

WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND THE QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY IN BRAZIL*

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, the issue of women's political representation has become one of the most important topics in the discussion over the nature of democratic regimes in different parts of the world. What are the implications for the functioning of democracy when it maintains fundamental inequalities among its citizens? This question affects not only young democracies in Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa, but also those countries in which democracy is perceived to have been consolidated long ago, such as England, France, the United States, and Italy. Women constitute one of the last social contingencies to win political rights in contemporary democracies. And, just as in consolidated democracies, this achievement weighs relatively little on the distribution of positions in political representation. In the field of political science, (Lijphart, 1999; 2003) has touched at the heart of the matter by maintaining that the rate of women's participation in national parliaments is a relevant indicator of the quality of democracies currently in existence. Other authors reinforce this argument by insisting on the fundamental centrality of the principle of political equality in the evaluation of the comparative advantages of a democratic regime over its alternatives (Morlino and Diamond, 2005; O'Donnell, Iazzetta and Vargas-Cullell, 2004). Equality, in this case, does not only involve the right to elect the members of the political elite who will govern, but also the right to be chosen to influence and make decisions that affect the political community as a whole.

Based on this premise, this work aims at contributing to the debate over women's political participation and its impact for the quality of democracy by discussing the case of Brazil from a comparative perspective at a moment when the country is completing a quarter of a century of its second experience as a democracy since it became a republic in 1889. Currently, the participation of women in Brazilian parliament is less than half of the world average, i.e., less than 9% versus 19.4%. Among all Latin American countries, Brazil ranks second to last—Panama ranks last—in the participation of women in parliament. While dominant culture, social behaviors, and traditional divisions of roles among genders

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involve discrimination against and unequal treatment of women, the institutional structure of Brazilian democracy does not have involve any formal restrictions to their political participation. However, recent research has shown that, regardless of the existence of a policy of quotas for women in political competition—designed to correct the traditional exclusion of women from political participation—, the effective differences in the treatment of men and women by political parties continue affecting the access that women have to financing opportunities for running for office, thus, negatively impacting their electoral performance (Meneguello, Mano and Gorsky, 2012; Speck and Sacchet, 2012; Miguel and Biroli, 2009; Grossi and Miguel, 2001). The relevant issue consists then in knowing if the implications of that impact are limited to the political exclusion of women or if they affect the functioning of the democratic regime as a whole.

On the international scene, an increasing preoccupation with this theme has recently translated into the creation of commissions, within organizations and international regimes, designed to address issues related to the participation of women in the politically relevant decision-making mechanisms and to gender politics in general. An example of this type of initiative is the installation of UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, created in 2010 and headed by former president of Chile Michelle Bachelet. In the 90s, the role of political institutions in the promotion and effectuation of equal rights for women and men achieved new relevance with research into historical institutionalism and other approaches, which became one of the decisive factors explaining the political discrimination against women. Due to their power to recruit people for political life, to legitimate political leaders, and to decide on issues of public interest, political parties became a central factor in the debate. With regard to parliaments, they were perceived in the literature as fundamental pieces in the articulation of the political interests of women. This finding served as inspiration for movements promoting political reforms as a means of bettering the democratic regime (Goetz and Sacchet, 2008).

The contemporary political debate about the political participation of women emphasizes, among many others, two principal arguments. The first raises the question of justice or of recognition; drawing on the premise that it is illogical and unnatural for the democratic political system to sustain a notion according to which the talent and virtues necessary for public life are attributed exclusively to the masculine gender, part of the literature demonstrates a conflict that exists between the defense of political rights for women and the effective functioning of institutions created by men who constitute as the dominant

elite: in practice, institutions constrain the performance of women and other *outsiders* of the system. According to this perspective, institutions are not neutral. Rather, they possess biases or incentives that make certain outcomes more likely than others. Furthermore they are marked by the circumstances of their historical development, reflecting the power relations at their root. Given that representative institutions were created in the context of asymmetric gender relations, important implications arise for the substantive representation of women. Moreover, the effects of that asymmetry resulted in the primacy of masculine conceptions, interests, and priorities (Franceschet, 2011). In other words, the absence of women from positions of political representation or implementation of public policies should be attributed to the discrimination they encounter, even if the discrimination is not institutionalized. The second argument refers to the threat of compromising the efficacy of institutions such as parliaments and parties as a result of the exclusion of women, who, in the majority of cases, make-up 50% or more of the population of the countries taken into consideration herein. In this sense, the exclusion of women would affect not only the performance of those institutions but also the legitimacy of the very representative political system, bringing into question the nature of the democratic regime.

Other authors maintain that ensuring the presence of women in parliaments or other offices as public representatives, from a symbolic point of view and from its cultural impact, leads contemporary societies to recognize the singular nature of the social and political contributions of women and, at the same time, causes an increase in the respect owed to them by re-qualifying their place in society, culture, and contemporary politics. Seeing that women have distinct life experiences from those of men, not to mention different perceptions and evaluations of the democratic political process, their participation could potentially challenge the representative democracy in question, bringing to the table the need to incorporate interests and perspectives rarely taken into consideration by the political system. In other words, because women and men occupy different positions in the structure of contemporary societies, women have the potential to assume distinct postures toward a more exigent and ethical treatment of public business, contributing to the betterment of the political system².

² In this sense, studies focused on analyzing the general political process demonstrated that women are more proactive than men in what is said with respect to issues related to their rights, while the studies focused on the specific results of the representation of women are less optimistic about the difference that women make; in other words, even when the proportion of women in legislatures increases, the political practices and the results don't necessarily change. The issue becomes a matter of knowing if the increase in the participation of women is enough to produce changes that can lead to the betterment of the political system or, to the contrary, if the intrinsic characteristics of the political system are such that they would impede that possibility; for proper evaluation, the topic requires new empirical research that falls out of the scope of this paper.

The under-representation of women, especially in parliaments and in political parties, has come to be seen, for the most part, as an expression of a democratic deficit that brings into question the quality of democracies currently in existence. Although the contemporary democratic theory recognizes that the level of inclusivity of the political system—that is, the extent to which civil and political rights are guaranteed to all citizens without exception—is a fundamental condition for democratic consolidation, the minimalist approach to democracy dismisses the consequences of the impermeability of the system to the participation of all social strata when evaluating the regime. Open, clean, and predictable electoral processes that are free of fraud can alter the social composition of political elites — as in the case of Brazil in the last 25 years (Rodrigues, 2013) —, but the deepening of the democracy depends on whether or not guaranteed access to political power is offered to all segments of society, i.e., it depends on the existence of effective conditions that assure the participation and/or the influence of all adult members of the political community in the decision-making processes that affect them.

The Brazilian case confirms one of the most important findings presented in the international literature on the impact of the political inequality that affects genders. This finding identifies the specific limitations found in both of the stages in which the process of participation of women in electoral competition unfolds. On the one side, there are limits to women's capacity to pass from the condition of eligible citizens to the condition of candidates actually apt to participate in the electoral process; those limits involve electoral legislation—the system of open-list proportional representation, the predominance of party oligarchies in decision-making and the Quotas Act (Lei de Cotas)— and the manner in which political parties choose their candidates: they do not adopt democratic mechanisms, as is the case of the American primaries model, to make that choice. On the other side, there are obstacles that complicate women's access to the organizational and financial resources necessary for their participation in the political competition; recent experiences have demonstrated that it is one of the main hindrances to the efficacy of female participation in Brazilian politics. Various factors can explain this situation, especially those of a socioeconomic or cultural nature, not to mention the strictly political ones. However, in light of the inexistence of explicit institutional barriers that keeps women out from candidacy for public offices, the issue points to a deficit in the functioning of Brazilian democracy. Research in this area needs to elucidate the roots of the contradiction between the institutional parameters that do not impede the existence of female candidates and the formal and informal procedures that, in practice, make very difficult and unviable the selection of female candidates by political parties (Matland, 2003; Sacchet, 2008).

The implications of this process for the quality of Brazilian democracy need to be evaluated, and this work provides a preliminary contribution to the debate by focusing on three main aspects: first, innovations in the examination of the subject introduced by the approach of the quality of democracy; secondly, the description of the Brazilian case from a comparative perspective with other Latin American countries; finally, based on the advancement of research, the issue regarding the financing of women candidates in recent elections in Brazil. This work owes an intellectual debt to Teresa Sacchet and Bruno Speck, whose contributions greatly influenced the thoughts presented herein.

QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL INCLUSION

International experience confirms that elections are essential to the existence of any democracy. However, analyses of the processes of democratization in many parts of the world over the last 40 years have shown that elections do not guarantee the establishment of a political system capable of ensuring fundamental principles such as the rule of law, respect for citizens' civil, political, and social rights, as well as control and oversight of governments. Despite signaling that undemocratic alternatives were overcome and that, therefore, the choice of who governs is subject to the principle of popular sovereignty, in several cases, even when the process actually evolved to ensure governability, elections did not necessarily keep electoral democracies from not meeting the minimum criteria under which an authoritarian political system becomes democratic. In the Southeast and in Eastern Europe, in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, countries that have consolidated competitive elections coexist with governments that violate the principles of equality before the law, use corruption and misappropriation of public funds to accomplish private objectives, and hinder or block the functioning of mechanisms of vertical, social, and horizontal accountability. In such cases, what is at issue is not whether democracy exists, but its quality (Shin, 2005; Morlino, 2002; Diamond and Morlino, 2005; O'Donnell, Cullell and Iazetta, 2004; Schmitter, 2005; Lijphart, 1999).

Consequently, the controversy over the definition of democracy is again in the center of the debate. Despite the advances occurred in the nineteenth century, with the recognition of civil and political rights to citizenship and the progressive elimination of the qualification requirements for the right to vote, the literature has recently classified the democratic system as a phenomenon of a multidimensional nature that involves elections, fundamental rights, institutions of interest intermediation, and the civic culture of citizens. While the usual concept adopted by *mainstream* political science refers to the procedures

and competitive mechanisms for electing governments, recent approaches have broadened their understanding, taking into consideration the requirements of both an effective popular sovereignty and those that refer to the contents and the results of democracy. These approaches have included the requirements for political inclusion and effective participation for a democracy to realize its promises, in addition to the performance of institutions.

Influenced by the minimalist approach of Schumpeter (1961) and the procedural one of Dahl (1971), several authors have defined democracy in terms of participation, political competition, and peaceful contestation over power, but they have generally left out of the debate the unequal treatment given to women and other *outsiders* in this process. According to these lines of thought, the establishment of a democratic regime basically involves: 1) the right of citizens to choose governments through elections with the participation of adult members of the political community – but the universality of this condition was only fully recognized with the gradual extension of women’s suffrage in the twentieth century; 2) regular, free, open, and competitive elections; 3) guaranteed rights to expression, assembly, and organization, especially for political parties to compete for power, although without considering whether the internal decisions of the parties are subject to democratic rules; 4) access to alternative sources of information about the actions of governments and the political process. This definition maintains that any political system that is not based on competitive processes for choosing public authorities — i.e., that do not depend on the vote of the mass of citizens — cannot be considered a democracy. However the usual definition omits the fact that these competitive processes, in most cases, only included half of society by excluding female voters, those of African descent, and other outsiders.

Schumpeter’s perspective presumes, however an electoralist fallacy, that is, a tendency to privilege elections over other dimensions of democracy (Karl, 2000). By defining democracy as essentially a method of choosing between elites who compete for positions in government, the minimalist approach has given little importance to what happens in other democratic institutions and has ignored the discrimination imposed on women that excludes the possibility of integrating them among said elites. Neither has this line of thought considered that institutions such as parliament, political parties, the judiciary, or the police can operate in deficit or in a manner incompatible with the doctrine of separation of powers, living with electoral rules that do not recognize the effective inequalities of their application. In several experiences, the opposition is barred from competing on an equal footing and finds no support in the General Prosecutor’s office, judiciary, or parliament when restrictions on freedom of the

press and media constrain citizens' rights to participation and access to alternative information about the political process; nor are the differences in treatment of women recognized as a problem that brings into question the functioning of a representative democracy.

The contribution of Robert Dahl is however slightly different: he broadens the definition of democracy to deal with procedures that characterize polyarchies in connection with the historical tradition and political culture. Dahl insists that the principle of contestation of power is only assured when the participation of all adult members of the political community is unconditional, and their right to choose and be chosen to form governments is secured. For Dahl, full democracies are only those in which suffrage has been extended to all segments of society and certainly to women and the descendants of slaves. In his book *Democracy and its Critics* (1989), Dahl reflects on the fact that only in the twentieth century, especially after World War II, were women given the right to vote and be voted for in countries like France, Belgium, and Switzerland. He designates this as an obstacle to the realization of political equality demanded by democracy. Dahl demonstrates that even authors who influenced his own theoretical perspective, such as John Locke, excluded women from the qualifications required for the right to vote and to compete for power (Dahl, 1989, pps. 124, 135). For Dahl, governments and political leaders' responsiveness is also important, and for this reason the organization and representation of civil society through political parties is seen as fundamental. But again the issue of the internal democracy of parties is not portrayed as a necessary condition of the structure of opportunities which could facilitate the participation of women and other outsiders of the system.

The theoretical perspective that advances toward an effective treatment of this question is the one that defines democracy in terms of its quality. According to this perspective, the contents of the democratic regime, i.e., the principles of liberty and equality, as well as its requirement for articulation, are central to the theory. Playing on an analogy of the operations of a market, the term quality of democracy refers to the quality of a product — in this case, the democratic regime — to be obtained in accordance with specific procedures, content, and specific outcomes. Quality involves processes controlled through methods and unique, precise *timing*, capable of attributing particular characteristics to the product to meet the expectations of its potential consumers.

In the case of democracy, it is expected that the regime meets the expectations of citizens with respect to: i. the mission that they ascribe to governments (quality of results); ii. the guarantee of rights to

freedom and political equality needed to allow citizens to participate and achieve their interests and preferences (quality of content); and iii. the existence of institutional procedures or methods for choosing governors; lastly, the accountability designed to empower citizens to assess and judge the performance of governments and representatives authorized to act on their behalf (quality of procedures). Institutional procedures and government action are seen as a means of achieving the principles, contents, and results expected by citizens regarding the political process. The requirement of participation of such citizens is, therefore, linked to the existence of a political culture capable of legitimizing the system. The premise is that the principles, institutional procedures, and the participation of citizens should be articulated, which makes political inclusion a fundamental condition necessary for the attainment of political equality.

Diamond and Morlino (2005) identified eight dimensions according to which the quality of democracy can vary. The first five correspond to procedural rules, although they are also related to their contents: the rule of the law, political participation and competition and the modalities for vertical, horizontal, and social accountability. The two that follow are essentially substantive: on one hand, the respect for civil liberties and political rights; on the other, as a consequence of the former, the guarantee of political equality and of its correlates, such as social and economic equality. Finally, an attribute that integrates procedures into contents, in other words, the responsiveness of governments and representatives, through which citizens can evaluate and judge whether public policies and the practical operation of the regime (laws, institutions, procedures, and structures of public expenditures) match their interests and preferences. Although the quality of democracy approach defines democracy in terms of its fundamental principles and contents, which implies the perception of citizens in that respect, it integrates institutional procedures into content without ceasing to refer to the practical results of the system based on the assumption that social and economic equality can be achieved only if and when political equality is effective.

An important implication of this way of conceiving democracy is the connection between representation and participation for the realization of the preferences of members of the political community. This connection, if effective, allows one to overcome the gap between formal institutions and social life. Elections and subsequent monitoring of results by representative institutions are seen primarily as a means of honoring the rights of citizens and the preferences of different social segments. They are also a driving force of the institutional conditions that establish a balance of power, the effective existence of

an opposition and the obligation for governments and representatives to be held accountable for their actions; toward this end, the role of political parties and parliament is fundamental. By insisting on the analytical connection between representation and participation, the quality of democracy approach shifts the emphasis from the formal dimension of democratic institutions – as stressed by minimalist and procedural theories - to modes, including informal ones, in which effective rights should ensure the principle of political equality. Fundamental rights depend on the rule of the law, the effectiveness of which ensures that the values of freedom and equality are realized; however, this only materializes with the effective political inclusion of different social segments, allowing the articulation of the preferences of two fundamental components of the political system, namely the functioning of institutions and their social context. Accordingly, supposing that the balance in the distribution of resources of power—organization and money—is a key factor in stabilizing the political party system and in ensuring the proper functioning of democracy, equal opportunities in the electoral competition and political inclusion play key roles in measuring the quality of democracy. In this sense, discrimination, whether it be formal or informal, that excludes women from political participation in a representative democracy lowers the quality of democracy, and in the case of Brazil, compromises the very inclusivity required by the political equality principle. The following sections of this paper deal with the implications of this framework for Brazil.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN BRAZIL

In 2013 Brazil is completing 25 years of its latest democratic experience. The electoral cycles for choosing governments have usually taken place according to the constitutional rules that ensure an alternation in power. Today, fundamental individual liberties are more guaranteed and there has been an expansion of citizenship rights, pointing to some improvement in the functioning of republican institutions. After an interval of more than two decades of authoritarian rule (1964/1988), the military returned to their professional duties and no relevant political actor revindicates the adoption of undemocratic means to compete for power. Even facing strong resistance, a Truth Commission tasked to recover the memory of repression and resistance during the dictatorship is in operation in the country.

Such advances, however, are not enough to affirm that, apart from its electoral virtues, a democracy of quality has been established in the country. Part of the literature evaluating the results of democratization in Brazil shows that the country suffers from deficits and significant distortions in the

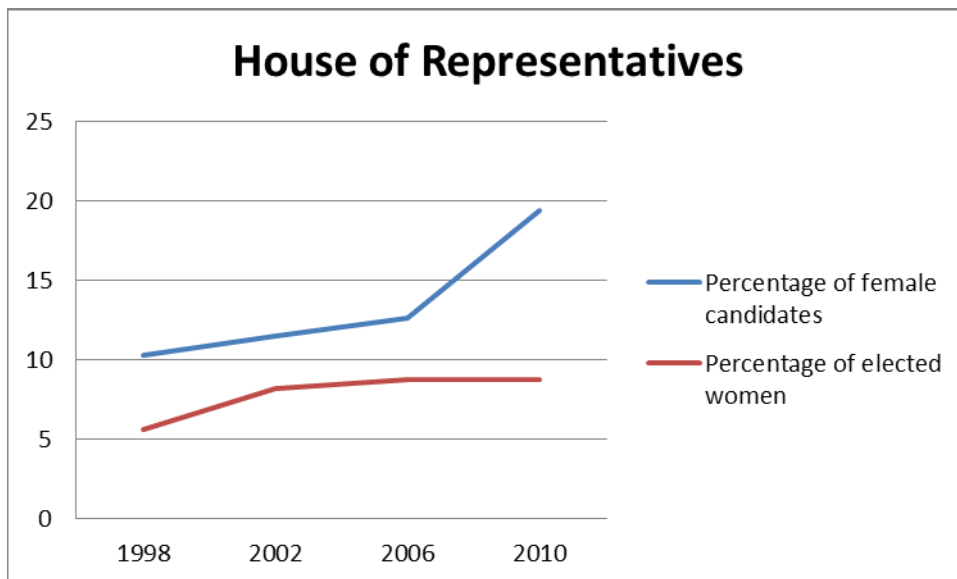
functioning of its democratic system. Abuses of power, such as the increasing incidence of corruption, show that the rule of law is not yet fully established. The Brazilian federal model involves imbalances relating to the operation of the electoral system, which gives unequal weight to the vote of citizens of large and small states, such as São Paulo and Roraima. More serious are the grave conditions of relative insecurity, especially among populations in the periphery of large cities; in the past 27 years, more than a million people have been murdered in the country. With respect to access to education, although Brazil experienced in the mid 90s the almost complete universalization of enrollment in primary education, over 80% of young people who complete this initial training cycle are not able to complete high school, affecting their structure of opportunities as they enter the labor market and political life. All this adds to the unequal treatment meted out to different social segments with respect to their political rights, as is the case in the underrepresentation of women, people of African descent, and indigenous communities in government and in the National Congress. This is an indication that the process of extension of rights to citizens — and, particularly, political inclusion — still has a long way to go in the country. Important asymmetries and distortions also characterize the functioning of democratic institutions, limiting, on the one hand, institutional fiscalization and control of the Executive and, on the other hand, the function of representation assumed by political parties and parliament. The presidential system prevailing in the country gives the Executive complete control of the political agenda and, given the huge legislative prerogatives reserved for presidents, parliament plays a more reactive than proactive role (Moisés et alii, 2010).

This does not deny the economic and social advances that have occurred in the country over the last two decades under democratic governments. The macroeconomic stability and inflation control achieved in the Cardoso government and maintained by Lula da Silva (1995/2010) improved living conditions and participation in terms of consumption benefits for broad segments of the population. Greater attention to social issues has resulted in the improvement of indicators that measure inequalities. But the efficiency and effectiveness of the process of formulation, implementation, and evaluation of public policies is still limited. In different areas of governmental activity, planning is absent and there remain financial wastes aggravated by embezzlement and corruption. Moreover, the criteria that inform the decision-making process do not always take into account the inequalities between genders, social groups, or regions.

Therefore, assessing the quality of Brazilian democracy requires specific measurements of different dimensions, such as political participation and inclusion, vertical, social, and horizontal accountability mechanisms, and government responsiveness. This paper, however, deals with only the first of these dimensions based on the examination of comparative data on women’s political participation in Brazil and other Latin American countries. The starting point for the characterization of the pattern of women's participation is the proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by them in the national parliament. The premise is that the measurement of said participation is a proxy for the effective political inclusion of women in the country. The paper then examines the limits represented by campaign financing for such inclusion.

Second only to Panama, Brazil has one of the lowest rates of women in federal legislative positions in Latin America; in the world ranking, it occupies the 111th position³. In the 2010 general elections, Brazilian women accounted for 19.42% of the candidacies, but reached only 8.77% of the total number of representatives elected to the House of Representatives⁴. The following graph shows the evolution of female representation in the House of Representatives between 1998 and 2010:

Graph I



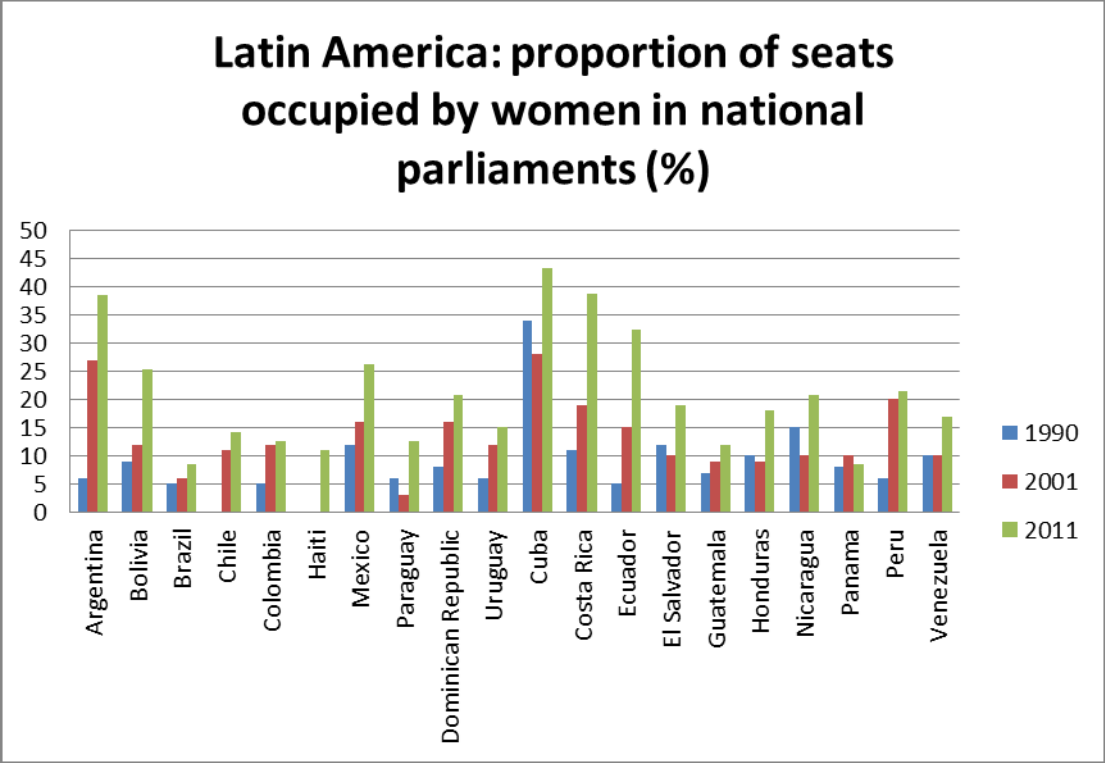
Source: TSE, 2012.

³ Interparliamentary Union, 2012.

⁴ TSE, Supreme Electoral Court, 2012.

The under-representation of women in political institutions occurs not only in Brazil. To the contrary, it is a recurring fact in all Latin American countries. Table I below shows the evolution of female political representation in Latin America between 1990 and 2011. The data show that in most Latin American countries political representation of women increased during this period, suggesting that democratization affects political inclusion. However, the percentage of seats held by women is still much smaller than those held by men. Brazil's situation contrasts sharply with that of other countries, especially Cuba, Costa Rica, Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico, Bolivia, and Peru. With the exception of Cuba — which has not yet experienced a process of democratization — all others countries established democratic regimes following the 'third wave of democratization' (Huntington, 1991) and adopted a presidential system of government. With different patterns of relationship between the Executive and Legislative branches, almost all are countries where parliaments are more reactive to political agendas proposed by the Executive than they actively present alternatives to it; in this context, the capacity of women representatives to succeed in introducing new subjects into the political agenda has been limited, although studies of cases like Argentina and Chile indicate that the limitations depend on both formal and institutional rules and specific political contexts that lead actors to expand their work space (Franceschet, 2011).

Table I

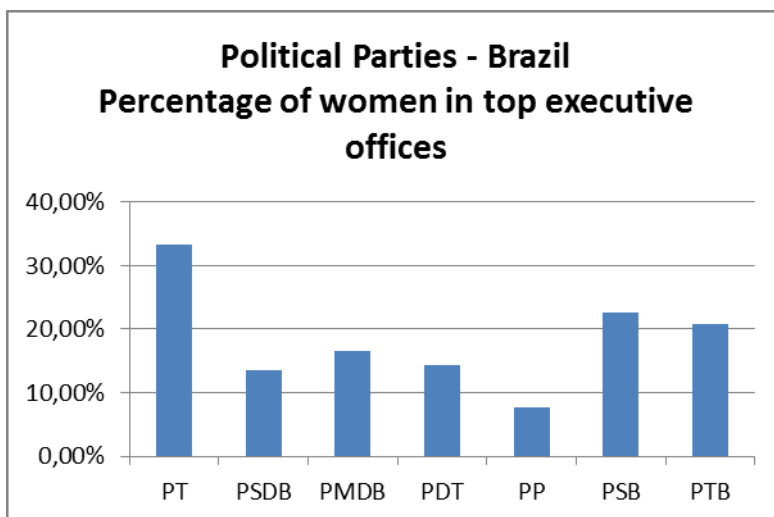


The obstacles that hinder the success of women in electoral processes are multidimensional. The literature points to three main barriers to the success of women candidates: the electoral system, political parties, and campaign financing. Brazil adopts the open-list proportional system in which candidacies are decided based on political capital and resources available to the candidates rather than being part of a list defined by political parties. In addition to a fierce intraparty dispute between candidates — which weakens the parties —, the process is characterized by an extreme personalization of candidacies and, for that reason, depends fundamentally on the ability of individual candidates to ensure the support of social networks and draw on their own financial resources to meet the costs of political competition, which can be extremely fierce and costly. Apart from that, the distribution of political resources available to the parties (in the case of Brazil, money from a public party fund and free television exposure during an electoral broadcast hour) is marked by large disparities. The scheme reproduces the inequalities of the social structure. Such features annul the comparative advantages that some authors attribute to the proportional electoral system (Lijphart, 1999) once that, instead of facilitating the recruitment of candidates from a broader social spectrum, it makes recruitment dependent on factors outside the political process, particularly the influence of money and social prestige (Sacchet, 2012).

In the case of political parties, the Brazilian experience confirms the evidence presented in the literature according to which both their structure and ideology are factors that influence the electoral performance of women. The multi-party system in Brazil is relatively unstable and fragile and is not characterized by very well-defined programmatic profiles. Rather, parties tend to change position according to the political circumstances that influence the formation of the majority coalition that characterizes the coalitional presidentialism in the country. This is of little help in attenuating voters' informational costs when deciding their vote. Given the characteristics of the proportional electoral system — which monitors the recruitment for seats in the House of Representatives —, political parties adopt a very pragmatic perspective with regard to selection of candidates. This selection — except for very rare exceptions — remains in the hands of political oligarchies that, in most cases, lead the political parties for decades. The result is a model that, as suggested earlier, tends to give preference in the final decisions to candidates who have their own resources to draw from or have access to resources provided by their supporters.

In spite of these circumstances, the social pressure for increased participation produced by the democratization process resulted in some changes. Although we cannot properly speak of a democratization of structures and procedures adopted by parties, permeability to female participation increased especially among left-wing parties. This signaled an improvement trend which, however, has generated very timid results. In this sense, Table II below shows the participation of women in the top executive offices of political parties these days.

Table II



Source: IDB, 2007.

The Workers Party (PT) has the highest participation of women in its top executive body, followed by the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB), the Brazilian Labor Party (PTB), and the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB). Although the percentage of women in the upper levels of the PT does not exceed 35%, it is undeniable that the party's experience with female militancy beginning in the 80s served as an incentive for women's greater access to senior leadership positions in other political parties. This process was clearly more limited in the parties of the center and right, such as the Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB) and the Democratic Party (DEM). Recent studies also show that, in addition to PT, PSB, and PDT, other parties of the left, such as the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), gave more opportunities for female candidates. This indicates that in the Brazilian case, ideology is a factor that affects women's access to leadership position in political parties.

THE ROLE OF QUOTAS

As a result of female militancy during the process of democratization, almost all Latin American countries adopted, from the 90s on, the policy of quotas for female candidates for legislative positions. In Brazil, the adoption of quotas was an initiative of leftist parties. The country has implemented quotas for female candidates at the municipal level for proportional elections since 1995. In 1997, these measures were extended to all proportional elections, establishing a reserve of at least 30% and at most 70% vacancies for each sex on the party lists.

The adoption of quotas was justified by the expectation that if there were no structural, cultural, and political obstacles complicating the political participation of women, the number of representatives of both sexes would be more balanced. Because the imbalance is seen as deriving from both formal and informal discrimination, the premise is that the imbalance can be corrected by a policy that, in addition to changing the institutional norm, would influence the political culture. The argument also claims that the inclusion of marginalized segments of society, women for example, in decision-making increases the expression and recognition of different points of view in a democratic political system, thus enhancing the adoption of policies aimed at the needs and interests of broader groups of society. This consequentially affects the legitimacy and quality of the democratic system. Then an assessment of the first outcomes of the quotas policy can provide important information to the debate.

Affirmative action policies like quotas were motivated in large part by the recognition of true inequalities among specific social groups. The purpose of quotas is the equalization of opportunities for these groups. In this context, the predominance of a Legislative composed mostly of men is seen as a threat both to the implementation of policies designed for specific social groups such as women and to the lessening of gender gaps and unfair division of labor. The idea, therefore, is that changing the profile of the players that define the public policies, making them more diversified and complex, can be an initial step toward gender equality in different spheres of social and political life. But the tension between the imperative of equality and the difference that actually exists marks the debate over quotas since its inception. The idea that claims the existence of a specific group identity that should be considered in the field of political representation is challenged because it assumes innate similarities between their alleged members who would tend to perpetuate the fixed differences that, to the contrary, should be seen as subject to a constant process of change. This debate is far from complete, but the preliminary overview of the results of this policy can contribute to its development. It is with this objective in mind that the data collected about the effects of quotas in the Brazilian case are presented here.

Regardless of the direction of the debate, its partial results cannot be generalized because they depend on political and structural factors specific to the context of each country in which quotas are adopted. The data presented below show the framework for the adoption of quotas in Latin America for the different parliamentary houses, for both unicameral and bicameral structures:

Table III

Countries	House of Representatives	Senate	Unicameral countries
Argentina	1	1	
Bolivia	1	1	
Brazil	1	0	
Chile	0	0	
Colombia	0	0	
Mexico	1	1	
Paraguay	1	1	
Dominican Republic	1	0	
Uruguay	1	1	
Costa Rica			1
Ecuador			1
El Salvador			0
Guatemala			0
Honduras			1
Nicaragua			0
Panama			1
Peru			1
Venezuela			0

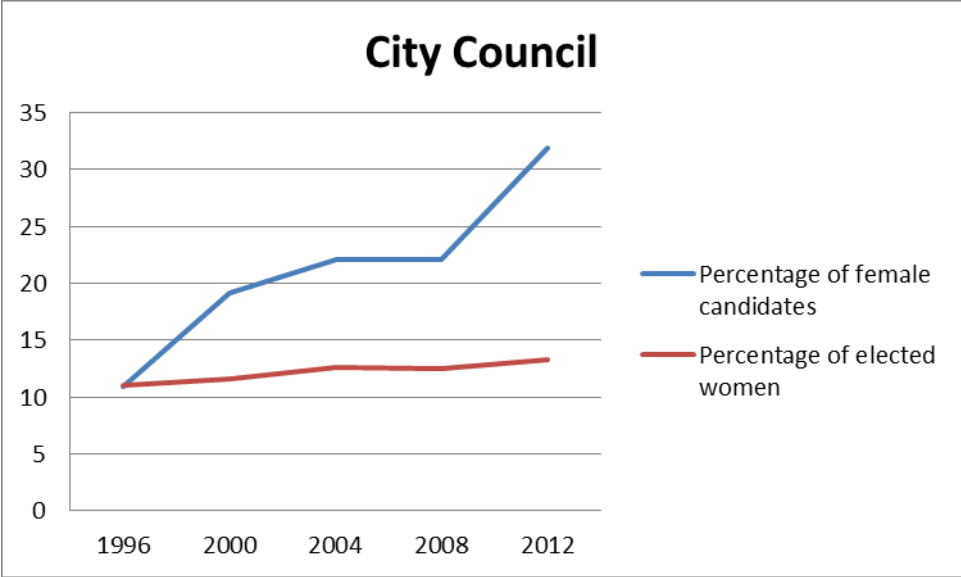
Source: IDB, 2007. Legend: 0 = No, 1 = Yes

Of all the countries in Latin America, only Chile and Colombia have no quotas for both congressional houses. Brazil adopts the policy only for the House of Representatives, Legislative Assemblies of States, and Municipal Chambers. In relation to countries whose parliamentary structures are unicameral, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Venezuela have not adopted a policy of quotas, although, as can be seen in Table I, except for the first, all the other three experienced an increase in female participation after democratization. Chile and Colombia, despite not adopting quotas, are countries where women's representation has increased slightly. Of greater interest is the evidence that shows that, with the exception of Brazil and Uruguay, the countries where female representation most improved, namely Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Paraguay, and the Dominican Republic, are precisely those that have adopted quotas, in some cases showing significant growth (for Argentina). A preliminary conclusion which follows from the observation of this framework is that, in general, the process of democratization has placed the issue of female representation on the agenda, but the most positive results, though not spectacular, have occurred in countries that have adopted the quota policy.

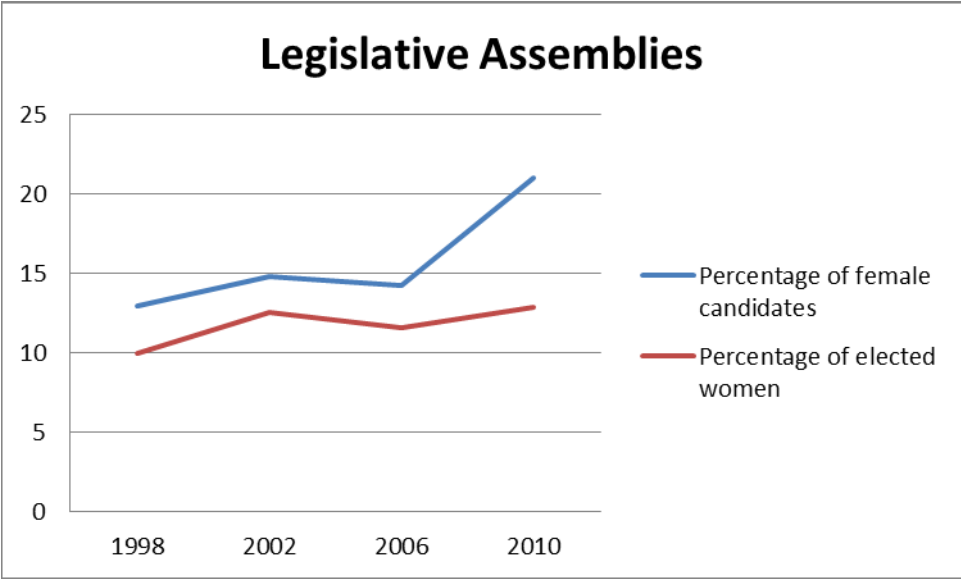
Evidently, Brazil represents the most significant exception of this set of countries. In the Brazilian case, the adoption of quotas was not enough to bring about greater participation of women in legislative positions. The research shows that there are many causes for this problem. Among them are the type of

open list electoral system in the country, the non-obligatory legal fulfillment of quotas by political parties (the law that sets quotas does not require the parties to fill them), the fact that quotas do not involve a mandatory allocation of political resources in favor of women candidates, and, last but not least, the low number of women who present themselves in electoral competition. These political, institutional, and cultural factors explain the failure of quota policies in Brazil and other countries (Bohn, 2009). However, in the Brazilian case, an assessment cannot be restricted to the federal level. The data on female candidates running for the Legislative Assemblies of States and Municipal Chambers indicate that there may be a process of gradual increase of mobilization in favor of women's participation in positions of political representation in the country precisely because of the existence of quotas.

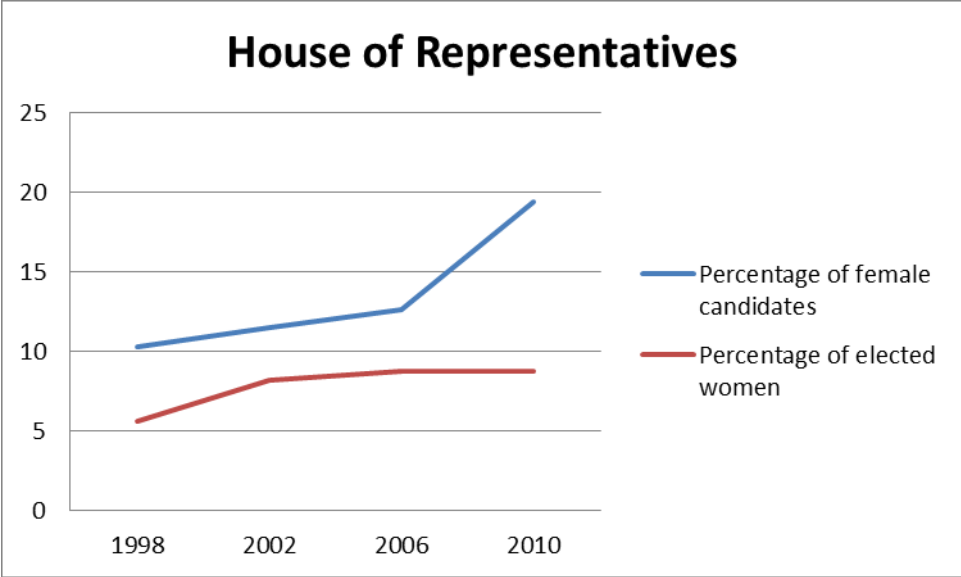
The graphs below show the evolution of the number of female candidates who were elected to city councils or to positions as State and federal deputies, and mayors between 1996 and 2012. The tables show that there was a significant increase in the number of women running for the posts of city councilors and state and federal deputies. However, this increase was not reflected in the increase in the percentage of women elected, which remained practically constant. The quota law for proportional elections was adopted in 1997, establishing a reserve of at least 30% and at most 70% vacancies for each sex on party lists. The procedure for the selection of candidates within parties — and particularly, the distribution of resources that affect electoral competition — have not changed. This shows two things at once: first, that the issue cannot be assessed without taking into account the integration between the formal structure of quotas and informal procedures of political parties; second, that, albeit timid, the scenario of women's participation in positions of political representation in Brazil only changed with the introduction of the quota policy.



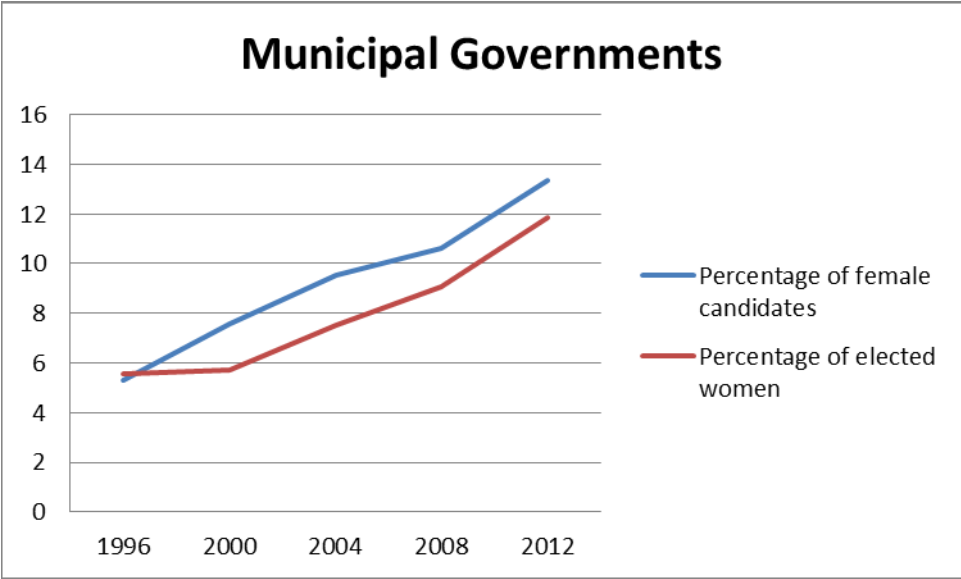
Source: TSE, 2012.



Source: TSE, 2012



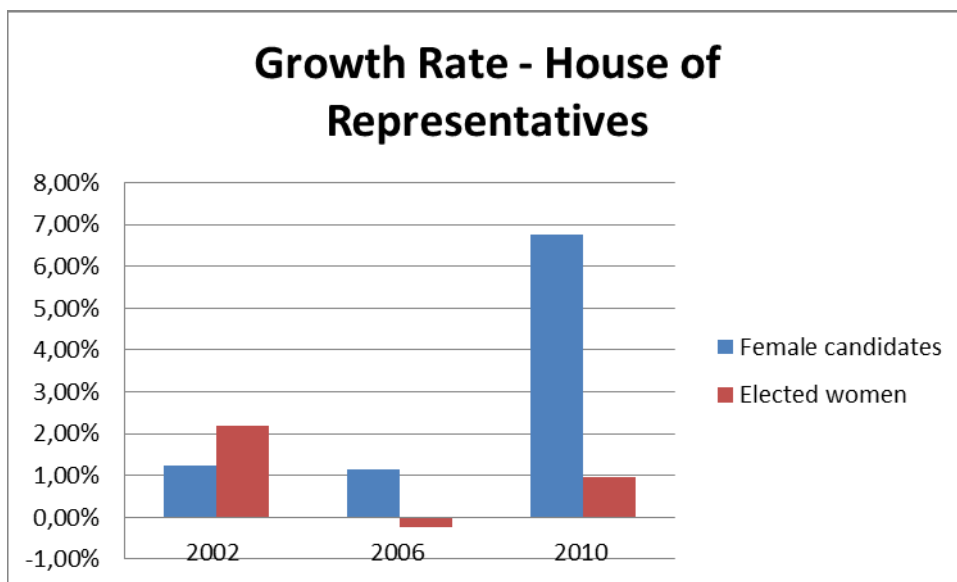
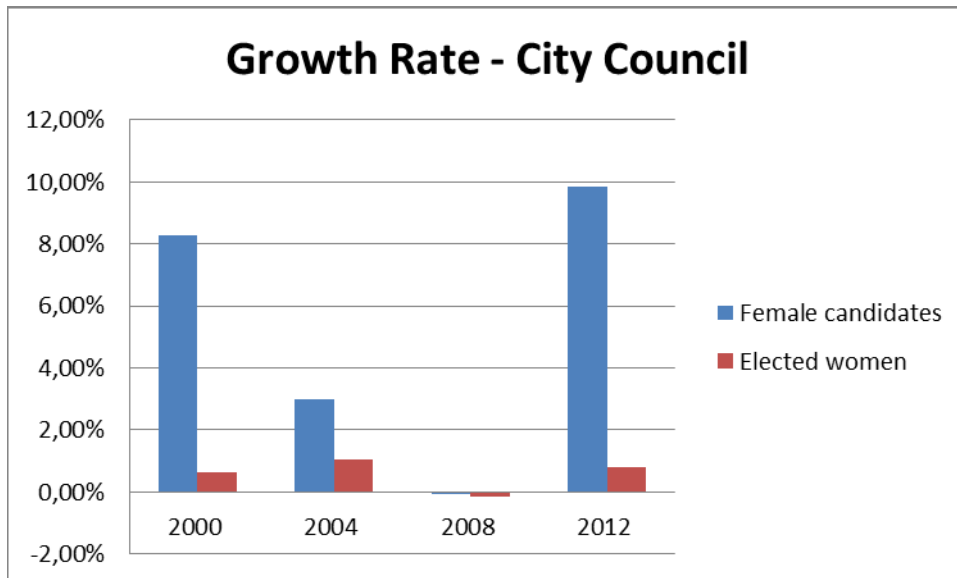
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Source: TSE, 2012.

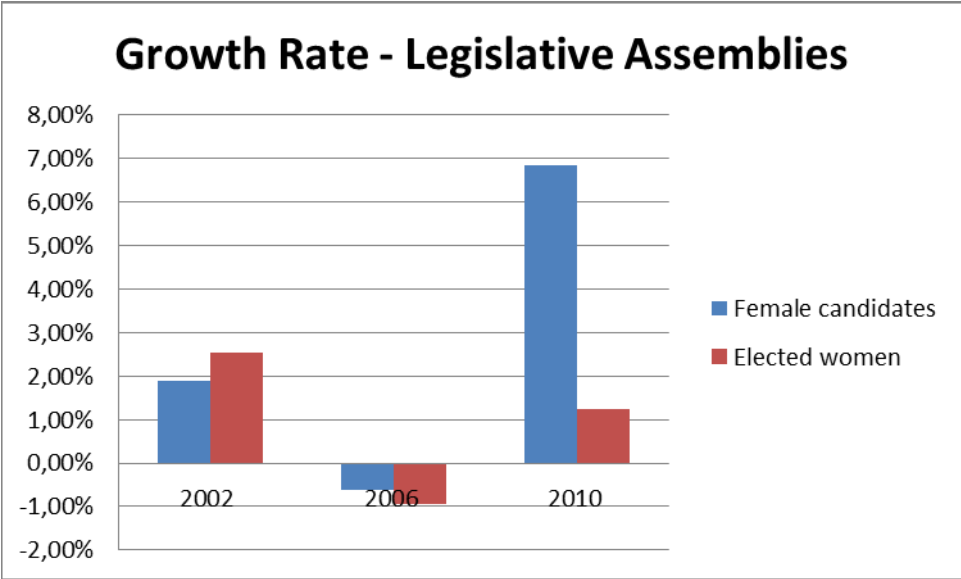
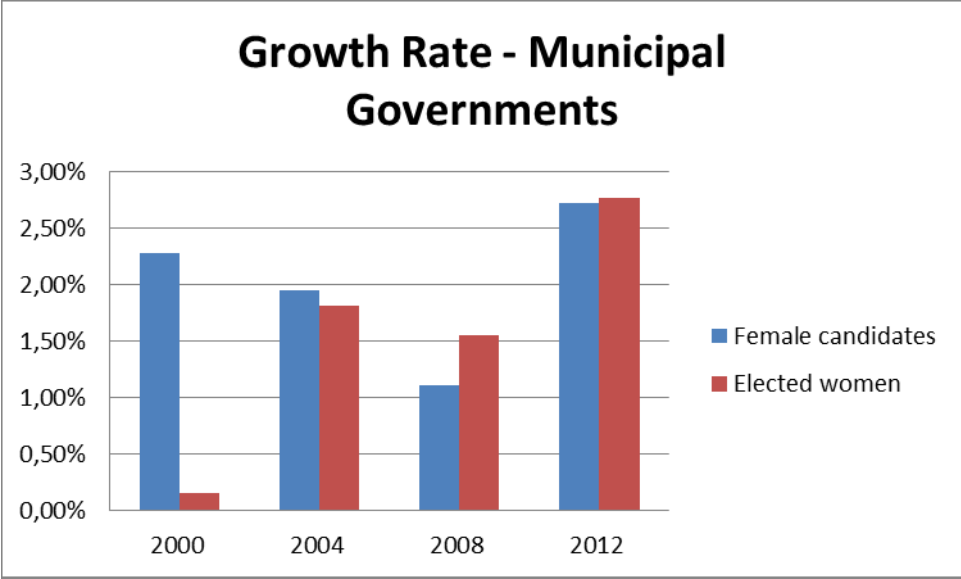
The graph on municipal governments shows that both the percentage of women candidates and the percentage of women elected followed the same upward trend, but the growth in the number of candidates for mayors was lower than the growth of candidates for councilors or MPs. One possible explanation for this is the fact that the quota law does not apply to majority elections. To prove this

statement we calculated the growth rates for female candidates and female elected officials, in each office, between the years 1996 and 2012⁵. The graphs below show the results of this procedure.



Source: own elaboration.

⁵ For the calculation of growth rates, we used the following equation: N_{women} / N_{total} . Subsequently, we calculated the difference between the years. In the case of the growth rate for the number of female candidates for City Council, for example, N_{women} / N_{total} in 1996 was equal to 0.108672. In 2000, this same index was equal to 0.191431. The growth rate between 1996 and 2000 was, therefore, equal to 8.28%.



Growth rates of women running for positions of city councilor and deputy had the largest increase, and it is directly associated with the adoption of the Quotas Act for these type of political competition. In spite of this, the growth rates of women elected in both cases remained stable. In the case of elections to municipal governments, the growth rate of women elected accompanied the growth rate of women running for office; however, growth has not reached 3%. In this case, it is notable that there is no adoption of quotas. It is possible to conclude that the adoption of the quota law in Brazil resulted in an increase in the number of female candidates running for the positions to which the law applies. But this increase did not translate into an increase in the number of women elected. The explanation for this has to be sought in other factors related to women's political participation. On the other hand, in cases

where there was no adoption of quotas, i.e., in elections to municipal governments, the number of women running for office grew at a much slower pace than in cases where the law was adopted.

ELECTORAL FINANCING ON AND THE PERFORMANCE OF WOMEN

Brazilian women face a double barrier in electoral competition. In the first place, they are under-represented among the candidates. Secondly, when they manage to run for office, they face difficulties that affect their electoral performance. In Brazil, the fact that the electoral system is proportional and of open list makes it so that electoral campaigns remain practically in the hands of the candidates. This condition results in discrimination against women for the many reasons. Research shows, for example, that there is a high statistical correlation between financial collections for the campaigns and election results. Indeed, together with factors such as the electoral law and political parties, the literature on women's political participation identified campaign financing as a major factor affecting female performance in the elections. In reality, these three elements are combined in the production of the frame which results in under-representation of women in politics, but this is mainly due to the fact that political parties unevenly distribute organizational resources and materials that impact the success of campaigns and, therefore, the success of female candidates.

The data presented below were collected to offer a preliminary overview of the situation for the Brazilian case based on the 2010 general elections, and rely in large part on the work of political scientists Teresa Sacchet and Bruno Speck⁶. Inequality in campaign financing for women in Brazil can be observed on the basis of comparative data on total revenue of financial resources used by men and women in the parliamentary and state level government elections in 2010⁷ as shown in Table I:

⁶ "Funding election, political representation and gender: an analysis of the 2006 elections," Public Opinion Magazine, Campinas, 2012.

⁷ Source: Sacchet, Teresa; SPECK, Bruno, "Money and sex in Brazilian politics: campaign finance and electoral performance of women in legislative positions", 2012.

Total revenue (among the candidates with information) - 2010 Elections						
Office	General		Female candidates		Male candidates	
	Candidates	Elected officials	Female candidates	Female elected officials	Male candidates	Male elected officials
State Deputy	R\$ 944.186.346,80	R\$ 454.419.049,22	R\$ 118.234.210,63	R\$ 53.543.502,49	R\$ 825.952.136,17	R\$ 400.875.546,73
Federal Deputy	R\$ 916.032.830,36	R\$ 574.368.583,21	R\$ 76.554.013,11	R\$ 45.791.773,85	R\$ 839.478.817,25	R\$ 528.576.809,36
Governor	R\$ 725.351.043,61	R\$ 302.379.851,42	R\$ 61.343.719,05	R\$ 30.076.727,76	R\$ 664.007.324,56	R\$ 272.303.123,66
Senator	R\$ 348.686.746,07	R\$ 223.370.862,48	R\$ 49.336.462,05	R\$ 37.770.070,94	R\$ 299.350.284,02	R\$ 185.600.791,54

Source:

TSE

The data show that the average total number of male candidates is much greater than the average total number of female candidates in all cases. To analyze these data with greater analytical precision, the above mentioned researchers created two indexes: the Success Index of Votes (ISV) and Revenue Success Index (SRI). The ISV is an indicator that measures the electoral success of candidates taking into account the conditions of competition in the States or federal unit (UF) in which these candidates compete. The factors are considered as follows:

$$ISV_{candidate} = \frac{V_{candidate} \times N_{uf}}{V_{uf}}$$

$V_{candidate}$: total votes received by the candidate

V_{uf} : sum of votes received by all of the candidates of the UF (state)

N_{uf} : number of candidates from each UF (state)

To measure the success of fund-raising efforts, analogous calculations were used. The indicator of success in revenue (ISR) relates the sum of the funds raised by each candidate to the sum of revenues from all candidates of each State or UF. Thus, it is possible to measure the percentage of funds collected by each candidate over the total resources of the UF.

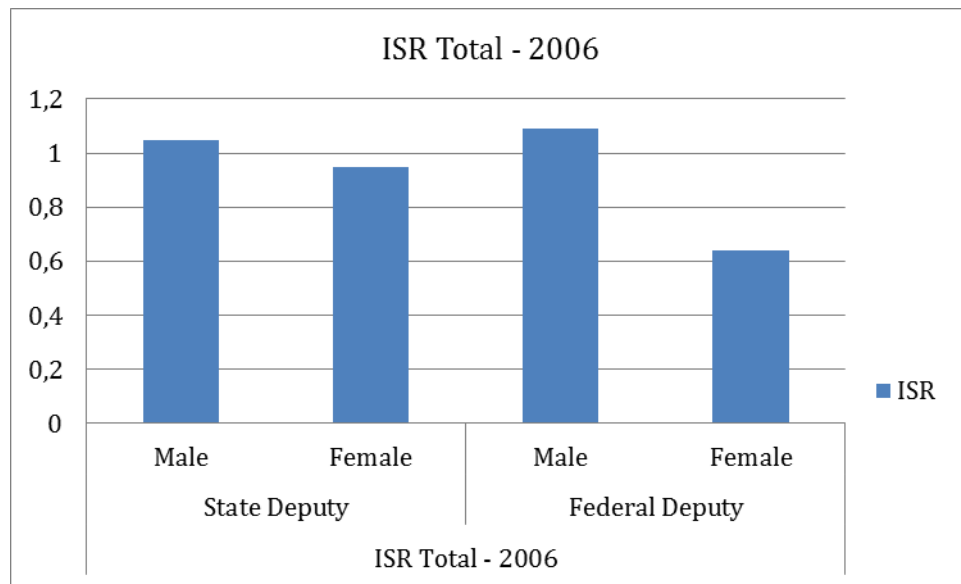
$$ISR_{candidate} = \frac{R_{candidate} \times N_{uf}}{R_{uf}}$$

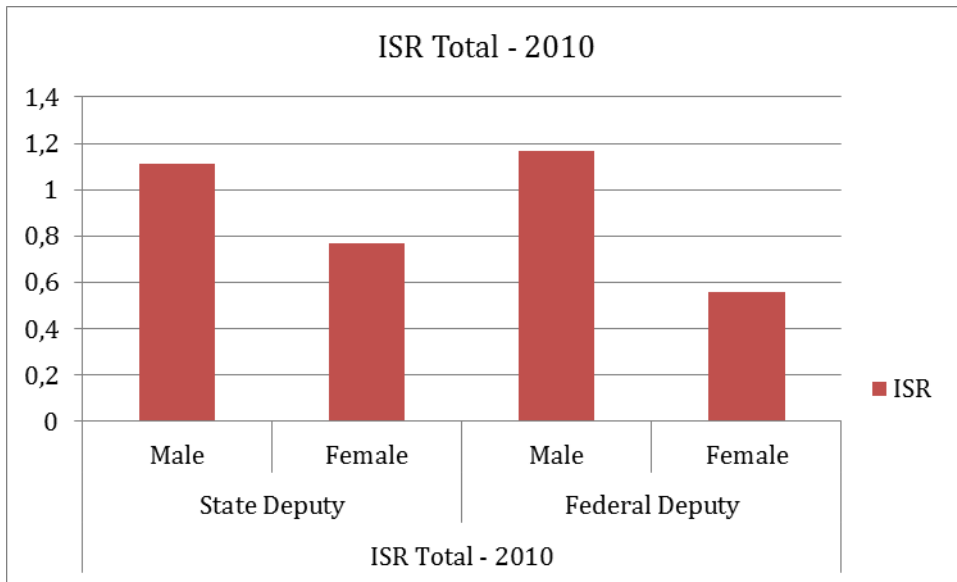
$R_{candidate}$: Candidate's total revenue

R_{uf} : total revenue of the UF/state (sum of the revenue of all the candidates of the UF/state)

N_{uf} : number of candidates from each UF/state

Both the ISV and the ISR have value 1 when the votes or revenue of the candidate correspond with the average of the votes or revenue of the UF or States concerned. The value is greater than 1 if the candidate achieves higher than average votes or revenue, so the closer to zero these indicators are, the worse the performance of the candidates in terms of resources and votes with respect to their competitors' averages. The use of the ISR and the ISV allows for a more accurate comparison of the performance of individual candidates, both with respect to the funds collected and to the votes obtained, making it possible for the analysis to take into account different Brazilian States and parties. The graphs below show the data for the collection of men and women who competed for office as State and federal deputies in 2010. In this case, the data is compared with the 2006 election and measured in ISR with the goal of making comparison of their campaign financing more precise.





By comparing the values of the graphs it can be observed that the differences between the fund-raising of men and women are significant. For the office of state deputy in 2006, women were left with 9% less funds than men, but for the office of federal deputy — most important from the point of view of political representation — women were at 41% less than men. In 2010, the difference based on the ISR shows that women had 31% less resources for the office of state deputy and 54% less for the office of federal deputy, showing that inequality in this case may be growing rather than decreasing over time; thus, the positive effects of the adoption of quotas may be neutralizing.

Sacchet and Speck present four hypotheses to explain the unequal funding of female candidates' campaigns. The first suggests that private financing, that is, the ability of applicants to assail their own financial resources toward their campaigns, is critical to the success of their campaigns, which would leave women in a position of disadvantage, among other reasons, because they have traditionally less control over their own resources and those of their families. The second hypothesis states that women have limited access to social and political networks that might otherwise provide alternative sources of campaign funding. The third hypothesis is focused on low financial support of private donors for female candidates; private companies tend to invest resources for the candidates they deem most likely to win the election, in this case men. The last hypothesis holds that parties discriminate against women in the distribution of party fund resources, despite the fact that these resources are public, that is, derive from tax revenues collected from both men and women.

As the indices presented showed, there is an imbalance in the relationship between the number of candidates of each sex and the proportional volume of campaign fund raising. The data show that men raise proportionately more money than women for their campaigns. This underfunding of women candidates happens in most Brazilian states. It can be argued, therefore, that the low performance of women in elections is directly linked to the low funding of their campaigns. On the other hand, the political capital — understood as the political experience of the candidate based on information on their prior political participation — also influences the behavior of donors and the amount of votes received. Two hypotheses about the influence of political capital on the performance of candidates are mentioned: the first argues that the longer the candidates have been involved in politics, the greater their chances of winning the elections. The second suggests that candidates with more political capital have greater access to financial resources. There is a close relationship between political capital and electoral success. However, female candidates are disadvantaged both among candidates who have not held office for a previous term (less political capital) and among the candidates vying for re-election (greater political capital). This means that the political institute of reelection increases the differences between men and women. Candidates with greater political capital acquire greater financial donations, but the under-funding of the campaigns of women persists (Sacchet, 2012a).

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Since 1998, there has been an increase in the participation of women in legislative positions in Brazil. A major reason for this increase was the adoption of legislation providing quotas for female candidates. However, as figure 1 show, the number of elected women remained stable over time. This means that quotas are not sufficient to increase the political inclusion of women and thus reduce inequality observed between them and men. The data presented earlier suggest that other measures to ensure more equitable conditions for electoral competition, such as the balance of funds for election campaigns, are needed. In addition, the absence of democratic practices within Brazilian political parties to choose candidates for elected office is also a factor of great importance.

The issue discussed herein touches on a fundamental aspect of the quality of democracy that was proposed by theorists of democracy many years ago. Sartori⁸, for example, argued that "... more than any other factor (...) it is the competition between parties with balanced resources (political, human, and economic) that generates democracy". The significant differences in the financing of campaigns for men and women in Brazil show that this condition has not yet been achieved in the country. Academic

⁸ SARTORI, G. Elementos de teoria política. Madrid: Alianza, 1992.

research also indicated that there is a high correlation between the funds raised by candidates and their chances of electoral success. The electoral financing is, therefore, one of the most important factors that influence the performance of women in elections. In showing the need to measure such aspects, the quality of democracy approach sheds light on the existence of deficits in the functioning of Brazil's democratic regime. Such deficits can be remedied through reforms of the democratic institutions. This, however, was not the object of this work and should be treated on another occasion.

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* Este trabalho foi apresentado por José Álvaro Moisés oralmente no Seminário Internacional "Gender, Power and Democracy", ocorrido de 14/07/2013 a 21/07/2013, em Veneza, Itália.