

**The Effects of Women's Descriptive Representation in  
Legislatures: A Comparative Analysis of Brazil and Mexico's  
Congresses**

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## ABSTRACT

This study analyzes whether disparities in the descriptive representation of women between legislatures relate to differences in how lawmakers operate in one legislature and the other. Following a review of propositions in the literature, I first hypothesize that the higher the presence of women in the legislature, the higher the insertion of women and other minorities' interests in the legislative agenda. Second, I hypothesize that the percentage of women in the legislature does not affect the traditional areas in which lawmakers of both genders work, because of female representatives' "marginalization". Finally, I hypothesize that in legislatures with gender descriptive equality, competition makes the productivity of female and male lawmakers similar, while in descriptive unequal legislatures women feel pressured to perform better. I investigate the cases of Brazil and Mexico, two Latin American countries sharing sociopolitical and economic similarities, which adopted gender quotas as early as the 90s' (Piatti-Crocker, 2019). However, the outcomes in terms of descriptive representation were sharply contrasting. Brazil's Congress barely changed its gender ratio and only achieved a record of 15% of female representatives in its 2018's elections. Meanwhile Mexico, which started from a similar level as Brazil, conquered technical gender parity in Congress by 2018 (IPU<sup>1</sup>, 2019). Therefore, a comparison of the two countries approximates a "most similar systems" test of whether the higher presence of female deputies in Mexico is related to a higher introduction of women and other minorities' interests in the political agenda and a higher "democratization" of gender roles in the legislature, in comparison to Brazil. Hence my study relates the topics of gender quotas, women's descriptive and substantive representation, gendered political activity, and democratization. It consists of a comparative case study and is mostly quantitative.

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<sup>1</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the last three decades, the average presence of women in legislatures grew expressively around the world. Many questions arise from this phenomenon. Considering that it is still recent, further research is needed for a better comprehension of how women impact politics. This is especially true for developing countries, which have not been the focus of most of the scholarship in this matter. Therefore, investigating lawmakers' activity in two developing nations, the objective of this study is to contribute to the literature about women's inclusion in legislatures by addressing two questions, which are: "Is a higher presence of women representatives related to higher inclusion of women and other minorities' interests in the legislative agenda?" and "Is a higher presence of women representatives related to a higher democratization of gender roles in the legislature, in comparison to legislatures with a small number of female representatives?".

A broad scholarship has been dedicated to investigating female representatives' political activity, their differences from male representatives, and the contributions they bring to political life. For example, Thomas (1994) argues that female representatives prioritize issues concerning women, children, and the family, topics not prioritized by their male counterparts (Wängnerud 2009, p.62). Wängnerud highlights that issues like social policy, pornography, and affirmative actions are more often embraced by female representatives and that they tend to view the representation of women's interests as part of their duty more than male representatives do (Ibid, p.62). Similarly, investigating the British Parliament, Bird (2005) found that female MPs were more likely to refer to "women" and "gender" than male MPs (Bird 2005, p. 353). Furthermore, she found that among the parliamentary questions addressing "women", the most prevailing issues concerned employment, domestic violence, politics and representation, and women's health (p.361).

Provocatively, Reingold (2008) argues that if many studies relate female representatives to a broader representation of women's interests, several exceptions exist in the scholarship which point to few, if any, differences among female and male lawmakers regarding policy preferences and roll call votes (p. 131). This shows the necessity of a better comprehension of the effects of women's inclusion in politics. The necessity of further research on the topic is especially true for regions other than Western Europe and North America, which have been the object of most of the studies in the field.

Therefore, this research uses Hannah Pitkin's (1967) definition of descriptive and substantive representation to investigate the impacts of women's presence in legislatures. She classifies descriptive representation as the resemblance between a representative body and the demographic identities of specific groups, and substantive representation as the defense of these groups' interests in the legislative (Hayes & Hibbing 2016, p. 33). Accordingly, this research investigates the impacts of the inclusion of female representatives in legislatures (e.g., the increase of women's descriptive representation) on the inclusion and support of women and other minorities' interests in the legislative agenda (effects on substantive representation).

Lawmakers' activity is analyzed for two countries at the aggregate and individual levels. The aggregate level refers to comparisons between the countries' legislatures, while the individual level refers to comparisons among female and male legislators inside each legislature. The first question investigated is whether a higher descriptive representation of women relates to a higher inclusion of women and other minorities' interests in the legislative agenda. The second question is whether, in a legislature with a higher descriptive representation of women, there is a "democratization" of gender roles, meaning that female and male representatives have a more similar activity concerning the topics in which they work on, not focusing fundamentally on interests traditionally considered to be of their genders' concern. The third question is whether a higher descriptive representation of women impacts the substantive

representation performed by lawmakers on how compromised they are to their duties and, indirectly, to the defense of their electorates' interests.

Comparing the legislative activity in the countries' Chambers of Deputies, I test the hypotheses below:

- 1) The higher the presence of women in the legislature, the higher the insertion of discussions about women and other minorities' interests in the legislative agenda;
- 2) The percentage of women in the legislature does not affect the gendered political activity concerning the areas which are traditionally related to women and men's interests;
- 3) In legislatures which achieved gender equality, because of competition, the productivity of female and male representatives is not very contrasting. In legislatures in which women are the minority, because of social pressure, their legislative performance is better than that observed for men.

Two Latin American countries are compared in this research. The selection was based on the region's prominence in women's inclusion in politics (Jones 2009, Buvinic & Roza 2004), by the implementation of gender quotas' mechanisms and parity systems. Today, in the international ranking of Women in Parliaments, three of the four countries with the highest percentages of female lawmakers are Latin American (IPU, 2019). Even though there is a broad research field investigating the implementation of gender quotas and parity systems in the region, the scholarship's attempts to understand the material results of the inclusion of women in its Congresses are still shy.

The countries chosen as the cases for this study are Brazil and Mexico. They were selected for several reasons. First, they are relevant players in the Latin American region, which makes it interesting to investigate the gendered legislative activity inside their Congresses. They share several sociopolitical and economic similarities and implemented gender quotas' as early



as the '90s, although the current women's descriptive representation in their Congresses contrasts dramatically. Nowadays, Brazil has only 15% of women in its Congress (IPU, 2019). In contrast, in 2018 Mexico reached technical parity in both its Senate and Chamber of Deputies (Ibid, 2019). This makes them the perfect cases to investigate what can be found among countries with disparities in women's presence in legislatures.

Several contributions are provided by this research. The first is testing the scholarship's arguments about the impacts of women's descriptive representation in politics in two countries not much explored in the research field. The second is the analysis of lawmakers' activity in two countries during their current legislatures, a recent period that has not been much explored. The third is that the research is focused on two developing countries, which decentralizes the research field and broadens the possibilities to understand the impact of women's inclusion in politics in the region and elsewhere in the developing world.

The structure of the study is the following: In chapter one, I introduce the paths of Brazil and Mexico in the implementation of policies to include women in Congress. This is followed by a review of some existing arguments about female lawmakers' political activity and how their representation adds to politics. In chapter two, I develop the theoretical framework of the study, commenting on the controversial relationship between descriptive and substantive representation, which is followed by an explanation about the research design. In chapter three, I expose the results of my empirical analysis and comment about its biases. Chapter four consists of the conclusion.

## CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review is divided into two sessions. First, an introduction about the themes of gender quotas and women's inclusion in Brazil and Mexico's Congresses is developed. Its focus is to explain how gender quotas' mechanisms were designed in the two countries, and how the inclusion of women in the legislature became so contrasting between them. Second, several arguments regarding women's activity in politics and how their presence impacts the political environment will be exposed. The intention is to show how the legislatures' scenario might contrast in the two countries as a consequence of the disparity in the inclusion of women representatives.

### **Gender quotas in Brazil and Mexico: contrasting outcomes in the inclusion of women in politics**

Latin America is a pioneering region regarding policies for the inclusion of women in politics (Jones 2009; Buvinic & Roza 2004). In 1991, Argentina was the first nation in the world to pass a gender quotas law (Piatti-Crocker 2019, p.44), a move which was followed by other 17 Latin American countries in consecutive years (Ibid, p.44). This included Brazil, in 1995, and Mexico, in 1996 (Ibid, p.49). At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a similar movement, this time towards the adoption of parity systems, started in the region (Ibid, p.45). Mexico was one of the first countries to adopt such policies, in 2014 (Ibid, p.55).

Nowadays, with only 15% of its houses composed of female representatives, Brazil occupies the 132<sup>nd</sup> position among 190 countries in the world ranking of Women in Parliaments (IPU, 2019). Together with Paraguay, Brazil has now the lowest percentage of women representatives in comparison to all other Latin American countries (Ibid). Opposing Brazil's scenario, in 2018 Mexico reached technical gender parity in both its houses and raised to the 4<sup>th</sup> position in the world ranking, as well as the 3<sup>rd</sup> among Latin American nations (Ibid). Today,

76 of the 514 Brazilian deputies are women, while in Mexico they are 241 of the 500 elected deputies.

If similar outcomes in women's inclusion in politics could be logically expected for countries with similar economic and social scenarios, it is intriguing to find such contrasting results in Brazil and Mexico and to think about the reasons that led the two countries to become so different in the matter. Therefore, a better comprehension of how these mechanisms were introduced in the countries' Congress and the specificities of each political system might help to understand this unexpected divergence.

Since democratization in the '80s, Brazil uses an open list proportional representation system (Sacchet 2018, p.37) for the fulfillment of legislative vacancies in all its three federative levels. The open list character of the country's political system is the first factor that affects its ability to implement gender quotas. This is because not only voters can vote on individuals, which can alone bias the legislature to a more traditional and masculine trend, but also because it prevents the design of segmental quotas which would oblige parties to high rank and support women's candidatures. Also, it allows candidates who manage to win the biggest share of votes to be individually elected, which concludes in a situation that favors the most well-known and well-financed politicians (Ibid, p.41). Women are disadvantaged in both aspects, and also by the fact that coalitions can launch candidates in a quantity twice as big as the number of seats to be fulfilled, which weakens the impact of quotas, considering that females are usually launched as marginal candidates (Ibid, p.41). Already in 1955, Duverger intelligently highlighted the role of the electoral systems in determining the number of women elected in a Parliament (Wängnerud 2009, p. 52).

In 1995, Law 9100 determined that Brazilian parties should respect a minimum of 20% of women's candidatures for city councils' elections. This was the first-time gender quotas mechanisms were introduced in the country. In 1997, Law 9504 increased the percentage to

30% and expanded quotas' incidence also to the regional and national legislative levels (Piatti-Crocker 2019, p.48). One year after, in 1998, Brazil's national Chamber of Deputies, as well as the ones of the federate states themselves adopted a 30% gender quota (Araújo 1998, p.83). But at the same time they established gender quotas, both Law 9100 and Law 9504 allowed parties to increase the number of their registered candidates for each electoral instance, first to 120% of the places to be fulfilled (Law 9100), and, finally, to 150% of the places to be fulfilled (Law 9504). Therefore, the law gave parties the possibility to "compensate" quotas with more male candidates and to push females' candidatures even more to the back of their electoral preferences. This was exactly how they behaved, by ignoring the intention of the laws and increasing the number of candidates (Sacchet 2018, p.31).

Furthermore, the obligation to fulfill the percentage of 30% of women's candidatures also became constantly violated by parties. They began stealing random women's national identification and launching "empty" candidacies of women who were not truly running elections. This practice was named the launching of "ghost candidacies". It is a way of launching candidacies of women who do not have the intention to run the elections, only to fulfill the legal percentage. Such candidacies are also named "orange candidacies" (Wylie, dos Santos & Marcelino, 2019). Orange candidacies are considered fictitious and consist of a practice that remains highly adopted in Brazil today.

In 2009, a "small electoral reform" was performed in the country, which determined that each party should fulfill a minimum of 30% and a maximum of 70% of their candidatures with candidates belonging to each gender. It also determined that parties should invest a minimum of 5% of their resources obtained from the Public Electoral Fund in the creation and maintenance of programs directed to the promotion and diffusion of women's political participation. Finally, the law obliged parties to destinate a minimum of 10% of their time of public propaganda in the promotion and diffusion of women's participation in politics (Lopez,

Braun & Oliveira 2016, p.214). These changes reflected the national pressure for the inclusion of women in politics, raised mainly by women's movements. Even though, the new rules did not have a substantial impact in the 2010 elections. The fact that Brazil has no specific sanctions for parties' non-compliance with gender quotas reinforces their disrespect to the law (Ibid, p.21).

Already in 2018, the Brazilian Superior Electoral Court (TSE), the country's institution responsible for supervising elections, when answering to a consultation made by female congresswomen, understood that, in line with gender quotas, 30% of the Especial Fund for Campaign Financing (FEFC) received by parties and of their time of electoral propaganda should be directed to women's campaigns (Banhos 2019). Following, the Brazilian Supreme Court (STF) also decided that 30% of the amounts from the Electoral Fund received by parties should be directed to promote women's campaigns (Ibid, 2019). After these changes, the number of women elected for the country's Chamber of Deputies in 2018 increased from 10,70% to 15%, thus, from 55 to 77 deputies (IPU 2018-2019). The percentage of women elected for the Senate remained the same, 14,8%, corresponding to 12 senators (Ibid). To the date, there are still no gender quotas requirements to be applied to elections for the Brazilian senate. Despite the recent modest efforts to remediate women's legislative underrepresentation, Brazil's path made the country a case of failure in the inclusion of women in politics (Sacchet 2018, Ramos & da Silva, 2019).

Mexico's story regarding women's inclusion in politics is very different from that one of Brazil. Initially, in 1993, a modification in the Federal Code of Institutions and Electoral Procedures (Cofipe), signalized that parties should promote higher participation of women in the political life (Reynoso & D'Angelo 2006, p.283). For its general character, the specification was considered as a declaration of principles (Ibid, p.283), an invitation for parties to support the inclusion of women in politics (Díaz & Becerril 2020, p.99). In 1996, Mexico approved the

first law specifying gender quotas in its closed-list electoral system. A disposition added to the Cofipe recommended parties to promote higher political participation of women and include in their statutes the rule that candidatures for deputies and senators should not exceed 70% for each gender (Reynoso & D'Angelo 2006, p.284). This reform left a gap in the legislation, by not specifying whether the candidatures had to be "symbolic" (for surrogate positions, or the last places in the parties' lists) or "effective" (for officeholder positions, e.g. the first places in parties' lists) (Ibid, p.284). Therefore, material dispositions for women's representation were included, but it was not clearly defined how they should be applied (Ibid, p.284).

The result was a small initial effect of gender quotas for legislative candidatures in the country. This concluded in another change in the Cofipe. By 2002, a determination was made that from the total party solicitations of registration for deputies' and senators' candidacies, candidates could not be more than 70% of the same gender (Ibid, p.284). Also, the law specified that parties' proportional lists should be integrated by segments of three candidacies and that in each one of the three first segments, there should be a candidate of different gender (Ibid, p.284). This consisted of an effort to avoid parties from allocating female candidates in the last positions of their lists (Medina Espino 2014, p. 09).

Therefore, quotas of 30% for women's candidatures became mandatory and extra mechanisms were designed to guarantee their effective inclusion in politics. To stop parties from violating the quotas, the law also specified sanctions to be applied in case of non-compliance (Ibid, p. 10). If parties were caught disrespecting the quotas, the Cofipe determined that they would be required to rectify the candidacies in 48 hours. In the case of non-rectification, they would receive a public warning, which would be reiterated if the change was not performed in an adequate period. If parties recurred in the violation, the Cofipe also determined that they would be sanctioned with a refusal to have their candidacies registered. (Reynoso & D'Angelo 2006, p.284). Afterward, the threshold for gender quotas was increased

to 40% in 2008, opening the way for the implementation of a parity system in Mexico's Congress (Díaz & Becerril 2020, p.99). The legislation also called parties to designate 2% of their budget to promote women's leadership, gender equity, and equal political participation (Ibid, p.99).

Finally, in 2014, a law requiring 50% of women's candidatures was adopted (Piscopo 2015). This introduced a parity system for Mexico's legislative elections, a mechanism which resulted in the technical gender equality in its two houses at the end of 2018. The country, thus, achieved a percentage of 48.2% of women elected for its Chamber of Deputies and 49.2% for the Senate (IPU 2019, Piatti-Crocker 2019). But even before this achievement, the laws that established a gender quotas system in Mexico had already made a big positive impact on women's inclusion in politics. Before 2018, Mexico was already the 9<sup>th</sup> country in the world with the highest percentage of women in the legislature, with 42.6% of female deputies and 36.7% of female senators (IPU 2018).

Considering the great difference in the effectiveness of gender quotas in Brazil and Mexico, it is interesting to think about how this contrast will affect legislative activities in the two countries. One possible way of thinking about the consequences of women's inclusion in politics through quotas is that being elected under a quota rule designed to combat women's underrepresentation in politics should lead women to identify with the task of representing other women more strongly. Of course, this is a relationship of a probabilistic nature, not deterministic. Therefore, although it is not possible to affirm that women elected by gender quotas will necessarily represent women's interests, it is possible to imagine that they might do so more emphatically.

However, in this study, the comparison focuses on how the proportion of women in the legislative body – i.e., the indirect influence of a quote – influences legislative behavior. The relationship between gender quotas and the representation of women's interests brings the

discussion about the women's descriptive and substantive representation in politics, which will be further explored.

### **Evidence about women's presence in politics: what do they add to the political environment and what is their situation inside it?**

The literature about women's impacts in politics is broad and relates to different matters. It can refer, for example, to whether women's higher presence in elective positions influences other women to engage in politics, as well as to whether it changes men's attitudes toward female politicians. Moreover, it can address the effects that women's presence in politics has on policy development and the dynamics of the political processes. In this section of the study, I will expose some of the existing arguments and shreds of evidence in the literature about women's inclusion in politics. The studies commented focus especially on how female representatives impact the insertion of women's and other minorities' interests in the political agenda and contribute to progressive policies. To give a global overview of the topic, the selected studies investigate the matter in diverse regions of the world. Although my study is focused on legislatures, here I also considered studies addressing other political spheres.

The first interesting study is the one developed by Chattopadhyay & Duflo (2004), which analyzes the gendered political activity in Indian Village Councils. Since the mid-1990s, one-third of the head positions in these councils have been randomly reserved for women. Focusing on the differences between female and male heads, the authors found that the reservation of a council's leadership for women affects the types of public goods provided in the villages. This because council leaders were found to invest more in infrastructure that is directly relevant to the needs of their respective gender (Ibid, p. 1409).

Investigating candidates in France's local councils, Bird (2003) argues for the existence of different perspectives held by female and male candidates, suggesting that gendered political



parity could bring democratic renewal and policy change, at least at the local level (p. 05). She observes that the priority women place on family responsibilities was a factor that appeared to position their political interests in areas different from those engaged by male candidates (Ibid). Bird also suggests that women's previous exclusion from public life and their hesitancy to make a political career may explain their higher general support for a socio-cultural diversification in politics (Ibid).

In another study, Bird (2005) analyzed MPs' activity in the British Parliament. Her research comprised the period between 1997-1998 and focused on questions made by MPs. The results suggested differences between female and male MPs' political activity. Bird found that female MPs were more likely to refer to "women" and "gender" than their male counterparts (p.353). Contrarily, male MPs appeared more inclined to refer to "men" than females, while representatives of both genders seemed to agree about which issues should be related to "women". Among the questions referring to "women", the most prevailing issues concerned employment, domestic violence, politics and representation, and women's health (p.361).

In 2006, Wängnerud published a study about differences in the legislative activity performed by female and male representatives in the Swedish Parliament, which covered approximately 20 years (Wängnerud 2009, p.63). She analyzed the number of female and male MPs who mentioned, as an area of personal interest, social policy, family policy, care for the elderly, or health care as a campaign issue or an area of personal interest (Ibid). The results showed that in 1985, 75% of the female MPs addressed such issues in their election campaigns, while the number for male MPs was 44% (Ibid). Furthermore, the study pointed out that 52% of the female MPs declared these areas as of their interest, while the percentage for male MPs was 11% (Ibid).

Similarly, in posterior research, she highlights that issues considered as of women's interest tend to be more embraced by females, such as social policy, pornography, and

affirmative actions (Wängnerud 2009, p.62). She also argues that female representatives are considered to view the representation of women's interests as part of their duty more than males do (Ibid). Furthermore, she claims that women have more liberal policy preferences than men (Poggione 2004 in Wängnerud 2009, p.62), and female representatives are found to be more aligned to leftist ideas and more favorable to new policies, such as environmental protection (Ibid). Finally, she mentions Thomas' (1994) argument that female legislators prioritize issues concerning women, children, and the family, topics that are usually not prioritized by male representatives (Ibid).

When analyzing Rwanda's Parliament, Helle Schwartz (2004) found that quota women were perceived as grass-roots politicians and that the main factor differentiating MPs' work, for example, regarding how they represented women's issues, was related to their gender (Bauer 2012, p.375). Elizabeth Powley (2006) states that women MPs elected for Rwanda's Chamber of Deputies in 2003, the first elections after the country's genocide, although facing diverse constraints, acted as strong advocates for the rights of children (Ibid, p.375). Pearson & Powley (2008), found that women MPs and their caucus (the FFRP) initiated and helped to pass the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Bill in Rwanda, the only successfully bill addressing violence against women initiated by the country's Parliament until that year (Ibid, p.375). Bauer highlights that the increase of female representatives in the Parliament firmly positioned gender issues in Rwanda's political agenda (Ibid).

Concerning Uganda, Tamale (1999, p.194) and Tripp (2001) state that female members of the Constituent Assembly achieved concrete results in securing pro-woman provisions in the 1995 constitution (Ibid, p.376). Tripp (2010) also highlights that in 2009, a Domestic Violence Bill, an Anti-Female Genital Mutilation Bill, and a Marriage and Divorce Bill, all of them with pro-woman provisions, advanced through the Parliament due to female MPs' pressure (Ibid, p.376). In the same direction, Georgina Waylen (2007) argues that female MPs in Uganda have

supported and succeeded in the adoption of a new constitution containing provisions of gender equity, in the adoption of state women's machineries in the way which was advocated by them, in the increase of female in the legislative and the executive, as well as in policy outcomes such as laws addressing reproductive rights and domestic violence (Ibid, p.377).

There are also studies investigating the impact of women's inclusion in politics in Latin America. These studies suggest a positive relationship between more women in Congress and changes in the political dynamics, bringing support to equal rights' legislation and social welfare policies (Piscopo 2014, p.88). In the region, female lawmakers have been related to the support of feminist policies as pro-abortion rights and contraception, protection against sexual violence, and the expansion of political and economic rights (Ibid, p.92). Female legislators are also found to support policies for social justice and attend to marginalized and disadvantaged populations more than their male counterparts (Ibid).

In a study about Argentina, Colombia, and Costa Rica, Schwindt-Bayer (2006) finds that female representatives place a higher priority on women, children, and family's issues, which is translated into behavior, once they also initiate more bills in such areas than male representatives do (p.583). She also finds that while women issue more bills regarding women's interests, they legislate less about issues as agriculture, education, health, or economy, even though gender differences do not exist in attitudes toward these topics (Ibid). According to her, this happens because women's proposition of bills is marginalized to topics considered as "women's domain", while male legislators tend to focus on topics included in "men's domain", also considered politically more relevant (Ibid). She argues that female representatives are pressured to legislate about issues included in "women's domain" (Ibid). According to her, the same pattern of female representatives' prioritization of women, children, and family issues can be found in the U.S. and other Western nations' legislatures (Ibid).

The pressure for female politicians to focus on areas considered to be of women's interests is also found in some of the other studies previously commented on. In a study in which she analyzed local candidates in France, Bird's findings point to a concentration of women MPs' activity in lower and traditionally feminine areas of the political life (Bird 2003, p.05). In the British Parliament, she shows that representations of womanhood and manhood reinforced conservative gender roles and risked essentializing sexual categories (Bird 2005, p.353). Although, other studies suggest an opposite situation. Reingold (2008) finds several important exceptions in the literature that suggests differences in the political activity of the two genders, with other studies pointing to few, if any, differences in female lawmakers' policy preferences and roll call votes (p.131) in legislative bodies around the United States.

Investigating gendered differences in representatives' performance in the last year of Zimbabwe's 7th Parliament (2012-2013), when women represented only 34 of the 210 legislature's members, Dube (2013) found no differences in the attendance of male and female MPs (p.07). While women spoke more than men in the Senate, no difference was found in the House of Assembly (p.09) and the topics in which women spoke about were not in the usual issues stereotyped as women's concern, but about a variety of topics, including the treatment of female prisoners, women's participation in decision-making, politically motivated violence against women, citizenship, the constitution-making process, human rights, health, and budget (p.12).

In a similar direction, Wängnerud (2009) finds that in the Swedish Parliament, the gap between females and males' activity diminished between 1994 and 2002 (p.63). In the same direction, Claire Devlin & Robert Elgie (2008) argue that in Tanzania, big changes in the parliamentary culture were attributed to female's presence, such as concerning the social climate between MPs of different genders and more prominent cabinet appointments for women (p.251, in Bauer 2012). Meanwhile, Ragnhild Muriaas & Vibeke Wang (2012) find that

Uganda's district women MPs and representatives of the disabled perform better in the Parliament if compared to other interest groups (Ibid, p.377).

Therefore, this brief literature review shows how deep and not obvious is the discussion about the effects of women's inclusion in politics. This strongly supports the relevance of this study's empirical analysis.

## CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH DESIGN

### **Theoretical framework: The link between the descriptive and substantive representation of women**

In *The Concept of Representation*, Hannah Pitkin (1967) differentiates between formalistic, symbolic, substantive, and descriptive political representation (Hayes & Hibbing 2016, p.33). She defines formalistic representation as the formal granting of authority for somebody to act for others (Celis, Childs, Kantola & Krook 2008, p.100). Symbolic representation is defined as the meaning that a representative has for the represented, and it is not necessarily related to any congruence with their policy views (Lawless 2004 in Hayes & Hibbing 2016, p.33). Substantive representation is defined as having one's policy views politically placed by an elected representative (p. 33). Descriptive representation, finally, is usually understood as independent of a representative's policy actions, referring to whether a representative or a representative body resembles the demographic identities of specific groups (Ibid). Therefore, the substantive representation of women corresponds to the inclusion of women's interests in the legislative agenda (Wängnerud 2009, p.52), while the descriptive representation of women corresponds to their presence in political positions, for example, in the legislative, executive, and judiciary (Ibid).

Phillips (1995) suggests, in his book *Politics of Presence*, the existence of a connection between descriptive and substantive representation, meaning that women representatives would be more equipped to represent other women (Wängnerud 2009, p.52). This is justified as a consequence of the existing differences between women and men in societies, for example, regarding child-rearing, education, work, division of labor, violence, and sexual harassment, as well as under the argument that women representatives share at least some of the experiences faced by other women (Ibid). Thereby, having shared experiences would make representatives

more inclinable, willing, or even ready to represent the interests of the specific demographic groups to which they belong.

Challenging Phillips, Reingold (2006) states that the link between the descriptive and the substantive representation of women is neither guaranteed nor absolute. She also argues that the descriptive representation of women is neither necessary nor sufficient for the occurrence of their substantive representation (p.01). This is because some female politicians are more likely than others to act for women, just as some male politicians are more likely to act for women than other men (Ibid). Therefore, she states that future research on the topic should explore the processes involving the link between descriptive and substantive representation, so that it can be better understood (Ibid). For Reingold, researchers should test possible influencing factors such as dimensions of social identity and location, race, ethnicity, institutional and political structures (Ibid). Regarding these processes, she highlights that, in the United States, it was already empirically found that Democrat and Republican women differ ideologically more than simply representative women and men do (p. 05).

An interesting criticism existing in the theory about women's descriptive representation in politics is made by Childs' (2006). She argues that the claims for increasing women's descriptive representation usually do not come with an explanation of why their presence matters (p.07), and mentions Pitkin's own criticism of the concept, which is that a relationship between representatives' characteristics and their actions is mistakenly assumed (Pitkin 1967, p.66-72 in Childs 2006, p.07). Although, she also claims that the argument for the natural link between descriptive and substantive representation remains plausible (p.07). Following, she explains that this supposed link is usually explained by the concept of *critical mass*, meaning that a certain "mass" of women in the legislature would reflect a greater representation of women's interests (p.08).

Some scholars try to define a turning point in which the number of elected women would impact the legislature. Wängnerud (2009) mentions that a number of around 30% is usually accepted (p.60). But other scholars also suggest that different thresholds should be considered. Grey (2006), for example, argues that 15% of elected females may allow women to change the political agenda, yet a minimum of 40% is needed to achieve women-friendly policies (Wängnerud 2009, p.60). But again, Childs (2006) explains that the concept of critical mass is weak once it assumes that the quantity of women inside an institution is the key to explain female representatives' behavior and its effects, and also because it doesn't explain why women would be interested in representing other women (p.08).

Therefore, the discussion about the supposed link between women's descriptive and substantive representation leaves several questions open. Relating the theory commented in chapter 01, about gender quotas' introduction in Brazil and Mexico, and how the countries ended up, for now, in extremely different situations regarding women's descriptive representation in their Congresses; the discussion about how women contribute to and change the political environment; and the controversies regarding the link between the descriptive and substantive representation of women, this research is proposed to analyze the following three puzzles:

- i) Whether or not a high presence of women in the legislature relates to broader inclusion of discussions about women and other minorities' rights in the political agenda;
- ii) Whether or not a high presence of women in the legislature relates to a "democratization" of the representatives' activity, thus, impacting how traditional gender roles are performed by female and male lawmakers, or to a "marginalization" of women representatives in the least valued areas of the political life traditionally



considered to be of their interest, as well as to a “discrete”, moderate activity in the legislature;

- iii) Whether or not a higher descriptive representation of women impacts the substantive representation performed by lawmakers on how compromised they are to their duties and, indirectly, to the defense of their electorate's interests.

### **Case selection**

Worldwide, while a broad scholarship investigates the effects of women's inclusion in legislatures, it has been traditionally focused on Western countries. Although there is also a smaller, but still considerable, scholarship dedicated to understanding the phenomenon in African nations, fewer studies address the issue in Latin America and Asia. The high concentration of this specific field of research on only a few countries contrasts with the huge efforts directed to foster women's inclusion in politics throughout the world.

In fact, during the last three decades, Latin American countries lived a strong movement that led the region to occupy the first positions in the global ranking of Women in Parliaments (IPU, 2019). While the research field investigating the implementation of gender quotas and, more recently, parity systems in the region is broad (see Fernández Poncela 2011; Jones 2009; Piscopo 2006 & 2015; Piatti-Crocker 2019; Piatti-Crocker, Schmidt & Araujo 2017; Archenti & Tula 2013, Htun & Jones 2002), the scholarship about the effects of females' inclusion in politics through these mechanisms on the substantive representation of women's and other minorities' interests is much more limited (see Schwindt-Bayer 2006, Piscopo 2014, Franceschet & Piscopo 2008, Campos 2019).

Therefore, broader empirical investigation is needed for a better comprehension of the link between the increase of the descriptive representation of women and their substantive representation in Congresses across the region. The results of such research are especially

interesting for developing countries, in which the functioning of social and political structures is at times different from the ones of the developed world. These are the reasons that prompted my choice to analyze the legislatures' dynamics, from a gendered perspective, in Latin American countries. Also, I opted to investigate only two countries because of the time limitation to develop the study, which would make it impracticable to perform a robust analysis of a bigger number of cases.

Several reasons justify the selection of Brazil and Mexico as the cases studied. The first reason is the very contrasting percentages of women elected to the countries' national Congresses in their latest elections, which took place in 2018. If it could be expected that countries sharing considerable socioeconomic similarities would present similar patterns of women's descriptive representation in politics, Brazil and Mexico demonstrate the opposite. They are Latin America's two biggest economies and have similar HDI's and income per capita (World Bank, 2020). The biggest share of both countries' populations is Christian Catholic, in such a way that their societies and institutions mostly hold values that reinforce traditional gender roles. This should include the idea of incompatibility between women and politics.

Yet, in the past three decades, Mexico achieved an incredible transformation in women's presence in Congress, while Brazil remained one of the countries with the lowest women's presence in Latin American legislatures and globally. Therefore, Brazil and Mexico are the perfect cases to investigate what differences, if any, concerning women's substantive representation and the democratization of the legislative environment can be found from disparities in women's descriptive representation.

Once the electoral results are still recent, the analyses hereby developed are innovative and present a substantial contribution to the literature about the topic. The fact that both countries renewed their Congress in the year 2018 is also pertinent, considering that it allows for a synchronous analysis of the representatives' activity. It also allows for an easy collection

of data, once the legislative activity of both countries is available in their Chambers of Deputies' official websites.

To develop the analysis, a choice was made to focus on both countries' Chambers of Deputies. The lower houses were chosen instead of the Senates because they are the bodies responsible for representing the people's interests by initiating bills, which are one of the main indicators of my empirical investigation. For being closer to popular opinion, they are also known as less conservative than the Senates. Finally, in federations like Brazil and Mexico, the Senate represents the interests of the federative states, not directly those of the people, which is not interesting for the scope of this study.

## Hypotheses

The following hypothesis will be tested in this research:

**Hypothesis 1)** *The higher the presence of women in the legislature, the higher the insertion of discussions about women's and other minorities' interests in the legislative agenda.*

I hypothesize that in a legislature with a high number of female representatives, the number of bills addressing women and other minorities' interests is higher than in a legislature with a much smaller percentage of women.<sup>2</sup> According to the sociological argument that women are expected to be more prepared to represent the interests of female voters (Wängnerud 2009, p. 61), I also hypothesize that in both legislatures with a high and a small percentage of female representatives, they are the main advocates of women and other minorities' interests.

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<sup>2</sup> Hereby, I do not consider the quality of these bills or whether they protect or violate women and other minorities' interests, only how many of them are proposed by representatives belonging to each gender.

**Hypothesis 2)** *The percentage of women in the legislature does not affect the gendered political activity concerning the areas which are traditionally related to women's and men's interests.*

Following the literature that finds a marginalization of female representatives in areas traditionally related to women's interests (Schwindt-Bayer 2006), even though the presence of women might be contrasting between different legislatures, this does not substantially impact the areas of focus of the representatives' political activity. Therefore, in a legislature that achieved gender equality in the gendered descriptive representation and a legislature with only a small percentage of female representatives, their activity remains mostly focused on topics traditionally considered as of their gender's interest. Areas considered to be of greater political relevance are still concentrated under males' legislative activity in both scenarios and, in legislatures where the percentage of elected women increases, male representatives tend to reduce their intensity of women's substantive representation (Hömann 2020).

**Hypothesis 3)** *In legislatures which achieved gender equality, because of competition, the productivity of female and male representatives is not very contrasting. In legislatures in which women are the minority, because of social pressure, their legislative performance is better than that observed for men.*

Even if gender inequalities remain existing in legislatures which already achieved descriptive gender equality, the high inclusion of women changes the dynamics of the political life. This happens because competitiveness increases. Therefore, in legislatures with descriptive gender equality, the general performance of male representatives tends to be better than in legislatures with a small percentage of female representatives. In legislatures with gender descriptive equality, also, female representatives need to prove their presence is worthy, especially considering that equality derives from gender quotas. The consequence is that female and male representatives' performances are not so different. In legislatures without gender

equality in descriptive representation, the logic works in the opposite direction. Here, female representatives need to prove even more that their presence is worthy, which results in their general better performance in comparison to that of their male counterparts. Although I could not find literature investigating the impact that women's inclusion in legislatures generates to competitiveness among lawmakers, I developed this hypothesis based on what could be expected in two contrasting environments, where representatives of both genders have different incentives in the development of their institutional duties.

## **Research design**

This study consists of a comparative case study, aimed at addressing and comparing the legislative activity in Brazil and Mexico's Chambers of Deputies from a gendered perspective. Therefore, a comparison of the two countries approximates a "most similar systems" test of whether the higher presence of female deputies in Mexico is related to a higher introduction of women and other minorities' interests in the political agenda, as well as to a higher "democratization" of gender roles in Congress, in comparison to Brazil. It is a hypothesis-testing study (Rohlfing 2012, p. 10), i.e. the hypotheses surrounding the study were specified before the empirical analysis, based on arguments, evidence, and existing discussions in the literature. Afterward, to check their validity, they were tested on the two selected countries. Therefore, the research goal of this study is theory centered (Ibid, p. 11).

The representatives' activity was analyzed for the first year of legislative activity in the current Brazilian legislature, elected in 2018. This corresponds to the two legislative periods of the legislative session of 2019 (from February 2<sup>nd</sup> to July 17<sup>th</sup>, and from August 1<sup>st</sup> to December 22<sup>nd</sup>), of the 56<sup>th</sup> legislature (Câmara dos Deputados do Brasil, 2020). Once the two countries do not release the data about the representatives' activity in the same manner, I could not analyze the same period for most of the analyses performed in Mexico. Therefore, the

legislative activity was analyzed for Mexico regarding the full period of the current legislature until now. This comprehends the ordinary legislative sessions from September 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup> (2018 and 2019) and from February 1<sup>st</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup> (2019 and 2020), e.g., the first and second years of legislative activity of the LXIV legislature (Cámara de Diputados de México, 2020). There is one exception in the period analyzed for Mexico, which will be explained soon.

The analysis was performed considering two different levels: the aggregate and individual. The aggregate-level refers to the Chambers of Deputies themselves, comparing the legislative activity of the deputies between each Congress. The individual-level refers to the representatives' activity in the countries themselves, thus, consisting of comparisons of the legislative behavior of females and males inside each country. The results were assessed with a quantitative approach, although I tried to eventually take into consideration qualitative arguments too.

I used two key independent variables to perform my analysis. At the aggregate level, my independent variable is the percentage of women present in each Chamber of Deputies. At the individual level, my independent variable refers to whether the representative is a female or a male. My dependent variables are also two. The first one refers to how active female and male representatives are. The second refers to the areas of specialization of female and male representatives. Each of my dependent variables presents multiple indicators. Relating to how active representatives are, I analyzed several indicators for both Brazil and Mexico. Not all of them are the same for both countries, again, once the information available in the Chambers of Deputies' websites varies in some matters. These indicators will be further explained soon.

### **Samples selection and databases**

To measure my variables, as already mentioned, I collected data from the websites of both Brazil and Mexico's Chambers of Deputies. Although the two houses provide information

about the legislative activity of the current and past legislatures, there are no specific databases or tables with the content I needed to analyze in this study. Once the data collection had to be performed in a limited period, it would be impossible to include information for all the 514 Brazilian and the 500 Mexican deputies, as well as for all the existing commissions in the two countries. Therefore, I randomly selected 76 deputies belonging to each gender in each of them. The quantity was chosen according to the existing female deputies exercising their mandates in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies in 2020.

This way, I collected and analyzed data for 152 deputies in each country, 304 in total. This corresponds to approximately 30% of the total deputies elected for each Chamber. To select the deputies, I developed two initial databases including the name, gender, and party of all the deputies in each country and performed a random selection. Finally, I created another two databases with broader information about the deputies' work, which I named *data.brazil.deputies* and *data.mexico.deputies*. I also created two databases with the information about commissions, one including basic information about all the existing commissions in the two countries, and the other including only information about the commissions selected for the in-depth analysis. These databases are explained below.

#### **Database: Brazilian deputies (*data.brazil.deputies*)**

The information selected for the deputies' work includes, first, their names, gender, and party. I also selected from the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies' website other information which could be compared to similar indicators for the Mexican deputies. Therefore, I collected data regarding the deputies' speeches given in plenary, roll-call votes, presences and unjustified absences from plenary, as well as presences and unjustified absences from commissions reunions. Although the presences and absences from legislative meetings and sessions cannot be considered good indicators to account for the deputies' legislative performance, I considered

that they could, at least, tell about how committed the representatives are to their functional duties.

Furthermore, I included the total amount of legislative proposals started by each deputy during the period analyzed, also separating the total amount of bills proposed (including ordinary and complementary bills, the last ones related to constitutional matters). Since many bills are proposed in groups of representatives, I added a column for the number of such bills started by the deputies individually. I also included two columns with the titles of the first and last bills proposed by the deputies. Each of these columns is followed by another column where I specified the main topic to which they refer. The topics correspond to the ones previously defined by the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies itself. They are: i) *agricultural*; ii) *cities and transport*; iii) *science, technology, and communications*; iv) *consumer*; v) *human rights*; vi) *economy*; vii) *education, culture, and sports*; viii) *environment and energy*; ix) *politics and public administration*; x) *foreign affairs*; xi) *health*; xii) *security*; xiii) *work, retirement, and assistance*. Once part of this research is aimed at analyzing how female and male representatives behave concerning women and other minorities' interests, I created another two topics: xiv) *women's rights*; xv) *children's and youth's rights*. Therefore, the proposals are classified into 15 different topics.

If the deputy only proposed one bill – in a group or individually – during the period analyzed, I repeated the information in the columns referring to the first and last bills proposed. Regarding the first and last bills, I also did not differentiate whether they were proposed individually or in a group of representatives. Finally, many of the bills refer to more than one topic, therefore, in most cases the aggregate number of bills in the topics' classification is bigger than the total quantity of bills proposed by the deputies.



### **Database: Mexican deputies (*data.mexico.deputies*)**

The differences between this database and the one developed for Brazil come basically from the fact that the countries' Chambers of Deputies do not release the same data about the legislative activity on their websites. Therefore, I had to make some adaptations. Once on the Mexican website, there is no information about roll-call votes, instead, I controlled for the number of bill proposals to which the deputies voted. As I did in the Brazilian database, I controlled for the deputies' voting and unjustified absences from voting sessions, as well as for presences in plenary sessions and unjustified absences from them. Because of how the website releases the data, the presences and absences from plenary were included only for the first year of legislative activity, comprehending the two first legislative sessions (from September 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup> and from February 1<sup>st</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019).

Considering that the website does not comprise information about the speeches given in plenary by the deputies, I substituted this indicator for the number of commissions in which the deputies participate. I also controlled how many commissions related to issues considered to be of women's interests they integrate. Another distinct factor that I controlled for the Mexican deputies was the participation in friendship groups (*Grupos de Amistad*) with other nations, which seems to be a relevant activity in the house.

Just as for the Brazilian deputies, I controlled for the Mexican deputies' total amount of decree projects (bills) proposed, the ones which they started individually, their first and last decree projects proposed, and the respective topics to which they belong. For the first and last decree projects proposed, I also included to which topic they refer to. Different than the case of Brazil, the Mexican Chamber of Deputies' website does not classify the bill proposals into topics. The solution I found was to categorize them according to the main commission in which they passed during the legislative process. But as Mexico currently has 46 ordinary

commissions, to equalize the quantity and character of the topics to those existing on the Brazilian website, I had to aggregate different commissions dealing with similar matters.

Therefore, the 17 topics in which I classified the bill proposals in the Mexican database are: i) *national treasury and public credit/ budget and public account*; ii) *legislative affairs/ constitutional points/ transparency and anticorruption*; iii) *children's and youth's rights*; iv) *social development/ social security/ work and social provision*; v) *governing and population/ federalism and municipal development*; vi) *environment, sustainability, climate change and natural resources/ hydraulic resources, potable water, sanitation, and energy*; vii) *gender equality*; viii) *rural and agricultural development and conservation/ alimentary self-sufficiency*; ix) *health*; x) *economy, commerce and competitiveness/ livestock*; xi) *metropolitan and urban development, territorial ordering and mobility*; xii) *education and sports*; xiii) *communication and transports/ radio and television*; xiv) *foreign relations/ national defense*; xv) *public security/ justice*; xvi) *attention to vulnerable groups/ indigenous people/ housing/ migratory affairs/ human rights*; xvii) *science, technology, and innovation*.

### **Commissions' databases**

My analysis of the legislative activity also included information about the deputies' distribution among the existing commissions. By July 2020, when the information was collected, there were 77 active commissions of different natures in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies (divided among 25 permanent, 39 temporaries, and 13 mist commissions) and 46 active ordinary commissions in the one of Mexico.

The first step to develop this part of the analysis was the creation of a simple database named *data.commissions.presidency.brmx*. This database includes the full list of the 123 active commissions in Brazil and Mexico, the names of their leadership (president or coordinator), her or his gender, and party. I analyzed all the commissions regarding the leadership's gender. The

selection of the sample used in the in-depth analysis began with a separation of the commissions that could be easily related to topics traditionally considered as of women's interests, which I correctly imagined would consist of the minority. Afterward, I selected a corresponding sample of commissions addressing issues traditionally considered as of men's interests. In total, 12 commissions addressing issues classified as traditionally related to women's interests in Brazil and 09 in Mexico were included in the analysis. Also, 10 commissions addressing issues traditionally related to men's interests were selected for each country (therefore, a total of 38 commissions). I gathered the information about the selected commissions of both Chambers of Deputies in a database named *data.commissions.brmx*.

In this database, I included information about the names of the commissions, their country, to which gender they are traditionally associated, their amount of vacancies, the number of female and male deputies occupying these vacancies, the name of their president or coordinator, her or his gender and party. Once there is no available information about the membership of most of the Brazilian commissions selected for the sample, I considered the information about the deputies which participated in specific reunions of such commissions at the end of 2019. The parred selected commissions are exposed in the following tables:

**Table 1: Commissions – interests traditionally related to women**

<b>Brazil</b>	<b>Mexico</b>
Migration and Refugees Mixed Commission	Migration Affairs Commission
Social and Family Security Commission	Social Security Commission
Human Rights and Minorities Commission	Human Rights Commission
External Commission of Politics for the Early Childhood	Children's and Youth Rights Commission
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disability Rights Commission</li> <li>Elder Rights Commission</li> </ul>	Attention to Vulnerable Groups Commission
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mixed Commission to Fight Violence Against Women</li> <li>External Commission about Domestic Violence Against Women</li> <li>Commission for the Defense of Women's Rights</li> </ul>	Gender Equality Commission
Environment and Sustainable Development Commission	Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Natural Resources Commission
-	Youth and Sexual Diversity Commission
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Culture Commission</li> <li>Education Commission</li> </ul>	Education Commission

**Table 2: Commissions – interests traditionally related to men**

<b>Brazil</b>	<b>Mexico</b>
Agriculture, Livestock, Supply and Rural Development	Rural and Agricultural Development and Conservation, Food Self-sufficiency Commission
Science and technology, Communication and Computer Commission	Science, Technology and Innovation Commission
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urban Development Commission</li> <li>Special Committee on Urban Mobility Policy</li> </ul>	Metropolitan and Urban Development, Territorial Ordinance and Mobility Commission
Economic development, Industry, Trade and Services Commission	Economy, Commerce and Competitiveness Commission
Constitution, Justice and Citizenship Commission	Constitutional Matters Commission
Financial Supervision and Control Commission	Budget and Public Account Commission
Mining and Energy Commission	Energy Commission
Foreign Affairs and National Defense Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exterior Relations Commission</li> <li>National Defense Commission</li> </ul>
Public Security and Fight Against Organized Crime	Public Security Commission

## CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS

To test the propositions outlined in chapter 2, I had to design a measure of the key-dependent variable. To operationalize it, I created three different criteria of performance, that are: i) legislative performance; ii) area of focus of the legislative activity; iii) gendered distribution in commissions. Inside each of these criteria, I defined several questions to be empirically investigated. In the next three sections, I explain the criteria, expose the questions, and comment on the results of the empirical analysis. In the end, I comment on some biases of the analysis.

### **Criterium I: Legislative performance**

The first criterium analyzed was the legislative performance of the deputies. Here, the intention was to check whether a difference in the quality of the deputies' work could be found between females and males in Brazil and Mexico and whether the results contrast between the two countries. The analysis was performed individually, for each country, because different indicators were chosen for them according to the information available on each website. Following, the results were compared between the countries.

Concerning Brazil, the questions analyzed were:

- i) Which group was responsible for more speeches in plenary, female, or male deputies?
- ii) Which group was responsible for more roll-call votes, female, or male deputies?
- iii) Which group was responsible for more bill proposals, female, or male deputies?
- iv) Which group was responsible for starting more bill proposals individually, female, or male deputies?
- v) Which group was present in plenary and commissions' meetings more assiduously, female, or male deputies?

- vi) Which group was more often absent from plenary and commissions' meetings without justification, female, or male deputies?

Concerning Mexico, the questions analyzed were:

- i) Which group participates in more commissions, female, or male deputies?
- ii) Which group integrates more friendship groups (*Grupos de Amistad*) with other nations, female, or male deputies?
- iii) Which group was responsible for more votes, female, or male deputies?
- iv) Which group was responsible for starting more decree projects, female, or male deputies?
- v) Which was responsible for starting more decree projects individually, female, or male deputies?
- vi) Which group was more assiduously present in plenary, female, or male deputies?
- vii) Which group was more often absent from plenary without justification, female, or male deputies?

### **Brazil's results**

To assess the results of this part of the analysis, I classified the difference in averages of female and male deputies' performance as i) low (until 06); iii) moderate (between 06 and 12); high (above 12).

First, the results showed that female lawmakers were responsible for a higher quantity of speeches in plenary during the period analyzed. The average difference between the speeches given by female and male deputies was 9.05, a moderate result considering an entire year of legislative activity.

Concerning the roll-call votes, the difference was positive for male deputies. On average, they gave 10.46 more roll-call votes than female lawmakers' in the period analyzed. Therefore, the difference is also moderate, considering that it relates to a whole year of legislative activity.

A much smaller difference was found for the bill proposals. Female deputies proposed, on average, 1.71 more bills than male deputies in the period analyzed. This result is very small and, therefore, cannot tell about differences in the deputies' activity. Regarding the bill proposals started individually, female deputies were again responsible for a bigger share of them. Although, the average difference between the two groups was 0.78 bill proposals, a very small difference as well.

Regarding the presence in plenary, male deputies were the ones who were present more assiduously. The average difference in comparison to female deputies was 05 sessions during the period analyzed. This is a low difference that cannot tell about a substantial difference in the performance between female and male deputies. The result of the indicator about presences in the commission's reunions was similar. Again, male deputies were more assiduously present than female deputies, although, the difference in averages was 5.5 reunions, a small number.

Regarding the absences from plenary, curiously, male deputies were also the group that missed more sessions without justification. Notwithstanding, the difference in absences was, on average, of 0.52 sessions between the two groups a very small number. Finally, about the absence from commissions' reunions, male deputies also missed more of such events without justification. The difference in averages shows that male deputies missed 7.5 more commissions' reunions than female deputies did, a moderate number.

The results of Brazil's analysis are summarized in the table below:

**Table 3: Brazil's results – Legislative performance**

Indicator	Better performance/ gender	Average difference	Result
Speeches given in plenary	Female	9.05	moderate
Roll-call votes	Male	10.46	moderate
Bill proposals	Female	1.71	low
Individual bill proposals	Female	0.78	low
Presences in plenary	Male	5.00	low
Presence in commission's reunions	Male	5.50	low
Absences from plenary	Female	0.52	low
Absences from commission reunions	Female	7.50	moderate

Notwithstanding Brazilian female deputies showed an overall better performance in five of the eight indicators analyzed, only three of the results showed a moderate difference between their work in comparison to that one developed by male deputies. Therefore, the results of this analysis do not show substantial gendered differences in the representatives' performance in Brazil, nor they point to an obvious better performance of female deputies.<sup>3</sup>

### Mexico's results

First, the results showed that male deputies integrate more commissions than females. Although, the difference in averages was 0.04, a very small number. Concerning the deputies' participation in friendship groups (*Grupos de Amistad*) with other nations, female deputies participated in more of such groups than their male counterparts. But the difference in averages was of only 0.65 commissions, again a very small number. About which group of representatives gave more votes in plenary, female deputies also showed a slightly better performance than males. Notwithstanding, the difference in averages was of 2.63 votes, a low number.

<sup>3</sup> The full analyses can be found in the Appendix.



Referring to the decree projects (bills) started by the lawmakers, this time, male deputies presented a better result than females. Even though, again, the difference in averages was small, of 4.05 decrees, a number that does not tell much about gendered disparities in the deputies' performance. Contrarily, female deputies were the ones who started more bills individually. The difference in averages between female and male deputies was of 3.81 bills, therefore, a small number that also does not point to an obvious better performance.

Now, concerning the deputies' presence in plenary, male deputies presented a better result than females. The difference in averages was 1.48 sessions, a small result. Finally, regarding the unjustified absences from plenary, female deputies achieved a better result. Although, again, the difference in averages was rather small, 0.10 sessions.

The results regarding the Mexican deputies' legislative performance are exposed in the table below:

**Table 4: Mexico's results – Legislative performance**

Indicator	Better performance/ gender	Average difference	Result
Participation in commissions	Female	0.04	low
Friendship groups	Female	0.65	low
Votes in plenary	Female	2.63	low
Bill proposals	Male	4.05	low
Individual bill proposals	Female	3.81	low
Presences in plenary	Male	1.48	low
Unjustified absences from plenary	Female	0.1	low

In sum, although Mexican female deputies achieved better scores in most of the analyzed indicators, in all cases, the difference was small or insignificant. Therefore, the results fit the partial hypothesis that in a legislature with gender equality, the productivity of female and male deputies is not very contrasting.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The full analyses can be found in the Appendix.

## **Comparison between the countries**

The results of the analysis do not show conclusive evidence to support the hypothesis that the legislative performance of female and male deputies differs between legislatures according to the number of elected women. The differences in the legislative productivity of female and male deputies inside each country's Chamber of Deputies were mostly small. Thus, the argument about disparities in the deputies' performance between legislatures with a high and a low descriptive representation of women, influenced by the type of competition and the pressure to which female and male deputies would be subjected, is not confirmed.

## **Criterion II: Areas of focus of the legislative activity**

The second criterium empirically analyzed was the focus of the legislative activity of female and male deputies in Brazil and Mexico. Here, the intention was to check whether a substantial difference could be found between the two countries in the areas of interest in which deputies of both genders focus their activity on. Once this criterium is related to the topics of the bills started by the deputies, it was possible to develop questions that fit the two countries.

The questions analyzed for both Brazil and Mexico are:

- i) What were the themes of the highest incidence in the first and last bill proposals of both groups, female, and male deputies?
- ii) What were the themes of the lowest incidence in the first and last bill proposals of both groups, female, and male deputies?
- iii) In which themes did both groups, female, and male deputies, legislate more?
- iv) In which themes did both groups, female, and male deputies, legislate less?
- v) How many bills, on average, were proposed by both groups about women's rights, children's and youth rights, human rights, education, and health?

- vi) How many bills, on average, were proposed by both groups about the economy, security, science and technology, agriculture, cities, and transport?

### **Brazil's results**

The results of the analysis show that, among the three themes of the highest incidence in Brazilian female deputies' first bill proposals, two of them refer to interests traditionally related to women. These themes are *education, culture, and sports*, amounting to 15 first bill proposals, and *women's rights*, which was the object of 14 first bill proposals. Although, there was also a high concentration of females' first bills proposals on *politics and public administration*, that also amounted to 15. From the other topics that were considerably represented in female lawmakers' first bill proposals, only *human rights*, amounting to 05 proposals, is directly related to interests traditionally related to women. Although, most of the topics of the lowest incidence in female lawmakers' first bill proposals are traditionally related to men's interests. Finally, from women's first bill proposals, 39 were concentrated in areas traditionally related to women's interests, which are: i) *education, culture and sports*; ii) *women's rights*; iii) *human rights*; iv) *health*; v) *children's and youth rights*. **The results are exposed in table XVI of the Appendix.**

The topics of highest incidence in Brazilian male deputies' first bill proposals are *politics and public administration*, with 26 proposals, and *work, retirement, and assistance*, with 10 proposals. They are followed by *education, culture, and sports*, with 05 proposals, *security*, with 05 proposals, and *human rights*, with 04 proposals. Considering that i) *politics and public administration*; ii) *work, retirement and assistance*; iii) *security*; iv) *economy*; v) *agricultural*; vi) *cities and transport* are all topics traditionally related to men's interest, the amount of Brazilian male deputies' first bill proposals made in such a cluster was 49.

Topics traditionally considered as of women's interests occupied a much smaller share of male deputies' first bill proposals. For example, *education, culture and sports* and *human rights*, which were moderately legislated by male deputies, totalize only 09 of their first bill proposals. In women's first bill proposals, they represent 20 bills. There was no first bill proposal regarding *science, technology and communications, foreign affairs*, and *children's and youth rights*, only the last of them traditionally considered as of women's interest. **The results are exposed in table XVI of the Appendix.**

Regarding female deputies' last bill proposals, the results are similar to the ones found for their first bills. The themes of the lowest incidence in women's last bill proposals were all traditionally related to men's interests. The results found for male deputies' last bill proposals were also similar to the ones found for their first bill proposals. It is important to highlight that no male deputy started the last bill proposal on the themes of *children's and youth rights* and *women's rights*, although most of the topics of lowest incidence in their last bill proposals are in fact areas traditionally related to men's interests. **The results are exposed in table XVII of the Appendix.**

The topics *politics and public administration; education; work, retirement and assistance; and health* were among the ones of highest incidence in the first and last bill proposals of both female and male Brazilian deputies. Although, the results clearly show that female deputies legislated more than males did in almost all the topics traditionally considered to be of women's interests. The exception is *health*, which was legislated more by male deputies than by female deputies, contradicting the expectations. Male deputies are also shown to legislate more about topics traditionally considered as of men's interests than females do, even when the incidence of women's first and last bill proposals on such topics is high. **The results are exposed in tables XVI and XVII of the Appendix.**

This confirms that in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, although it cannot be stated that female representatives are marginalized in topics traditionally considered as of women's interests, they do specialize their activity mostly in such affairs. In fact, in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, aggregately, women legislate twice as men about *women's rights, children's and youth rights, human rights, education, and health*. The same pattern is observed for male deputies regarding topics traditionally considered as of men's interests. The table below is exemplificative of the disparity between the deputies' bill proposals on topics traditionally considered as of women's interest.

**Table 5: Bills on topics traditionally related to women - Brazil**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Female</b>	843	11.09
<b>Male</b>	408	5.37
<b>Difference</b>	435	5.72

The difference is also significant considering these topics individually. During the period analyzed, female deputies proposed almost twice as many bills as male deputies did on *health*. The pattern repeats itself for most of the topics traditionally considered as of women's and men's interests, even if the statistical difference is small. The exceptions are *technology and communications; consumer; politics and public administration; foreign affairs; work retirement and assistance*, all of which were more legislated by female than male deputies, even if the difference is small. The results are exposed in the table below.

**Table 6: Bill proposals per topic – Brazilian deputies**

Bill theme	Women	Men
Agricultural	6	16
Cities and Transport	35	49
Science, Technology, and Communications	42	22
Consumer	30	21
Women's rights	110	25
Children's and youth rights	106	13
Human rights	356	201
Economy	61	72
Education, culture, and sport	141	98
Environment and energy	58	55
Politics and public administration	888	756
Foreign affairs	2	0
Health	130	71
Security	121	128
Work, retirement, and assistance	122	119

Regarding the *economy, security, science, technology and communications, agriculture, cities and transport*, all topics traditionally considered as of men's interests, although the results show that men legislated more than women about them, the difference in averages is small. This reinforces the observation that in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, women deputies are not marginalized. The results are exposed in the table below.

**Table 7: Bills on topics traditionally related to men - Brazil**

	Total	Average
<b>Female</b>	265	3.48
<b>Male</b>	287	3.77
<b>Difference</b>	22	0.29

These findings support the perception that although there seems to be a specialization of Brazilian female and male deputies in areas traditionally considered to be of their interests, this does not come along with the marginalization of female deputies in legislating about issues considered to be of women's interests. There seems to be a link between women's descriptive and substantive representation, without women's marginalization. Although, male deputies

clearly do not put the same focus females do on issues traditionally considered as of women's interests. In fact, some of these issues remain highly ignored by them.

### **Mexico's results**

Regarding the first bill proposals of the Mexican female deputies, only three groups appeared in a high frequency. These groups were: i) *legislative affairs/ constitutional points/ transparency and anticorruption*, with 43 proposals; ii) *national treasury and public credit/ budget and public account*, with 19 proposals; iii) *children's and youth rights*, with 09 proposals. From all the topics that appeared in Mexican female deputies' first bill proposals, only *children's and youth rights* are considered as traditionally related to women's interests.

Many of the topics of lowest incidence in Mexican female deputies' first bill proposals are, in fact, traditionally considered as of women's interests. Some of the topics which were not the object of women's first bill proposals are: i) *attention to vulnerable groups/ indigenous people/ housing/ migratory affairs/ human rights*; ii) *health*; iii) *gender equality*; iv) *environment, sustainability, climate change, and natural resources/ hydraulic resources, potable water, sanitation/ energy*; v) *education/ sports*. 65 women's first bill proposals were made on topics traditionally considered as of men's interests. **The results are exposed in table XVIII of the appendix.**

Concerning male deputies' first bill proposals, four groups of themes were highly or considerably present. These groups are i) *legislative affairs/ constitutional points/ transparency and anticorruption*, with 39 proposals; ii) *national treasury and public credit/ budget and public account*, with 21 proposals; iii) *education/ sports*, with 06 proposals; iv) *children's and youth rights*, also with 06 proposals. Both *education/sports* and *children's and youth rights* are topics traditionally related to women's interests.

Comparing the topics of highest incidence in female and male deputies' first bill proposals, it is possible to note that both groups legislated mostly about similar areas which refer to topics traditionally related to both women's and men's interests. Differences existed, but they were not striking. For example, the difference in the representatives' first bill proposals concerning *national treasury and public credit/ budget and public account* was of only 02 bills, therefore, small. Also, male deputies had a considerably higher incidence of *education/ sports* in their first bills, amounting to 06 bills, while only one woman made her first bill proposal on these themes. Regarding the topics which were not legislated by any male deputy as a first bill proposal, there were themes traditionally related to women's and men's interests. Although, 64 of the male deputies' first bill proposals were made on topics traditionally considered as of men's interests, and only 12 on topics traditionally considered as women's interests. **The results are exposed in table XVIII of the appendix.**

About women deputies' last bill proposals, four groups of themes had a much higher incidence than the others. They were: i) *public security/ justice*, with 17 proposals; ii) *social development/ social security/ work and social provision*, with 15 proposals; iii) *legislative affairs/ constitutional points/ transparency and anticorruption*, with 13 proposals; iv) *national treasury and public credit/ budget and public account*, with 07 proposals. None of these topics is considered traditionally related to women's interests. Topics traditionally related to women's interests appeared in only 13 of the female deputies' last bill proposals.

Regarding male deputies' last bill proposals, a high concentration of the bills in only a few topics remained. The topics with the highest incidence were: i) *legislative affairs/ constitutional points/ transparency and anticorruption*, with 17 proposals; ii) *social development/ social security/ work and social provision*, with 10 proposals; iii) *health*, with 10 proposals; iv) *public security/ justice*, also with 10 proposals. From these topics, only *health* can be considered as traditionally related to women's interests. Among the 06 topics which had



the lowest incidence in male deputies' last bill proposals, two of them are traditionally considered as of women's interests: *children's and youth rights*, with one proposal and *gender equality*, without any proposal. In total, 24 of the 76 male deputy's last bill proposals were focused on topics traditionally related to women's interests. **The results are exposed in table XIX of the appendix.**

Regarding the topics in which women deputies legislated more, the five themes with the highest amount of bill proposals were about interests traditionally related to men. These topics were: i) *legislative affairs/ constitutional points/ transparency and anticorruption*, with 1271 bill proposals; ii) *national treasury and public credit/ budget and public account*, with 1026 bill proposals; iii) *public security/ justice*, with 599 bill proposals; iv) *governing and population/ federalism and municipal development*, with 593 bill proposals; v) *social development/ social security/ work and social provision*, with 491 bill proposals. Curiously, the number of female deputies' proposals on such topics was very similar to that one of the male deputies.

Interestingly, in absolute numbers, these proposals were immediately followed by proposals related to areas considered as of women's interests: i) *environment, sustainability, climate change and natural resources/ hydraulic resources, potable water, sanitation, and energy*, with 422 bill proposals; ii) *gender equality*, with 395 bill proposals; iii) *health*, with 299 proposals; iv) *attention to vulnerable groups/ indigenous people/ housing/ migratory affairs/ human rights*, with 253 bill proposals; v) *education and sports*, with 235 bill proposals; vi) *children's and youth rights*, with 161 bill proposals. This might mean that although interests traditionally linked to women are not the focus of Mexican female deputies' work, they are still taken as relevant areas. All the four topics of lowest incidence in female deputies' bill proposals are traditionally related to men's interests.

Concerning Mexican male deputies' bill proposals, the six topics which amounted to a moderate quantity of bill proposals were also the same ones as those of women deputies, again without much of a difference. All the four topics of lowest incidence in male deputies' bill proposals were also the same as those of female deputies. The similarity between female and male deputies' topics of bill proposals might point to a congruence between the two genders' legislative activity in a legislature with gender equality, which coincides with a democratization in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies. The results are exposed in the table below.

**Table 8: Bill proposals per topic – Mexican deputies**

Bill's Theme	Women	Men
legislative affairs/ constitutional points/ transparency and anticorruption	1271	1301
national treasury and public credit/ budget and public account	1026	1067
public security/ justice	599	662
governing and population/ federalism and municipal development	593	547
social development/ social security/ work and social provision	491	603
environment, sustainability, climate change and natural resources/ hydraulic resources, potable water, sanitation and energy	422	507
gender equality	395	313
Health	299	313
attention to vulnerable groups/ indigenous people/ housing/ migratory affairs/ human rights	253	238
education and sports	235	264
Children's and youth rights	161	135
foreign relations/ national defense	114	122
communication and transports/ radio and television	101	136
economy, commerce and competitiveness	75	80
rural and agricultural development and conservation/ alimentary self-sufficiency	33	39
metropolitan and urban development, territorial ordering and mobility	22	36
science, technology, and innovation	22	32

Following, the results showed that female deputies were responsible for a bigger share of the proposals made on topics traditionally related to women. Although, the average difference was very small, of only 1.06 proposals per deputies belonging to a different gender.

The proposals considered in this part of the analysis are: i) *gender equality*; ii) *children's and youth rights*; iii) *attention to vulnerable groups/ indigenous people/ housing/ migratory affairs/ human rights*; iv) *education and sports*; v) *health*. the results are exposed in the table below.

**Table 9: Bills on topics traditionally related to women - Mexico**

	Total	Average
<b>Female</b>	1343	17.67
<b>Male</b>	1263	16.61
<b>Difference</b>	80	1.06

Finally, male deputies proposed more bills than women on topics traditionally related to men's interests. Although, once again the average difference was of 1.29 proposals per deputy, therefore, very small. The topics considered were: i) *economy, commerce, and competitiveness*; ii) *science, technology, and innovation*; iii) *rural and agricultural development and conservation/ alimentary self-sufficiency*; iv) *public security/ justice*; v) *metropolitan and urban development, territorial ordering, and mobility*.

**Table 10: Bills on topics traditionally related to men - Mexico**

	Total	Average
<b>Female</b>	751	9.88
<b>Male</b>	849	11.17
<b>Difference</b>	98	1.29

Therefore, the results found for Mexico do point to a dispersion of the two groups of deputies, male and female, in diverse and not stereotyped areas of the legislative activity. This signalizes a positive relationship between a high presence of women deputies in a legislature and the democratization of traditional gender roles.

## **Comparison between the countries**

Comparing the results achieved, it is possible to note that in Brazil, a higher specialization of the legislative activity of female and male deputies to traditional gender roles was found than in Mexico. In the Mexican Chamber of Deputies, there seems to be a much higher equilibrium between the areas of activity of female and male deputies. This contradicts the hypothesis that the percentage of women in the legislature does not affect the deputies' activity concerning the areas which are traditionally related to both genders. There seems to be, in fact, the democratization of gender roles among the Mexican deputies. Although, it does not seem fair to affirm that there is a marginalization of Brazilian female deputies in areas traditionally considered as of their interests.

Concerning the insertion of discussions about women and other minorities' interests in the legislative agenda, the results do suggest that such topics are more present in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies. This confirms the hypothesis that the higher the presence of women in the legislature, the higher the insertion of discussions about women and other minorities' interests in the legislative agenda.

## **Criterium III: Gendered distribution in Commissions**

In this criterium, I empirically analyzed the distribution of Brazil and Mexico's female and male deputies among the countries' commissions. Both the commissions' leadership and presence of the two groups of lawmakers among them were considered. Again, the same questions were analyzed for the two countries. These questions are:

- i) How many Commissions are led by female and male deputies?
- ii) What are the Commissions led by women?
- iii) How many of the commissions addressing issues traditionally related to women's interests are led by male deputies?

- iv) What is the gap between females and males' presence in commissions traditionally related to women's interests?
- v) What is the gap between females and males' presence in commissions traditionally related to men's interests?

### **Brazil and Mexico's results**

Concerning how many commissions are led by women and men in the two countries, the results showed that in both cases women chair more commissions than simply the ones traditionally considered as of their interest. In the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, female representatives chair 15 of the 75 existing commissions, which corresponds to 20% of the leadership positions. The result shows that women's descriptive underrepresentation in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies is reproduced in this matter. In Mexico, although inequality still exists, the disparity is much smaller, with women chairing 19 of the 46 existing commissions or 41,30% of the commissions' leadership positions. **The results are exposed in table XX of the appendix.**

One interesting finding is that in Brazil, male deputies occupy 05 commissions classified as traditionally related to women's interests<sup>5</sup>. Meanwhile, Brazilian female deputies do not occupy any of the commissions classified as traditionally related to men's interests. This reinforces the perception of women's underrepresentation in commissions' leadership. In Mexico, the results show that while male deputies occupy 02 of the commissions selected as traditionally related to women's interests<sup>6</sup>, female deputies occupy 04 of those selected as traditionally related to men's interests. When analyzing the full list of the Mexican

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<sup>5</sup> The Brazilian commissions classified as of women's interests led by male deputies are i) Environment and Sustainable Development Commission; ii) Social and Family Security Commission; iii) Human Rights and Minorities Commission; iv) Disability Rights Commission; v) Education Commission.

<sup>6</sup> The Mexican commissions classified as of women's interests led by male deputies are i) Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change, and Natural Resources; ii) Human Rights Commission.

commissions, females occupy the leadership position in 12 commissions' not traditionally related to women's interests, while in Brazil they occupy only 06 of such positions.

These findings contradict the hypothesis of women's marginalization to issues traditionally related to their gender in legislatures with a high and a low percentage of women deputies, although differences exist between them. Again, even if not marginalized, Brazilian female deputies are highly underrepresented in commissions' leadership. In Mexico, the gendered distribution of commissions' leaderships is much more equal than in Brazil. The relation of the commissions led by women in both Brazil and Mexico is exposed in the table below.

**Table 11: Women's leadership in commissions – Brazil and Mexico**

	Commissions not related to women	Commissions related to women (sample)	Commissions related to men (sample)
<b>Brazil</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Commission on labor, administration and public service;</li> <li>2) Special commission about the development fund for the North Fluminense region;</li> <li>3) Special commission about the super indebtedness of the consumer;</li> <li>4) Special commission about personal data;</li> <li>5) Special commission on the expenses of federal education institutions;</li> <li>6) Special commission of the Bolsa Família Program;</li> <li>7) Special commission about the PL 1917/15 (portability of the electricity bill);</li> <li>8) External commission about the unfinished constructions in the country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Elder rights Commission;</li> <li>2) Mixed Commission to combat violence against women;</li> <li>3) Migration and Refugees Mixed Commission;</li> <li>4) External Commission of Politics for the Early Childhood;</li> <li>5) External Commission about Domestic Violence Against Women;</li> <li>6) Women's rights Commission;</li> <li>7) Culture commission</li> </ul>	<b>x</b>
<b>Mexico</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Health Commission;</li> <li>2) National Treasury and Public Credit Commission;</li> <li>3) Jurisdictional Commission;</li> <li>4) Justice Commission;</li> <li>5) Commission about the marine;</li> <li>6) Civil protection and disaster prevention Commission;</li> <li>7) Constitutional matters Commission;</li> <li>8) Radio and television Commission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Migration Affairs Commission;</li> <li>2) Attention to Vulnerable Groups Commission;</li> <li>3) Children's and Youth Rights Commission;</li> <li>4) Education Commission;</li> <li>5) Gender Equality Commission;</li> <li>6) Youth and Sexual Diversity Commission</li> <li>7) Social Security Commission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Science, Technology and Innovation Commission;</li> <li>2) Metropolitan and Urban Development, Territorial Ordinance, and Mobility Commission;</li> <li>3) Constitutional Matters Commission;</li> <li>4) Public Security Commission</li> </ul>

Concerning the deputies' representation in commissions traditionally related to women's interests, in Brazil, 196 positions are occupied by male deputies, in comparison to 95 positions occupied by women. But considering the huge gender gap in Congress, where only 15% of the deputies are female, their average representation in such commissions is almost 03 times bigger than that of male deputies. Surprisingly, the average presence of Brazilian female deputies in commissions traditionally considered to be of women's interests is more than twice as bigger as in Mexico. One possible way to understand this result is supposing that in a legislature with gender equality, part of the female deputies "feel free", at least, not to engage in these commissions. This, once again, supports the hypothesis of the "democratization" of gender roles in the Mexican legislature. The higher concentration of Brazilian female deputies in commissions traditionally related to women also supports the hypothesis that in a legislature with fewer women, they appear to remain more attached to topics traditionally considered as of their interests.

But this does not mean that in Mexico male deputies engage more in commissions traditionally considered as of women's interests. The average presence of Mexican male deputies in such commissions is even smaller than in Brazil, with the positions occupied by them amounting to only 84, in comparison to 173 occupied by females. Although, once there is gender equality in Mexico's Congress, the gender inequality gap in the descriptive representation of both groups in these commissions is also smaller. The results are exposed in the table below.

**Table 12: Presence in commissions related to women – Brazil and Mexico**

	Brazil		Mexico	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
<b>Deputies per commissions</b>	196	95	84	173
<b>Average</b>	0.44	1.25	0.34	0.66
<b>Difference in averages</b>	0.81		0.32	



Finally, comparing the presence of female and male deputies in commissions traditionally considered as of men's interests, the difference in Brazil is striking, as female deputies are highly underrepresented. In Mexico, although women's underrepresentation still exists to a certain degree, the difference is much smaller. The results are exposed in the table below.

**Table 13: Presence in commissions related to men – Brazil and Mexico**

	<b>Men (Brazil)</b>	<b>Women (Brazil)</b>	<b>Men (Mexico)</b>	<b>Women (Mexico)</b>
<b>Total</b>	298	25	199	141

Therefore, this analysis' results suggest a higher democratization of traditional gender roles in Mexican commissions than in the Brazilian ones. They also suggest that gender inequalities in the deputies' dispersion and leadership occupation in commissions are much bigger in Brazil, where women are descriptively underrepresented. If Brazilian female deputies are not marginalized in leading only commissions traditionally considered as of their interest, they are concerning the participation in these commissions.

### **Biases of the analysis**

Once the analysis developed is quantitative, it is not possible to tell about differences in the quality of the activity performed by female and male deputies. For example, factors as the substance of the bills proposed, how progressive they are, and how relevant is the deputies' engagement in the support of social liberal ideas and women's and other minorities' interests are not captured by this study. Therefore, the quality of the legislative work identified for the two genders of deputies is biased by the lack of "in-depth" information. For example, bills classified as concerning human rights do not necessarily relate to the protection of human rights.

They might as well represent the exact opposite. This is a qualitative matter which is not captured by this study.

Another bias of the analysis is that because of how the data about the legislative activity is distributed in both countries' Chambers of Deputies websites, the information collected for the two countries was different in some points and collected in different ways. For example, while for Brazil only the first year of the legislative activity was analyzed, Mexico's analyses included all the legislative activity from the beginning of the legislature until September 2020, corresponding to two years of legislative activity. This is a factor that can also bias the results achieved.

Finally, the lack of classification for the bill proposals in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies' website also biases this study. This, because once I had to create my own classifications for the Mexican bill proposals and fit them in the Brazilian classifications, many different areas of the Mexican legislative activity were gathered together. This makes it impossible to infer, through the database used, where the legislative activity was mostly focused on inside these categories, which can give the impression that bills were proposed on topics in which they were not.

## CHAPTER 04: CONCLUSION

Based on Hannah Pitkin's (1967) conceptualization of political representation, this study was directed to analyze the link between women's descriptive and substantive representation in legislatures. Although the scholarship investigating the impacts of women's inclusion in politics and the link between women's descriptive and substantive representation is broad, two factors justified the pertinency of the study: i) the literature is not conclusive, and arguments can be found supporting a positive relationship between women's descriptive and substantive representation, as well as claiming that the relationship is not proved at all or, at least, that it is not obvious; ii) the existing literature investigating the topic in developing countries is still not robust nor systematic.

Therefore, a choice was made to investigate the theme in Latin America, a region that has been prominent in the inclusion of women in Congresses through the last three decades. Although the scholarship studying the implementation of gender quotas' laws in the region is robust, the same cannot be affirmed for the areas which relate to the substantive effects of the implementation of such mechanisms. Few studies are found investigating the effects of women's inclusion in Latin American Congresses and comparing different countries in this matter. For this reason, approximating a "most similar systems" test, this study was directed to analyze the legislative dynamics through a comparison between the cases of Brazil and Mexico.

Although the two countries present similarities in several sociopolitical, economic, and cultural matters, they followed extremely different paths in women's inclusion in politics during the last three decades. Mexico became one of the world's countries with the highest percentages of women in its legislature. Meanwhile, Brazil is considered a case of failure in the inclusion of women in Congress. This unexpected contrast between the countries raised the question of which differences (or similarities) could be found in the dynamics of the legislative activity in their Congresses through a gendered approach.

Two questions were investigated in this study. First, "Is a higher presence of women representatives related to a higher inclusion of women's and other minorities' interests in the legislative agenda?". Second, "Is a higher presence of women representatives related to higher democratization of gender roles in the legislature, in comparison to legislatures with a small number of female representatives?". To investigate these questions, I developed three hypotheses.

I first hypothesized that the higher presence of women in the legislature, the higher would be the insertion of women and other minorities' interests in the legislative agenda. In this matter, after analyzing the bills proposed by the deputies in each of the countries during specific periods of the current legislatures, I found that in Mexico the inclusion of such topics in the legislative agenda was considerably higher than in Brazil.

My second hypothesis was that the percentage of women in the legislature does not affect the political activity concerning the areas which are traditionally related to women and men's interests. This hypothesis was not confirmed by the results found in my analysis. In Mexico, lawmakers' bill proposals were much more dispersed among topics traditionally related to both women and men's interests than in Brazil. Although female deputies legislated more about traditional "women's concerns" than males, the differences in Mexico were not so big. In Brazil, the differences were big. Female deputies legislated about such issues much more than males did. Although, Brazilian female deputies were not found to be "marginalized" in legislating exclusively on topics traditionally stereotyped as of women's interests. My conclusion regarding the bill proposals was that in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, there seems to be a higher "specialization" of the legislative activity of both female and male deputies in areas traditionally considered as their interests, without marginalization.

The conclusion was the same concerning the deputies' dispersion and leaderships among the countries' commissions. Although gender inequalities in the deputies' dispersion

among commissions traditionally related to each gender still exist in Mexico, they were much smaller than the ones found in Brazil. Gendered differences were found huge regarding Brazilian female and male deputies' presence in commissions traditionally related to each gender's interests. The marginalization of female lawmakers in participating in commissions traditionally related to women's interests is confirmed in the country. Also, although in Brazil female deputies were not shown to be marginalized in commissions' leaderships only related to their genders' traditional concerns, the gender inequality gap in the occupation of such positions is huge. In Mexico, this dynamic was shown to be much more equilibrated. Therefore, a higher presence of women in the legislature was found to be related to the democratization of the legislative activity in this matter. A lower presence of women was found to be related to a specialization of the deputies' work in traditional areas, as well as to more inequalities among female and male deputies.

My third hypothesis was that in legislatures that achieved gender equality, because of lawmakers' competition, the productivity of female and male representatives is not very contrasting. In legislatures in which women are the minority, because of social pressure, their legislative performance is better than that observed for men. After an analysis of several indicators of the deputies' performance in the two Chambers of Deputies, my results did not prove this hypothesis right. The differences found among deputies inside each Congress and the comparison of the results between the two Congresses did not suggest considerable differences.

Therefore, this study contributes to the literature investigating the link between the descriptive and substantive representation of women by bringing an innovative comparative analysis between two countries which differ dramatically concerning the number of elected women. It also contributes to the literature about the effects of women's inclusion in politics in

Latin America. Finally, it brings interesting results which can be tested in other regions of the world, especially in developing countries.

Following, I believe that this study's main limitation is its quantitative character, which does not allow for an assessment of the substance of the legislative activity performed by the deputies. For example, once the quantity of the bills proposed about "human rights" by female and male deputies is analyzed, it remains impossible to know whether these bills in fact protected human rights or disrespected them. Therefore, it seems extremely relevant that qualitative studies addressing the link between women's descriptive and substantive representation are developed, especially for Latin America and other developing regions. The second limitation is that the same time-lapse could not be analyzed for the two countries. Once the period of legislative activity analyzed for Mexico is twice as big as the one analyzed for Brazil, it possibly brought biases for the study. The third important limitation of the study is that the same indicators could not be analyzed for the two countries, once the information released in the Chambers of Deputies' websites differs in some regards.

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## APPENDIX

### CHAPTER 03: Analysis (*Additional Tables*)

#### Criterion I: Legislative performance

##### Brazilian Deputies

**Table I:** Speeches – Brazilian deputies

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Female</b>	3144	41.37
<b>Male</b>	2456	32.32
<b>Difference</b>	688	9.05

**Table II:** Roll-call votes – Brazilian deputies

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Female</b>	21314	280.45
<b>Male</b>	22114	290.97
<b>Difference</b>	800	10.46

**Table III:** Bill proposals – Brazilian deputies

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Female</b>	907	11.93
<b>Male</b>	777	10.22
<b>Difference</b>	130	1.71

**Table IV:** Individual bill proposals – Brazilian deputies

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Female</b>	693	9.12
<b>Male</b>	634	8.34
<b>Difference</b>	59	0.78

**Table V:** Presences in plenary – Brazilian deputies

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Female</b>	6826	89.82
<b>Male</b>	7206	94.82
<b>Difference</b>	380	5

**Table VI:** Presences in commission's reunions – Brazilian deputies

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Female</b>	10642	140.03
<b>Male</b>	11060	145.53
<b>Difference</b>	418	5.5

**Table VII:** Absences from plenary – Brazilian deputies

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Female</b>	192	2.53
<b>Male</b>	232	3.05
<b>Difference</b>	40	0.52

**Table VIII:** Absence from commission's reunions – Brazilian deputies

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Female</b>	1990	26.18
<b>Male</b>	2560	33.68
<b>Difference</b>	570	7.5

### **Mexican Deputies**

**Table IX:** Participation in commissions – Mexican deputies

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Female</b>	207	2.72
<b>Male</b>	210	2.76
<b>Difference</b>	03	0.04

**Table X:** Friendship groups – Mexican deputies

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Female</b>	242	3.18
<b>Male</b>	193	2.53
<b>Difference</b>	49	0.65

**Table XI:** Votes – Mexican deputies

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Female</b>	9959	131.03
<b>Male</b>	9759	128.40
<b>Difference</b>	200	2.63

**Table XII:** Bill proposals – Mexican deputies

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Female</b>	4933	64.09
<b>Male</b>	5179	68.14
<b>Difference</b>	246	4.05

**Table XIII:** Individual bill proposals – Mexican deputies

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Female</b>	848	11.15
<b>Male</b>	558	7.34
<b>Difference</b>	290	3.81

**Table XIV:** Presences in plenary– Mexican deputies

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Female</b>	4690	61.71
<b>Male</b>	4803	63.19
<b>Difference</b>	113	1.48

**Table XV:** Unjustified absences from plenary– Mexican deputies

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Female</b>	35	0.46
<b>Male</b>	43	0.56
<b>Difference</b>	8	0.1

## Criterion II: Area of focus of the legislative activity

### Brazilian deputies

**Table XVI:** First bill proposals – Brazilian deputies

Bills' theme	Female		Male	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Education, culture and sports	15	19.74	5	6.58
Politics and public administration	15	19.74	26	34.21
Women's rights	14	18.42	2	2.63
Work, retirement and assistance	7	9.21	10	13.16
Security	6	7.89	5	6.58
Human rights	5	6.58	4	5.26
Health	3	3.95	3	3.95
Children's and youth rights	2	2.63	0	0
Cities and transport	2	2.63	2	2.63
Consumer	2	2.63	1	1.32
Environment and energy	1	1.32	3	3.95
Science, technology and communications	1	1.32	0	0
Agricultural	1	1.32	3	3.95
Economy	1	1.32	3	5.26
0 proposals	1	1.32	6	7.89
Foreign affairs	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table XVII:** Last bill proposals – Brazilian deputies

Bills' theme	Female		Male	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Human rights	13	17.11	3	3.95
Education, culture and sports	11	14.47	8	7.89
Women's rights	9	11.84	0	0
Politics and public administration	8	10.53	18	23.60
Children's and youth rights	7	9.21	0	0
Security	6	7.9	9	11.84
Environment and energy	5	6.58	4	5.26
Work, retirement and assistance	5	6.58	5	6.58
Health	5	6.58	12	15.79
Agricultural	2	2.63	2	2.63
Economy	2	2.63	2	2.63
Foreign affairs	1	1.32	0	0
Cities and transport	1	1.32	6	7.89
0	1	1.32	6	7.89
Consumer	0	0	0	0
Science, technology and communication	0	0	1	1.32
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 3.2.2. Mexican deputies

**Table XVIII:** First bill proposals –Mexican deputies

Bills' theme	Female		Male	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
legislative affairs/ constitutional points/ transparency and anticorruption	43	56.57	39	51.31
national treasury and public credit/ budget and public account	19	25	21	27.63
children's and youth rights	9	11.84	6	7.89
governing and population/ federalism and municipal development	2	2.63	3	3.94
economy, commerce and competitiveness/ livestock	1	1.31	0	0
education/ sports	1	1.31	6	7.89
social development/ social security/ work and social provision	0	0	0	0
environment, sustainability, climate change and natural resources/ hydraulic resources, potable water, sanitation and energy	0	0	0	0
gender equality	0	0	0	0
rural and agricultural development and conservation/ alimentary self-sufficiency	0	0	0	0
Health	0	0	0	0
metropolitan and urban development, territorial ordering and mobility	0	0	0	0
communication and transports/ radio and television	0	0	0	0
foreign relations/ national defense	0	0	0	0
public security/ justice	0	0	1	1.31
attention to vulnerable groups/ indigenous people/ housing/ migratory affairs	0	0	0	0
science, technology and innovation	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Table XIX:** Last bill proposals –Mexican deputies

Bills' theme	Female		Male	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
public security/ justice	17	22.36	10	13.15
social development/ social security/ work and social provision	15	19.73	10	13.15
legislative affairs/ constitutional points/ transparency and anticorruption	13	17.10	17	22.36
national treasury and public credit/ budget and public account	7	9.21	4	5.26
governing and population/ federalism and municipal development	4	5.26	2	2.63
environment, sustainability, climate change and natural resources/ hydraulic resources, potable water, sanitation and energy/ fishing	4	5.26	7	9.21
Health	3	3.94	10	13.15
attention to vulnerable groups/ indigenous people/ housing/ migratory affairs human rights	3	3.94	4	5.26
economy, commerce and competitiveness/ livestock	2	2.63	5	6.57
education/ sports	2	2.63	2	2.63
foreign relations/ national defense/ tourism	1	1.31	0	0
children's and youth rights	1	1.31	1	1.31
science, technology and innovation	1	1.31	0	0
gender equality	0	0	0	0
rural and agricultural development and conservation/ alimentary self-sufficiency	0	0	1	1.31
metropolitan and urban development, territorial ordering and mobility	0	0	1	1.31
communication and transports/ radio and television	0	0	2	2.63
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 3.3. Criterium III: Gendered distribution in Commissions

**Table XX:** Leadership in Commissions – Brazil and Mexico

	Male/ presidencies (total)	Female/ presidencies (total)	Male/ presidencies (selected)	Female/ presidencies (selected)
<b>Brazil</b>	60	15	15	7
<b>Mexico</b>	27	19	8	11