WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN LATIN AMERICAN LEGISLATURES: CURRENT CHALLENGES AND NEW DIRECTIONS

La representación de las mujeres en las legislaturas de América Latina: Desafíos actuales y nuevas direcciones

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Abstract: The growing number of women elected to national legislatures in Latin America has led to significant scholarly attention on the consequences of women's presence in office. In this essay, I offer a brief overview of the literature on women's substantive representation around the world and evaluate research on Latin America, specifically, in the context of six current debates. I suggest several ways that scholars of women's representation in Latin America can address the challenges provided by these debates and move the field in new directions. This will contribute to the growing literature on women's substantive representation, keeps Latin America at the forefront of it, and helps scholars, activists, and politicians better understand how Latin American legislatures are representing women and women's interests.

Keywords: Latin America, substantive representation, women

Resumen: El número creciente de mujeres electas a legislaturas nacionales en América Latina ha concitado la atención académica sobre las consecuencias de la presencia de mujeres en cargos políticos. En este artículo ofrezco un breve panorama de la literatura sobre la representación sustantiva de las mujeres en el mundo y evalúo en particular las investigaciones realizadas sobre América Latina, en el contexto de seis debates actuales. Sugiero varias maneras en que los y las estudiosas de la representación femenina en América Latina pueden enfrentar los desafíos que surgen de estos debates y avanzar en este campo abriendo nuevas líneas de investigación. Esto representará un aporte a la creciente literatura sobre la representación sustantiva, manteniendo a América Latina en un lugar destacado en esa producción, y ayuda a académicos, activistas y políticos/as conocer mejor cómo las legislaturas latinoamericanas están representando a las mujeres y sus intereses.

Palabras clave: América Latina, representación sustantiva, mujeres

1. Introduction

In the past thirty years, the number of women elected to Latin American legislatures has risen dramatically. In 1995, only 12% of Latin American legislatures were female (IPU 1995). Today, the Americas average is nearly 25% (IPU 2013). Five Latin American countries are among the top 20 worldwide –Cuba, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Argentina, and Mexico– and all five have more than 35% of their congresses being female (IPU 2013). Thirteen countries have adopted national

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gender quota laws requiring women's presence on party ballots to be in excess of a certain percentage and this has contributed to the growing number of women elected to Latin American legislatures. Of course, not all countries have experienced such uniform progress. In some countries, such as Colombia, Uruguay, Panama, and Brazil, women have made very few gains and their representation remains lower than the 1995 regional average of 12% (IPU 2013).

The influx of women into many Latin American legislatures has raised a number of important questions: Why has the number of women in office risen so dramatically? In the countries that have not had such change, why has it remained so low? Why does it matter whether women are present in politics? What do women do in office and how/why does that differ from male politicians? Does the presence of women in politics lead to greater government attention to "women's issues?" At their core, these questions are about the causes and consequences of women's representation. With the increasing number of women elected to national legislatures, these research questions have moved front and center in the study of Latin American politics.

An impressive literature has emerged in the past twenty years explaining the number of women elected to Latin American legislatures (i.e., "descriptive representation" of women). Less research, however, has explored the consequences of women's presence in government (for this paper, this refers specifically to "substantive representation" of women). This is not to say that no research has considered these questions. To the contrary, quite a few groundbreaking studies have emerged in recent years lending important insights into precisely this topic. A core body of research on women's substantive representation in Latin America has indeed taken hold. Yet, many questions related to women's substantive representation in Latin America need more attention.

In this essay, I aim to provide some theoretical insights into what we know about women's substantive representation in Latin America, what the current challenges facing scholars of women's representation are, and how the literature in this area can move in new directions. I offer an overview of existing research on women's substantive representation worldwide to tie research on women's substantive representation in Latin America to the broader, non-region specific, literature on women's representation. I then use some of the ideas, discussions, and debates that have emerged in this literature generally to suggest ways in which the literature on women's substantive representation in Latin America can move in new directions.

2. A brief overview of the literature on women's substantive representation

The concept of "substantive representation" emerged from Hanna Pitkin's (1967) seminal book on the concept of representation. In that book, Pitkin explored the multifaceted nature of the concept of representation, identifying four interrelated dimensions –formal representation, which refers to the institutional rules and procedures through which representatives are chosen; descriptive representation, which refers to the compositional similarity between representatives and the represented;

substantive representation, which focuses on the ways in which representatives "act for" the represented; and symbolic representation, which considers the ways in which elected bodies are symbols that generate emotional responses from the represented.

Research on women in political office has appropriated Pitkin's conceptualization of representation and built a comprehensive literature on women's representation that explores all four forms of representation as well as the linkages between the different dimensions (see, for example, Childs 2008; Schwindt-Bayer 2010; Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005). The most explored dimensions have been women's descriptive representation, women's substantive representation, and the way in which increasing women's descriptive representation could increase women's substantive representation. Although empirical evidence has often been mixed (Wängnerud 2009), scholarship has long theorized that electing more women to political office will lead to greater political attention to women's equality and women's interests in representative democracies (Lovenduski 2005; Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1995; Williams 1998; Young 1990).

It was the possible linkages between descriptive and substantive representation that laid the groundwork for early research on women's substantive representation. With comparatively large numbers of women in office in several Scandinavian and Western European countries during the 1970's, scholars began asking questions about what difference women's presence in office makes for politics (Norris 1996; Skard and Haavio-Mannila 1985; Wangnerud 2000a, 2000b). These questions also emerged in the United States during the 1970's and 1980's, alongside the second wave of feminism, as scholars wanted to understand the consequences of the dearth of women in office and perhaps provide empirical leverage for feminist demands for more equal participation between men and women (Diamond 1977; Dodson and Carroll 1991; Leader 1977; Sapiro 1983). Scholarship in the United States reached a high point in 1992 in what became known as the "Year of the Woman," when women fared better than they had ever done in congressional elections (Carroll 2001; Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995; Thomas 1994). Scholarship on substantive representation of women in Latin America got a slower start, but this was largely a result of the fact that most Latin American countries did not transition to democracy until the 1980's (see, however, Chaney 1979; Jaquette 1976; Saldias 1982). Early research on women in politics in Latin America focused much more heavily on the women's movements working under authoritarian regimes or in conditions of civil war (Baldez 2002, 2003; Bayard de Volo 2001; Jaquette 1994). Research on women in elected office really took hold in the late 1990's and 2000's after a group of Latin American countries adopted gender quotas and significantly increased the number of women in office.

At its core, worldwide research on the consequences of women's presence in politics has focused on the different ways in which elected representatives "act for" women.[1] In other words, studies have considered various parts of the policymaking

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1 Women's substantive representation has a variety of conceptualizations in the literature on democratic and representation theory. Representatives can represent women in their electoral districts but a dyadic understanding of representation is not required and may not be the most appropriate way to consider women's representation. Women's substantive representation may be better construed as women representing women collectively (Hurley 1982) or as surrogates (Mansbridge 2003).

process to see what difference having women in office makes on policy. They have most often done this by looking for gender differences in legislator behavior and inferring from this that women make a difference. For example, studies have found that female representatives sponsor bills on compassion issues more often than male representatives, sponsor bills on economics and business issues less often than men, and are more likely to cosponsor bills rather than individually sponsor legislation (Jones 1997; Schwindt-Bayer 2006; Swers 1998; Thomas 1991, 1994; Wangnerud 2000b). Women are more likely to sit on committees such as Education, Health, and Welfare, while men are present across the board (Diamond 1977; Heath, Schwindt-Bayer, and Taylor-Robinson 2005; Johnson and Carroll 1978; Norton 1995; Skard and Haavio-Mannila 1985; Thomas and Welch 1991; Towns 2003). Women have been found to do more constituency service than their male counterparts and have different home styles (Diamond 1977; Norris 1996; Thomas 1992), and female legislators are often less vocal on committees and in hearings where male colleagues dominate (Catalano 2008; Kathlene 1994; Taylor-Robinson and Heath 2003). Lastly, women have been much less likely to hold positions of leadership in legislative chambers and on committees (Rosenthal 2005; Saint-Germain and Metoyer 2008; Skard and Haavio-Mannila 1985). From these findings, scholars have concluded that women make a difference in politics but continue to be undervalued and lack real political power.

3. Current challenges and new directions

Research on women's representation has supplied us with a wealth of information on what women do in office, and more specifically, how they act for women. Yet, this research is not without its criticisms. Scholars have raised a number of concerns about the ways in which we study women's representation and have offered a number of suggestions for improvements. What are the challenges that women's substantive representation research faces? How do these concerns pertain to research on Latin America? What are the paths forward for women's representation scholarship in Latin America? In this section, I review six major challenges to existing research on women's representation, situate research on Latin America into these debates, and offer suggestions for how research on women's substantive representation in Latin America can expand in new directions and remain at the forefront of scholarship in this area.

3.1. Moving from critical mass to critical actors

One of the key discussions in recent research on women's substantive representation has been what to do with the common and quite intuitive argument that having more women in office leads to greater substantive representation of women. As noted previously, the link between descriptive and substantive representation has long been a major part of research on and advocacy for women's representation. Although not necessarily disputing that the two are related, recent research has taken issue with the

rather simplistic operationalization of descriptive representation as having a "critical mass" of women in office (Beckwith and Cowell-Meyers 2007; Childs and Krook 2006). Studying the effects of women as a "critical mass" on women's substantive representation has become quite commonplace in research on women and politics (see, for example, Bratton 2005; Dahlerup 1988; Heath, Schwindt-Bayer, and Taylor-Robinson 2005; Thomas 1991; Thomas 1994; Wangnerud 2000b), but it has proved to be both theoretically and empirically vexing.

Critical mass arguments emerged out of sociological research on the effects of new groups in organizational structures (Kanter 1977) and began to be applied to women's representation research when Drude Dahlerup (1988) brought the idea to women in legislatures (Childs and Krook 2008). At their core, critical mass theories suggest that as the number of women present in legislatures increases, women can form alliances, differentiate themselves from one another, change the male-dominated culture, and in general, effect the legislative process (Childs and Krook 2006; Dahlerup 1988; Kanter 1977). This has been interpreted by gender scholars to imply a myriad of outcomes (Childs and Krook 2006). Some scholars argue that women in legislatures will be unable to promote women's issues in the legislative arena by sponsoring bills in these areas, creating women's issue committees, or getting women's issue bills passed until a critical mass of women exists (Saint-Germain 1989; Thomas 1991, 1994). Other scholars build on Kanter's (1977) assertion that, as an underrepresented group increases its numbers from mere tokens toward parity, divisions between the groups diminish and the dominant culture of the organization merges with the minority culture. They suggest that increasing the number of female legislators will lead to male legislators taking on women's issues because these issues become mainstream and enmeshed with traditional legislative concerns (Bratton 2005; Diamond and Hartsock 1981; Thomas 1991, 1994). Still others suggest that women will be unable to effect legislative change with a critical mass because their presence will be viewed as a threat to male legislators who will marginalize women (Hawkesworth 2003; Heath, Schwindt-Bayer, and Taylor-Robinson 2005). Women also face partisan divides that challenge their ability to work together.

The diverse effects that critical masses of women are expected to have on women's representation contradict each other in ways that make "critical mass theory" a weak theoretical construct that cannot be empirically falsified. Critical mass theory can be supported (or rejected) regardless of what scholars find empirically. Critical mass theory is also hindered by the fact that no one knows just what the critical mass "magic number" is. Kanter (1977) suggested a threshold of 15% women and Dahlerup (1988) evaluated a critical mass of 30%, but Thomas (1991) finds that 31% is not sufficient to bring change to U.S. state legislatures. Towns (2003:23) finds that there is no "magical threshold of 20, 30, or 40% women parliamentarians that will have similar effects in all legislatures around the world." The uncertainty surrounding just what the threshold for a critical mass should be makes empirical analyses of it quite challenging.

The logical contradictions inherent to critical mass arguments about women's representation diminish its theoretical power. Scholars are increasingly recognizing

the limits of this concept and posing a number of ways to move beyond the concept of "critical mass" (Beckwith 2007; Beckwith and Cowell-Meyers 2007; Childs and Krook 2006; Dahlerup 2006; Grey 2006; Tremblay 2006). One of these is to move toward thinking about "critical actors" rather than "critical mass." Childs and Krook (2008, 2009) return to Kanter (1977) and Dahlerup's (1988) original arguments about critical mass and point out that Dahlerup in particular was actually making an argument for considering what individuals do to promote women's issues as a precursor to having a certain threshold of women in office. They argue that scholars need to return to Dahlerup's idea about "critical acts" when studying women's representation. Specifically, they suggest greater scholarly attention to "critical actors" —"male or female—, these legislators can be identified as those who initiate policy proposals on their own and often —but not necessarily— embolden others to take steps to promote policies for women, regardless of the number of female representatives in a particular institution" (734). They and several other European scholars promote this idea in a series of follow-up articles and symposiums in *Representation* and *Parliamentary Affairs* that are accompanied by theoretical and empirical research paying greater attention to critical actors (Celis and Childs 2008; Celis et al. 2008).

Research on women's representation in Latin America too needs to move beyond thinking about "critical mass" when linking descriptive to substantive representation. One way to do this is to follow Childs and Krook's ideas about considering "critical acts" and "critical actors." What would this look like empirically? I argue that it means studying both women and men and moving beyond viewing men merely as a comparison category to considering them as potential principal actors in women's representation (Krook and Schwindt-Bayer 2013). Thinking about the passage of some major pieces of women's rights legislation in Latin American countries, both women and men come to mind. Senator Elisa Carrió in Colombia and president Michelle Bachelet in Chile are women who are "critical actors" in pursuing women's rights policies. However, the adoption of gender quotas in Argentina may not have occurred without the late hour call by then-president Carlos Menem for the PJ delegation in the Chamber of Deputies to vote in favor of the quota bill (Krook 2009). The Law for Real Equality for Women in Costa Rica may not have come to fruition without the efforts of Oscar Arias in his first term as president of Costa Rica in 1986-1990 (Saint-Germain and Morgan 1991). Thus, moving beyond simply the number of women in office to considering who the critical actors may be, male or female, may produce greater progress in linking women's descriptive representation to women's substantive representation in Latin America.

Empirically, this can be challenging. On one hand, it suggests more case study and qualitative research to determine the "critical actors" for the passage of certain bills or for promoting women inside the legislature. This could be individual legislators, parties or party factions, or the *bancadas femeninas* that have emerged in many legislatures in recent years to bring female legislators together across party lines to focus on women's issues. On the other hand, it augurs for more detailed data collection in large-scale, quantitative studies. It is insufficient to simply code legislators as male or female. To start to understand "critical actors," it is necessary

to think about the characteristics besides sex that makes legislators "critical actors" for women's rights. One characteristic is whether a legislator is feminist or has a gender consciousness (Tremblay and Pelletier 2000; Young 2000). This is hard to quantify in a large dataset but new data collection efforts could and should work toward developing measures of this or beginning to survey legislators and ask them a battery of questions that would allow the researcher to discern the extent to which they have a gender consciousness. The concepts of feminism and gender consciousness typically associate with liberal thinking or leftist parties, but as recent research suggests, conservative women can make claim to be representing women and the extent to which this occurs also needs attention (Celis and Childs 2012; Childs and Webb 2011). Another possible measure could be assessing legislators' ties to women's groups or participation in political party activities on behalf of women. Still another might derive from the committee assignments and leadership posts that legislators hold that may put them in a position to better represent women.

3.2. Is it sex, gender, or both?

Since at least as early as the 1970's, scholars have noted the differences in the concepts of sex and gender and the importance of one, the other, or both in research on women and politics. Sex, of course, refers to the biological characteristics of men and women, whereas gender refers to the ways in which men's and women's characteristics have been socially constructed. In her 1998 *Annual Review of Political Science* article, Joni Lovenduski examined how literature on women in politics to date had used the concepts of sex and gender and argued for empirical scholars of women's representation to bring more gender analysis to the subject without losing the focus on sex (Lovenduski 1998). In other words, she argued for research that incorporates both sex and gender. Other scholars have made similar arguments over the past fifteen years continuing to highlight the need for women's representation research to not just focus on women but to consider women *and men* in a relational way (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995; Krook and Schwindt-Bayer 2013; Tamerius 1995).

Much empirical research still favors the concept of sex over the concept of gender. Early research on women and politics in Latin America sought to bring attention to women's representation by studying just women (Chaney 1979; Rivera-Cira 1993). More recent research has also tended to study women in the omission of men (Marx, Borner, and Caminotti 2007; Saint-Germain and Metoyer 2008). Other research has explicitly compared women to men in an effort to better understand women's representation but even these studies still focus more on sex than on gender (Jones 1997; Schwindt-Bayer 2006; Taylor-Robinson and Heath 2003). Future research on women's representation in Latin America needs to continue with analyzes based on sex but move further with gender analyses as well.

A gendered analysis would situate women's representation in the context of the gendered institutions in which male and female legislators operate and consider the ways in which these institutions have adopted and reinforce masculine privilege (see section 3.6 below), how sex differences are shaped by and further contribute to

masculine dominance, and how gender shapes the very issues and questions that scholars are analyzing (Beckwith 2005; Chappell 2006; Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995; Lovenduski 1998, 2005). Empirical research needs to pay attention to the ways in which male political actors perceive of women and women's interests and how and why they, as gatekeepers, may hinder women's access to positions of political power in the legislature.[2] Recent work using experimental methodologies could lend significant insight to how male politicians' view and behave toward their female colleagues, why their actions might vary across institutional contexts, and ultimately, how this affects women's political representation. These considerations are particularly important in the context of Latin America where cultural stereotypes continue to portray a *machista* society.

3.3. The importance of intersectionality

Early research on women's representation frequently fell victim to the criticism that women are not a homogenous group with a common set of political interests. This argument was particularly strong among those studying women in politics in the developing world where native scholars felt that western feminists were imposing inappropriate visions of women and feminism. One response to these criticisms was to stress the fact that women are a heterogeneous group and to encourage scholars to consider the ways in which women's varied identities and their corresponding unequal social structures intersect. Arguments about "intersectionality" have become critical to the study of women's representation (Weldon 2006). Using a lens of intersectionality means that all research on women's representation needs to at least consider, if not analyze outright, the diversity of women and the effect that women's distinct identities and the structural inequalities associated with them have on women's substantive representation.

Research on intersectionality in women's representation began with key theoretical insights about the diverse identities of women and how they factor into research (Hancock 2007; Hawkesworth 2003; Mansbridge 1999; Weldon 2006). Today, nearly all studies at least mention the importance of women's intersecting identities even if every one of them does not explicitly analyze it. The topic was critical to the recent set of review essays on participation and representation in *The Oxford Handbook on Gender and Politics* (Part V) not to mention getting its own chapter in the "Concepts and Methods" section (Collins and Chepp 2013; Waylen et al. 2013). Empirical scholarship also has begun to find ways to take intersectionality into account. This has been particularly important in gender quota research that has begun to look beyond quotas for women to quotas for underrepresented ethnic minorities (Htun 2004; Krook and O'Brien 2010). Melanie Hughes (2011), for example, drew upon theories of intersectionality to analyze the interaction between gender and minority quotas to determine their differential effects on the election of majority and minority women to legislatures.

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2 Gatekeeping roles include serving as party or chamber leaders inside the legislature, controlling the legislative agenda, and serving in committee leadership.

Research on intersectionality is critical to the study of women's representation in Latin America. Part of the reason for this comes precisely from the concerns of feminists in the region that women in Latin America are different from women in the west. We cannot assume that women throughout the world are the same or have the same set of interests or will do women's representation in the same way. Paying attention to the ways in which women's identities intersect means considering at a bare minimum the regional differences among women. But, more than this, research on intersectionality brings to light that the racial, ethnic, social, and class cleavages among women within Latin America, particularly between the wealthier women of Iberian descent and those of Afro and indigenous descent who are more often much poorer, play a critical role in our understanding of women's representation in the region. Yet, intersectionality has not been at the top of the agenda for scholars of women and politics in the region (see, however, Htun and Ossa 2013; Rousseau 2011).

We need more research that considers the ways in which Afro, indigenous, lower, middle, and upper class women and their interests are being represented. This could come in the form of qualitative case studies that work to identify the cleavage structures at work in Latin America, how they are formed, and theorize about their consequences for women's representation. At the same time, large-n quantitative research needs to conceptualize ways to measure the nuanced nature of intersectionality. This again means not just collecting data on who is female and who is male but collecting data on what the ethnic, racial, class, and even age identities of legislators are. It means explicitly considering the ways in which these identities interact with one another to produce various outcomes related to women's representation. Hughes' (2011) article is an excellent example of just this.

3.4. Conceptualizing women's interests

Another debate that has long characterized research on women's representation and has been very important in the context of Latin America is about common conceptualizations of "women's interests." Do women have a unique set of interests that are waiting to be represented? What are the problems with thinking of women's interests in this way? What are the solutions to the challenges presented by the concept of "women's interests?"

Scholars have long-debated the notion of "women's interests" or "women's issues." Some scholars have a normative concern that classifying women as a group with identifiable interests that are waiting to be represented is essentialist and elitist (Mansbridge 1999, 2005; Weldon 2002; Young 2000). Assuming that women have a common interest means that "members of certain groups have an essential identity that all members of that group share and of which no others can partake" (Mansbridge 1999:637). This is problematic because it reinforces the idea that women are inherently different from men, that women are a homogeneous group who can be classified together as an interest group, and that their issues are less important than men's. Critics point out that women's differences from men are not innate but socially constructed, that

women's issues are as important as men's, and that, as mentioned previously, women have an array of identities, such as those emerging from race, ethnicity, class, religion, or ideology, that may intersect with their gender identity (Weldon 2006). These critics worry that creating a dichotomy of "women's issues" and "men's issues" reinforces subordination of women and women's issues (Peterson and Runyan 1999). To avoid falling into the trap of essentialism, some scholars have suggested defining women's interests as issues that emerge from women's long-standing status as subordinate to men and the problems that this subordination has produced rather than as emerging from sex differences between women and men (Mansbridge 2005). "Women's interests," then, involve concerns that derive from the long history of gender inequality in society.

Another concern with the notion of "women's issues" is more empirical. Some scholars argue that it is inappropriate to classify issues as "women's issues" or "men's issues" *a priori*. Instead, it is better to let interview subjects define women's issues or for the researcher to determine them inductively from the political context under study (Celis et al. 2008; Mackay 2008; Zetterberg 2008). These scholars emphasize that women's issues in one country, at one point in time, and as defined by one woman may not be the same as in another country, at another point in time, or as defined by another woman.

The longstanding debate over women's interests/issues has still not been solved, despite some exciting new research on this (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2014). Research on women's substantive representation in Latin America needs to think carefully about how it constructs its classifications of "women's interests" and "women's issues" and be clear about how it handles the myriad criticisms that plague the concepts. I suggest here that scholars of women's representation in Latin America can take some specific steps to address concerns about the concept of "women's interests" and move research on substantive representation forward. First, scholars of women's representation must be very clear in each and every piece of writing just how we are defining the concept of "women's interests." We need to acknowledge the drawbacks of talking about "women's interests" as a homogenous whole and take responsibility for the limits of our research in the context of such a general concept.

Second, we would be well suited to spend time determining just what "women's interests" are in the context that we are studying. We need to recognize that women's interests vary across space and time and expend due effort determining what women's interests are in every space and time we are analyzing. This might mean looking at the kinds of issues that women's groups and movements in a particular country are emphasizing, examining public opinion on a broad set of issues we might consider to be women's interests to determine what women in society are really prioritizing, or looking at international organizations operating in the country and the kinds of issues on their gender agenda. Ideally, we could find issues that are generalizable across space and time and be able to draw broad generalizations in some cases. But we cannot assume the generalizability of women's interests, and where we find they are not consistent, we need to study them separately and analyze the distinct findings we may uncover (Escobar-Lemmon, Schwindt-Bayer, and Taylor-Robinson 2014).

Third, and building from this last point, research in Latin America would benefit from disaggregating the umbrella concept of "women's interests" (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2014; Htun and Weldon 2010). It would be useful to study the specific issues that might be part of this. Recent work by Htun and Weldon (2012), for example, breaks ground in this way by identifying domestic violence legislation as a key women's issue and studying the factors that have facilitated the passage of legislation in this very specific area. Mala Htun's (2003) book on abortion, divorce, and family law in Latin America took a similar approach, and recent work on maternity and paternity leave policy worldwide by Miki Kittilson (2008) serves as a nice example. One benefit for research on Latin America of focusing on specific women's issues rather than the more amorphous and oft-criticized idea of "women's interests" is to highlight differences between women's representation on issues of importance to different groups in Latin America –e.g., wealthy women of European descent as compared to poor, indigenous women.

Thus, empirical research on women's representation benefits from defining "women's interests" a priori because it provides a frame of reference for determining whether representation of women is taking place. If women's interests are defined as women's rights policies, for example, then research can look for whether those policies are getting passed. Yet, it does not have to try to create one conceptualization of women's interests that transcends all political environments nor should it be ignorant of the challenges facing the concept of "women's interests." Thinking carefully about what women's interests are in the context of Latin America and how we can best study the way those interests are getting represented is critical for moving research on women's substantive representation in the region forward.

3.5. It's not just about policy

Research on women's substantive representation has often focused on policy –particularly laws that have been passed and the policy priorities of legislators. In Latin America, important attention has been devoted to the women's issue policies that governments have produced (del Campo and Magdaleno 2008; Franceschet 2010a; Friedman 2009; Haas 2010; Rodríguez Gustá and Caminotti 2010; Stevenson 1999). This is not surprising; after all, substantive representation is about "acting in the interests of the represented in a manner responsive to them" (Pitkin 1967:209). Yet, substantive representation is much broader than just "policy responsiveness." Substantive representation takes place across a wide array of activities, even just within the legislative arena. As Pitkin herself points out, "there is still room for a whole range of positions concerning the representative's role and his relationship to his constituents" (Pitkin 1969:20). Scholars of political representation have identified a wide array of ways in which representatives represent their constituents, beyond *policy responsiveness*. Eulau and Karps (1977), for example, identify three other ways in which representatives can respond to constituents: *service responsiveness*, which refers to the provision of particularized benefits to individuals or groups; allocation *responsiveness*, which refers to the generation of pork barrel benefits for the

constituency; and *symbolic responsiveness*, which refers to intangible gestures made in response to constituent concerns. Other scholars focus on "home style," which refers to how representatives act in their districts rather than in the capitol (Fenno 1978), and the "personal vote," which focuses on how legislators act to secure constituent rather than party support (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987), as forms of substantive representation.[3] Thus, I argue here that scholars need to continue studying legislative policy outcomes but also need to consider women's representation across various parts of the policymaking process[4] –bill sponsorship, committee membership, legislative debates, voting– as well as outside the legislature arena –in political parties and "in the district."

Scholars studying women's representation in Latin America have examined some of these alternative conceptualizations of women's representation. Studies of bill sponsorship have been popular in research on women's substantive representation in Latin America. For example, Schwindt-Bayer (2006) compares legislators' attitudes and bill sponsorship behavior on women's issues to determine what types of issues women in office are more likely to attend to. Zambrano (1998) studied which legislators sponsored women's issue bills in Colombia, and Jones (1997) compared gender differences in bill sponsorship patterns in Argentina and the United States. Barnes (2012) examined legislators' cosponsorship of women's issue legislation in Argentine subnational elections. Taylor-Robinson and Heath (2003) examine bill sponsorship and speech making in the Honduran legislatures to show that differences between men's and women's representation is most distinct on women's issues.

Other studies have considered another part of the policymaking process where women's representation takes place –committees. Research on committee memberships in Latin American legislatures finds that women are more frequently members of women's issue committees and often fail to gain access to more powerful committees, which significantly minimizes their political power as representatives (Heath, Schwindt-Bayer, and Taylor-Robinson 2005; Marx, Borner, and Caminotti 2007; Rivera-Cira 1993; Saint-Germain and Metoyer 2008; Schwindt-Bayer 2010; Zetterberg 2008).

Less research has moved beyond these two key arenas of the policymaking process, considered women's representation within legislative party factions, or looked at how representation takes place among women's groups or the electorate, more broadly. Piscopo (2011) explores speech making in Argentina to examine how women frame women's issues in a political system with quotas. Rodríguez (2003) emphasizes the importance of alliance-building among women in office for furthering a feminist policy agenda, and Marx et al. (2007) highlight the role of Brazil's *bancada feminina* in overcoming the challenges produced by women's otherwise small numbers. Key research on women's representation within legislative political parties includes Marx's (1992) work on Argentina and Macaulay's (2006) work on Brazilian and Chilean parties. And, Schwindt-Bayer (2010) examines how and why male and

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3 In some contexts, Honduras for example, this may even take the form of clientelism.
4 See Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) for an excellent discussion of the distinction between process and outcome in women's representation.

female legislators represent constituents, particularly women, when working in their districts, focusing on questions such as how frequently representatives travel to their districts, how often they attend public events in their districts, the amount of time they spend on constituency service, and the kinds of casework they do on behalf of their constituents. Research that continues to move in the direction of looking beyond policy responsiveness and considering other ways and places in which substantive representation takes place is critical for future research.

3.6. Taking institutional context into account

Research on women's substantive representation has long considered the ways in which legislators "act for" women inside the larger legislative organization. It has often failed, however, to take into consideration the ways in which the varying institutional contexts in which legislators must "act for" women can actually influence the very process of substantive representation of women. As Celis et al. (2008:105) point out "institutional contexts are not stable configurations, but dynamic systems [...and] these contextual elements do not simply form the backdrop for SRW [substantive representation of women], but also actively shape what kinds of strategies actors may employ in their efforts to promote women." Recent studies have drawn attention to the fact that women's representation does not take place in an institutional vacuum but both shapes and is shaped by that context. Institutions themselves are gendered. Specifically, political institutions were created by men, produce masculine environments, and reinforce the dominance of masculine ideas and norms. A growing body of research on the ways in which institutions reinforce women's marginalized status is emerging (Acker 1992; Beckwith 2005; Chappell 2006, 2010; Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995; Hawkesworth 2003, 2005; Krook and Mackay 2011; Mackay, Kenny, and Chappell 2010).

Recent research on Latin America emphasizes this, as well (Franceschet 2011). One set of studies, for example, argues that electoral rules that promote personal vote seeking over party-centered political behavior may strengthen the impact of women (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Schwindt-Bayer 2010; Zetterberg 2008). Schwindt-Bayer (2010), for example, argued that more party-centered electoral systems produce greater marginalization of women and thus greater divergence between men and women in their access to committees and leadership, which could hurt their efforts to promote women's substantive representation. Barnes (2012) argues that electoral systems that promote personal vote seeking provide female candidates with the opportunity to use women's issues as a way to distinguish themselves from male politicians. She examines subnational congresses in Argentina and finds that increases in women's numerical representation in office leads women to work together more often under electoral rules that encourage personal vote seeking rather than those that encourage more party-centered behavior.

Other work in Latin America has considered the way in which gender quotas have reshaped the ways in which legislators represent women's issues (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Martínez and Garrido 2013; Zetterberg 2008). Zetterberg (2008), for

example, finds that despite concerns that gender quotas will produce "token" women in office, that has not been the case in Mexico. A particularly creative approach to considering institutional context was taking by Franceschet (2010b) where she framed the rules, norms, and legislative activities common to legislative politics as rituals and explored how the symbolic dimensions of formal rules and informal norms in the legislative arena (e.g., committee memberships, speaking styles, holding late night meetings) can exclude women. Research, such as this, that explicitly considers the mediating role that political institutions play in the process of women's substantive representation is much needed in Latin America and will help to keep research on women's representation in Latin America at the forefront of the field.

4. Conclusion

In this essay, I offered a brief overview of the development of the literature on women's substantive representation around the world and evaluated research on Latin America in the context of six key debates on women's substantive representation. These debates raise important issues for scholars of women's substantive representation to contend with. Yet, I also offer some suggestions of ways that researchers studying women's representation in Latin America can address the challenges raised by the debates and help to move the field in new directions. This not only will help to build a strong body of literature on women's substantive representation in Latin America and keep Latin America at the forefront of it, but it will help scholars, activists, and politicians build a better understanding of how Latin American legislatures are representing women and women's interests. The essays included in this symposium already tackle some of the challenges posed here and work to move scholarship on women in Latin America in new directions.

In the past twenty years, scholarship on women's representation in Latin America has built a solid body of research on how women get elected, and to a lesser extent, what the consequences of women's election to office are. These are key questions for Latin American politics as the number of women elected to legislatures in many countries has risen dramatically alongside the widespread adoption of gender quotas. Yet, as this essay shows, there is still much work to be done, and there are still numerous dimensions of women's substantive representation that need to be explored. This symposium of papers takes a step in the right direction for doing just this. Many more steps remain to be taken, however, to help us fully understand the nature of women's representation in Latin America.

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The number of women elected to Latin American legislatures has grown significantly over the past thirty years. This increase in the number of women elected to national office is due, in large part, to gender-friendly electoral rules such as gender quotas and proportional electoral systems, and it has, in turn, fostered constituent support for representative democracy. Stil The number of women elected to Latin American legislatures has grown significantly over the past thirty years. Â Ultimately, this book communicates the complex and often incomplete nature of women's political representation in Latin America. ...more. Get A Copy. Amazon. The influx of women into many Latin American legislatures has raised a number of important questions: Why has the number of women in office risen so dramatically? In the countries that have not had such change, why has it remained so low? Why does it matter whether women are present in politics? Â 3. Current challenges and new directions. Research on women's representation has supplied us with a wealth of information on what women do in office, and more specifically, how they act for women. Yet, this research is not without its criticisms. Scholars have raised a number of concerns about the ways in which we study women's representation and have offered a number of suggestions for improvements.