

THE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN TRIUMVIRATE: FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS OF ANGOLA, ETHIOPIA AND LESOTHO

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ABSTRACT

From December 5, 2001 to January 31, 2011, the percentage of women serving in the lower chambers of Angola, Ethiopia, and Lesotho, increased by 23.1 percent, 20.1 percent, and 20.4 percent respectively (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011) While numerous factors can possibly explain this increase, this paper examines political, socioeconomic and cultural factors that may help to explain the increased presence of women in the national parliaments of Angola, Ethiopia, and Lesotho from 2001 to 2011. Unlike my previous works on women serving in national parliament, that employ quantitative analysis when examining the impact of explanatory variables on women in parliaments, this work employs a case study approach to systematically examine the increased share of women in the parliaments of three very different and unique Sub-Saharan African countries.

Keywords: Women, African politics, Parliament, Representation, Angola, Ethiopia, Lesotho



“It is important to understand that, establishing women’s political rights in law does not mean in practice that women will be allowed to exercise those rights.”
(Pamela Paxton/Melanie M. Hughes, 2007: 62)

Introduction

Women in Sub-Saharan African society have been the subject of countless studies in the United States during the past three decades. Topics ranging from domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, government corruption, to Sub-Saharan African women’s access to healthcare, education, the paid workforce and political power, continue to be the focus of governmental reports and academic manuscripts. Numerous scholars have highlighted the work and influence of non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) in strengthening the roles of women in Sub-Saharan

African society. Others have sought to highlight gender inequalities, the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on women, and global initiatives developed to ameliorate inequality.

While many feminist scholars have examined the “integral role” women have played in local politics of Sub-Saharan Africa for generations (International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics, iKNOW), few works have examined factors that influence the percentage of women in the national parliaments of Sub-Saharan African countries. Due to the lack of empirical data for many countries in the region, much of the scholarship on women in Sub-Saharan African politics is rooted in case studies. This work examines the increased percentage of women in the parliaments of Angola, Lesotho, and Ethiopia from 2001 to 2011. These countries are chosen because the female membership in these national parliaments increased by twenty percentage points within a ten year period [See Appendix A]. Explanations for the increased percentage of women in the three aforementioned countries may be rooted in a wide range of political, socio-economic and cultural factors.

Previous cross-national works have found that a country’s electoral system (Rule, 1981; 1987; Matland, 1998; Kenworthy and Malami); education (Rule, 1987); the share of women in a country’s paid labor force (Oakes and Almqvist; 1983); religion (Paxton, 1997; Kenworthy and Malami, 1999); a country’s threshold of economic development (Matland, 1998); left party government (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999); the timing of female suffrage (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999); the share of women in professional occupations (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999); the existence of gender quotas (Reynolds, 1999; Ertan, 2011; Krook, 2009); the existence of free and fair elections (Paxton, 1997); opportunities for ethnic minorities (Paxton, 1997); when and whether a country ratified CEDAW (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003); global pressure for the inclusion of women in international politics (Paxton, Huges and Green, 2006) significantly impact the presence of women in a country’s national parliament.

The current study finds its origin in a 2011 study on the factors that impact the share of women serving in the lower chambers of the national parliaments of 46 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Using ordinary least square regression analysis, Adams (2011) found that political, socio-economic, and cultural factors all influence the share of women serving in the parliaments of Sub-Saharan African parliaments, corroborating prior works on the subject

(Adams, 2006; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003; Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Matland, 1998; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1985; Norris, 1985; Rule, 1987). Specifically, the findings indicate that the type of quota adopted, the size of the legislature, the electoral system, the timing of universal female suffrage, the share of women in the paid labor force, religion (Catholicism), and the adoption/ implementation of quotas, significantly affects the percentage of women serving in the lower chambers of parliaments of Sub-Saharan Africa (Adams, 2011). Additionally, the findings show that from 2001-2011, the countries of Angola, Ethiopia, and Lesotho, increased their female membership by more than 20 percentage points, thus, warranting a closer examination of these countries, to determine which factors are in place that could help explain the increased percentage of women in these three Sub-Saharan African parliaments, over a ten year period.¹

Unlike most of the prior works on women serving in national parliaments worldwide that employ quantitative analysis when examining the impact of explanatory variables on women in parliaments, this work employs a case study approach to systematically examine the effects of various political, socio-economic and cultural factors that have been found to significantly affect the percentage of women serving in national parliaments in general, in three very different African nations. Angola, a Central African country, that was embroiled in a twenty-seven year civil war from 1975-2002, is now one of Africa's top oil producers (Hanson, 2008). Ethiopia, an Eastern African country located in the Horn of Africa, is one of the fastest growing non-oil producing countries in the region (African Economic Outlook, Ethiopia) and Lesotho, a South African country, also referred to as the "Hostage State", is a ruggedly mountainous country, landlocked, and completely surrounded by and dependent upon the Republic of South Africa (Culture of Lesotho). Despite their obvious differences, the three countries have made the inclusion of women into its lawmaking bodies a priority during the last decade.

The Positioning of Women in Angola, Ethiopia, and Lesotho

From December 5, 2001 to January 31, 2011, the percentage of women in the lower chambers of Angola, Ethiopia, and Lesotho, increased by 23.1 percent, 20.4 percent, and 20.1 percent respectively. Rwanda increased by 30.6 percent, moving from 25.7 percent in 2001 to

¹ Not all of the 46 countries included in the study increased their percentage of women in parliament; four countries in Sub-Saharan Africa decreased their percentages. From 2001 through 2011, the net loss of women in the parliament of Botswana was -9.1; the Republic of the Congo, -4.7; Ghana, -0.7; and Mali, -2.0 [See Appendix A] (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2001 and 2011).

56.3 percent in 2011²(Inter-Parliamentary Union, January 31, 2011) [See Appendix A]. The regional average for women serving in the lower chambers of national parliaments in Sub-Saharan Africa increased by 6.9 percent over a ten year period. Near the end of 2001, women comprised of 12.4 percent of the regional average of members in Sub-Saharan African parliaments, today the regional average for women is 19.3 percent (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011). This increase is significant because the region of Sub-Saharan Africa exceeds the worldwide increase of women in national parliament for the same time period by 1.6 percent. While numerous factors can possibly explain this increase, this paper examines political, socio-economic and cultural factors used in previous works to determine whether these factors help to explain the increased presence of women in the lower chambers of parliament in Angola, Lesotho, and Ethiopia from 2001 to 2011.

Table1. Categorization and Description of Factors that may Influence Representation

	Factor	Description
Political Factors		
	Quotas	Presence of Quotas
	Size of Legislature	Total # of Seats
	Timing of Suffrage	Yr. Female Suffrage
	Democracy	Democ. Index Score
	Electoral System	PR/Majoritarian
Social Factors		
	Tertiary Education	% Female higher edu
	Secondary Education	% Female sec. edu
	Eco. Activity Rate	% Female Eco. Rate
	Eco. Development	GDP per capita
Cultural Factors		
	Religion	% Id as Catholics
	Fertility Rate	Country's Fert. Rate
	CEDAW ^a Ratify	Yr. Ratify CEDAW
^a CEDAW Treaty on the Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women		

² A major reason for the increased presence of women who serve in the national parliament of Rwanda is due to the 1994 genocide that claimed the lives of a large portion of the male population. Given this unique situation in Rwanda, it is omitted from the current research.

Angola, Ethiopia, and Lesotho: Political Factors

The adoption and implementation of *political quotas* have been found to significantly affect a country's share of women in parliament (Adams, 2011; Ertan, 2011; Krook, 2009; Reynolds, 1999). Generally, there are three types of quotas recognized— (1) “the constitutional quota where seats are reserved for women as a constitutional right; (2) the election law quota [legislated candidate quota], where the national legislature includes a quota provision; and (3) the political party quotas where internal rules by political parties slate a percentage of women candidates for office” (Zakiya, 2008; IDEA Quota Project, 2011).

In Angola, legislated candidate quotas were adopted at the national level in its unicameral parliament, in 2005. Angola's electoral law states that “The charter of political parties shall obligatorily include "rules which encourage the promotion of the equality of opportunity and equity between men and women, as well as a gender representation of not less than 30 percent (Political Parties Law, No 2/05 of July 1 2005. Art.20).” (IDEA, Quota Project). As a result of the 2005 law, in the 2008 election, MPLA³, the ruling party of Angola that has been in power since the country gained its independence from Portugal in 1975, won 81 percent of the seats that included 77 women out of its 191 MPs. “The main opposition party, UNITA,⁴ elected 4 women out of its 16 MPs” (IDEA, Quota Project).

Lesotho has adopted reserved seat quotas at the sub-national level, which some have argued are effective tools to getting women into the political pipelines for national office. “For the 2005 local elections, 30 % of all local election divisions were reserved for women only. The all-women constituencies were distributed randomly and in the end, 58% of the elected were women”(SADC Gender Protocol 2011 Barometer, 59; IDEA, Quota Project).

Ethiopia, has adopted the least effective type of quotas for the advancement of women-- the political party quotas. Party quotas are adopted voluntarily by political parties and may result in few sanctions, if any, for non-compliance (IDEA, Quota Project).

A country's *electoral system* can greatly impact the percentage of women serving in politics. Scholars have found that women are more likely to serve in national legislatures in

³ The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA)

⁴ National Union for the Total Independence of Angola

systems that use party lists in multi-member districts, than in single member winner-take all districts (Adams, 2006; Rule, 1981; Norris 1985, Matland, 1998; Paxton, 1997). In 2008, Tripp and Kang (2008) found that that introduction of quotas and party-list proportional representation electoral systems offered the most explanatory power for women's representation in legislatures today. In 2005, Dahlerup and Friedenvall argued that “the type of gender quota adopted by a country should match the electoral system of that county in order to increase its share of women serving in public office, if not, the electoral system may just be symbolic”(40).

Out of the three countries under study, Angola is the only one that operates under a party-list proportional representation system.⁵ Lesotho has a mixed member proportional system⁶ and Ethiopia has a majority/plurality system under which the candidate or party with the most votes wins the election.

The *size of the legislature* has also been found to impact the share of women serving in national parliaments. The assumption is that the more seats that are in a nation's legislature, the greater the chance that a woman would occupy it (Oakes and Almquist, 1993). Currently, women occupy 84 seats out Angola's 220 total seats in parliament. Based on the May 2010 election results in Ethiopia, women comprise of 152 out the total number of 547 MPs. In Lesotho, as a result of the May 2012 elections, women occupy 30 of the 120 seats (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2012).

The *timing of suffrage* in a country has also been found to affect its share of women in parliament. The year gained the right to vote in a country is important because in those nations where women's suffrage has been a long standing right, the political climate may be conducive to a greater percentage of women serving in the national legislature (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Reynolds, 1999). Out of the three countries under study, Ethiopia granted female suffrage first in 1955, and the country elected its first female parliamentarian in 1957. Lesotho granted suffrage to women one decade after Ethiopia in 1965, and appointed its first female parliamentarian the same year (Nation Masters Statistics for Suffrage, 2011). Angola granted

⁵ Under a **List Proportional Representation** (List PR) system each party or grouping presents a list of candidates for a multi-member electoral district, the voters vote for a party, and parties receive seats in proportion to their overall share of the vote. In some (closed list) systems the winning candidates are taken from the lists in order of their position on the lists. If the lists are 'open' or 'free' the voters can influence the order of the candidates by marking individual preferences (IDEA, <http://www.idea.int/esd/glossary.cfm#MMP>).

⁶ “**The Mixed Member Proportional** is a mixed system in which the choices expressed by the voters are used to elect representatives through two different systems—one List PR system and (usually) one plurality/majority system—where the List PR system compensates for the disproportionality in the results from the plurality/majority system” (IDEA, <http://www.idea.int/esd/glossary.cfm#MMP>).

suffrage to women in 1975 and elected her first female parliamentarian in 1980. New Zealand was the first country to offer women the right to vote and stand for election in 1893, America did so in 1920 with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, and in May 2005, the parliament of Kuwait extended the right to vote to women(Nation Masters Statistics for Suffrage, 2011).

Another political factor that has been found to significantly influence the share of women serving in a county's parliament is the degree of political rights and freedoms (*level of democracy*) within a nation(Adams, 2012; Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003; Paxton, 1997). Women are more likely to be present in the legislatures of countries where the citizens are afforded higher levels of democratic rights and freedoms, than in countries where civil rights and liberties are more repressed (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Reynolds, 1999; Adams, 2006). While Sub-Saharan African countries in general have varied levels of democracy, two of the three countries under study, Ethiopia and Angola,are considered to be authoritarian regimes⁷ by the *Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy*.⁸ Lesotho is categorized by the *Index* as a flawed democracy,⁹with a global democratic ranking of 64th out of more than 167 countries (The Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy, 2011: 5-7).The average index score for Lesotho is6.33 (out of ten), receiving its highest score of 7.42 (out of ten) for the electoral process and pluralism within the country, and the lowest score of 5.63(out of ten) for the overall political culture in Lesotho.

Conversely, Ethiopia's global democratic ranking is 121st. Ethiopia received its highest ranking in the category of political participation, receiving 5.00 (out of ten). Ethiopia's lowest ranked category is 0.00 (out of ten) for its electoral process and pluralism. Angola's global democratic ranking is 133rd. Angola's received its highest ranking of 4.44 (out of ten), for political participation, and received its lowest score of 1.33 (out of ten) for its electoral process

⁷ “**Authoritarian regimes:** In these states political pluralism is absent or heavily circumscribed.. Many countries in this category are outright dictatorships. Some formal institutions of democracy may exist, but these have little substance. Elections, if they do occur, are not free and fair. There is disregard for abuses and infringements of civil liberties. Media are typically state-owned or controlled by groups connected to the ruling regime. There is repression of criticism of the government and pervasive censorship. There is no independent judiciary” (http://www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=Democracy_Index_Final_Dec_2011.pdf&mode=wp)

⁸“The Economist Index of Democracy is based on a 0 to 10 scale, is based on the ratings for 60 indicators grouped into five categories: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture. Each category has a rating on a 0 to 10 scale, and the overall index of democracy is the simple average of the five categories” (The Economist Index of Democracy, 2011; (http://www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=Democracy_Index_Final_Dec_2011.pdf&mode=wp).

⁹ “**Flawed democracies:** These countries also have free and fair elections and even if there are problems (such as infringements on media freedom), basic civil liberties will be respected. However, there are significant weaknesses in other aspects of democracy, including problems in governance, an underdeveloped political culture and low levels of political participation.” (http://www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=Democracy_Index_Final_Dec_2011.pdf&mode=wp)

and pluralism. Generally, women are more likely to be found in democratic systems such as Lesotho, than in authoritarian regimes such as Ethiopia and Angola (The Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy, 2011: 5-7).

Angola, Ethiopia, and Lesotho: Socio-Economic Factors

Education has been found to significantly impact the percentage of women serving in a country's parliament. In countries where women have greater access to educational opportunities, more women are found in their parliaments than in countries where female access to education is more restricted (Adams 2006; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003; Paxton, 1997). Access to *tertiary education* is an important indicator of the status of women in a given country. Countries with a high percent of women in higher education will have a greater likelihood of having more women who can be considered for political office, than countries with lower percentages of women in higher education.

Lesotho ranks among the highest of all Sub-Saharan African countries with 55 percent women enrolled in tertiary education (United Nations Division of Statistics, Table 4d). In Angola, 45 percent of students enrolled in tertiary education are women and Ethiopia lags far behind with 27 percent women enrolled in tertiary education (United Nations Division of Statistics, Table 4d).

In countries such as Ethiopia, where female access to tertiary education is low, female access to secondary education may be a better indicator. Hence, female access to *secondary education*¹⁰ may also influence the share of women serving in parliament. As nations approach universality of secondary education among women, the numbers of women in their national legislatures will increase.

Again, Lesotho percentages are high with 58 percent of women enrolled in secondary education, Ethiopia's share of women receiving secondary education is 45 percent, much higher than their tertiary education statistics. In Angola, women comprise of 41 percent of those students who are enrolled in secondary education (United Nations Division of Statistics, Table

¹⁰“The girls' share of secondary enrolment refers to the percentage of students enrolled in secondary education who are female. This indicator helps assess gender disparity with regard to participation in secondary education. When the indicator approaches 50% it reflects a good level of gender parity” (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/socind/>).

4c). In 2009, an estimated 85 percent of Lesotho's population 15 and over was literate. "As such, Lesotho boasts one of the highest literacy rates in Africa. Contrary to most countries [in Africa], in Lesotho, female literacy (94.5%) is higher than male literacy" (Lesotho Culture and Education, 2009). Despite Lesotho's relative educational advantage for women, "social prejudice - rather than lack of qualifications, employment regulations, or the Constitution – also bars women from getting into mainstream politics" (African Development Bank, 2006:31).

Another socio-economic factor that has been found to influence a nation's share of women in parliament is a country's share of *female economic activity*. As women move from unpaid to paid labor, their status usually increases and thus there will be a greater likelihood of women participating in political process and electing other women to the legislature (Adams, 2006; Oakes and Almquist, 1993; Rule, 1987). The female economic activity rate¹¹ in Angola is 62.7, and for Lesotho the percentage is 58.7. Surprisingly, Ethiopia's female economic activity rate is 78.3 percent (United Nations Division of Statistics, Table 5c). This high percentage is a reflection of the Ethiopian government's recognition in 2001 that the economic empowerment of women would help Ethiopia prosper nationally. Thus, the government joined forces with the World Bank, the Italian Cooperation, and other donors to implement the Ethiopian Women's Development Initiatives Project (WDIP). The aim of WDIP is:

"to redress gender imbalances in development opportunities by investing in women's skills, productivity, and organizational capacity. The project encouraged women from low-income households to form women's groups to coordinate their productive activities, such as grain and spice processing, handicraft production, and the rearing of animals and poultry" (The World Bank International Development Association, 2008).

"Between 2000 and 2005, the WDIP supplied grants and training to 621 women's cooperatives in rural and urban low-income areas in Ethiopia, benefitting 11,300 women and 60,000 direct family members. . . . As a result of participation in the WDIP, women are less likely to uphold traditional rules that constrain their participation in the workforce and freedom of movement" (The World Bank International Development Association, 2008).

¹¹ Female economic activity rate refers to the percentage of the population that is female aged 15 and over that is economically active.

The Ethiopian Women’s Development Initiative has given Ethiopian women the self-confidence to create businesses and challenge societal norms that once held them to the confines of household jobs.

Scholars have found that a country’s level of *economic development (GDPPC)* can also affect its share of women in politics. The wealthier the country, the more likely gender equality is to play a role in selecting political representatives (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Inglehart and Norris, 2003). Matland (1998) maintains that “development leads to weakening of traditional values, decreased fertility rates, increased urbanization, greater educational and labor force participation for women, and attitudinal changes in perceptions of the appropriate roles of women” (p.114; Kenworthy and Malami, 1999: 241). According to the CIA World Fact Book, Angola’s estimated gross domestic product per capita for 2011 is \$5,900. Lesotho’s is substantially lower at \$1,400, followed closely by Ethiopia estimated GDPPC is \$1,100.

In 2008, Angola became Africa’s number one oil producer, surpassing Nigeria (Hanson, 2008). Economists predicted that the gross domestic product would increase by 16 percent that year, “placing Angola among the fastest growing economies in the world” (2008). Nonetheless, most Angolans still live in poverty, and “development indicators for the country have improved little since the end of its decades-long civil war in 2002, raising questions about how well the oil-rich country will translate its windfall into sustainable long-term economic growth” (Hanson, 2008).

Lesotho’s economic growth has remained moderate due to the severe 2011 floods within its borders. Ethiopia still remains one the fastest growing non-oil producing countries in Africa, despite its “high and persistent inflation” (African Economic Outlook, Ethiopia).

Angola, Ethiopia, and Lesotho: Cultural Factors

Identifying and measuring cultural factors that may impact representation in global legislative bodies has proven to be quite difficult. ‘Culture’ takes on different meanings at different times within individual countries, especially in African countries that are often highly factionalized with numerous tribal influences. Yet scholars continue to explore and refine measures in an effort to assess the meaning of culture (Paxton and Kunovich, 2003; Adams, 2008). A highly recognized measure of culture is the level of religious diversity and/or

homogeneity within a country. A country's dominant religion can reveal a great deal about the expected role of women within a society.

According to Paxton (1997), Protestant religions vary, but are generally less patriarchal than Catholicism or Islam. In countries where the dominant religion is Protestant backgrounds women often have a higher presence in national legislatures, than those of Roman Catholic or Islamic heritage. In countries with dominant Islamic heritage have the least number of female legislators, since under Islamic law female activities are constrained and their status is considered low (Ahmed, 1992; Paxton, 1997; Glaser and Possony, 1979).

In Angola, 53 percent of the population practices Christian beliefs. The largest share of Christians, thirty-eight percent (38%), identify as Catholics (Overlanding Africa). Catholicism is the country's largest single denomination. Protestant denominations in Angola include Methodists, Congregational, Baptist and Evangelical churches. Tribal religions are very prevalent in Angola with many Angolans believing in "witchcraft, sorcery and ancestral spirits" (Overlanding Africa). "Islam in Angola is a minority religion with approximately 80,000-90,000 followers, composed largely of migrants from West Africa and families of Lebanese origin" (Overlanding Africa; U.S. Department of State International Religious Freedom Report, July-December, 2010).

The dominant religions in Ethiopia are Ethiopian Orthodox and Islam. Ethiopia is predominantly a Christian nation where the majority of Christians are Orthodox Tewahedo Christians. In 2007, approximately 43.5 percent Ethiopians identified as Orthodox, 33.9 percent identified as Muslim, and 18.6 percent identified as Protestant (CIA World Factbook, 2011).

"Religion in Lesotho is a mix of traditionally based ancestor worship and Christianity, with a small representation of Islam" (Culture of Lesotho). Roughly 80 percent of Lesotho's population identify as Christians, with approximately 45 percent identifying as Roman Catholics. Approximately 20 percent of the Lesotho's population is considered to have indigenous beliefs (CIA World Factbook, 2011). "The main church groups [in Lesotho] are Catholic, Anglican, and Dutch Reformed. The dominance of the Catholic religion reflects the church's involvement in education, with over 75 percent of all primary and secondary schools being owned and managed by Catholics" (Culture of Lesotho). There are approximately 4,000 Muslim families and 150 Hindu families living in Lesotho. Their numbers have declined precipitously due to recent

emigration to South Africa (U.S. Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report, July-December, 2010).

The timing of country's ratification of the U.N. Treaty on the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)¹² may serve as an important indicator of a country's progress towards women's equality, culturally. The ratification of CEDAW affirms a country's commitment to the principles of fundamental human rights and equality for women (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003). Countries that ratified CEDAW early on may be more progressive and may be more likely to have women in legislative bodies than countries that ratified the Treaty later. Among the countries under study, Ethiopia ratified CEDAW first. Despite Ethiopia's ratification of CEDAW in 1981, the government has failed to comply with its basic tenets and provisions. Under CEDAW, states have an obligation to respect, protect, provide for and promote women under CEDAW (Alemu, 2002). Nonetheless, in Ethiopia, discrimination and violence against women persists. For example:

“Domestic violence is highly prevalent in Ethiopia and widely socially condoned. A study conducted by the World Bank in July 2005 concluded that 88 percent of rural women and 69 percent of urban women believed their husbands had the right to beat them. Moreover the courts do not tend to consider domestic violence as a serious justification for granting a divorce” (The Coalition of the Campaign, 2010).

In addition to discrimination and domestic violence problems, Ethiopian women continue to face obstacles to education and the ownership of property and are readily exposed to female genital mutilation (The Coalition of the Campaign).

“.....although the Criminal Code, as well as the Constitution (article 35(4)), condemn harmful traditional practices, female genital mutilation (FGM) remains widely practised in Ethiopia, especially in the regions of Somali, Afar, Dire Dawa, Oromia and Harar. It is estimated that around 74% of the female population undergoes FGM. No criminal prosecutions have ever been brought against perpetrators of FGM” (The Coalition of the Campaign, 2010).

¹² “CEDAW, adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination” (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>). States that ratify CEDAW are required “to respect the equal rights of women by refraining from discriminating against them both formally and in practice. Hence, states are obligated to abolish discriminatory laws if any” (Alemu, 2002:6).

Angola became a party to CEDAW five years after Ethiopia, in 1986, and seems to have made much more progress with regard to women's equality than Ethiopia. According to a 2012 letter from Angola's Minister of Family and the Promotion of Women to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, "gender equality has been a priority issue for the government of Angola since the country's independence in November 11, 1975" (Lino, 1). As proof, Minister Genoveva da Conceicao Lino underscores that the Angolan Parliament adopted the Domestic Violence Act in 2011. The Angolan Council of Ministers approved the Land Law which gives rural women access and control of land either by acquisition or by inheritance. The same Council is considering the approval of the National Gender Policy, a revision of the Family Code and the Action Plan on Rural Women (Lino, 2012). Other improvements include greater accessibility to educational and health facilities for the girls/women of Angola.

Lesotho ratified CEDAW in 1995. While the Lesotho government has committed itself to eliminating discrimination through legislation, programs, and policies, such as the Gender and Development Policy and the Sexual Offences Act,¹³ "women continue to suffer a high level of discrimination because aspects of the patriarchal culture have been incorporated into customary law that take women as minors and place them under the perpetual custody and protection of men" (African Development Bank, 2006: 31). Although Ethiopia and Lesotho have adopted CEDAW, which in theory, suggests that they are committed to the end discrimination against women, in practice, women in Ethiopia and Lesotho continue to face grave discrimination and violence.

Finally, a country's *fertility rate* may also influence a country's share of women in parliament. Women may be more likely to serve in the legislatures of countries where the birthrates are lower and they can devote more time to careers in public life. Fertility rate refers to the total number of children the average women in a population is likely to have throughout her life, based on the country's current birthrate. The "birthrate ranges from more than 7 children per woman in developing countries in Africa to around 1 child per woman in Eastern European and highly-developed Asian countries" (Rosenberg, 2009). Culturally, the fertility rate signals a level of control women are allowed to have over their reproductive lives. In countries with lower

¹³ This Act consolidates all laws regulating sexual conduct and repeals those which are discriminatory and do not offer adequate protection to victims (African Development Bank, 2006).

fertility rates, women may hold greater shares of seats in the lower chambers of their national parliaments. Out of the three countries under study, Ethiopia has the highest fertility rate with 5.97, followed closely by Angola with 5.54. Lesotho’s fertility rate is much lower at 2.89 (CIA World Factbook, 2011).

Comparison of Findings

It is impossible to determine with any degree of certainty to what extent the political, socio-economic, and cultural factors mentioned in this work are responsible for the more than 20 percent increase in the share of women serving in the parliaments of Angola, Ethiopia and Lesotho from 2001 to 2011. Without a quantitative (linear regression) analysis, no estimation of the size of the effects of the political, socio-economic and cultural factors on the share of women in parliament can be determined. Nonetheless, when examining the countries systematically, there appear to be factors that are present in individual countries that may have contributed to the increased percentages in women in the parliaments of Angola, Ethiopia, and Lesotho over the last decade.

Angola

Angola’s 23.1 percent increase in the share of women, from 2001 to 2011, may be attributed to political, socio-economic and cultural factors within the nation. The adoption of electoral law quotas at the national level, its proportional representation electoral system, the level of economic development in the country and religion may account for the greater share of female representatives.

Possible Explanations for Angola’s Increased Presence of Women, 2001-2011

Angola	Factors
Political Factors	
	Gender Quotas
	Electoral System
Social Factors	
	Eco. Dev. (GDPPC)
Cultural Factors	
	Religion

Studies have found that women are more likely to be found in legislative bodies that have adopted gender quotas than in countries that have not adopted such quotas (Reynolds, 1999; Ertan, 2011; Krook, 2009). In 2005, Angola adopted legislated candidate quotas at the national level, setting a minimum of not less than 30 percent women in its unicameral legislature. Angola's "promotion of equality of opportunity and equity between men and women" by the implementation of gender quotas, could singularly explain the increase of women in its parliament from 2001-2011 [Political Parties Law, No 2/05 of July 1 2005. Art. 20] (IDEA, Quota Project).

Another political factor that may be attributed to Angola's increased presence of women in parliament is the country's electoral system. Women are more likely to serve in national legislatures in systems that use party-lists in multi-member districts, than in single member winner-take all districts (Adams, 2006; Rule, 1981; Matland, 1998; Paxton, 1997). Out of the three countries under study, Angola's electoral system is the only pure proportional representation system. Ethiopia and Lesotho use mixed majoritarian systems (IDEA, Quota Project).

Angola's relative high level of economic development (GDPPC) may also contribute to the increased presence of women in parliament over the last decade. According to Matland (1998) "development leads to a weakening of traditional values . . . and attitudinal changes in perceptions of the appropriate roles of women" (114; Kenworthy and Malami, 1999: 241). In 2008, Angola became Africa's top oil producer, placing itself among the fastest growing economies in the world (Hanson, 2008). Scholars contend that the wealthier the country, the more likely gender equality is to play in selecting political representatives (Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Kenworthy and Malami, 1999).

It is difficult to ascertain with great clarity the impact of religion on the cultural attitudes of women in Angola due to the overwhelming amount of indigenous religions and the continuing influence of the Kimbanguist Church¹⁴(Overlanding Africa; Angola Press, 2012). Forty-seven percent (47%) of Angolans practice various indigenous religions. However, Roman Catholic is

¹⁴ A religious and anticolonial movement in tropical Africa from the 1920's to the 1950's. It was named after Simon Kimbangu (1889–1951), who in 1921 founded a Christian sect in the Belgian Congo (present-day Republic of Zaire). "Kimbangu preached a doctrine that was in many ways more strict than that of the Protestantism from which it evolved. Healing by the laying on of hands; strict observance of the law of Moses; the destruction of fetishes; the repudiation of sorcery, magic, charms, and witches; and the prohibition of polygyny were all part of his original message" (<http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-15050.html>).

the nation’s largest single denomination,consisting of 38 percent of the population (CIA World Factbook, 2012;OverlandingAfrica).While many Angolans are said to be very spiritual in nature, with a rich religious system,the religious beliefs do not seem to have a debilitating influence on the role of women in society. According to Angola’s Minister of Family and the Promotion of Women, Minister Lino, “gender equality has been a priority issue for the government of Angola since the country’s independence in 1975 (2012: 1).

Neither of the three countries under study are declared Islamic states, nor have they declared Islam as their state religion (Ertan, 2011). All three countries are predominantly Christian nations, with Angola and Lesotho having fewer percentages of their population that identify as Muslims. In Islamic countries the roles of women are clearly defined and theyare usually outside of the public sphere.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia’s 20.1 percent increase in its share of women in parliament from 2001 to 2011 may also be attributed to political, socio-economic and cultural factors within its borders. Ethiopia’s timing of suffrage, its relatively high percentage of women in the workforce, and the timing of the ratification of CEDAW¹⁵ may explain the increase in female members of parliaments during the ten year period. While Ethiopia has the largest seats in its parliament among the countries under study, the size of the legislature does not seem to affect the share of women in parliament.

Possible Explanations for Ethiopia’s Increased Presence of Women, 2001-2011

Ethiopia	Factors
Political Factors	
	Timing of Suffrage
Social Factors	
	Female Eco. Activity
Cultural Factors	
	CEDAW Ratification

¹⁵ The United Nations Treaty on the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

Scholars have found that the timing of suffrage impacts the percentage of women serving in national parliaments. In countries where women gained the right to vote early on and women's suffrage has been a long standing right, the political climate is more conducive to women participating in political affairs (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999 and Reynolds, 1999). Ethiopia granted women's suffrage in 1955, one of the earlier Sub-Saharan countries to do so, and elected its first female parliamentarian, Woizero Sinedu Gebru,¹⁶ in 1957 (Ethiopian Review, 2009). Lesotho granted suffrage to women a decade after Ethiopia, in 1965, and Angola granted female suffrage two decades after Ethiopia, in 1975. Given that Ethiopia's history of women serving in parliament dates back to 1957, one could argue that this was a "start" to a slow, gradual liberalization of attitudes towards the role of women in leadership positions in Ethiopia.

The timing of a country's ratification of the U.N. Treaty on the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) may serve as an indicator of a country's cultural commitment to women's equality (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003). Scholars have hypothesized that countries that ratified CEDAW early on may be more progressive and have more women in their legislative bodies than countries that waited to ratify CEDAW. Although Ethiopia was the first of the three countries under study to ratify CEDAW in 1981, the ratification seem to be more of a symbolic gesture rather than a real devotion to the eradication of violence and discrimination against women. Ethiopia, like many countries, has failed to comply with the basic obligations under CEDAW to respect, protect, provide for, and promote women. Women in Ethiopia continue to face grave discrimination, domestic violence and obstacles to education, the ownership of property and female genital mutilation (The Coalition of the Campaign, 2010).

Despite Ethiopia's seemingly lack of commitment to true gender equality culturally, women seem to be doing better economically. Scholars have found that the share of women in a country's paid workforce influences its share of women in parliament (Adams, 2006; Oakes and Almquist, 1993; Rule, 1987). Today, the female economic activity rate¹⁷ for Ethiopia is 78.3 percent (United Nations Division of Statistics, Table 5c). In 2001, the Ethiopian government joined forces with the World Bank, the Italian Cooperation, and other donors to implement the

¹⁶ Ethiopia's first woman parliamentarian and the first Ethiopian school director of Etege Menen school (*Ethiopian Review*, April 25, 2009)

¹⁷ The female economic activity rate refers to the percentage of the population that is female aged 15 and over that is economically active.

Ethiopian Women’s Development Initiatives Project (WDIP) to bolster the economic empowerment of women and thus, the entire Ethiopian economy (The World Bank International Development Association, 2008). Ethiopia’s high female economic activity rate may offer some explanation for the increased presence of women in its parliament from 2001 to 2011.

Lesotho

Lesotho increased its share of women in parliament by 20.4 percent from 2001 to 2011. Political, socio-economic and cultural factors such as the level of democratic rights and freedoms afforded its citizens, female access to secondary and tertiary education, and lower fertility rates may be attributed Lesotho’s increased share of women in parliament.

Possible Explanations for Lesotho’s Increased Presence of Women, 2001-2011

Lesotho	Factor
Political Factors	
	Level of Democracy
Social Factors	
	Tertiary Education
	Secondary Education
Cultural Factors	
	Fertility Rate

Researchers maintain that a country’s level of democracy significantly influences the percentage of women serving in a country’s parliament (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003; Paxton, 1997). The findings indicate that women are more likely to be present in the legislatures of countries where citizens are afforded higher levels of democratic rights and freedoms, than in countries where civil rights and liberties are more repressed (Adams, 2006; Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Reynolds, 1999). Unlike most Sub-Saharan African countries, including Angola and Ethiopia, that are categorized as authoritarian regimes by the *Economist Index of Democracy*, Lesotho is considered a flawed democracy whereby its citizens routinely witness free and fair elections, and basic civil liberties are respected (The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Index of Democracy, 2011).

Female access to education in Lesotho may also contribute to the increased presence of women in its parliament over the last decade. Access to education is an important indicator of the

status of women in a country and is often a non-formal qualifier for public office. Thus, scholars contend that women are more likely to be found in the parliaments of countries where women have greater access to educational opportunities, than in countries where those opportunities are more restricted (Adams, 2006; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003; and Paxton, 1997). Lesotho ranks among the highest of all Sub-Saharan countries with 55 percent women enrolled in tertiary education (United Nations Division of Statistics, Table, 4d). Fifty-eight percent (58%) of women are enrolled in secondary education in Lesotho (United Nations Division of Statistics, Table, 4c). In 2009, Lesotho boasts one of the highest literacy rates in Africa with an estimated 85 percent of its population 15 and over literate (Lesotho Culture and Education, 2009).

Lesotho's relatively low rate of fertility may also be a contributing factor to the increased presence of women in national politics from 2001 to 2011. Culturally, the fertility rate signals a level of control that women are allowed to have over their reproductive lives. Countries with lower fertility rates may offer women greater opportunities for public pursuits such as politics, than countries where the fertility rates are higher and women are attending to the needs of their children. Lesotho's fertility rate of 2.89 is one of the lowest rates for Sub-Saharan countries. "The birthrate ranges from more than 7 children per woman in developing countries in Africa to around 1 child per woman in Eastern European and highly-developed Asian countries" (Rosenberg, 2009) Of the three countries under study, Ethiopia has the highest fertility rate with 5.97, followed closely by Angola with 5.54 (CIA World Factbook, 2011).

Concluding Remarks

While not model systems of gender equality, and in the case of Ethiopia, far from it, the countries of Angola, Ethiopia, and Lesotho have made marked progress over the last decade. Out of forty-six Sub-Saharan African countries, the triumvirate increased their share of women in parliament more than 20 percent (Adams, 2011) [See Appendix A]. Perhaps, the largest explanation for the increase is pressure from outside forces to comply with global initiatives centered on equality. Nonetheless, the overall objective of this work was to identify political, socio-economic and cultural factors that could possibly explain the increased presence of women in the national parliaments of Angola, Ethiopia, and Lesotho. While not quantitative and thus more speculative, the systematic comparison of the countries do sheds positive light on factors that may explain the increased share of women in each country from 2001 to 2011.

In Angola, the adoption of gender quotas, its proportional representational system, the country's relatively high level of economic development and religion may explain the 23.1 percent increase of women in parliament over the last decade. Ethiopia's longstanding history of women voting (timing of female suffrage), and its 2001 Women's Development Initiatives Project (WDIP) to include more women in the paid workforce may have contributed to the 20.1 percent increase of women in parliament over the last decade. Ethiopia's non-compliance with the basic tenets of CEDAW signals that the country is far from true gender equality. Finally, in Lesotho, low birthrates and the government's commitment to female education, and a democratic process whereby all citizens, male and female, basic civil liberties are respected, may have contributed to the increased presence of women in its parliament over the last ten years.

Africa has experienced a gradual liberalization of attitudes toward the role of women in society and in politics over the last few decades. Some of the factors that may have contributed to this progress may have been outlined in this work. Angola, Ethiopia and Lesotho, while not model countries for gender equality, have made women's issues a greater priority over the last decade. Feminists, like myself, can only hope that this trend continues to gain the necessary momentum to move women forward.

Political, Socio-Economic and Cultural Factors & the Presence of Women in the Parliaments of Angola, Ethiopia, and Lesotho

	Rep. of Angola	Ethiopia	Lesotho
Political Factors			
Percent Women 2001	15.5%	7.7%	3.8%
Percent Women 2011	38.6% ^a	27.8% ^b	24.2% ^c
FirstFemaleParliamentarian	1980 (elected)	1957 (elected)	1965 (appointed)
Presence of Nat. Quotas	Yes	Yes	No
Dominant Quota Types	Election Law Reg. (Nat.)	Political Party	Constitutional (Sub/Nat.)
Size of Legislature	220	547	120
Electoral System	List PR	Majority/Plurality	Mixed Mem. Prop.
Level of Democracy	Authoritarian	Authoritarian	Flawed Democracy
Yr. Female Suffrage	1975	1955	1965
Assembly Type	Unicameral	Bicameral	Bicameral
Socio-Eco. Factors			
Wm. Tertiary Edu.	45%	27%	55%
Wm. Secondary Edu.	41%	45%	58%
GDPPC	\$5,900	\$1,100	\$1,400
Women in Labor	47%	48%	52%
Cultural Factors			
Dominant Religion	Christian Orthodox	Ethiopian Orthodox	Christianity
Fertility Rate	5.54	5.97	2.89
Yr Ratified CEDAW	1986	1981	1995

^aBased on the September 2008 election results

^bBased on the May 2010 election results

^cBased on the February 2007 election results

Sources: International *IDEA* and Stockholm University, the Global Database of *Quotas* for Women ,the CIA World Factbook, 2011, 2012)

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Appendix A

Women in National Legislatures of Sub-Saharan Africa 2001, 2011

Country	2001	2011	Change 2001-2011
Angola	15.5	38.6	+23.1
Benin	6.0	10.8	+4.8
Botswana	17.0	7.9	-9.1
Burkina Faso	8.1	15.3	+7.2
Cameroon	5.6	13.9	+8.3
Cape Verde	11.1	18.1	+7
Central African Republic	7.3	9.6	+2.3
Chad	2.4	5.2	+2.8
Comoros	0	3.0	+3
Congo	12	7.3	-4.7
Cote d' Ivoire	8.5	8.9	+0.4
Djibouti	0	13.8	+13.8
Equatorial Guinea	5.0	10.0	+5
Eritrea	14.7	22.0	+7.3
Ethiopia	7.7	27.8	+20.1
Gabon	9.2	14.7	+5.5
Gambia	2.0	7.5	+5.5
Ghana	9.0	8.3	-0.7
Guinea	8.8	19.3 ^a	+10.5
Guinea-Bissau	7.8	10.0	+2.2
Kenya	3.6	9.8	+6.2
Lesotho	3.8	24.2	+20.4
Liberia	7.8	12.5	+4.7
Madagascar	8.0	12.5	+4.5
Malawi	9.3	20.8	+11.5
Mali	12.2	10.2	-2.0
Mauritania	3.8	22.1	+18.3
Mauritius	5.7	18.8	+13.1
Mozambique	30.0	39.2	+9.2
Namibia	25.0	24.4	-0.6
Niger	1.2	10.2 ^b	+9.0
Nigeria	3.4	7.0	+3.6
Rwanda	25.7	56.3	+30.6
Sao Tome and Principe	9.1	18.2	+9.1
Senegal	16.7	22.7	+6.0
Seychelles	23.5	23.5	0
Sierra Leone	8.8	13.2	+4.4

Somalia	0	6.8	+6.8
South Africa	29.8	44.5	+14.7
Sudan	9.7	25.6	+15.9
Swaziland	3.1	13.6	+10.5
Tanzania (United Rep)	22.2	36.0	+13.8
Togo	4.9	11.1	+6.2
Uganda	22.7	31.3	+8.6
Zambia	10.1	14.0	+3.9
Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)	9.3	15.0	+5.7

^aRefers to 2008 data ; In Guinea the Parliament was dissolved following the Dec. 2008 coup

^b Refers to 2009 data for Niger

Source: Data taken from Inter-Parliamentary Union, “Women in Parliaments: World Classification”, 2001, 2006, and 2011.

(<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>); United Nations Statistics Division “Statistics and Indicators on Women and Men,” Table 6a, accessed March 17, 2011 (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/tab6a.htm>)