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Can Cities Be Feminist? A Cross-National Analysis of Factors Affecting Local Female Representation in Latin America

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CAN CITIES BE FEMINIST? A CROSS-NATIONAL ANALYSIS OF FACTORS
AFFECTING LOCAL FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN LATIN AMERICA

by
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ABSTRACT

Women are underrepresented in mayor's offices and on city councils across Latin America. In this paper, I examine gender-based differences in individual opinions toward running for office in Argentina and Uruguay, as well as conduct a twenty-six country analysis on factors related to female representation in municipal government. Based on these analyses, I make three main conclusions about female local representation in Latin America. The first conclusion is that women in Latin America are significantly less likely to want to run or feel qualified to run for office. The second conclusion is that cross-national variation in the percentage of female mayors is influenced by structural factors, specifically unmet need for family planning, and cultural factors, specifically voter attitudes surrounding women's leadership abilities and left/right leanings of the electorate. The third conclusion is that cross-national variation in female city council members is strongly influenced by institutional forces that may generate an environment that is more amenable to running for local office.My overall conclusions are that closing the ambition gap between men and women through personal encouragement and women's recruitment to political parties would improve the descriptive representation gap for mayors, and that prospective female city council members would benefit from local quota laws.

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INTRODUCTION

Women are underrepresented in governments all over the globe. In democracies, this is particularly concerning in light of the widespread institutionalized enfranchisement of women.[1] Disproportionately low female representation has important consequences for democracy. Democratic rule relies on the active participation of its citizens, and when any citizen group is oppressed or disenfranchised, the society as a whole loses that group's contribution.

In terms of representation, women's low descriptive representation may result in proportionately low substantive representation. The concept of description representation, as developed by H.F. Pitkin, is premised on the idea that elected officials are better able to represent their constituents if they share important aspects of identity and experience. In this approach to thinking about representation, the focus is on whether representatives come from similar backgrounds (Pitkin 1972). To the degree that elected officials tend to mirror the background of their constituents, the theory of descriptive representation suggests a greater understanding of constituent needs, and thus enhanced representation. Descriptive representation is popularly used in the literature around representation and has been shown to positively affect substantive representation for women and other historically oppressed groups (Mendelberg, Karpowitz, Goedert 2013; Lowande, Ritchie,

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[1] While many indigenous nations allowed women to participate in governing affairs, it is relatively recent elsewhere. New Zealand became the first internationally recognized self-governing democracy to allow women to vote with restrictions in 1893, and Switzerland was the last European democracy to grant women suffrage in 1971 (Williams, Gosteli, Bozon 2016).

Lauterbach 2019; Sobolewska, Mckee, Campbell 2018). Substantive representation is when the elected, through policy, agenda, or party, further the interests of the electorate. If more women are elected, they have a greater likelihood of creating policies that benefit women, potentially creating cracks in a male-controled public sphere (Hassim 2006). If more women of color, women who have immigrated, women who have disabilities, women of marginalized classes or religions, and women that are a part of the LGBTQ+ community are elected, they are more likely to ensure that these cracks extend through systems of oppression across a country. This paper focuses solely on descriptive representation, but is important due to the established connection between descriptive and substantive representation.

In this paper, I hope to shed more light on descriptive representation as it pertains to female leadership at the local level in Latin America. My approach is to examine factors that may impact the prevalence of local female representation in elected office in two ways. First, using survey data from America's Barometer Survey, executed by the Latin America's Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), I examine individual-level factors related to the willingness and decision to run for office, to test whether these systematically impact women more than men.[2] The degree that women may be differentially (and more negatively) affected in ways that keep them from taking the first step toward elected office -- the decision to actually run for election -- will have a limiting effect on female elected leadership.

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[2] My specific focus for these analyses is on Argentina and Uruguay. These are the only two countries that included survey questions related to the decision to run for office in the America's Barometer Survey.

In addition, I undertake a cross-national examination of 26 Latin American countries in an attempt to offer insights into why some countries have more female elected officials than others. My focus is on the local level (mayor and city councilor), and I examine the potential impact of institutional, cultural, and structural forces as explanations for this variation in female representation. Taken together, I hope these analyses will lend additional insight into two fundamental aspects of female descriptive representation in Latin America: the decisions of women whether or not to run for office, and the prevalence of women holding local elected office in Latin America.

Female local representation in Latin America is currently far from equitable. The average female representation among mayors is 15.5% and the average among city council members is 29.6%. National representation is slightly better with the average representation in parliaments and federal legislatures at 31.2% and the average among executive cabinet members is 28%. Figure 1 and Figure 2 illustrate the percentages of female representation for mayor and city council in Latin America broken down by country (Source: Gender Equality Observatory 2018).

Figure 1: Percentages of Mayors- Female
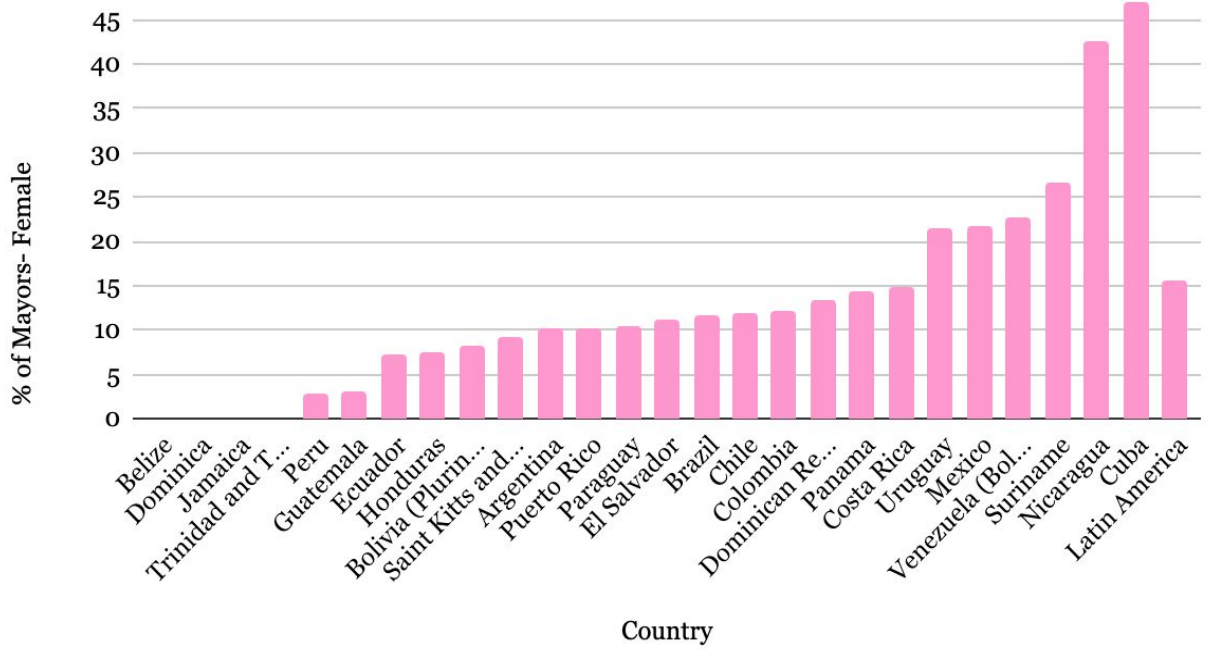
Figure 2: Percentages of City Councilors- Female
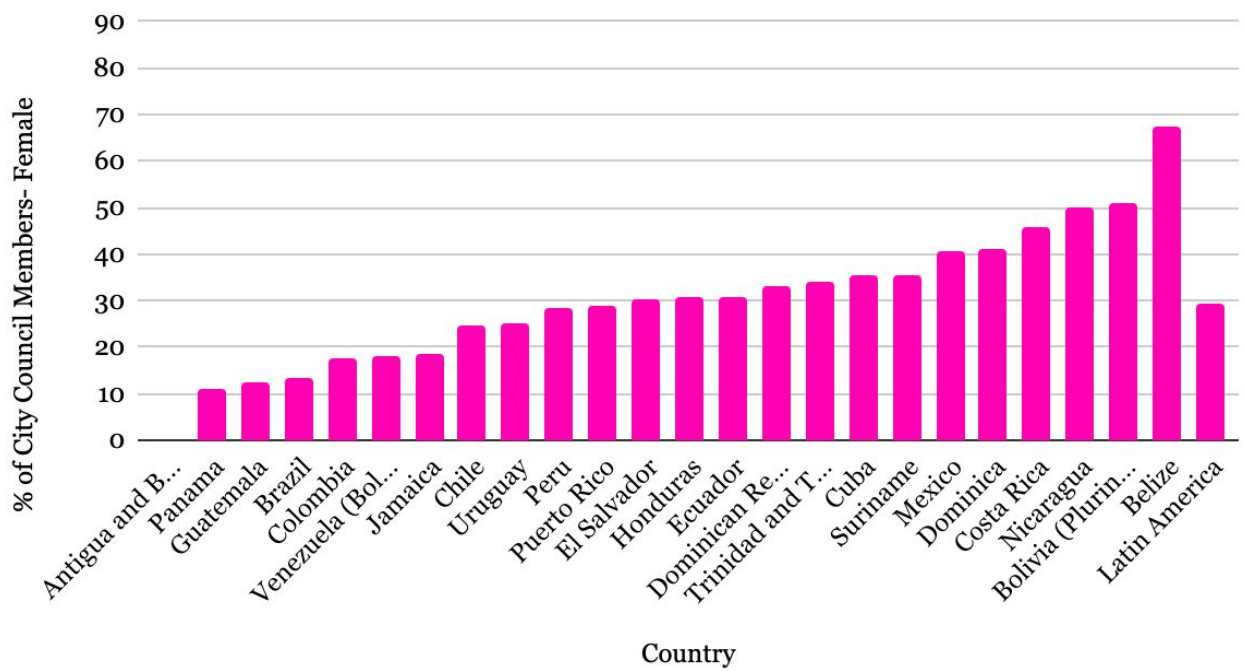
Political theorist Benjamin Barber proposed that "cities, in today's globalizing world, have become democracy's best hope" and asserted that mayors might be poised to hold a great amount of power as people flock to their cities (Barber 2014). Ensuring that women have a more proportional share of that power than they currently hold is a worthy endeavor. Additionally, holding a position in local government can also be a good first step for women to higher positions, as local races often have lower barriers to entry across the board (Valelly, Mettler, Lieberman 2016). The local level of government is also the closest to the citizens, giving unique opportunities to women in local leadership capacities opportunities to cater to special needs of their community.

Studying local electoral representation cross-nationally does not come without its challenges. Due to the variety of organizational structures and lack of centralized data collection, it is hard to study local representation on a basis across nations. The sheer number of local positions in a country make it hard to collect data on each municipality, and titles and responsibilities of positions of power can vary greatly across systems of representation.

While research on the gap in local leadership is sparse, there is a robust body of literature on factors affecting females and minorities representation on the national and cross national level. Current scholars that attempt to explain female representation, while centering their research mainly around national parliaments, use theories that can apply to gender disparities on all levels or theories that apply to representation across all historically underrepresented groups. In this thesis, I intend to help close the gap in our understanding by applying these commonly used theories to examinations of local elected

offices in Latin America. My research indicates that women start with an 'ambition gap' disadvantage and are less likely than their male counterparts to be willing to run. I also discover that female mayors are less likely to be elected in countries that possess structural and cultural barriers, but are more likely to be elected by left-leaning populaces. Female city council members are less likely to be affected by cultural or structural barriers, but more likely to be elected in countries with high female representation in higher levels of government.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Why Latin America?

Latin America is a particularly interesting area to study representation of women on the municipal level. All of the countries included in the region are marked in some way by Spanish, British, French or Portuguese colonialism. They all have a relatively similar history of women's suffrage, starting with Ecuador in 1929 and ending with Paraguay in 1961, with the majority of countries granting suffrage from 1940-1950 (Strong-Boag 2016). Quota systems are extremely popular, and are usually only applied at the parliamentary level. Studies, written in both English and Spanish, on the trends surrounding female representation in Latin America tend to focus on this federal level of politics. Aside from parliamentary studies, there is also a wide variety of studies about South America's substantial record of female presidents.

A trend that has been popularly observed throughout the region is that females are conforming to the male-defined pathways of running for office in the past couple decades. From the 1960s-1980s, women were much more scarce in national politics in the region than they are today. In an analysis of the national parliaments of Argentina, Colombia, and Costa Rica, researcher Leslie Schwindt-Bayer observed that those candidates who did run for top executive positions and and won "tended to be older, married with children, and university educated; to have occupational experience as

teachers, secretaries, or social workers; to have family ties to politics and have little political ambition." A campaign style among these candidates, and leaders of women's movements around the region, was to emphasize these women's differences from men as justification for feminism (Schwindt-Bayer 2011). Not only were candidates poised to change the way that power systems in their countries looked, they were set to 'feminize' the space. They broadcasted that a high aptitude in familial affairs, social service backgrounds, and even low political ambition that is traditionally attributed to women in post-colonial Latin America can all be assets to being a good policy maker.

In the 1990s, women began to follow traditionally male-defined paths instead. Today, instead of campaigning as 'different' from men, Latin American women present themselves as 'equal' to men. They may be more likely to emphasize that political experience in the traditional sense makes them qualified for political office. In doing so, female politicians in Argentina, Colombia, and Costa Rica are actually growing to have similar qualities and hold similar positions as their male counterparts. Schwindt-Bayer's work has shown that both male and female candidates are often middle aged, married with children, and college-educated. Up to the most recent studies in 2011, a new crop of female political candidates has been following the traditional career paths of law, business, and the public sector, have prior political experience, and aspirations for reelection and/or higher political office similar to their male counterparts (Schwindt-Bayer 2011). This does not mean that differences between men and women in these countries are almost gone, but it does fundamentally change how we look at who is running for office in these countries and how to get more women on the path to do so.

More evidence has been uncovered by studies surrounding Latin American federal politics. Htun and Piscopo (2014) noted that educational attainment levels between genders within a country don't seem to affect the number of women in the national legislature. Their study also indicates that women's participation in the labor force is positively correlated with lower houses, and very weakly correlated with upper houses. The researchers credit the weakness in correlation to the types of jobs in which women are employed, and their lower representation in management. For example the Anglophone Caribbean (Bahamas, Barbados, St. Lucia, etc.) has the highest rates of female employment, but those jobs are most likely to be in the tourism industry. Essentially, female dominated fields don't often translate to the opportunity to achieve political power.

Htun and Piscopo also have found trends across Latin America that male voters carry more of a discriminatory bias against female political leaders than female voters do. Disparities emerged in Argentina, Colombia, Paraguay, and Venezuela. The largest gap was in Argentina, where 57 percent of Argentine males disagreed that men are better suited for political leadership, compared to 75 percent of Argentine females (Htun, Piscopo 2014). This is an interesting caveat to consider when thinking about overall attitudinal discrimination against women in politics.

Trends in political ideology popularity and right/left self-identification are shifting in Latin America as well, and this can have repercussions for the number of women elected by ideology. In Latin America, the political spectrum is defined as left to right. The Pink Tide was a political phenomenon of Latin American governments turning

to the left of this spectrum in the early 1990s up to 2010, away from neoliberal economic policies (Encarnación 2018). This wave ushered in four female leftist heads of state to some of the largest economies in Latin America: Michelle Bachelet of Chile from 2006-2010 and again in 2014-2018, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of Argentina from 2007- 2015, Laura Chinchilla of Costa Rica from 2010-2014, and Dilma Rouseff of Brazil from 2011-2016. In the past decade, the right-wing of the spectrum has been on the rise. Starting in the early 2010s and reserging in 2018 and 2019, there was widespread backlash across the region to the Pink Tide. The Argentine executive office was captured by the conservatives in 2015, Brazil in 2016, and Chile in 2017. This is the first period since the 1980s, when much of South America was governed by military dictatorship, that South America's three leading economies are led by right-leaning governments (Encarnación 2018). All of the progressive women were replaced by more conservative men. Bachelet and Kirchner were limited by term limits, Chinchilla was replaced, and Rouseff was impeached, leaving no female heads of state in Latin America (Piscopo 2018).

Researchers Morgan and Buice have found that leftward shifts in Latin American and Caribbean democracies are often connected to "support for democracy and its ideals" and support for female leadership overall. They offer that individually high prioritization of egalitarianism trickles down to gender egalitarianism. Pro-democracy attitudes may also advance other female-positive societal changes, such as tolerance and acceptance of consciousness-raising socialization (Morgan, Buice 2013). These attitudes may also support the idea that descriptive and substantive representation probably have a

connection recognizable to the citizenry. Ondercin and Welch comment on the pivot from the Pink Tide. They theorize that the backlash to the leftist, pro-democratic Pink Tave may be partially motivated by male backlash to female economic advancement. The leftist, pro-democratic ideals help female political socialization, but do not often change the overall society in the short term. Both descriptive and substantive representation often take much longer to produce deep society-wide results. In the meantime, "where women are becoming more likely to hold professional positions, male support for female equality is currently low." This predicts that the fight for equitable female representation in Latin America may be a series of peaks and valleys throughout the next century, rather than a consistent trend or an overnight fix (Morgan, Buice 2013).

Women's National and Local Representation

The decision to run for any office is extremely personal and may require an individual to make familial, physical, and financial sacrifices. No one can make the decision for the candidate, but researchers have theorized which factors are most important leading up to a candidate's decision. There are several steps that can serve as barriers that contribute to low female or minority representation. First, candidates may not have the desire to run for office. They may not believe that they are qualified, physically or financially able to run a campaign, or even the best person to do the job if elected. Factors like political socialization, encouragement, recruitment, and training can condition or prepare candidates of a group to be excited to enter the political arena. Females in the U.S.A., for example, are less likely than their similarly educated male

counterparts to have ever even considered running for office (Lawless, Fox 2013). In this paper, I will examine if similar factors influence the likelihood of women running for office in Latin America.

Theoretical Approaches to Understanding Women's Representation

In keeping with the current literature on female representation, I will be applying established theories to womens' decision to run for office. In my twenty-six county analysis, I will specifically apply structural, institutional, and cultural classifications to the factors I examine that affect women's representation. Norris and Inglehart (2001), for example, use these categories in their analysis of national parliaments. Structural theories relate to the social composition of society that can provide barriers or springboards for women's, careers. They include the socioeconomic fabric as a whole, emphasized by the industrialization and post-industrialization of the country. They often limit the 'candidate pool,' or the group that party leaders select from when grooming the next generation of leaders and representatives (Lena, Krook 2009). Examples of variables in this category can be poverty rates, childcare systems, unmet need for family planning, or numbers of women in fertile pre-government fields such as law or journalism.

The next category of theories I will apply, will be institutional. Institutional variables offer an alternative to structural explanations. They analyze the political institutions of a country, and have shown recently to be very effective at explaining cross-national variation in female representation at the national level (Sundström, Stockemer 2015). Institutional variables dive into the specific features of representation

systems, such as elections, appointments, legislated and voluntary gender quotas for parties, voting methods, and even legal and nonlegal interplay of party competition. Party affiliation and the norms of parties can fall under this category as well.

The final group of theoretical explanations, I will use relates to political culture. Politically cultural variables ('cultural' variables for sake of conciseness) consider the socialization around political offices and attitudes around which candidates are qualified to hold them. This category examines the direct and indirect attitudinal discrimination that women and minorities face when attempting to be involved in the political sphere. While often documented on the national level, this category is the most rarely applied to local and regional comparisons of representation, due to the amount of opinion research required. Examples include how highly a citizenry prioritizes equality or views a female's preparedness or ability to conduct the duties of an elected office (Norris 2001).

Structural Theories

Pre-industrial societies tend to face more structural supply barriers across all societal groups than post-industrial societies (Norris 2001). The percent of women in poverty in a pre-industrial society, or the degree of that poverty, may serve as a barrier to those who may want to run for office. Providing food, water, and housing are of greater importance in Maslow's hierarchy of needs than employment, and thus need to be partially filled before a potential candidate considers running for office (Kaufman 2019). Female health factors may not be conducive to women's leadership, such as a high female mortality rate, low access to women's healthcare, low access to menstrual hygiene

products, and overall low lifespan. While there are no pre-industrial countries in Latin

America, these factors could still remain as barriers in certain regions or among

marginalized groups in Latin America and could be grounds for future research.

Variables that can affect pre-, post-, and developing industrial societies include

educational variables and those around a woman's relationship to childcare and family

planning. In pre-industrial societies, women may not have access to primary or higher

education at all. In post-industrial, educational opportunities and paths that females are

encouraged to pursue can put them at a political disadvantage to men. These may affect

the number of women *socially* eligible to run.[3] Women's relationship in society to

childbearing and childcare may also affect female candidates. This relationship may limit

female candidates in pre-industrial societies where there is an extremely high birth rate or

where childcare is primarily a female job. Post-industrial societies usually have lower

birth rates, but attitudes around childcare might still be archaic.

Post-industrial societies often have different factors that impact the likelihood of

female office holding. Structural barriers, like poverty, unmet need for family planning,

and the need for children to be working rather in school, are usually lower across the

board, unless in governments of extreme inequality. Female employment often increases,

and may increase the capital that women have to use to run campaigns or otherwise pay

social dues that are often prerequisites to community leadership. It may also create more

diverging attitudes in the populace related to a woman's role or the role of democracy/

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[3] Sometimes, there is actually a higher expectation for females to pursue higher education. Often though, there is less of a monetary return for investment in the fields that women are encouraged to pursue than males. For example, in the U.S, females make up 56% of college students nationwide. But these females are concentrated in the humanities and arts, while males are more often in engineering, computer science, and business majors (Napolitano 2018).

government in society. Matland asserts that the structural increase in female workforce

participation may trickle into positive cultural effects. A balanced workforce may

encourage modern beliefs about gender roles, including the belief that society is better off

when women have the ability to work outside of the home if they desire (Matland 1998).

On the flipside, high levels of women's workforce participation may have a backlash

later because men see women as a threat for jobs. Status discontent theory and the

backlash against the Latin American Pink Tide both support this assumption (Morgan,

Buice 2013). Sanbonmatsu (2002) finds that high women's workforce participation in the

United States at the state level increases the number of both Democratic and Republican

female candidates, as well as women's representation in both parties (Sundström and

Stockemer 2015).

Institutional Theories

The institutional qualities of a government relate to the organization and rules of

the political system. Both formal and informal institutional factors may exist within the

same government. An example of an informal institutional factor affecting municipal

representation is the capital required to run a successful campaign. Elected positions are

more accessible economically privileged members of society (Carnes 2018). The

personal financial costs required for political connections and races vary by party, region,

nation, level of hierarchy within government, and even by election cycle so they are

therefore quite difficult to measure. Formal institutional factors are usually easier to

measure. Highly important formal institutional factors are voting and candidacy laws.

(Sundström, Stockemer 2015). Laws determining who can run for office directly restrict females' ability to enter the political arena, as well as how much weight their community or group can give to support them. If women do not have the right to vote in a country or if the right to vote is only partially ensured, women may not be able to serve in government roles at all. If they are fully restricted by law or in practice, they will not be able to support other women with their votes. Laws also might even project messages in the society about who is worthy to participate in politics, and who is qualified, and who is desired (Lagunoff, Jack 2003). While all of the countries in Latin America guarantee the right to vote to women and allow them to run for office, there are other types of institutional factors that vary.

Quotas

A highly successful formal institution factor is the use of quotas. Quotas have proven to be one of the best institutional tools that countries can employ to increase both the number of female candidates and elected female representatives within their government. Quotas are popularly used on the national level in Latin America, and their effectiveness in the region specifically will be discussed in a later section. Overall, countries that employ quota laws see consistently higher levels of representation in the group targeted by the quota (Schwindt-Bayer 2009; Chen 2008). The countries that set country goals or quotas for their parliamentary houses at 50% saw the highest levels of representation in single and lower chambers at 29.3% and highest representation of upper houses categories at 47.1% (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2019). It is important to note that

there are varying types of quotas and if a quota policy does not match the electoral system the quota may be purely symbolic (Gender Quotas 2009).

There are three different types of quota systems. The first are reserved seats. Reserved seats literally block off seats for women that men are not eligible to contest. They are used in political assemblies, councils, and parliaments. The number of seats is usually quite small- between 1% and 10%, but sometimes as high as 30%. There are plenty of issues with reserved seats because they isolate the demand for female representation within a few districts or election cycles. They can undermine the incumbency of female representatives and rob women of the experience of running in co-ed races (Krook 2008).

The second type are legislative quotas. These force all parties to nominate a certain share of women as candidates. They are common in developing countries, particularly in Latin America, or in post-conflict societies, like Southeastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. The adoption of this particular kind of quota usually requires a constitutional reform, and therefore may heavily involve the judicial brand of a country in determining the legality of this policy.

The third type are party quotas. These are voluntary quotas that parties adopt themselves. They span all types of political parties and are usually adopted at national party conventions. Quotas not only increase the presence of women for the party in question, but also put pressure on other parties to adopt quotas in order to stay competitive. An issue that can sometimes arise with legislated and party quotas is that parties may choose to nominate women to unwinnable positions, making them sacrificial

lambs. Also, neither type is a silver bullet as voters may not even vote for the women nominated, but they help demystify the candidate selection process (Sundström and Stockemer 2015).

Some countries, like India, do extend quotas to the local level, usually through legislated and party quotas. (Krook and Obrien 2010). Yet it is by far the norm for quotas to apply only to legislative national legislative bodies. Quotas across the board are rarely applied to executive positions or even cabinets. The lack of official candidate lists or shortlists for a particular election make mandating quotas for executives much harder.

Political Parties

In countries, areas, or districts where quotas are not enforced or adopted, the onus of increasing the demand for women to run falls quite largely on political parties. Many studies on political party recruitment sans quota are completed with countries with a low number of political parties. On the other hand, studies that focus on the United States two party system are abundant. Fox and Lawless conducted the Citizen Political Ambition Panel Study, a survey of more than 2,000 potential candidates in the United States in 2008. They found that qualified and well-connected women of both political parties are less likely than similarly situated men to be recruited by all types of political actors (Lawless and Fox 2010). They find that women are specifically less likely to be recruited intensely and by multiple sources, decreasing the likelihood that they will want to run in comparison to the aforementioned males. Women's groups in the U.S. are making headway in closing the gap of recruitment, increasing demand for women, and putting

pressure on the Democratic party to do the same. It is common around the world for

leftist and social democratic parties to be more responsive to women's lobbying, but

scholars have noted that conversvative parties sometimes start to feel competitive

pressure to increase demand for female candidates within their party in order to win the

hearts and minds of voters who believe this is important (Caul 2001; Mailand and Studiar

1996).

Political parties are formal institutions that can have informal effects on women's

candidacies. Especially in competitive elections, parties often recruit from lower levels of

government. While this yields candidates with political experience, there are usually

more men than women at all levels of government. This may discourage women without

a direct government service record and unintentionally create a more male-dominated

candidate short-list (Sanbonmatsu 2016). Kira Sanbonmatsu's study found that within the

U.S., fewer women run for office where political parties are highly active in nomination

contests. There is no offical policy of discrimination, but party-related action through

legislative caucuses and campaign committees can be biased. If party systems are more

'good ole boy' networks than fair and open organizations, they can become

echo-chambers and these biases can be exacerbated. Parties can combat this by recruiting

outside of the governmental hierarchy, conducting training for women themselves, and

encouraging women across society to run within their party.

It is not uncommon for a higher proportion of women to align themselves with

one side of the political spectrum rather than the other. Recently, women in Western

democracies have become more likely to align themselves with the political left than the

right (Sundström and Stockemer 2015). Socialist, social democratic, and green parties are often more accepting of traditionally disempowered groups overall, including women (Htun, 2005; Matland and Studlar, 1996). Left of center parties often give more attention to issues of high concern to women. (Caul, 1999; Krook and Childs, 2010). Also, they traditionally lead in having strong internal women's organizations (Kittilson, 2006). If women are more likely to identify with leftist parties, it may be assumed that women are more likely to both run and be elected in areas where the larger share of the electorate votes left.

Radical right parties are more likely than other parties to believe that men and women are "inherently different and should occupy different social positions" (Fennema, 1997). Some radical right-wing parties even implicitly or explicitly argue that men are more natural leaders than women (Hainsworth, 2008). Presence of right wing parties may suppress the election of women in an area, through spreading narratives or pure intimidation. The presence of these parties may indicate that deeply traditional ideas and negative stereotypes about women are held among voters throughout the area as well.

Representation Systems and Incumbency

The incumbency advantage is especially good at slowing the pace at which members of any previously excluded group can begin to hold elected office. Incumbency advantage refers to the greater ease that incumbents have in a race in raising money, capitalizing on name recognition, and getting their message out (Clark, Darcy, and Welch 1987; Incumbent Advantage 2019). Schwindt-Bayer's analysis of 33 national legislatures

found that higher retention rates of representatives lead to fewer women in office, even when controlling for socioeconomic factors, gender quotas, and electoral rules. In the same study, term limits were found to positively correlate with females winning office, due to the increased turnover of incumbents (Schwindt-Bayer 2005). Schwindt-Bayer's case-study of Chile demonstrates that once women are elected, the incumbent advantage can serve them positively as well. Regardless of gender, parties favor nominating candidates that are prefered to win. In the Chilean context, women incumbents are just as likely as their male counterparts to be re-elected.

The literature strongly supports the premise that proportional representation systems tend to generate higher percentages of elected women than plurality/ majority systems. Due to the zero-sum (winner-takes-all) game under plurality, parties in most single-member districts tend to nominate highly educated middle-aged to senior men of the dominant ethnicity as candidates (Sundström and Stockemer 2015). On the other hand, PR systems require multi-member districts, as it is not possible for one person to represent a population proportionally. Also, PR systems provide more of an opportunity for parties to bring in new candidates rather than relying on citizens voting consistently for individuals (Moral, Ozen, Tokdemir, 2015). This connection could lower the incumbent advantage for male representatives in elections.. Multi-member districts alone have been found to alone be extremely beneficial in terms of sending female representation to national parliaments, but could work for city councils as well (FairVote 2019; Trounstine and Valdini 2008; Studlar and Welch 1991).

Some countries, like the United States, are very unlikely to adopt proportional representation, even within multi-member districts. In such cases, strategies like cumulative voting or ranked choice voting within a plurality system may be the next-best options. Ranked choice voting mitigates the risk of 'spoiler candidates' and allows for multiple women or minorities to run without ruining the others chances by syphoning votes (Donegan 2019). Multiple women on a ballot vie with each other for the attention and for novelty, usually making voters less willing to learn about or vote for either woman (Schwindt-Bayer 2005). The Australian Senate uses ranked choice voting in multi-member districts and has relatively high levels of female representation at 31.% (FairVote 2019).

Cultural Theories

Ambition Gap

Political culture factors and beliefs are perhaps the group of theories most strongly associated with the candidate pool in terms of women's representation. Socialization around politics particularly has resulted in a clear gendering in the desire to run for office- christened the 'ambition gap' (Lawless and Fox 2013). To examine the root of this ambition gap, Lawless and Fox conducted a national survey of American college students. That found that combination of cultural variables including familial socialization, lack of exposure to political information, lack of exposure to competitive environments, lack of encouragement, and a tendency to assess themselves as less qualified were to blame. Overall, women in the study were less likely to demonstrate any

desire to run for office at all (Lawless and Fox 2013). This gap may increase in areas with

adversarial political cultures (Drage 2001). In areas where women are not exposed to

competitive climates, such as children's sports or debate tournaments, are discouraged

from being competitive by societal expectations around female personalities, women may

be less prepared for combative debate and personality conflicts (Lawless and Fox 2013).

Consciousness-raising socialization experiences can change this trend. Positive

socialization includes national and international feminist conferences held in the area,

work by local non-governmental organizations, initiatives or speeches by female leaders,

or word of mouth. Similarly, training led by governmental and non-governmental

organizations can both make women technically more qualified to run in accordance with

political cultural qualification. It can also serve a dual purpose in making the women

themselves feel more qualified and able to run. The women and allies trained may apply

pressure on the government to improve the election system for women, as well as

compound the training by consciousness-rising throughout the society.

Fearful male political cultures pose a barrier to a trained and enthusiastic

candidate pool. Women may not want to enter the arenas where male colleagues have

difficulty coping logically with female competition and belittle and personally attack

them (Drage 2001). Also, training may not help if women do not want to enter a political

culture that is full of traditionally masculine reward and punishment systems.

When it comes to election time, and a female candidate is in the race, voters will

evaluate if they feel she is qualified for the job. Voters are often harsher on female

candidates, and in these situations elite cues can be vital. Elite cues are "information

shortcuts" coming from people perceived as leaders or experts, such as Beyonce

endorsing Hillary Clinton for President or a parliamentary speaker endorsing or getting a

beer with the candidate (Morgan and Buice 2013). Scholarship surrounding these cues

asserts that voters with weak prior opinions on a topic at hand are more susceptible to

messages communicated by elites and their behavior. Studies on women throughout Latin

America show that they hold their views on gender strongly and are not moved by elite

cues. Men throughout the region have attitudes that are more contingent on cues. This

could inform findings that men are more supportive of female candidates in areas that

have histories of including women in the political elite or an elite that is happy about

female leadership (Morgan and Buice 2013).

Stereotyping

Women in politics are generally viewed as more trustworthy and compassionate,

kinder, warmer, more friendly, and even easier to deal with and less intimidating.[4] Men

are viewed as more decisive and gruff, but also as stronger leaders and preferable in a

crisis (King, Matland 2003; Dolan 2014). In terms of competence women are stereotyped

to better at handling issues such as "childcare, poverty, education, health care, women's

issues and the environment than are men, while men are thought to be more competent at

dealing with economic development, military, trade, taxes, and agriculture" (Dolan

2014). Women running for office in right-leaning parties may be less likely to benefit

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[4]Assertive women have been labeled "the bitch," and it is possible that women are perceived as more friendly due to their societal condition to avoid confrontation.

from their perceived stereotypes, as their parties tend to emphasize policy areas in which

men are perceived to be more competent..

Due to both an actual party alignment as well as personal stereotypes, women are

perceived overall as both more left than they actually are and more left than their male

counterparts (Norrander, 2003; Welch 1985). This can create problems for women trying

to win the nomination and election in very right-aligned countries or regions. Women

who want to be elected in right-leaning areas have to work harder to prove they are

right-leaning. While this is bad when appealing to staunch rightist voters, this stereotype

may help right-leaning women appeal to center leftist voters in close elections (Ondercin,

Welch 2009; Dolan, Lynch 2013). Because leftist parties are more likely to have more

competitive female candidates, Leftist women often experience more difficult primaries.

This may make leftist voters less excited about women if they are chosen as their party

nominee. Rightist women usually face more competitive general elections. For example,

in the U.S., 67% of Republican female congressional candidates face a quality candidate

in the general election compared to only 47% of Democratic women (Barnes, Branton,

Cassese 2016).

Regardless of party, in studies of areas with low national female representation,

high distrust of government has shown to sometimes promote females as an alternative to

the current male leadership (Morgan, Buice 2013). If women have been prevented from

entering political networks, they are seen as 'outsiders,' offering new ways of governing

and controlling power outside of the broken system (Bouvier 2009; Buvinic and Rosa

2004; Swamy et al. 2001). Female candidates are also often stereotyped as intrinsically

more honest, trustworthy, and caring (Dolan 2009). Attitudes affected by stereotypes are

popularly measured, if not affected by the honesty of self-reporting.[5]

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[5] Voters are not very likely to admit sexism in surveys. (Miller 2016). How much these attitudes affect voting habits may also vary between countries and societies so there is no magic number that indicates gender cost. These biases also may not be overt- oftentimes, humans prefer those that agree with them and have similar qualities (Hinojosa and Franceschet 2011; Niven 1998).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS/ANALYSIS

Heretofore, I have summarized the literature on barriers to female representation. In the analyses to follow, I hope to shed original insight on the resulting gaps in representation by investigating two important aspects of the likelihood of female representation: the decision to run for the office, and the prevalence of women in local elected offices. My focus is on Latin America because of the shared history and post-industrial qualities of the countries, as well as the almost universal stark gaps in descriptive gender representation.

I begin my analysis by examining survey data to determine if there are significant differences in attitudes that may affect the relative likelihood of men and women running for elective office in Latin America, specifically in Argentina and Uruguay.[6] I then move to a cross-national analysis examining variation in the percentage of females elected to local offices (mayor and city council members), across twenty-six Latin American countries. Taken together, these analysis will help offer additional insight into factors related to the representation of women in municipal politics in Latin America

Differences in Attitudes Toward Running for Office: Argentina and Uruguay

The America's Barometer Survey, executed by the Latin America's Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), has asked similar questions to those asked in Lawless and Fox's survey of female political ambition in the U.S., but asked them of citizens in Latin

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[6] These were the only two countries with public opinion data available for political ambition-centered questions within the America's Barometer Survey.

America. This is where I draw my data for my first analysis. Conducted by Vanderbilt University, LAPOP carries out scientifically rigorous surveys in 34 Latin American countries, including North, Central, South America, and a majority of the Caribbean (Latin 2020). In their 2017 survey implementation, LAPOP included a battery of questions designed to tap respondent attitudes regarding the likelihood of running for office. Unfortunately, these questions were only fielded in Argentina and Uruguay, yet the results examined below help provide some understanding of what factors influence attitudes toward running for office across Latin America. Argentina and Uruguay can be seen as baseline countries in Latin America in terms of local female representation. Argentina falls on the low end of the median with 10.2 percent of mayors identifying as female. Uruguay falls on the upper end of the median bubble with 21.4 percent of mayors and and on the low end with 25 percent of city council members identifying as female. While it would be preferable to have data for more countries, these analyses allow me to offer some empirical observations regarding influences on women running for office in Latin America.

I begin by examining gender differences in responses to the questions listed below. From there, I move to a multivariate analysis designed to determine if bivariate differences (female vs. male) in these responses are robust to other factors that may influence attitudes toward the likelihood of running for office.

A. Feels qualified to run for office

B. Feels qualified to do the work of an elected official

C. Has considered running for office

D. Has been encouraged to run for political office

E. Would be willing to stand for election if had more time

F. Would be willing to stand for election if had more money

G. Would be willing to stand for election if had fewer responsibilities

While these questions do not specifically cite level of office, they do highlight important barriers to entry for all political offices. Since I find responses vary sharply by gender, it seems reasonable that these differences would hold at the local level, as well as higher levels of office.

Table 1: Feel Qualified to Run for Office (%)				
	Argentina		Uruguay	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Very Qualified	7.62	4.35	10.5	7.2
Somewhat Qualified	17.78	11.35	23.25	19.75
A Little Qualified	25.13	17.68	25.49	21.66
Not at All Qualified	49.47	66.62	40.76	57.58
N	748	758	714	785
X^2	46.31 p =.000		52.76 p = .000	

Table 1 lists the percentages of men and women in both Argentina and Uruguay who responded that they feel very qualified, somewhat qualified, a little qualified, or not at all qualified to run for office. I use a Chi Square (X^2) statistic to determine if there is an association between the gender of the respondent and how qualified they see themselves in terms of running for office.[7] The null hypothesis in the case of Table 1

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[7] The chi square statistic is commonly used for testing relationships between categorical variables (Chi-Square Statistic 2020).

would be that there is no relationship between the gender of the respondents and the categorical distribution of responses to the question of whether they feel qualified to run for office.

In the case of Table 1, the chi square indicates the null hypothesis is rejected, and there is a significant association between the gender of the respondent and attitudes toward feeling qualified to run for office. We see the largest differences in the percentage of those who feel "not at all qualified" to run for office. While almost one-half of male respondents in Argentina respond in this fashion, two-thirds of women indicate they do not feel qualified. Results for Uruguay are consistent with Argentina, and show a significant difference in how women and men view their qualifications to run for office. If women are less inclined to feel qualified to even run, it is reasonable to assume that this could affect their likelihood of running.

Table 2 reveals similar results. Respondents were asked whether they feel qualified to do the work of an elected official. In both Argentina and Uruguay, we see a significant association between gender of the respondent and their self-assessment of whether they are qualified. Again, the largest difference is among those who indicate they are "not at all qualified." The data also indicate that almost twice as many men than women feel themselves to be "very qualified" to do the work of elective office in both countries. This puts women at a severe disadvantage when it comes to socialization to run and also puts Latin American countries in line with the U.S. in terms of low female self-qualification assessment (Lawless, Fox 2013)

Table 2: Feel Qualified to Do Work of Elected Official (%)				
	Argentina		Uruguay	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Very Qualified	9.47	4.50	13.04	7.27
Somewhat Qualified	21.2	13.77	29.31	21.56
A Little Qualified	23.33	17.88	25.11	20.92
Not at All Qualified	46.0	63.84	32.54	50.26
N	750	755	713	784
X^2	52.38 p =.000		52.20 p = .000	

It is not mere speculation that fewer women want to run. Table 3 displays that

fewer women surveyed in both countries have ever considered running for any office,

although the gap only reaches statistical significance in Argentina.

Table 3: Has Considered Running for Office (%)				
	Argentina		Uruguay	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	10.04	4.82	9.86	6.68
No	89.96	95.18	90.14	93.32
N	757	767	720	794
X^2	15.096, p = .000		5.097, p = 0.24	

In line with Lawless and Fox's findings (2013) in the U.S., women in Argentina

and Uruguay are less likely to have been encouraged to run than their male counterparts

(Table 4). This suggests that, if we want to change this pattern, there is an opportunity for

us to encourage female Latin American friends to run for office and for Latin American

political parties to make a formalized effort to encourage, recruit, and train more women.

Table 4: Has Been Encouraged to Run for Office (%)				
	Argentina		Uruguay	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	16.27	11.78	21.86	14.16
No	83.73	88.22	78.14	85.84
N	756	764	720	791
X^2	6.36, p = .012		20.44, p = .000	

The following three survey questions capture the barriers both genders assess stand in their own way to running for office. Table 5 displays the difference in female and male respondents when asked if they would be willing to stand for election if they had more time.

Table 5: Would Be Willing to Stand for Election if Had More Time (%)				
	Argentina		Uruguay	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	40.34	29.08	35.8	29.94
No	59.76	70.92	64.2	70.06
N	748	760	715	785
X^2	20.75, p = .000		5.85, p = .016	

In both countries, males were significantly more likely to say they would stand if personal time constraints were removed. This raises the hypothesis that the disportionate amount of time women spend on housework or in domestic duties is not the only barrier to women's representation. Table 6 below demonstrates that in Argentina, males would be more likely to stand for election if they had fewer responsibilities. In Uruguay, this pattern actually did not continue, and males and females answered comparably.

Table 6: Would Be Willing to Stand for Election if Had Fewer Responsibilities (%)				
	Argentina		Uruguay	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	37.15	26.0	30.18	32.35
No	62.85	74.0	69.82	67.65
N	743	750	709	782
X^2	12.25, p = .000		8137, p = .367	

Finally, Table 7 explores personal assessment of economic barriers to running for office. Respondents reported in this table whether they would be more willing to stand for election if they had more money. In Argentina, women again were still less likely to say they would be willing to stand for election if they had more money. This indicates that there is more to this problem than income inequality between the genders. Women spend less of their disposable income than men on themselves, instead spending disposable income on children and family (Bailey 2019).[8]

In contrast, the differences between men and women on this survey item were not statistically significant for Uruguay. Uruguay has the lowest income inequality in all of Latin America between genders as measured by the Gini Coefficient, and the average female in Uruguay makes around $2,700 more the average Argentine female, closing the gap to the average $24,000 that both Argentine and Uruguayan men make (Gini 2019) (Human n.d.). This indicates that while income inequality is not the whole story, it is still important.

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[8] When women do spend their expenses income on themselves, popular media clasif and magazines classify women as frivolous spenders (even though men are more likely to make impulse buys) and encourage women to invest in nice clothing. On the other hand, the same media encourages men to invest in displays of traditional power such as cars or yachts or on long-term investments and goals. Young boys are also more likely than young girls to learn about investment, taxes, and credit scores from their parents, and therefore gain financial confidence (Wong 2019).

Overall, these bivariate comparisons indicate that women are less inclined to run for office in both Argentina and Uruguay. They also indicate, however, some differences between the countries. In Uruguay, men and women perceive barriers to entry (e.g.: time, responsibilities, and money) in largely similar ways. In Argentina, women feel these barriers more acutely.

Table 7: Would Be Willing to Stand if Had More Money (%)				
	Argentina		Uruguay	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	33.38	26.0	29.49	28.37
No	66.62	74.0	70.51	71.63
N	743	750	712	786
X^2	9.74, p = .002		.229, p = .632	

In addition to these bivariate examinations, I also include a multivariate analysis in order to control for relevant factors that might influence whether people feel qualified to run for office. For example, it's possible that differences in education or other political attitudes may be responsible for the differences between women and men revealed by the bivariate analysis. In order to account for this possibility, ran an OLS regression model using whether the respondent has considered running for office as the dependent variable. To better isolate gender effects, I control for the following:

A. Level of respect for political institutions

B. Level of trust in government

C. Overall political interest

D. Education

E. Number of young children in the household

F. Political ideology (scored from liberal to conservative)

G. The interviewer's perception of respondent's level of political knowledge

H. Pride in nationality

I. Perceptions about whether leaders are interested in what people think

J. Respondent's determination of how well they understand important issues

K. Attitudes toward democracy as a form of government

Table 8: Feel Qualified to Run for Office (Multivariate)		
Independent Variables	Argentina	Uruguay
Gender	-.1873 (.05)**	-.2473 (.05)**
Respect for Political Institutions	.0263 (.014)	.0186 (.014)
Trust in Local Government	-.0194 (.014)	-.0157 (.014)
Political Interest	-.1778 (.027)**	-.1267 (.026)**
Education	.0175 (.008)*	.0452 (.007)**
Number of children in household < age 13	-.0121 (.021)	.0145 (.025)
Ideology (left/right)	.0133 (.012)	-.0003 (.01)
Perception of Level of Political Knowledge	-.013 (.029)**	-.099 (.028)**
Pride in Nationality	-.037 (.025)	-.1089 (.024)**
Leaders are Interested in What People Think	.002 (.013)	.018 (.014)
Understands Important Issues	.0969 (.017)**	.1141 (.017)**
Democracy is Better Than Any Other Form of Govt.	-.0603 (.017)**	-.0646 (.019)**
Observations	1221	1296
Adjusted R^2	.189	.214
*Significant at .05 level, one-tailed. **Significant at .01 level, one tailed. Standard errors in parentheses		

Table 8 details the results, and indicates overall, that even when controlling for

education and important political attitudes that might influence whether one feels

qualified to run for political office, statistically significant differences between men and

women still exist. In general, the control variables behave as expected, with low levels of

political interest and knowledge being negatively associated with feeling qualified to run for office, and higher levels of education and understanding of important issues being positively associated with feeling qualified to run. Interestingly, attitudes agreeing that democracy is better than any other form of government are negatively associated with feeling qualified to run. Most importantly for my purposes is the strong negative coefficient on the gender variable for both countries. Even in the face of these controls, women are significantly more likely than men to respond that they feel less qualified (or unqualified) to run for office.

Cross-National Analysis of Structural, Institutional, and Cultural Factors

To this point, my analysis has focused on one aspect of factors related to female descriptive representation -- attitudes that influence the decision to run for office. Now I turn to examining structural, institutional, and cultural barriers that influence female representation in local elected offices across multiple countries. In this section, I undertake a cross-national examination of the prevalence of female mayors and city council members throughout Latin America. My goal of this analysis will be to offer insights into which structural, institutional, and cultural factors help explain variation in local female representation in the region. I chose from these categories the independent variables that are popularly examined in literature on national representation and have the richest date available for the region.

My dependent variables are the percentage of female mayors and city councilors across Latin American countries. My independent variables are factors that could

influence the variation in percentage of local female representation across countries. They are spread across the three theoretical categories I previously introduced (structural, institutional, and cultural). I will be employing ordinary least squares regression (OLS) to examine the factors that influence cross-national variation in the percentage of mayors and city councilors across Latin America. The relatively small number of countries I am examining raises potential concerns about the consistency of my estimators and places constraints on the number of explanatory variables I can use (Achen 1982). As such, I am using one variable designed to tap each of my theoretical categories (structural, institutional, contextual) along with an additional control for ideology. I explain these variables in more detail below.

Unfortunately there were data limitations on my choice of independent variables. This is no measure yet that that directly measures all of the structural, institutional, and cultural variables that affect women within a society across all thirty-three countries in Latin America, including the Caribbean. Therefore I had to find variables that maximized my number of cases. I used variables that I felt best captured the impacts of factors, or variables that I felt represented each category broadly, given these data limitations and concerns about the size of my N.

To evaluate the impact of structural forces on cross-national variation in female mayors, I use a measure of unmet need for family planning. This variable is theoretically appropriate because it represents a social structure that clearly disadvantages women in terms of allowing them to control the amount of time they are pregnant and how many children they will have. The indicator is directly reported by women and compiled by the

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division. It captures the women of reproductive age (15-49 years) who want to stop or delay childbearing, but are not using a method of contraception. The number reported by the UN and that I use in my analysis is the median estimate for each country. I believe this variable captures societal structure as it pertains to added burden unplanned for children may give. Overall, it may capture how women in society have access to basic freedoms over their bodies and careers. My expectation is that higher levels of unmet need for family planning will have a negative effect on female representation for local offices.

Institutional structure will be represented by the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Political Empowerment subindex. This subindex is made of up three data points given roughly equal weight: ratio of women to men in parliament, ratio of women in ministerial positions, and the number of years with a female head of state.[9] This measure works well because it indirectly captures the impacts of quotas, as well as the ability of women overall to succeed in the country's representational system. Countries that score higher on this index should have higher percentages of female mayors.

The variable representing the cultural category is how much of the country self-reports to believe that men are better political leaders than women. Taken from survey data, this measure directly taps into attitudes in a country regarding beliefs towards women in elected positions of power. To the degree that greater percentages of

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[9] Globally, Political Empowerment represents the largest gap in comparison to the WE Forum's other subindexes of Health and Survival, Educational Attainment, and Economic Participation and Opportunity. It is also the gap the WE Forum's 2020 Global Gender Gap report theorizes will take the longest to close.

people in a country agree or strongly agree with this sentiment, we should expect there to be a negative effect on the percentage of female mayors.[10]

Finally, I include an additional attitudinal control for ideology: an aggregation of how left or right leaning the country is based on a survey question asking respondents to place themselves on a 10-point ideological scale. Means were calculated for each country. As previously stated, left/ right ideological dominance could influence egalitarian values within a country. My expectation is that, cross-nationally, increased conservatism will be negatively associated with the percentage of female mayors.[11]

I expected two countries to be outliers- Nicaragua and Cuba.[12] Therefore, I first used the percentage of female mayors as my dependent variable, and ran a preliminary regression with these four factors across the twenty-one countries with available data. Cuba did not have the data available and was dropped. The results are reported in Table 9 below.

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[10] Data from the OECD Gender Institutions and Development Database and LAPOP

[11] Data from the Latin America Barometer 2018 survey run by the Latin American Public Opinion Project at Vanderbilt University (LAPOP 2020).

[12] "Nicaragua is today the most successful case in terms of female presence in mayoral command, and this is largely due to a law passed in 2012 that establishes the implementation of gender parity in the submission of the candidates' lists for municipal elections. The country rose from having 8.6% of women mayors in 2008, the year of their penultimate elections, to 40.1% in 2012, the year of the last municipal elections and with the parity law in force" (Elected Mayors n.d.)

Table 9: Cross-National Analysis of Factors Affecting Percentage of Female Mayors	
Variable	Coefficient
Unmet Family Planning	-1.451 (.481)**
Political Empowerment	34.98 (15.85)*
Men Better Political Leaders	.1949 (.313)
Left/ Right Ideology	-.0235 (.016)
Observations	21
Adjusted R^2	.388
*Significant at .05 level, one-tailed. **Significant at .01 level, one tailed. Standard errors in parentheses	

Given my concerns about my results being skewed by Nicaragua as a potential outlier, I decided to run a diagnostic check and run a robust regression. As I hypothesized, Nicaragua was assigned outlier status and dropped from the regression. The results of this regression are reported in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Cross-National Analysis of Factors Affecting Percentage of Female Mayors - Robust Regression	
Variable	Coefficient
Unmet Family Planning	-1.25 (.253)**
Political Empowerment	2.77 (7.704)
Men Better Political Leaders	-.4925 (.156)**
Left/ Right Ideology	-7.04 (2.81)*
Observations	20
*Significant at .05 level, one-tailed. **Significant at .01 level, one-tailed. Standard errors in parentheses	

When I remove Nicaragua, I find that three of the four variables proved to be significant. My structural variable, unmet family planning, actually has high significance. Countries with higher levels of unmet family planning have fewer female mayors, as I hypothesized. This means that barriers to women in society affect the number of female mayors represented. My institutional variable, the political empowerment index, does not significantly affect the percentage of female mayors in a country. My cultural variable, the prevalence of attitudes that men are better political leaders, is highly significant. If more members of society equate effective leadership with men, there are fewer female mayors in their country. Finally, the self-reported ideology of respondents is significant as well, and behaves as expected. As supported by the literature, if more members identify as left-leaning, there will be more female mayors.

Table 11 shows that the same variables hold very different meanings for the number of female city council members in a country. The only variable that is significant in determining the percentage of female city council members is the only one that is not significant for mayors- the political empowerment index. This means that the number of females in high positions of power in government is highly correlated with the number of females that are elected to local city councils. One could hypothesize this is because city council members run for parliament after serving on a council. I would hypothesize instead that there actually is an attitudinal or institutional (through quota implementation) trickle-down effect from high federal representation to the local level. Women ushered in by quotas to parliaments and ministerial positions may make it a more socially accepted idea for those considering a possible city council position farther down the hierarchical chain to also run for a deliberative body. Voters are already more accustomed to seeing women in deliberative bodies, and this may be the reason that women in city council seats have outpaced those in mayor's offices. Voters may also prefer electing women to deliberative bodies rather than executive positions due to beliefs that women are more collaborative, pragmatic, and harmonious than men (Carlsburg 2018).

Table 11: Cross-National Analysis of Factors Affecting Percentage of Female City Council Members - Robust Regression	
Variable	Coefficient
Unmet Family Planning	.3711 (.660)
Political Empowerment	80.37 (19.23)**
Men Better Political Leaders	-.622 (393)
Left/ Right Ideology	4.28 (8.35)
N	18
*Significant at .05 level, one-tailed. **Significant at .01 level, one-tailed. Standard errors in parentheses	

CONCLUSIONS

Gender is a social construct, but it has become extremely important throughout

human history. Lyn Kathlene writes, "Gender, like class, is a fundamental category of

political analysis, not simply another independent variable representing biological sex"

(1994). Constructions of gender can change from society to society, from age to age, but

while gender may be a fluid concept, it can have life-defining effects on those subjected

to its expectations. Females have been politically underrepresented in modern

democracies due to expectations surrounding their gender. I sought in this paper to

explore why the underrepresentation lingers in local governments in Latin America,

despite huge strides in higher levels of government. In the absence of data indicating the

likelihood of women winning when they ran, I tried to address both the individual

decision to run and factors that affect variation in representation across countries.

Based on these analyses, I make three main conclusions about female local

representation in Latin America. The first conclusion is that women in Latin America are

significantly less likely to run for office than their male counterparts. Factors that are

likely to exert a negative influence on the decision to run for office are more prominent

for women than men. In both Argentina and Uruguay, women are significantly less likely

to feel qualified to run for office or do the work of an elected official. Similarly, women

in both countries are less likely than men to be encouraged to run for office. Not

surprisingly, given these patterns, they are less willing to stand for office, even in the absence of time constraints. This pattern continues for Argentina even if women are unconstrained by responsibilities or money. While there is no measure on the local level of how often women actually do run vs. their male counterparts, I believe it is safe to assume that this 'ambition gap' results in a candidate pool with fewer female candidates than male.

The second conclusion is that cross-national variation in the percentage of female mayors is influenced by structural and cultural factors. Countries with social structures unconducive to female independence, like higher unmet need for family planning, tend to result in fewer female mayors. Countries where voters hold cultural attitudes that men are better political leaders and subscribe to more right-leaning ideologies also have fewer female mayors. While institutional variables, such as quotas, are often discussed as a way to increase women's representation on the national level, this does not appear to help women break into mayoral positions.

The third conclusion is that female city council members are strongly influenced by their institutions, more than any other kind of variable. They are especially affected by the dynamic of female representation in higher levels of government within their country, much more significantly than mayors. If more females are represented at the national level, more females will also be in deliberative bodies on the local level. I want to acknowledge that this conclusion is a bit more tentative, given the smaller number of observations available for this analysis, but it could provide a basis for future exploration.

My overall interpretation of my research is that there is no silver bullet to solve unequal representation on the local level in Latin America, but closing the ambition gap between men and women through personal encouragement and women's recruitment to political parties is an efficient place to start. In terms of mayoral representation, combatting structural inequalities in society that pose barriers to women's advancement across the board as well as attitudes that men are inherently better leaders would tip the scales towards equity. Strengthening left-leaning parties and popularity of a leftist political viewpoint would also indirectly help elect more female mayors. To close the gap in city councils, increasing women's representation at the national level as well as implementing gender quotas sends positive signals that women belong in policy-making bodies.

I hope that this study is a step in closing the gap between local and national female representation in Latin America. I also hope that someday this study may give insight into the repercussions of other societal constructions than gender, like ability, race, and sexuality. Chilean-American author Isabel Allende writes "What I fear most is power with impunity. I fear abuse of power, and the power to abuse. In our species, the alpha males define reality and force the rest of the pack to accept that reality and follow their rules" (Allende 2007). I hope that citizens and those that believe there is a chance for political equality someday use the academic resources in this paper to prevent impunity of those who have unfairly dominated political representation for so long.

LIMITATIONS

The most important limitation is that the data I measured was not available for all of the countries that I wanted to study. While almost all of the most populous countries were represented in my multi-national analysis, the less populous countries such as French Guiana were regularly dropped due to lack of data being collected from the area. These areas are often neglected in academic literature and would be interesting places to study going forward.

Another limitation is the extreme lack of data on the local level. Data on the factors affecting the structural, institutional, and cultural make-up of cities, as well as electoral information about the gender-identification of what candidates ran for office versus which won within cities, would have painted a much clearer picture of local female representation. This study could have taken quite a different and far more surgical approach, examining differences from municipality to municipality within a country. Large district magnitude and the increasing power of the office has been found to be negatively correlated with the likelihood of female and minority victory in cities in Canada (Spicer, Mcgregor, Alcantara 2017). The Latin American equivalent of this data would have allowed me to fill a gap in the literature on local city administration. Unfortunately this data largely is not accessible,

My data also does not allow for a more in depth analysis of the variables used to represent the structural, institutional, and cultural categories. It was beyond the scope of my thesis to dive into why different countries allowed different access to family planning, and would be very important future research. I was not able to find a variable that directly captures information on local quotas, due to the varying types and levels of quotas applied throughout Latin America. Also, I can not explain why respondents in some countries believe men are better leaders than women, though this is certainly a fruitful area for further research. A more direct evaluation of socialization experiences among Latin Americans awaits information such as the employment and educational status of survey respondents wives, mothers, or sisters, and is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Finally, due to time constraints, I was not able to explore why Cuba and Nicargaua were an outlier in terms of female mayoral representation, but I assume the empowerment of women under Cuba's communist system explains this country. I was not able to explore also why in Belize, women are actually over represented on city councils.[13] Specific papers of each of these countries could be very helpful in the overall scheme of the literature.

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[13] Women are actually overrepresented in Bolivia as well. The percentage of city council members went from 13.4% in 2005 to 44.1% in 2014. This is directly related to the parity law passed in 2009 and then perfected in 2010 (law 4.021 of April 14, 2009 and Act 26 of June 30, 2010) (Elected Mayors n.d.).

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