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Exploring Women's Representation in the Parliaments of Latin America

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The existing literature on women in politics has made it abundantly clear that women around the world are facing structural, cultural, and socioeconomic barriers to power in both the public and private spheres. Yet, despite these common obstacles women in some countries fare better than others. Within Latin America, an otherwise fairly homogenous region, there exists a large variation in the percent women's representation in the national single or lower houses, from 6.7% (Belize) to 38.6% (Costa Rica). Possible hypotheses for this spread will be tested using data from the Latinobarómetro Survey, UNESCO, the Quota Project, and the Inter-parliamentary Union. Isolating the main causal factors for low female political representation will provide a framework for the next steps of the women's movement for gender equality in Latin America. In the years since the implementation of quotas (either legislative or at the party level) in 16 of the 19 cases presented here, women's representation has risen significantly in these nationstates. In accordance with the literature, all of the most successful country cases utilize a proportional representation list system. This study finds that the institutions and the dedication of the government in power to reinforce these institutions are the most significant factors in increasing the representation of women in the national parliaments of Latin America.

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INTRODUCTION

As of July 2006, there were approximately 3.23 billion women in the world. That is 3.23 billion women who are or have the potential to be, mothers, wives, and partners in the private sphere. The Western world touts itself as modern and progressive, and yet in no society are women granted their full human rights[16] to participate in the public spheres of the workforce and elected office.

Out of 191 members of the United Nations in 2006 there are only 9 female ambassadors and only 12 countries led by women. Ironically it is Rwanda, a nation that suffered devastating civil war less than a decade ago, which took the lead in female representation in the single or lower national parliament when, in October of 2003, it replaced the previous leader, Sweden, with women winning 48.8% of the seats. There are fifteen nations in sub-Saharan Africa – the poorest region on this Earth – with higher proportions of women MPs than the United States (15.2%), twenty-four higher than France (12.2%) and thirty-one higher than Japan (9.4%). Though statistically deplorable in this respect, the US will at last take a huge step forward, inaugurating its first female Speaker of the House, Congresswomen Nancy Pelosi of California. She will be the twenty-seventh woman in the world to preside over a national House; before World War II, only Austria had elected a woman to lead in this capacity (UNIFEM, WomeninPolitics.org, IPU).

In the Latin American region, the women's movement has been gathering momentum. Despite a largely patriarchal culture, Latin American women are finding

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[16] As guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, individuals have such rights as the right to an education, to employment, to full participation in cultural life, and the freedoms of thought, conscience, expression, and opinion (UN.org)

strength in numbers and forming groups like the *Iniciativa Feminista* (Feminist Initiative) in Chile and the *Alianza de Mujeres Mexicanas* (Alliance of Mexican Women) in Mexico, choosing candidates to back and forming alliances and coalitions with political parties who support "women's issues," such as decent healthcare, education, and reproductive rights.   According to a longtime member of the Mexican women's movement, Adelína Zendéjas, there is one real danger to the success of the movement, and that is women's desire to succeed for themselves, and not for the good of women as a whole: "They gave us the vote, and then everything went downhill, because women would not fight for women's causes but for their own personal interests, to become a director or a deputy – and they forgot everything" (Jaquette 1994, 205).

It is important to remember that the right to voice political opinion was not always a right — it was once a privilege granted only to the few (mostly white, upper-class males). Understanding the nuances of women's representation will provide for a greater awareness of the biases and barriers that today keep both developed and developing cultures from achieving true gender equality.

Review of the Literature

In recent years the issue of the disproportionately low political representation of women has been a frequent theme of many studies in the fields of political science, women's studies, and sociology. These studies differ in their opinions of which variables interact to have the strongest impact on women being excluded from political participation. However, they all seem to agree that women's legislative absence is a problem and one that needs to be addressed. The UN Decade for Women (1976-85) launched the development of women into the international spotlight. In the 1990s various

women's groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) continued to remind the world that the work was not yet over. The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, states, "Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account" (Sawer 2000). Today civil society around the globe has been strengthened and women are poised to take their place as equals in the public sphere after having spent centuries relegated to the private. As they gain access to the "old boys clubs" of politics, the primary forums in which women will be able articulate their views on national policy are the national legislatures.

The global average percentage of women in the single or lower national house is 16.8%. Why is it, then, that the Nordic region has an average of 40.0% while the rest of the world lags behind (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2006)? The field of women in politics has grown steadily over the years, but in comparison to studies of the Nordic success story, Latin America has gone largely untouched by scholars. In Latin America an interesting pattern has developed; some nations are charging ahead with as high as 38.6% representation in Costa Rica, and others are being left in the dust, like Belize with a mere 6.7%. Looking only at these percentages, and ignoring other factors, Belize would seem to fit more closely in line with the Arab states than its Latin American neighbors. This article will attempt to explore the reasons for this divide between the otherwise similar nations of Latin America.

Gender disparity is still a prevalent issue in the 21st century. Nowhere, perhaps, is this more obvious than in politics (Kenworthy and Malami 1999, Inter-Parliamentary

Union 2006). Even today, when women have almost universally achieved the right to vote and to stand for national elections (Martin 2000, Kenworthy and Malami 1999), only 4 of the 20 cases in Latin America have more than 30% female representation in the national lower or only house. Lane Kenworthy and Melissa Malami report that the United Nations Development Program considers 30% to be the critical proportion (also called "critical mass" in the literature) necessary for women to exert "substantial influence" on the politics of a nation (Kenworthy and Malami 1999). The literature suggests three sets of variables to account for women's access to legislative power: political/institutional, cultural, and socioeconomic.

Politics and Institutions

Of the many schools of thought regarding this topic, scholars most universally agree that political systems have a great effect upon women's representation in the national legislatures. The proportional representation electoral system with a large district magnitude and multi-member constituencies has provided the greatest opportunities for female participation in politics. Combined with a high electoral threshold and quotas (also known as affirmative action), the literature confirms that this model is unbeatable for the guarantee of increased female representation (Matland and Montgomery 2003, Sawer 2000, Inglehart and Norris 2003, Kenworthy and Malami 1999, del Campo 2005, Lovenduski 2005, Matland 1998, 2006). In a PR system the parties have the incentive to present a balanced ticket that appeals to the varied electorate. There is also the pressure to comply with intra-party elements such as quotas; PR systems make it much easier to introduce quotas than in single member district systems where there is only one place to be filled. Parties, however, will only choose to gender-balance their ticket if there is

considerable pressure for them to do so. The level of pressure hinges upon the nature of the party system and a variety of cultural factors, to be discussed later.

In a PR system the cost of competing with other parties in policies of female representation are relatively lower than when in a majoritarian system. PR systems lend themselves to the creation of more political parties, which in turn decreases the political distance between each. In these systems, then, it is far easier for qualified female candidates to relocate to another party which is more willing to provide them political opportunities (Matland and Montgomery 2003). As a result, parties respond quickly to challenges made by other parties in the area of female representation. This is known as a contagion effect (Matland 1997).

The average number of representatives per district is known as district magnitude. The lower the level of the district magnitude the higher the level of electoral disproportionality will be. The greatest change can be seen when moving from single-member districts to the first category of multi-member districts. As the magnitude increases disproportionality decreases, and as more seats are created it is more likely that party will be willing to "sacrifice" that seat to a female candidate who they previously feared would lose in that district (Jones 1993). As district magnitude increases typically party magnitude will increase as well. Party magnitude reflects the number of seats a party wins or can win in the district. Both party and district magnitudes are important because they strongly affect how parties choose their candidates.

In a single-member district (SMD) a party can only win one seat; it is impossible to balance the ticket in the district. Where women are competing directly against men for the opportunity to be a candidate, it is zero-sum politics and a party can only deny male

candidates when it chooses a woman candidate. When district magnitude increases, it is likely that a party will win more seats in the district. Party leaders will be more apt to balance their tickets in these situations, spreading party interests by carefully choosing candidates for winning slots. In these PR systems parties do not have to look for a single candidate who will represent all their interests, as they would in a majoritarian system. They may instead choose each candidate to represent a particular interest. Failing to provide balance in gender can cost a party support and important votes (Matland and Montgomery 2003).

Plurality, or "first past the post," systems encourage the formation of two strong parties, raising the electoral stakes and making it less likely for a party to put forward a candidate, especially a female, unless it is sure that s/he will win. Author Richard Matland agrees, but argues that this is not among the foremost reasons for female success or failure in obtaining access to the political process. The lack of faith in females as candidates is one of the root challenges in women's political representation for the simple reason that when women do not run for office they cannot be elected to serve (Matland and Montgomery 2003). It can be very difficult to separate cultural variables from institutional variables because the two tend to reinforce each other.

In order to improve the representation of women in the national legislatures, many nations are turning to legal quotas. Quotas have been most effective in Nordic Europe, followed closely by Argentina, the democratic nation. The Argentine *Ley de Cupos* established in 1991 a 30% quota for women in electable positions on party lists for the Chamber of Deputies. Since this law, women's representation has increased from 5% in 1983 (Escobar-Lemmon & Taylor-Robinson 2005) to its current 35% (IPU 2006).

Governments have demonstrated that they take "women's issues," such as paid leave and other family policies seriously, by instituting various forms of quotas to increase women's participation in electoral politics at a greater speed (Caul 2001).

Electoral quotas may be legislative, constitutional, or party-regulated. They may apply to the number of women candidates proposed by a party for election, or may take the form of seats reserved for women in the legislature. Quotas require that a certain number or a certain percentage of women constitute a body, be it an electoral list, parliamentary assembly, a committee, or a government itself. They socialize the burden of recruitment from the women themselves to the process at large, releasing some of the pressure from individuals. The aim is at producing a "critical mass" (Studlar & McAllister 2002) rather than a true gender balance of 50-50 percent. These quotas may be applied as a temporary measure, until the barriers for women's entry into politics are removed, but most nations have not limited their use of quotas in time.

Despite successes, quotas are not the ideal path to progress in women's issues. Quotas allow parties to make concessions to women without having to take sides in controversial gender issues, like reproductive rights or sexual harassment, which may prove divisive among their constituencies. In addition, as more women become involved in electoral politics, there is less chance of agreement among them on core issues. Elsewhere, nationalism and identity politics can overrun gender politics. It is important, then, to consider all the cultural aspects within a nation or a specific region before generalizing its female electorate. Generational gaps can cause serious ruptures in the politics of "women's issues." Younger women and younger generations in general are becoming more supportive of gender equality and expanding political roles of women,

but this is trend is seen only in developed countries (Jaquette 2001, Inglehart and Norris 2003, Caul 2001).

The Literature on political factors and institutions has led to the formation of the following hypotheses tested in this study:

When a government has structural or institutional factors that encourage the success of minority candidates, the higher the percent of women's representation will be.
IH1: The larger the size of the single or lower national house, the higher the percentage of women's representation.

IH2: The longer the amount of time between the year of the granting of universal suffrage and the election, the higher the percent women's representation.

IH3: The greater the enactment and enforcement of quotas, the greater percent women's representation.

IH4: When the electoral system is proportional representation more women will be elected to the national legislature than when the electoral system is simple plurality single member district.

CULTURE COUNTS

Many scholars of women and politics stress the importance of cultural variables, but it can be difficult to operationalize. Pippa Norris was one of the first to successfully develop good measures of cultural differences, using the Eurobarometer from 1977 to develop a measure of political egalitarianism. Norris found that egalitarianism positively affected the proportion of women in a parliament (Matland 1998). Studies in established democracies around Europe have shown that either egalitarian or traditional attitudes toward women influence both whether women are prepared to come forward as candidates for office and the criteria used by political party gatekeepers when evaluating potential candidates. In cultures with dominant traditional value attitudes women may be reluctant to run and may find it equally difficult to garner enough support to win. A study

by the IPU found that female politicians cited hostile attitudes as the one of the greatest barriers to running for parliament.

In spite of the common-sense effects of culture, there exists little cross-national research on the subject, and most studies are forced to adopt proxy indicators, such as religion. It has been hypothesized, as the Catholic Church is associated with a more hierarchical and authoritarian culture, there will be less political activity among women in West European Catholic countries, and this has been supported by research. It has also been found that the countries in which non-Christian religions are practiced (including Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Confucianism, and Hinduism) all have lower proportions of women in legislatures and in cabinet offices than those predominantly Christian nations, either Protestant or Catholic (Norris and Inglehart 2001). Latin America is a predominantly Catholic region, but with a unique history of female mobilization within religious groups.

One aspect of Latin American history that works in favor of women is their history of mobilization for practical purposes such as food prices, employment, and housing. Men did not feel threatened by mobilization for these issues and so women were granted a surprising amount of power, even under authoritarian regimes. Due to women's significant role in social liberation- related movements, gender issues were incorporated into the new constitutions of Brazil, Peru, and Argentina (Matland and Montgomery 2003)

The region of Latin America today seems to fall in the middle in the global spectrum of cultural attitudes. In Scandinavia, a long history of government intervention to promote social equality may have made the public more receptive to the idea of actions

(such as gender quota laws) intended to achieve quality for women in public life. At the opposite end, many nations with strict Islamic traditions often rank at the bottom of the list in terms of women in parliament, despite a few notable women in top leadership positions.

In "Women's Representation in National Legislatures: Developed and Developing Countries" by Richard Matland, the author utilizes three measures to compare women's standing with that of men: the differential between male and female literacy rates, the ratio of women's labor force participation to men's labor force participation, and the ratio of university educated women to university educated men. These are essentially socioeconomic indicators that reflect the general cultural sentiment regarding women's access to power. Matland assumes that the more equal the social standing of women, to more likely that they are seen as equal in the field of politics, and the greater the probability that they are represented in equal numbers. To these variables Matland adds the level of development (Matland 1998).

Modernization has occurred largely as a result of a new generation's focus not upon class-based politics but on the ideals of freedom, self-expression, and gender equality. The support for post-materialist values is closely related with women's support for parties of the left, as discussed below (Inglehart and Norris 2003).

In discussing these variables it is important to address the supply side (whether women are prepared to come forward for office) and the demand side (the criteria used by party gatekeepers and the electorate to evaluate and select candidates). Cultural attitudes regarding women as politicians and women in the workplace (outside of the home) cause The lack of faith in women as candidates can be shown to derive from the

cultural attitudes regarding women as politicians and women in the workplace or outside

of the home in general. A study done by the Inter-parliamentary Union found that female

politicians in many countries mentioned hostile attitudes toward women's political

participation as one of the greatest barriers to running for parliament (Inglehart and

Norris 2003, Norris and Inglehart 2001).

Traditional attitudes regarding gender equality have long been thought to

determine women's entry into elected office, yet so far little evidence has been able to

prove this thesis. Proxy indicators such as religion and education have been adopted to

compensate for this lack. The literature also struggles to quantify exactly how far

attitudes have changed over time, though to be sure the younger generations, as they shift

ideologically to left, have approached gender equality much more openly than their

predecessors (Inglehart and Norris 2003).

The Latinobarómetro measures the opinion of Latino peoples with questions

angled to get at these attitudes. It has found that the people of some Latin American

nations are more likely to support a male politician than others, and that these countries

are slowly becoming more confident in women in the workplace as time progresses.

These attitudes, although changing, reflect the lag in feminist movement and organization

that has happened in this region as compared to the strong institutions of the Nordic

countries or the North Atlantic nations and the United States.

These attitudes draw from a socialization process rooted in culture, and the

women in politics literature cannot be reviewed without first taking stock of the culture or

cultures at hand. In fact, Sonia Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar edited the

book, *Cultures of Politics, Politics of Cultures: Re-visioning Latin American Social*

Movements (1998), with this relationship in mind. In some nations of the world, it is not common for women to participate in the political process. It is not the result of oppression if it is of their own volition, but in systems such as these where the gender roles are very traditional, it is unlikely that women will be able to easily leave the private sphere. It is certainly considered oppressive if women are simply excluded from the process by law and/or by force when they would otherwise wish to participate.

Ideological Factors

The literature suggests that a woman's desire to take part in politics will increase greatly depending on the political party in which she participates. In the 1970s, women the world over placed themselves to the right of men on the political spectrum. Over the course of nearly thirty years they have slowly migrated and now place themselves just to the left of men on the political spectrum (as observed in the World Values Survey and European Values Survey since 1981). These differences may also be accounted for by the generational gap, and/or modernization, but it is important here to examine the parties towards which women gravitate (Inglehart and Norris 2003). If the party supports more issues that women would care about (and, as is most often the case, will benefit directly from – for example, pensions and child care), a woman is more likely to become involved in that party (Paxton 2003, Inglehart and Norris 2003). The issues that many women support (government spending on the welfare state, public services, and environmental protection) are commonly espoused by the parties to the left of center, and for this reason it is logical to assume the following: when a party to the left of center is in power, more women will be involved in that party, will be put up for election, and by virtue of being in power will be elected to positions within the legislature and/or government (del Campo

2005). This more modern view of women's ideological preferences runs counter to the origins of women's political organizations. These groups were historically nonpartisan, created in the aftermath of suffrage to encourage women's active participation without succumbing to the world of man-made and male dominated partisan politics (Sawer 2000).

In Latin America the idea of women as fully equal to men is only just emerging. It has hardly been more than sixty years since most of the women in this region achieved the right to vote, and they are still struggling to establish themselves as professional and intellectual equals to their male counterparts. The earlier a nation has granted women the right to vote, the further society will be in this process of adjustment, thus allowing for more women to participate in the political process (Martin 2000, Kenworthy and Malami 1999).

The literature outlining the cultural variables affecting the percent women's representation has led to the development of the following hypotheses tested in this study:

The more liberal/progressive the culture, the higher the percent women's representation will be.
CH1: When the party in control of the legislature is to the left of center, more women will be elected to the national legislature.

CH2: The greater the religiosity of a nation, the higher percent women's representation will be.

CH3: As the percentage of respondents who answered "strongly agree" or "agree" to the following questions increases, the percent women's representation in that country will decrease.
    (P57A) It is preferable that a woman concentrates on the home and a man on his work.
    (P57B) Men are better political leaders than women
    (P57C) If the woman earns more than the man, she will almost certainly have problems

Socioeconomic Hurdles on an Individual and a National Basis

The feminist slogan that most clearly sums up the relation between socioeconomic status and women in government is that 'the personal is political.' Carole Pateman writes that the separation and opposition between the public and private spheres in liberal theory and practice is ultimately, what the women's movement for access to power is all about. What has ended up happening is that women are being granted more opportunities in the public sphere, but women's historically close association with and responsibility for the domestic sphere are not wavering. This dual role puts undue stress on would-be female candidates who simply don't have the primary resource of time working in their favor. As a result, women's entrance into politics is often later in life than most men, as they are waiting until their children are older (Okin 1998).

Additionally, before any woman can contemplate entering the national legislature, she must first overcome the socioeconomic barriers that still exist today, such as poverty, low levels of female workforce participation and education that are reinforced by widely held inequitable social values. The biases reflected in the Latinobarometer questions concerning women in the workplace, P57ST.A[17] and P57N.C[18], translate into real physical barriers. Women are prevented from escaping underemployment and from acquiring the capital that would make themselves equal to their male counterparts in the workplace and especially in being able to run for office (Matland 1998, Chowdhury 1994).

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[17] "It is preferable that a woman concentrates on the home and a man on his work."
[18] "If the woman earns more than the man, she will almost certainly have problems."

According to authors Irene Diamond and Nancy Hartsock, the three most significant factors that structure social relations are sex, race, and class. Marxists have long argued that state policy is closely linked with social divisions, and issues of women's access to power are no different. A woman born into a poorer home will have less resources available than a woman born into a wealthier home, and is even more disadvantaged when compared to a male candidate coming from any socio-economic class. A great deal of social division derives from reproductive activity, and by design women are negatively affected (in the areas of career advancement and peak job performance) when they are having children (Diamond and Hartsock 1998).

Early theorists hypothesized that economic growth would have a tremendous effect upon factors of human development and improving the status of women. This has not proven to be true in the studies of Inglehart and Norris, as nations such as South Africa consistently outdo economic giants like the United States in terms of female political representation (Inglehart and Norris 2003).

Richard Matland's findings provide some optimism. His research of both developed and lesser-developed countries shows that as countries become more developed, women are increasingly integrated into spheres of public life like the workforce, and he expects that to translate into higher women's representation in the national legislature. According to Matland's research, development leads to the weakening of traditional values, decreased fertility rates, increased urbanization, greater educational and labor force participation for women, and attitudinal changes in the perceptions of the appropriate roles for women. This is partially confirmed by the findings of Inglehart and Norris, that growing affluence does lead to the expansion of

literacy and schooling, the creation of social safety nets, and an increase in white-collar jobs. However, they emphasize that these results are not guaranteed, and neither do they automatically benefit women (Inglehart and Norris 2003).

The literature has suggested the following hypotheses which are tested in this study:

In cases where there are more resources available to women, the higher the percent women's representation will be.

SH1: The greater the country's GDP the higher the percent women's representation.

SH2: The greater the percentage of women attending tertiary education the higher the percent women's representation.

SH3: The higher the HDI score the higher the percent women's representation.

I. CASE SELECTION FOR A MOST SIMILAR, CROSS NATIONAL RESEARCH DESIGN

Within the region of Latin America the majority of the nations are homogenous and have had similar experiences of colonization and democratization. These countries also align on a variety of demographic variables such as religion and commonly used language. These similarities make Latin America a natural sample for use with a most similar research design.

There are, however, a few Latin American nations that deviate from this most similar design; for example, the nations or dependencies colonized by the French (Haiti and French Guiana), the British (the Falkland Islands, Guyana) or the Dutch (Suriname, Aruba). The case of Cuba is also very difficult to reconcile with the rest of the nations in the sample, because it is an authoritarian state. Due to these differences, cases have been

eliminated from the sample. Brazil and Belize, despite some clear linguistic differences (Brazil was colonized by the Portuguese, and speaks primarily Portuguese, while Belize was colonized by the United Kingdom, and speaks English in many areas) remain in the sample. In both cases, the second language is Spanish, the indigenous culture is similar to other cases in the region, the dominant religions and levels of religiosity are the same as regional peers, they maintain strong economic ties with other Latin American nations, and finally, the United Nations has officially classified them as Latin American.

The nineteen cases that remain are: Costa Rica, Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Honduras, Bolivia, Panama, Venezuela, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Chile, Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Paraguay, Colombia, Guatemala, and Belize.

II. Dependent Variable

The dependent variable of this study is the percent women's representation in the single or lower chamber of the national legislature in the most recent election for which there are data available. This information was obtained from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU.org) and is shown below in Table 1. The cabinet level was not studied here because ministerial-level positions are not directly elected, but rather appointed, and is thus not an accurate representation of the will of the electorate or society at large.

Table 1: Variation Of Dependent Variable

	Size of House	Percent Women
Costa Rica	57	38.6
Argentina	257	35.0
Peru	120	29.2
Honduras	128	23.4
Mexico	113	22.6
Nicaragua	92	20.7
Dominican Republic	178	19.7
Venezuela	167	18.0
Bolivia	130	16.9
El Salvador	84	16.7
Panama	78	16.7
Ecuador	100	16.0
Chile	120	15.0
Uruguay	99	11.1
Paraguay	80	10.0
Brazil	513	8.6
Colombia	161	8.4
Guatemala	158	8.2
Belize	30	6.7

III. INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

The independent variables included in this study follow the primary areas of women in politics literature: cultural, political/institutional, and socioeconomic.

Culture

The primary cultural variables used are three questions on the 2004 Latinobarometer Survey which tap the attitudes of Latin American nations regarding women as political leaders, women working outside of the home, and women earning more than their male spouses.[19] The data has been aggregated to reflect the percentage of all individual responses in each separate nation who responded either "strongly agree" or

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[19] Latinobarometro Questions:
(P57A) It is preferable that a woman concentrates on the home and a man on his work.
(P57B) Men are better political leaders than women
(P57C) If the woman earns more than the man, she will almost certainly have problems

"agree." The only case missing is Belize; either there is no such place in Belize able to conduct such survey work or the Latinobarometer did not consider it to be sufficiently Latin American due to its historical British influence. Despite these missing data, I decided to keep the case of Belize for the purposes of bivariate analyses with other independent variables. The case of Belize represented my minimum and it was important to examine the effects of its structural and institutional variables on the dependent variable.

The predominant religion in each case is the same (Roman Catholic) but the degree of religiosity varies from 49.6% at its lowest (Belize) to 97.0% at its highest (Honduras). The relative strength of Roman Catholicism was measured by the percentage of the population who identify as Roman Catholic.[20]

Politics and Institutions

Institutions may represent some of the most powerful factors accounting for the variations in women's access to power in Latin America. An excellent source for institutional data is the database compiled by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance and Stockholm University. Their research project created a database of the resources available to women worldwide and how to more effectively use those resources in addition to documenting electoral data and the legal affairs pertaining to gender in each country, principally the electoral quotas implemented at all levels.

There are several different ways to operationalize institutions by size and type. The first variable used was the size of the legislative house examined in each of the nineteen cases. This information was found in the database of the Quotaproject.org, a

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[20] These data were obtained from the 2006 CIA World Factbook (https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/).

website dedicated to observing the use of quotas around the world. The Quota Project is a division of the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). This database was also used to code the next variable; each nation's quota system is coded from 1 to 4, with 1 representing those nations with no quotas or ineffective quotas, and 4 representing those with highly effective and very institutionalized, well-established quotas.   The second variable for which I used this database was institutional: the electoral system of each nation using a Single Member District system was coded as a 1, a Mixed Member Proportional system as a 2, and List Proportional Representation was coded as a 3.

Conventional logic is that the longer a nation has been holding elections in which women are able to vote, more women will be elected to public office. This hypothesis was measured by computing the number of years between the most recent parliamentary election and the year of suffrage. The <u>Almanac of Women and Minorities in World Politics</u>, by Mart Martin (2000), provided the year of universal suffrage granted in each nation.

The final political variable is the ideology of the party in power. The party in control of government after the parliamentary election was coded as a 1 (left of center), a 2 (centrist), or a 3 (right of center). I researched each party ideology individually using the party websites to gauge the party's ideology and placed them on the political continuum relative to other parties in that nation's government.[21]

Socioeconomics

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[21] For sources, see Appendix A.

It is difficult to obtain data on socioeconomic variables in a region of the world that keeps statistics sporadically. One variable that can be relied upon is the GDP (PPP) of each nation. These were obtained from the CIA's World Factbook online and were measured in billions. This variable measures the degree of economic development of each nation. Two ideal measures would be the differential between the average income of a woman and that of a man in each of the case nations, and the differential between each gender's workforce participation. Unfortunately, this type of data is not available.

The second socioeconomic variable is the Human Development Index score. The HDI score essentially grades 177 nations on the quality of their human development indicators, including most of the Millennium Development Goal indicators. According to the website of the United Nations Development Project,[22]

> The HDI provides a composite measure of three dimensions of human development: living a long and healthy life (measured by life expectancy), being educated (measured by adult literacy and enrolment at the primary, secondary and tertiary level) and having a decent standard of living (measured by purchasing power parity, PPP, income).[23]

The HDI score is measured on a scale of 0 to 1, with 1 indicating the greatest level of development

A third socioeconomic variable is the level of education women are able to obtain. In measuring the amount of women who are able to obtain higher education, this variable also inherently measures the resources available to women, seeing as the women enrolled in tertiary education would not have achieved this level had they or their families not had

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[22] http://hdr.undp.org/ The HDI score is measured on a scale of 0 to 1, with 1 indicating the greatest level of development
[23] Norway is currently ranked highest in the world, with an HDI score of .965.

the means to do so. Female educational attainment is measured by the percent of women of common college age who are enrolled in tertiary education in each country case (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's – UNESCO's – website).[24]

ANALYSES AND FINDINGS

This section reports the results from empirical analyses. All fourteen variables are tested using bivariate correlation tables to test the strength – measured in Pearson's R – and statistical significance of the relationship between the dependent variable and each independent variable.

The dependent variable that was tested is the percent of the lower or single house represented by women in each case nation. These data were obtained from the Inter-Parliamentary Union for the most recent election in each of the nineteen countries.

The independent variables cluster under three main hypotheses, the first of which is derived from the women in politics school of thought which claims that cultural factors strongly affect the level of women's representation at the national parliament level. The hypothesis states: the more liberal/progressive the culture (to be interpreted as to the political left of center), the higher the percent women's representation will be. While the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, it is certainly proven unlikely. The most substantively significant variable was Party Ideology, as shown in Table 2. An increase in the religiosity of the culture correlates positively with an increase in the percent women's representation in the national single or lower house (coefficient = of .343 and p = .075).

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[24] For the missing cases of Bolivia and Ecuador there was insufficient information on UNESCO's online databases.

Also as hypothesized, an increase in the conservatism of the party in power correlates with a decrease in percent women's representation (coeff = -.347 and p = .073).

The remaining four cultural variables were weaker, and in the case of Question 57C, went in the unexpected direction. However, the correlation between this variable and the dependent variable is so weak (.132) that it does not particularly matter in which direction it correlates; it simply does not support the hypothesis. This is most likely due to the lack of variation amongst the responses to the Latinobarometro survey, which can be explained by the considerable amount of control achieved in working with these most similar nations. Also, Belize was not included in the Latinobarometro Survey, and as it was the case with the lowest female representation, it would have been helpful to have a measure of cultural attitudes there.

The final variable was tested initially as a way to tap societal acceptance for women's education. The hypothesis was that the greater the difference between male and female literacy rates[25], the smaller percent of women represented in the national parliament. While this correlation went in the expected direction, it is very weak (coeff = -.058) and not statistically significant (p = .406).

Table 2: Bivariate Correlations of Cultural Variables and Women's Representation

Variables	Pearson's R	Significance	Expected Direction?	Expected Strength?
Q57A – Women Better In Home? N=18	-.228	.181	Yes	Yes
Q57B – Men Better Leaders? N=18	-.299	.114	Yes	Yes
Q57C - Women Earning More Causes Problems? N=18	.132	.300	No	No

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[25] Definition: Age 15 and over can read or write.

Religiosity **N=19**	**.343**	**.075**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Literacy Differential **N=19**	**-.058**	**.406**	**Yes**	**No, weaker**

Below, Table 3 reflects the frequency with which respondents in each country responded that they agreed with the statement in Question 57B of the Latinobarometer Survey: "Men are better leaders than women." These results are compared with the column on the right, which indicates the level of women's representation. The general trend supports the hypothesis that as the percentage of respondents that answers "agreed" increases, the percent women's representation will decrease. The two most prominent outliers are Uruguay and Honduras; in the case of Uruguay, it appears that society is very egalitarian, and yet it has a low percent women's representation (11.1%). In the case of Honduras, a society that does not appear to hold strong egalitarian values has the fourth highest percent women's representation in the region (23.4%).

Table 3: Frequency of Responses to Q57B

	Percent Agreed "Men are Better Leaders than Women"	Level of Women's Representation (Low, Medium, High)
Dominican Republic	**49.2**	**Medium**
Guatemala	**38.0**	**Low**
Honduras	**37.9**	**High**
Panama	**36.2**	**Medium**
Nicaragua	**35.2**	**Medium**
Venezuela	**34.1**	**Medium**
Paraguay	**33.8**	**Low**
Ecuador	**33.6**	**Medium**
Brazil	**32.4**	**Low**
Bolivia	**29.5**	**Medium**
El Salvador	**27.8**	**Medium**
Colombia	**26.5**	**Low**
Chile	**25.9**	**Medium**
Argentina	**24.9**	**High**
Costa Rica	**20.9**	**High**
Peru	**18.5**	**High**
Uruguay	**16.7**	**Low**
Mexico	**16.0**	**High**

Structural/Institutional Variables

The second main hypothesis is that when a government has more structural or institutional factors that encourage the success of minority candidates, the higher the percent women's representation will be. The only statistically significant variable of my study is found here, and successfully rejects the null hypothesis. The Quota System adopted by a country positively correlates with the percent women's representation in a country at the .01 level ($p = .002$ and coeff = .617). It is in the expected direction and is even stronger than I had anticipated.

The literature places great emphasis on the effect of the electoral system variable and it was surprising that it was not stronger or more significant. It had a statistical significance of .194, which – while not terrible for this type of research – is not ideal (coeff = .210). In the region of Latin America there is not a lot of variation of electoral systems; the majority utilize a proportional representation system, and so this variable cannot fully explain the variation in the dependent variable.

The existing explanations for the variable of House Size is that where there are more seats available, more women will be able to obtain a higher percentage. The case of Brazil negatively skewed my data, as is indicated in Table 4. Brazil has a very large house (513 seats) and a very small percent women's representation (8.6%). By removing the case of Brazil, the correlation goes in the correct direction, but is still very weak.

It is suggested in the literature that the year in which universal suffrage was granted might be correlated to the percent women's representation. It is intuitive that the longer the electorate has had to adjust to women having political rights, the more likely it would be to elect women to office. However, this hypothesis is not supported by the data,

as the correlation is in the opposite direction, incredibly weak (-.011), and has no statistical significance (.482).

Table 4: Bivariate Correlations of Structural/Institutional Variables and Women's Representation

Variables	Pearson's R	Significance	Expected Direction?	Expected Strength?
Quota N=19	.617**	.002**	Yes	Even stronger
Electoral System N=19	.210	.194	Yes	No, weaker
House Size (With Brazil) N=19	-.107	.332	No	No, weaker
House Size (without Brazil) N=18	.244	.329	Yes	No, weaker
Year Suffrage N=19	-.011	.482	No	No, weaker
Party Ideology N=19	-.347	.073	Yes	Yes

Socioeconomic Variables

The third main hypothesis states that in those cases where there are more resources available to women, the higher the percent women's representation will be. The null hypothesis cannot be successfully rejected by any of the three variables tested here, but there is evidence to support the hypothesis nonetheless. The variable that proved closest to statistical significance was Education (coeff = .337 and p = .093). As expected, the better access women have to tertiary education, the greater the percent women's representation.

The Human Development Index score proved to be a weaker variable than I had hypothesized (coeff =.281). However, with a significance of .122 in the predicted direction, it still supports the original hypothesis that the more developed a nation is the

greater the percent women's representation will be. The weakest variable of this set was

GDP. Initially, GDP proved to be very weak and in the incorrect direction (-.034). This

was due to Brazil, again being an outlier, negatively skewing the data. When Brazil is

removed from the data, the correlation is stronger and in the correct direction (.267) and

with more encouraging significance of .283.

Table 5: Bivariate Correlations of Socioeconomic Variables and Women's Representation

Variables	Pearson's R	Significance	Expected Direction?	Expected Strength?
GDP N=19	-.034	.445	No	No, much weaker
GDP (Without Brazil) N=18	*.267*	*.283*	*Yes*	*No, weaker*
Education N=17	.337	.093	Yes	Yes
HDI N=19	.281	.122	Yes	No, weaker

Findings With Eta

I went on to test three of my independent variables using Eta, which is an

appropriate measure when the independent variable is measured on a nominal or ordinal

scale and the dependent variable is measured on an interval scale. The three variables

tested were party ideology (ordinal), the level of quota system (ordinal), and electoral

system (nominal). This lends strength to and confirms my prior results with bivariate

correlations, and makes my findings more robust.

The results of the Eta testing (shown in Table 5) were similar to those of the

bivariate correlations. Quota System is still the strongest variable, followed by Party

Ideology and then the Electoral System. The only note to make is how weak Electoral

System looks when compared to the two stronger variables; the literature and common

sense suggest that this variable would explain much more of the variance in the dependent variable. Again, though, there is little variation amongst the electoral systems of the case nations, and so it is not surprising that with this Most Similar case study, this variable was not as effective as hypothesized.

Table 5: Results of Eta Testing

Variables	Pearson's	Significance	Eta^2	Significance
Party Ideology	-.347	.073	.125	.342
Electoral System	.210	.194	.094	.452
Quota System	.617	.002**	.459	.116

CONCLUSIONS

The findings presented in this work are consistent with the stated hypotheses. The institutional variable of Quota System proved to be the only statistically significant variable, but Religiosity, Party Ideology, and Education strongly supported the hypotheses as well. While the region of Latin America is demographically homogenous, the combined effects of strong quota systems, highly religious demographics, a leftist party in power, and increased access to education for women indisputably put certain nations (Costa Rica and Argentina) at a distinct advantage.

In the future, I would like to see the Latinobarometer expand to other nations in the region, particularly Belize. In addition, although UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) has done a tremendous job of compiling data, in the future it would be ideal if they could collect data on the level of tertiary education in more nations of Latin America. However, it is understandably difficult to do so in this region, where the civil service sectors are not fully developed everywhere.

The results raise issues that beg further inspection. To further this research it would be beneficial to research the various women's organizations within each nation to better understand why some nations' women's movements are so much better organized than others. In addition, researching women's access to power in other levels of government (i.e. local government and cabinet/ministerial) would shed even more light on the issue of women's access to public office. It would also be valuable to study what female legislators are like once elected. Are women actually promoting legislation related to traditional "women's issues?" A study done in 1990s in the United States found that women were indeed following the expected trend and promoting "women friendly" legislation (Thomas and Wilcox 1998). However, as of this time no such study has been done in the region of Latin America. This information would help us to understand whether current female legislators are just proxies for male politicians – making women's representation descriptive – or truly acting on their own behalf, making women's representation substantive. By observing women's legislative action in various parliaments, the idea of critical mass (Kenworthy and Malami 1999) can be more strongly supported.[26]

In regards to the variable of political ideology, future research should provide some sort of background knowledge of the political party lexicon. The different party systems in Latin America are very complex, and it can be difficult to define words like "liberal" unless in the constructivist sense, i.e. in relation to other parties in the field. The current movement towards leftist, populist – here sometimes meaning indigenous –

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[26] The literature suggests that the critical mass lies somewhere around 30%

parties (prime examples being Venezuela's Hugo Chavez and the Fifth Republic Movement and Bolivia, with Evo Morales' Movement Towards Socialism) could have exciting ramifications in the area of women's congressional representation, and it would benefit Latin Americanists to more fully understand the effects of the party system upon candidates.

While women's representation may not bring about immediate changes in society or the political agenda of the traditional political parties, changes will take place through the increasing awareness women have of the importance of women's issues and of their political power when they organize and act as a group.

Appendix A
Sources for the Four Largest[27] Parties in Each Nation

Argentina
- Front for Victory (Frente para la Victoria – FPV): http://www.frenteparalavictoria.org
- Racial Civic Union (Unión Cívica Radical): www.frenteparalavictoria.org
- Alternative for a Republic of Equals (Alternative por una República de Iguales): http://www.ari.org.ar/
- Justicialist Party (Partido Justicialista de la República Argentina): http://www.pj.org.ar/

Belize
- People's United Party: http://www.belizetimes.bz/, http://countrystudies.us/belize/76.htm
- United Democratic Party: http://www.udp.org.bz/, UDP newspaper: http://www.guardian.bz/

Bolivia
- Movement Towards Socialism (Movimiento al Socialism, MAS): http://www.masipsp.com/
- Social and Democrat Power (Poder Democratico y Social - PODEMOS): http://www.bolpress.com/, http://www.electionguide.org/

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[27] The four highest seat winners in the most recent parliamentary election

- National Unity Front (Frente de Unidad Nacional): www.electionguide.org, www.cne.bo/org_politica/partidos.aspx
- Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario): http://www.mnr.org.bo/

Brazil
- Liberal Front Party (Partido da Frente Liberal): http://www.pfl.org.br/
- Brazilian Social Democratic Party (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira, PSDB): http://www.psdb.org.br/site.asp
- Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro, PMDB): http://www.pmdb.org.br/
- Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores): http://www.pt.org.br/

Colombia
- Colombian Liberal Party (Partido Liberal Colombiano, PLC): http://www.partidoliberal.org.co/, Democracia a distancia: elecciones 2006 http://www.portalcol.com/colombianadas/elecciones2006/
- Social National Unity Party (Partido Social de Unidad Nacional): http://www.partidodelau.com/
- Colombian Conservative Party (Partido Conservador Colombiano): www.conservatismocolombiano.org, Democracia a distancia: elecciones 2006 http://www.portalcol.com/colombianadas/elecciones2006/
- Radican Change (Cambio Radical): http://partidocambioradical.org/, Democracia a distancia: elecciones 2006 http://www.portalcol.com/colombianadas/elecciones2006/

Costa Rica
- National Liberation Party (Partido Liberación Nacional, PLN): http://www.pln.or.cr/
- Citizen's Action Party (Partido Acción Ciudadana, PAC): http://www.pac.or.cr/sitio1/paginas/index.php
- Libertarian Movement Party (Partido Movimiento Libertario): http://www.libertario.org/index.htm
- Social Christian Unity Party (Partido de Unidad Socialcristiana, PUSC): http://www.partidounidadsocialcristiana.com/

Chile
- Coalition of Parties for Democracy (Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia): www.concertacion.cl
  - Member Parties: Christian Democrat Party (http://www.pdc.cl/), Party for Democracy (http://www.ppd.cl/index2.php), Socialist Party (http://www.ppd.cl/index2.php), Social Democrat Radical Party (http://www.partidoradical.cl/)
- Alliance for Chile (Alianza por Chile):
  - Member parties: National Renewal (http://www.rn.cl/) and Independent Democratic Union (http://www.udi.cl/)

- Together We Can Do More (Juntos Podemos Más - http://www.podemos.cl/)
  - o   Member Parties: Communist Party of Chile (http://www.pcchile.cl/), Humanist Party (http://www.partidohumanista.cl/j/index.php)

- Independent Regional Force (Fuerza Regional Independiente)
  - o   Member Parties: National Alliance of Independents (http://www.partido-ani.cl/), Regionalist Action Party of Chile (http://regiones.ya.st/)

Ecuador
- Ecuadorian Roldosist Party (*Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano)*: www.electionguide.org
- Democratic Left Party (Partido Izquierda Democrática): www.electionguide.org
- Institutional Renewal Party of National Action *(Partido Renovador Institucional de Acción Nacional)*: http://www.prian.org.ec/
- Pachakutik Plurinational Unity Movement – New Country *(Movimiento Unidad Plurinacional)*: http://www.pachakutik.org.ec/home/index.php

El Salvador
- Nationalist Republican Alliance *(Alianza Republicana Nacionalista* or *ARENA)*: http://www.arena.com.sv/
- Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front *(Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional, FMLN)*: http://www.fmln.org.sv/
- Party of National Conciliation *(Partido de Conciliación Nacional*, *PCN)*: www.electionguide.org
- Christian Democratic Party *(Partido Demócrata Cristiano)*: www.electionguide.org

Guatemala
- Grand National Alliance *(Gran Alianza Nacional, GANA)*: http://www.ganaconoscarberger2003.org/
  - o   Member Parties: Patriotic Party, Reform Movement, National Solidarity Party
- Guatemalan republican Front *(Frente Republicano Guatamalteco)*: http://www.frg.org.gt/
- National Unity of Hope *(Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza)*: http://www.une.org.gt/
- National Advancement Party *(Partido de Avanzada Nacional)*: http://www.pan.org.gt/

Honduras
- Liberal Party of Honduras *(Partido Liberal de Honduras)*:
  http://www.partidoliberal.net/
- National Party of Honduras *(Partido Nacional)*: http://www.partidonacional.hn/
- Democratic Unification Party *(Partido Unificación Democrática – PUD)*: http://rds.hn/index.php
- Christian Democratic Party of Honduras *(Partido Demócrata Cristiano de Honduras)*: http://www.pdch.hn/

Mexico

- National Action Party *(Partido Acción Nacional)*: http://www.pan.org.mx/
- Coalition for the Good of All *(Coalición por el Bien de Todos)*
  - Member Parties: Party of the Democratic Revolution *(http://www.prd.org.mx)*, Labour Party *(http://www.partidodeltrabajo.org.mx)*, Convergence *(http://www.convergenciamexico.org.mx/)*
- Alliance for Mexico
  - Member Parties: Institutional Revolutionary Party *(http://www.pri.org.mx)*, Ecologist Green Party of Mexico *(www.pvem.org.mx)*
- New Alliance Party *(Partido Alianza Nueva)*: http://www.nueva-alianza.org.mx/web/

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