at 23 and men at 29 on average, according to the United Nations Development

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p. 254.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 255.

¹¹⁷ Nadine M., "Arab Queer Women and Transgenders Confronting Diverse Religious Fundamentalisms: The Case of Meem in Lebanon," www.awid.org/content/download/101215/.../CF_SUM_ArabQueer.pdf, accessed April 2014.

¹¹⁸ Yaacoub, p. 6.

¹¹⁹ "Lebanese Women: A Diminishing Marriage Market," *AUB Bulletin Today* Vol. 8 no. 2 (December 2006), <http://staff.aub.edu.lb/~webbultn/v8n2/article21.htm>, accessed April 2014.

Program (UNDP).¹²⁰ CAS also revealed that 32 to 45 percent of married women between the ages of 15 and 24 had a husband more than ten years older than them. However, it estimated that fewer than 2 percent of women were married before the age of 15, and only 2 percent were married to a man who had another spouse, showing that the issues of child marriage and polygamy, often discussed by human rights organizations in the MENA region, were not a major concern in Lebanon.¹²¹

According to the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs, 14.2 percent of heads of households were women in 2006, as opposed to 85.8 percent of male heads of households.¹²² In 45 percent of households led by women, the head of the household was over the age of 65 and in most cases widowed. Of these women-led households, 56 percent had no male children or adults, showing once again the gap between genders in terms of leadership and decision-making inside the home.¹²³ The right to divorce in Lebanon is limited depending on the spouses' religion(s). Muslim women can divorce, although the process is more difficult for them to initiate than for Muslim men. Christian Lebanese, on the other hand, cannot legally divorce under Lebanese law, although they can opt for an annulment instead.¹²⁴ Taking these legal hurdles into account, the number of divorces is unsurprisingly low. The CAS recorded an average of 34,093 new marriages per year between 2000 and 2010, and an average of 4,927

¹²⁰ United Nations Development Program, "Youth and Family Formation," p. 96, <http://www.undp.org.lb/programme/governance/advocacy/nhdr/nhdr98/chptr8.pdf>, accessed April 2014.

¹²¹ Yaacoub, p. 6.

¹²² Lebanese Republic Ministry of Social Affairs, "Living Conditions of Households: The National Survey of Household Living Conditions 2004," 2006, p. 28, <http://www.socialaffairs.gov.lb/docs/pubs/LCH-en.pdf>, accessed April 2014.

¹²³ Yaacoub, p. 12.

¹²⁴ UNICEF, p. 2.

divorces each year during the same time frame, meaning that there were around 14.5 divorces for each 100 new marriages.¹²⁵

Regarding motherhood, Lebanese women had on average 1.9 children between 1999 and 2003, the CAS reported.¹²⁶ The low number of children can be explained to some extent by women marrying much later, coupled with the social taboo surrounding children born out of wedlock in Lebanon.¹²⁷ But contrary to what low birth rates might suggest, Lebanese women suffer from a lack of information and access to reproductive health. A 2012 study by the Institute of Health Management and Social Protection (IGSPS) revealed that 45 percent of Lebanese women do not use any form of contraceptive methods.¹²⁸ Lebanese public schools do not provide sex education in their curriculum, and private institutions only give limited information on reproductive health.¹²⁹ These barriers to managing one's sexual health and family planning hurt women and men by limiting their decision-making ability over a significant portion of their lives.

3. *Women and Lebanese Law*

While Lebanon ratified CEDAW in 1996,¹³⁰ it did so with certain reservations and these women's rights issues remain at the legislative level to this day. The previously mentioned personal status laws are often held as a prime example of

¹²⁵ Yaacoub, p. 7.

¹²⁶ Yaacoub, p. 5.

¹²⁷ Elie Fares, "What Happens to Lebanese 'Bastard' Children?" *A Separate State of Mind* (blog), August 12, 2013, <http://stateofmind13.com/2013/08/12/what-happens-to-lebanese-bastard-children/>, accessed April 2014.

¹²⁸ Institute of Health Management and Social Protection, "National Health Statistics Report in Lebanon," p. 74, <http://www.igsp.usj.edu.lb/docs/recherche/recueil12en.pdf>, accessed April 2014.

¹²⁹ Olivia Alabaster, "Lack of sex education in Lebanese schools poses risks: experts," *The Daily Star*, September 19, 2011, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2011/Sep-19/149097-absence-of-sex-education-in-lebanese-schools-poses-risks-experts.ashx#axzz2zEg2YEcs>, accessed April 2014.

¹³⁰ Lebanese NGO Forum, "A brief review of the current state of violations of women's rights in Lebanon," <http://www.inf.org.lb/windex/brief1.html>, accessed January 2014.

legislation discriminating against women. Lebanon's confessional legal system makes it so that a woman's marriage, divorce and inheritance are dependent on her religion, creating both an inequality between and within genders. Most religious personal status laws in Lebanon designate the father as the sole legal guardian of a child, granting men custody of their children by default in case of divorce.¹³¹ Furthermore, like in other MENA countries, female citizens of Lebanon cannot pass on their nationality to their children.¹³² Lebanon's personal status laws, according to Rabea Naciri and Isis Nusair, "govern what typically is seen as belonging to the private sphere – marriage, divorce, maintenance, child custody and inheritance – but has [sic] an equal effect on women's public lives, acting as a potent control mechanism over women's economic, political, social, civic and cultural activities."¹³³

Another prominent legal issue is that of domestic violence, which has been the center of major activist campaigning in 2013 and early 2014. A domestic violence law was passed in April, but the amended version of the bill fails to criminalize marital rape, going so far as to enshrine into law spouses' sexual rights of access to their partner.¹³⁴ The above examples are but some of the most prominent legal issues being contested in Lebanon today by activists, who argue that they are a direct violation of the CEDAW agreement.¹³⁵ However, some, like League of Lebanese Women's Rights President Linda Matar, see the partial ratification of CEDAW as a "starting point" towards a full

¹³¹ UNICEF, p. 2.

¹³² Collective for Research & Training and Development-Action, "Arab Women's Right to Nationality Campaign," <http://crt-da.org.lb/project/22>, accessed January 2014.

¹³³ Rabea Naciri and Isis Nusair, *The Integration of Women's Rights into the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Women's Rights in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia* (Copenhagen: Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, 2003), p. 5.

¹³⁴ Nizar Saghieh, "Lebanon's Law to Protect Women: Redefining Domestic Violence," *The Legal Agenda*, December 23, 2013, <http://www.english.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=571&lang=en#.U1GSVPI vo4>, accessed April 2014.

¹³⁵ Lebanese NGO Forum.

endorsement of the text and as “strengthening the struggle of the Lebanese women’s movement, which is an integral part of the country’s democratic movement.”¹³⁶ By tying their work to the international treaty, Lebanese women’s rights activists attempt to establish an uncontested legal basis for their political action.

C. Women and Politics in Lebanon

1. *The Historical Roots of Lebanese Women’s Political Awareness*

Despite the dire statistics and legislation mentioned above, there is plenty of evidence that women have played a role in Lebanese politics for much of the country’s modern history. In the early twentieth century, numerous women like Julia Tohme Dimashqiyeh and Mary Ajami lobbied for women’s suffrage and personal status issues, created political salons or other women’s groups.¹³⁷ Dimashqiyeh in particular hosted literary salons and founded a woman’s association as well as publication *al-Mara al-Jadida*, or “The New Woman.” In addition to discussing literature and women’s emancipation, Dimashqiyeh’s outlets for women also became a way to discuss political issues during tense relations between Turkey and former Ottoman territories.¹³⁸ As summarized by Hala Ramez Dimechkie, Dimashqiyeh believed in “the establishment of independence based on secular nationalism, and independence could not be obtained without the full participation of women,” framing the emancipation of women as crucial for the good of the then- Syrian-Lebanese nation.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Linda Matar, “La Femme Libanaise : Sa Situation et Son Rôle,” speech given at *La laïcité et la femme libanaise, une clé pour le futur?*, Brussels, Belgium, March 10, 2007, p. 3, http://llwr.org/music/conf-laicite-10-mars-2007_Linda_Matar.pdf, accessed April 2014.

¹³⁷ Betty S. Anderson, *The American University of Beirut: Arab Nationalism and Liberal Education*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011), p. 108.

¹³⁸ Dimeckie p. 62.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 66-67.

Another example is the foundation in 1921 of the Women's Union in Syria and Lebanon by prominent women activists, including Salma al-Sayigh and Ibtihaj Qaddura. The union, an Arab nationalist and religiously inclusive organization, would later be called the "vanguard of a self-conscious women's politics" in Lebanon.¹⁴⁰ During the same time period Nazira Jumblatt became the de facto leader of the Druze community in 1920s Greater Lebanon until her son Kamal took over two decades later, showing the important political role women could play in Lebanon, albeit within the scope of a patriarchal and oligarchical system.¹⁴¹ This patriarchal structure has however ensured that women's political contributions are minimized. According to Lina Khatib, director of the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut, the long-standing association of men and politics

is reinforced in the historical tales about the formation of the independent Lebanese republic, which name a number of prominent men (such as Bshara al-Khoury and Riad al-Solh, the independent republic's first president and prime minister), but ignore women completely. As such, any role played by women is absent from the dominant historical discourse.¹⁴²

The feminist political struggle in Lebanon continued in the mid-20th century with the creation of the League of Lebanese Women's Rights, which was founded in 1947 by Souraya Adra, who according to her successor Linda Matar,

was inspired by her participation in the struggle for Independence to create an "atypical women's association" to fight not only for women's rights, but also to contribute to the protection of the Independence, which needs all of its citizens, men and women.¹⁴³

Matar has since led the organization for more than 60 years, showing the endurance of Lebanese women social movements. Her origins as a former child factory worker also

¹⁴⁰ Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2000), p.98.

¹⁴¹ Bernard Reich, *Political Leaders of the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990), p. 283.

¹⁴² Khatib, p. 442.

¹⁴³ Matar, p. 4.

show a shift in women's political and social involvement, no longer relegated solely to the privileged middle and upper classes.¹⁴⁴

The Lebanese civil war, which tore the country apart between 1975 and 1990 and killed an estimated 120,000 people, was also an opportunity for Lebanese women to break out of their conventional social roles and contribute, in some form or another, in the conflict. Jean Said Makdisi recalls a feminine "expansion of consciousness" during the civil war, as women turned traditional perceptions of femininity in their favor to secure their survival as well as that of their loved ones.¹⁴⁵ Of her experience, she recalls:

"It was particularly women, I think, who benefited from the breakdown of the old authoritarian forms: in an extraordinary sort of way, women flourished, and grew. Always powerful within the family, but now, released from constricting proprieties, we found ourselves soaring into an exhilarating realm of personal power and strength. [] Normally protected by our men from insult and injury, we became their protectors. Because of the reverence for women, especially those past their prime, inherent in Arab civilization, women were rarely assaulted or kidnapped at checkpoints, and even men accompanied by women, especially older women, were spared. [] If the war taught me anything about myself as a woman, it is that I am a stronger person than I knew, stronger than the political forms allow me to be."¹⁴⁶

Some women, like the famous leftist Souha Béchara, not only contributed during the civil war within the scope of traditional gender expectations, but also volunteered as spies or fighters, blurring the divide between feminine and masculine roles in war. As noted by sociologist Sonia Dayan-Herzbrun:

"The struggles for national liberation put in place conditions for the emancipation of women. It seems that the moment of confrontation itself gave them access to autonomous action. [] In Egypt, Lebanon or Palestine, because women considered themselves directly concerned by the nationalist

¹⁴⁴ Evita Mouawad, "Linda Matar honored for decades-long fight for women's rights in Lebanon," *The Daily Star*, March 20, 2010, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2010/Mar-20/56471-linda-matar-honored-for-decades-long-fight-for-womens-rights-in-lebanon.ashx#ixzz2zKY2z3qs>, accessed April 2014.

¹⁴⁵ Jean Said Makdisi, "Powerlessness and Power : Women and the War in Lebanon," *Women: A Cultural Review* 8:1, (2008): 91, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09574049708578298>, accessed April 2014.

¹⁴⁶ Makdisi, pp. 90-91.

struggle, they have at certain moments succeeded in imposing their presence in the political space.¹⁴⁷

Béchara's memoirs confirm that many women were involved in the struggle against the Israeli occupation of Lebanon, as evidenced by the presence of many female detainees in the prison camp of Khiam at the time. Béchara placed her fight squarely within the scope of Lebanese nationalism: "There remains the basic cause for which I fought: a free Lebanon, a country at peace, but also one grounded in the ideas of justice and democracy. [í] I accepted the idea of dying for my country."¹⁴⁸ Implicit in her statement is not only the willingness to sacrifice herself for Lebanon, but for a more just and inclusive Lebanon. Béchara's testimony is significant in that it exposes the efforts of some women to become involved in the conflict, not only in a supporting role for men – like the significant contributions of war-time nurses and female family members – but also by fighting at their side. However, academic Kirsten Schulze argued that Lebanese "society tolerated female "warriors" since they were perceived as temporary, often not being taken seriously by their male counterparts or those in politically important positions."¹⁴⁹ Regardless, the important role played by women in an informal political capacity must not be overlooked when discussing their participation in the formal political arena.

2. *Lebanese Women in Politics and Government*

In this section, we will focus on women's place in formal politics since the end of the civil war. Women have had a place in political parties to some extent over the

¹⁴⁷ Sonia Dayan-Herzbrun, *Femmes et politique au Moyen-Orient* (Paris, France : L'Harmattan, 2005), p.48-49.

¹⁴⁸ Souha Béchara, *Resistance : My Life for Lebanon*, (Brooklyn, NY : Soft Skull Press, 2003), p. 140.

¹⁴⁹ Kirsten Schulze, "Communal Violence, Civil War and Foreign Occupation: Women in Lebanon" in *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism: The Politics of Transition*, edited by Rick Wilford and Robert L Miller (London:Routledge, 1998), p. 157.

years. Institut Français du Proche Orient (IFPO) researcher Kinda Chaib explored in *Parcours de militantes*¹⁵⁰ (Journeys of women militants) the extensive role of women in Hezbollah, whose village women's committees or support committees for the Islamic Resistance form an important social support for the political movement. Other Lebanese political parties in both the March 8 and March 14 coalitions, such as the Lebanese Forces, Kataeb, Amal and the Progressive Socialist Party,¹⁵¹ have publicly incorporated female supporters into their ranks, oftentimes creating a women's affairs department. However, as noted by Chaib, women are usually in charge of the social side of political commitment, which is seen as a "counterpart to the [] engagement of men."¹⁵²

However, Lebanese women's position in government institutions seems restricted at best. Lebanese women gained the right to vote in 1952, but only seventeen women have been members of Parliament since 1963, when Mirna Boustani replaced her deceased father as an MP.¹⁵³ Women first took on the role of ministers more than 40 years later, when Leila Solh Hamadeh, Wafa Diqa Hamzeh and Nayla Moawad were respectively appointed as Minister of Industry, Minister of State and Minister of Social Affairs in 2005.¹⁵⁴ According to lawyer Alia Berti Zein, who was quoted in a 2009 Slate article, "it is scandalous to note that, in a country as politicized as Lebanon, supposedly cultured and civilized, out of the 701 candidates to the June 7 election, only six were

¹⁵⁰ Kinda Chaib, "Parcours de militantes" in *Le Hezbollah, état des lieux*, edited by S. Mervin (Paris, France: Sindbad, 2008).

¹⁵¹ "Femmes et politique au Liban : un 'état' d'exclusion?," June 20, 2013, Institut Français du Proche-Orient, <http://www.ifporient.org/en/node/1337>, accessed January 2014.

¹⁵² Chaib, p. 298.

¹⁵³ Nadia Khalife, "A Woman's Place, in Lebanon," Human Rights Watch, July 2, 2009, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/07/02/womans-place-lebanon>, accessed August 2013.

¹⁵⁴ Khatib, p. 438.

women.¹⁵⁵ Lebanon was ranked 133 out of 136 countries in terms of women's political empowerment in the 2013 Global Gender Gap Report.¹⁵⁶ The report defined political empowerment in quantified terms, taking into account gender ratios in political bodies as opposed to a more qualitative analysis.

Only four women – Bahia Hariri of the Future Movement, Sethrida Geagea of the Lebanese Forces, Gilberte Zwein of the Free Patriotic Movement and March 14 independent Nayla Tueni – currently sit in Parliament in 2014 alongside 124 male colleagues. The recently-formed cabinet of Prime Minister Tammam Salam includes only one woman, Minister of the Displaced and former judge Alice Chabtini. While Lebanon's past shows historical involvement and interest in the nation's public affairs, women have far too often stayed in the margins of decision-making, a fact that remains applicable today.

This chapter has shown both the past and present situation of women in Lebanon at the economic, legal, familial and political levels. While we have seen the undeniable involvement of women in Lebanese society, their contributions have far too often been minimized or set aside in favor of a patriarchal narrative. This background will inform the upcoming chapter by providing context to the research data. In the next chapter, I will analyze the content of the interviews done for this research to see if certain trends emerge in the answers given by the political and civil society actors regarding their views on the political gender quota debate in Lebanon. The interviews, informed by the literature review and specific national background, will help formulate a hypothesis on the feasibility and desirability of a political gender quota for Lebanon.

¹⁵⁵ Nathalie Bontems, "Liban: 'Sois belle et vote,'" *Slate*, June 6, 2009, <http://www.slate.fr/story/6199/au-liban-beaut%C3%A9-%C3%A9galit%C3%A9-et-sexisme>, accessed January 2014.

¹⁵⁶ World Economic Forum, p.13.

CHAPTER IV ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW RESPONSES

A. Perceptions of Lebanese Women’s Role in the Public Sphere

In order to fully understand the reasoning behind the interviewees’ positions on political gender quotas, they were asked about their perception of the current status of Lebanese women in the public sphere. Specifically, respondents were asked if they saw women as visible and included in broader Lebanese society and the political arena. These questions tied in with the theoretical debate on citizenship and inclusivity in gauging whether they felt women were marginalized in the typically masculine arena of public-sphere citizenship. The answers varied, although distinctions were repeatedly made between the following three sectors: the economic sector; civil society and the social sphere; and the political arena. In the following subsections, we will explore the comments made on each specific area.

	Perception of women as visible or included	Perception of women as invisible or marginalized
In the economic sphere	4	5
In the academic sphere	3	1
In the social sphere	3	2
In the political sphere	0	10

Table 1: Number of interviewees who mentioned women’s inclusion or exclusion in major public spheres in Lebanon.

1. Lebanese Women's Visibility in the Economic Sphere

Of the ten individuals questioned, nine mentioned the economy when asked about women's role in the public sphere. Four out of the nine saw women's participation in the Lebanese economy as a positive factor showing their public involvement. For F.S., women have "taken advantage of economic freedom which has really pushed them to work." Several interviewees mentioned the high number of women lawyers in Lebanon as a sign of progress in terms of visibility in the workforce, specifically through certain highly qualified jobs. But R.M. noted that while women have grown to represent a bigger proportion of the workforce than before, the real contribution to the country's productivity by many women is often invisible in statistics. "That's a phenomenon of working in the informal economy: working from home, working as freelancers, even domestic work is work. This weighs heavily on the economy," she said. Taking these factors into account, she claimed, would reveal women's contribution to the Lebanese economy to be much higher than current statistics "which estimate women to represent only 25 percent of the workforce" indicate.

However, five of the interviewees did not find Lebanese women's economic participation satisfying. L.H. said that Lebanese women were not "actors where it counts in terms of economic power." T.Q. called discrimination against women in the Lebanese workforce part of a "universal impulse," which translates to lower wages for women on a global scale, as well as discrimination based on marital or familial status. However, T.Q. pointed to a lack of legal measures in Lebanon to punish and prevent employer bias against women, unlike in some other countries. In general, the

interviewees lauded the growth of female economic participation while noting the progress left to be accomplished.

2. Lebanese Women's Visibility in Civil Society and the Social Sphere

Several of the respondents brought up Lebanese women's social roles and involvement in civil society when asked about women's place in the Lebanese public sphere. F.S., who was first involved in activism in the 1970s, said Lebanese women have long enjoyed personal liberties such as freedom of assembly and belief, even during the civil war. T.Q. spoke of the literal visibility of Lebanese women in the streets of the country's capital, compared to her personal experience in other Arab countries. Higher education was also an issue which came up regularly as an area where Lebanese women are solidly represented, as confirmed by statistics presented in the third chapter of this thesis.

On her end, N.M. denounced the "completely false stereotype" of Lebanese women "a stereotype she described as defining them solely by their physical attractiveness and submissiveness. Speaking of her personal experience and interactions with fellow female citizens, N.M. said that she knew "Lebanese women, on the professional, social and even humanitarian front, are really active and manage to cumulate several activities in addition to their status as wives and mothers." In contrast, R.Y. denounced an "overt indulgence in false freedoms" for Lebanese women, superficial liberties which she said distract from broader issues of gender inequality: "Lebanese women in terms of their reputation regionally seem to enjoy a lot of

freedoms; you can go out late, go out and drive, dress in skimpy things. But all these things don't really say anything about how much a woman has equitable rights.ö

While certain undisputable statistical facts ó like the high number of college-educated women ó were brought up as symbols of progress, opinions were split on the impact of women's contribution to Lebanese civil society. While their societal participation has increased, several interviewees mentioned that women were still not perceived as decision-makers, whether in public or inside their homes. öEven if women assume a lot of responsibilities socially, at the same time they do not assume a bigger role in the decision at the family level,ö S.A. said. R.M. added to the sentiment, saying that öthe patriarchal system and other factors are reinforcing the perception that women cannot be leaders in society.ö

3. Lebanese Women's Visibility in the Political Sphere

While opinions may have been divided on women's visibility in other sectors of Lebanese society, interviewees were unanimous in saying that women were severely marginalized in the Lebanese political class. öThere are no political parties that promote womenö in Lebanon, Geagea affirmed. M.H. went so far as to say that even the women who managed to enter the realm of politics were pushed aside and not öoutspokenö and visible enough, whether in the media or in their political role.

For F.S., the near-absence of women in politics was tied to the notion that women cannot be decision-makers: öSociety can see women in the domain of teaching, secretariat, more and more as lawyers, but they don't see them in Parliament, because

the issue of power in Lebanon is political power.ö L.A. corroborated that assertion, saying that öIf [a Lebanese woman] has the potential to be a leader, she has skipped the political field and tried to find herself in the economic or social sphere, where there is more potential.ö N.M. placed women's political exclusion within the scope of larger political marginalization: öIt is not only women who are marginalized from a political standpoint; it's 90 percent of the Lebanese population.ö N.M. cited young, old, handicapped and öaverageö citizens as populations she perceived to be politically marginalized within Lebanon in addition to women.

Over the course of the research, it became clear that while growing inclusion in economic, educational and social sectors was evaluated differently based on the respondents' satisfaction with the existing situation, politics was widely seen as the least accessible level of social participation for women.

B. Opinions on Political Gender Quotas for Lebanon

After having given their assessments of the current status of women in Lebanese society and politics, respondents were asked about their positions on quotas, both theoretically and in the case of Lebanon. They also shared what they saw as obstacles to the passage of a political gender quota law, and factors which they thought would make such legislation likely to happen.

1. The Desirability of a Political Gender Quota

Nine of the respondents said they were for political gender quotas in Lebanon, with one, R.Y., resolutely against. Out of those in favor, however, four ó F.S., L.A., N.M. and S.A. ó approved of quotas as a temporary measure and three ó L.A., M.H. and R.M. ó said they used to be opposed to quotas or still had reservations about their theoretical implications. Most importantly, none of the interviewees mentioned the most recent proposal for a ten percent reserved seats quota as satisfactory.

	For quotas in general	Quotas as a temporary measure	Reserved seat quota			Party quota	Legislative quota
			10% quota	30% quota	50% quota		
Number of respondents in favor (%)	9 (90%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)	6 (60%)	2 (20%)	2 (20%)	4 (40%)

Table 2: Respondents expressed opinions in favor of political gender quotas in Lebanon

In the following sections, I will break down the arguments mentioned by the research participants when explaining their positions on political gender quotas.

a. Arguments in Favor of Quotas

By and large, respondents saw gender quotas as a concrete measure to implement higher gender equality in the political sphere. Although R.M. and her organization were initially opposed to quotas, they changed their mind, citing a ñneed to be practical in ensuring women's access to the political sphere.ö For L.H. and other

interviewees, quotas were seen as a tool to supersede societal obstacles to women's political inclusion:

“If you look throughout the world – except for two or three exceptions – women have not advanced in politics without the quota system. I totally support a women's quota, because unless equality is enforced it's not going to happen automatically. It is a positive change because on one hand it's recognition that women are not present in the political sphere, and on the other hand, it is actually a statement and an indication of being serious in terms of having women in politics.”

S.A. called political gender quotas “legislation that starts to, or helps, transform or advance the culture, or start to view women as successful, capable actors in decision-making and in public office.”

N.M., the independent parliamentary candidate, said a gender quota would have a direct effect on her political aspirations: “I have far more chances to make it if there is a quota, as an independent and as a woman, because then there will be a position reserved for a woman.” F.S. argued that a gender quota would bring qualified Lebanese women into the political system, claiming that “our women, in my opinion, are better than 80 percent of Lebanese MPs... I also tell this to the MPs themselves.” L.H. countered critiques of gender quotas as discriminatory, saying that “it is also very much undemocratic for women not to be represented, whether in parliament or local governance.”

Five of the respondents said gender quotas would accustom society to seeing women in leadership roles. “We must work for [quotas] to make society used to the idea that women can play an important role,” Geagea said. L.A. called gender quotas “a key to open the door, to get people used to seeing women in Parliament.” Similarly, N.M.

said quotas were "necessary to give a woman an opportunity to prove her competence and show that she is qualified to hold positions of responsibility, that she is capable of taking on a political function." M.H. spoke of how the course of her research made her realize change her mind about gender quotas:

"At the beginning I was against quotas. Maybe I hadn't passed through an experience where I felt I was denied anything as a woman. It was only until I started doing the field work, interviewing candidates, interviewing ambitious women, that I really started being convinced that the quota is needed in Lebanon. Not to make the men accept the women, to make the women courageous enough to demand to be there."

While the interviewees seemed overwhelmingly in favor of political gender quotas, four of them said they were only in favor of such policy as a temporary measure. Speaking of his organization's stance on quotas, S.A. said that they "believe that [a] 30 percent [quota] is effective for a transitional period." L.A. said she supported a gender quota for two terms in office, "no more," keeping in line with opposition to gender quotas "as a principle." F.S. said she wanted a gradual increase of women in Parliament, from 33 to 50 percent of the MP population, before removing the quota from legislation.

While S.A. and others said they found a 30 percent quota to be satisfying, others wanted more. In addition to F.S., L.H. said she saw 33 percent as a "minimum" quota, as that she preferred a 50-50 division of Parliament between men and women. These demands all exceeded the ten percent reserved seats quota discussed by Lebanon's Parliament as recently as 2013, thus showing that those in favor of gender quotas in general were not necessarily receptive to current proposed policies.

The interviewees also expressed preferences in terms of the type of gender quotas they wanted to see implemented in Lebanon. Three spoke out in favor of party list quotas. Geagea mentioned that her political party, the Lebanese Forces, had a 20 percent women's quota, which she said was "small but it's a start." S.A. said electoral list quotas were more likely to push political parties to integrate women: "When the quotas are on the lists, then the political parties are forced to promote women in their ranks."

L.A. said she was in favor of quotas at both the party and parliamentary levels to ensure proper representation. L.H., on the other hand, saw party list quotas as not secure enough, saying that "women will not be elected without reserved seats." M.H. also expressed reservations regarding the effectiveness of quota policies in the specific context of Lebanese electoral law, critiques that will be explored in the next section.

b. Arguments Against Quotas

Even the respondents who said they were in favor of quotas had critical opinions about such legislation. L.A. said that she had issues with the way gender quotas legislate separately between men and women:

"I'm against [gender quotas] because I don't see that there is a difference between a Lebanese woman and a Lebanese man. I don't accept this difference, because here we are talking about citizenship, so I should not feel this...She doesn't have to beg for a seat."

Similarly, R.M. said that she used to be opposed to women's quotas because she thought a quota system "would be against gender equality." M.H. said of her past

opinion on quotas that she “felt like it was an insult to women.” In addition to arguments about gender quotas as entrenching inequality, F.S. and L.H. also mentioned how some interlocutors argued about the quotas’ undemocratic aspect. “It’s true, a quota is anti-democratic, but it is a temporary thing,” F.S. said.

Another major element of concern was whether a political gender quota would truly bring needed gains for Lebanese women’s rights. “Quotas are like a sponge absorbing the frustrations of women and satisfying them in principle, but not really giving them the gains that are needed” in terms of everyday rights, M.H. said. T.Q. agreed, saying: “[quotas] could be a positive change but I don’t think it would be necessarily do much for women’s rights. Representation is always important in the long-run, but in the short-run it doesn’t always help women’s conditions.” R.Y., the only respondent categorically opposed to quotas, said that she didn’t believe in a trickle-down approach to women’s rights through quotas. She observed that current women politicians were still more likely to be confined to discussing women’s issues than broader topics pertaining to national policy. Conversely, T.Q. pointed to prominent women leaders at a global scale – like Margaret Thatcher and Indira Gandhi – as evidence women entering politics thanks to quotas would not necessarily bring a feminist approach to legislation. On a local note, she also mentioned the case of Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri’s wife, Randa, who spoke out against criminalizing marital rape.¹⁵⁷ “So if you had this gender quota system, and Nabih Berri puts his wife in there, it’s a good example of how this quota would definitely not result in positive changes for women,” T.Q. said.

¹⁵⁷ Justin Salhani, “Lebanese protest domestic abuse on Women’s Day,” *Anadolu Agency*, March 9, 2014, <http://www.aa.com.tr/en/life/298526--lebanese-protest-domestic-abuse-on-womens-day>, accessed March 2014.

By the same token, several postulated that gender quotas wouldn't work properly without other reforms. M.H. summarized her concerns thusly:

“Everybody is emphasizing the quota, but the quota by itself, no matter the form it takes, unless it is accompanied with other electoral reforms, will not pay any dividends for women or for the country. So those who are demanding the quotas should approach the whole thing as a basket, rather than treating the gender quota as a stand-alone issue.”

R.Y. also critiqued the notion of gender quotas as a quick fix for the problem of women's political inclusion:

“I can't talk about gender quota and completely rid that from the context of what is going on in society. I can't just suddenly say, “Oh if I include a gender quota, then everything will be fixed.” There has to be a system that enables women to politically engage to create a political opinion that is aside from their partners, or that is not pushed upon by people in their lives or mostly patriarchs.”

R.Y. added that she believed gender quotas would lead to women being “coopted” by existing political leaders and used as alibis to convince the public of these leaders' progressiveness. T.Q. shared a similar sentiment. With gender quotas, she said, “you are basically removing a certain portion of men, so men can easily put a woman who is related to them to do their bidding” instead.

Finally, M.H. brought up her work on a 2008 opinion poll in which Lebanese respondents, when asked about desired electoral law reforms, showed little interest in gender quotas. “[This] really tells you that the Lebanese are really worried about other things, that the confessional interests supersede human rights issues, including women's issues,” she said.

While low citizen interest in quotas might not necessarily be an indicator of the effectiveness of such policy, it is a sign that a political gender quota would face numerous obstacles on the path towards ratification. The next section of this thesis will explore these hurdles, as well as the factors seen as favoring the passage of a women's quota law.

2. The Feasibility of a Political Gender Quota

In addition to asking the respondents what their positions on political gender quotas were, this research tried to assess whether they believed that a quota was feasible in Lebanon. The interviewees were therefore asked whether they believed some obstacles stood in the way of political gender quota legislation, and, conversely, if they saw certain factors as facilitating the passage of a gender quota law. Their perceptions of the likelihood of such policy passing are thought to have a big impact on these actors' decision to invest time and efforts into this cause. While the interviewees may have been overwhelmingly in favor of some form of political women's quota or another for Lebanon, their responses were much less positive when asked whether they believed gender quota legislation was likely to pass into law. The respondents pinpointed numerous obstacles they thought were standing in the way of applying gender quotas in the country, but they also identified some elements improving the likelihood of a gender quota policy gaining some sort of momentum.

a. Obstacles to the Implementation of a Quota

Factors cited by respondents	Number of respondents citing said factor as an obstacle to political gender quotas (out of 10)
<i>Patriarchal social system</i>	7
<i>Confessional political system</i>	5
<i>Existing political class</i>	5
<i>Poor timing/ security situation</i>	4
<i>Lack of public knowledge about quotas</i>	3
<i>Lack of solidarity and organization with the women's movement</i>	3
<i>Legal hurdles</i>	2
<i>International influence</i>	1

Table 3: Factors cited as obstacles to the implementation of a political gender quota in Lebanon, from most to least cited.

By and large, the interviewees identified the existing political class and political system as one of the biggest barriers to a gender quota in Lebanon. Lebanese politicians were depicted in a very negative light, and were widely believed to stand against this type of affirmative action policy. "The main obstacle is coming from the deputies themselves. They consider women to be competitors," L.A. said. "They've had the 128 seats for themselves for years and now someone is coming to take some seats, so don't expect cooperation from them." N.M. concurred, saying:

"The obstacle is the political class which doesn't want to change anything. They want to stay stuck to their seats with superglue. Do you know anyone who would accept leaving his seat to a woman? ...This is a very big obstacle,

and unfortunately we have politicians who have never thought about general interest, who have never prioritized public interest over their private interests.ö

T.Q. pointed to the östagnationö of the Lebanese political class making it unlikely to implement a gender quota policy. öI've never seen any politician take a socially progressive stance,ö she said. öThe Lebanese political class is afraid of change, whatever form it may take. And every social stance has had a political reason behind it.ö

F.S. said political corruption was a major factor in stalling pro-women legislation:

öWhere there are women in key positions, there is not a lot of corruption. They [women] are less corrupt than men, and that is why men don't want women to take up political positions. They want to keep these positions because it makes it easier for them to become rich. In Lebanon it's clear as day.ö

Lebanon's confessional system, which divides parliamentary seats and governmental positions between religions, was seen as a closed elitist arrangement antithetical to women's inclusion. With regards to gender quotas, L.H. said that

öThe most ferocious opposition is the religious and confessional system. Religion and confession cannot coexist with equality and freedom, and therefore that system needs to be challenged, because by definition confessional systems, religious systems, religious institutions do not agree with the concept of gender equality, they focus on [gender] complementarity, which is totally against human rights.ö

Speaking of the Lebanese state apparatus, R.M. said that öthese institutions are made for the confessional system to be the only quota rule that is prevailing nowadays.ö

F.S. identified the majoritarian political structure of the state as impeding the inclusion of many segments of Lebanese society:

“Regarding the communal political system found in Lebanon, I think it is a major problem, not only for women, but for youth and for other marginalized Lebanese communities. This is because this is a country with different divisions formed with different minorities and electoral laws are based on a majoritarian system. This majoritarian system neglects and eliminates the marginalized, including women.”

M.H. also mentioned Lebanon’s small voting districts, which, she said, make it harder to convince small political parties that they need to include women. Bringing up the 2006 Boutros proposal, which contained a gender quota provision, she said:

“The Boutros Commission quota, within the system as is now, with the divisions of small districts and large districts, and restricting the quotas to the [party] lists – it didn’t say how they [women] will be put on the lists, the ranking. So it has made the gender presence on the list a subject of compromise between various political parties, where the big one, the head of the list, will impose on the small groups to satisfy this [requirement].”

In addition to political reluctance to incorporate more women, Lebanon’s geopolitical situation since the beginning of the bloody civil conflict in neighboring Syria was seen as a major impediment to introducing the idea of a gender quota in public discourse. F.S. said politicians were citing the security situation as a sign that “now is not the time” to discuss political quotas. “With the current security situation, the heads of parties all think about how to win elections,” Geagea said. “The timing is not good now.” L.A. tied the low chances of rallying political momentum for quotas to Lebanon’s position on the regional stage. “This is a small country, but a very complex one, and we depend on the exterior. All the decisions are made outside and implemented inside Lebanon,” she said.

The aversion to gender-inclusive policies regarding women is not merely political, respondents noted, with seven specifically naming patriarchal social norms as being a significant stumbling block for women's quotas. Geagea lamented the social mores limiting women's ambitions. "There are social obstacles, and the patriarchy is also an obstacle as well. When a girl is born, she's encouraged to be a nurse or a secretary. But when a boy is born, he is encouraged to be a doctor or a CEO. This is not right," she said. For L.A., the mentality that "leadership means macho" is still pervasive in Lebanese society. R.M. agreed, saying that "the patriarchal system and other factors are reinforcing the perception that women cannot be leaders in society. They are perceived more by their traditional roles as mothers and caregivers." In F.S.'s words:

"Women are not seen as decision-makers. It starts in the family, where she does not make decisions. She might decide on trivial things like what to buy for the children, what is needed in the home but not on necessary things. I studied the role of women in decision-making in Lebanon. I found that all women, even those with elevated status, told me that the purchase of a house, their daughters' weddings, and distribution of money were not up to them to decide."

In addition to social prejudices surrounding women's capabilities, S.A. pointed to a lack of political investment in Lebanese women: "You can't tell the people that you need to believe in the role of women and have confidence in them, if you don't actually work with women, push them, give them exposure, give them access to opportunities. These two things need to work in parallel."

b. Factors Facilitating the Implementation of a Quota

Factors cited by respondents	Number of respondents citing said factor as a facilitating factor for political gender quotas (out of 10)
<i>Potential commitment of women's organizations</i>	5
<i>Potential agreement between politicians</i>	2
<i>Lebanon's commitment to CEDAW</i>	2
<i>International pressures</i>	2

Table 4: Factors cited by interviewees as facilitating the implementation of political gender quotas in Lebanon, from most to least cited.

While the interviewees painted a grim picture of gender quotas' prospects in Lebanon, they also pointed to some elements which could make quotas' implementation a possibility. Both R.Y. and F.S. spoke of the probability that Lebanese politicians could decide to implement quotas, although they disagreed on the ways they might be made to change their minds. For F.S., official quota legislation wouldn't be necessary if politicians were convinced of its necessity:

“If these same parties are persuaded that a quota, that the presence of women in Parliament is necessary, then they could do like in Morocco: a gentlemen's agreement between political parties, without mentioning a law, and this could still help some women enter Parliament.”

R.Y., on the other hand, thought a political party could stand in favor of gender quotas in order to maintain an appearance of liberalism:

“To prove some kind of progressiveness, one party might say we agree on the quota and the other group will not because they are old fashioned or behind.” Do I think a law on gender quotas might work? Yes, sadly it might

work. It might be too soon for its own good though. Under this system, as a marker to prove someone's open-minded.ö

Three respondents said pressure from external entities could push the political class into action. L.H. remarked that Lebanon is a signatory of the Beijing Platform of Action, and as such is committed to integrating women in politics. öInsisting on Lebanon's commitment to the international community and to women, and insisting on a full, serious implementation of CEDAW are definitely a step in the right direction,ö she said. T.Q. argued that financial pressure could be effective. öI can't imagine anything [working] besides the World Bank intervening and saying 'we won't give you this loan until you institute this gender quota,ø she said. N.M. concurred: öInternal pressure works, but they [politicians] listen much more and much faster to them [international actors].ö

Four of the respondents emphasized the role Lebanese women's rights organizations could play in galvanizing change. S.A. said a öhigher women's voiceö could bring about change, that there was a need for öa higher conviction on the part of women, that 'yes, that we have a say, we must have say, we will not vote if we are not included in the process, we will not vote for an entirely male parliament.ø Geagea pointed to the öhistorical roots for women's rights in Lebanonö as proof that gender quotas were achievable. L.H. lauded the öresilienceö of the women's rights movement as a positive element. R.M. was more cautious in discussing the role of women's rights organizations, while noting their importance:

öInitiatives are taken by women's rights organizations to increase the political capacity of Lebanese women, but it's not a counter-system. It works in parallel

to the mainstream system, but the alternative is not yet strong enough to produce another culture of engaging women or empowering women.

Despite the overall pessimism of the respondents, several highlighted that their concern was not so much that a quota would never come into law, but that it would fall far short of their expectations. "I don't think that it will take ten years," F.S. said. "They will implement a quota, not the one that we want, but it's a start, we'll take what they'll give us. But we won't stop there."

C. Calls for Broader Political and Social Changes

In addition to asking the interviewees about their opinions on political gender quotas, the research also enquired about what kind of changes they felt would contribute to a broader inclusion of women in politics. The intent of this question was to gauge what they saw as solutions to bring about inclusive political citizenship for Lebanese women. Their answers were varied and revealed a wide scope of issues seen as hindering women from participating in politics as men's equals. The responses fit into two broad categories, which can be summarized as demands for structural changes in government and state organization and social changes, less tangible goals referring more to general mentalities.

1. Call for Structural Changes

Seven of the respondents brought up structural changes to Lebanese law, politics and economy as necessary to improve women's political situation. Legal reform was at the forefront of topics addressed. Geagea pointed to several gendered issues in dire need of legal regulation, including honor killings, which were recently criminalized; domestic violence; marital rape; and adultery cases. "These changes will help women's progress and are necessary," she said.

F.S. mentioned her research on gender discrimination in Lebanon's penal and fiscal systems as examples of the pervasive legal prejudice against women. The unequal status of men and women enshrined in Lebanese law, including in the religious personal status laws, was seen by F.S. as impacting whether women envision themselves in politics. Because women's status in the private sphere is regulated by inequitable legislation, Lebanese women tend to not think of themselves as having the same capacities or opportunities as men in the public sphere, F.S. argued. The solution, according to her, would be to "abolish discrimination enshrined in laws and establish civil laws for the legal personal status of women."

Two of the interviewees saw changes in the existing electoral law as an essential improvement for women. N.M. said electoral law reform was an "absolute necessity, because it is a law which does not allow for real representation of all components of Lebanese society." M.H. called for an independent commission to oversee elections, and criticized existing campaign funding laws:

"They decreased [the campaign application fee] by 2 million [Lebanese pounds], but on the other hand what did they do? They asked every candidate

to have a separate bank account, to appoint a special list in accounting and have a certified account. What is the cost of this? It jumped over 20 million! So who is able to do it? Only the women who has been adopted by large *za'ims* [strongmen].ö

M.H.ø point highlights the political impact of the economic gender disparity, which means aspiring women candidates need to find rich sponsors in order to have a chance at running.

On a related note, N.M., L.A. and L.H. held up Lebanonø confessional political system as an area in need of reform. In N.M.ø words:

ö[The Lebanese political class] is limited to five or six confessional leaders who lead their deputies themselves. There is no justice, no equality between candidates. They have a monopoly of money, monopoly of media, monopoly of electoral machinesí This is an electoral law which only allows this same political class to perpetuate itself from generation to generation and election to election.ö

L.H. said she saw the confessional system as antithetical to gender equality: öThe confessional system is by definition hierarchical, patriarchal, and discriminatoryí Because the confessional system means institutions are confessional, this means that they are also patriarchal and hierarchical.ö For L.A., the assignment of political seats by religion ömeans youøre already limiting the possibilities of getting in with the presence of big families that have been inheritingö political power for generations.

On the other hand, T.Q. brought up Lebanonø lackluster economy and poor job prospects as a factor hindering progress for women: öWhat's the point of education when people graduate and leave the country?... I really think that a lot of our social stagnation has to do with really high youth migration rates.ö A sound economy, she

argued, would partially stop the emigration flow and help Lebanon retain some of its younger generation, which could in turn lead a push for women's rights.

2. Call for Societal Changes

Beyond demands for institutional reform, interviewees said changes needed to occur in Lebanese society in order to improve women's inclusion in the political sphere. Educational reform and other awareness-raising measures were mentioned as important factors. L.A. pointed to the lack of civic education in Lebanese schools as impacting political awareness, hence impeding political participation:

“Lebanese women are really educated, we are open-minded people, and we fit everywhere. With all this intellect, there is still something missing at the political level. And this is missing not because one is a woman, but because she hasn't had the experience of going through this, and she didn't learn it at school. I can have a PhD, speak three languages, have two Master's degrees, but I don't know the constitution, the structure of the Parliament, its committees, how to play my role.”

N.M. agreed, saying civic education was a way to foster a sense of national belonging in all Lebanese citizens. “Civic education is necessary and essential. We are still not citizens, we have not yet developed the concept of citizenship, of belonging to a nation, to a state. and it is very, very important to change this affiliation,” she said.

Tied to the notion of civic education, F.S. said women needed to be specifically informed about their rights. “The quota is a necessary tool, but it isn't sufficient,” she said. “It must be accompanied by a certain initiation of women. We need to impart unto them knowledge on their rights and on the tools they must use to make it.” By educating

women, F.S. said, they would become more empowered to claim their rights and a place in the political sphere.

Similarly, L.H. called for challenging pervasive negative stereotypes about women in schools, households, media and politics. "These kinds of statements by people who are supposed to have responsibilities and who are supposed to be accountable shouldn't be taken lightly; because this is the mindset that directs them to make the policies that they make, which are discriminatory policies," she said. R.M. also aspired to changes to the "popular attitude towards women" in Lebanon. N.M. denounced what she called the "macho mentality" pervasive in the country, adding that men were not the only carriers of such mindset, and that many women also propagated reductive visions of their own gender.

R.Y. argued that creating more space for women's voices to be heard would also be a positive step. Notably, she said women were not engaged enough in political discussions, being most often limited to discussing women's issues:

"Creating a platform that focuses on not just women talking about women's issues. I think that's an asset, then we are on an equal playing field. You are a citizen so you would care about everything in the country that affects you. Because you tell women that their opinion is valuable, or this education they are gaining or work they are doing on the ground can be put into practice. As opposed to them feeling quite useless or that their opinions are seen as second-best, or that they are second-rate citizens."

Relatedly, S.A. saw improved communication among women's organization as key to creating momentum for women's political inclusion. "We have maybe 200 women's organizations in Lebanon that don't work together efficiently, regularly," he said. "That's a shame. If all the organizations come together, something would change."

T.Q. said that she saw NGOs and other grassroots organization as key actors in bringing change:

“I really think that the only solution for Lebanon's economic and social problems lies in the grassroots. I'm really a believer in these groups! The government is like a rock, it's so difficult to get it to budge. But if you are focused and talking to your community! you can create enough change to make your life better.”

The wide span of answers by respondents on Lebanese women's status, the desirability and feasibility of gender quotas, and their visions of improved female inclusion revealed the complex nature of work towards inclusive citizenship in Lebanon. While their answers should not be interpreted as reflective of Lebanese society as a whole, they nevertheless bring crucial insight into the perceptions of some segments of Lebanese society.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

A. Analysis of Research Results

The research undertaken in this thesis has revealed interesting trends among certain swaths of Lebanon's political and societal elite regarding their perception of political gender quotas, but also the broader role of women in Lebanese society and the reforms needed to improve their inclusion in some of the country's most impermeable circles.

As mentioned in the research methodology and limitations sections, a large majority of people contacted for this study did not respond or declined to participate. Politicians, even women parliamentarians, were amongst those least likely to agree to participate, without elaborating on the reasons of their refusal. This most likely points to low levels of interest in political gender quotas, which are seemingly perceived as not even worth discussing. This attitude seems to corroborate the perception of the ‘non-debate’ about gender quotas in 2013, when such policy was cast aside with little said on its pros or its cons. The lack of response from some politicians, women’s groups, political reform NGOs and political scientists contacted for this research can indicate two things: either political gender quotas are not on the radar of many of these actors, or their feelings about quotas are not strong enough to make them consider it worth their while to discuss their opinions on them.

The study population sample spoke almost unanimously in favor of political quotas, although for some of them, this meant coming to terms with the fact that their desire to believe in citizenship as an egalitarian concept – like that described by T.H. Marshall – was at odds with the de facto existence of what Suad Joseph had called ‘gendered citizenship.’ Their recognition of a social and legal system which codifies discrimination between genders in Lebanon led them to believe that a quota could somewhat alleviate this disparity. However, their support of political gender quotas for Lebanon was dampened by a belief that such legislation was unlikely to pass – or would become law in a significantly watered-down form.

While the respondents’ arguments tended to mirror many aspects of the theoretical debate on political gender quotas detailed in the literature review, Lebanon’s

specific context influenced the weight given to these theoretical points in practice. A prime example of this is Carson and Tuffy's position on quotas obstructing the notion of merit. This argument was prominently featured in the theoretical debate, but was only mentioned in passing by the interviewees. The existence of numerous political dynasties in Lebanon and the insular nature of the country's political class seemed to discredit the idea that political leadership is based on intellectual merit in the eyes of many of the respondents. The context also led to fears that a gender quota would be weakened by existing definitions of merit in the political class, rewarding women for their political loyalty as opposed to their acumen. These observations echoes remarks made by Joseph Carens, who has cautioned in his work to carefully weigh theory against practice and not let the former eclipse the latter. Speaking of his own work on immigration and inclusion, he wrote:

I did not begin with a general theory of social membership which I then applied to the ethical questions raised by immigration. The theory is simply an attempt to make the implicit rationale of policies explicit and to connect the rationales of different policies together.¹⁵⁸

The theoretical debate on quotas does a great deal to inform our understanding of the situation in Lebanon, however this research has shown that one must shape these theoretical lessons around the context in order to properly discover the implicit rationales at play in the country. If one ignores the specificities of the situation in which the debate is taking place, one's arguments become significantly weakened and discredited, ultimately dooming one's efforts to affect policy in one direction or another.

¹⁵⁸ Joseph Carens, *The Ethics of Immigration* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 169.

The obstacles cited by the respondents were manifold, ranging from structural to societal positions which make it hard for women and other marginalized communities to assert themselves in leadership roles. Interestingly enough, the only respondent who said she didn't believe there were many obstacles in the way of political gender quotas was R.Y., the only interviewee who opposed such policy. In some instances, the interviewees' specific background could be distinctly felt in the way they discussed these obstacles. The most striking example was regarding Lebanon's security situation. While most respondents who cited it as an obstacle specified that it was an argument that politicians would raise as opposed to their personal belief that the Syrian civil war made the quota impossible, Geagea was the only one who mentioned the conflict as a reason not to pursue quotas now, confirming the others' arguments. It is important to note that while the political and legal hurdles were catalogued separately from social barriers, the two spheres were seen as influencing and feeding on one another in ways that made it impossible to isolate one area as being single-handedly responsible for women's marginalization.

Likewise, the solutions given to counter this exclusion covered a range of topics, from legal reform to the creation of paradigm shifts in the way society perceives women. Many tied women's political empowerment to the resolution of legally enshrined inequalities. Topics of concern included the existing nationality law, which prevents Lebanese women from passing on their nationality to their children; the lack of legislation criminalizing domestic violence and marital rape; and the confessional personal status laws, which discriminate between men and women and between women themselves. Those who cited the necessity of addressing these issues echoed the second-wave feminist slogan "the personal is political," stressing the intersection of public and

personal issues.¹⁵⁹ If Lebanese women no longer had to fight for the rights affecting their daily lives, their personal safety and that of their family, they would be more capable of focusing on their political rights, or so the logic goes.

Many of the identified hurdles, as well as the proposed changes, showed clearly how women's inclusion was seen as tied to a wider effort to improve inclusion of all citizens through changes both within and outside of the realm of "women's issues," echoing Mernissi's observations on the unenviable status of men in patriarchal and authoritarian systems. This attitude embodied the oft-quoted speech by then-US First Lady Hillary Clinton: "Human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights."¹⁶⁰ For those of the interviewees who leaned more towards secularist political beliefs, the advent of a non-confessional Lebanese state was seen as an opportunity to infiltrate an elite political class, which they perceived as antithetical to the inclusion of broad sections of Lebanese society, including women.

In addition to legal obstacles, respondents pointed to the social prevalence of patriarchal thinking, in which pervasive prejudices regarding women's decision-making and leadership abilities abound. The patriarchy defines power as being the realm of men, and women attempting to break this division of roles are seen as threatening the social order. This form of misogyny, while not specific to Lebanon, seems to have affected not just the opinions of men, but of women as well, as several interviewees pointed out that many women did not envision themselves or fellow women in politics. Changing this mentality, they said, would require extensive working at multiple levels,

¹⁵⁹ Linda Napikoski, "The personal is political," Women's History, http://womenshistory.about.com/od/feminism/a/consciousness_raising.htm, accessed March 2014.

¹⁶⁰ Hillary Clinton, "Women's Rights are Human Rights," speech given at the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women Plenary Session, Beijing, China, September 5, 1995.

including in schools and media, to eradicate the subtle and not-so-subtle ways these institutions perpetuate these stereotypes.

The tense political situation resulting from the protracted civil conflict in neighboring Syria loomed large in the list of pretexts used to push several issues, including quota legislation, to the side. This legal paralysis in the name of Lebanon's security has become very telling of the existing patriarchal mentality. While the spillover of the Syrian war threatens both male and female citizens of Lebanon, and women serve in the Lebanese army, albeit in small numbers,¹⁶¹ the inclusion of women in political decision-making in this time of crisis is seen as secondary. This prioritization of security at the expense and exclusion of women frames national defense as a man's duty, once again reasserting the gendered division between private and public spheres as observed by Saadawi and Mouffe.

The interviewees' demands were revealing in several ways. Firstly, the vast majority of them saw the need for a major legal and societal overhaul in Lebanon, showing a broad discontent with the existing status quo in the country extending far beyond women's rights. While not surprising in and of itself, given the general political inclination of the study sample, this showed a certain disenchantment with the Lebanese political apparatus and little faith in its capacity to change. Gender quotas were seen as not easily achievable, not because the interviewees saw little need for them, but because they had seen firsthand the difficulties in getting seemingly less controversial laws like the domestic violence bill passed.

¹⁶¹ Simona Sikimic, "Army gives women parity with men except in combat," *The Daily Star*, June 17, 2010, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2010/Jun-17/57817-army-gives-women-parity-with-men-except-in-combat.ashx>, accessed March 2014.

Most interviewees seemed to believe that a political gender quota law would eventually pass in Lebanon. However, without broader change to the system, the quota was expected to be too small to make a significant difference, or likely to perpetuate a crony system in which women elected into office would merely parrot party lines. The latter point mirrored Phillips's politics of ideas versus politics of identity dichotomy. While the respondents most invested in gender quotas and women's rights hoped the increased presence of women in Parliament would have an impact on the types of policies and positions being presented in the political sphere, they voiced fears that the "right" kind of woman, as R.M. put it, would still be excluded, and that gender quotas would fail to bring more feminist voices in politics. Barring the advent of major political change, the interviewees were torn between fighting for a space in a broken system they objected to and not contributing to said broken system. Therefore, gender quotas were seen as only a small measure for women's rights if the existing problems within the patriarchal and elitist system were not addressed.

While the goal of this research was not explicitly to advise whether political gender quotas should or shouldn't be pursued in Lebanon, the overwhelming response in this research seemed to indicate that too many obstacles were currently standing in the way for these interviewees to believe that a fully-fledged gender quota was possible on the short to medium term. The pessimism exhibited by the respondents is telling, given their roles as civil society and women's rights leaders. The lack of a strong consensus on the feasibility of a quota among these actors, along with allegedly disjointed collaboration between women's rights organizations in Lebanon, means there is little chance of an organized movement emerging to raise awareness and create momentum around the issue at this time. However, it is important to note the timing of

the interviews, which occurred in the months after the postponement of the parliamentary elections and as victims of domestic violence made it to the headlines at regular intervals. Since then, a rally for International Women's Day in Beirut brought together thousands in March,¹⁶² and a domestic violence law was finally approved by Parliament after months of civil society campaigning. Whether these recent developments would have mitigated the interviewees' pessimism remains unknown. However, the time period when the research was conducted, during which the prospect of a presidential election also seemed shaky, should be acknowledged as having a likely impact on the respondents' views.

What the research did find, however, is that interviewees' concerns strongly echoed Mernissi and Saadawi's argumentation on women's rights being tied to broader social and political systems which affect all citizens. While this thesis may have focused on a very narrow 'women's issue,' it revealed how this issue was intrinsically tied to a host of different political, social and economic factors which contribute to the marginalization of broad swathes of the Lebanese population. Any efforts, whether political or through civil society, which seek to tear down the exclusionary barriers in Lebanon and bring about change must at the very least consider a political gender quota as one of the solutions to the country's problems.

¹⁶² Yazan al-Saadi, "Thousands renew fight against patriarchy on International Women's Day," *Al-Akhbar English*, March 8, 2014, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/18945>, accessed May 2014.

B. Future Considerations

While the results of this study have yielded a few clear-cut answers on the issue of political gender quotas, it also raised issues which could pave the way for further research and policies, both related to women's political inclusion and the broader themes that emerged around it.

In terms of academic research, work has already been done in Lebanon exploring the levels of legally-enshrined discrimination against women, and the public perceptions of women as decision-makers. However, more research would be useful in exploring public opinion on women in politics in Lebanon, and what tangible efforts could effectively change mentalities regarding women. While the predominant sentiment among this research's respondents was that large portions of Lebanon's citizens are excluded from entering the political sphere, this issue could benefit from more thorough research on the existing political system to either corroborate or contradict this perception, and to isolate certain factors which contribute to such exclusion.

Seeing the results of this research, civil society organizations need to either rally together and create a much bigger push for political gender quota awareness and mobilization, or table the issue altogether. Outside of quotas, I believe bigger efforts need to be made to uncover the political exclusion of women in Lebanon and expose the wide gender disparity in that field. Only by raising awareness about this issue could the Lebanese public, and hopefully the Lebanese leadership, finally be convinced that action is necessary.

Politically speaking, the research pointed to the existence of legislation discriminating against women. Should Lebanon's political class decide to fight for women's inclusion in the public sphere, they need to address prominent women's rights issues which have been the center of numerous advocacy campaigns in recent years: pass a better domestic violence and marital rape law and allow women to transmit their nationality to their children. The continued existence of negative stereotypes against women in Lebanese society is also an issue which can be addressed by the government by ensuring its school curricula are not perpetuating these views. The political recognition of the importance of these issues would show that the Lebanese government takes the issue of gender inequality between its citizens seriously. These changes would also give civil society organizations the time to focus on other issues related to women's rights which have until now been relegated to the background.

The biggest reform demanded by the interviewees involved changing the basis of the Lebanese political structure: its confessional system. However, the idea of dismantling the Lebanese political system went deeper than a desire to facilitate the application of gender quotas. It revealed the bigger ambitions of those who called for an end to the existing system, and for whom political gender quotas are but one battle among many to make the Lebanese political system more inclusive. While this call was not unanimous, the religion-based personal status laws, as well as the religious quotas dividing up political roles, were seen as major impediments to the inclusion of women as fully-fledged citizens with equal access to political power as men. M.H. was one of the respondents who offered an alternative to the complete overhaul of Lebanon's political system in favor of a secular state. She advocated for the creation of a secular nineteenth sect in Lebanon, which citizens could freely choose to opt in to. "If it

grows it will wipe the others, if it doesn't grow let's stop chasing ghosts," she said. This type of legislation could either change the political landscape of Lebanon organically, or could finally expose the fact that most Lebanese citizens are in favor of the existing system, and lead civil society actors to look for new solutions fitting within that framework. Whatever the case may be, Lebanese women have a long struggle ahead of them to claim the political rights they deserve as citizens of this nation. . However, the past several years have seen an eruption of political change in the Middle East and North Africa, as thousands of citizens across the region rose up to claim the right to have a say in the governance of their nations. Lebanon has been hit by the consequences of these upheavals, with Syrian refugees now forming a quarter of the country's population,¹⁶³ testing the limits of the Lebanese state's ability to protect and provide for its residents. Coupled with the adverse effects of the neighboring conflict, Lebanon has experienced a political crisis, with parliamentary and presidential elections undergoing lengthy delays and intensifying partisan divisions. But while the country has seen up close the potentially destructive effects of these popular movements, the same desire for more inclusive models of citizenship can be felt strongly among certain portions of Lebanon's civil society. Only time will tell if the regional political shift will become a catalyst for the emergence of a new vision of citizenship in Lebanon.

¹⁶³ "More than 1 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon: UN," *The Daily Star*, April 3, 2014, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Apr-03/252152-more-than-1-million-syria-refugees-in-lebanon-un.ashx#ixzz31Y6D99xU>, accessed May 2014.

APPENDIX A: TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH F.S.

Interview done in December 2013, translated from French.

Could you describe your work or involvement in civil society and/or politics?

Before getting involved in women's issues, my work in civil society dated back to the 1970s. My work from 1970 to the Beijing Conference was on political and cultural issues. I am from the south [of Lebanon] and I was very active in the defense of the south against Israel, but also on the political and cultural levels. Even my research has dealt with these questions, with the Arab culture, the cultural system, the problems brought by the cultural system and with political thought, because I was a leftist, and still am actually. I was involved, for example after the 1990s, I joined the big international project of anti-globalization.

But with the Beijing conference, I became concerned as an activist in the political and cultural domains. I came from that background with other organizations, as part of the committee that actually was formed with different organizations, now just women's organizations, but civil society organizations. I represented civil society in the committee they prepared for the World Conference on Women in Beijing.

At the beginning of the 1990s, it was also the beginning of peace in Lebanon after the 1975 war. So it really shocked me that there was no knowledge about women's issues. There was no knowledge, there was no research. We didn't know where women were, what they did, what their problems were. We knew, *grosso modo*, that there was discrimination against the Lebanese woman, but where and how, and what have women's organizations done, what needs to be done? These questions still didn't have answers.

You know the 1990s were years of radical change in the world, at the geo-strategic and cultural levels, there was the wave of human rights, the activation of certain concepts that were not as is at the time. I got involved because I believed that the totalitarian analysis which has dominated international thought – you know, the Marxist analysis of change, the notion of total change – did not succeed. So what needs to be done? It must start by succeeding in activism on specific issues – for example, on women. And so this is how I got involved in women's issues.

Starting with the Beijing Conference, I was among the women who represented the government. When we came back, we decided – we were women researchers – to build another organization which could take care of producing knowledge on women. Our committee here, our organization, was established by academic researchers. This is why our organization applied itself to produce knowledge, because we are aware, and I am aware, that to make things move forward, you must have knowledge and know-how on what you are working on, how you are going to persuade, communicate, negotiate with

political power. We worked hard; it took three years to know which laws discriminate against women. So we did a first document and found that it wasn't totally complete, and so we did a second one, and now we are working on a third one, because for example there was nothing on the fiscal system in our second document, but now we are finding that the fiscal system is full of discrimination against women. The penal system is full, in a direct or indirect manner, of discrimination regarding women's issues. So we are working on a third document. We did a campaign on the nationality law with UNDP, and we also did a campaign over two years on the topic of dialogue and democracy in the Lebanese family. We do all this research-action.

When did you start this research?

In 1996, because we established the organization in 1996.

Did you think your work would be on the long term?

We will continue, of course. We are working, as I told you, on research-action. We do research, and based on the results of the research we do awareness, training. We have a lot of things, and we always work with other organizations. There is always a certain coalition around the issue and those who care about it.

How would you describe the role of women in Lebanon? Are they visible, invisible? Do you believe they are included or marginalized in civil society and politics? Why or why not?

The role of the women? Because the women are visible, as you know, because they have taken advantage of economic freedom which has really pushed them to work. You know with economic freedoms, there is always a certain political freedom. In any case, these laws are a matter of the Lebanese constitution. Personal liberty is respected, until now. Personal liberties, compared to what is happening in the Arab world, are always protected, even during the war. You know, there was a 15-year war, but there was always this freedom of assembly, this freedom of belief, and women took advantage of that, they are visible. But visible where? They are in universities, but what are they learning? What are the specialties they are choosing? This is the problem. The problem is not that women are visible or invisible. Lebanese women are 54 percent of the university population, but what majors are they choosing? There are always theoretical specializations which don't directly lead to the job market. Of course, there is a job market for these specializations, but it's not the same. Of course the Lebanese woman has moved forward, it's visible in job societies: societies of lawyers, medicine,

pharmacists, there are many of them. The good example of progress for Lebanese women is magistrates, who are numerous, and they will apparently surpass the number of men. But where are the gaps? The gap is politics. For me, the problem is there, it's a problem based on Lebanese society's perception of women. How does it see women? Until now, for example, you spoke of the issue of visibility - Society can see women in the domain of teaching, secretariat, more and more as lawyers, but they don't see them in Parliament, because the issue of power in Lebanon is political power. You know, in this time of globalization, the link between the economy and politics is very, very tight. More and more, it is businessmen who want to be politicians. And especially in third world countries, it's this way. In America, there are fewer and fewer businessmen who want to be presidents, there are political families. But in the third world, because the link between the economy and politics facilitates corruption. There is corruption a little bit everywhere, but more so in the third world, because those who really hold political power are the rich, and if they aren't rich, they will become rich when they enter politics. And this is why I believe it becomes more and more difficult to accept women into Parliament.

Why? Is it because they are excluded from this economic side?

No, you know the latest international report on corruption showed that where there are women in key positions, there is not a lot of corruption. They are less corrupt than men, and that is why men don't want women to take up political positions. They want to keep these positions because it makes it easier for them to become rich. In Lebanon, it's clear as day.

Do you think more work needs to be done to include women in politics in Lebanon?

We need to do two very important things. Women have had the right to vote and be elected since 1953. Despite all of that, there wasn't a woman in Parliament before 1990. I think there are two major problems: the first is that women don't see themselves in politics. And that, for me, is a result of the legal status of women. This means the personal status of women, their position in the family. And her position in the family is secondary, she doesn't have rights in the family, she can be kicked out of the house at any time, she can lose her children. This position is due to women's personal status and the laws surrounding it. The second problem is a result and a cause of the latter at the same time. It's the patriarchal system which is found, not only in the family, but even in schools and in media. This patriarchal system reproduces itself because women are not aware of what they have, and the political sphere does not want women to be aware of this status. We have done a lot of work on general education in Lebanon, from

kindergarten until secondary, on discrimination against women in Arabic and civic education books. We worked on this during eight years, and now we presented this work to the Education Ministry, and they are now applying the results and renewing the content of books and readjusting the image of women, the way to talk about them, the mentality. It's a great work we've already done. I've also done a lot of research work on the issue of nationality for women who are married to foreigners.

These two major causes hinder women. Now, what must be done? We are doing two things right now: the first is to initiate women to their rights; then abolish discrimination enshrined in laws and establish civil laws for the legal personal status of women. In order to push things forwards, we already worked on the issue of quotas. And when we speak of quotas, we speak of them not only in politics, but in decision-making, because there are a number of levels before Parliament. We are for a 33.3 percent quota, because this is the necessary number to change public opinion or change the decisions in Parliament. We don't accept that they give us ten percent. Ten percent won't change anything, because the last bill proposal didn't specify women's place, and this ten percent won't mean anything. If they give that to us, we will take it, of course, but we are never in agreement on the issue. We wanted to start with 33 percent, then up to 50 percent, and at 50 percent we stop women's quotas, because society will have had the time to get used to seeing women as decision-makers. For us the quota is a necessary tool, but it isn't sufficient. It must be accompanied by a certain initiation of women. We need to impart unto them knowledge on their rights and on the tools they must use to make it.

Have you and your organization always been for political gender quotas, or has this been an evolution of your thought process?

Yes, we have always been for quotas. We have done a lot of work on the question, but now we think we must really push the issue from now until the elections. If there are elections, we never know. And for us the quota is necessary in Lebanon.

According to you, what would be the consequences if Lebanon passed a women's quota? Do you think change would happen quickly?

Yes of course, having women in Parliament who are really sensitive to women's issues. Because you know, there are women who are against the quota, and there is a banal discussion on the question of democracy: "Ah, this isn't democratic, it's anti-democratic." It's true, a quota is anti-democratic, but it is a temporary thing. But for us a quota could, first of all, push women to present themselves, and secondly, once they enter Parliament they must be sensitive to women's issues. We have an experience with Parliament which hasn't been bad. Our women, in my opinion, are better than 80

percent of Lebanese MPs. Yes, you can write it down! I don't care. I also tell this to the MPs themselves.

According to you, what are the biggest obstacles in the way of a quota passing in Lebanon?

I told you, women are not seen as decision-makers. It starts in the family, where she does not make decisions. She might decide on trivial things ó what to buy for the children, what is needed in the home, I don't know ó but not on necessary things. I studied the role of women in decision-making in Lebanon. I found that all women, even those with elevated status, told me that the purchase of a house, their daughters' weddings, and distribution of money were not up to them to decide. So what are they deciding on? They are not decision-makers.

And what do you see as facilitating factors for political gender quotas?

You know, me, regarding the communal political system found in Lebanon, I think it is a major problem, not only for women, but for youth and for other marginalized Lebanese communities, the minorities. This is because this is a country with different divisions formed with different minorities, and electoral laws are based on a majoritarian system. This majoritarian system neglects and eliminates the marginalized, including women. But it's not only that. Even with a system like this, if there is a real political will to improve women's participation in politics, they could do it. But to the contrary, now there are confessional parties in Lebanon. If these same parties are persuaded that a quota, that the presence of women in Parliament is necessary, then they could do like in Morocco: a gentlemen's agreement between political parties, without mentioning a law, and this could still help some women enter Parliament. But I think that with rather conservative community-focused systems, every party is rather conservative ó Christians more so than Muslims. Don't think it's otherwise. For example, the party of Michel Aoun presents itself as modern. Hezbollah is a conservative party. But tell me why they are not presenting women in elections, why they don't help women present themselves.

In your opinion, what kind of quota is the most likely to succeed, or the most desirable, in Lebanon?

I don't think the political parties intend to make room for women. This is why we work, we exert pressure, we still want to form some public opinion in favor of quotas, because President Michel Sleiman is for quotas, and for us, that's something. We still need to

regroup our efforts as civil society organizations, and not just women. Civil society needs to work to change the current state of things, including civil organizations, human rights for example, which are advocacy parties. I think we haven't reached this point. It's a problem for women's organizations, because they are not convinced, they think that there are a lot of things to do before, the priorities are different. But I believe that the priority is women's participation in decision-making, anywhere, at any level, and especially in Parliament.

Do you think other factors could improve the inclusion of women in politics?

Of course, there are a lot of factors. For example, for municipal elections, there are obstacles in terms of the implementation of law. In municipal elections, a woman who is married in another village or another region can't present herself in the region where she was born. There are minor obstacles that could be changed, but they don't want to change them. These are the priorities women's organizations should have, but like I told you, they are not all convinced that we need to start with that.

You know, there are problems of war and political contradictions in Lebanon, so people say women's political participation is not a priority. So it's an issue of changing priorities, of really launching campaigns to put women's participation as women's top priority.

You seem to imply that a quota would not be feasible on the short term. When do you think it will be a plausible option?

It is difficult to try to implement the quota now due to the existing Parliament. They have already done two elections themselves. They did not accept implement a quota, and we've heard from what went on in government discussions, in which every time the president brought up the quota, they tell him "no, now is not the time to talk about it." So I think it will be difficult for this time around, but we must always keep on working to change this situation, and I think the government will change, given what is happening in the Arab world. I don't think that it will take ten years or they will implement a quota, not the one that we want, but it's a start, we'll take what they'll give us. But we won't stop there.

APPENDIX B: TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH L.A.

Interview done in December 2013, partially translated from French.

Could you describe your experience with your current organization?

It was founded seven and a half years ago, and our mission is to build the capacity of NGOs and help them be integrated into the decision-making process. Since the majority is women and other marginalized groups who are far from that process, we mostly target them ó NGOs working with women and NGOs working with youths. Nevertheless, we have four main axes that we work on. One: advocacy at all levels. Two: elections, especially running for elections, which is based on one of our main skills here, strategic planning. We have a component which is development. The concept of development has evolved and takes many meanings, but what we care about is only one angle, which is gender. By gender development, we mean empowering women to take decisions, to have a voice and to be able to be integrated in that process. So it is only that angle that we work with. Where can she get her voice? By voting for example, and that's why it's linked to elections. This is grosso modo our plan.

What had been your experience in civil society before this organization?

I forgot to tell you that we do have our own programs, but our main work is consultancy, and we do this work in more than ten countries, always surrounding election advocacy. We are the people of advocacy in the sense of most experienced. We have even been developing manuals in advocacy, and this was very rare in the Arab region, because usually we translate advocacy manuals. But since I've been working in that field for more than 20 years, that's why I decided to write an advocacy manual coming from an Arab person's perspective, and particularly a woman. So that's why we work in these regions around advocacy mostly.

How would you describe the role of women in Lebanon? Do you see them as visible or invisible?

Undoubtedly they are invisible. They are invisible in the public arena, and the reasons behind this are the most important things. Had there been a Lebanese person sitting with us, they would say: "No, come on, she is very active in the public sphere." I would say, because I understand public issues, she is not visible in the four fields ó in the economic, social, cultural and political fields. If she has the potential to be a leader, she has skipped the political field and tried to find herself in the economic or social sphere, there is more potential there.

Do you think women are marginalized in civil society and politics?

Back to the civil society, where is the civil society? That is another question: are we really a civil society? This is the question, because we are still a minority of civil society and a majority of family associations. The family associations are also divided between providing humanitarian services and religious services, and they are like a tool that has been used by women whose husbands were politicians. The husbands did so to keep their wives busy and to feel like they're doing something, but in fact they are buying people off with their services, they're not really working as civil society. So we don't believe that we have a civil society, but for the sake of not generalizing, I will say that we are some numbers, we have a core group of civil society.

Would you say more work needs to be done to include women in politics?

Yes, there has been work done to include women in politics, although we know very well that it's hard to get them there, and the reasons are many. First of all, we have in Lebanon, as you know, the confessional system. And that confessional system allowed a certain number of seats to a certain number of religions. So this means you're already limiting the possibilities of getting in, with the presence of big families that have been inheriting this. And we also have the power of money, which women don't have and which is another factor preventing them. And the presence, I would say, of this fanaticism, plus the regional influence which make women feel threatened. And plus the patriarchal society I would say, for sure. And even as principals I have been interviewing myself also female principals as part of a study, and she would tell me, especially if it was a public school, that they have to get support from the municipality. And whenever the municipality knows that she is a woman, the first reaction will be: "Really? You are a principal for a mixed-gender school? So they don't have men in your family?" What they mean is: "How come she has that power?" So you see, we still have this patriarchy and chauvinism. For them leadership means "macho," so how come this nice, sweet woman can be that kind of person? She won't fit the position.

Another major reason is that women are not well prepared. For them, it's not enough to talk in clichés, but we don't have women who have their own political opinions. We don't have women who have worked on themselves to become politicians, and we don't have women who struggled on the ground so as to make a movement, so as to be present. So it's always women inheriting a seat from their husbands. All of this makes it hard for women to have a voice and to say "I'm here." Nowadays Facebook makes it easier, but still it's nothing in front of the money and how politicians are using their money.

What is your opinion of gender quotas in general?

Undoubtedly as a Lebanese woman, I am against them as a principle. I am with them for other reasons. I am against them because first of all I don't see that there is a difference between a Lebanese woman and a Lebanese man. I don't accept this difference, because here we are talking about citizenship, so I should not feel this. But am I for? Yes I am. First of all, I am for them for a temporary period of time. Maybe two amendments, but not more. This is a key to open the door, to get people used to seeing women in Parliament, because having three women in Parliament is not really being visible. I am for quotas, but with conditions. For example, we don't want them to just have a quota on the seats; we want a quota on the voting list, we want a quota for whenever political parties decide on a percentage on the voting list. So at this moment, yes, I want a quota. Otherwise I am not, because she doesn't have to beg for a seat.

Can you describe your thought process on gender quotas? Did you always have this opinion, or has it evolved over time?

Any act that I do in my life is based on basic right approach. So whenever you're acting on basic right approach, finitely, you're talking about a human, so the idea of differentiating between genders is really hard for me. Even for example in raising my children, I have a boy and a girl, and I never thought that "this is a boy and this is a girl," it's always been "I have two weak human persons, and my role is to empower them." This is also to tell you that if you believe in what you want, you must practice it also. If it's not applied at home, forget it. And most of them, under their peers' influence, even if they talk about these things, they don't apply them. The peer influence is very high. The Lebanese care so much about what others think of them, and this is as if you're living for others, and not for yourself. Instead of having your own opinion, your plan in life, you know? So I think a minority is aware of this - maybe the intellectual group or people who traveled a lot are more open to this idea. But other, forget it, they have this patriarchal thinking and high social influence.

You said you would be for a quota on a temporary basis. Could you go into more detail about what you expect the consequences of quotas to be?

We tried before to pay visits to the heads of political parties, we did lobbying work - not only me, but other women, around 20 to 25 women fighting for this. I don't see this as happening. The reason behind this is because there are still misunderstandings about this concept. We really need to do work on awareness and work hard on it. Some people don't know how to use the word "quota" in Lebanon. I've been organizing roundtables in the development areas in Lebanon talking about quotas and what quotas are. You

really need to educate people on this, and then ask them to do it afterwards. So I think we're asking something very sophisticated.

What are some misunderstandings that you encountered?

First of all, when people hear "quota," they think a number of seats, and this is not exactly what we want. We don't want this to be a number of seats, because again, suppose that I am representing political party X, since I know that this chair is for a woman, the political party will work hard, even if I am for example, excuse the term, a stupid woman, to bring her, because they want that presence. So we don't want it from that side, and we're not competing with men. Because also they think we'll be competing with men, that we're taking something away out of their hands. We want her to come from a strong background, which is get into a list - the most powerful point for her is to come from a political party, which also means she has a background in politics. People will look at her in a different way than someone who has always been nice to people but has been working in humanitarian aid. They won't see this person as a politician; they won't see her as strong. So we would love for her to be adopted by a political party, to be on their list, so as to complete that image.

In your opinion, what are the main obstacles to passing a gender quota law in Lebanon?

The main obstacle is coming from the deputies themselves. They consider women to be competitors. They've had the 128 seats for themselves for years and now someone is coming to take some seats, so don't expect cooperation from them. If for example a man and a woman are running for the same seat which for a long time had been only for a man, and now there is a woman coming. She will face many obstacles for sure in her community.

So you are saying that the biggest obstacle to a gender quota law is the people who would vote on it?

For sure.

On the other hand, do you think certain factors in Lebanon could facilitate the passing of a gender quota law?

The environment now is not helpful at all, because you're not dealing with a normal country. Don't forget that this is a small country, but a very complex one, and we depend on the exterior. All the decisions are made outside and implemented inside Lebanon. For example, Hezbollah is strong in Lebanon, but it's strong because the influence is coming from outside. When Iran gives the green light, it means Hezbollah is growing stronger. The decision-making game is different. You are not talking about a completely independent country. We depend on the exterior, so this means we cannot do interior analysis – we do not have this logic.

What other factors beyond gender quotas – like legislation, education, social change – if any, do you think would work to have better inclusion of women in politics in Lebanon?

I'm working now on a big project right now, because I have dealt in my life with very intellectual ladies, and I've trained them to run as candidates. Some of them even had PhDs. Lebanese women are really educated, we are open-minded people, and we fit everywhere. With all this intellect, there is still something missing at the political level. And this is missing not because one is a woman, but because she hasn't had the experience of going through this, and she didn't learn it at school. For example, I can have a PhD, but I've never learned the constitution at school. So how do you want me to run for election and be in Parliament if I don't know my constitution? Look at how silly it is. I can have a PhD, speak three languages, two Master's degrees, but I don't know the constitution, the structure of the Parliament, its committees, how to play my role.

So now I am doing a program just to educate women on this side, because I think this is what is missing, so she can be able to analyze. Women are always on the receiving end, but we want her to analyze and have her own opinion so people will start listening to her.

So you think it's an issue of education first and foremost?

Yes, of civic education, which is very weak in our curriculum. And the problem has to do with the minister of education – who is he, which religion is he coming from, what does he represent, which points does he highlight – Who is going to teach our children in the future about the history of this country? There is zero objectivity. And there is no trust among the Lebanese, this is another point. Everyone has his own plan, and we are not working for all of Lebanon. Everyone is working for a part of Lebanon.

Is there anything else you would like to say on the topic?

Until now, you can count on your fingers the ladies who presented themselves as candidates and deserved to be candidates. Lebanese women are expected to be two or three times better than a man in order to be considered worthy of being a candidate. Among the 124 men deputies in Parliament, we have maybe 50 percent of them who are educated and 50 percent who we don't know from where they've come from. But no one is talking about them. They are men, they are deputies; we accept that.

Women also don't trust each other. There is competition among women, and we are unable to bring them together. They have never seen a woman role model, someone whose achievements are highlighted. No one is supporting one another, they are not opening the door for their daughters. There is a mentality of *après moi, le déluge*.

APPENDIX C: TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH L.H.

Interview done in October 2013.

Can you describe your work and what your organization does?

[My organization] was established in 1999. It's established in Lebanon but works in several countries in the Arab region. We work essentially, of course, on gender equality and social justice but specifically on gender and citizenship, gender and economic rights, women's public and political participation. And our work combines, grassroots work, actual research and advocacy communication and campaigning.

What are your specific responsibilities?

I'm the executive director of the organization.

Ok, so you oversee pretty much everything.

Yeah, yeah.

How would you describe the role of women in Lebanon, speaking particularly in terms of the public space? Do you feel they are visible or invisible?

Lebanon shares the paradox of women in Arab countries, that is that there have been advances in education and health, which has not been reflected in economic and political participation and power. So even though, in some parts of Lebanon, women might be visible in the public sphere, but they're not actors where it counts in terms of economic and political power. And essentially, since in Lebanon the confessional system is more powerful than the state, and the confessional system is by definition hierarchical, patriarchal, and discriminatory, and that is definitely one of the main reasons. Because the confessional system means also institutions that are confessional, which means that they are also patriarchal and hierarchical.

Do you think more work needs to be done to include women in politics?

More work needs to be done to include women everywhere, but you cannot dissociate the public sphere from the private sphere. Women in the private sphere are literally slaves. Either slaves because they're actually the carers of the family, the providers, etc. You cannot imagine emancipation in the public sphere if there is no emancipation in the private sphere. So yes.

What is your opinion of women's quotas in general? Do you support or oppose them.

If you look throughout the world ó except for two or three exceptions ó women have not advanced in politics without the quota system. I totally support a women's quota, because unless equality is enforced it's not going to happen automatically. Women face many, many challenges; institutional challenges, legal challenges, religious challenges, and unless the state takes affirmative action and ensures that equality is respected, you will not have women in politics without a quota system.

Do you think that the push for political gender quota in Lebanon is a positive change? If yes, can you expand on why.

It is a positive change because on one hand it's recognition that women are not present in the political sphere, and on the other hand, it is actually a statement and an indication of being serious in terms of having women in politics. In any case, we tend to forget that Lebanon is a signatory in the Beijing Platform of Action, which means that by 2015 we should have reached a 30 percent women's quota. I do not see how we are going to

reach it, but Lebanon has made an official commitment to the international community and to its women that it will reach this 30 percent quota by 2015.

What do you expect would be the general consequences if a quota were implemented in Lebanon?

Well, it would be basically a 30 percent participation of women in politics. But actually I don't think we can talk of consequences, it's about breaking obstacles that have not allowed women to practice their political rights ó their rights to political participation. I don't think the world will stop turning if you had 30 percent quota, which is the minimum quota, I think it should be 50 percent.

I believe the debate this year before the parliamentary elections were canceled was more around 10 or 15 percent, correct? Do you have something to say in terms of what would be your preferred form of quota? The one being debated now involves reserving parliamentary seats, but some people are arguing for quotas within political parties.

I'm not a technocrat when it comes to the difference, but I think that in which ever form ó first of all, I don't think, if we had lists presented by parties, I don't think any list should be accepted without women, and of course we know throughout the world how political parties tend to fidget where they would put them at the end and all of this. So these are tactics that are overused by now. So there is the experience of how people try to go around it. So I think one, is that no list whatsoever is possible without equal representation of women and men, plus the reserved seats. Women will not be elected without reserved seats. If people say this is undemocratic, it is also very much undemocratic for women not to be represented, whether in parliament or local governance or whatever.

Do you believe that women are best suited to represent other women in politics?

It doesn't matter. The bottom line is: women have the right to political participation. Whether they're best suited, whether they're not best suited, is not the issue. The issue is that this is a right, and by definition a right is unconditional.

What kind of work does your organization do, if any, related to the quota debate?

We are members of an international partnership called the Women Learning Partnership, which is a partnership of 22 feminist organizations across the world that actually works within the international framework of women's rights, but develops materials that are culturally adapted to promote international values of human-women's rights, especially in the areas of women's leadership. We promote through our work ó whether in training, capacity building, other accompaniments ó a leadership model that is consultative, horizontal, democratic. We do similar kinds of work in terms of promoting women's public and political participation and also the practice of a culture of democracy.

In your opinion are there obstacles to having political gender quotas in Lebanon, and what are they?

Yes of course. As I said, basically the most ferocious opposition is the religious and confessional system. Religion and confession cannot coexist with equality and freedom, and therefore that system needs to be challenged, because by definition confessional systems, religious systems, religious institutions do not agree with the concept of gender equality, they focus on complementarity, which is totally against human rights. So I think, the struggle for everyone, the struggle for all, is to fight for a secular state. Only a secular state is a guarantor of, even the freedom of religion, and the freedom of any kind of belief.

So you think there is a lot of work to do before we can even reach the point [of a quota]?

No I don't think it's that hopeless, I think it's very possible to have intermediary gains, but I think we need to keep in mind that the ultimate goal is to have a seriously democratic system which is inclusive and egalitarian.

You seem to be saying that these two political quotas ó gender and religious ó are inherently opposing each other.

Exactly. The existing confessional quota is based on the assumption that confessions have rights, which as we know is a false assumption. Religions and confessions do not have rights. Humans and individuals have rights. And as long as rights are only determined as rights of communities, particularly religious communities, than the individuals will continue not to have their own individual rights.

Do you think certain factors in Lebanon would make these political gender quotas easier to achieve?

I think resilience and continuing to struggle, and insisting on Lebanon's commitment to the international community and to women, and insisting on a full, serious implementation of CEDAW are definitely a step in the right direction.

How do you, from your position as part of civil society organization, perceive the movement surrounding those quotas? Do you feel there is an actual push for them?

I think that it is a continuous movement and that is good. I think that we shouldn't be waiting for election dates to start hammering everybody about this. I think the work should be similarly like the kind of work we are doing with our nationality campaign, it should be ongoing on a daily basis on several levels without despair, basically.

You briefly mentioned this earlier, but what other factors ó legislation, education, or maybe just a social change in mentalities ó do you think would improve women's inclusion in Lebanese politics beyond just quotas?

I think it's a combination, it's not just one. It's work at different levels. In schools, within the households, challenging all the negative stereotypes in the media, looking at the really negative influence of the discourse of many politicians, which is ó I think it was a year ago when an officer said, during the Tripoli events, something along the lines of 'we are not going to wear skirts anymore.' These kinds of statements by people who are supposed to have responsibilities and who are supposed to be accountable shouldn't be taken lightly because this is the mindset that directs them to make the policies that they make which are discriminatory policies. So it's not just one intervention, it's an all-out struggle.

You seem to imply that a quota is not going to happen before the 2015 deadline...

I don't know. I honestly don't know. I'm not implying anything. I'm saying that the work has to continue steadily and with a lot of patience.

Do you see this as more of a medium to long-term goal as opposed to short-term?

Yes. Absolutely. At this stage, everything counts. Every breakthrough counts.

What kind of breakthroughs are you thinking of?

Any legal reforms, any positive change in the discourse, anything like that.

APPENDIX D: TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH M.H.

Interview done in November 2013.

To start, can you please describe your work and your involvement in civil society and politics?

I'm not a member of any civil society organization although I've been working with many of them, especially women civil society organizations since 1995-6 and I've been doing research and training and I am presently developing a training curriculum on issues of gender for Arab CSOs and Arab parliamentarians.

How would you describe the role of women in Lebanon in general? Would you describe them as visible or invisible in the public sphere?

In the public sphere they are not that visible. Even our women parliamentarians are not that visible. They do not really appear on TV, they don't make their points of view clear to the public, if they have a separate point of view or whatever. And it is not restricted to one of them, with the exception of Mrs. Hariri ó Bahia Hariri ó who was somehow outspoken about certain issues. But she's kind of retired nowadays with the exception of a few things. But specifically on women issues we don't find our women ministers, those who occupy the position for a very short period or women parliamentarians really making an issue of it or trying to advocate for it within or outside parliament.

Most of the work is limited to the women organizations with the help, funnily enough, of some male MPs, like Mr. Ghassan Moukhaiber whom I really respect a lot. He's a member of parliament and he's really active on women's and human rights issues.

To go a bit more in that, why do you think women are marginalized in the public sphere?

I think the whole thing goes back to the nature of Lebanese society, and I'm not going to talk about the political confessional structure of the society in the abstract, I'm going to go a little bit into how this effect women in particular.

I don't believe that the confessional formula, you know this distributing positions among the sects is the problem. The problem lies in the division of the Lebanese society in a way where I cannot just call it a pluralist society. You know calling it a pluralist society distorts the picture gives one part of the puzzle but does not give you the whole puzzle. The Lebanese society is a heterogeneous society. The difference between pluralism and a heterogeneous society is that a heterogeneous society is inevitably plural but not every pluralistic society is heterogeneous. And what we mean by heterogeneity is that there is a deep divisions over basic issues: issues of identity, the faith of the country, if it has the right to exist by itself, the relation of state to religion, etc.

If you read books in comparative politics about political culture and so on, you will find that the solution for this is ó because what results from this is a conflictual culture ó and the solution is consociationalism, which is regional federalism or communal federalism which we have in Lebanon.

But, what scholars are not paying attention to when they are approaching the Lebanese is that there are levels of heterogeneity. And heterogeneity becomes disruptive and threatening to the society when you have an exclusionary political ideology and this is the situation in Lebanon and it is not only that the Muslim does not accept the Christian on an equal footing, it is also the Shia and the Sunni do not accept each other on an equal footing. What is the implication of all this for women?

Here you find there is a war for survival. With the patriarchal culture, women are seen as unable to maintain the interests of the sects. And unfortunately women regenerate this culture that works against them. In a study I did on the political culture on women, I found that gender issues did not transcend the borders of sects. The Shia women votes and have the same position as the Shia men regarding major national and political issues. The Maronite with the Maronite man, the Sunni women with the Sunni man, and so on. And women are not really pushing her to assume their positions.

This is due to the weakness of civil society in Lebanon. First of all, most women organizations are dominated by elderly ladies, my age and above. There is no democratic decision making.

They are unable to attract new blood, fresh blood, and young blood. A young lady and a young man enter there to work, they drive them away because they don't give them a chance to participate in the decision making, they don't pay them well, the minute they find another job they just leave.

The other sign of weakness of civil society in Lebanon, and especially women, is that their relations are more competitive than cooperative. They are competing over funds and over budgets. If one conducts a study, the results are not sharing it. It is leading to duplication, waste of efforts, waste of money, and being busy with describing the problem rather than trying to coordinate efforts to solve the problem.

And in this I blame the donors.

The donors?

They should coordinate with each other. It is good to have too many CSOs, but duplication of the same studies, I don't think that much changes.

I was working as a consultant on a project, one of the things we were dealing with was the rule of the law. I started research from the beginning. I found out that there were 17 organizations in Lebanon paid by donors to conduct a study on the status of the judicial system in Lebanon. Within 2-3 years what has changed? Read the reports on Lebanon, read the statistics, it's cut-copy-and paste. It's a way of making money. But where is the money for really implementing projects, or really looking into the solutions to the problems, for empowering women. I believe too much of the money that is spent on these things can be spent on real projects.

Plus women do not support women. There is always, 'why she and not me?' This is the same as men.

So there is a kind of a lack of solidarity.

A lack of solidarity among them, yes.

At the beginning I was against quota. When I started working on women's issues I was a sworn opponent of quotas. I felt like it was an insult to women.

How come?

Maybe I hadn't passed through an experience where I felt I was denied anything as a woman. I mean my personal life, I was never treated as a girl different from a brother who was a man, or from a colleague. It was only until I started doing the field work, interviewing candidates, interviewing ambitious women, that I really started being convinced that the quota is needed in Lebanon. Not to make the men accept the women, but to make the women courageous to demand to be there.

That's interesting.

I believe that the women can impose themselves. She has the capacity. She has the competence. We have very, very good women. I have interviewed many of them and I regret that they haven't reached positions of power. Doctors. Lawyers. And even from the laywomen, without high university degrees, but they impressed me with their ambitions and ideas because they know what the problems are ó not only women's problems ó their villages, their countryside. So we want people like this.

Now, I don't know if when they get to the chair in parliament, this will change? I was just wondering this morning, there are some members of parliament who were my students and I was telling the dean at Haigazian, I don't know what happens when they sit on that chair...

And the president was my student. Michel Suleiman. In my capacity as a professor I did my duty, I was fortunate that I had people like them in my classes and I hope they will do what they believe in for their country.

You kind of already started on this, but can you expand more on why you think the gender quotas would be positive on Lebanon.

The gender quota is important and is needed. But the problem the various suggestions for this quotas. Quotas are like a sponge absorbing the frustrations of women and satisfying them in principle but not really giving them the gains that are needed.

In fact, the quotas as suggested do not really work for women. And the other problem is that everybody is emphasizing the quota, but the quota by itself, no matter the form it takes, unless it is accompanied with other electoral reforms will not pay any dividends for women or for the country. Those who are demanding the quotas should approach the whole thing as one basket, rather than taking, treating the gender quota as a standalone issue.

Take the Boutros Commission quota; within the system as it is now ó the divisions of small districts and large districts, and restricting the quotas to the lists ó it didn't say how they will be put on the lists, the ranking. So it has made the gender presence on the list a subject of compromise between various political parties, where the big one ó the head of the list ó will impose on the small groups having satisfying this. So as one of the small Armenian groups had said: "All I have is one position, do you want me to give it to a woman?"

You see? And many of the minorities would say the same. If they are allocated one seat, they are not going to give it to a woman that easily, unless they have that woman that

really imposes her presence and abilities overall which until now I haven't seen any of them really doing it.

If you take the numbers they will amount to be much less than the demanded 30 percent by CEDAW and the Beijing Plan of Action, and unless they reach the 30 percent it is not going to work. I'm not sure if you are familiar with the sources of the 30 percent, where did it come from?

Is it from before CEDAW?

From nuclear physics. An American lady studied what the amount needed to make change in nuclear physics and she found that she needed 30 percent. She took this formula and went and studied various institutions in the US, private and public, and found out where women were 30 percent and above, they were able to make the change and where they were less, they didn't. That's when the international conventions started with the 30 percent. It didn't come out of the blue. There is a reason for asking for the 30 percent.

I know the Boutros law was put aside years ago and before the elections that were supposed to happen this year, they were debating ó

And all the members of parliament promised that they were going to adopt in 2009, and when they went in, I don't know what happen, within half an hour they all changed their mind and went and voted against it...

That's why you need a change in the electoral law, in the distribution of districts, and that's why you have to know what are the real failures of Lebanese electoral law to be able to make the reform.

No matter how much opposition the law, the proposal, have received, I've been advocating it since the early 1990s. I've been calling for it. I've suffered a lot. Everybody told me that I'm a confessional biased person. It is really based on real observations of the Lebanese situation. We need national, but not national like all of Lebanon, I'm in favor of each ó Muslims or Christians, or Shias or whatever ó electing their own.

We talked about heterogeneity, in consociationalism it is adopted to give a feeling of security. What we have now is not giving us a feeling of security, because Christians are winning seats by the votes of Muslims but not the other way around, so you don't feel like you are represented. Plus, this small divisions is not encouraging the political parties ó party life in Lebanon ó so once you have it on a national level...like Christians have to form a party list, you encourage party life, you encourage programs. The seats

are 65 seats, you have to have a list for 65 Christians you can fit women in there. But when the list has 3 or 4, or 12 or 24, you cannot fit women especially if it is distributed over the various sects and the divisions within the sects, and etc.

Now, the opposition to this can be countered by saying, okay the list that wins in the Christian side cannot assume power unless it receives 10 percent of the votes of the Muslims and vice versa. So you encourage moderation on both sides. You see, that is finding the solution between. And you can also create a 19th group in Lebanon which is the secular. If it grows it will wipe the others, if it doesn't grow let's stop chasing ghosts.

I believe that those who call for removing political confessionalism are using it for public consumption. None of them will withdraw the carpet underneath their feet. Let's start with optional civil marriage, and as this group grows it is going to automatically decrease the size of the other sects, and the more it grows the more you give it representation in the political offices. If it doesn't grow or is misused, then let's stop chasing ghosts and let's face our facts and let me say I have this disease, I have cancer and not flu and keep on treating flu while I am dying from that. Let's face our problems and find our real solutions for it.

What you kind of discussed is suggesting that quotas happen on the party level.

For sure, and on a national level, not on a small district. That will encourage the role of women in political parties, it will encourage the roles of political parties and oblige them to have programs, not personalization of political parties.

Unfortunately, most of our political parties are an institution for leaders who found it, or his family, or his sons, or whoever. Very, very few of the parties have really modernized. They are modern on the outside and traditional, tribal ó I would say ó on the inside.

In your opinion, what are the main obstacles to there being political gender quotas in Lebanon?

I was working with IFIS on this WOMENA project, Status of Women in MENA region, and we conducted a national survey. Also I was working with IRI and we conducted six public opinion polls between 2008-9. We were asking about what do you want to have in the new electoral law and we listed them. Gender quota was the least, even among women, which really tells you that the Lebanese are really worried about other things. That the confessional interests supersede human rights issues, including women's issues. So you have to have some kind of political stability, that the state should play its role in providing services, in providing this sense of security for the individuals.

And I think the women CSOs should really give up their individualistic approach and start organizing, networking, distributing work, you need to raise public awareness. We say we are happy with the Lebanese youth. I've taught at four major universities for 35 years, one of them is AUB. I am very sorry to say that our youth is highly politicized but ranks very low on political maturity.

What do you mean by political maturity?

They talk politics from the minute they wake up until the minute they sleep. You can mobilize them, you can take them to the streets. They follow leaders blindly. Ask them, what is the meaning of this concept? Even political science specialists, those who are specializing, what does your leader mean by saying this? They don't know. They just take what he tells them. You know this critical mind, this sense of accountability, this questioning is not there.

And politicians are using all these terms with emotional connotations. That's how they are able to play on the emotional and the fear of the sects to mobilize their public and mainly the youth behind them but nobody is able to really paying attention to raising the awareness of the youth to the importance of their role in holding their politicians accountable, in playing their jobs, in participating in the major mechanisms of democracy, in political parties. You know, they've blamed the women for not participating in political parties, what's the percentage of men in political parties? It doesn't exceed 11 percent.

That is what we are finding out in the various national surveys we are conducting. That's why political parties in Lebanon would never tell you about the size of their members.

On the other side, what factors in Lebanon do you think would actually make these quotas possible or maybe easier to achieve?

The electoral law.

The existing one?

Not the existing one. Changing the existing one and various reforms like an independent commission to oversee the elections, etc.

Limiting how much is spent on the propaganda and campaigning and all that stuff. And being strict with it.

There is something they didn't pay attention to. They said, "Oh the women is really suffering and cannot run in elections because of the amount she has to pay for submitting her application."

They decreased it by 2 million [Lebanese lira], I think, but on the other hand what did they do? They asked every candidate to have a separate bank account, to appoint a special list in accounting, a certified accountant. What's the cost of this? It jumped over 20 million! Who is able to do it? Only the women who has been adopted by large warlords or whoever.

Unfortunately, as we noticed in 2009, some women were used in Beirut, some women candidates were used. They continued running to the last minute because their group used the money allocated to them, allowed to them, for other purposes.

So you think only once those changes have been made, not before?

I think that will guarantee equal rights for all Lebanese, not only women, and women will benefit from it and then I'll be able to vote for the one that really satisfies my ambitions, regardless of his or her sects.

APPENDIX E: TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH N.M.

Interview done in November 2013, translated from French.

Can you describe your participation in Lebanese politics and civil society?

Firstly, I am a lawyer by profession and I advocate in civil society for the past ten or so years for causes, starting with that of women's participation in political decision-making, as well as human rights and the fight against corruption. Within the framework of civil society, as an activist for different causes I hold dear, in which I strongly believe, I noticed, and I am not the only one, that really we campaign, we campaign, we campaign, we work, and we find a wall blocking our way because we are unable to make the changes we hope for because we are not really being listened to. The best result we can reach is a bill which ends up in a drawer of the national assembly accumulating dust. So at some point we told ourselves: "It's enough, we can continue with this block, we have to be political actors, we must enter the political arena" against our will for the most of us, because we would have preferred to stay outside of it. They have twisted the true meaning of political life, which is public service and the improvement of people's living conditions, etc. Unfortunately the political practice in

this country has done no such thing and twisted the real goal of political action. So we saw ourselves forced to become political activists, hence my candidacy in the parliamentary elections which were cancelled in an unconstitutional and illegal manner.

Was this the first year you presented yourself as a candidate?

It was the first time I presented myself in elections because we decided, as I told you, to no longer stay powerless when faced with people in charge who actually don't care at all. They pretend to adopt our causes, but really by their deeds show that it's the last of their concerns to help us achieve our goals. So we told ourselves: "Let's enter the political arena, we will try to create change on the political scene itself by attempting to introduce some actions, a program that improves people's lives, that improves the state of the country. This political scene is monopolized by two camps that, in the end, are very much alike because they are both solely concerned with the fight for power rather than having a vision. To the contrary, we are seeing more and more degeneration, so we told ourselves: "We will become an actor; we won't leave them the field just for themselves anymore. We will try to get in, even if we are a small player, we will still be a player. We will no longer stay silent; we will no longer let them continue like this."

We want to say, not only to them but also to the public that, from now on, they need to take us into account. It's a challenge, we wanted to challenge them.

When you say "we," are you part of an organization?

Yes, we are several independents who are civil society activists for the most part, who, like me, despair at the completely negative results of this political class, and who want to challenge this political class, challenge this division between [March] 8 and [March] 14 which don't mean a thing anymore. There are citizens who see things differently, who want to bring about a new vision, a new way of doing politics.

How would you describe the role of women in Lebanon?

There is a false perception of the Lebanese woman, because we focus on a specific cliché of the Lebanese woman which does not correspond to reality at all. And this is also one of the reasons for my candidacy. I wanted to change this cliché, to say "no, there are Lebanese women who work, who are mothers, wives, and who are very active, who have things to say, who have a vision, who have a way of seeing things, who want to participate actively in all aspects of life, and who do." It isn't this cliché and completely false image of "be beautiful and shut up." There is a completely false stereotype which does not correspond to reality, and I must say that Lebanese women,

on the professional, social and even humanitarian front, are really active and manage to cumulate several activities in addition to their status as wives and mothers, etc.

Do you think that Lebanese women are included in politics?

Not at all. They are completely marginalized, like 90 percent of Lebanese. It is not only women who are marginalized from a political standpoint; it's 90 percent of the Lebanese population. Women are marginalized, young people are marginalized, old people are marginalized, disabled people are marginalized, the average citizen is marginalized, we are all marginalized. So we haven't been included at all. There is a specific political class that thinks it's their private property, who treat political action as their private property, and who considers that "I'm here forever, and if it isn't me, it's my son or my daughter or my son-in-law."

Do you think changes need to be made to include women in politics?

Yes. There are truly many changes to be made. First the electoral law must be changed. It's an absolute necessity, because it is a law which does not allow for real representation of all components of Lebanese society. To the contrary, it is limited to five or six confessional leaders who lead their deputies themselves. There is no justice, no equality between candidates. They have a monopoly of money, monopoly of media, monopoly of electoral machines, of a large number of delegates, of representatives, etc. In the end this is an electoral law which only allows this same political class to perpetuate itself from generation to generation and election to election."

So once we change that, I am in favor of the [gender] quota, but I am also in favor of a change in mentality, because we are operating with a macho mentality. And this mentality isn't just in men. I would say from my experience on the ground that you also find this mentality in women, more so than in men. When I presented myself in the elections and I started my electoral campaign, I had a much harder time with women than with men. I was much more convincing; men supported me, more so than women, except for youth. It's an issue of generations. Young women were very enthusiastic, women from my generation and older were not. They still have this macho mentality.

What arguments did they give against your candidacy?

The arguments they gave is they could not imagine the role of women in politics. They could not trust another woman to take the reins, to become politically in charge. They think that it's a domain reserved for men, that women should limit themselves to charity, humanitarian or social actions. It's this way of thinking that she has a specific

role, or that she's an object but not among young women. Under the age of 40, it's alright, older than that, it's less good. Not all though, I don't want to make generalizations.

You seem to be saying that there needs to be a big change before the idea of a political gender quota is even brought up.

There must be a change in electoral law; it's imperative, and the introduction of a quota. I'm in favor of the quota, even if I presented my candidacy without one. I was a candidate as if I were a man, I didn't benefit from a quota, I wanted to be at the vanguard and first prove that we exist, that there are plenty of Lebanese women like me who don't fit the stereotypical image of Lebanese women that still exists here and in the world. Secondly, I wanted to prove that there are competent women who can absolutely exert political responsibilities, because until now we hear political leaders say "but women aren't competent, they need to have more expertise, more experience, they can't cumulate the job with their family duties, or they're scared" – No. I wanted to show that we're not afraid and we're here. So it was to defy preconceptions that exist in some mentalities.

Now, why do we need a quota, or at least a temporary quota? Because this experience with quotas was adopted in France, in Norway, in very advanced and very democratic countries, where they felt the need to resort to quotas for women to have a chance, for her to be given a chance to prove that she is competent. It's an experiment that was very successful in Norway, to the point that they resorted to quotas first, and women succeeded so well in politics that now they need another quota for men, because at a certain point they reached a wide majority of women in the Norwegian Parliament, so now they resort to a "gender quota" as opposed to a "women's quota" so men aren't marginalized.

So it is necessary to give a woman an opportunity to prove her competence and show that she is qualified to hold positions of responsibility, that she is capable of taking on a political function.

Do you think a women's quota would be positive or negative for Lebanon?

It is necessary. If there is a quota, I have a much higher chance of succeeding than if there isn't. The existing electoral law is completely unjust, and I don't think they will change it because it's not in their interest, they don't want a law of which they won't know the results in advance. I have far more chances to make it if there is a quota, as an independent and as a woman, because then there will be a position reserved for a woman.

In your opinion, are there obstacles to women's quotas in Lebanon? If yes, what are they?

The obstacle is the political class which doesn't want to change anything. They want to stay stuck to their seats with superglue. They don't want to move. Do you know anyone who would accept leaving his seat to a woman? And they know that if there is a quota, a number of them won't make it back. This is a very big obstacle, and unfortunately we have politicians who have never thought about general interest, who have never prioritized public interest over their private interests. We are unfortunately governed by a political class which has shown that private interest prevails over everything. So this is an enormous obstacle, and only a big pressure from civil society, citizens and public opinion can make them yield in that direction.

In your opinion, are there factors facilitating women's quotas in Lebanon? If yes, what are they?

The women's quota will have a chance of passing only when we will have seriously explored an electoral law project. We've had an electoral law project since 2005, which was put together after studies, research, specialists, statistics, experts, men of law, statesmen. It is the Fouad Boutros project, a project that is mixed and acceptable on a temporary basis, and they still haven't adopted it and we still don't know why. Well, truly we know why, but they have never been capable of justifying why. This project notably contains a clause regarding the women's quota. So I don't really see what can change things, except for the pressures this ruling class is sensible to, international pressures especially. They are very sensible to that.

You don't believe an internal pressure can change things?

I don't see how. We pressured, we've been pressuring for about ten years. Yes, internal pressure works, but they [politicians] listen much more and much faster to them [international actors]. They obey much more to international pressure.

What other possible factors (legislation, education, social change) do you think could improve women's inclusion in Lebanese politics? Do you think these factors would be more effective than a women's quota?

Civic education is necessary and essential, the education of the citizen. We are still not citizens; we have not yet developed the concept of citizenship, of belonging to a nation,

to a state. We are still individualists who belong to a clan, or a tribe, or to a religious or family clan, etc. And it is very, very important to change this affiliation.

So you think a change in mentalities would have a bigger impact on women's political participation than a quota?

Absolutely.

Given the fact that the political arena is so hermetic, how do you plan on successfully infiltrating it as an independent?

There is a side of the law that allows me to infiltrate it, if we want to talk technically. We have a majoritarian and confessional voting system in the districts. For example, the region in which I am running has four Maronite deputies, four Orthodox, one Catholic and one Armenian. I am Maronite, even though my program is secular, but that too is a long and tough battle. So there are four Maronite MPs, and with the current state of things, people are divided.

You must know that not all voters vote. So there is already a high number, about 40 to 50 percent, who don't vote. So if you can motivate these people – They don't vote not because they aren't motivated by the current candidates, by the governing political class, but most of them think their vote doesn't count, that they won't be able to change things. So we are trying to raise awareness to talk to these people who don't vote and are more likely to be in favor of my candidacy because perhaps it corresponds more to their aspirations. Trying to mobilize these people, to count on them, to make them vote by explaining that their abstention is a double opportunity for the ruling class that they reject. We need to convince them that their vote counts, on the contrary. Because if we can mobilize this portion of the electorate, which has been completely uninterested so far, we can turn things around.

But this is difficult, because we are told that statistically we can motivate a low percentage of these people, but that's already something. Now how can I try to infiltrate with the current law? By trying to convince those who vote for either side to give me a chance on the one hand, and on the other because we can eliminate – the lists aren't blocked, they are open. So you have four Maronites, they can remove one and add my name in one of the coalitions. That is the only possibility with the existing electoral law in order to infiltrate these two big blocs.

Before June, Take Back Parliament had mentioned that certain districts had more seats than candidates.

Yes, there have been districts, especially in the South, where it is very difficult to infiltrate, but we had some courageous candidates even there. But effectively it is easier in districts like Beirut and Mount Lebanon, where I am, than in these regions.

To your knowledge, how many independent candidates ran this year?

Listen, we had a press conference during the elections, we were about fifty independent candidate, most of who were from civil society, and almost 50-50 men and women. It was a new vision, and public opinion responded very favorably to this vision, because they had a tiny hope that was completely annihilated with the illegal and unconstitutional extension of the Parliament's term of office.

Do you have anything to add on the topic, whether on quotas or political inclusion?

I want to say something important, that I try to repeat often now. We complain about the leading political class. We complain and we're unhappy and we grumble, but at the end of the day, we are the ones who chose them. So now I am talking to the Lebanese people and telling them: "Stop complaining? Either you renew the terms of these people and you stop complaining, or you do something." The Lebanese people have a large part of responsibility for the state in which we're in. We are not only victims, we are responsible for deterioration at all levels— social, political, national security, economic— we bear a large part of responsibility. It is time to raise the alarm, to awaken the people and tell them "no, you are responsible, stop placing the blame on others."

APPENDIX F: TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH R.M.

Interview done in October 2013.

Please describe your work or involvement in civil society.

I've been working in civil society since 2003 focusing on gender equality and women's rights in Lebanon but also in the MENA region, and then working with the Collective for Research, Training and Development (CRTDA) on managing the nationality campaign for women to pass on their nationality to their children, and for two years now I'm working with [my current organization] as the gender equality program manager. The organization is a resource center for gender equality engaged in promoting the notion of gender equality but giving different perspectives. We are trying to spread the notion of gender equality without necessarily limiting services to survivors

of domestic violence, but through the engaging of men and young boys and efforts to provide services to men in order to understand the gender identity, masculinities, femininities, etc. through specialized social centers for men. This also is engaging young boys in these efforts through sports, as well as engaging other figures in the community such as religious leaders, etc. in the patriarchal system that will be affecting our work.

Can you describe your and your organization's perceptions of the role of women in Lebanon? Are they visible or invisible? Do you believe they're included or marginalized in civil society and politics?

If we're talking about specifically gender, women are assuming in the country a bigger role in the public sphere by assuming a more productive role in the public sphere, in the economy in general. However their productive role is still bound by their nature as a woman. So in this sense in relation to gender roles, women are entering into the economic force more and more, but however their contribution is still invisible, especially in certain works, in terms of freelance women. Data on 23 percent of women in the workforce in Lebanon is not really accurate. That's a phenomenon of working in the informal economy: working from home, working as freelancers, even domestic work is work. This weighs heavily on the economy.

As for other roles such as the political/social roles, they are still very far from assuming roles equally, and this is due to the fact that the patriarchal system and other factors are reinforcing the perception that women cannot be leaders in society. They are perceived more by their traditional roles as mothers and caregivers. This is exactly why they are absent from the public sphere.

Do you think more work needs to be done to include women in politics?

Yes, sure. More work and also change how women themselves perceive their political/social gender role. Because men and women's work should start from this objective and the objective of factors like: why women are not engaged and why they perceive themselves as not capable of getting engaged. They think that they are hindered from the system so just to see where we can start this work.

Do you have some answers to these questions through your work with your organization?

Yes actually, we are in the process of concluding a study on the perceptions of women towards the political roles, because the new round of parliamentary elections were

supposed to take place this year, so we were trying to see, instead of just having yet another project on training for leadership and running for candidacy, we were trying to see the root causes of these perceptions. The results are yet to be analyzed, and I think will be completed in several months. But from the initial data we are getting that women do not perceive themselves as eligible to hold such high positions, as well as the fact that they think the system is not very supportive of them, should they want to run for office.

Can you tell me what your opinion, and maybe your organization's opinion, is on gender quotas? Do you support or oppose them?

Well initially we thought that a quota system would be against gender equality. But then, practically speaking, some affirmative measures need to be taken in order for this gap to be bridged. Both [my organization] and I think that the minimum 30 percent of women in these seats would be good as a first step in ensuring women's engagement in the public sphere. However, the question to analyze here would be how to make sure that the political identity of women not be tied from the confessional identity. I'm speaking about the fact that even men in Parliament, they are not really reflecting their own problems or their own agendas, but rather those of their confession. So we don't mind having men advocating for women's rights should there be any, but thus far the system itself is just a reproduction of ideas and identities related to the confession rather than gender-based.

So do you think that gender quotas would clash with existing quotas?

Exactly.

Do you think a political gender quota would be a positive change for Lebanon? Why or why not?

In Lebanon I think yes. As I told you, in this situation, Lebanese women, their political participation is very limited. As per the CEDAW's Article 4, I think, the state has to take affirmative actions to ensure the bridging of the gap. Given that the government has not made any reservation on this article itself, I think first the government needs to take this step in terms of endorsing the gender quota system. But it is not so sure, because as I said the discrimination or the limited number of women on the political scene, either in the parliament or at the administrative level is very shameful. Maybe this political gender quota system would be a good step, at least as a first step. Even if they don't have a gender agenda, if women would be securing 30 percent of the seats,

this would be a start. It would help the perception that women have a role in this system. And maybe in other rounds, they would start adopting programs of women's rights and human rights.

You mentioned before that you and your organization didn't think gender quotas would be good for gender equality. Can you explain why you all thought that?

We thought that the quota system would not ensure full equality of women. Should there be equality, it should be half of parliament as women; it shouldn't be limited by a percentage. So this is from one side. From the other side, we did not want to impose any factors from outside, because the equality has to prevail without having any foreign factors interfering in bringing gender equality into the country. However, it turned out that this is just a theoretical aspect of equality, because we need practicalities as well. We need to be practical in ensuring women's access to the political sphere.

In your opinion, are there obstacles to implementing political gender quotas in Lebanon, and if yes, what are they?

Not just in my opinion, but the actual obstacles are there in terms of endorsing the quotas system that was proposed by the Boutros law. It proposed 30 percent of seats reserved for women as part of a parliamentary quota system to ensure women participated in the lists. However the obstacles started with not endorsing the quota system or endorsing other suggestions related to the draft law. The main obstacles would be seen in the system itself. The way the patriarchal system actually functions in Lebanon, talking about the perception of the traditional gender role of women, how they perceive women and their role in society, how the system has been translated into a functionality of the confessional system and the way the government and the parliament are functioning. These institutions are made for the confessional system to be the only quota rule that is prevailing nowadays.

Do you think certain existing factors could facilitate the implementation of political gender quotas in Lebanon, and if yes, what are they?

This is a very complicated question, because all alternatives are not systems yet. So initiatives are taken by women's rights organizations to increase the political capacity of Lebanese women, but it's not a counter-system. It works in parallel to the mainstream system, but the alternative is not yet strong enough or imposing enough to produce another culture of engaging women or empowering women.

So how soon do you think a political gender quota would be conceivable?

I don't want to be pessimistic or optimistic, but I'm not sure in the current political, security and external situation in the region because of the crisis in Syria. The whole political/security scene, if things remain with the status quo, it's not going to be implemented or endorsed in the near future.

What other factors do you think could improve women's participation in Lebanese politics apart from quotas?

Work needs to be done from a top-bottom approach and a bottom-up approach. Work needs to be done at the level of the mentality in parallel. We cannot say that having a law that draws women in with a quota system without working to ensure that the right women will be involved. The secured seats in parliament, as well as the popular attitude towards women and their involvement in politics or in leadership positions' work needs to be done, longer term work. It will take five to ten years to change attitudes.

You mentioned ensuring that the 'right women' come into politics. What do you mean by 'right woman'?

As I told you, they [*women*] are not just holding the agendas of their confessions, but instead of having a man through the confessional quota, to have a woman. Maybe it's not correct to use the word 'right,' but to have women who advocate for agendas that would promote and ensure human rights and women's rights.

APPENDIX G: TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH R.Y.

Interview done in March 2014.

Can you describe your work and involvement in civil society and/or politics? When did you get started?

I worked on reproductive and sexual health research, which was what I studied. For a while, before even joining [my current organization], I used to work with groups like Marsa, Sexual Health, HIV testing and consulting, and I used to give community course for the Organization for Women's Empowerment, which is part of the Muslim Orphan Welfare Group. Also, alongside other things, I used to work in AUB for while on

training of people from Ministry of Education and research ó on mostly reproductive and sexual health.

Since my involvement with [my current organization], which has been about three and a half years, since then we've been doing more workshops on politics of sex, which is a workshop in which we invite women to talk about sexuality and gender, started reading groups, and movie screenings to raise feminist consciousness, and work on domestic violence law, on racism, and etc. While there are some things we wanted to tap into more but have not like ableism, we've kind of put that in the conversations of the reading groups.

Also work on racism with the Anti-Racism Movement, which started under Nasawiya. In that sense, we do things to talk about rape and violence, and that happened more with protests incidents and working on the ground.

How would you describe the role of women in Lebanon? Do you see them as visible or invisible?

I think the role of women in Lebanon is very visible. I think it's under appreciated. I think it's obviously taken for granted with all sexism and misogyny included. But I think her role is very visible. How I see women in Lebanon? I see there is this overt indulgence in faux freedoms, because maybe Lebanese women in terms reputation regionally seem to enjoy a lot of freedoms. You can go out late, go out a drive, dress in skimpy things if you want to. All these things don't really say anything about how much a woman has equitable rights in the state that she is supposed to be under.

I think that is one of the reasons there isn't a big push in terms of meeting the development indicators ó I don't really like them, they are out of context and really kind of just put together all these points, but the truth of the matter is that they do come from things that do signify how much involvement women have within society on a broader, more general level. I think what happens here that that's not really there because there's nothing that is really holding...it's invisible, it's not really a glass ceiling, there's glass everywhere, so it's not above you. I think it's invisible and women can't really tell that a few things have been taken from them. That's also because you are kind of playing around with things that are quite fun. It gives a faux freedom. It's not really real.

Do you believe that women are excluded in civil society and politics?

I wouldn't say in civil society, but in politics maybe yes. In civil society, if I think of women as mothers, women as laborers, or women that take part in committees in universities, and academics, and whatever. There is marginalization that really falls

under patriarchy, and that's going to be everywhere, it's going to be cross-cutting through everything. And for example, women's role in the home as caregivers is a lot of time is seen as a housewife, but really that work is also quite valuable and it's underappreciated, and almost expected. So in that sense, yes, marginalized, and this is what I meant before about taken for granted because that work should be paid labor if you want to think about it ó it is physically demanding, emotionally demanding, it is mentally demanding to teach and take care and nurture. If you get a nanny and house cleaner, how much do you pay them? Let's count that all up.

There's actually a nice info-graphic about that somewhere, counting house work and work outside of the house.

In all of these together, I don't know if I would call it marginalization, but I think as always because of patriarchy the voice of women is rated less in terms of making change. You really have to prove what you think or want to do works for somebody to believe, but the first line is always disbelief and you have to prove it because you are women.

Do you want to add anything about their role in politics?

Politics is really messy. I'm still thinking about civil society for a minute. I think though with civil society there are differences, with women organizations that have a majority of women, and you have two token men who most likely stand as president of these organizations, which has happened if you noticed in many women's organizations in Lebanon. Where they give a medal to a guy during International Women's Day, which happened two-three days ago with the NCOW. It's kind of a joke.

But are they doing something? Of course, they are working hard and doing what they can. But then you put in a male representative and pat him on the back for believing in women's causes, that's really quite shit.

And then there is politics. In terms of politics, marginalized yeah, because there's so few of them. So there's not really a voice to it. And also really quite co-opted by sectarianism and so it's a bit messy.

Do you think more work needs to be done to include women in politics in Lebanon right now?

Under the current format of how you elect, that would be a strict no. To throw women into this big monster which is sectarianism and have them fall as a ploy for these sectarian leaders so they can prove progressiveness by saying: ðOh but we have a woman,ö but she's literally just regurgitating what they want her to say. No, not really.

At this point this is not a woman who is representing. In that sense, no. But do I think it's important that women take a part in the political decision? Yes, a hundred percent. It boils down to at least seeing women in politics, even if they are kind of shitty sometimes or saying things that are not really pro-women's issues, which really happens a lot sadly, still kind of makes the sight of that more normalized, than believing that free incompetent men ó sorry, warlords and incompetent guys with a rap sheet that should be in prison.

What's your opinion on gender quota in general? Do you support or oppose them?

In general, I think in a lot of examples in other countries itø worked well. But really there has to be a lot more. I can't talk about gender quota and completely rid that from the context of what is going on in society. I can't just suddenly say, ðOh if I include a gender quota, than everything will be fixed.ö

There has to be a system that enables women to political engage, to vote as per their opinion, to create a political opinion that is aside from their partners, or that is not pushed upon by people in their lives ó mostly patriarchs.

In that sense, when all these are in play, when even at the very least in a college classroom in political science, when women has as strong voice as men, and men do not take so much space, but are just too loud which makes other women less likely to debate and discuss their opinion.

At least on that very small, what looks like a trivial format of just a class room, you have women engaging politically. If you can't have that, than really to just create a quota and put people in their places doesn't make any sense. That's the case of Lebanon, I would think.

And specifically here, because the quotas would only fall under certain leaders. This system is racist, and is sexist, and there are too many issues in terms of the history of the country and how these political parties came to be. For us to say, we just want women to politics no matter what happens, we are lying to ourselves.

For you it's a categorical no?

Yeah, I mean there is no need. If you mean parliament, I don't really care. But also though in terms of county elections, there is more room for women to engage politically. A lot more women have been involved politically, and they really seem to find issues by getting pushed by really way up top political leaders, saying to them to rally people for us in elections. It really co-opts the issues that our country has to go through.

For example, if Aoun says we want this and not that, and tells this woman, "I'll support you to get into parliament, but right now in this small county spread my good message." Already this person has been co-opted, her issues have been co-opted, and this guy is mainly voicing what he wants through her. She will remain indebted to him until she gets up there and really that just becomes the same pattern as opposed to not having that. And even that system, the quotas of how many Christians, and how many Muslims, and etc., even that as its own has caused so many issues for the country that really to just do that by changing up the sexes of the players I wouldn't want them to take up that cause.

I think there are so many other ways to support women politically in how they work or becoming more politically engaged. For example, the fee for running is too high. If you know that there is a gender paying gap that is massive, that women do not make as much money as men, even if the labor law was fair in terms of gender, then at least I would say women and men have the same chances to fund their campaigns. But this is already preset with all these political leaders who have all this money and who want to fund men, and if they want to fund some women, women cannot pay for it. So even if a woman really wants to get into politics, and if that is her dream, she cannot afford it unless you are going to have to be bought out. You cannot buy it yourself.

There are so many other ways to support women to get into parliament rather than corrupt them or get them to join a political party, and then take a quota. So that's what I think it is a more likely chance. Do I want women in politics? Yes, of course. Do I want women to participate in ruling the country? Yes of course, because it doesn't make any sense. Who has a full set of men running the country, it's just really strange. It's a bit sad.

Like right now, with the new cabinet, the only woman who was in...and the way they described her in the media, first they go on whether she's married, how many kids she's got, and works for some baking committee, and then in the end they ended with the fact that she has a PhD and she has worked in that...It's really wrong how we are thinking of this in the beginning.

In your opinion, are there obstacles today to political gender quotas being passed in Lebanon?

It's tricky. I want to say that there might not be that many obstacles, but I want to say that it might happen for very bad reasons, because I feel like there are less cards than what a women are holding already.

To prove progressiveness, one party might say, "We agree on the quota," and the other group will not because they are old-fashioned or they are really behind. I think some people might accept it or it might have fewer obstacles because there have been massive

amounts of screw-ups in terms of laws that have to do with protecting women, such as the domestic violence law and all of these, that I think it may be just a win for someone to clamp on. There are women who are severely competent enough to do the same job, that other guys are taken to or put up for in terms of the political parties. It's not like there isn't a wealth of good human resources, there is. I think it's just another body to fill and sadly might be just another card to control for political leaders. Do I think a law on gender quotas might work? Yes, sadly it might work. It might be just too soon for its own good though. Under this system, I think, as a marker to prove someone is really open-minded.

Obviously I can't see into the future or can tell if it's going to work completely. But if it does work, it's for that and if it doesn't then it's patriarchal and that's pretty much that. I know it sounds that I'm not happy either way, the truth is I'm not happy with the entire way parliament is formed anyway.

What other factors outside of political gender quotas ó if any ó do you think would help improve women's inclusion in politics?

One, which I've already said, in terms of fixing the pay gap or in terms of supporting women financially who want to get into politics. But then there are other societal things, such as education. The educational ratio is higher towards women than men, but women are expected to not work afterward.

We have 28-30 percent of women in the workforce as opposed to men and that's because there is this norm of people telling women to hang up their degree and telling them to work at home.

I would think that engaging women in political discussion is crucial, because in terms of talking about either the nationality issue, or that they cannot open their bank accounts for their children without their husbands' approval, or etc. There are so many issues in terms of legislation and law that a lot of women do not know until they have to face it. That, included with general issues that are not gender focused ó I'm talking about things like energy, or political rivalries, or what's happening with the trash in the south, I'm saying things that what has to do with the country ó even these things are almost not directed in conversation towards women.

I think with social media now, women are engaging a lot more on a political level just because before, pre-social media, the newspaper was a very manly act to read a paper, and smoke a cigar, and god knows what, because a) you have the leisure time, b) while women have so much work to do.

Also, when people ask about political opinions about what's going on in terms of regional or internal politics, you don't ask women as often. But I think if they did

engage women in a political discussion, I think that's an asset, then we are on an equal playing field. I think maybe kind of creating a platform that just focuses on not just women talking about women's issues. You are a citizen so you would care about everything in the country that affects you.

So you think these changes would be more effective than gender quotas?

Hell yes. Because you tell women that their opinion is valuable, or this education they're gaining or this work they are doing on the ground can be put into practice. As opposed to them feeling quite useless or that their opinions are seen as second-best, or that they are second-rate citizens.

Is there anything else you want to add on the topic of women in politics, or women in Lebanon?

Maybe one thing. As much as I think seeing women in politics also nurtures a sense of there is a possibility of engagement for younger girls, at the same time, for example, the women who have already been representing in politics, it's quite funny because they are just wives of politicians trying to do what is social works in politics. Everything else their opinion doesn't really count. But they can stand and say things that are still womanly work and then taking that up to politics and just still doing womanly work in politics. And so this why I think addressing gender norms and gender roles, you do that not from the top to the bottom.

If I start the gender quota on the top and assume it's going to come down, it's not going to. Because the one who has already reached all they talk about are really women's issues and anybody who tries to talk outside of that is cast out completely.

I don't really think they are doing quite a service in the way we think of in gender, really.

APPENDIX H: TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH S.A.

Interview done in October 2013.

Please describe your work in civil society and what your organization does.

We are focused on election monitoring, both pre- and post-election. We work on electoral reform and electoral law reforms, like pre-printed ballots, for example. [My organization] is involved in supervision over program related to research, training,

monitoring, and provide awareness of reform. We believe that monitoring is an important way to ensure, or to contribute to raising the bar for the elections, for the process and for how democratic it is. So we try to encourage people to try and participate in this effort, either through being members of the monitoring team on Election Day or in the campaign period, or by simply getting involved themselves. We've developed tools for them to be able to report on violations. So this is one thing. Another thing is that we train our volunteers that are going to be members of the monitoring team on E-Day, so this goes under the training program. The research that we do involves a lot of work on electoral reform, things that are done in different parts of the world, efforts on monitoring, new trends and new techniques and technologies used in monitoring. And the electoral reform program is mostly advocacy and lobbying, working with groups in different regions, working with organizations, with civil society to raise awareness on this issue and to mobilize people and communities and organizations to push for electoral reform.

How would you describe the role of women in Lebanon, in general and maybe more specifically in civil society and politics? Do you feel that they are visible or invisible, or do you feel that they are included or marginalized in these public spaces?

I would say they are marginalized. There is not a serious effort—this is to the best of my understanding of the gender question, of the women participation issue. There is not enough effort, there is not a serious effort to include women in the decision-making process, to include women in the political life, to include women in—it even goes further away from the political domain. Even if women assume a lot of responsibilities socially, at the same time they do not assume a bigger role in decision-making at the level of the family. I would say there is not a serious effort; I would say they are marginalized in a way. But, I think the women's movement is growing. I wouldn't say it has reached its full potential, maybe not even half of its potential. I think there is a lot of potential, huge potential. There are a great number of activists, women who are educated, involved, professional, you name it. There is a lot of potential in that movement, but there is still not the most efficient framework honestly.

Do you think more work needs to be done to include women in politics?

I think it's a process. There needs to be more allies to that cause. And I think that women themselves...well, not women themselves, let me correct myself there...People who are real advocates of that issue and need to do more work on it, need to widen their scope, need to highlight certain interests that are shared by different stakeholders. I can

pinpoint exactly what needs to be done, but I think that, yes, a lot of work needs to be done still. I think that it's a local problem.

Local as in local to Lebanon?

No. As in, I mean, local to Lebanon yes, but I mean it needs to be something that local actors need to do some work, rather than invest more ó I'm not saying more should not be invested in the topic, yes there needs to be more invested ó the issue is more locally rooted.

What is your opinion, and maybe your organization's stance on gender quotas in general? Do you support or oppose them?

Yes, we do. We do support it as a transitional measure.

Was it always something that this organization supported or was there a process reaching to that conclusion?

Of course there was a discussion and there are a number of people who believe that quota is not the right way to go, but rather than immediately subscribe to the premise that there is equality and it shouldn't be incorporated into a law, because this is discrimination in itself. Why 30 and not 50 percent? So there is a discussion around that, but we believe that this measure will push the gender agenda faster. There is not harm in it. It doesn't say that women are 30 percent and men are 70 percent or whatever. All it says that we need some legislation that starts to, or helps, transform or advance the culture or start to view women as successful, capable actors in decision-making and in public office.

Do you think a gender quota will create a positive change in Lebanon?

You need to create a space. You can't just say that we'll wait until society believes that women can. This doesn't happen. Women have to force themselves upon society before society accepts them as equals. You can't just say this is an eventual turn of events, or things will actual progress. Yes they do, but this is part of how progress. Forcing ourselves as womenô not speaking for myself, but I'm an advocate of this causeô on to the political, the social domainsô is part of the progress, is part of this gradual eventual change.

Can you tell me if your organization does anything specific to pushing for gender quotas.

Most of [my organization]'s work on electoral reform is done through a campaign called Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform. This campaign includes civil society organizations, some of which are women's organizations. Most of the work done on that issue is done by these organizations or by the campaign itself. But [my organization] does contribute to this work. Only recently we've developed, in cooperation with one of these organizations, a guide for monitoring elections from a gender perspective looking into candidate platforms, looking into also old issues, how many female representatives in candidate's campaigns so we've developed a guide for that kind of monitoring. And the objective of that guide is to give further insight on the gender issue, to political participation, election campaigns and candidate programs.

In your opinion are there obstacles to implementing political gender quotas in Lebanon, and if yes, what are they?

Of course there are obstacles. It hasn't been approved, so it must be something that is obstructing it. I think political parties have not invested in women at all. They do not have candidates to push, they do not have candidates or maybe, this is basically part of why we are really looking forward to increase the presence of women in parliament is because women, maybe, and this is not something that has been studied, have not been completely incorporated into this paternalistic structure of politics in Lebanon. So we are hoping that an increased presence of women will bring with it an increased shift towards public policy and an increased change in the political dynamics in Lebanon. I think that political parties have not and this has definitely cultural and social reasons and roots they have not really pushed women in their ranks. You don't see high ranking women in political parties, you don't see heads of parties, you don't see not even second or third level, except in very few cases. I would name now, if I wanted to recall, I would just recall one person. So this is part of why, come elections, they don't have anyone to promote. Of course, there is this issue that people still are not willing to completely give confidence to women candidates, and this is something that women organizations are working on. But this needs to go in parallel. You can't tell the people that you need to believe in the role of women and have confidence in them, if you don't actually work with women, push them, give them exposure, give them access to opportunities. These two things need to work in parallel. Now only one part of it is working. There are civil society organizations working with the people trying to promote the role of women, promote gender equality, promote that women can do the same job that a man does. But at the same time, there are no opportunities out there on a political level.

Do you think there are any factors in Lebanon would actually facilitate the adoption of quotas? Do you think anything in particular would make it more likely to pass?

Something that would facilitate a gender quota is a higher women's voice, I think. A higher conviction on the part of women, that yes that we have a say, we must have say, we will not vote if we are not included in the process. We will not vote for an entirely male parliament. So yes, I think it all goes back to the people. How organizations work with the people, with the communities, with women themselves, and how they mobilize. This will facilitate things. There is nothing else that can facilitate it, in my opinion. You can talk to politicians for as long as you want. If they don't feel that there is a need to change, that there is a pressure for change, they won't. I think that pressure needs to come from people with interest.

In your opinion, do you think that this is a sort of policy that has a chance of actually passing in Lebanon?

Yes of course, it has a chance. It has a chance. If you remember, the law that was proposed by Minister Charbel included, if I am not mistaken, a 10 percent women's quota. So it started to become part of the discussion and it is a part of the discussion. We are trying to do something that is effective. We believe that 10 percent is not effective. We believe that 30 percent is effective for a transitional period or at least more effective for a transitional period. Our position is that a quota should be on the candidate's list and not in seats.

Why so?

We believe that when the quotas are on the lists, then the political parties are forced to promote women in their ranks. Because, they can't put a list where there are no candidates and then they start to fill the seats with women just like that. They have to have their women on the lists, and that means, and there is a system, by which you have within every list a third, if you are going from the top there is two men and one woman or one woman and two men. So it doesn't suffer from the technicalities. It does yield in effect.

So this would ultimately yield the same number of women as say a 30 percent parliamentary quota?

No it doesn't. It does not have to. I mean if you say a 30 percent quota on seats, then you'd make sure then there are 30 women in parliament. But we want thirty women who

have been elected by the people to be in parliament. So that's why we are pushing for the 30 percent quota on the lists rather than on the seats. You know what I mean?

Do you think this would improve legitimacy?

It improves legitimacy. It forces political parties to do their own gender work and effort. Whereas if it is on the seats, no one has to do anything. "It's forced upon us, okay, we'll just get whoever." It doesn't have to be actually elected. They don't have to have legitimacy to be members of parliament. We need women, we want women, definitely, they have to be there, and they have to have popular, public support.

What other factors—legislation, education or social shift—if any do you think would improve women's inclusion in Lebanese politics? And do you think these factors would be more efficient than a gender quota or complementary?

I would say there are other factors. I mean these are important factors that you can't go around. Education is important. Legislation is very important. Mobilizing and organizing. Women have to organize. This is what I think is the most important thing. We have maybe 200 women's organizations in Lebanon that don't work together efficiently, regularly. That's a shame. If all the organizations came together in a single, unified—definitely a lot would change, not a lot maybe, but something would change. That is one important factor. Organization. Organizing, and mobilizing, bringing goals together, people together, forming a unified front for a women's quota. A unified front for women's participation and gender equality, definitely.

It is strange to see how these organizations feel very marginalized and there are so many of them.

There is some big organization called Women's Council of Lebanon. They say that they are a coalition of over 150 organizations. I'm not sure if all of them are women's organizations, maybe not. But that is one coalition and then there are other coalitions. Don't use the number, but there is a lot.

Is there anything else you'd like to say on gender inclusion in Lebanese politics in general?

I think there is a risk that spaces will get narrower with everything that we are going through now.

What do you mean by narrower?

For women's participation. There is a sense of going backwards rather than going forward sometimes. So there are threats. Progress on this issue will not happen on its own. There are no guarantees. If people do not get involved, if women don't organize, if all sorts of local actors, and communities, and civil society organizations don't get together... We have a problem with systematic work, planning, organizing. This is not only on the issue of women's participation, it's on a broad range of topics, and we have that problem. And I think before we overcome that problem, it's going to be difficult to make any serious achievements.

You briefly touched on the situation that makes these spaces narrow. Can you expand on that?

What the priorities are. We are going back on our list of priorities. At one point we were talking about democracy, and democratic standards, and further participation. Now we are talking about "let's see about elections" do we hold elections or do we not hold elections? Next year we are going to face the same about the presidential elections, do we or don't we. So the questions are becoming backwards questions, medieval questions. We are going in the other direction, the opposite direction, in the type of questions, the nature of questions that we are asking ourselves. This is a threat. It's a threat to everything; among those things is the gender issue and women's participation, definitely. Although, if I may add, this could also be an opportunity. Women can become a driving force behind the movement that hopefully will rise against this deterioration of things in Lebanon. So it's a threat definitely, but it is also an opportunity. I think you need people to take the lead—women and men—to take the lead to give it a higher level. Let me also add that there has been some work, or some achievements done. I just remembered with the issue with domestic violence. This is an important achievement. There was a lot of work, a lot of media coverage, and a lot of media effort, and a lot of communication stuff that was done on that issue. Sadly though, there have been casualties, several casualties, but still it is an achievement that needs to be built on. We can't just say, okay we built this. It can easily be taken away. It hasn't been passed...yet.

APPENDIX I: TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH SETHRIDA GEAGEA

Interview done in January 2014, translated from Arabic.

Please describe your work or involvement in civil society and/or politics.

Beginning with politics, I am the wife of Samir Geagea, the head of the Lebanese Forces. He was arrested in 1994 and the Lebanese Forces were disbanded. At the time I was studying Political Science at LAU, from where I graduated in May 1994. My husband was arrested in April 1994. At that time, he and I thought it wasn't going to last long, but it took 11 years and 3 months, and he was in a very dire situation. After a short period of time, less than a year, the LF had become defunct. There were arrests and killings based off an individual's political leanings. I decided to enter politics, without thinking I would end up being an MP or hold the torch and continue the struggle.

In terms of what I do for civil society, based off of my experience in politics, women are marginalized. Women are visible in many cases, and have rights, for example the right to education. She is visible in nearly every sector except in politics. As an MP, it is a job dominated by men, and somewhat restricted. I represent a mountainous area, 1400 meters from the sea level and there is a debt I owe to the people from all layers of society. I started working on infrastructure, education, hospitals and other health sectors. I developed a more sociable society, encouraging links to the land and working on human rights. I founded an NGO that sought to push the youth away from drugs and other work to bring women more into the public sector.

How would you describe the role of women in Lebanon? Are they visible, invisible? Do you believe they are included or marginalized in civil society and politics? Why or why not?

I think women are visible, but not in the political sector. In education, there are a lot of women. In the legal sector, entertainment, media, business, labor, etc. But women are not as visible as MPs or heads of a party. Why? The reason is because the Lebanese lived from 1970-1990 in a state of war. The war repressed thinking. It was about survival. After the 1990s, there was a silent war that continued to repress thinking. There are no political parties that promote women. And with the current security situation, the heads of parties all think about how to win elections. At this point, we have to ask if Lebanon will exist. As part of the March 14 movement, we are struggling to keep Lebanon alive.

Do you think more work needs to be done to include women in politics in Lebanon?

Of course. I could talk hours and hours without giving an adequate solution about this. We need gender quotas, along many levels, in order to remind society of women's role. My husband, as a politician, showed much trust and respect for me as a politician. I sacrificed a lot as an MP. I get death threats. Without the support of the head of the party [LF], I wouldn't be able to get far. The LF has a women's quota of 20 percent. Sure, it's small but it's a start.

What is your opinion on gender quotas in general? Why do you support them?

It has to happen. We must work for it to make society used to the idea that women can play an important role. A woman is a human being, they complement men, and men complement women. As a woman I know what I can do. The death threats do not stop me, I'm not scared and women in general are not scared. I know what the real changes are and what we've done in the area. Gender quotas can give them an opportunity to do that change.

In your opinion, are there obstacles to political gender quotas in Lebanon? If yes, what are they?

The political and security situation. The country is divided, and politicians are struggling for elections.

There are social obstacles, and the patriarchy is also an obstacle as well. When a girl is born, she's encouraged to be a nurse or a secretary. But when a boy is born, he is encouraged to be a doctor or a CEO. This is not right. A girl should and can be whatever she wants to be.

Do you think certain factors in Lebanon would facilitate political gender quotas? If yes, what are they?

Of course, the timing is not good now, but there are historical roots for women's rights in Lebanon. In the 1950s women got most of their rights. A 30 percent quota is a first step towards implementing the idea that women should be present in the political sphere. There are NGOs here that promote equality. As a politician, I think of how to protect women in society ó in some cases, they are murdered by their relatives. There are civil society groups like KAFA, which aims to stop domestic violence and I am actively involved in helping the organization and in obtaining political gains for women.

What other factors (legislation, education, societal shift), if any, do you think would improve women's inclusion in Lebanese politics? Do you think these factors would be more efficient than a gender quota?

One of the first things we have to do is protect women from horrible problems like honor killings. In some cases, a father, or brother, or a relative kills a woman if she is out with someone they do not agree with. We were able to remove this legally last year and that was a major milestone.

Legally, adultery cases are unfair. There is a difference between punishment between a man and woman. Women and men are all human beings and this should change. We are trying to present a law for it to be more equal.

In another case, we are tackling domestic violence. We are endorsing and supporting groups who are highlighting the issue. The women, in these cases, are double victims: victims of an abusive husband, and victims of security/police who are not helping them at all. We are endorsing a law to protect women from domestic violence.

Another legal factor that needs to be changed is the marital rape law. The current law does not punish the husband if he forces himself on his wife. We are trying to change the law so the husband is criminalized and punished for such acts.

These changes will help women's progress and are necessary.

APPENDIX J: TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH T.Q.

Interview done in March 2014.

First off, can you describe how you've been involved in civil society and how long?

I think I started in civil society in January 2007, when I first entered Mar Elias refugee camp to volunteer with a kindergarten called, "Ghassan Kanafi Cultural Foundation" and then I became introduced with Ghassan Kanafi's work and I became more involved in Palestinian refugee issues. When the war on Nahr al-Bared happened a few months after, I was part of a group of students and professors that organized relief activities for the displaced who had settled in Beirut. That's how I became really immersed in civil society.

When did you start working on women's rights issues?

I was in Washington, DC. It was my first year there, and my friends were starting Nasawiya. As soon as I came back it was my return to the Lebanese social, civil society scene, so I started moving away from refugee issues and moved deeper into women's rights issues. I was in Nasawiya when it first opened its space, not the one in Mar Mikhael, it was in Jeitawi.

When did you come back from DC? What year?

2010. Nasawiya was founded I think in 2009.

How would you describe the role of women in Lebanon? Do you think that they are visible or invisible in the public sphere?

I think that they are vastly underrepresented in the political class, but then again everyone is really underrepresented in the political class because the political class is stagnant. It's been the same way since 1943, and anyway it's not a good reflection of Lebanese society.

Having lived in another part of the Arab world ó Abu Dhabi ó I definitely think it is much more comfortable and women are much more visible here than in Abu Dhabi, at least when I used to live there. Also, having visited various parts of the region. I know there is a feminist argument that it is superficial to think that women in Lebanon are more liberated because they can wear miniskirts, but the fact that you see so many women on the street. The fact that you don't see abnormal shortage of women on the street says a lot of good things about Lebanon.

What do you think are the reasons that Lebanese women are underrepresented?

In the Lebanese government?

Or in general, in public?

I wrote an article actually about this in 2011, where I looked into the under-representation of women in the work force in Lebanon. Basically, the problem with Lebanese women is very similar ó at least in the workforce ó is very similar to the problems with the rest of the world. Employers are less likely to promote or hire women because they expect them to be caregivers at some point, and so they don't see them as

worth investing in. It's basically a universal impulse and doesn't have anything to do with our traditions per say.

The problem in Lebanon is because we don't have a proper state, we can't protect against this discrimination. It's happening all over the world, but there are certain legal measures to stop it happening in such an unfiltered way.

I'm not one of those people that subscribe to the idea that we are more backwards in perceiving women than in the West. One thing that makes me really hopeful of women's issues in Lebanon, and most issues in Lebanon ó whether it's gay or women's rights or workers' rights ó is that unlike in other parts of the Arab world there is room for dialogue. In the Emirates or Jordan for example, you'd think like fifteen times before posting a YouTube video, or exposing a certain harmful practice. You are not likely to work on a billboard campaign about women's rights like we saw in Lebanon a few months ago.

These things might not necessarily lead to immediate change but the fact that it starts a dialogue means that you are going to see a difference between the current generation and the previous generation, because people are thinking, they are changing their minds, and it's bound to change the way you act. That is what makes me most hopeful about Lebanon.

Briefly can you tell if you think more work needs to be done to bring women into politics specifically?

I think that the women situation ó and I think Nasawiya got this right when they started the 'Take Back Parliament' ó I think they were correct in forging a path for women's rights that went through fundamental political change. Because, as long as we have a stagnant political class that is basically being propped up by a sectarian political system.

It's really a fundamental problem. Of course there needs to be work on government. Nothing changes in Lebanon through the government, because it's fundamentally a consensus system. Lebanon was created ó its raison d'être ó is for these war lords or tribal leaders, if you want, to appease each other, otherwise it falls apart.

What's your opinion on gender quotas in general, and then more specifically for Lebanon?

In general, I think it's definitely a good push. It's very similar to affirmative action. I'm not very well versed in the history of affirmative action, but my sense is that you need to force underrepresented people into important spheres so that they can naturally be in

these places. Because there are so many barriers, cultural, economic barriers that prevents it from happening.

My theory with Lebanon, in specific, with regards to gender quota, I think it's important in the long term so people can get familiar with this. Just seeing a third of parliament being filled up by women can change something cognitively.

But I'm sure if this is instituted tomorrow, then Geagea will put his wife in ó if he hasn't already. Geagea is a case in point, he couldn't be in parliament, so he sent his wife to do his bidding, which is basically what gender quotas have the capacity to do. You are basically absenting a certain portion of men, so men can easily put a woman who is related to them in their place to do their bidding.

You seem to have a more cautious vision of what these quotas would bring to Lebanon. Do you think they can bring a positive change or not?

It could be a positive change but I don't think it would be necessarily do much for women's rights. Representation is always important in the long-run, but in the short-run it doesn't necessarily help women's conditions.

If you think about women that have been in government, or heads of state, they haven't done much for women's rights. Like Margaret Thatcher, who wasn't a feminist ó and that was probably not even the worst of her qualities. Indira Gandhi, I don't know much about her, but I know she was very conservative. And recently, it's funny, did you see the recent article today about Nabih Berri's wife? You should see this. Nabih Berri's wife took a stand against legislation prohibiting marital rape. She made a statement against anti-marital rape laws. So if you had this gender quota system, and Nabih Berri puts his wife in there, this is a good example of how this gender quota would definitely not result in positive changes for women.

Would you say that you are opposed to gender quotas on the short- and medium-term?

No, I wouldn't say I'm opposed to it. I don't think it's going to be more harmful. I just don't think it will have very broad powers, because in principle I'm not a believer in the state. It makes me very depressed about this country, and I would rather focus on the grass roots.

In your opinion do you see certain obstacles to a political gender quota law being passed in Lebanon? And if yes, what do you think they are?

It's hard to tell. Has the conversation even started about gender quotas?

There was the Boutros suggestion in 2009, which was very quickly set aside, and then briefly in 2012-2013 before the elections, it was quickly cast aside as well.

I think that actually everyone in Parliament is too afraid of appearing progressive. I've never seen any politician take a socially progressive stance. It comes down to this stagnation of the political class. The Lebanese political class is afraid of change, whatever form it might take. Every social stance has had a political reason behind it. Even the women's right to nationality issue is at its core fundamentally a political issue. The Kataeb party which was at the forefront of decriminalizing honor killings and is for criminalizing marital rape, when it comes to women giving nationality they're staunchly against it.

So it's not so much their actual interest of women's rights, but more off their own interests?

They might be for women's rights. They might really feel like they can be a reformist party. I kind of know for a fact that [the Kataeb party] wanted to move in this direction, as absurd as it might sound to anyone who knows their history, but at the end of it, they can't go all the way on women's rights because one part of women's rights threatens a fundamental aspect of who they are ó which is basically sectarian.

Do you think there are certain factors in Lebanon today that would make gender quotas possible?

Yeah like the World Bank [laughs]. I can't imagine anything besides the World Bank intervening and saying, "We won't give you this loan until you institute this gender quota."

I think it's just money, if nothing else. Or of course by some miracle, this feminist party joins parliament. It might be too pessimistic of me to say that there would be no genuine change would happen in this regard, because at the end when there was the 'Take Back Parliament' movement was maybe the only sizable, anti-sectarian movement that was entering the elections in Lebanese history but they weren't given a chance because the elections were postponed. It would be a much more informed answer if they were successful. Maybe these barriers that I'm talking about are actually illusory, or maybe because no one has tried to break into the political class and until someone properly breaks into the political class there won't be proper change.

What other factors ó education, legislation, social, etc. ó would improve women's inclusion in Lebanese politics outside of quotas? What do you think would work?

Education is definitely important, but what's the point of education when people graduate and leave the country? I think really it comes down to a sound economy. It's kind of a chicken-or-egg situation.

I really think that a lot of our social stagnation has to do with very high youth migration rates.

You've seem to imply is the government basically is assured that they will stay here as long as there is social and economic stagnation, but if the situation were to improve that it may jeopardize their own seats?

I don't think they are consciously trying to jeopardize the economy, because they have interests in having a sound economy. They are all business people. At the same time, yes, if you had a good economy they would probably be more threatened than ever.

Is there anything else you want to add on women's rights and women in politics in Lebanon?

I really think that the only solution for Lebanon's economic and social problems lies in the grassroots. I'm really a believer in these groups. Nasawiya really got me thinking about how things change in Lebanon and they actually gave me a lot of hope. One of Nasawiya's main programs was the anti-sexual harassment program and I really felt a different and that it really did something.

You know about the truck ad? It's really, really cool, not just the truck but the whole program started a whole discussion about cat-calling, and I generally started to feel it less. I remember one time when I was walking down the street and there was a mini-truck stuck in traffic and he said something, and I looked at him, and he said, 'I wasn't cat-calling.' Which was for me was really surprising, because I strongly believe that before Nasawiya started the conversation about this, that they didn't know that what they were doing was cat-calling. There was no name for it.

The government is like a rock, it's just so difficult to get it to budge, but if you are focused and talking to your community ó of course in not a condescending way, because there is a fine line ó then you can create enough change to make your life better. Like with this cat-calling thing.

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