Gender Quotas and Women's Substantive Representation in the National and Local Governments of the Dominican Republic

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GENDER QUOTAS AND WOMEN’S SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION IN THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

by

Marcial Amaury Pineda Moquete

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Political Science
Western Michigan University
December 2021

Doctoral Committee:

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Mahendra Lawoti, Ph.D.
Druscilla Scribner, Ph.D.
Jim Butterfield, Ph.D.
Although women’s political representation has increased during the first part of the twenty-first century, the number of female politicians in legislative assemblies worldwide remains low. When well-designed and enforced, gender quota laws can increase women’s representation. In turn, the election of female politicians brings about better outcomes for women. Further, female politicians elected by quota are likely to feel more committed to representing women than counterparts elected without quotas. This study tests whether and how quota-elected women can represent women’s interests better than men and women elected without quotas.

Using the rare natural experiment of the Dominican Republic’s Congress and local governments, I compare male and female politicians and quota-elected women with women elected without quotas. I analyzed elected officials’ attitudes and behavior toward representing women’s interests using a mixed-methods research design. I found strong evidence to confirm that men and women have different attitudes and act differently regarding women’s issues. However, the difference between quota-elected women and women elected without quotas is more nuanced.
This dissertation’s findings show that women’s interests are better represented when female politicians, especially those elected by quotas, are part of the decision-making process in the Dominican Republic’s Congress and local governments. Gender quota laws are an excellent tool to increase women’s representation and enhance the quota of such representation.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is a reality, thanks to the contributions of many people. I want to thank my advisor, Dr. Priscialla Lambert, for the valuable feedback and the amount of time she invested in guiding me through this journey. Also, I want to thank the members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Jim Butterfield, Dr. Druscilla Scribner, and Dr. Mahendra Lawoti, for the recommendations and revisions that significantly improved this study's quality.

Because this dissertation was only possible because of the data I was able to obtain. I want to thank all the people who helped in the data collection process. Specifically, I thank all the academics and the legislative and municipal governments staff who helped me schedule appointments with elected officials in the Dominican Republic. I am very thankful to the legislators, ministers, and local government leaders who volunteered their time to give me relevant information.

On a personal note, I thank my late mother, Rosa Laura Moquete, for her sacrifice to offer me the best education possible. She truly embodied the values of hard work, discipline, and perseverance that shaped me into the man I am today. Similarly, I thank my family, friends, and colleagues for the support they have given me while I was a graduate student. To all of you, I say thanks.

Marcial Amaury Pineda Moquete
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 2012, a 16-year-old Dominican, Rosaura Almonte, known publicly by the nickname "Esperancita," made international headlines. The Dominican Republic’s harsh anti-abortion laws prevented the medical care she desperately needed. The doctors in charge of her refused to administer the chemotherapy treatment she was prescribed because they feared prosecution and losing their medical license (Sandoval-Mantilla & Laguna-Trujillo, 2018).

While hospitalized, Esperancita was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia and a seven-week pregnancy. The doctors determined that a chemotherapy treatment had to be initiated immediately to save her life. However, because such treatment would put in danger the life of the embryo, the doctors faced a legal dilemma. Under Article 37 of the Dominican Republic’s Constitution and Article 317 of the Penal Code, abortion is illegal without exceptions. Several public health organizations in the country debated whether Esperancita’s medical treatment could be legal. After three weeks of debate, the authorities concluded that her doctors could proceed without fear of prosecution. Unfortunately, it was already too late. Esperancita died in the hospital on August 17, six weeks after her diagnosis (Sandoval-Mantilla & Laguna-Trujillo, 2018).

The legislation that prevented Esperancita’s medical treatment was passed in the Dominican Congress by a majority vote of 128 to 34 in 2009 (Diaz, 2009), demonstrating an overwhelming disregard for women’s interests amongst most Dominican legislators on this matter. Although Latin America is second only to the Nordic countries in the number of congressional positions held by women (29.9% on average), Esperancita’s case is not an exception in the region. Eleven Latin American countries allow abortion only to save the
mother’s life or banned it altogether. In addition, a legacy of laws that tolerated marital rape, marital violence, and even attenuated femicide in some instances (Núñez Cetina 2015) is evidence of the long history of the absence of women’s representation in the political decision-making process.

To address women’s underrepresentation in politics, many countries have adopted gender quota laws in their national and local legislative bodies (O’Brien & Rickne 2016). Gender quota laws impose limits to the number of candidates of either gender that political parties can nominate to public office. Because representative politics is a male-dominated field, quota laws can serve as tools to improve women's access in electoral democracies. Indeed, quota laws have been adopted by more than 100 countries worldwide that seek to include women’s perspectives in the decision-making process.

In the Dominican Republic, the first quota law was adopted to nominate candidates to the Chamber of Deputies in 1997. Since then, these laws have been modified and extended to reach more gender-balanced candidacies and encompass multiple elective offices. However, whether and how quota laws affect women’s representation in politics remains under discussion.

Empirical studies on gender quotas find that, under certain conditions, this policy can increase the number of female elected officials (Jones 2009). Further, some studies find that quota laws can improve policy outcomes for women, even when cultural and institutional factors are considered (Franceschet et al. 2012).

Gender quota laws can yield tangible outcomes in favor of women because female politicians can articulate women’s interests better than their male counterparts (Mansbridge 1999). Also, when gender quota laws are adopted as a result of women’s mobilization
demanding political representation, female politicians elected by quota can feel more committed to representing women’s interests (Franceschet & Piscopo 2008).

On the other hand, quota laws could also deter female politicians from representing women’s interests. Some women officials elected by quota report that they are perceived as politicians who got elected with an unfair advantage and who are not qualified for the job (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). In reaction, some of these female politicians could choose not to advocate for women’s interests. They might think that by staying away from women’s themes, they can avoid the ‘bad’ reputation. This dissertation intends to test whether quota-elected women avoid women’s themes not to be labeled as politicians who cannot manage serious legislative tasks.

The Political Representation of Women’s Interests

Today, it is almost impossible to conceive the functioning of modern democratic countries (republics) without the device of representative government (Manin 1997). Policies that affect some groups and benefit others, such as who gets the right to vote, who qualifies for a tax exemption, what acts would be considered crimes, etc., are debated, passed, or voted down by representatives who are elected by citizens (Manin et al. 1999). Therefore, a common expectation among citizens is that their representatives advocate, speak about, act on, and produce substantive outcomes favoring their interests (Dovi 2007b). This is especially true for historically marginalized groups such as women (Mansbridge 1999; Williams 1998).

As a historically marginalized and still vulnerable group, for Latin American women, effective political representation is a matter of life and death. The kinds of laws that disproportionately impact women, such as “laws that tolerate marital rape, endorse different minimum ages at which men and women can marry, or grant greater rights to men on marriage,”
have been identified by activists (Godoy 2013). Thus, gender quota laws remain important tools to improve women’s representation.

After more than 20 years of quota laws in the Dominican Republic, this policy and its possible effects remain controversial. In 2019, the Dominican Republic reformed its electoral code, and a significant point of disagreement among lawmakers was the proposal to increase the quota from 33 to 40 percent. Yet, we do not know whether quota laws yield tangible benefits for women.

This project uses the rare natural experiment of the Dominican Republic to test whether female politicians elected by quota can represent women’s interests better than politicians elected without quotas. Female deputies and vice-mayors are elected by quota in the Dominican Republic, and female senators and mayors are elected without quotas. This allows for comparisons between these two groups to further the understanding of gender quota laws’ effects, or lack thereof.

Key Concepts

Gender Quotas

Gender Quotas are defined in this study as a group of laws and policies that mandate political parties to present a gender-balanced list of candidates at one or more levels of political representation. For example, no gender can comprise fewer than forty percent of candidates that political parties nominate for the Chamber of Deputies in the Dominican Republic (Art. 53, Law 33-18).

Women’s Substantive Representation

This dissertation defines women’s substantive representation as “acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them” (Pitkin 1972 p. 209). Based on this concept,
researchers define women’s substantive representation as taking action to produce results favoring women’s interests (Celis 2012; Celis et al. 2008; Childs 2006;).

**Women’s Descriptive Representation**

According to Pitkin (1972), descriptive representation refers to the extent to which representatives look like or share certain experiences with those they represent (60-1). Political theorists in the area of gender and representation build on Pitkin’s definition and argue that men and women experience the world in very different ways, so that men can only articulate the male perspective and that women’s perspective can only be expressed by women (Williams 1998; Young 2000). For example, female legislators were more likely to speak on women’s issues than their male counterparts (Celis 2006; Osborn & Morehouse-Mendez 2010; Pearson & Dancey 2011), and they are also more likely to bring the women’s perspective into non-gender policy discussions (Broughton & Palmieri 1999; Fraune 2016).

**Research Question and Arguments**

This dissertation tests whether and how gender quota laws affect women’s representation. More specifically, do gender quota laws increase women’s substantive representation? Do female politicians elected by quota feel more committed to representing women’s interests than politicians elected without quotas? Or, are politicians elected by quota stigmatized because they were elected through this policy? If so, does that affect their political priorities?

This study assesses the possible link between women’s substantive representation (the extent to which politicians act in favor of those they represent) and gender quota laws. Further, this analysis advances the understanding of the role gender quota laws play in the national and local legislative bodies of Latin America. This dissertation finds that female politicians are more committed to representing women’s interests than their male counterparts. For example, women
introduced more legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests than male colleagues and successfully passed these legislative initiatives.

Furthermore, quota-elected women are more committed to representing women than women elected without quotas. The former group embraced the idea of representing women, prioritized women’s issues in their agendas, and were concerned with a broader set of women’s issues than the latter group. Gender studies scholars and women’s advocates can use these results to support quota adoption not just to increase women’s representation but promote outcomes in favor of women. This study finds that gender quota laws promote the election of female politicians committed to representing women’s interests.

**Study Background**

Although some political parties in Europe and elsewhere, adopted voluntary quotas to promote the inclusion of women in politics, gender quota laws were first adopted by Argentina in 1991. After the 1995 Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action recommended that countries implement gender quota laws when necessary “to promote progress toward gender balance” (p. 237), more countries followed the Argentine model.

Gender quota laws have captured the attention of researchers interested in testing whether quotas affect political outcomes in favor of women. Empirical studies confirm that when quota laws are well-designed and enforced, they can increase the number of female legislators (Gray 2017; Jones 2009). Also, some studies find that legislative bodies with quota laws are more likely to produce women-friendly policies (Chen 2010; Clayton and Zetterberg 2018).

Furthermore, some scholars argue that quota laws can affect the behavior of elected officials. Some studies suggest that politicians elected by quota can be either strongly committed to representing women’s interests or indifferent to women’s issues (Childs & Krook 2012;
Franceschet & Piscopo 2008). In both cases, scholars consider that being elected through quota laws drive female politicians’ political behavior (Childs & Krook 2012; Franceschet & Piscopo 2008).

However, the thesis that female politicians elected by quota can represent women’s interests better than male politicians and female politicians elected without quotas, has not been tested in the context of Latin America. As a result, we do not know whether female politicians’ commitment to representing women’s interests is due to quota laws or the politician’s gender.

Studies on gender quota laws find mixed results in other contexts. For example, Clayton et al. (2017) uses plenary speeches to compare female legislators elected by quotas with female legislators elected without quotas in Uganda. The researchers find that female legislators elected by quotas do not advocate for women’s interests more than their colleagues elected without quotas. Yet, this argument has not been tested empirically in the context of Latin America.

The National Congress of the Dominican Republic offers an excellent case to draw comparisons between quota-elected women and women elected without quotas, because female legislators in the lower chamber and vice mayors are elected by gender quotas, while female senators and mayors are elected without quotas. Further, the Dominican Republic shares many cultural and institutional similarities with other countries in the region. Hence, the results of this study sheds light on the potential impact that quota laws can have on women’s representation in other Latin American countries.

**Case Selection**

In 1997, the Dominican Republic adopted quota laws for the first time. Law 275-97 mandated political parties to ensure that 25 percent of candidates for a legislative seat are women. In 2000, this law was amended by two other laws. First, Law 12-00 increased the quota
to 33% and extended the quota for councilors in local government elections. Second, Law 13-00 mandated that either the mayor or vice-mayor be a woman. That is, when candidates for mayor are men, their running mate for vice-mayor must be a woman and vice versa.

This partial adoption of gender quotas in the Dominican Congress has produced two different outcomes in legislative chambers. In the Chamber of Deputies, female representation increased steadily. Meanwhile, female representation has increased at a much slower rate in the Senate. Figure 1.1 shows how female representation in the Chamber of Deputies has increased, compared to female representation in the Senate since 1998.

Figure 1.1 Female Elected Dominican Republic National Congress

The evidence shows that quota laws increased women’s representation in the Chamber of Deputies. However, no study has examined whether quota laws can yield tangible results that benefit Dominican women beyond increasing their numbers. This dissertation addresses this gap by testing whether female deputies are more committed to representing women’s interests than their male colleagues or female senators.
As previously indicated, the Dominican Republic offers a rare natural experiment to answer these questions. Table 1.1 shows that of the fifteen countries that have adopted quota laws in Latin American, eight have unicameral chambers. Of these countries, the Dominican Republic and Brazil (highlighted in blue), are the only two cases in which gender quotas are applied to just one of the two legislative chambers.

Table 1.1 Quota Laws National Level (Latin American countries)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Current quota rule</th>
<th>Adopted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>Both Chambers, 50%</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>Both Chambers, 50%</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td><strong>Lower Chamber, 30%</strong></td>
<td><strong>1997</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>Both Chambers, 40%</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Both Chambers, 30%</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>Unicameral, 50%</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dominican Republic</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lower Chamber, 40%</strong></td>
<td><strong>1997</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>Unicameral, 50%</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>Unicameral, 30%</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>Unicameral, 50%</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Both Chambers, 50%</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>Unicameral, 50%</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>Unicameral, 50%</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>Both Chambers, 50%</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Unicameral, 30%</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Gender Quota Data Base

However, while the Dominican Republic and Brazil adopted quotas in 1997\(^2\) the number of female legislators in Brazil has remained low. The biggest jump in numbers for female legislators in Brazil was in the 2018 election. Yet, the Dominican Republic almost doubles the percentage of female legislators in the lower chamber. Indeed, Brazil has “the least number of

---

1 Currently, only 15 countries have quota laws or parity. Venezuela’s Supreme Court ruled quota laws unconstitutional (Archenti 2011) and Uruguay’s quota laws at the legislative level were designed to be used for their 2014 elections only (Johnson 2016).

2 Brazil adopted a 20% quota for female candidates in local elections in 1995 and, in 1997, a new quota laws were increased to 30% for elections at any level. Meanwhile, the Dominican Republic and Brazil started with a 25% percent quota law in 1997 at the national level. Then, quota laws were extended to encompass local government elections and increase to 33% in the year 2000 and 40% in 2018.
women in national legislatures of all countries in the Americas” (Sacchet, 2018 p. 25). In contrast, Figure 1.2 shows that quota laws have increased the number of female deputies steadily in the Dominican Republic National Congress.

Although the Dominican Republic has not reached the minimum quota of 33%, data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union highlights that the country has surpassed the global average of 26%. The limited impact of Brazil’s quota laws make it a failed case (Gurdian 2010; Sacchet 2018). Thus, the Dominican Republic National Congress is the best natural experiment to test the effects of gender quotas in Latin America.

**Figure 1.2** Female Deputies Dominican Republic and Brazil Since Gender Quota

Source: International Organization of Parliaments

---

3 As of Oct. 2021
Moreover, gender quota laws have also impacted female representation in the municipal town halls of the Dominican Republic. Indeed, the presence of female councilors and female vice-mayors has increased since the adoption of quota laws. Table 1.2 shows the increases in the number of female councilors and vice-mayors after quota laws were implemented in the year 2000.

Table 1.2 Female Councilors and Vice-mayors Before and After Quota Laws

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female councilors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>93</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(12%)</td>
<td>(24.4%)</td>
<td>(27.95%)</td>
<td>(26.79%)</td>
<td>(33.3%)</td>
<td>(32.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female vice-mayors</strong></td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(3.4%)</td>
<td>(92%)</td>
<td>(88.7%)</td>
<td>(92.2%)</td>
<td>(87.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dominican Republic Electoral Board

Many Latin American countries have adopted quota laws in local governments. However, about half of these countries have advanced to require gender parity instead of quotas. Of the countries that have not shifted to parity (Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Peru), the Dominican Republic has the highest percentage of female councilors in municipal governments. Figure 1.3 shows that the Dominican Republic leads in number of female councilors. These data reflect the latest electoral results when writing this chapter.
Figure 1.3 Percentage Female Councilors in Latin American Countries with Gender Quota

Sources: (Disla 2017; Meireles and Veira 2017; Muñoz and Guibert 2014; “Las Mujeres en el Poder” 2016); Paraguay’s municipal elections’ results available at http://tsje.gov.py/static/ups/libros/pdf/em-myee-2010.pdf

Furthermore, gender alternation between the mayor and vice mayor requires that every male candidate running for mayor must have a female running mate as vice-mayor. This extension of gender quota laws has only been adopted in the Dominican Republic and Honduras (Honduras: Reglamento de paridad y alternancia 2017). Yet, the Dominican Republic offers a feature that Honduras lacks. The data displayed in Figure 1.3 reflects the latest electoral results when writing this chapter.

Under Article 368 of law 176-07 that legislates local governments in the Dominican Republic, municipalities where the vice-mayor is a woman, the vice mayor is responsible for implementing gender policies and developing gender actions. Thus, this law charges female vice-
mayors with the responsibility of representing women’s interests. In contrast, Honduras’s vice mayors do not have a gender-oriented mandate.

Table 1. Female Mayors 1998-2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of municipal governments</th>
<th>Number of female vice-mayors</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dominican Republic Electoral Board

Table 1.3 shows how the gender quotas for mayors and vice-mayors, increased the number of female vice-mayors since 2002. Before the quota, only a few female politicians were nominated to be vice-mayors. The significant increase of female vice-mayors demonstrates that quota laws increase women’s chances of getting elected for this position. The law is designed to increase women’s participation and to include women’s perspectives in local governments. Again, only in the Dominican Republic, do these female vice-mayors have a legal mandate to implement gender policies and initiatives.

Finally, the Dominican Republic shares many similarities with other countries in the region. Like many other Latin American countries, the Dominican Republic is a multiparty presidential system. Unlike parliamentary systems where the prime minister is elected from within the parliament, presidents are elected by popular vote in general elections. As a result, the legislative and executive branches are more cooperative in parliamentary systems. In presidential systems, the three branches of the republican government (legislative, judicial, and executive) work independently. Because most countries in Latin America share the presidential republican form of government, findings in the Dominican Republic can predict results in other countries in the region.
Furthermore, the culture of ‘Machismo,’ a context of shared values and practices that minimizes the participation of women in society, is a problem that inhibits women from participating in public matters. In politics, the machismo culture endorses the idea that women must stick to the “role” of childbearing and taking care of household chores (Del Campo 2005; Chaney 1979; Furlong & Riggs 1996; Stevens 1973). Additionally, as in all other Latin American countries, the Catholic Church’s stand against abortion, premarital sex, and its support for traditional gender roles in society, shapes the cultural values of Dominican people (Betances 2007). These characteristics make the Dominican Republic an ideal case to test the effects of gender, and gender quotas on women’s substantive representation.

**Significance of the Research**

Can gender quota laws impact women’s substantive representation beyond increasing women’s descriptive representation? Yes, the evidence discussed in this project reveals that quota-elected women are more committed to representing women’s interests than male colleagues and women elected without quotas. To my knowledge, this is the first empirical study that tests the mandate effect and the label effect in the context of Latin America. Although Francheschet and Piscopo (2008) find evidence to confirm the mandate effect and the label effect, the study did not compare female politicians elected by quotas with female politicians elected without quotas. Thus, we do not know whether gender or gender quotas explain female politicians’ commitment to representing women’s interests. By drawing comparisons between quota elected women and women elected without quotas, this dissertation closes the gap in the literature and opens new avenues for future research. As more countries adopt gender quota laws, the results of this project help policymakers, activists, and academics understand the possible effects this policy can have on women’s rights.
Finally, the implications of this project are particularly significant for Latin American countries. This region has the highest rates of gender-based violence in the world and has some of the most stringent abortion laws. Women’s organizations and regional leaders concerned with these issues can use projects to support the adoption of quotas as a tool to address these problems.

Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation includes a total of six chapters. Chapter I introduces the reader to the problem this dissertation addresses, the research questions it attempts to answer, explains the case selection, and places the Dominican Republic’s quota laws relative to the rest of Latin American.

Chapter II discusses the theoretical framework that links gender quotas with women’s representation. This chapter defines the dependent variable, explains the hypotheses derived from the literature, and discusses the methods this dissertation uses to test them.

Chapter III analyzes whether and how female legislators represent women’s interests better than their male counterparts. I compare male and female legislators’ attitudes and actions toward women’s representation in both houses. I look at indicators of women’s substantive representation as process and outcome to assess whether and how female legislators differ from male colleagues. Through the analysis of semi-structured in-depth interviews, I measured whether legislators prioritize women’s issues and whether they connect with women’s organizations. Also, using archival data, I compare the number and success rate of legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests that legislators introduce. I perform a content analysis of legislative debates to test whether and how legislators speak in favor of women’s rights. Finally, I look at committee assignments to see which legislators join committees on gender issues.
Chapter IV analyzes whether and how female legislators elected by quotas can represent women’s interests better than female legislators elected without quotas. When possible, this chapter uses the same methods and measurements used in Chapter III to draw comparisons between female deputies and senators. Further, this chapter uses semi-structured in-depth interviews and archival data on committee leadership to test whether female deputies are treated differently from female senators by their female colleagues.

Chapter V consists of semi-structured in-depth interviews with elected officials from four municipal governments to compare whether and how female politicians address women’s interests better than male colleagues in local governments. Further, this chapter tests whether female politicians elected by quotas are more committed to representing women’s interests than female politicians elected without quotas in Dominican town halls.

Chapter VI discusses concluding thoughts. This chapter revisits the hypothesis, summarizes key findings, discusses possible implications for countries that adopt gender quotas, unexpected results, the limitations of this study, and avenues for future research.
CHAPTER II
GENDER QUOTAS AND WOMEN’S SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION

This dissertation is a case study of the impact of gender quota laws on women’s representation. Although many studies on gender quota laws consider how this policy can, under the right conditions, increase the number of female politicians who get elected, a more interesting question is whether this policy can yield tangible outcomes in favor of women. More precisely, this study tests whether female politicians represent women’s interests better than male colleagues and better than female politicians elected without quotas. This chapter lays out the body of literature that guides this project. Grounded on this literature, the study draws several hypotheses and describes the research design used to test these hypotheses.

Can female politicians represent women better than male politicians? The literature on women’s descriptive representation addresses this question. Theorists claim that because of shared experiences, female politicians can understand women’s issues better than men. Some empirical studies test this argument, finding mixed results. Some research shows that female politicians are more likely to propose and pass policies that favor women. Still, other evidence shows that other factors such as party ideology explain benefits for women better than having female elected officials.

Can quota-elected women represent women’s interests better than women elected without quotas? A small but growing body of literature addresses this question. Some scholars argue that when gender quotas are adopted, because of pressure from women’s organizations, quota-elected women are more committed to representing women than women elected without quotas. A few studies have tested this hypothesis, finding mixed results. Yet, this argument has not been tested in the context of Latin America. This research attempts to close this gap.
Do quota-elected women face discrimination because of quota laws? If so, does that affect their attitudes and actions toward the representation of women’s interests? A few scholars argue that quota-elected women face unequal treatment from male colleagues because they are elected by quotas. In response, these female politicians avoid representing women’s issues to avoid the stigma of the quotas. However, this has not been tested in the context of Latin America. By comparing quota-elected women with women elected without a quota in the National Congress and municipal governments of the Dominican Republic, this dissertation addresses this gap in the literature.

**Literature Review**

**Women’s Descriptive Representation**

Are female politicians more likely and better able to represent women’s interests than their male colleagues? Yes. According to Williams (1998), female politicians are better than their male colleagues at representing women’s interests. In other words, legislators’ gender explains why they have different policy preferences and exhibit different legislative behavior, especially when policies that tend to affect women differently than men are debated.

The assumption behind this argument is that men and women experience the social world from different positions of privilege. As a result, men and women develop different points of view. These differences can translate to policy preferences and legislative action. The dichotomy between male and female politicians is more evident over matters that impact women's lives in ways that men's lives are not effected.

On the other hand, in her seminal book, political scientist Hanna Pitkin (1972) argues that descriptive representation is restricted to only “giving information” (90) and does not necessarily address the components of creative action, consensus-seeking, accountability, and governing that
true representation requires. Descriptive representation is not true representation because it is limited to seeking to create a legislative assembly that, proportionally, resembles society’s demographics across characteristics such as race, gender, economic class, etc. (1972).

Pitkin’s arguments on the disconnect between descriptive representation and accountability mean that women’s descriptive representation in legislative assemblies does not necessarily bring about substantive representation for their group’s interests. In other words, the legislators’ gender is not a sufficient condition for substantive representation. Nevertheless, several scholars have challenged Pitkin’s conclusion (e.g., Dovi 2007a; Mansbridge 1999, 2003; Phillips 1995; Sapiro 1981; Williams 1998; Young 1997). In essence, they argue that women’s descriptive representation matters because descriptive representatives provide benefits to their group and society at large that other representatives cannot provide (Williams 1998).

The causal relationship between the descriptive representation of women as a historically marginalized group and women’s substantive representation lies in the claim that members of privileged groups do not have the understanding of marginalized groups’ interests in certain policy areas (Williams 1998). By ‘historically marginalized group,’ I follow Williams (1998), who defines it as groups of persons that fulfill five requirements: 1) they are socially and politically discriminated because they belong to such group; 2) their membership to such a group is not voluntary; 3) their membership in such groups cannot be easily changed; 4) the group is associated with negative connotations by the dominant culture, and 5) they have had these characteristics for multiple generations.

Williams (1998) suggests that politicians who advocate in favor of women’s interests must understand how women’s experiences are affected by the culture of male privilege. Due to her own experience, a female politician is more effective than male counterparts in articulating
women’s perspectives concerning public policy (Williams 1998). Indeed, studies find that female legislators see their behavior as differing from men's. These differences intensify in male-dominated legislative bodies (Abdela 1989; Childs, 2002, 2004a; Lovenduski 1995).

The link between women’s descriptive representation and women’s substantive representation has been studied theoretically (e.g., Williams 1998; Phillips 1995; Young 1997) and empirically (Berkman & O’Connor 1993; Chen 2010; Osborn & Morehouse-Mendez 2010; Shea & Christian 2017; Wangnerud 2000). For example, while controlling for party, constituency opinion, resources, and interests groups, Cowell-Meyers and Langbein (2009) found that the presence of female politicians in US state legislatures “is associated with more women-friendly public policy, including higher Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits, a higher percentage of women who receive child support, a minimum wage that exceeds the federal standard, the presence of pay equity laws, and the presence of several laws supporting the rights of gays and lesbians and women’s reproductive rights” (506).

Similarly, by looking at budget debates in the Belgian Parliament from 1900 to 1979. Celis (2006) found that the more female politicians, the more speeches advocating for women’s interests, such as equal pay, social security rights for women working in the household, reproductive rights, and educational opportunities.

Furthermore, other studies find empirical evidence of the link between women’s descriptive and substantive representation in municipal councils. For example, Rodríguez-Garcia (2015) found that in Spanish municipalities, a female councilors' presence increases local governments' responsiveness to women’s associations’ demands. Also, Bratton and Ray (2002) found that in the councils of Norwegian municipalities from 1975 to 1991, increases in women’s descriptive representation are associated with increases in the provision of childcare. In another
study, Saltzstein (1986) found that the presence of female mayors increased the hiring of women in American municipalities. All three of these studies ran their analysis while controlling for party.

On the other hand, some studies find a weak relationship between descriptive and substantive representation. For example, after examining the voting behavior of the US House from 1981 to 1992, Vega and Firestone (1995) found that although female legislators have more liberal voting patterns than their male colleagues, this difference is not statistically significant. However, when they looked at the bill introduction data for the same period, they found that female legislators introduced more women-friendly legislation than male colleagues. Another example of mixed results is Opello (2008). This study examined local legislative assemblies in France and found that women’s descriptive representation yielded women-friendly policies. However, this was mostly due to the work of critical actors, and that included the advocacy efforts of some male legislators.

In conclusion, there is evidence to believe that female politicians are more committed to representing women’s interests than their male counterparts because they can relate to women’s experiences in ways that men cannot. However, other research shows that factors such as party ideology matter in the study of women’s representation. Therefore, gender, gender quotas, and party ideology are factors considered in this study.

**Gender Quotas: The Mandate Effect**

Are female legislators elected through gender quotas more committed to representing women’s interests than female legislators not elected through these quotas? Yes. When gender quota laws are adopted because of women’s mobilization, female politicians elected by quotas feel responsible for representing women’s demands (Franceschet & Piscopo (2008). In other
words, female politicians elected by gender quotas feel a strong sense of obligation to prioritize women’s interests in their legislative agendas. These researchers call this link the ‘mandate effect.’

Gender quotas can create a mandate effect that impacts women’s substantive representation when this policy is adopted because of women’s organizations’ demands. Franceschet & Piscopo (2008) argue that the mandate effect is stronger when female legislators understand that the adoption of gender quotas is the result of the grassroots efforts of women’s organizations and when these organizations’ rhetoric in support of gender quotas is centered around the benefits of increasing women’s descriptive representation, rather than arguments about democracy and modernization (Franceschet & Pispoco 2008).

According to Franceschet and Piscopo (2008), the clearer the connection between women’s movements’ efforts, the benefits they expect from increasing women’s descriptive representation, and the adoption of gender quotas, the higher the chances that female legislators advocate for women’s interests. The causal mechanism is that female legislators feel obligated to represent women’s interests not only because they are women but because their pathway to a legislative seat was made possible by a quota. A Gender quota “…confers a special mandate on women who are elected this way, precisely because their election is intended specifically to improve the representation of women as a group” (Krook 2008 p. 358).

In the Dominican Republic, gender quota laws were achieved by the women’s movement before the 1998 election (Gómez Carrasco 2005). Motivated by feminist groups, especially by the Centro de Investigación para la Acción Femenina, political elites integrated gender-inclusive language in their 1990s political campaigns. These political elites adopted some women’s issues in their platform (Cordero 1991).
In the 1990s, the women’s movement was able to make solid progress on women’s rights. Under the slogan “Politics is also a women’s thing,” feminists’ groups were able to leverage important governmental changes. For example, the governmental institution that promotes women’s rights (Dirección General de la Promoción de la Mujer) received substantial increases in funding, and in 1999 was elevated to the rank of Ministry of Women (Morgan et al. 2008). These efforts were rooted in a long history of Dominican feminism, that has been politically active since Trujillo’s dictatorship (Manley 2018).

A small but growing number of studies have examined the potential impact of the mandate effect on women’s substantive representation (e.g., Childs & Krook 2012; Clayton et al. 2017; Franceschet & Piscopo 2008; Xydias 2014). For example, Childs & Crook (2012) found evidence of the mandate effect when they compared female legislators elected through a shortlist party gender quota with legislators from parties without quotas in the United Kingdom. These researchers found differences in how these two groups of female legislators approach the policymaking process (Childs & Krook 2012).

One important difference is that female legislators elected by quotas joined and were active members of the parliamentary women’s block. In interviews, these female legislators reported that some women-friendly policies were successful because of their presence. However, female legislators elected without quotas did not join the block claiming that it was not considered a serious group and felt they wanted to be involved in more important legislative matters (Childs & Krook 2012).

Analyzing voluntary party quotas in Germany, Xydias (2007) compared female legislators elected by quotas and legislators elected without quotas. This study found that female
legislators elected by quotas are more prone to speak on women’s issues than male colleagues and female colleagues elected without quotas.

In contrast, Clayton et al. (2017) compared female legislators elected by gender quotas with female colleagues elected without quotas in the parliament of Uganda. They found no significant difference on whether they would use their parliamentary speeches to advocate for women-friendly policies.

**Gender Quotas: The Label Effect**

Are female politicians elected by quotas considered less qualified than female colleagues elected without quotas? Are female politicians elected by quotas less likely to represent women’s interests to avoid being labeled by their colleagues? One possible explanation for the shortcomings of the mandate effect is the label effect. According to this thesis, female legislators elected by quotas are less likely to advocate for women’s issues because they do not want to be labeled as undeserving, unfit, incapable women who cannot handle serious legislative tasks.

According to Franceschet and Piscopo (2008), the label effect has two parts. First, women elected by quotas could be considered and treated as less qualified than women elected without quotas. Second, women elected by quotas could reject responsibility to represent women’s interests to avoid being labeled.

The assumption behind the label effect thesis is that because gender quota facilitates access to political office for women, female legislators who benefit from this policy are often deemed by their colleagues as undeserving and unfit for the position. Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) found that in the hope of counteracting this negative perception, some Argentine female legislators prefer not to engage in women’s issues.
Although gender quotas can increase women’s descriptive representation, it does not immediately change the cultural environment female politicians have to navigate (Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2005). In this sense, female politicians elected through quotas experience additional discrimination because they are women, and because their male colleagues perceive that the mechanism of gender quotas gives them an unfair advantage (Chowdhury 2002; Tripp 2003). In turn, the label effect can push some female politicians elected by quota to try to disassociate themselves from women’s interests (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008).

Female legislators elected through quotas are not less qualified to run for office than their counterparts elected without quotas and their male colleagues. However, some female legislators elected through quotas claimed that they are kept out of important committee assignments, are relegated to work on gender issues despite their policy preferences and expertise, and face a lot of resistance to pass legislation, thus, affecting women’s substantive representation (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008).

In Argentina, party leaders recruited women within their family circle to comply with the quota while ensuring that only party loyalists would make it into Congress (Franceschet & Piscopo 2008). Notwithstanding that political parties often choose both men and women in Latin America based on their loyalty, or even nepotism, female legislators elected through quotas are perceived as party puppets or placeholders (Dahlerup 2006). Several female legislators elected by gender quotas reported to Franceschet and Piscopo that their male colleagues labeled them as ‘Mujeres de,’ meaning they were simply the wives of male politicians who controlled their legislative agenda (2008).

Similarly, some of the female legislators elected through quotas to the Parliament of the United Kingdom reported to Childs and Krook (2012) that their male colleagues and the media
labeled them as members who were only qualified to deal with women’s issues. In reaction to this perception, these legislators did not want to be associated with gender issues, which negatively impacts women’s substantive representation (Childs & Krook 2012). These female legislators were labeled as ‘Blair’s babes,’ ‘Stepford Wives,’ ‘uncritical mass,’ or told that they ‘wore the wrong clothes’ by both male legislators and female legislators not elected through the party gender quota because they were less likely to rebel against the party whip (Childs 2004b; Cowley & Childs 2003).

Although Franceschet and Piscopo’s (2008) study did not prove that the label effect had any impact on women’s substantive representation as an outcome, they argue that the label effect negatively affects women’s substantive representation as a process. Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) assume that “If fewer women are willing to associate themselves with feminist initiatives, than those legislators who do engage in substantive representation as a process, may encounter greater difficulties finding allies, thereby making substantive representation as an outcome even less likely” (420). In other words, the label effect can diminish the chances of legislative successes by decreasing the number of women elected by quotas willing to act together to represent women’s interests.

**Party Ideology**

Can party ideology explain women’s substantive representation? Yes, some studies find that party ideology is more likely to affect women’s substantive representation than politicians’ gender (Beckwith and Cowell-Meyers 2007; Htun and Power 2006). The rationale behind this argument is rooted in the idea that political parties are more ideologically homogenous than women as a group (Çakmak et al. 2014; Reingold 2000). Also, political parties can provide
incentives that women organizations cannot, such as appointment to leadership positions for legislators who remain loyal to the party’s agenda (Htun & Powers 2006).

These ideological differences are such that sometimes male Democrats are more liberal and pro-women, than Republican women (Dolan, 1997). For example, Simon and Palmer (2010) found no ideological change in the voting scores of female members of the House who replace male incumbents and vice versa for both Democrats and Republicans from 1937 to 2008. In other words, the voting record of Democrat and Republican parties’ members remains ideologically consistent regardless of whether a man or a woman occupies the seat. Thus, party trumps gender.

To explain support for gender quotas among legislators in Poland, Dubrow (2011) found that party ideology on this matter trumps the effect of legislators’ gender. Also, looking at the voting records of the Australian parliament, Beauregard (2018) demonstrates that “gender differences in support for various types of gender quotas disappear once partisanship is taken into account” (305). And Htun and Power (2006) found that among national legislators in Brazil, membership in a left-wing party is the only consistent predictor of support for women’s rights and gay rights even when controlling for legislators’ gender, their education level, among other factors.

In contrast, many studies find that female politicians are more liberal in their political views than their male colleagues (Burrell 1994; Dodson 1998). For example, using bill sponsorship and floor remarks during the U.S. House of Representatives 104th to 107th sessions, Gerrity et al. (2007) found that female legislators who defeated male incumbents in the same district introduced more women-friendly legislation even when controlling for party ideology and district’s public opinion.
Similarly, evidence of how gender impacts legislative behavior over party ideology becomes more obvious when looking at other stages of the legislative process. For example, content analysis of all one-minute speeches from the 103rd Congress to the 110th Congress (1993–2008), Pearson and Dancey (2011) found that congresswomen in both parties are significantly more likely than congressmen to discuss women in different legislative debates.

On the other hand, some studies have also found mixed results. For example, through a longitudinal comparison of voting records Frederick (2015) shows that male and female legislators have almost identical voting records on the liberal-conservative policy dimension. Nevertheless, on votes dealing with women’s issues, female senators tend to be more supportive than male senators.

Another study uses the voting records of the Equal Rights Amendment. Hill (1983) found that female legislators were as likely as their male colleagues to respond to party cues. However, on issues that affect women differently than men, only 12 percent of Democratic congresswomen reject their party’s lead, compared to almost half of Republican congresswomen.

In sum, political parties are the gatekeepers that determine candidate selection and policy priority, they can play an important role in the substantive representation of women. Therefore, “research on (women) legislators’ behavior always accounts for partisanship” (O’Brien 2018 p 29).

**Alternative Theories**

Some scholars study other factors that can explain women’s substantive representation. On the one hand, Weldon (2002) argues that women’s movements are better equipped than individual legislators to address the diversity of interests and perspectives that women have as a group. For example, Htun and Weldon (2012) show that autonomous feminist movements can
explain policy variation to prevent violence against women and other human rights over the past four decades better than legislative politics, party ideology, or economic development.

On the other hand, some studies focus on factors inside congress/parliament such as legislative power (Schwindt-Bayer & Squire 2014) and the presence of female representatives (Phillips 1995). The present study falls under the latter category. Particularly, this study tests whether female legislators elected by quota can represent women’s interests better than male colleagues and female colleagues elected without quota.

Many studies on women’s substantive representation focus on the role played by political actors (Celis et al., 2008). Although external forces can influence elected officials, the decision-making authority lies, ultimately, in their hands. Because legislators and local government elites have the legal authority to make changes that can impact women’s interests, it is important to advance our understanding of the relationship between political actors and women’s representation.

**Hypotheses**

Are female politicians more committed to representing women’s interests than male colleagues and female colleagues elected without quotas? This dissertation draws on the literature that addresses gender quotas and women’s substantive representation to answer these questions. This dissertation tests whether gender and gender quotas can explain differences in the dependent variable – women’s substantive representation in the context of the national and local governments of the Dominican Republic.

The first hypothesis in this study is grounded in the literature of women’s descriptive representation. As previously discussed, this thesis suggests that because female politicians are
part of an ascriptive group politically subordinated, they are better advocates of women’s interests than female colleagues (Mansbridge 1999; Williams 1998).

**H1:** An increase in the number of women in the National Congress and municipal governments of the Dominican Republic should increase women’s substantive representation.

The second hypothesis in this study is based on the work done by Franceschet and Piscopo (2008). This study suggests that when a gender quota is achieved by women’s organizations’ grassroots efforts, female politicians elected by quotas are more committed to representing women’s interests. The authors call this commitment to women’s substantive representation the ‘mandate effect.’ The authors believe this responsibility is created because female politicians are bound by a policy that helped them get a legislative seat (Francesche & Piscopo 2008).

**H2:** If the mandate effect is strong, women representatives elected by quotas should be more likely to pursue women’s interests and increase women’s substantive representation more than colleagues elected without quotas.

The third hypothesis suggests that quotas can result in a backlash against women’s substantive representation. Some female legislators reported to Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) that they were perceived as unfit for their positions because the gender quota gave them an unfair advantage. As a result, the authors found that some female legislators tried to counteract such stigma by staying away from women’s issues. This is what the authors call the label effect, which diminishes women’s substantive representation (Francesche & Piscopo 2008).

**H3a:** If the label effect is strong, gender quotas should result in negative perceptions about quota-elected women’s qualifications relative to female colleagues elected without quotas.
On the other hand, Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) assume that if more female politicians refuse to represent women’s interests, women’s substantive representation becomes more challenging to achieve. The fewer female politicians elected by quota act together, the fewer chances to bring meaningful changes, such as women-friendly policies. Under this assumption, the label effect can harm women’s substantive representation.

H3b: If quota-elected women are labeled, gender quotas will decrease women's substantive representation.

The fourth hypothesis is grounded in the literature of party ideology. Many studies find that left-leaning parties are more committed to representing women’s interests than right-leaning parties.

H4: If party ideology is strong, center-left representatives should impact women’s substantive representation more than right-center colleagues in the National and local governments of the Dominican Republic.

In the next section, I describe the research design. I operationalize the dependent and independent variables. I describe the qualitative and quantitative methods used to test these hypotheses and the evidence confirming or rejecting each hypothesis. Further, I identify the data and the data collection methods used in this study.

Research Design

This dissertation uses the comparative method in a case study. The use of research designs focusing on a single case is helpful to test hypotheses and elucidating causal mechanisms (Brady and Collier 2010; Eckstein 1975; George and Bennet 2005Gerring, 2007). Yin (2014) argues that case studies are better to explore ‘why and how’ questions as opposed to ‘how much’
(12). Because I am trying to test whether and how gender quota affects Latin American women’s substantive representation, the case study method is the best option.

Another advantage a case study offers over large-N research, is improving internal validity and avoiding conceptual stretching (KKV 1994; George and Bennet 2005; Munck 1998). Cultural variables such as religion and institutional variables such as the political system remain constant in the Dominican Republic.

Furthermore, King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) suggest that researchers should select cases in terms of the independent variables and where they can see how the dependent variable varies. Piscopo (2011) suggests that to study the effects of gender quotas, scholars should “…identify two similar cases whose primary difference is the presence/absence of a quota mechanism” (470). Following these recommendations, this study uses a rare natural experiment that offers quota-elected women, women elected without quotas, and men to test the hypotheses relating gender and gender quotas to women’s substantive representation.

On the other hand, some studies suggest that because senators must represent a broader constituency, they do not respond to the same incentives as lower house members (Schiller 2000; Sinclair 1989). This finding suggests that female senators might not advocate for women’s issues the same way their female colleagues do in the lower house. However, empirical studies show that despite having different incentives, female senators represent women’s issues (Osborn & Morehouse Mendez 2010; Swers 2016). For example, Osborn & Morehouse Mendez (2010) found that female senators use legislative speeches to speak about women’s issues more than their male counterparts. Thus, differences in incentives for female senators and female deputies do not explain whether they represent women’s interests.
Variables and Operationalization

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study is women’s substantive representation in Congress and local governments. To arrive at a definition of women’s substantive representation, most scholars in gender and politics start with Pitkin’s (1972) concept of substantive representation (Celis et al. 2008; 2014). According to Pitkin (1972), substantive representation is “acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them” (209). Based on this concept, researchers define women’s substantive representation as taking action to produce results favoring women’s interests (Celis 2012; Celis et al. 2008; Childs 2006;). However, two methodological challenges arise from this definition, a) identifying what taking action is; and b) defining what women’s interests are (Celis 2009).

Scholars address the problem of defining what ‘taking action’ means by dividing it into two stages. On the one hand, scholars focus on process, which refers to the behavior of individual elected officials (e.g., introducing legislative initiatives, roll call voting, and collaboration with women’s organizations) (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). On the other hand, researchers evaluate outcomes, that is, the output of a group of elected officials (e.g., passing laws, enacting, and implementing policies).4

When studies only consider measurements of women’s substantive representation as outcomes, they risk leaving out the efforts made by key actors in the representation of women (Franceschet & Piscopo 2008). In contrast, focusing solely on the behavior of individual elected officials would not tell us whether such actions yield tangible results. Thus, this dissertation uses

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4 Researchers also refer to these two forms of legislative action using other concepts. For example, Kroeber (2018) define process as micro-level acts as outcome as macro-level acts. Nonetheless, they describe the same concept. According to Franceschet and Piscopo (2008), the best way to understand how gender quotas affect women’s substantive representation is by analyzing the ‘processes’ and the ‘outcomes’ of legislative activity.
indicators of process and outcome to test whether and how gender quotas affect women’s substantive representation.

The literature on gender and politics highlights some measurements of women’s substantive representation as process (Legislators’ attitudes, collaboration with women’s organizations, legislative initiatives, and legislative speeches) that can measure whether and how legislators impact women’s substantive representation.

Using legislators’ responses to questions about their legislative priorities, Reingold (1992) found that female legislators are more committed to representing women’s interests than their male colleagues. With the same method, Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) found that legislators who are more committed to representing women’s interests also connect often with women’s organizations.

Furthermore, before voting on a policy that addresses women’s issues, women’s perspectives must be put on the agenda. To accomplish this, legislators can introduce legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests (Meloy, 2015; Schwindt-Bayer 2006; Vega and Firestone 1995; Wolbrecht 2002) and use legislative speeches to raise women’s concerns (Broughton & Palmieri 1999; Celis 2006; Pearson and Dancey 2011; Piscopo 2011; Trimble 2000). Based on these findings, this dissertation analyzes legislators’ responses to questions about their legislative priorities, legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests, and legislative speeches as women’s substantive representation as process.

On the other hand, some of the measurements of women’s substantive representation as outcome that scholars consider are women-friendly policies, laws, and changes to the congressional rules that make politics more inclusive for women (Cowell-Meyers & Langbein 2009; Wittmer & Bouche 2013; Smith 2014). For example, through the study of 19 democracies
from 1970 to 2000, Kittilson (2008) found that women’s presence in congress significantly affects the adoption of maternity and childcare leave policies. Similarly, Htun et al. (2013) found that the more female legislators, the more legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests are introduced in Argentina’s Congress.

Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) argue that changing discriminatory congressional practices to women constitutes an outcome for women. For example, the researchers report that female senators changed the Senate session meeting time from 6 p.m. to 3 p.m. Meetings at 6 p.m. limited women’s ability to participate in important political discussions (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008).

On the other hand, data availability limits the methods this dissertation can use to test the effects of gender quota laws in local governments. Municipal governments in unitary states such as the Dominican Republic do not have legislative duties (Rodríguez-Garcia 2015). Nevertheless, semi-structured in-depth interview data can reveal how committed elected officials in municipal councils are in representing women’s interests.

Town hall leaders can collaborate with women’s organizations and advocate for programs to benefit women in their respective communities (Paragraph 1-d, Article 19, Law 176-07). Thus, women’s substantive representation as process in municipal councils are 1) prioritizing women’s interests, 2) collaborations with women’s organizations, and 3) developing projects that benefit women. No indicators of women’s substantive representation as outcome can be measured in local governments.

These indicators of women’s substantive representation as process address the first challenge in defining women’s substantive representation. That is, defining what taking action means. Pitkin (1972) argues that substantive representation is “acting in the interest of the
represented, in a manner responsive to them” (209). This dissertation defines taking action as performing one or more activities described above such as introducing legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests, and using legislative speeches to advocate for women.

The second challenge defining women’s substantive representation is operationalizing women’s interests. This is problematic because we need to know what women want before assessing whether an elected official is truly acting in favor of women’s interests (Baldez 2011). There are two extreme views in this discussion that must be avoided. On the one hand, some scholars have adopted feminists’ claims as if they were universally upheld by all women (Celis & Childs 2012). However, one cannot assume that all women share common identities or interests (Dovi 2007b). For example, women (including feminists) disagree on abortion laws, positive discrimination, face veils, prostitution, pornography, etc. (Celis & Childs 2018).

On the other hand, some scholars have adopted Saward’s (2006) ‘economy of claims’ approach in which women’s interests are defined by the actors’ claims in the way those actors see it is best to favor women. This extreme must be avoided because it can fall into the trap of value-relativism. That is, any claim made in the name of women’s interests could be valid (Dodson 2006). For example, Severs et al. (2013) argue that in debates over the Flemish headscarf debate, claims made by some conservative Muslim women do not represent the interests of many Muslim women.

Although some scholars have opted for operationalizing women’s substantive representation as bringing women’s arguments to the table without judging the value content of such arguments (e.g., Clayton et al. 2017), Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) argue that “substantive representation requires that legislators have certain attitudes and preferences when acting as representatives” (397). Thus, for Franceschet and Piscopo (2008), “women’s issues
include all themes related to improving women’s lives, including but not limited to eliminating violence against women, expanding reproductive rights and women’s health, and advancing equality and nondiscrimination measures” (397).

To avoid these problems, several empirical studies have utilized Baldez’s (2011) approach of framing women’s interests based on the UN Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (e.g., Bouché & Wittmer 2015; Chaney 2015; Volden et al. 2018). According to Baldez (2011), this approach “offers a better way to measure women’s interests that addresses the political limitations of existing definitions” (422).

Furthermore, Baldez (2011) argues that the CEDAW offers several advantages: 1) it does not favor any particular group’s interpretations of women’s interests because its recommendations are based on the premise that women should not be discriminated against due to their gender; 2) it is a legitimate indicator of women’s interests, as its comprehensive list of rights have been ratified by most countries (including all Latin American countries), and 3) it captures how women’s perspectives can add a gender dimension to themes not traditionally considered gender issues.

Based on the literature discussed, women’s substantive representation is defined in this study as the manifestation of one or more of the following acts: introducing legislative initiatives, using legislative speeches, networking with women’s organizations, passing laws, enacting policies, changing legislative and municipal rules, having positive attitudes toward the representation of women, and any other action that is performed in favor of women’s interest as defined by the UN Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women which
include enhancing women’s autonomy, educational parity, the elimination of sexualized violence, women’s economic emancipation, and programs for rural women.  

**Independent Variables**

The operationalization of the independent variables is simple and straightforward. The first independent variable is gender. Many studies find that female politicians are more likely to act in favor of women’s interests than male colleagues. This dissertation operationalizes the concept of gender as men and women.

The second independent variable is gender quota laws. A small, but growing body of literature points out that women elected by quotas can have a stronger impact on women’s substantive representation than women elected without quotas. This dissertation operationalizes gender quota as quota elected women and women elected without quota.

The third independent variable is party ideology. However, there is not much ideological differentiation among Latin American parties to create a standard classification (Mainwaring 1999). Ruth (2016) argues that the clientelistic practices common in Latin America politics hinder the development of programmatic differences among political parties to the point that citizens do not respond to cues of left-right labels.

Due to the lack of programmatic differentiation among Latin American parties, some scholars have resorted to constructing party classifications based on survey responses from country experts and legislators (e.g., Coppedge 1997; Kitschelt et al 2010; Mainwaring 2018; Rosas 2005; Wiesehomeier & Benoit 2009). These classifications have been used to account for

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5 For a comprehensive list of all the issues address in the UN Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, please visit [https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx](https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx)
party ideology as a control variable in studies of gender and politics (e.g., Funk et al 2017; Hinojosa et al 2018; Schwindt-Bayer 2010). For example, Hinojosa et al (2018) used the Wiesehomeier data on Latin American parties to control for party ideology while testing the effects of descriptive representation in Costa Rica’s Legislative Assembly.

According to Sagás (1999), vote-buying and promises of job placement in exchange for citizens ID cards are clientelistic practices that have always been part of the electoral system of the Dominican Republic. Further, a ranking of political party ideology of 12 Latin American countries puts the Dominican Republic as the least programmatic system (Kitschelt et al., 2010). And using data from the Latin American Elites project from the University of Salamanca, Alcantara (2006) argues that the Dominican Republic is the least ideologically polarized country in the region.

One academic argued that “major political parties in the Dominican Republic are pragmatic. Party elites make political decisions to get and maintain power, not to advance a particular ideology.” Evidence of this pragmatic decision-making is the strategic alliances between parties that have been traditionally on opposite sides. For example, the PRD has always stood for social democratic values in Dominican Politics. Meanwhile, the PRSC represents conservative values. However, both parties reached a historic alliance known as Alianza Rosada (In English, Pink Alliance because of the combination of the parties’ color, PRSC red, and PRD white) to increase both parties’ chances of winning elections (Gulías 2006).

Although political parties in the Dominican Republic are not ideologically driven, some differences are important. When debating controversial issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and women’s legal age to marry, among others, one can see political parties taking ideologically

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6 Interview with academic October 20, 2019-C.
driven positions. This dissertation uses parties’ guidelines, bylaws, and experts’ opinions to classify political parties into two groups (Center-left and Center-right).

**Table 2.1 Political Parties’ Classification and Congressional Representation In the National Congress of the Dominican Republic (1998-2016)**

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partido de la Liberación Dominicana (PLD)</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>22 (69%)</td>
<td>30 (94%)</td>
<td>28 (81%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deputies</td>
<td>48 (32%)</td>
<td>41 (27%)</td>
<td>95 (53%)</td>
<td>105 (57%)</td>
<td>107 (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD)</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>19 (63%)</td>
<td>29 (91%)</td>
<td>6 (19%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deputies</td>
<td>68 (46%)</td>
<td>73 (49%)</td>
<td>41 (23%)</td>
<td>75 (41%)</td>
<td>15 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partido Reformista Social Cristino (PRSC)</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deputies</td>
<td>15 (10%)</td>
<td>35 (23%)</td>
<td>42 (24%)</td>
<td>3 (2%)</td>
<td>18 (9%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partido Revolucionario Moderno (PRM)</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Senate</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deputies</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>42 (22%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partido Revolucionario Independiente (PRI)</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deputies</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bloque Institucional Socialdemócrata (BIS)</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Senate</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deputies</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partido Unión Democrática Cristiana (UDC)</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
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<td>Deputies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fuerza Nacional Progresista (FNP)</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
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<td>Deputies</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partido Nacional Voluntad Ciudadana (PNVC)</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
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<td>Deputies</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partido Verde de la Unidad Democrática (PVUD)*</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deputies</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>-</td>
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Table 2.1. —continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Name</th>
<th>Center-</th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th>Deputies</th>
<th>Center-</th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th>Deputies</th>
<th>Center-</th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th>Deputies</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fuerza del Pueblo (FP)</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bloque Institucional Progresista (BIP)</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
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<td>Frente Amplio**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partido Popular Cristiano (PPC)</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partido Quisqueyano Demócrata Cristiano (PQDC)</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partido Liberal Reformista (PLR)</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alianza País (ALPAIS)</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movimiento Democrático Alternativo (MODA)</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partido de los Trabajadores Dominicanos (PTD)</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dominican Republic Electoral Board

* Previously known as Unidad Democrática (UD)

** Previously known as Movimiento Independencia, Unidad y Cambio (MIUCA)

Table 2.1 shows that nineteen parties have had congressional representation since 1998. Nevertheless, only a few parties have had significant numbers. The Dominican Liberation Party (PLD), the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD), and the Social Christian Reformist Party (PRSC) controlled most of the seats during this period. Currently, the Modern Revolutionary Party (PRM) controls the Senate and has a majority in the Chamber of the Deputies.
Data and Methods

This dissertation uses multiple qualitative methods to test the impact of gender and gender quotas on women’s substantive representation as process and outcome. The methods chosen are appropriate to test the hypotheses and answer the research question at hand. Because the representation of women’s interests can occur in different stages, it is best to measure multiple aspects of representatives’ work, rather than one level of measurement.

Interviews

I used the qualitative method of in-depth interviews to collect data about politicians’ attitudes toward representing women’s interests, priorities, and whether they collaborate with women’s organizations to assess women’s substantive representation as process. In total, I collected interviews with 16 academics, 26 deputies, 12 senators, and 23 local government leaders. These semi-structured interviews were conducted in the fall of 2019. Some interviews took place in each participant’s office, or a public setting. Each interview lasted from one hour to one and a half hours.

Given my research questions, this sample size is ideal for reaching data saturation. According to Weller et al. (2018), “If the goal is to get a few widely held ideas, a small sample size will suffice” (15). In this sense, this sample size matches the study’s objective, as I am trying to test whether a few ideas about gender quotas and women’s representation are widely held among legislators and local government officials. After each interview, I performed a preliminary content analysis to identify themes within key questions. I stopped recruiting participants once I found a pattern and noticed that some themes were repeated.

7 For a list of all interviews, see Appendix A
Furthermore, Weller et al. (2018) suggest that “Sample sizes of one to two dozen interviews should be sufficient with exhaustive probing” (15). The semi-structured interview method and the time each participant granted me allowed me to perform enough follow-up questions. I follow the Reingold (1992) and Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) questionnaire design to measure whether and how participants represent women’s interests. I included questions such as: Do you see yourself as a representative of women? Do you consider women a critical constituency group? And do you feel qualified to represent women’s interests?8

Before I interviewed politicians, I conducted 16 semi-structured in-depth interviews with academics, journalists, bureaucrats, and civil society leaders. These individuals provided me with key insights about gender quotas in the Dominican Republic and the work of key legislators, mayors, and councilors. In addition to these interviews, I researched each legislator and mayor that accepted to participate in the study prior to our meeting by reading their personal websites, social media, newspaper articles, and interviews available on YouTube.

I used a stratified purposeful sample of participants from my sampling frame which consists of former and current legislators and local government leaders in the Dominican Republic. This sampling strategy involves choosing a sample of particular units that vary according to key dimensions within the sample (Shewhart 2012). In this study, the participants’ gender and party ideology are important dimensions to consider. Tables 2.2 and 2.3 show the number and distribution of participants in the National Congress and local governments.

**Table 2.2 Legislators Interviewed by Chamber, Gender, and Party.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chamber of Deputies</th>
<th>Senate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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</table>

8 For the complete instrument used in these interviews, see Appendix B
To recruit participants, I performed a snowballing sampling strategy. This method involves identifying an initial group of relevant participants, and then asking them to suggest other potential respondents who fit the characteristics that the researcher is interested in (Tansey 2007). This strategy is particularly useful in political science when interviewing political elites (Tansey 2007).

If H1 is correct and descriptive representation affects women’s substantive representation. I expect that regardless of their party ideology, more female legislators, and local government female leaders than their male colleagues, will have positive attitudes towards representing women’s interests. For example, if more female politicians place women’s concerns higher in their policy priorities, this would confirm my hypothesis.

Furthermore, if H2 is correct, and the mandate effect impacts women’s substantive representation as process. I expect a higher percentage of female deputies to feel more responsible for representing women’s interests than female senators. Also, I expect that a higher proportion of female deputies collaborate with women’s organizations, name the organizations, and describe the type of support they provide. These results would confirm this hypothesis.

If H3a is correct and quota-elected women are treated differently than women elected without quotas, I expect female deputies, councilors, and vice-mayors to describe how they are treated differently by male colleagues. Also, if H3b is correct, and labels hinder quota-elected women from representing women’s issues, I expect that female deputies, councilors, and vice-
mayors will not feel responsible for representing women. These results would confirm these hypotheses.

**Legislative Initiatives**

This dissertation compares the number of legislative initiatives (bills and resolutions) addressing women’s interests introduced by quota-elected women with women elected without quotas and men, and by center-left and center-right legislators. I selected all the legislative initiatives (a total of 122 legislative initiatives\(^9\)) addressing women’s interests as defined by the UN Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women introduced in Congress from 1998 to 2019.\(^{10}\) These data were obtained by requesting all the meeting minutes recorded in this period. In the Dominican Congress, meeting minutes record all the legislative initiatives introduced. In addition, Law 200-04 of free access to public information created a permanent office in each public institution to address citizens’ information requests.

If H1 is correct and descriptive representation affects women’s substantive representation as process and outcome, then I expect that relative to their proportion, female legislators introduced more legislative initiatives in favor of women’s interests than male colleagues. In addition, I expect that more legislative initiatives introduced by female legislators were approved relative to male colleagues.

Furthermore, suppose the second hypothesis is correct, and the mandate effect impacts women’s substantive representation, female deputies should have introduced more of these legislative initiatives than female senators, and more of deputies’ legislative initiatives should pass. Similarly, if H4 is correct, and center-left parties impact women’s substantive

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\(^{9}\) Because seven of these legislative initiatives were introduced by the complete female deputies’ block, these legislative initiatives cannot be attributed to a single political party. Hence, 122 bills are used to compare male and female legislators and 115 for comparing center-left and center-right parties.

\(^{10}\) For a list of all these legislative initiatives, see Appendix C
representation, I expect center-left legislators should have introduced more of these legislative initiatives than their center-right counterparts. These results would confirm these hypotheses.

**Content Analysis**

To test legislative speeches, I performed a content analysis of relevant legislative debates that highlight differences between male and female legislators. Content analysis is a method of systematically analyzing written, verbal, or visual information (Cole 1988). This method operates under the assumption that certain words and phrases can share the same meaning, allowing researchers to condense broad data into a few concepts or categories that can describe the phenomenon studied (Cavanagh 1997). Then, these concepts or categories can be used to make valid and replicable inferences (Krippendorff 1980).

I collected these data by reading through the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate’s session minutes. First, I identified polemic debates in which three or more legislators participated and presented different arguments. Procedural discussions were not considered as debates. The literature points out that female legislators are more active when debating issues that affect women differently. I compared legislators’ participation rates in these debates, whether they used their speech to support legislative initiatives that benefit women and the type of arguments they used.

I sorted the arguments used by deputies to justify their position using qualitative content analysis. This method has been used to study legislative debates to elicit differences between male and female legislators. For example, Broughton and Palmieri (1999) found that female deputies are more likely than male colleagues to bring a gender perspective to discussions not traditionally considered gender issues. By classifying legislators’ speeches into categories, the researchers were able to find differences between male and female parliamentarians’ speeches.
If H1 is correct, I expect female legislators outnumber male colleagues when debating issues that affect women differently. Also, female legislators should use their speech to speak in favor of legislative initiatives that benefit women, and they should use women’s rights arguments. These results would confirm this hypothesis.

On the other hand, if H4 is correct, I expect that center-left legislators outnumber their center-right colleagues when debating issues that affect women differently—regardless of gender. Also, center-left legislators should use their speech to speak in favor of legislative initiatives that benefit women, and they should use women’s rights arguments. These results would confirm this hypothesis.

**Committee Assignment**

Membership in the Gender Equity Standing Commission is a good indicator that women’s interests are among legislators’ top priorities. To collect these data, I requested all committee assignments in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate from 1998 to 2019. Because of the low numbers of female senators, committee assignment comparisons between female and male senators are not feasible. Thus, I compared female and male deputies. I compared the number of female and male deputies that joined the Gender Equity Standing Commission. If H1 is correct, I expect female deputies to outnumber male deputies in this committee. By contrast, If H4 is correct, center-left deputies should outnumber their center-right colleagues in this committee.

On the other hand, I analyzed committee assignment and leadership to test whether there is evidence of the label effect in the Chamber of Deputies. Committee assignments and leadership positions are scarce resources that can be distributed unequally based on legislators’ gender. Men have controlled Latin American legislative assemblies. I created three categories of
standing commissions\textsuperscript{11} following Michelle Heath et al. (2005)’s coding, ‘Gender Issues’, ‘Social Issues’, and ‘Economics and Foreign Affairs’\textsuperscript{12}. Then, I compare the distribution of male and female deputies in these three groups and their leadership positions. If H3 is correct, female deputies should be proportionally overrepresented in the membership and leadership of gender and social issues committees but underrepresented in economics and foreign affairs committees. These results would confirm these hypotheses.

The next chapter tests whether the presence of female legislators yields women’s substantive representation in the Dominican Republic National Congress. I test the first hypothesis by analyzing semi-structured in-depth interviews with legislators and archival data. The results shows that female legislators are more committed to representing women’s interests than their male colleagues.

\textsuperscript{11} The standing commissions under the category of Social Issues are Education, Higher Education, Culture, Human Rights, Public Health and Social Welfare, and Adolescents and Children; under the category of Economics and Foreign Affairs are Agriculture, Defense, Industry and Commerce, Presidency, Interior and Police, Foreign Affairs, Public Works, Debt, and Contracts; and under Gender Issues is Gender Equity.

\textsuperscript{12} In their study, Michelle Heath et al consider a fourth category, ‘Power Committees’. The researchers coded this category based on the opinion of country experts. However, the commissions consider the most prestigious and powerful in the Congress of the Dominican Republic overlap with the category ‘Economics and Foreign Affairs’.
CHAPTER III

THE ROLE OF GENDER IN THE CONGRESS OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Can female legislators represent women’s interests better than male colleagues? If so, how? One of the main arguments for adopting gender quota laws is the possible link between women’s descriptive and substantive representation. If female legislators are more likely to represent women’s interests than their male counterparts, tangible outcomes for women are more likely when quota laws are adopted. However, the answer to that question remains debatable.

On the one hand, it is difficult to define women’s interests without falling into conceptual traps. Defined too narrowly, women’s interests fail to represent the diversity of perspectives among this group. Defined too broadly, there is no way to say whether a bill is favorable or detrimental to women. On the other hand, female legislators’ success at representing women depends on the scholars’ methods. If one looks at passed-laws, female legislators’ impact might seem minuscule. If one looks at legislative priorities, women’s interests might seem the main concern among female legislators.

This chapter addresses these methodological challenges by using the National Congress of the Dominican Republic as a case study. First, women’s interests are not defined by any group. As discussed in Chapter Two, this study follows the definition provided by the UN Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which includes enhancing women’s autonomy, educational parity, the elimination of sexualized violence, women’s economic emancipation, and programs for rural women.

Second, to get a comprehensive picture of how legislators might represent women’s interests, this study considers many stages of the legislative process that can be defined as process. Legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests and legislative debates are some of
the methods this study uses to measure women’s substantive representation as process. Similarly, passed bills and resolutions in favor of women’s interests are methods used to measure women’s substantive representation as outcome.

This Chapter provides an overview of women’s participation in congressional politics in the Dominican Republic. Then, the Chapter discusses the analysis of the data and methods. Finally, the Chapter presents the findings. The evidence confirms the hypothesis that the presence of female legislators in the National Congress should increase women’s substantive representation.

Female legislators were more likely than their male colleagues to impact women’s substantive representation as process and outcome. For example, the analysis shows that female legislators claimed to be more committed to representing women’s interests, they introduced and passed much more women-friendly legislation, and they are more inclined to speak in favor of women’s interests during legislative debates than their male counterparts.

**Women in the Dominican Congress**

As a group, women have been historically underrepresented in politics, and Dominican Republic National Congress is not an exception. Although women are about 50% of the country’s population, congressional politics in the Dominican Republic remain a male-dominated field. For example, table 3.1 shows that before the adoption of gender quota laws, only a handful of women made it to the National Congress. Although the number of female deputies has been increasing in the past two decades, women control less than thirty percent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies and less than seven percent in the Senate.

Women are not a minority group, but a group that is marginalized from representative politics. Consider that, since the 2000s, there are as many qualified women to hold office as men.
For example, Census data from 2002 and 2010 show that women represent 58% of all college graduates and 53% of the law graduates, which is the most common profession among Dominican legislators.\textsuperscript{13}

**Table 3.1** Female Representation Before Quota Laws in the Dominican Congress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congressional period</th>
<th>Number of female legislators (Both chambers combined)</th>
<th>Total number of seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982-1986</td>
<td>7 (%6)</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986-1990</td>
<td>10 (%7)</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1994</td>
<td>13 (%9)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1998</td>
<td>14 (%11)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dominican Republic Electoral Board

On the other hand, despite their low numbers, female legislators were the ones who initiated discussions about women’s issues in the Dominican Congress. For example, in 1986, a newly elected women deputy, Rafaela Alburquerque, denounced the lack of support from male legislators and political parties to initiatives proposed by female colleagues (Batista Polo 2015). She indicated that male legislators did not consider women’s perspectives in the decision-making process because there were not many female deputies, which at that moment was eight, in the whole Congress.

Eventually, female legislators received support for initiatives addressing issues about children, family, and education. However, legislative initiatives that tackle violence against women were not approved (Paiewonsky et al. 2002). It was not until the mid-1990s when Congress took gender equity matters seriously by establishing standing committees to address these issues in both chambers. By 1999, a year after the first election with gender quota laws, the Chamber of Deputies elected Alburquerque as the first women president of that Chamber. It

\textsuperscript{13} 33 percent of Dominican legislators have a law degree. The second most common profession is business administration with 10.3 percent (Batista Polo 2015).
would take 15 years for the Senate to follow suit and elect Cristina Lizardo as the first women president in 2014.

One of the main objectives of the standing committees on gender equity was to raise awareness about the need for legislation in favor of Dominican women (Paiewonsky et al. 2002). Although not all female legislators share the same perspective on women’s issues, they agreed they needed to promote women’s representation. Whether their efforts to represent women were any better than their male counterparts are the matter this Chapter addresses.

**Legislators’ Priorities and Women’s Interests**

To only look at women-friendly legislative outcomes might not fully uncover how female legislators can impact women’s substantive representation. Multiple factors (e.g., party lines and a small size of women coalition) can impede female legislators from delivering legislative results addressing women’s issues. Hence, scholars use other methods such as legislators’ priorities to better picture the impact female legislators can have on the representation of women’s interests as process.

Many empirical studies on women’s substantive representation consider where women’s interests rank in legislators’ priorities (Erzeel 2015; Osawa and Yoon 2019, Poggione 2004). In this sense, most scholars point out that female legislators are more inclined to prioritize women’s issues than their male counterparts (Diaz 2005, Jones 1997, Volden et al. 2018). For example, Tam (2017) finds that “Female legislators put a higher degree of priority on issues related to women’s rights” (57), and Wängnerud (2006) finds similar results even when controlling for party ideology.

Furthermore, this method can reveal legislators’ agendas and predict their legislative behavior (Wängnerud 2009). For example, Esaiasson (2000) finds that legislators who claim to
represent women’s interests are more likely than others to contact cabinet ministers about women’s issues. If gender matters in the Dominican Congress, I expect female legislators would have prioritized women’s interests more than their male colleagues. Also, we could find a connection between legislators’ priorities and their legislative actions.

This section compares male and female legislators’ responses to questions about legislative priorities in the Dominican congress. Among other things, most Dominican legislators agree that female legislators are better positioned to represent women’s interests. Further, female legislators were more likely than their male counterparts to indicate that women’s issues are a priority in their agendas, and they are more inclined to self-identify as female representatives.

On the other hand, empirical studies show that legislators can perceive women as a distinct group who have their own interests and expectations within their constituency (Celis 2012; Dodson and Carroll 1995; Reingold 2000). In the Dominican Republic, both chambers of Congress have had their own standing Committee on Gender Equity since 1995. Further, the institution in charge of women’s affairs was elevated to the rank of ministry with its own budget in 1999, thanks to a bill drafted and approved in Congress. These pieces of evidence prove that the Dominican Congress considers women as a group that deserves special attention.

When I asked legislators whether they believe that there are issues that affect women more than men, all of them, both men and women, said yes. Domestic violence was cited as the main issue that affects Dominican women more than men. This does not come as a surprise as the Dominican Republic ranks fifth among the Latin American countries with the highest rate of femicide, according to data from the Gender Equality Observatory.14

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14 The 5 countries with the highest rate of femicide per 100,000 women are: El Salvador (6.8), Honduras (5.1), Bolivia (2.3), Guatemala (2.0) and the Dominican Republic (1.9). (info available at https://oig.cepal.org/en/indicators/femicide-or-feminicide)
Furthermore, the UN designated November 25th as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women based on the 1960 assassination of the three Mirabal sisters in the Dominican Republic.\textsuperscript{15} Every year, Congress celebrates activities around this date to bring awareness to the issue, and news of femicides is widely covered in the media. Thus, Dominican legislators’ acknowledgment of domestic violence as a women’s issue is expected. However, while male legislators only cited domestic violence, female legislators (female deputies only) cited other issues including abortion, discrimination, lack of job opportunities, and sexual harassment.

Other differences can be drawn from asking legislators how they perceive their roles in the representation of women’s interests. I asked legislators about their legislative priorities and whether they see women as better able to represent women’s interests. Granted, their opinions do not necessarily reflect what legislators do. Instead, these responses are to be taken as a reflection of how these legislators expect that they and their peers would behave.

If female legislators believe that they are better able than their male colleagues to represent women’s interests, they should have an incentive to advocate for women. Female legislators might believe that without their intervention, women’s interests would not be seriously addressed in Congress (Reingold 2000). On the other hand, if male legislators think that they are equally capable as their female colleagues to represent women’s interests, they would be incentivized to get involved with women’s issues.

The assumption of the women’s descriptive representation thesis is that female legislators should be better positioned than their male counterparts to represent women’s interests because

\textsuperscript{15} The UN General Assembly chose this date because many women’s rights organizations had observed it as a day against gender-based violence for many years. These activists had been observing this date in honor of the Mirabal sisters who were brutally murdered (1960) due to their political activism by order of the Dominican Republic’s dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo (1930-1961).
they can understand the unique perspective of that ascriptive group (Williams 1998). Indeed, most of the legislators, both male and female, I interviewed believe that female legislators are a better able to represent women’s interests due to their shared experience. For example, one current female deputy indicated:

...there are some issues that concerned women only. Thus, it is our experience on these issues that gives us a distinctive voice. Do not get me wrong, some male legislators are allies and we could not achieve any legislative success without their support. However, it is our role as female legislators to bring these issues to the table, to make a case for them, and to convince the rest of the legislators why we should support certain bills. If women legislators would not act on these matters, I do not believe the men would act on them by themselves, or at least, it would take way longer for these issues to be addressed.16

Another women deputy said that “we (women) are the ones who understand the fear of domestic violence…this is not a concern for most married men”.17 These opinions were shared by almost half of the male legislators I interviewed. One male senator said that “Women, in all cultures, share a very similar story. In almost all societies, women’s rights have been second to men’s… As a result, I think that women share some common goals in this regard”.18

Nevertheless, some legislators do not believe there is a difference. For example, one female senator said that “I do not believe that women are the only ones that can represent women, just the same way men are not the only ones that can represent men”.19 A male deputy echoes this sentiment responding:

I do not think that that is necessarily true. Yes, a woman might feel more comfortable connecting with a female legislator, but that does not mean that male legislators are incapable of doing the same. As a matter of fact, all the male legislators that are here won with the vote of the women in their communities. Think about it, women are about half of the population, if it was true that women would prefer female politicians, then, it would be tougher for us, the male legislators, to get elected. The fact is that each legislator knows his/her community, they do the legwork to ensure that their constituents feel represented by them. Thus, I do not think that female legislators would

16 Interview with center-left female deputy, October 18, 2019.
17 Interview with center-left female deputy, November 5, 2019.
18 Interview with center-right Senator, October 16, 2019.
19 Interview with center-right female Senator, December 5, 2019.
do a better job of representing women than us. We are elected to represent everyone in each of our communities, men, and women alike.\textsuperscript{20}

Furthermore, some legislators believe that party lines trump gender. Although political parties in the Dominican Republic are not very ideologically driven, they work united to achieve their political goals. As one male senator explained:

It is possible that women might be interested in some issues more than in others. However, in my years in the Senate, agreement only comes when political parties want to support certain bills. Thus, I do not believe that the fact that they are women unites them more than the party they belong to. Albeit not on every matter, parties tend to have their priorities and they expect that their soldiers, us the legislators, follow the instructions to secure the outcome. I am pretty sure that women do not escape that reality.\textsuperscript{21}

Finally, a few male legislators went as far as to accuse their female colleagues of acting together on matters that are particularly beneficial to them as female legislators but not acting with the same energy on matters that concern Dominican women in general. On this point, a former men deputy said that “…maybe they are united to advocate for gender quotas, something that is only aiming to serve their own interests. However, I did not see them acting altogether in all matters”.\textsuperscript{22}

This opinion was shared by some academics who believe that female legislators are not truly committed to representing women on controversial matters such as abortion laws. However, when it comes to gender quota laws most of them are fierce warriors willing to move mountains to have their way.\textsuperscript{23}

Table 3.2 shows that female legislators in both parties were more likely to see themselves as a better able to represent women’s interests and about half of their male colleagues agree with

\textsuperscript{20} Interview with center-left male deputy, November 20, 2019.
\textsuperscript{21} Interview with center-right male Senator, October 15, 2019.
\textsuperscript{22} Interview with center-right male deputy, December 4, 2019.
\textsuperscript{23} Interview with academic, October 11, 2019-A.
them. Also, these results show that 51 percent (both parties combined) of the male legislators see themselves as capable as women to represent women’s issues because they do not buy into the idea that their female colleagues are better able to represent that group.

### Table 3.2: Are Female Legislators Better Able to Represent Women’s Interests?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response to question</th>
<th>Center-left parties</th>
<th>Center-right parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female (N=9) (%)</td>
<td>Male (N=8) (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                      | Female (N=7) (%)    | Male (N=14) (%)      |
| Yes                  | 57                  | 54                   |
| No                   | 43                  | 46                   |

On the other hand, more differences arise when I asked legislators about representing particular groups. In an earlier part of the interview, I asked legislators whether they see themselves as representatives of certain constituency groups. To avoid any priming about gender issues, I asked this question before asking any questions referring specifically to women in politics or women in the legislatures.  

I group legislators’ responses into categories with labels that are self-explanatory. ‘Everyone’ is the category in which I assigned legislators who do not believe that they represent any constituency group because they represent the Dominican people. Except for the legislators who do not believe in representing particular groups, most of them indicated that they represent multiple groups in their responses.

The results in table 3.3 show that many legislators were willing to acknowledge that they see themselves as representing certain constituency groups. These legislators identified themselves with groups they believe they are part of, or groups that need more of their attention. For example, one male deputy said that he feels he must represent the youth because of his

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24 This is the strategy used by Reingold (2000). However, to get the participants’ consent I had to explain the purpose of the study and it is possible that some priming could have occurred as a result.
young age, and a female senator said that because her community depends a lot on trade, she collaborates with small business owners.

In contrast, other legislators did not believe in the idea that elected officials should represent specific groups. Instead, these legislators argued that they must represent the Dominican people as a whole. For example, one male deputy explained:

After one starts to work in the government, one realizes that the laws are not directed at specific groups, but that they affect the entire population, or at least the majority. I tell my constituents that I am not a deputy of a party or a group of people, but that I am a deputy of the Dominican people.

### Table 3.3 Are You Representing Some Groups?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response to question</th>
<th>Center-left parties</th>
<th>Center-right parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female (N=9)</td>
<td>Male (N=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerable groups (elderly, children, youth, poor)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, the results show that female legislators in both parties were more likely than their male counterparts to indicate that they represent women. Only one male legislator from a center-right party mentioned women as one of the groups he feels he represents. When justifying their responses, female legislators referred to feeling responsible for representing their ascriptive group or that women need special attention in the Dominican Republic. For example, one female deputy said:

Well, let me make it clear first that I know very well that legislators are expected to represent everyone. However, I am not afraid to admit that I feel particularly responsible to representing women, the youth, and children. These are groups that deserve especial

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25 Interview with center-right male deputy, October 13, 2019.
26 Interview with center-right female Senator, December 6, 2019.
27 Interview with center-right male deputy, November 9, 2019.
28 Interview with center-right male deputy, October 23, 2019.
attention and as a young women deputy, I think it is my responsibility to use my platform to advocate for their interests.29

Although all legislators, male and female, acknowledge women as a group with particular interest issues, female legislators were more likely to mention them as a group they feel committed to representing. Also, I found similar results when I ask legislators about their legislative priorities. Specifically, I asked them to name their top three legislative priorities in no particular order.

I group and label participants’ responses to mirror the organization of subject matters in the standing commissions of both chambers. For example, priorities such as public debt, taxation, and economic development are combined into the ‘Economy’ category. Most legislators’ responses were diverse as they spoke about priorities that could be organized into different categories. Thus, most legislators provided the three legislative priorities I asked for. However, a few legislators prioritized issues that are similar enough to fall into the same category. These legislators only had one or two distinct categories based on the way I organized their responses.

Figure 3.1 shows that female legislators in the Dominican Republic were more likely than their male counterparts to indicate that women’s interests are a priority in their legislative agendas. While 13 of the 16 female legislators I interviewed mentioned women’s interests as one of their top three priorities, only one of the 22 male legislators did. The results also show that male legislators were more likely to prioritize economic and public safety issues, and their male colleagues more likely to prioritize health and welfare programs. Of the twenty legislators that prioritized health and welfare programs, twelve are women.

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29 Interview with center-left female deputy, November 8, 2019.
These results reinforce the idea that female legislators feel more committed to representing women’s interests than their male counterparts. Also, they were more likely to support welfare programs. In other words, female legislators were more likely to embrace the link between descriptive and substantive representation. Dominican female legislators’ attitude is that of representing their ascriptive group. Even when controlling for party, gender remains a strong predictor of where women’s interests rank in legislator’s priorities.

Although legislators from center-left parties were more likely to prioritize women’s interests in their legislative agendas than their colleagues in center-right parties, the difference between these two groups is not as wide as the difference between female and male legislators. Figure 3.2 shows the differences between the two parties. Clearly, the largest differences between these two groups of political parties are in bureaucracy and public works and public safety.
Further evidence of the role gender plays in legislators’ priorities is the committee assignment. To be part of a committee that addresses gender equality is a strong indicator that legislators will advocate for women’s interests (Erzeel 2015). In the Dominican Congress, the standing commission on Gender Equity is the context in which all bills and resolutions that affect or might affect women are discussed. I analyze the composition of this committee to test whether gender plays a role in membership.

The first hypothesis in this study suggests that female legislators are more concerned with representing women’s interests than their male counterparts. Therefore, one can assume that more women than men would join the standing commission on Gender Equity. This hypothesis has been tested empirically in some European parliaments in which, indeed, female lawmakers outnumber their male colleagues in committees that address gender equality (Holli and Harder 2016).

Originally, the Gender Equity (formerly known as Women’s Affairs) standing commission was created in 1994 by female deputies to form allegiances across party lines and reform laws that discriminated against women in the Dominican Republic (Paiewonsky et al. 2002). The following year, the Senate established the Honorary Commission of Advisors to the
Senate. This was not a standing commission but had the same purpose of changing laws that discriminated against Dominican women.\textsuperscript{30}

Nonetheless, the Gender Equity Standing Commission is not a women-only group. According to the guidelines of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, standing commissions are formed from the voluntary registration of legislators giving priority to those with more years of experience or qualifications on the matters such commissions deal with. For example, male senators have always outnumbered women in this commission because there are not enough women to comply with a minimum of 5 or 7 senators.\textsuperscript{31}

Membership in the Gender Equity Standing Commission is a good indicator that women’s interests are among legislator’s top priorities. In the Chamber of Deputies, commissions are limited to 15 members and a minimum of 9, and deputies are limited to be part of a maximum of 4 standing commissions. Further, the Chamber’s guidelines establish the principle of gender equity in the membership of standing commissions. Thus, male and female deputies have equal opportunities to be part of this commission.

Figure 3.3 shows the male/female deputies ratio compared to the center-left and center-right party ratio in the Chamber of Deputy Gender Equity Standing Commission from 1998 to 2019. The gender equity commission in the Senate is not useful to draw comparisons because female senators are vastly outnumbered. Yet, all female senators are part of this commission. In contrast, only 4 male deputies joined the commission in the 21 years covered in this study.

\textsuperscript{30} The 1994 Dominican Congress had 14 female deputies but only one female Senator, Milagros Ortiz Bosch. As a result, female deputies had enough numbers to establish a standing commission amongst themselves. Meanwhile, Ortiz Bosch had to recruit female politicians and social activists to volunteer in helping the Senate. See Paiewonsky et al (2002 p. 85) for details on the early beginnings of the Gender Equity Standing Commission.

\textsuperscript{31} From 1998 to 2019, there have been only two or three women in the Senate on a given legislative period.
While there is almost no difference in membership by party ideology, there is a wide gap in participation between male and female deputies. The high participation of female deputies across the political spectrum in the Gender Equity standing commission shows that these deputies are actively engaged in representing women’s interests.

Taken together, the evidence shows that legislators’ gender shapes their priorities toward the representation of women’s interests. All legislators, male and female alike, recognize that women are a distinct group with their own interests and are affected by issues unique to them. However, male legislators were not as likely as their female colleagues to see themselves as representatives of women’s interests, nor did they prioritize women’s issues in their legislative agendas. These results hold even when party ideology is considered.

On the other hand, the analysis shows that there are party differences as well. Left-center parties prioritized women’s interests more than right-center parties, and more center-left legislators join the Gender Commission more than center-right legislators. However, the differences in party ideology are not as significant as the difference between male and female legislators.

**Figure 3.3 Gender Equity Standing Commission Membership by Gender and Party (1998-2019)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female deputies</th>
<th>Male deputies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>223 (98%)</td>
<td>4 (%2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>104 (46%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>123 (54%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

63
Nonetheless, these results only show where women’s interests rank in their legislators’ priorities. Although legislators’ responses to these questions can be a good indicator of their legislative behavior, assessing their performance is needed to get a complete picture. In the following sections, I test whether legislators, as descriptive representatives of women, were more likely to act in favor of women’s interests than their male counterparts.

**Legislative Initiatives**

Introducing legislation that address women’s interests is one of the main avenues by which legislators can engage in women’s substantive representation as ‘process’ (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). Several empirical studies have operationalized the concept of women’s substantive representation this way (Dodson and Carroll 1995; Evans 2012; Garboni 2015). Also, this method can bring women’s concerns to the front line of political debate. Because Latin American women traditionally have been marginalized from politics, this is particularly important for them (Piscopo 2011). After all, legislators’ law-making prerogative is one of their most important duties.

In this study, only bills and resolutions introduced by legislators from 1998 to 2019 are considered. I managed to compile a list of 122 legislative initiatives (bills and resolutions) that address women’s interests as defined by the UN Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Recall that in Chapter II, I discussed the rationale for selecting

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32 According to Dominican Laws, the Executive Branch, the Judicial Branch, and the civil society can also introduce bills to Congress. The timeframe starts in 1998, as this was the first election year after gender quota laws were adopted and 2019 was the last full legislative cycle at the moment of writing this dissertation. Also, resolutions (an ample array of decisions that both the Chamber and the Senate can make on their own) are included because these decisions can affect women’s interests inside and outside Congress.

33 Because seven of these legislative initiatives were introduced by the complete female deputies’ block, these legislative initiatives cannot be attributed to a single political party. Hence, 122 legislative initiatives are used to compare male and female legislators and 115 for comparing center-left and center-right parties.
this narrow definition of women’s interests. Each draft bill identifies its author, their political party, its cosponsors, the year it was first introduced, and the current status.

Although some legislative initiatives address not only women’s but other group’s interests, the narrative that justifies their proposal shows that the author’s main intent is correcting some form of inequality against women or provide women with an advantage that is considered necessary. For example, Law 136-03, which regulates common-law marriage, protects men and women in case they separate after living together for some time. However, while debating the bill in the Chamber of Deputies, the bill’s author, Sofia Sanchez Baret, indicated:

When people who cohabitate under common-law marriage separate, men, most of the time, refuse to compensate their partner in recognition of their contributions to the assets they have accumulated through the years they were together. We all know that these men, sometimes, even take with them all the furniture, even the bed, leaving their ex-partner with nothing.34

It is clear that although Sanchez Baret’s bill protects men’s and women’s rights equally, the bill is designed to upset what she considers an unfair practice against women. In contrast, legislative initiatives that address the interests of a particular woman in which gender is not used to justify the legislation are not considered. For example, legislation that provide or increase pensions to some women, legislative initiatives that recognize a woman’s efforts and achievements that are not related to women’s rights activism, resolutions that donate certain assets for women for reasons that have nothing to do with women’s rights activism, etc.

However, the actual impact of the bill or how women’s organizations and academics might perceive the bill is not considered. For example, Senator Felix Bautista introduced a bill in 2012 that addresses violence against women. However, this bill has been criticized by multiple

34 This speech is contained in Chamber of Deputies session minutes “Acta NO. 7 del martes dieciseis (16) de Marzo de 1999, pages 33-34.”
feminist academics, female legislators, and public officials because the bill allegedly limits the Ministry of Women’s scope of action.

For example, by stripping the Ministry of Women of duties such as providing counseling services for women victims of domestic violence, this bill would reallocate resources from the Ministry of Women to the Attorney General’s office. This could potentially weaken the Ministry of Women’s operational capacity. Regardless of the controversy, all the legislative initiatives that address women’s interests are considered in this study.

Furthermore, some of the legislative initiatives have multiple authors. In some cases, these authors are of different gender and from different political parties. However, the practice of the Dominican Congress is that the legislator who authors the bill receives credit by having their name appear on top of the list.35 Thus, I categorized each draft bill according to the characteristics of the legislator whose name comes first on the list of authors.36

Figure 3.4 shows that even though female legislators had fewer seats than their male counterparts from 1998 to 2019, they introduced more legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests. And the difference is staggering. While female legislators were only 19% of the seats, they accounted for 68% of all the legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests. Further, Table 3.4 describes the dataset divided by gender in more detail. Throughout five legislative periods, one can observe the number and percentages of male and female legislators present in

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35 Several of the journalists I interviewed reported that although legislators collaborate on legislative initiatives to increase the chances of success, one can know who the bill’s visionary is. Legislators who write the bill ensure that their names appear on top of the list because these are the names that get media coverage if the bill makes headlines. Another evidence of this practice is found in a legislative debate on Oct. 17, 2017, in which several deputies corrected the president of the Chamber of Deputies at the time who, incorrectly, gave credit to a legislator whose name should have been second on the list of proponents of the bill under discussion. This is consistent with the fact that the list of coauthors on a draft bill does not follow any apparent order.

36 Accordingly, I use the characteristics of the legislator whose name comes second on the list of authors to attribute the bill’s co-sponsorship. In the cases in which, there are multiple co-sponsors of different sex and from different political parties, I assigned the sex and party category to the group that, proportionally to their group size in Congress, has more co-sponsors on that list.
Congress. Further, one can compare the number of legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests introduced by legislators divided by gender into two groups.

**Figure 3.4** Legislators Seat Share and Bill Introduction by Gender (1998-2019)

In essence, the data confirms a positive link between women’s descriptive and substantive representation. Female legislators introduced more legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests than their male colleagues in absolute numbers and proportionally. However, the data also shows that male representatives introduced legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests.

**Table 3.4** Legislators’ Bills Addressing Women’s Interest by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative periods (both houses combined)</th>
<th>Male legislators</th>
<th>Bills</th>
<th>Female legislators</th>
<th>Bills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-2002</td>
<td>150 (83.5%)</td>
<td>5    (20.8%)</td>
<td>29    (14.5%)</td>
<td>18   (79.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2006</td>
<td>156 (85.7%)</td>
<td>6    (26.7%)</td>
<td>26    (15.14%)</td>
<td>13   (73.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.4. —Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006-2010</th>
<th></th>
<th>2010-2016</th>
<th></th>
<th>2016-2019</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>174</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(82.9%)</td>
<td>(6.7%)</td>
<td>(17.1%)</td>
<td>(93.3%)</td>
<td>(82.5%)</td>
<td>(45.5%)</td>
<td>(19.1%)</td>
<td>(54.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>817</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>821</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(81.4%)</td>
<td>(41.7%)</td>
<td>(18.6%)</td>
<td>(69%)</td>
<td>(81.4%)</td>
<td>(31%)</td>
<td>(18.6%)</td>
<td>(69%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This dataset allows for tests of proportions. Specifically, I perform a binomial probability test. This test shows whether the difference between the number of legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests introduced by female legislators and the expected number of legislative initiatives they introduced based on their seats-share is statistically significant. If gender does not play a role in representing women’s interests through the introduction of legislative initiatives, male and female legislators should have introduced these kinds of legislative initiatives proportionally to their seat share in the Dominican Congress.

In contrast, if gender plays a role on this matter, one should expect that the number of legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests introduced by female legislators to surpass their seat share. In this sense, we expect those female legislators should have introduced about 20 percent of these legislative initiatives during the 21-year time frame considered in this analysis. The independent variable is constructed concerning the legislator who authored the bill. Because the first hypothesis is that legislators’ gender will determine whether they propose legislative initiatives that address women’s interests, gender is operationalized as a dummy variable for gender, where woman=1 and man=0.
Table 3.5 Binomial Probability Test Female Legislators’ Bills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Observed K</th>
<th>Expected K</th>
<th>Assumed p</th>
<th>Observed p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gender</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>23.18</td>
<td>0.190000</td>
<td>0.68852</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
Pr(k \geq 84) = 0.000000 \text{ (one-sided test)}
\]
\[
Pr(k \leq 84) = 1.000000 \text{ (one-sided test)}
\]

Table 3.5 describes the output of the binomial probability test. The first part of the output reveals that, assuming a true probability that a female legislator drafted a bill addressing women’s interests is 21% (this number is women’s legislators seat share from 1998 to 2019 both houses combined), the expected number of legislative initiatives is 23.18 and that we observed 84. The first line under the binomial distribution results is a one-sided test; it is the probability of observing 84 or more legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests submitted by female legislators, conditional on \( p = 0.19 \). It is a test of \( H_0: p = 0.19 \) versus the alternative hypothesis \( H_A: p > 0.19 \). The second line refers to the opposite hypothesis that the probability of observing 84 of these legislative initiatives would be less on the condition of \( p = 0.19 \).

These results show that the difference between the expected number of legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests introduced by female legislators and the observed number of legislative initiatives they introduced is statistically significant. In other words, we can confirm the first hypothesis, that is, if gender affects women’s substantive representation as process, female legislators should have introduced legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests in higher proportion to their seat share. Based on these results, I can predict that female legislators will introduce legislative initiatives in higher proportions than their seat share. Despite being outnumbered by male legislators, female legislators, as a group, introduce many more legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests.
On the other hand, the fourth hypothesis considered in this study suggests that legislators from left-leaning political parties are better at representing women’s interests than any other group of legislators. Accordingly, party ideology and not gender can explain differences in legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests. To test this hypothesis, I divide legislators by party ideology and compare the legislative initiatives introduced by legislators on the center-left and the center-right parties.37

Figure 3.5 shows that the legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests introduced by center-left and center-right parties are almost proportional to their seat share from 1998 to 2019. Center-left legislators were 39% of the legislative initiatives and accounted for 41% of the legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests. Thus, party ideology does not seem to impact women’s substantive representation in this period.

![Figure 3.5 Legislators Seat Share and Bill Introduction by Party (1998-2019)](image)

Although political parties in the Dominican Republic are not ideologically driven, some differences are important. In this dissertation, parties are divided into two groups (Center-left and Center-right) based on each party’s programmatic guidelines and bylaws. Academics confirmed this classification during my fieldwork.
Furthermore, table 3.6 describes the dataset in more detail. One can observe the number and percentages of legislators in center-left and center-right parties present in Congress throughout five legislative periods. Again, both parties introduced legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests in proportion with their seat share.

**Table 3.6 Number of Bills Addressing Women’s Interest by Legislators’ Party**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative periods (both houses combined)</th>
<th>Center-left legislators</th>
<th>Bills</th>
<th>Center-right legislators</th>
<th>Bills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-2002</td>
<td>105 (59%)</td>
<td>11 (59%)</td>
<td>74 (41%)</td>
<td>9 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2006</td>
<td>102 (56%)</td>
<td>10 (43%)</td>
<td>80 (44%)</td>
<td>8 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2010</td>
<td>47 (22%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>163 (78%)</td>
<td>13 (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2016</td>
<td>76 (35%)</td>
<td>16 (44%)</td>
<td>139 (65%)</td>
<td>23 (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-2019</td>
<td>62 (228%)</td>
<td>9 (25%)</td>
<td>160 (72%)</td>
<td>14 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>392 (39%)</td>
<td>48 (42%)</td>
<td>616 (61%)</td>
<td>67 (58%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, a proportion test is needed to determine if the slight difference is statistically significant. I use the binomial probability model to test the fourth hypothesis rooted in the literature of party ideology. Again, the independent variable is constructed concerning the legislator who authored the legislative initiative. Because the fourth hypothesis is that legislators’ party ideology will determine whether they propose legislative initiatives that address women’s interests, party ideology is operationalized as a dummy variable, where center-left parties=1 and center-right parties=0.

Table 3.7 shows the binomial probability test results. The first part of the output reveals that, assuming a true probability that a legislator in a center-left party drafted a bill addressing women’s interests is 39%, the expected number of legislative initiatives is 44.86 and that we
observed 48. The first line under the table is a one-sided test; it is the probability of observing 48 or more legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests submitted by center-left legislators, conditional on \( p = 0.39 \). It is a test of \( H_0: p = 0.48 \) versus the alternative hypothesis \( H_A: p > 0.48 \). The second line refers to the opposite hypothesis that the probability of observing 48 of these legislative initiatives would be fewer on the condition of \( p = 0.39 \).

### Table 3.7 Binomial Probability Test Center-Left Parties’ Legislative Initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Observed K</th>
<th>Expected K</th>
<th>Assumed p</th>
<th>Observed p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>party</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>44.85</td>
<td>0.39000</td>
<td>0.41739</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\begin{align*}
\Pr(k \geq 48) &= 0.304467 \text{ (one-sided test)} \\
\Pr(k \leq 48) &= 0.758408 \text{ (one-sided test)}
\end{align*}
\]

The results show that although center-left legislators introduced legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests in higher proportion than their seat share, the difference is not statistically significant. Thus, we cannot confirm the fourth hypothesis. It is gender and not party ideology that explains women’s substantive representation as process in the National Congress of the Dominican Republic. Again, the difference between the expected number of legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests that center-left legislators should have introduced according to their seat-share and the observed number of legislative initiatives is not statically significant.

Furthermore, the difference in numbers of legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests between female and male legislators on both sides of the political spectrum adds to the evidence of the positive link between women’s descriptive and substantive representation. Figure 3.6 shows that female legislators are a minority within center-left and center-right parties. Yet,
female legislators introduced more legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests than their male colleagues in each group of parties.

**Figure 3.6** Legislators’ Bills Addressing Women’s Interest by Gender and Party (1998-2019)

Furthermore, table 3.8 shows the number and percentages of female and male legislators in the center-left and center-right parties and the number of legislative initiatives they introduced in detail. Clearly, female legislators on both sides of the political spectrum introduced more legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests than their male colleagues in each of the five legislative periods.
Table 3.8 Draft Bills Addressing Women’s Interest by Legislators’ Gender and Party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative periods (both houses combined)</th>
<th>Center-left male legislators</th>
<th>Bills</th>
<th>Center-left female legislators</th>
<th>Bills</th>
<th>Center-right male legislators</th>
<th>Bills</th>
<th>Center-right female legislators</th>
<th>Bills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-2002</td>
<td>89 (85%)</td>
<td>2 (23%)</td>
<td>16 (15%)</td>
<td>9 (77%)</td>
<td>61 (82%)</td>
<td>3 (22%)</td>
<td>13 (18%)</td>
<td>6 (78%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2006</td>
<td>87 (85%)</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
<td>15 (15%)</td>
<td>6 (67%)</td>
<td>69 (86%)</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
<td>11 (14%)</td>
<td>6 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2010</td>
<td>41 (87%)</td>
<td>0 (13%)</td>
<td>6 (13%)</td>
<td>2 (100%)</td>
<td>132 (81%)</td>
<td>0 (8%)</td>
<td>31 (19%)</td>
<td>13 (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2016</td>
<td>63 (83%)</td>
<td>7 (43%)</td>
<td>13 (17%)</td>
<td>9 (57%)</td>
<td>111 (80%)</td>
<td>12 (47%)</td>
<td>28 (20%)</td>
<td>11 (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-2019</td>
<td>45 (73%)</td>
<td>3 (33%)</td>
<td>17 (27%)</td>
<td>6 (67%)</td>
<td>122 (76%)</td>
<td>5 (44%)</td>
<td>38 (24%)</td>
<td>9 (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>325 (32%)</td>
<td>16 (14%)</td>
<td>67 (7%)</td>
<td>32 (28%)</td>
<td>495 (49%)</td>
<td>22 (19%)</td>
<td>121 (12%)</td>
<td>45 (39%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These data show that party identification does not drive legislators’ behavior regarding women’s representation in the Dominican Congress. Contrary to the party ideology thesis, center-right legislators introduced the largest share of legislative initiatives addressing women's interests, not center-left legislators. However, this performance does not mean that center-right parties care about women’s interests; rather, it reflects that those parties enjoy a greater proportion of seats and the male legislators within those parties are concerned about the representation of Dominican women.

Overall, male legislators in center-right parties constitute the majority with 49%, followed by male legislators in left parties with 32%. Female legislators in both parties are a small minority. Yet, they introduced more legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests than their male colleagues in absolute numbers and proportionally.

**Legislative Outcomes**

The preceding discussions show that gender has a positive impact on women’s substantive representation as process. Female legislators felt more committed to representing women, and they prioritized women’s interests more than their male colleagues. Also, female legislators’ commitment to representing women’s interests translates into action in this direction. Female legislators on both sides of the party ideology spectrum introduced more legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests than their male counterparts.

On the other hand, female legislators can also impact women’s substantive representation as outcome. Indeed, legislative initiatives introduced by legislators to address women’s interests are very successful in the National Congress of the Dominican Republic. Of the 122 legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests, 91 (75%) have been approved. Further, of the 84 legislative initiatives introduced by female legislators, 53 (63%) were approved. Not only did
female legislators outnumber male counterparts in introducing legislative initiatives, but the legislative initiatives they introduced were also more successful.

When compared by party, legislative initiatives introduced by center-left legislators were also very successful. In the 21-year period considered in this study, center-left legislators occupied 392 seats (39%), they are responsible for 48 (41%) legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests and managed to get 27 (56%) approved. Yet, these results were driven mostly by the female deputies as they introduced 21 (78%) of the 27 approved legislative initiatives. Thus, gender not party explains women’s substantive representation as outcome in the National Congress of the Dominican Republic.

Furthermore, many of the laws that female legislators introduced have addressed important issues for women. For example, Law 88-03 creates shelters for women, children, and adolescents who are victims of domestic violence; Law 189-01 recognizes that married women ought to have equal rights to the administration of property owned by married couples; and Law 13-00 extents gender quotas in the election of local government authorities.

However, no progress has been made in terms of abortion laws. Still today, the Dominican Republic is one of the 15 countries in the world in which abortion is banned altogether. Although these data shows that female legislators have neglected women’s reproductive rights, other methods can assess the accuracy of these results. To test whether female legislators have played a role on this issue, one must analyze legislative debates. Debate analysis can reveal differences in the way male and female legislators advocate for women’s interests in the Dominican Congress.
**Legislative Debates**

In the Congress of the Dominican Republic, legislators can use plenary speeches to show their support or disagreement with a bill and persuade one another to pass, amend, or reject such legislative initiatives. These debates are the “most public battleground in the policymaking process (Swers 2002 p. 97), it is important legislative behavior to analyze women’s representation further. To test whether there is any gender differences among legislators, scholars have studied legislative debates through content analysis and speech participation rates.

Research shows that female legislators can use legislative debates to improve women’s substantive representation by advocating for women’s interests in their speeches (Pearson and Dancy 2011). Also, female legislators speak more than male legislators about policy issues relevant to women (Osborn & Morehouse Mendez 2010). In this study, I examine the plenary speeches made during the introduction of legislative initiatives that address women’s interests to test whether female legislators speak more frequently and if they use these speeches to support these legislative initiatives more than their male counterparts.\(^{38}\)

Because of data availability and congressional rules, plenary speeches are the best source to analyze the potential effects of legislative debates on women’s substantive representation in the Dominican Congress. Unlike the U.S. Congress, the Dominican Congress does not have the practice in which legislators can make a daily one-minute speech. Also, during plenary speeches, legislators have up to 10 minutes to present their arguments, and debates can potentially extend almost indefinitely. This allows ample time for legislators to elaborate on complex ideas and

\(^{38}\) I selected plenary speeches in which at least three legislators intervened. No debate in the Senate fit these criteria, thus, all the debates were selected from the Chamber of Deputies from 1998 to 2018.
make their cases. Finally, these are the only publicly available legislative speeches since there are no transcripts of committee debates.

Among the legislative initiatives that address women’s interests introduced from 1998 to 2019, I identified 12 plenary debates covering the themes of common law marriage, divorce laws, gender quotas, violence against women, gender perspective, and abortion. These debates fall under the category of ‘women’s rights and wellbeing’. If the presence of female deputies increases women’s substantive representation, female deputies’ speeches on women’s issues should outnumber their male counterparts.

In absolute numbers, male and female deputies are evenly split. Each group outnumbers the other in six of the 12 women’s rights and wellbeing debates. However, relative to their seat share, female legislators’ participation is higher than their male colleagues in eleven of the twelve debates. On average, 19 percent of female legislators participated in these debates compared to only six percent of male legislators (see figure 3.7). These results support the hypothesis that female legislators are more likely than male legislators to speak on relevant matters to women’s interests.

![Figure 3.7 Deputies’ relative participation in ‘women’s rights and wellbeing’ debates.](image-url)

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Table 3.9 compares male and female deputies’ debate participation in absolute numbers and relative to their seat share in more detail. For example, three female deputies and 15 male deputies participated in the common-law marriage debate of 1998-02. However, three female deputies represent eleven percent of the 27 female deputies and 15 male deputies are twelve percent of the 122 male deputies elected in that legislative period. Except for this debate in which male deputies outnumbered their female colleagues by one percent, all debates show that female deputies, proportional to their seat shares, participated in higher numbers than male deputies.

Another example is the gender perspective debate of 2002-06\(^{39}\) in which three female deputies and four female deputies participated. In absolute numbers, male deputies’ participation is slightly higher than their female counterparts. Yet, when seat-share is considered, the results change completely. Three female participants represent 13 percent of the 24 female deputies elected in that period and four male participants are only three percent of the 126 male deputies.

Table 3.9 Deputies’ Debate Participation Women’s Issues and International Affairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women’s rights and wellbeing</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Absolute numbers</th>
<th>As % of seat share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common-law marriage</td>
<td>1998-02</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>1998-02</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quota laws</td>
<td>1998-02</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1998-02</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence against women</td>
<td>2002-06</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2002-06</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender perspective</td>
<td>2002-06</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006-10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016-20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016-20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>2002-06</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{39}\) Legislators debated over the bill 00448-2002-2006-CD that allows a woman to get married right after getting divorced. Under Article 35 of Law 1306-BIS, women must wait ten months before getting married after a divorce.
Table 3.9. —Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International Affairs</th>
<th>2016-20</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Migration</td>
<td>1998-02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006-10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016-20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>2002-06</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010-16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016-20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreements</td>
<td>2002-06</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016-20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>1998-02</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2002-06</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016-20</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, I compare the participation rate and content of female deputies’ speeches during debates on these gender policies to the frequency and content of their speeches on matters that are not traditionally considered gender issues. Empirical studies often classify foreign affairs as a ‘masculine’ policy domain to which female legislators do not pay much attention (Bäck et al. 2014; Itzkovitch-Malka and Chen 2018). This method can test whether female legislators are more active than male legislators only when discussing gender policy and whether they introduced a gender perspective to matters not related to women’s issues.

The results show that female deputies outnumbered their male colleagues in three of the eight international affairs debates highlighted here. This finding demonstrates that although female deputies might be more active on policy issues that matter to women, they are also active in policy areas that are usually considered masculine.

These results are consistent with Swers’ (2013) findings. In her book, Swers explains that female senators in the U.S. try to stand out in foreign policy and other typically masculine policy issues to establish credentials in these areas, gain more powerful positions, and gain a reputation with voters as having expertise on these matters.
However, neither male nor female deputies made gender-related claims when debating International Affairs bills. When legislators delivered speeches around these legislative initiatives, they did not advocate for women’s interests or mention whether these bills can affect women differently than men. In contrast, in the debates around the 12 draft bills addressing women’s interests, as mentioned above, a higher proportion of female deputies delivered speeches when compared to male deputies.

On the other hand, the differences between male and female deputies’ speechmaking in favor of women’s interests are more evident when analyzing the content of their statements. Such differences can be highlighted through a qualitative content analysis of the abortion debates of the 2002-06 and 2016-20 Congresses. These bills affect women’s interests as they attempted to create some exceptions to the Penal Code that prohibits abortion altogether. Due to these exceptions' moral and social implications, these are some of the most heated debates not just in Congress but in the whole country.

This content analysis consists of two parts. First, I identify the position deputies took. If female legislators use their speech to improve women’s substantive representation, I expect that they speak in favor of these exceptions in higher proportions than their male counterparts. And second, I categorize the arguments made by legislators in support of or against the bill. I expect that legislators who want to improve women’s substantive representation would make arguments in favor of women’s rights.

The first abortion debate is that of the 2002-06 Congress. This debate was part of a larger reform to the Penal Code. A multiparty special commission worked on the bill and recommended including an exception that would allow women to have an abortion in cases of rape or incest. This proposed exception was the point of highest disagreement among legislators and the
deadlock that stopped the whole reform during that Congress. The reform was approved by the 2006-10 Congress, leaving the exception out.

Figure 3.8 compares deputies’ participation percentage relative to their seat share by gender and party. The results show that relative to their seat share, female deputies lead the chart with the highest participation and the group that spoke more frequently in favor of adding the abortion exception. Of the 24 female deputies in the Chamber, 6 participated in the debate (25%) and only one (4%) spoke against the exception. Of the 126 male deputies, only 14 (11%) participated in the debate and nine (7%) percent spoke in favor of the exception.

![Figure 3.8 Deputies Participation Abortion Debate by Gender and Party (2002-06) in %](image)

Although there are participation differences across party lines, these results do not support the party hypothesis. The presence of center-left legislators should increase women’s
substantive representation. Nevertheless, relative to their seat share, center-right deputies participated in higher numbers than their center-left colleagues and spoke more frequently in favor of the exception. Thus, gender explains support for abortion laws in this debate, not party ideology.

Next, I sorted the arguments used by deputies to justify their position using qualitative content analysis. This method has been used to study legislative debates to elicit differences between male and female legislators. For example, Broughton and Palmieri (1999) found that female deputies are more likely than male colleagues to bring a gender perspective to discussions not traditionally considered gender issues. By classifying the legislators’ speeches into categories, the researchers were able to find differences between male and female parliamentary’ speeches.

Content analysis is a method of systematically analyzing written, verbal, or visual information (Cole 1988). This method operates under the assumption that certain words and phrases can share the same meaning, allowing researchers to condense broad data into a few concepts or categories that can describe the phenomenon studied (Cavanagh 1997). Then, these concepts or categories can be used to make valid and replicable inferences (Krippendorff 1980).

There are three approaches to content analysis: conventional, directed, and summative (Hsieh and Shannon 2016). The conventional or inductive approach is best for study designs in which researchers have no preconceived notions about the phenomenon. Through this process, researchers are not guided by a theoretical framework. Instead, researchers extract categories and definitions from the data (e.g., Broughton and Palmieri 1999).

The directed or deductive content analysis approach is best suited for studies guided by prior research that is incomplete or needs further evidence. Through this approach, researchers
can “validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory” (Hsieh and Shannon 2016 p. 1281). And the summative approach is used to interpret and quantify the frequency of certain words while accounting for their context (e.g., Clayton et al. 2017).

Empirical research on legislative abortion debates identified that legislators use different types of arguments in their speeches to support their views. In a recent study, Mucciaroni et al. (2018) found 18 different arguments that legislators in favor and against abortion laws use to justify their position. Although other studies have also identified these types of arguments (Dillon 1993; Piscopo 2011; Rohlinger 2002), Mucciaroni et al.’s (2018) study has the most comprehensive list.

In their study, Mucciaroni et al. (2018) analyzed 26 bills restricting abortion. These bills were proposed from 2011–2014 in the state legislatures of 16 American states. First, they organized the speeches into two categories, those who spoke in favor and those who spoke against the restrictions. Then, through an inductive approach to content analysis, they created a list of categories representing the arguments legislators used in their speeches. And they counted the instances in which legislators asserted any of these arguments.

Because there is a guiding theoretical framework about the types of arguments that legislators can use in their speeches when debating abortion laws, I use the directed approach to qualitative content analysis in this study. First, I condense and adapt the 18 arguments of Mucciaroni et al.’s (2018) study to equivalent categories that fit the context of the abortion debate in the Dominican Republic. For example, the category of “Abortion legal/constitutional right in the USA/restrictions unconstitutional” (Mucciaroni et al. 2018 p. 181) is reworded as ‘legal’. However, the definition remains almost the same as this category refers to any arguments that cited the constitution or any other legal text.
Furthermore, “women’s health and safety, women should decide/get to choose abortion/privacy, restriction burden women (emotional, financial, practical), and restriction threatens women’s health and safety/will lead to unsafe abortions” are combined into the category of ‘women’s rights’ as these three categories fit within my definition of women’s substantive representation.

Next, I read the debates searching and highlighting instances in which legislators referred to any of these arguments. Following Mucciaroni et al. (2018), I did not include speeches in which no arguments were used. In these instances, legislators intervened to make points of order, address other aspects of the bill, or ask questions. In a spreadsheet, I assign one point to each category every time I find it is mentioned. Some legislators used more than one type of argument. Thus, there are more points distributed than speeches.

In total, I found evidence for seven types of arguments used to support or reject the abortion exception. The ‘legal’ argument was used to indicate whether the exception fits the laws of the Dominican Republic, especially its Constitution. The ‘slippery slope’ includes any reference to the idea that this would open the door to other exceptions or laws of this nature. ‘Appeal to constituency’ means that the deputy believes this is what their constituency wants.

Furthermore, ‘family and morality’ includes arguments about values, religious beliefs, and the stability of the Dominican families. ‘Women’s rights’ is any argument that advocates for women’s well-being. ‘Pragmatism’ refers to arguments that seek a compromise to save the reform from falling apart. Finally, ‘medical’ encompasses the concerns of the medical community and whether there are clinical situations in which abortion would be necessary.40

40 Although this debate was about an exception to the abortion law in case of rape or incest, some legislators argued that the exception should be extended to include clinical situations in which the life of the mother might be at risk.
Figure 3.9 shows that male and female deputies used a variety of arguments. However, there are some differences between the two groups. For example, the medical, the slippery slope, and the appeal to constituency arguments were used only by male deputies. It is not surprising that male deputies felt more inclined to claim they speak on behalf of their constituency as 66 percent of Dominicans do not approve of abortion in any case (Muñiz et al. 2017). However, in civil society, there are voices on both sides. Women’s organizations sent letters to Congress asking legislators to support the change. At the same time, the Catholic church leaders and evangelical churches also sent letters urging legislators not to support the exception. These letters were read during the debates.

Another difference is that a higher percentage of female deputies used pragmatic arguments compared to male deputies. These female deputies argued that they were willing to compromise to save the bill. Because the reform to the Penal Code contained other changes that female deputies considered advantageous to women, they were willing to compromise their
position about the abortion exception. One of those changes to the Penal Code was recognizing the concept of ‘femicide’ as a distinctive type of crime.

Finally, the most striking difference is that female deputies outnumbered their male counterparts in using the women’s rights and family and morality arguments. Although female deputies were only 16 percent in the Chamber and 35 percent of the group that participated in the debate, they were the group that used the women’s rights (50%) and family and morality (33%) arguments the most. While most male deputies (45%) used the legal argument, this was the argument least used by their female colleagues. These results show that female deputies were more likely to justify their stand on women’s issues as advocacy for women’s rights.

It is important to highlight that family and morality arguments were used to justify, both, rejecting or adopting the exception. The male and female deputies who supported the bill using this type of argument stated that this exception would help poor families mitigate the effects of rape or incest giving them the opportunity to decide whether they want to keep the pregnancy. They claimed that forcing a woman to keep a pregnancy that resulted from rape or incest would only add pain and suffering to the trauma that the family might already be experiencing.

In contrast, the female deputy who used this argument to reject the exception claimed that abortion would actually add more trauma to families regardless of the cause of the pregnancy. For her, abortion is the killing of a life that should be sacred, especially for the mother. She believes that a complete prohibition of abortion is better for families.

On the other hand, when compared by party ideology, the positions taken by deputies in their speeches are not very different. Figure 3.10 shows that the speeches made by center-left and center-right deputies are proportionally distributed across the different arguments. Hence, party ideology does not explain women’s substantive representation.
The abortion debate of the 2016-20 Congress added two new exceptions. In addition to the cases of rape and incest, the country’s president, Danilo Medina, recommended to include an exception in the event the life of the mother is at risk, and another in cases where a fetus has a congenital disease incompatible with life. As in 2002-06, this debate was also part of a larger reform to the Penal Code. Again, this was the point of highest disagreement among legislators and the deadlock that has stopped the whole reform until today.

One major difference with the previous debate is that it was the country’s president who suggested excluding the three exceptions. Danilo Medina is also the main political leader of the dominant center-right party, Partido de la Liberación Dominicana (PLD). During the 2016-20 Congress, this party controlled the Senate with 29 of the 32 Senate seats and had the majority of the seats (106 out of 190) in the Chamber of Deputies. Thus, there was a great expectation that the exceptions would be adopted into the new Penal Code with Medina’s support. However, this did not occur.

**Figure 3.10** Deputies’ Arguments Classification by Party (2002-06 debate)

The chart shows the distribution of deputies’ arguments by party, categorized into different areas of discussion:

- **Legal**
- **Slippery slope**
- **Appeal to constituency**
- **Family and Morality**
- **Women's rights**
- **Pragmatism**
- **Medical**

The chart uses bar graphs to illustrate the percentage of arguments made by the center-left and center-right parties in each category. The data is presented as follows:

- **Legal**: 40% center-left, 33% center-right
- **Slippery slope**: 20% center-left, 17% center-right
- **Appeal to constituency**: 20% center-left, 17% center-right
- **Family and Morality**: 20% center-left, 25% center-right
- **Women's rights**: 20% center-left, 33% center-right
- **Pragmatism**: 20% center-left, 25% center-right
- **Medical**: 20% center-left, 25% center-right

This visual representation helps to compare the focus and arguments made by the two parties across different categories.
The debate over the three exceptions took place after Medina vetoed the first draft of the bill indicating that he supported the three exceptions. The Chamber of Deputies' special commission in charge of the bill rejected Medina’s request to include the three exceptions. Thus, the debate in the Chamber was around the decision taken by this special commission. The deputies who support the three exemptions disagreed with the commission’s report that issued an unfavorable opinion to President Medina's request.

Figure 3.11 shows that female deputies’ participation and support for the abortion exceptions remained strong. Of the 52 female deputies in the Chamber eight (15%) participated in the debate; five (10%) spoke in favor of the three exceptions and three (5%) spoke against them. However, this time center-left deputies lead the chart with the highest participation and the group that spoke more frequently to add the three abortion exceptions. Of the 52 center-left deputies in the Chamber, eleven participated in the debate (21%), with nine (15%) using their speeches to support the exceptions and three (6%) speaking against them. Meanwhile, center-right deputies were evenly split. Of the 131 center-right deputies, only nine (7%) participated in this debate. Of these nine, four (3%) supported the exceptions, and five (4%) spoke against them.
These findings support the first and fourth hypotheses. On the one hand, female deputies’ debate participation and support for the bill proves that female politicians are more committed to representing women’s interests than male colleagues. On the other hand, center-left deputies’ debate participation and speeches in favor of the three exceptions confirm that left-leaning parties represent women’s interests better than right-leaning parties.

The strong support for women’s interests shown by deputies from center-left parties can be explained by the position that the main center-left party, Partido Revolucionario Moderno (PRM) adopted on this matter. As the vice-speaker of the PRM in the Chamber (Gloria Reyes) said in her intervention during the debate, “The PRM has responsibly assumed this issue (the three exceptions) and has sent a strong message to the country and to our bench rejects the report.
from the commission that is unfavorable to the observations of the Executive Power.” In other words, Reyes indicated that all PRM deputies supported the three exceptions to the abortion ban.

All the PRM deputies who participated in the debate spoke in favor of the three exceptions. The only center-left deputies who spoke against them were part of other center-left political parties. This was an unusual situation on this matter. A female deputy indicated that many legislators, especially female ones, are afraid to support anything related to abortion because they believe the Catholic Church and their followers could vote them out of office. Yet, support for the exceptions among female deputies remains strong.

The interviewee continued saying that over the last few years, some polls have shown that more Dominican people support these exceptions. This momentum has been accelerated due to a few unfortunate events of pregnant teenagers who lost their lives having abortions performed at clandestine clinics or had complications with their pregnancies. The interviewee believes that these new data and President Medina’s stand gave the PRM confidence they needed to support these exceptions fully.

The cohesion among the PRM deputies was also reflected in the arguments used during this debate. In this content analysis, I found fewer categories than the previous one. The ‘slippery slope’ and the ‘medical’ arguments were not used this time. Male and female deputies from center-right and center-left parties were mostly focused on the legal aspect of the exceptions and their impact on women’s rights.

Figure 3.12 shows that there are some similarities between this debate and the previous one. Again, female deputies did not appeal to their constituency in their arguments, while male deputies did so, albeit in a smaller proportion. Further, female deputies were more willing to

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41 Interview with center-right female deputy, October 31, 2019.
compromise to save the bill. As in the previous debate, some female deputies believe that other aspects of the reform made it worthwhile, even without the three exceptions.

**Figure 3.12 Deputies’ Arguments by Gender (2016-20 debate)**

Moreover, there are some important differences from the previous debate. Female deputies were more evenly split between the legal and the women’s rights arguments. And women’s rights arguments were used by male deputies more often than their female colleagues. Nonetheless, the women’s rights argument remains the one argument that female deputies assert the most.

When compared across party ideology, center-left deputies made a major difference. Figure 3.13 shows that center-left deputies made more references to women’s rights arguments than any other group. Further, they were not willing to compromise the abortion clauses to save the bill. These results show that the position adopted by the PRM to support these exceptions changed the level of support among center-left deputies and the rhetoric these deputies used to advocate for the bill relative to the previous abortion debate.
Figure 3.13 Deputies’ Arguments by Party (2016-20 debate)

Although gender remains a strong predictor of support for women’s substantive representation, the results from this debate show that political parties can exercise a great deal of influence in the legislative process. Despite President Medina’s support for the exceptions, his center-right party (with control in both chambers at the time) did not follow his line. This result supports previous findings that show that left-leaning parties are a strong predictor for political representation of women’s issues (Thun and Power 2003).

Conclusion

Are female legislators more likely than their male colleagues to impact women’s substantive representation in the National Congress of the Dominican Republic? Yes, this analysis shows that even though female legislators are underrepresented, they are more impactful to the representation of women’s interests than their male colleagues.

Although both male and female legislators recognize women as a constituency group with particular issues, female legislators were more likely to mention women as a group they feel they represent. They prioritized women’s interests more than their male counterparts. Further,
female legislators’ positive attitude towards the representation of women’s interests also translates into action.

In the National Congress of the Dominican Republic, female legislators introduced more legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests than their male counterparts. Also, these legislative initiatives have a higher chance of success when compared to the bills introduced by men or center-left legislators. Many of these legislative initiatives have corrected past injustices against women and brought more equity between the two genders.

In the areas where female legislators have not seen legislative success, such as abortion laws, it has not been due to lack of effort. The results of the legislative debate analysis show that female legislators use their legislative speeches to advocate for women’s interests more than their male counterparts.

Taken together, these results show that there is a positive link between women’s descriptive and substantive representation in the National Congress of the Dominican Republic. Female legislators claimed to prioritize women’s interests, and they demonstrate their commitment by introducing legislative initiatives addressing these interests. Thus, female legislators embraced the idea that they are better able to represent their ascriptive group than male legislators. In other words, the presence of female legislators increases women’s substantive representation.

The data review in this chapter shows that gender matters. Thus, Gender quota laws impact women’s substantive representation by increasing the number of female legislators. Next, I test whether quota laws can impact women’s substantive representation via the mandate effect and the label effect. To do so, I compare female deputies (elected by quota) with female senators (elected without quotas) using the same methods and data reviewed here.
CHAPTER IV
MANDATES AND LABELS IN THE DOMINICAN CONGRESS

The data discussed in the previous chapter shows that female deputies and female senators impact women’s substantive representation more than male colleagues in their respective chambers of the National Congress of the Dominican Republic. Those findings are consistent with the women’s descriptive representation literature that argues that female politicians are better than their male counterparts at representing women’s interests.

The analysis shows that legislators’ gender plays a role in women’s substantive representation even when controlling for party ideology. However, whether female legislators elected by quotas are more committed to representing women’s interests than their female colleagues elected without quotas remains untested. This chapter discusses if the mandate effect and the label effect can impact women’s substantive representation.

This analysis is grounded in the mandate effect and the label effect, these effects are discussed in Chapter II. A small but growing number of studies suggest that female politicians elected by quotas are more committed to representing women’s interests than women elected without quotas. On the one hand, when quota laws are adopted in response to women’s mobilization, female legislators can feel strongly committed to representing women’s interests because their legislative seat was made possible by the quotas.

On the other hand, gender quota laws can also be conceived as a fast-track mechanism to include women in politics. This perspective can lead to the view that female politicians elected under gender quota laws are not truly prepared for public office. Negative assumptions about female candidates’ experience, education, and skills can be made because of gender quota laws. To avoid being label as inexperienced politicians, some female politicians elected by quotas opt
to distance themselves from the representation of gender issues. This is known as the ‘label effect’ and it can negatively impact women’s substantive representation.

The mandate effect and the label effect theses are backed by Franceschet’s and Piscopo’s (2008) findings in Argentina’s case of quota laws. Nonetheless, their study does not compare female legislators elected by quotas with female legislators elected without quotas. Because Argentina’s Congress adopted gender quota laws in both chambers, female senators and female deputies have been elected by quotas since 1991.

In contrast, the Dominican Republic’s Congress adopted quota laws in the chamber of deputies only. Thus, this Congress provides a rare natural experiment to draw comparisons between female legislators elected by quota (female deputies) with those elected without quota (female senators). Using semi-structured in-depth interviews and archival data, this chapter compares how female deputies and female senators prioritized women’s interests and act to bring tangible outcomes for women.

**Gender Quotas and Legislators’ Priorities**

**The Mandate Effect**

Can gender quota laws affect how female legislators prioritize women’s interests? To address this question, scholars look for evidence that demonstrates the female legislators elected by quota are committed to representing women’s interests (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). Indicators such as recognizing women as a unique constituency group, collaborating with women’s organizations, and putting women’s issues in their legislative agendas can show how strong legislators’ commitments to women’s interests are.

The mandate effect thesis suggests that female legislators elected through quota laws can be more committed to representing women’s interests than legislators elected without quotas. If
the mandate effect is strong, female deputies should speak about women’s issues at greater lengths than female senators. Among other things, female deputies should mention women’s issues as a top priority, they should be able to name women’s organizations they work with and describe the nature of their collaboration. I use interview data to compare female deputies’ and female senators’ responses.

The analysis of semi-structured in-depth interviews with female legislators shows that female deputies are more connected with women than female senators as a constituency group. Fenno (1978) observed that legislators see their constituents as a heterogeneous group, they can identify the subgroups that support them and the intensity of that support. Hence, if the mandate effect is strong, female deputies should be more connected to their female constituents than female senators.

When asked whether they believe there are issues that affect women more than affect men, all female legislators said yes. However, while female senators only cited domestic violence and some health issues, female deputies cited other issues including abortion, discrimination, lack of job opportunities, and sexual harassment. These results were echoed by a high-ranking minister who indicated:

One can count with female senators to support legislation addressing breast cancer treatment because this issue is widely supported by all Dominicans. However, when it comes to contentious issues like the three exceptions for abortion, or sex education, one will not see any of them supporting these positions. On the contrary, these senators turn on a conservative discourse and declare themselves faithful Catholics.42

Furthermore, other pieces of data also show the narrow scope of issues that female senators recognize as women’s issues. For example, while all the female legislators indicated that they collaborate with women’s organizations, female senators only do it with a handful of

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42 Interview with minister, October 11, 2019.
female senators are mostly concerned with organizations that advocate for cancer research, violence against women, and women’s entrepreneurship. One female senator said:

I have two organizations. Through these organizations, I organize technical workshops in which many women and some men also learn how to make detergents, upholstery, language studies, cooking, sewing, making bread, sales courses, pharmacy, accounting, among others. In short, we have been able to educate many women to be microentrepreneurs and to earn a living. Also, I have also collaborated with other women’s organizations. Many seek financial or promotional support to carry out an activity and I help them with that.

However, this female senator was not able to name those organizations she claimed she collaborated with. In contrast, most of the female deputies can cite three or more women’s organizations, how often they are in contact with them and the nature of their collaboration. For example, one female deputy cited five different women’s organizations indicating that she sees 2 or 3 representatives from some of these organizations, at least, once a month. She said she believes this is important to remain active and updated on the issues that are affecting these constituents.

The assumption behind these data is that legislators who maintain strong ties with women’s organizations receive firsthand information on issues that are important to women (Erzeel 2015). Thus, the more women’s organizations and the more contact a legislator maintains with them, the better informed they would be about women’s concerns. Another female deputy said she has a close relationship with two organizations emphasizing the nature of involvement she has with them. She indicated:

In one organization, I work as an instructor, I teach women about safe sex, how to manage their finances, and I also teach children how to read and write. With another organization, I help organize conferences and workshops in which we discuss strategies

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43 The organizations’ names were omitted to maintain the participant’s anonymity.
44 Interview with center-right-female Senator, December 5, 2019.
45 The names of the organizations are omitted to protect the participant’s confidentiality.
46 Interview with center-left-female deputy, November 22, 2019.
47 The names of these two organizations are omitted to protect the participant’s confidentiality.
that women can implement to escape abusive relationships or protect their children from abusive partners.48

More differences can be drawn by asking female legislators how they perceive their roles in the representation of women’s interests. Female deputies were far more likely to emphasize gender differences and the importance of having women in the legislature to represent women’s issues than female senators. Also, while all the female deputies believe that female legislators are better able to represent women’s interests, most female senators do not share that belief.

All the female legislators acknowledge that men and women play different roles in society. However, female deputies embraced the idea that these differences between the two genders play a role in politics. For example, in response to the question of whether female legislators are better able to represent women’s interests than male legislators, one female deputy said:

I understand that this is nothing but natural. From our biology and our socialization, women tend to focus on things differently from men. I remember that back in high school there were so many things that girls and boys did differently. For example, do not you remember that when a group of women did a project, we were always focus on making it look good, organized, while guys did not even care about these things. I mean, we have different life priorities and when you have diversity in Congress you would see that in the laws that are produced too.49

Another female deputy blames the male chauvinist culture in the country for male legislators not being a good fit to represent women’s interests. She responded:

The culture of this country does not allow for a man to be immerse in women’s issues; people would consider him gay for doing that. Thus, male legislators are not so eager to advocate for women’s rights. It is up to us, the women, to bring these themes to the floor and make sure that we advocate for them, because, otherwise, bills that address women’s needs would go nowhere.50

48 Interview with center-left-female deputy, October 30, 2019.
49 Interview with center-right-female deputy, December 9, 2019.
50 Interview with center-left-female deputy, December 16, 2019.
In contrast, most female senators opine that politics should not be exercised along the gender lines. Most female senators emphasize that legislators’ role is to represent the Dominican people as a whole and not particular groups. Most female senators do not think that female legislators ought to claim they are the ones that can represent women’s interests. For example, one female senator explained:

It is an enticing idea; it would actually make a lot of sense for us to claim that we represent women’s interests because we are part of the same big group. I am sure that some female politicians would make such claims expecting that this would add them support from female voters. Yet, we must not represent the interests of particular groups but the Dominican people. There are girls and boys, male and female poor persons, male and female workers, we are all alike in this piece of island. We cannot pretend to support one group at the expense of the other. Thus, policies must include both genders.51

The two female senators who believe that female legislators are better able to represent women’s interests were ambivalent in their responses. They argued that representing women’s interests should not be a matter exclusive to female legislators. Yet, they acknowledge that this is what society expects from them. One of these female senators explained:

Our society has expectations of the role women should play in politics and we cannot escape that reality. Although our job as legislators is to represent all Dominicans equally, many people expect us, female legislators, to be the ones who advocate on behalf of Dominican women. Hence, while it is an option for male senators to get involved with gender issues, it is a must for us female senators.

Table 4.1 shows that all the female deputies from both sides of the political spectrum agree that female legislators are better able to represent women’s interests. In contrast, female senators were divided across party lines. Female senators from center-right parties did not share this idea, while female senators in center-left parties, albeit ambivalent, agreed that female legislators are better able to represent women’s interests.

51 Interview with center-right-female Senator, November 14, 2019.
Table 4.1 Are Female Legislators Better Able to Represent Women’s Interests?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response to question</th>
<th>Female deputies</th>
<th>Female senators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=7) (N=3)</td>
<td>(N=2) (N=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, when I asked female legislators whether they see themselves as representatives of certain constituency groups, almost all female deputies and only one female senator cited women among the group they feel they represent. Recall that to avoid any priming about gender issues, I asked this question before asking any questions referring specifically to women in politics or women in the legislatures.

I grouped female legislators’ responses into categories with labels that are self-explanatory. ‘Everyone’ is the category in which I assigned female legislators who do not believe that they represent any constituency group because they represent the Dominican people. Except for the few female legislators who do not believe in representing particular groups, most recognize that they represent multiple groups in their responses.

The results in table 4.2 show that female deputies are consistent in representing women’s interests. When justifying their responses, female deputies referred to feeling responsible for representing their ascriptive group, the support they believe they get from this group, or that women need special attention in the Dominican Republic. For example, one female deputy indicated:

I feel I represent women and young people. I mean, it should not come as a surprise to anyone. I am young and I am a woman, I think that these are the groups that identify themselves with me. When I go out campaigning, the vast majority of people excited for my candidacy are women and young people. I believe they see in me as someone who can truly represent their needs, and that is what I do from my seat in the Chamber of the Deputies.52

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52 Interview with center-right-female deputy, December 9, 2019.
In contrast, only one female senator acknowledges women as a group she feels she represents, and two female senators do not agree with the idea of representing particular groups. These female senators do believe that legislators should represent the Dominican people but cited their constituents as a particular group they feel indebted to. One of these female senators explained:

I represent everyone in my province and, of course, the country as a whole. However, if I have to think of a group that I feel personally indebted to is the people of my province.\(^\text{53}\) They are the ones that show support for my candidacy, and it is thanks to them that I am a senator today.\(^\text{54}\)

Although all female legislators acknowledge women as a group that has issues of particular interests to them, female deputies were more likely to mention women as a group they feel committed to representing. I found similar results when I ask female legislators about their legislative priorities. Specifically, I asked them to name their top three legislative priorities in no particular order.

**Table 4.2 Are You Representing Some Groups?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups Categories</th>
<th>Female deputies</th>
<th>Female senators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Center-left (N=7)</td>
<td>Center-right (N=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerable groups (elderly, children, youth, poor)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1 shows that female deputies were more likely than female senators to indicate that women’s interests are a priority in their legislative agenda. The results also show that female senators’ top priorities are health and welfare programs and the economy. It is worth noting that

\(^\text{53}\) The name of the province was cited by the participant, but that detail is omitted here to protect her identity.

\(^\text{54}\) Interview with center-right-female Senator, December 5, 2019.
health and welfare programs are considered issues that traditionally concerned women (Bratton 2005). These results are consistent with the opinion previously cited of a high-ranking minister who claimed that female senators support non-controversial women’s issues but stay away from sex education and the exceptions to the complete ban on abortion.

Female senators tend to only address non-contentious women’s issues. For example, female senators use their legislative speech to highlight events in support of efforts to eradicate violence against women or fundraising events for breast cancer research. Yet, they do not speak about gender quotas or abortion laws. In fact, when the three exceptions to the abortion ban were discussed in the Senate, female senators did not participate in the debate.

In the 21 years of legislative debates covered in this study (1998-2019), there is no single debate over women’s issues in which female senators support a position that is opposed by their male colleagues. The abortion debates discussed in Chapter III took place in the Chamber over the course of months in which most female deputies supported the exceptions and most of the male deputies did not. However, the abortion debate in the Senate took a few minutes and only one male senator, Julio César Valentín Jiminín, supported the exceptions. Again, no female senators participated in this debate.

While there are plenty of debates between female and male deputies over legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests, none of the bills or resolutions introduced by female senators were debated in the Senate. There are only a few instances when legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests that originated in Chamber of Deputies were debated in the Senate. However, in none of these instances did female senators intervene. For example, during the

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55 Senate Minute 064 Nov. 15, 2017
56 Senate Minute 0021 Dec. 14, 2016
57 See Table 3.9
58 Debates in which at least three or more legislators participated
abortion debate of 2016, only five male senators participated. Although female senators were present, they did not intervene. Thus, a legislative debate comparison between female senators and deputies is not feasible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female deputies</th>
<th>Female senators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women's interests</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and welfare programs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, culture, and recreation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucracy and public works</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Safety</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1 Female Legislators’ Priorities by Chamber

These results highlighted in Figure 4.1 reinforce the idea that female deputies feel more committed to representing women’s interests than female senators. Female deputies embraced the link between descriptive and substantive representation more than female senators. Not only are female deputies more open about representing women, but they also address a wider set of women’s issues.

If the mandate effect impacts female deputies’ commitment to representing women’s interests, these are the results I expect to find. Taken together, the evidence shows that the mandate effect drives female deputies’ attitudes toward the representation of women’s interests. While most female senators see themselves as representatives of all Dominicans, female deputies distinctively acknowledge their commitment to representing women’s interests. Further, female senators address issues that affect women that are not contentious. In contrast, female deputies

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59 Julio César Valentín Jiminián and Ruben Dario Cruz Ubiera spoke in favor of the three exceptions. Aristides Victoria Yeb, Jose Rafael Vargas Pantaleon, and Amilcar Jesus Romero spoke against the three abortion exceptions.
take the risk of supporting abortion laws despite the “consequences” they face to challenge the Catholic church.

Nonetheless, quota laws can also work against women’s interests. The label effect thesis suggests that female legislators elected by quotas can become the target of negative attitudes and behavior from male legislators who consider them not deserving of their legislative seat. To avoid attacks, some female legislators elected by quotas might avoid representing women’s interests. A discussion of the label effect in the Dominican Republic’s Chamber of Deputies is covered in the next section.

**The Label Effect**

While gender quotas can increase the number of female elected officials, this policy does not change the male-dominant culture of politics overnight. In contrast, increases in the number of female legislators can hurt women’s substantive representation as their male colleagues feel threatened by women’s growing strength (Baldez 2006). In some countries, increases of female legislators can be followed by hostility against them by their male colleagues (Thomas 1994), diminished support for gender-related legislative initiatives (Miguel 2012), and the relegation of female legislators to “less important” committees (Michelle et al. 2005), among other practices.

In the Dominican Republic, a handful of female deputies claimed that male legislators are hostile to them. They argued that some male legislators ignore them when they speak in favor of certain legislative initiatives that address women’s issues, some male deputies whisper ‘bitter old ladies’ when female deputies advocate for quotas, and even bully them in different ways.61 For

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60 A few female legislators claim that some of their female peers do not support the three exceptions to abortion and sex education in schools because these are positions to which the Catholic church stand against. These legislators believe that challenging the Catholic Church in the Dominican Republic can put at risk their chances of reelection.

61 Interview with center-right-female deputy, October 31, 2019.
example, in 2016 a male deputy of the PLD, Noé Camacho, used his belt to threaten a female colleague, Faride Raful of the PRM, while she delivered a speech on the floor (Frias 2016).

Camacho took his belt and whipped it on his desk several times and pointed at Raful with it. This incident caused national outrage, but a high-ranking minister expressed that this behavior is hardly a surprise given the country’s male chauvinist culture. Another female deputy echoed this sentiment indicating:

… what happens here (in the Chamber of Deputies) is a mere reflection of our male chauvinist culture. Perhaps, many men do not do it because they want to be disrespectful but because this is what they think is the right way to treat women. On the other hand, we have learned how to deal with these practices to survive in these environments…if I were to make a complaint every time, I hear some inappropriate comment that they think is a compliment, we would have a big scandal every week.

Male deputies also use more subtle tactics. For example, while discussing the adoption of gender quotas in 1997, male legislators left the Chamber saying they needed a bathroom break as an excuse or they have sideline conversations when female deputies speak on the floor. This form of discrimination is linked to the gender quota. As a female deputy explained:

I know that some of my male colleagues think we do not have the qualifications to become legislators. They say things like, “these women are only there because the party was forced to give them a space”. However, I know the truth; I know my women colleagues and their struggle to get here and how qualified they are. Are all of them super qualified? A few are not well-rounded professionals, but neither are some men and yet, you do not hear the same criticism about them.

These stories are consistent with Franceschet and Piscopo (2008)’s findings. Argentine female legislators indicated to the researchers that they were treated disrespectfully when advocating for feminist issues such as quota laws. The fact that these are a common experience

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62 Interview with Minister, October 11, 2019.
63 Interview with center-left-female deputy, November 22, 2019.
64 This incident is described by a female deputy (Ana Bonilla) during her speech advocating for the adoption of gender quotas in local governments (Chamber of Deputies Minutes 13. Sept. 23, 1999.
65 Interview with center-left-female deputy, November 22, 2019.
66 Interview with center-left-female deputy, November 31, 2019.
among the female deputies I interviewed but not among female senators demonstrates that females elected by quotas are the ones that are labeled.

On the other hand, female senators indicated that they are treated with respect by their male colleagues, and I could not find any instances of disrespectful or hostile behavior against female senators in the transcripts of legislative debates or in the media. In an interview, a journalist who covers the National Congress indicated to me that female senators are not pushy enough about women’s issues to threaten male dominance in the Senate. This journalist explained:

The gender dynamic in the Senate is very different from that of the Chamber. First of all, there are far fewer female senators than female deputies. Thus, female senators do not have the numbers to be considered a significant block. Further, female senators are not very likely to engage in controversial topics. When they advocate for a bill that favors women is because they know that that bill is supported by most of their male colleagues. Simply, female senators are not a revolutionary force that male senators should fear.

Furthermore, evidence of unequal treatment towards female deputies can be found in the distribution of committee assignments and the leadership of these committees. Committee assignments and leadership positions are scarce resources that can be distributed unequally based on legislators’ gender. Men have predominantly dominated Latin American legislative assemblies. However, because of several factors, especially gender quota laws, women have gained ground. Although women remain a minority in the congresses of most Latin American countries, they have become a strong group.

Looking at six Latin-American countries (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Venezuela), Michelle Heath et al. (2005) found that female legislators are marginalized from certain committees as their numbers grow in Congress. Also, a high-ranking

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67 Interview with center-right-female senator, December 6, 2019.
68 Interview with journalist, December 12, 2019.
minister indicated that one can find female deputies presiding over a commission on education, gender equity, or culture, but more prestigious commissions that work with the economy or national defense remain reserved for male deputies.69

To test whether these theses hold in the Chamber of Deputies of the Dominican Republic, I analyze the distribution of female deputies and whether they hold any leadership positions across three groups of standing Commissions from 1998 to 2019. I created three categories of standing commissions70 following Michelle Heath et al. (2005)’s coding, ‘Gender Issues’, ‘Social Issues’, and ‘Economics and Foreign Affairs’.71 Then, I compare the distribution of male and female deputies in these three groups and their leadership positions.

![Figure 4.2 Percentage Female Deputies in Standing Commissions](image)

69 Interview with minister, October 11, 2019.
70 The standing commissions under the category of Social Issues are Education, Higher Education, Culture, Human Rights, Public Health and Social Welfare, and Adolescents and Children; under the category of Economics and Foreign Affairs are Agriculture, Defense, Industry and Commerce, Presidency, Interior and Police, Foreign Affairs, Public Works, Debt, and Contracts; and under Gender Issues is Gender Equity.
71 In their study, Michelle Heath et al consider a fourth category, ‘Power Committees’. The researchers coded this category based on the opinion of country experts. However, the commissions consider the most prestigious and powerful in the Congress of the Dominican Republic overlap with the category ‘Economics and Foreign Affairs’.
As expected, Figure 4.2 shows that female deputies are overrepresented in the Gender Issues commission. Only, on two occasions, a couple of male deputies were part of this commission. Further, female deputies are proportionally represented in Social Issues commissions with an inclination to increase the participation levels as the presence of female deputies increased in the chamber.\(^{72}\) In contrast, female deputies are underrepresented in Economics and Foreign Affairs commissions.

Michelle Heath et al. (2005) argue that women were more likely to be isolated on women’s issues and social issues committees and kept off power and economics/foreign affairs committees when the number of female legislators increases, when chamber presidents control committee assignments, or when there is a specific committee that deals with women’s issues.

The Dominican Republic fits with two of these conditions. In the Chamber, deputies are assigned to different commissions by the Coordinator Commission. Deputies from different political parties integrate this Commission. Thus, no party leader or chamber president controls committee assignments. However, female deputies’ numbers have risen, and the Gender Equity Standing Commission is charged to work with all matters related to gender.

These findings indicate that because the number of female deputies is increasing and a commission works with women’s issues, female deputies in the Dominican Republic do not participate in Economics and Foreign Affairs commissions in numbers proportional to their seat-share in the Chamber. However, this difference in commission assignments can also be attributed to the difference in commission preference that male and female deputies have (Baekgaard and Kjaer 2012).

\(^{72}\) See figure 1.1
Through the study of local Danish governments, Baekgaard and Kjaer (2012) found that “women and men sit in different committees primarily because they have different preferences” (479). Indeed, the data discussed in Chapter III shows that female legislators are more engaged in representing women’s interests than male legislators. This can explain the overwhelming participation of women in the Gender Equity Commission.

Nonetheless, other data reveal that the differences in commission assignments are not totally dependent on deputies’ preferences. During the interviews, a few female deputies indicated that some of their commission preferences are not addressed. After learning about the commissions these female deputies were assigned to, I asked them whether these were the commissions they wanted to be part of, and a few indicated that they want to join other commissions.

For example, one female deputy argued that although she has a BA in accounting, she has not been considered for the Budget, Patrimony, and Accounting Standing Commission. She claimed that although she understands seniority plays a role, she has witnessed how other male deputies with no more experience than her are included in this Commission. Thus, she concludes that, albeit not openly, there is a preference to include men over women in this and other similar commissions.73

Another female deputy said that generally, commissions are fairly distributed among male and female deputies. Nonetheless, she feels there is a tendency to reserve certain commissions such as National Defense for male deputies. She claimed that although it is acceptable that these commissions can be formed with men only, it is unthinkable to imagine these commissions with a women majority or women in leadership.74

73 Interview with center-left-female deputy, November 31, 2019.
74 Interview with center-right-female deputy, October 20, 2019.
Furthermore, when debating commission assignments, Deputy Isabel Bonilla Hernández proposed including a female deputy for each parliamentary bloc. She then said that “...this aims at breaking the customary criterion in the Chamber of believing that women know nothing about finances and therefore, they are not taken into account for the Public Budget Standing Commission.”75 Again, this shows that some female deputies feel that the gender disparity in commission assignments is caused by discrimination.

It is worth noting that only three out of the 16 female deputies interviewed and a high-ranking minister claimed that commission assignments are somewhat biased and exclude female deputies from certain commissions that men traditionally dominate. Other female deputies indicated that they are assigned to the commission of their preference. However, this bias is fully absent in the Senate as female senators serve in almost all committees in proportion to their seat-share.

Perhaps, this discrepancy can result from the small number of female senators that get elected in every election. Michelle Heath et al. (2005) argues that when female legislators’ percentage of seat share occupancy is low, they are more likely to be included in Economics and Foreign Affairs committees. This is the case of female senators in the Dominican Republic. On average, female senators are 7 percent of the senate, and they are proportionally represented in almost all commissions.

Female representation in the Senate of the Dominican Republic has been historically low. In the 2020 election, four women were elected to the Senate. This was the first time that more than three women have been elected to that chamber. Because of their low numbers, female senators do not represent a threat to male dominance (Michelle Heath et al. 2005). During the

75 This speech is contained in the Chamber of Deputies’ minutes number 23, November 17, 1998, p. 2.
Interviews, female senators indicated that they get to serve in the Committee of their choosing. One said that female senators are sought after by some commissions chairs who want to include a woman in their team. "We are…" said the female senator… “a scarce resource”.76

On the other hand, a pattern of exclusion is also present in the leadership of the different commissions in the Chamber of Deputies. Evidently, all presidents, vice-presidents, and secretaries of the Gender Equity Standing Commission in the Chamber have been female deputies. Nonetheless, very few female deputies have served in any of these positions in any of the Economics and Foreign Affairs commissions.

On average, female deputies were 19 percent of the Chamber from 1998 to 2019. Yet, Figure 4.3 shows that female deputies occupied 26 percent of the presidencies, thirty percent of the vice-presidents, and forty percent of the secretaries of all commissions on Social Issues. These numbers are very high considering that, on average, women were 28 percent of the deputies in these commissions.

![Figure 4.3 Percentage Female Deputies Leading Standing Commissions (1998-2019)](image)

76 Interview with center-left-female senator, November 22, 2019.
By contrast, women were eleven percent of the deputies in all the Economics and Foreign Affairs commissions. Still, their numbers in leadership positions of president and secretary are below their membership percentage. Interestingly, female deputies were 14 percent of the vice-presidents in these commissions, but only two percent of the presidents. These results can mean that female deputies are not fully endorsed as the leading figure, albeit their peers consider them qualified to lead these commissions in a supporting role as vice-presidents.

Also important in the distribution of leadership positions among female deputies is party ideology. On average, female deputies in center-left parties were only twenty percent of all female deputies from 1998 to 2019. Yet, Figure 4.4 shows most female deputies leading standing commissions come from center-left parties. Thus, center-left parties were more likely to empower female deputies with commission leadership positions than center-right parties.

**Figure 4.4** Percentage Female Deputies Leading Standing Commissions by Party (1998-2019)
Taken together, these results show that gender quotas carry over the label effect in the Chamber of Deputies of the Dominican Republic. Compared to their female colleagues in the Senate, female deputies are treated with some level of disrespect, they are somewhat excluded from the more prestigious standing commissions, and the leadership of these commissions. However, it does not seem that the label effect deters female deputies from representing women’s interests.

I asked female deputies whether they believe more women should be in politics and whether they support gender quotas. Almost all participants agree that there should be more women in politics and that gender quotas are an important tool to achieve that. For example, one female deputy explained:

We are underrepresented in every branch of the government. Some people mistakenly think that because quota laws mandate 33%, now 40%, of female candidates, we have an actual 33% of women in Congress. Far from it, we are not even a 30% and in the Senate is even lower. Of course, there are plenty of women as government staff such as secretaries, assistants, customer service, custodial, etc., but that should not come as a surprise because women traditionally have performed these jobs. However, when it comes to women in leadership positions, there is not much support. And that is why we need quota laws; we must accept the fact that our culture has not changed enough to normalize the idea of women in higher offices.  

Female deputies who advocate for gender quota laws get a lousy reputation as politicians who want a guaranteed position without competing like anyone else. Yet, these female deputies do not seem distracted by such a reputation as they double down on their advocacy for quotas. Female deputies see the connection between gender quota laws and their growing numbers and that this gives them better chances to represent women’s interests successfully. One female deputy added:

…because of the quota laws, many of us, myself included, were able to get a chance to become candidates first and win an election. If we did not have the numbers we have

77 Interview with center-left-female deputy, December 16, 2019.
now, I do not believe that women would be properly represented. We are the ones who make sure that women’s rights are considered in the decision-making process. The problems that affect women are not the male deputies’ priority. If it were not because we are fearless when we advocate for women, that male chauvinist mentality in this country would be much worse.\textsuperscript{78}

However, one female deputy indicated that while she supports the idea of having more women in politics because women are more transparent, she does not support some female deputies who, she believes, get an easy pass to a legislative seat. She supports quota laws but believes that female candidates cannot simply rely on quotas to get elected, they should do the work as anyone else.\textsuperscript{79}

These results show that although quota laws create labels that affect female deputies, these labels do not affect women’s attitudes toward representing women’s interests. As Kerevel and Atkeson (2013) argue, “female legislators can still substantively represent women’s interests, while at the same time be marginalized by other members of the legislature” (981). In other words, the presence of labels, albeit detrimental to female deputies, might not be enough to change their stand in representing women’s interests.

Nonetheless, these results only show female legislators prioritized women’s interests. Although female legislators’ responses to these questions can be a good indicator of their legislative behavior, an assessment of their performance is needed to get a complete picture. In the following section, I test whether the mandate and label effects impact female legislators’ introduction of legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests.

\textsuperscript{78} Interview with center-right-female deputy, October 31, 2019.
\textsuperscript{79} Interview with center-right-female deputy, October 20, 2019.
Gender Quotas and Legislative Behavior

Can gender quota laws affect legislators’ behavior toward the representation of women’s interests? The mandate effect thesis suggests that female legislators elected through quota laws can be more committed to representing women’s interests than legislators elected without quotas. Thus, one should expect that female deputies in the National Congress of the Dominican Republic introduce more legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests than female senators.

![Figure 4.5 Senators’ Legislative Initiatives Addressing Women’s Interest by Gender](image)

Figure 4.5 Senators’ Legislative Initiatives Addressing Women’s Interest by Gender

However, data shows that female senators introduced as many legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests as female deputies. To perform this analysis, I compare female legislators’ legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests to male counterparts in their respective chambers. Figure 4.5 shows a comparison between male and female senators. On average, female senators were only eight percent of all senators. Yet, they account for 56% of the
legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests that were introduced in the Senate from 1998 to 2019.

Furthermore, Figure 4.6 shows that female deputies were only 21 percent in the Chamber of Deputies but accounted for 73% of the legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests introduced in that chamber. This sharp difference confirms that female politicians impact women’s substantive representation as process more than male colleagues.

![Figure 4.6 Deputies’ Legislative Initiatives Addressing Women’s Interest by Gender](image)

The results shown in Figure 4.5 and 4.6 indicate that female senators introduced as many legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests as female deputies. Although women are underrepresented in the Senate, they are a driving force regarding legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests. Female deputies also outperformed their male colleagues, but the
differences between both groups of female representatives regarding the number of legislative initiatives is not substantial.

Again, these results show that female senators are as likely as female deputies to introduce legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests. Thus, the mandate effect does not impact women’s substantive representation in the form of legislative initiatives. These results are consistent with Clayton et al. (2017)’s findings that gender, but not the mandate effect, affect women’s substantive representation.

On the other hand, there is a subtle but significant difference in the range of women’s issues that female senators and female deputies try to tackle with the legislative initiatives they introduce. While female deputies’ legislative initiatives cover a wide spectrum of women’s issues, including violence against women, women’s health, civil and political gender equity, women’s reproductive rights, protection for sex workers, and sex education, most female senators’ legislative initiatives are limited to addressing domestic violence and women’s health.

This finding is consistent with Meloy (2015). In her article, Meloy suggests statistical evidence from bill introduction or roll call voting misses important differences in how legislators represent women’s interests. Meloy found that female legislators have a broad definition of a sex crime while male legislators consider only a few specific behaviors fit their sex crime criteria.

Furthermore, Osawa and Yoon (2019) found that legislators who are more likely to represent women’s interests tend to address a wider range of women’s issues. In their study, Osawa and Yoon found that legislators who cover a broader range of women’s themes in their speeches are also the ones that engage in women’s substantive representation by speaking more frequently on women’s issues.
Although female senators introduced as many women-friendly legislative initiatives as female deputies, female deputies include a broader set of women’s issues in their legislative agendas. Researchers have found this difference between male and female legislators (Meloy 2015). Yet, I am unaware of other studies that connect the mandate effect with the number of women’s issues legislators consider. Thus, future research can explore the possible link between the mandate effect and the breadth of legislators’ view of women’s issues.

Another important difference between female senators and female deputies is that the latter make changes to the structure of the legislative power itself. For example, female deputies introduced and passed a resolution to build a nursery room in Congress that female legislators and women staffers can use for breastfeeding. One of the key objectives behind this resolution is to make it possible for all women workers in Congress to return to work after their post-natal break.80

One female deputy who co-sponsored this resolution indicated during our interview that it was the duty of Congress to set the example. The government wants employers to be inclusive of women workers, including women with newly born babies. Nursery rooms accommodate women in this situation so that they do not feel they have to choose between their job and their children or have to use unsafe spaces at work for breastfeeding.81

Another resolution requires that legislators’ official license plates be gender-sensitive and read diputado and diputada, senador and senadora (in Spanish, these nouns are gendered). In her motivation, the female deputy who authored the bill, Josefina Marte, claimed that when a female legislator arrives to certain places, people believe their chauffeur is the legislator because the

80 Bill 05072-2016-2020-CD discussed in the Chamber of Deputies on Dec. 8, 2016, pg. 24
81 Interview with center-right-female deputy, December 14, 2019.
vehicle’s plate reads male deputy or male senator (diputado or senador). Although it may sound like a joke, Marte claimed that this behavior reproduces women’s discrimination.

Perhaps, the most iconic of these changes is a resolution that institutionalized the gender perspective in the Chamber of Deputies. This resolution charges the Gender Equity Commission with the duty of drafting the gender policy of the Chamber of Deputies and integrates a team of specialists on gender issues to aid the Commission on this task. According to a female deputy, this resolution provides the Gender Equity Commission with the necessary funding to prepare workshops that educate legislators and staffers about gender issues. Many female legislators learned about behaviors the Dominican society considers acceptable, albeit behaviors that hurt women, indicated the female deputy.

These examples illustrate the wide variety of women’s themes that female deputies address with their legislative initiatives. Although female senators are as likely as female deputies to introduce bills and resolutions addressing women’s interests, female deputies’ legislative agendas encompass a more extensive set of women’s issues. This difference is present in the legislative priorities the female legislators I interviewed claimed to have and the actual legislative initiatives they introduced in Congress.

Conclusion

Women’s mobilization in the Dominican Republic, combined with international pressure, made possible the adoption of gender quota laws in 1997. While the number of female deputies has been increasing steadily in the lower house, female senators remain low. Yet, quota effects are not limited to increasing women’s representation.

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82 Bill 00656-2002-2006-C discussed in the Chamber of Deputies on September 10, 2003, pg. 32.
83 Bill 00189-2010-2016-C discussed in the Chamber of Deputies on May 15, 2013, pg. 39.
84 Interview with center-right-female deputy, December 14, 2019.
The evidence discussed in this chapter shows that female politicians elected by quotas are more committed to representing women’s interests than female politicians elected without quotas. Several pieces of empirical evidence demonstrate that the mandate effect can have an impact on women’s substantive representation as process and as outcome.

In terms of process, interviews revealed that female deputies claim to be genuinely invested in representing women’s interests. While some female senators do not think they represent women as a group, female deputies embrace the idea of representing women. Female deputies argued that women deserve special attention, and they are responsible for doing so.

However, this dissertation could not compare female senators and female deputies committee leadership to test whether bias is due to the label effect. Because only a few women get elected to the Senate, they are included in all the committees of their choosing and lead these committees in proportion to their seat share. Future research must compare legislative bodies with similar numbers of female representatives where quota laws are the main difference.

On the other hand, while female senators prioritized only a handful of women’s issues, female deputies prioritized a broader set of women’s issues in their legislative agendas. Female senators advocate for issues that are not controversial. Still, when it comes to other essential matters such as sex education and abortion laws, female deputies are the ones that advocate for women.

Another piece of evidence is that female deputies have strong connections with several women’s organizations that encompass several aspects of women’s lives, such as business, health, education, employment, and political rights. Female deputies regularly collaborate with these organizations and mention how often they meet. In contrast, female senators maintain connections with few women’s organizations.
The broader set of women’s issues that female deputies address is reflected in the legislative initiatives they draft. Although female senators introduce as many legislative initiatives addressing women’s interests as their female colleagues in the Chamber, female deputies’ legislative initiatives encompass a broader set of issues. For example, no female senator advocates easing the abortion ban. Meanwhile, female deputies engage in lengthy debates to ensure that women’s voices are heard.

Similarly, the mandate effect impacts women’s substantive representation as outcome. This dissertation found that female deputies made changes to the congressional rules to ensure that the legislative become more inclusive toward women, for example, by adding the gender of the legislator to the official license plate, so that female deputies’ chauffer is not mistaken as the legislator when they visit some places.

On the other hand, there is some evidence of the label effect. Some female deputies expressed that they are treated unequally by some male colleagues. Evidence that supports this thesis was found in committee assignment data and committee leadership. While male colleagues seek female senators to ask them to join the most prestigious committees, some female deputies do not get the opportunity to join prestigious committees in the Chamber. According to some female deputies, they are not considered for some prestigious committees even though they are qualified to join those committees.

Fortunately, the label effect does not discourage female deputies from representing women’s interests. Hence, the label effect does not have a negative impact on women’s substantive representation. Although it is detrimental for female deputies to face these challenges, they are not dissuaded from advocating for women’s rights.
 CHAPTER V  
GENDER QUOTAS IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

The results discussed in the two previous chapters show that politicians’ gender and whether they are elected by gender quota laws, affects women’s substantive representation in the Dominican Republic National Congress. In this chapter, I explore whether we can find similar results in municipal governments by comparing female elected officials with their male counterparts and female politicians elected by quotas with female politicians elected without quotas.

This chapter builds on the existing literature by considering the extent to which increasing women’s numbers impacts women’s substantive representation and to explore whether and how the mandate effect and the label effect play a role in local government politics. Specifically, I compare how male and female elected officials prioritized women’s issues. If gender matters in the municipal governments, I expect female councilors and mayors prioritized women’s interests more than their male colleagues.

I conducted a total of 23 semi-structured in-depth interviews with male and female politicians across four municipalities in the Dominican Republic. To the extent possible, I recruited current and former local government leaders from both sides of the political spectrum. Table 5.1 breaks down the distribution of participants.

Table 5.1 Local Government Leaders Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 councilors</td>
<td>3 councilors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 Mayor</td>
<td>1 Vice-mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Mayor</td>
<td>2 Mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 Vice-mayors</td>
<td>1 Mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Vice-mayors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

85 To maintain participant’s confidentiality, the names of these municipalities have been omitted.
The results show that female politicians, especially those elected by quotas, are more committed to representing women’s interests. While male councilors and mayors claimed to implement some projects to address women’s interests, the scope of their projects are not as broad, and their level of engagement is not as consistent as their female colleagues.

**Representing Women in Local Governments**

Gender quota laws were adopted in municipal governments in the year 2000 and revised in 2018. This policy was a victory of the first wave of female deputies elected by quota in 1998. The municipal version of quota laws mandates that no gender should have fewer than 33\%^{86} of candidacies for councilors. Also, quotas applied at the level of mayor. In this case, the candidate running for vice-mayor must be of the opposite gender of the candidate running for mayor. That is, when the mayor is a male, his vice-mayor must be a woman and vice versa.

Vice-mayors' primary duty is to substitute the mayor if needed. However, mayors can delegate some responsibilities to vice-mayors at their discretion, but in the case of female vice-mayors, Law 176-07 charges female vice-mayors with some special responsibilities. In this sense, female vice-mayors are mandated by law to chair a standing commission on Gender Issues and address all gender-related work in the municipality (Art. 368). In other words, by law, female vice-mayors are expected to address women’s interests in their municipalities. Indeed, the two female vice-mayors I interviewed are very much involved with promoting women’s perspectives in the municipal budget.

Many empirical studies on women in local government analyze whether increases in female representation yield policy outcomes favoring women (O’Brien & Rickne 2016; Opello

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^{86} This number increased to 40\% in 2018. (Law 33.18)
Although results are mixed, there is a consensus that female elected officials in local governments were more likely to prioritize women’s issues than their male counterparts, even when this commitment does not spill over into actual outcomes (Geys and Sørensen 2019).

Many of these studies rely on qualitative research methods, especially semi-structured in-depth interviews (Bochel and Briggs 2000; Boles 2001; Takhar 2014). Two reasons justify the use of this method. First, data availability is limited in some local governments. For example, municipal councilors’ primary duty in the Dominican Republic is to approve and audit the municipal budget. Unlike national legislators, municipal councilors do not have lawmaking prerogatives. Instead, councilors can introduce resolutions and ordinances. Unfortunately, these data are not digitally stored.87

Second, this approach is helpful to create a picture of the subject matter when not much is known about the case under investigation (Bochel and Briggs 2000). Because quota laws’ effects on women’s substantive representation in the Dominican Republic’s municipal governments have not been studied, initial steps are needed to establish parameters to understand the matter at hand. Open-ended interpretive data collection and analysis can better represent participants perspectives and experiences (Weiss 1995).

Although municipal councilors do not have law-making duties, there are other ways these elected officials can represent women’s interests. For example, municipal governments are required by law to allocate 4% of their budget to programs addressing education, gender, and health. Municipal councilors can propose different projects addressing women’s issues with

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87 These data can only be requested by ordinance or resolution. In other words, one cannot request all the ordinances and resolutions introduced by councilors. One must submit a separate form for each ordinance. To do so, one must know the document's title, which is not public information. Further, none of the town halls I included in the analysis allow the public to search through their physical files. These constraints make it impossible to obtain these data.
these funds. For example, a group of female councilors proposed implementing workshops to educate the public about violence against women in 2002.88

Furthermore, municipal councilors can introduce resolutions to include women’s themes in their town hall agenda. For example, one female councilor indicated that she promoted a regulation that would mandate the adoption of gender education for all elected officials and staff in her municipality to educate them about gender issues.89

Similarly, mayors can implement projects to target women or that have a gender perspective. For example, Koyuncu and Sumbas (2016) found that female mayors use positive discrimination when hiring municipal employees to create a gender-balanced staff. In the Dominican Republic, the major of the National District, Carolina Mejia, in conjunction with the Ministry of Women and other ministries, implemented a project to create urban gardens to allow citizens, especially single mothers, grow crops sustainably for consumption and trade.90

Initially, I asked participants whether they believe there are issues that affect women more than affect men. Their responses were very similar to that of National Congress legislators. Male and female mayors, vice mayors, and councilors said yes. Again, domestic violence was cited as the main issue that affects Dominican women more than men. Further, some participants mentioned issues such as harassment at work and lack of job opportunities.

Next, I asked councilors, mayors, and vice-mayors whether they think that female elected officials can better represent women’s interests. Male and female councilors and vice-mayors agreed that female politicians are better able to represent women. This is different from National

88 Introduced by councilors Mirna Tejada, Teotiste Sánchez y Cristina Sánchez, National District City Hall Resolution 185/2002.
89 Interview with center-left female councilor, December 7, 2019.
90 This project was conceived prioritizing women and single mothers and was implemented in 2021. For more details, https://mujer.gob.do/index.php/noticias/item/717-entidades-presentan-proyecto-para-siembra-de-30-huertos-urbanos-en-santo-domingo
Congress, as some legislators did not think that female deputies or senators can represent women better than their male colleagues (see Table 3.2). On the other hand, none of the mayors agreed with this statement.

As indicated in Chapter III, this is important because female elected officials who believe they are better able than their male colleagues to represent women’s interests are more likely to advocate for women. In this case, female councilors believe that their presence and voices ensure that women’s interests are taken seriously in local governments (Reingold 2000).

Female councilors’ responses echo what some female legislators mentioned. They talked about their shared experiences as women and the lack of understanding men have regarding the issues affecting women. For example, one female councilor indicated:

While some Dominican men are concerned about the prices of alcoholic beverages, many women worry about price increases in propane gas and groceries. We (women councilors) come from that world. Even some of my well-off female colleagues know that men do not usually prioritize the problems that we prioritize.91

Again, the women’s descriptive representation thesis assumes that female elected officials should be better positioned than their male counterparts to represent women’s interests because they can understand the unique perspective of that ascriptive group (Williams 1998). All male councilors and vice-mayors agree with this view. They indicated that they have to read about experiences that their female colleagues know, because they lived through them. For example, one male councilor said:

While campaigning with one of my female colleagues, I witnessed how some women in the community would start narrating an issue they are having, and my female colleague would finish their sentences, demonstrating that she knew of these issues because she has experienced them herself. These are things that can happen to me with other fellow men. However, there are some issues that, I believe, only women can know first-hand.92

91 Interview with center-right female councilor, December 1, 2019.
92 Interview with center-right male councilor, December 8, 2019.
Similarly, a male vice-mayor who previously served as a councilor expressed that he noticed that women in his community identify with the mayor (who is a woman). Women were more likely to come out to meet the mayor when she visited some towns, and he never witnessed a similar behavior with previous male mayors.93

Furthermore, one female councilor said that “Our male colleagues cannot speak about price changes in groceries, uncollected trash, children’s health, among other issues because these are matters that we (women) are responsible for in the household. Almost all Dominican men leave these duties to their women”.94 This sentiment was echoed by a female vice-mayor who argued that gender roles are fixed in the Dominican society. Women’s issues are not priorities for their male colleagues.95 In sum, all councilors and vice-mayors said they believe that female politicians can better represent women’s interests in local governments.

Nevertheless, mayors do not believe there is a difference. Both male and female mayors argued that, as politicians, it is their duty to know the issues affecting all their constituents, and a member of the opposite gender cannot claim to represent some groups in their community better. For example, one female mayor said:

My colleagues can do the same work that I do. They do not have any excuses to implement projects that benefit women in their communities. They know which problems affect women and what to do to solve them. Women in this country cannot expect to be represented only by female elected officials. Male politicians share the same responsibility. I believe that male mayors are as capable as I am to represent women. If they do not do so, it is not because they do not know of women’s issues.96

For this female mayor, male and female politicians must know of women’s issues and address them. Gender should not play a role in whether and how a mayor represents women’s

93 Interview with center-right male vice-mayor, December 15, 2019.
94 Interview with center-left female councilor, December 15, 2019.
95 Interview with center-right male mayor, November 24, 2019.
96 Interview with center-left female mayor, November 30, 2019.
interests. Even if it is easier for a female politician to know of the struggles women face in their communities, male politicians can and should learn about these issues and work to solve them. A male mayor echoed this view responding:

Although my female colleagues can understand women’s problems in a way no men can ever do, the problems that a mayor can do something about are not unknown to me. All women in my community aspire to have a clean and safe city where they can raise their families in peace. Thus, I am as equally qualified to represent my female constituents the same way I represent men, the youth, the elder, the very poor, the working class, students, clergy people, business owners, and everyone else.97

Academics’ opinions were somewhat in between. They explain that female mayors, vice-mayors, and councilors give women symbolic representation. They believe that there is power in seeing a woman running as a candidate, managing a townhall, or representing their community as their councilor. Yet, they consider that party lines permeate most decisions about the city budget. One academic said:

Party lines significantly constrain local politics. Mayors and councilors have very little room to act on their own. Thus, female politicians cannot implement a gender plan that their party does not back. However, in areas where they can work at their discretion, one can see that female elected officials are more likely to argue in favor of the women in their communities. Further, women are still underrepresented. In my opinion, their low numbers also affect how much power they wield in their municipality.98

Another academic opined that women in local governments are more committed to representing women than their male counterparts. Still, they do not have the financial resources or leverage over funding that female legislators have.99 In the Dominican Republic, senators receive specialized funding of one Dominican peso per inhabitant in their province for social spending. Deputies also receive social spending funds, albeit it is smaller than senators’.

97 Interview with center-right male mayor, December 8, 2019.
98 Interview with academic, October 13, 2019-B.
99 Interview with academic, October 12, 2019-B.
In contrast, female councilors can only access funds through the mayor. One academic emphasized that councilors who belong to the same party as the mayor are more likely to get funding for their projects. Still, even in these cases, gender is hardly a priority. Female mayors can exercise discretion, but party lines must be respected.

Female vice-mayors face similar challenges. Although law 176-07 mandates the allocation of resources for female vice-mayors to implement programs for women, this is unlikely to happen unless the mayor supports it. Whether and how much support female vice-mayors receive depends on whether these projects fit the mayor’s agenda.

Table 5.2 shows that male and female elected officials in both parties are almost evenly split regarding the question: Are female politicians better able to represent women’s interests? While some municipal leaders believe that male politicians can represent women as well as their female counterparts, others believe that female politicians are better able to represent women’s interests. Female elected officials in center-right parties stand out as all their members believe women are better able to represent women. For example, one center-right female vice-mayor said:

I grew up in a time when women were housewives, nurses, or teachers. As an adolescent, I never met a businesswoman, engineer, or mayor. I know what I represent for other women, and I am proud to be an example for young women who aspire to be leaders. I am not the mayor, but I know that my position gives women hope that winning elections is attainable.100

Table 5.2 Are Female Politicians Better Able to Represent Women’s Interests?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response to question</th>
<th>Center-left parties</th>
<th>Center-right parties</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female (N=6) (%)</td>
<td>Male (N=5) (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                      | Female (N=6) (%)    | Male (N=6) (%)       |
|                      | 100                 | 67                   |
|                      | 0                   | 33                   |

100 Interview with center-right female vice-mayor, December 8, 2019.
On the other hand, more differences arose when I asked these elected officials about representing particular groups. In an earlier part of the interview, I asked councilors, mayors, and vice-mayors whether they see themselves as representatives of certain constituency groups. To avoid any priming about gender issues, I asked this question before asking any questions referring specifically to women in politics or women in local governments. In the next section, I explore where women’s interests lie in local government leaders’ priorities.

**Municipal Leaders’ Priorities and Women’s Interests**

First, I asked local elected officials about who they think they represent. As in the case of legislators, I group local government officials’ responses into categories with self-explanatory labels. For example, ‘Everyone’ is the category in which I assigned local government leaders who do not believe they represent any constituency group because they represent the Dominican people. Except for two mayors who do not believe in representing particular groups, most participants indicated that they represent multiple groups in their responses.

The results in table 5.3 show that most local leaders were willing to acknowledge that they see themselves as representing certain constituency groups. These elected officials believe these are the groups that need more attention in their communities. For example, one male mayor said that he represents the working class because he comes from that group.101 One female councilor noted that because the elders are vulnerable and neglected, she feels she must advocate for that group.102

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101 Interview with center-right male mayor, December 8, 2019.
102 Interview with center-right female councilor, December 8, 2019.
Table 5.3 What Groups Do You Represent?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response to question</th>
<th>Center-left parties</th>
<th></th>
<th>Center-right parties</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female (N=6)</td>
<td>Male (N=5)</td>
<td>Female (N=6)</td>
<td>Male (N=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerable groups (elderly, children, youth, poor)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business owners</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, the results show that more female elected officials from both parties said that they represent women than their male colleagues in local governments. None of the male participants mentioned women as a group they think they represent. When justifying their responses, female leaders referred to feeling responsible for representing the group (women) they can relate to. For example, one female mayor said:

Although I work for everyone in my city, I know that female mayors are scarce, and therefore I am a symbol for other female politicians. I want to do an exemplary job in my administration because I know that my performance will make it easier or more difficult for other female leaders who will come after me. In this sense, I feel that I represent women, especially those who aspire to become leaders in our country.103

Another difference between female and male elected officials’ commitment to representing women in their town halls is their connection with women’s organizations. For example, while all the female councilors and female mayors indicated that they collaborate with women’s organizations, no male councilor does. Male mayors cited some organizations they have supported in some shape or form, but they do not have regular meetings. To this question, one male mayor responded “I supported MUDE (Mujeres en Desarrollo Dominicana) with a project to facilitate loans for women entrepreneurs to start their own micro-businesses.104

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103 Interview with center-right female mayor, December 15, 2019.
104 Interview with center-right male mayor, November 24, 2019.
However, when I asked this mayor whether he remained connected with this organization, he said this was a one-time project. Still, his office doors remain open for this and any other organization. Per this mayor’s response, one can conclude that his support is reactive rather than proactive. This mayor does not seek to connect with women’s organizations that do not initiate the contact. In contrast, some female councilors were part of women’s organizations before they become elected officials. For them, women’s organizations are part of their political support base. For example, one female councilor spoke at great length about her work with four different local women’s organizations. She explained:

Some of the women’s organization I work with are Dominicana Emprende, Empoderamiento Femenino Municipal, Circulo de Mujeres Cristianas, and Foro de Madres Comprometidas. She claims that they organized several workshops and events to promote entrepreneurship, protection against violence, sex education, Christian values, and discuss the issues affecting their community.105

The assumption is that elected officials who maintain strong ties with women’s organizations receive firsthand information on important issues that affect women (Erzeel 2015). Thus, the more women’s organizations and the more contact a politician maintains with them, the better informed they would be about women’s concerns. The work done with women’s organization reflect these councilors’ priorities.

To get information about participant’s priorities I asked councilors and mayors to name some of the women’s issues they have worked on while in office. Figure 5.1 shows that female elected officials spoke about a broader range of women’s issues than their male counterparts. Further, almost all the female councilors, vice-mayors, and mayors indicated they have worked on these issues, while only a few male elected officials were involved in several issues that mattered to women.

105 Interview with center-left female councilor, November 23, 2019.
Although the numbers show a stark difference between male and female elected officials’ involvement with women’s issues in their municipalities, the most critical difference between these groups is better assessed qualitatively. During the interviews, male leaders limited themselves to naming the projects and how they thought these projects were suitable for women. In contrast, female politicians spoke vividly about each project. They recalled how they came up with the idea and the struggle to get support from their colleagues and the mayor.

One female councilor recounted meeting with representatives from two women’s organizations (Fundación para el Bienestar de la Mujer Dominicana, INC. and Centro de Investigación para la Acción Fenemina) to discuss an educational campaign to eradicate violence against women. She explained to me:

I met with two activists who described a project to grant funding for students to develop creative educational ideas around eradicating violence against women in that community. However, they needed financial support, and the major had already turned...
them down. I loved that project so much that I reached out to my female colleagues from other parties and persuaded them about supporting this cause. We were very persistent, and thanks to that, we included this line item in the budget that year.106

Female councilors and female vice-mayors spoke at great length about prioritizing programs that target women and the youth. One female councilor indicated that women are almost nonexistent in some trades and that this is not because of the nature of the work itself but because of the barriers women face to enter these workplaces. She highlighted the example of carpentry. She believes that carpentry workshops are not open to taking women apprentices, and that limits women’s chances to learn this trade.107

Furthermore, both female vice-mayors described vocational school projects for women and the youth, one female vice-mayor said:

Our municipality’s main commerce is tourism. However, many employers claim that they must hire personnel from other parts of the country because there are few available workers with language skills to take on these jobs. My objective is to equip the many unemployed women and youth to take advantage of these opportunities.108

Another female councilor introduced regulations to establish mandatory workshops on gender perspective for all elected officials and staff in her town hall. She believes this type of project can help eliminate some disrespectful behavior that female staffers are subjected to. In this regard, she said:

...the worst part is that many men who commit these actions think they are doing nothing wrong. Unfortunately, they are right in believe so. Because of our male chauvinist culture, many Dominican men believe it is perfectly fine to use inappropriate language and sexual innuendoes towards women, even at work. Therefore, elevating complaints would not solve the problem; re-educating men and women about gender roles and what respect indeed looks like must be part of the equation.109

106 Interview with center-right male councilor, December 8, 2019-A.
107 Interview with center-right female councilor, December 15, 2019.
108 Interview with center-right female vice-mayor, November 24, 2019.
109 Interview with center-left female councilor, December 15, 2019.
This finding is consistent with the stories that some female deputies and academics shared. When asked about municipal politics, one academic with expertise in local government said that informality is the norm in this level of politics; and this lack of formality is detrimental to female politicians. The ‘male way’ of doing things is the norm; a feminine style of politics is seen as inexperience or that the female politician does not reflect society’s values.\textsuperscript{110}

One female vice-mayor spoke about her struggles to receive the funding that Law 176-07 mandates town hall authorities to allocate for gender issues. According to this Law, four percent of a municipality’s budget must be allocated to address education, gender, and health issues (Letter d, Art. 21). She said:

Those who think that because the law mandates support for women, that support must happen, are wrong. In local governments, women must stand up to get the allocation they are entitled to receive. Had I not spoken up in support of female councilors, the mayor might have used this four percent for something else.\textsuperscript{111}

The other female vice-mayor corroborated this claim. She revealed to me that the four percent that must be allocated for education, gender, and health issues has been used in her town hall to pay the “Salary 13”\textsuperscript{112} to the town hall’s staff.\textsuperscript{113} Unfortunately, I interviewed the male mayor she works with the day before I interviewed her. Therefore, I was unable to ask the mayor about this claim.

On the other hand, male and female mayors spoke only about Mother’s Day activities and incentives for businesses to hire women. Also, mayors did not talk much about these activities. Per mayors’ responses, women’s interests are not a top priority on their agendas. Granted,

\textsuperscript{110} Interview with academic, October 12, 2019-C.
\textsuperscript{111} Interview with center-right female vice-mayor, December 8, 2019.
\textsuperscript{112} This bonus refers to Dominican entitlement employees have. In the Dominican Republic, public and private employees must receive an extra payment in December. This payment must be equivalent to all payments received by the employee during that year divided by 12.
\textsuperscript{113} Interview with center-right female vice-mayor, November 24, 2019.
mayors claimed their work impacts all their constituents, and that includes women. For example, one male mayor explained to me that “By investing in sanitation, I am making sure that families remain healthy.”

Similarly, Mother’s Day Activities and creating incentives for businesses to hire women are the women’s issues that matter the most for male councilors. None of them mentioned education on women’s issues. Many male councilors are of the opinion that women only need education and opportunity to succeed; they think that there are no legal barriers that need to be addressed. For example, one male councilor said:

Women need job opportunities. To get these opportunities, women need good training and employers willing to hire them. In this municipality, I work with many employers to create jobs that women can take. A financially independent woman is less likely to become a victim of violence. Society does not hinder women any longer, women can get as far as they want in this country.

I asked male councilors follow-up questions to get details about the women-friendly projects they authored. However, their responses were vague. They reiterated that women are a priority but did not elaborate on the steps they take to ensure women in their communities are represented.

Male vice-mayors’ responses were equally vague. They spoke about supporting their female colleagues’ projects but did not elaborate on their own projects. Per male vice-mayors’ responses, they were not responsible for representing women because they work with a female mayor. When I asked one male vice-mayor more details about his projects to benefit the women in his community, he reminded me that his mayor is a woman, and she ensures that women in

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114 Interview with center-right male mayor, November 23, 2019.
115 Interview with center-right male councilor, November 23, 2019.
their municipality feel represented. In other words, he did not feel representing women was his duty since there was a female mayor in his town hall.

For one academic, the low priority that women’s issues receive in town halls is a result of women’s underrepresentation and budgetary constraints: “Women’s interests are a low priority in most local governments. However, women’s issues are, at least, somewhat addressed in municipalities with higher numbers of female councilors.” According to this academic, municipal governments are overwhelmed by more pressing concerns regarding waste management and sanitation. Gender issues are a second thought when the town is buried in trash or water.

Two pieces of evidence confirm the academic’s analysis. First, law 166-03 mandates the central government of the Dominican Republic to distribute ten percent of the national budget across all municipal governments. Nonetheless, the central government distributes less than 2.5 percent of the GDP (Vargas 2020). Second, local politics are a reflection of national politics regarding the inclusion of women. Only a handful of female politicians have led a town hall as a mayor, and female councilors remain at thirty percent. Table 5.4 shows the number of female councilors and female vice-mayors before and after the adoption of quota laws. Although female representation has increased in the past twenty years, it is far from parity. Moreover, this academic claimed that strong women’s representation is the most important factor:

Town halls’ funding struggles are not new to municipalities. The central government has never fulfilled the financial obligation legally required. Yet, one can see that some town halls implement meaningful projects to benefit women, such as sponsoring training in the trades for young women and single mothers. Usually, these projects come out of town halls led by a female mayor or where female councilors are in higher numbers.

116 Interview with center-right male vice-mayor, December 15, 2019.
117 Interview with academic, October 13, 2019-B.
118 Interview with academic, October 13, 2019-A.
Table 5.4 Female Councilors and Vice-Mayors Before and After Gender Quota

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female councilors</td>
<td>185 (24.4%)</td>
<td>220 (27.95%)</td>
<td>260 (26.79%)</td>
<td>383 (33.3%)</td>
<td>382 (32.8%)</td>
<td>352 (30.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female mayors</td>
<td>2 (1.7%)</td>
<td>10 (8%)</td>
<td>17 (11.2%)</td>
<td>12 (7.7%)</td>
<td>20 (12.7%)</td>
<td>19 (12.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dominican Republic Electoral Board

Unfortunately, including more female politicians as town hall leaders is not welcomed, at least not through quota laws. The next section discusses local government leaders’ perspectives on women in politics and gender quotas. Although many participants agree that more female politicians are needed in local governments, not many thought that quota laws should play a role.

**Women and Gender Quotas**

Although all the male councilors I interviewed in each municipality believe that more women are needed in local politics, they were less likely to support the use of gender quotas. Half of male councilors think that quota laws are fair and a good instrument to open access to women in local politics. The other half thinks that quota laws can lead to the election of female candidates that do not represent the interests of their communities. In contrast, all female councilors in each municipality believe that more women are needed in local politics and that quota laws are necessary to make this possible. In this sense, one female councilor argued:

> Quota laws are necessary but not enough to give female candidates a fair chance to represent their communities. We often do not receive equal support from our political parties and businessmen who make campaign contributions. Party leaders claim they must allocate most of the party’s resources to the candidates with higher probability of victory, usually men. Some businessmen contribute to female candidates, but not as much as they contribute to male candidates.\(^\text{119}\)

\(^{119}\) Interview with center-left female councilor, December 15, 2019.
Another female councilor described how she changed her perspective after she became a mother. She said:

I used to think that quota laws were unnecessary. My father raised me to believe that women can achieve whatever they desire by myself. I thought that neither I nor any other female politician needed quotas to become an elected official. However, my perspective evolved after I became a mother. I realized the disadvantages that women face in the political arena due to the burden of bearing children. I could not campaign for six months, and even after I recovered, I could not work as many hours as before. Male politicians do not face these limitations.120

Many male councilors disagreed with their female colleagues. For them, women do not need quota laws to win elections. For example, one male councilor said that “I do not believe in gender quotas, and I do not think women need such privileges. I believe that women are perfectly capable of working as hard as men to run a successful political campaign.”121

To this statement, I followed up with the argument presented by a female counselor who said that because of pregnancy, menstrual cycle, and not being physically as strong as men, female politicians’ ability to campaign is limited. Male politicians can visit every neighborhood on their own at any time, but some neighborhoods are risky for women. Sometimes, citizens criticize female politicians by questioning whether women should be in such places in the evening. For these reasons, this female councilor argued, gender quota laws are needed.122

A male counselor who disagreed with quotas argue that these facts were true fifty years ago. However, he considers that society has changed enough, and women do not face such barriers anymore. He thinks that some female politicians use gender quotas to reach public office without doing the required legwork. Political parties are forced to nominate women, even when these candidates are unknown to the community.

120 Interview with center-left female mayor, November 30, 2019.
121 Interview with center-right male councilor, December 8, 2019.
122 Interview with center-right female councilor, December 1, 2019.
I posed the same question to two female mayors and vice-mayors I interviewed, and their responses are somewhat different. Female mayors argue that quotas are positive, but women need to overcome the need for quotas through hard work. For them, female politicians should not expect to win a candidacy because of quota laws. Instead, female politicians should outwork their male opponents and demonstrate to party leaders that they can win the seat for the party. They claimed that only when female politicians do that will more become mayors and even presidents.

The two female vice-mayors I interviewed support gender quotas. For them, gender quotas are fair and necessary to make leadership positions attainable for women. One female vice-mayor explained that although many women work outside the house and some achieve high executive positions, politics have not evolved the same way. From her view, politics remain easier to navigate for men than for women. Gender quotas clear some obstacles but do not change the cultural baggage that politics is immersed in. She claimed that Dominican women have but a few heroines in politics. The fact is that most icons in Dominican politics are men. In consequence, young girls do not grow up considering politics as a career. While young women do not have many role models to look up to, men have plenty.

In contrast, one male vice-mayor argued that quota laws for vice-mayors are flawed. He claimed that female politicians are not well-represented by the female vice-mayors who get elected. He said he thinks many mayors simply nominate a good-looking female candidate to collect a paycheck but is not going to be intrusive in his work. This male vice-mayor asked me to look at female vice-mayors’ pictures. He claimed that many young women hold this position, which does not reflect the actual pool of qualified female candidates. For this vice-mayor, quota
laws do not promote the election of female candidates committed to representing women’s interests.¹²³

I had the chance to ask a female vice-mayor about this male vice-mayor’s comments. According to her, some mayors do just that. Some mayors choose female running mates because of these women’s looks. However, she claimed that most of her female colleagues are qualified professionals who have a lot to offer to their communities, though they were new to electoral politics. She said she believes that politics in the Dominican Republic is not inclusive to young people, especially young women. For her, gender quotas have given many young women the chance to serve their communities from a leadership position. Meanwhile, these young female politicians get enough experience to become future mayors.¹²⁴

On the other hand, I did not find any evidence of the label effect. Despite the male vice-mayor’s comments about female vice-mayors getting nominated because of their looks and the male chauvinist behavior of some male staff prompting female councilors to develop workshops to educate men on women’s perspective, I did not find any evidence of the label effect. When I asked female councilors, vice-mayors, and mayors how they felt male colleagues treated them, they all claimed to be treated with respect. One female mayor expressed:

I cannot complain about male councilors. I feel protected and supported by all the men I work with. When male councilors, especially from the opposition, criticize my work or fight me over the budget, they are very respectful. I never feel intimidated because I am a woman, and men outnumber me, and I think male councilors contribute to making my work environment safe for me.¹²⁵

However, one female councilor explained that though she and her colleagues are not the targets of sexist comments, she believes that female staff are. She asked me to interview some

¹²³ Interview with center-left male vice-mayor, November 30, 2019.
¹²⁴ Interview with center-right female vice-mayor, December 15, 2019.
¹²⁵ Interview with center-right female mayor, December 15, 2019.
female staff and ask them the same question. She believes that she and her female colleagues are respected because they are elected officials, but she does not think this courtesy is extended to female staff.\textsuperscript{126} Nevertheless, she acknowledges that she has not witnessed any incident of this nature, nor has she been informed by female staff. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, I could not interview municipality staff to confirm this claim.

In brief, male councilors and mayors did not prioritize women’s interests as much as female councilors, vice-mayors, and to some extent female mayors. The fact that female elected officials maintained regular connections with women’s organizations demonstrates that female politicians in local governments are more committed to representing women. Although all the male and female participants recognized women as a constituency group with specific interests, female councilors, vice-mayors, and mayors said they believe women are better able than male colleagues to representing women. Further, female participants spoke about a broader set of projects to benefit women than their male colleagues. Nevertheless, female mayors are not as committed to representing women’s interests as female councilors and vice-mayors. While female vice-mayors recognized how significant quota laws are for women to get a fair chance to compete for office with men, female mayors do not favor quotas as much.

Taken together, the evidence shows that gender and gender quotas shape whether and how local government elected officials prioritized women’s interests. All female councilors and vice-mayors recognize that women are a distinctive group with their own interests and issues unique to them. However, male councilors, mayors and female mayors did not see themselves as representatives of women’s interests, nor did they prioritized women’s issues as much as female councilors and vice-mayors. Nonetheless, these results only show where women’s interests rank

\textsuperscript{126} Interview with center-left female councilor, December 15, 2019.
in their legislators’ priorities. Although politicians’ responses to these questions can be a good indicator of their legislative behavior, future research must find more data that confirm their claims.

**Conclusion**

The interview data analyzed in this chapter shows that gender and gender quotas matter for women’s substantive representation in municipal governments. Like in the national congress, women remain underrepresented in town halls too. Yet, they are active representatives of women’s interests. Gender explains differences in attitudes toward representing women’s interests among municipal leaders.

Furthermore, this analysis reveals that the legal mandate that requires town halls to allocate 4% of their budget for education, gender equity, and health does not guarantee that resources will be assigned to address women’s issues. The presence of female politicians committed to representing women’s interests is a necessary condition to increase the chances that these funds are correctly allocated. Otherwise, local politicians would overlook gender equity matters.

Similarly, this study shows that the discretion mayors enjoy assigning duties to vice-mayors hinders female vice-mayors’ chances to lead gender equity projects in the Dominican town halls. Female vice-mayors can impact women’s substantive representation when they have support from the mayor. Although quotas for mayor and vice-mayors have increased the number of female vice-mayors, this is not a substitute for increasing the number of female mayors. Although female mayors were not as open as female vice-mayors to representing women, they were more likely than their male counterparts to implement projects that benefit of women.
Because local governments can address many issues directly impacting communities, gender equality in political participation in municipalities is necessary. Otherwise, Dominican town halls will continue allocating resources without women’s input. Although gender quotas have contributed to increasing women’s representation, enforcement in allocating resources to address women’s issues limits female politicians’ capacity to produce positive outcomes in favor of women.
CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

The evidence analyzed in this dissertation confirms what Senator Patty Murray said, “we need policymakers who understand what women are going through, so these policies work for women” (Whitney 2001; 45). In the national congress and town halls of the Dominican Republic, gender and gender quotas matter for women’s substantive representation. I found strong evidence to confirm that men and women have different attitudes and act differently regarding women’s issues. However, evidence in support of the mandate effect and the label effect is more nuanced. The differences between women elected by quotas and those elected without quotas are subtle. Nonetheless, this study concludes that to account for women’s needs in the decision-making process, democratic countries must increase women’s representation. Otherwise, women’s perspectives will remain overlooked in many significant issues that affect women differently.

Overall, female politicians are more invested in addressing women’s issues than male counterparts. The difference between female and male politicians’ attitudes and actions toward representing women’s interests demonstrate that women are better represented by female politicians in the national congress and local governments of the Dominican Republic. However, there are differences among female politicians. Quota-elected women’s impact on women’s substantive representation is stronger than women elected without quotas.

The findings presented here have implications for democratic representation and women’s rights. Democracy requires political elites to be responsive to citizens. Nonetheless, this dissertation shows that male politicians are less responsive to women’s demands than female their colleagues. Despite comprising half of the population, female representation in legislative
bodies worldwide remains below 25 percent.¹²⁷ To ensure that future laws and allocation of funds reflect the needs and aspirations of the entire population, democratic countries must increase women’s political representation. Under certain conditions, gender quota laws can speed up this process to make politics more inclusive toward women and much more. These policies can promote tangible outcomes in favor of women.

Using the rare natural experiment of quota laws in the Dominican Republic, this dissertation has attempted to test three hypotheses. First, whether female elected officials can represent women’s interests better than male counterparts. Second, whether female politicians elected by quotas can represent women’s interests better than female politicians elected without quotas. Third, whether female politicians elected by quotas are considered less capable by colleagues and whether these labels can discourage quota-elected politicians from representing women’s interests.

In this concluding chapter, I present a synthesis of the findings analyzed throughout this dissertation. Next, I discuss the implications of these findings for the literature of women in politics, democracy, women’s rights, and policymakers and activists who want to improve gender equality. Lastly, I explain the limitations of this study and explore avenues for future research.

**Synthesis of Empirical Findings**

This study sought to answer whether and how gender quota laws impact women’s substantive representation. Several additional questions were asked to clarify this primary question. Firstly, are female politicians more committed to representing women’s interests than

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¹²⁷ This is the world average as of Oct. 2021 according to Women in National Parliaments [http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm](http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm)
male colleagues? Secondly, are female politicians elected by quotas more committed to representing women’s interests than female colleagues elected without quotas? And finally, are female politicians elected by quotas treated differently by colleagues compared to female politicians elected without quotas? If so, do female politicians elected by quotas avoid working on women’s issues? As countries make political decisions over issues that affect women differently than men, such as abortion laws, these questions become more and more important to answer.

The evidence presented in this study reveals that gender and gender quotas impact women’s substantive representation in the National Congress and town halls of the Dominican Republic as process and outcomes. Although party ideology plays a role in some respects, gender and gender quotas are the variables that explain changes in women’s substantive representation as process and outcome. The main takeaway is that the presence of female politicians, predominantly female politicians elected by quotas, positively affect women’s substantive representation. Although some quota-elected women are labeled as inexperienced by some male colleagues, these female elected officials do not appear to be discouraged from addressing women’s issues because of this.

Gender

In the Dominican Republic’s Congress and town halls, there is a link between women’s descriptive and substantive representation. The findings discussed in this dissertation shows that when making laws or allocating resources, female politicians were more likely to bring women’s interests into the discussion than their male counterparts. Also, female politicians consider a broader set of women’s issues than male colleagues. Consequently, women’s interests are better represented when female politicians are involved in the decision-making.
This case study confirms that even when party ideology is considered, women speak in a different voice, they care about some issues that are not a priority for men, and their presence has positive results for women’s rights. In this sense, female politicians impact women’s substantive representation as outcome. The legislative initiatives introduced by female legislators were more successful than those presented by their male counterparts. Further, some of these legislative initiatives were intended to make politics more inclusive for women. For example, female deputies pushed for a nursery room in Congress. By making politics more accessible for women, female politicians ensure that more women can achieve more representation so that democracy becomes more responsive to women’s demands.

**The Mandate Effect and The Label Effect**

This study shows that when gender quota laws are adopted because of women’s mobilization, these policies can create a commitment between female politicians elected by quotas and women’s demands. More than just increasing women’s presence, gender quota laws can impact women’s substantive representation by increasing the probability of electing female politicians who are genuinely committed to representing women’s interests. The connection between civil society and representatives has implications for democracy. When the mandate effect is strong, representatives elected by quotas are more responsive to women.

However, the difference between female politicians elected by quotas and those elected without quotas are not as pronounced as the difference between female and male politicians. On the one hand, female politicians elected by quota in Congress and local governments of the Dominican Republic consistently claimed to be better able to represent women and they embraced the idea of being responsible for addressing women’s interests. Also, female politicians elected by quotas address a broader set of women’s issues than colleagues elected
without quotas. On the other hand, female politicians elected by quotas introduced as many legislative initiatives and initiated as many projects to benefit women as quota-elected women. In brief, there are subtle but important differences between quota-elected women and those elected without quotas.

The adoption of gender quota laws can also negatively affect women’s substantive representation. Because of quota laws, some female deputies were not treated fairly by some male colleagues. However, this unequal treatment did not discourage female deputies from representing women’s interests. Instead, female deputies’ attitudes and actions toward representing women’s interests show that they remained committed, albeit facing labels from quota laws.

**Implications for Countries Adopting Quota Laws**

Under certain conditions, gender quota laws can increase women’s descriptive representation. Countries that want to increase women’s presence in legislative assemblies or other political spaces can look at gender quota laws as a tool that can accelerate this process. Gender balance in the decision-making process is a matter of fairness. Women in leadership positions are a form of symbolic representation, which is essential for the correct functioning of a democratic society. Although some suggest that gender quotas are unconstitutional and discriminatory because they confer an “unfair” advantage for female politicians, the benefits of increasing the political representation of a traditionally marginalized group outweigh the drawbacks these policies could generate.

Furthermore, gender quota laws can deliver more than symbolic representation. This dissertation discusses evidence confirming that female politicians can yield tangible results for the women they represent. First, female politicians are more committed than male politicians to
represent women because they understand women’s perspectives better than men. When discussing policies, female politicians can predict whether and how such policies could affect women, something their male colleagues cannot do better. Female politicians have the unique vantage point of their shared experience. Also, female politicians can serve as a channel that brings women’s issues to political discussions where the gender perspective was not considered.

Second, when gender quota laws are adopted because of women’s mobilization, quota-elected women are even more committed to representing women’s interests than women elected without quota. The clearer and stronger the connection between women’s demands for political inclusion and the adoption of gender quotas, the more committed female politicians are. Quota-elected women were more likely to adopt a gender agenda because they understand that, at least partially, they owe the opportunity to run for office to women’s organizations’ efforts. Evidence of this commitment is the connection female deputies, councilors and vice-mayors maintain with women’s organizations.

In the Dominican Republic, quota-elected women were far more likely to be in regular contact with women’s groups and members of the women’s movement than male colleagues and women elected without quotas. Thus, beyond shared experience, quota-elected women are regularly engaged with women’s issues because of this direct contact. In interviews with legislators and local elected officials, it was clear that those elected by quota understood how this policy gave them a fair chance to win elections. In contrast, some female politicians elected without quotas do not support this policy and believe it gives women an unfair advantage.

On the other hand, Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) argue that the mandate effect occurs when quotas are adopted because of women’s mobilization. However, the conditions the authors describe are unique to Argentina. In the Dominican Republic, quota laws were adopted because
of women’s mobilization and international pressure on developing countries to modernize. Yet, the results of this study show a strong mandate effect among female deputies. Future research should test whether the mandate effect can be present in contexts where grassroots movements did not push politicians to adopt quota laws. Contexts in which other factors played a role in quota adoption should be studied to test for the mandate effect. If the mandate effect is possible in countries that adopt quotas through a top-down approach, the impact of gender quota laws on women’s substantive representation can be exported even in countries where the women’s movement is not as strong or as organized.

In brief, gender quota laws can help make electoral politics more inclusive toward women. In turn, women’s presence can bring outcomes in favor of women. This is especially true when gender quota laws are adopted because grassroots women’s movements demand spaces for women in decision-making bodies. When this happens, gender quota laws increase the chances of electing politicians genuinely committed to representing women’s interests. This is particularly true in countries where “machismo” dominates the political culture, and men are often unaware of gender differences, let alone the particular problems women face.

**Limitations and Avenues for Future Research**

To test the mandate and the label effect this study compares quota-elected women (female deputies and vice-mayors) with women elected without quotas (female senators and mayors). The results show that the former group is more committed to representing women’s interests than the latter. However, the mandate effect is not the only variable that can affects these results, there are also institutional factors that may help explain these differences. For example, female senators and mayors represent a larger constituency than deputies and city councilors. Thus, female senators and mayors respond to different incentives.
One pattern that is consistent with this explanation is that senators and mayors had similar responses to the question, what groups do you represent? Male and female senators and mayors were reluctant to claim they represent particular groups. Most claim they represent everyone in their province, municipality, or every Dominican in the country. Because they are elected to represent a larger constituency, claiming to represent specific groups could alienate voters and limit their ability to reach a broad base of electors. This institutional variable may explain why most female senators and mayors do not feel responsible for representing women. By contrast, female deputies and female councilors were very open about representing women, children, and the elderly. Because they represent smaller constituencies, it is electorally advantageous for councilors and deputies to identify themselves with interest groups that support their platform.

Another institutional factor at the local level is that female vice-mayors are mandated by law to address gender issues in their municipalities and incorporate women’s interests into policy. Female mayors do not have such a mandate. If female mayors claim to represent women as a group, they risk losing support from voters who do not support women’s issues. Since female vice-mayors are mandated by law to take the lead on women’s issues, they do not have a choice in the matter.

In short, these institutional factors may also impact the differences observed between women elected by quota and women elected without quotas at both the national and local level. However, it is difficult to gauge how much of this difference may be due to the mandate effect and how much of it may be due to these institutional differences.

Another limitation that affects the findings discussed in this study is the small number of interviews. Although data saturation was achieved at the national level, more participants are
needed from local governments. Interviews with political elites at the local level could yield different results. For example, interviewing more female councilors and vice-mayors could lead to finding evidence that not all town hall female leaders are committed to representing women’s interest. One way to address this potential weakness is to increase the number of interviews. Another way is to collect data on the ordinances and resolutions introduced and passed at the local level.

Another limitation of this case study is the impossibility of comparing legislative debates. When bills reach the Dominican Senate, there is enough consensus among senators to support or reject a bill. In the five congressional periods considered in this study, a major political party always had most of the votes in the Senate. Thus, party lines played a significant role in decision-making. The lack of debates in the Senate does not allow me to test whether and how gender or gender quota impact women’s substantive representation in this form.

The Dominican Republic shares many institutional and cultural aspects with other countries in the region, such as similar colonial past, the presidential republican form of government, and Catholicism. The results suggest that gender quotas could have a positive impact on women’s representation in other countries. The Dominican Republic is one of the most culturally conservative countries in Latin America. Thus, if gender quotas can deliver women’s substantive representation as process and outcome in the Dominican Republic, it is likely they can impact women’s representation in other Latin American countries. However, gender quotas in countries with different political systems and different political culture may not work in the same way. Thus, it is not possible to generalize these results beyond Latin America.

This dissertation contributes to studies that link women’s descriptive representation, the mandate and label effect, and party ideology with women’s substantive representation. Although
the link between women’s descriptive and substantive representation is strong, the impact of the mandate and label effect is more nuanced. Future research should compare legislative assemblies with similar electoral rules and political culture but different quota laws to deepen our understanding of the mandate and label effect.

Finally, women remain underrepresented in politics worldwide; they are more at risk of violence, are more prone to downward social mobility, and have fewer opportunities to escape extreme poverty (Reeves and Venator 2013). Furthering our understanding of gender quotas and women’s representation is vital for improving women’s quality of life and having a more sustainable democracy.
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APPENDICES

A. Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

Date: August 20, 2019

To: Priscilla Lambert, Principal Investigator
    Marcial Pineda, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: IRB Project Number 19-08-18

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “Gender Quotas and Women’s Substantive Representation in The National and Local Governments of The Dominican Republic” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes to this project (e.g., add an investigator, increase number of subjects beyond the number stated in your application, etc.). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation.

In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the IRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

A status report is required on or prior to (no more than 30 days) August 19, 2020 and each year thereafter until closing of the study.

When this study closes, submit the required Final Report found at https://wnich.edu/research/forms.

Note: All research data must be kept in a secure location on the WMU campus for at least three (3) years after the study closes.
B. List of Semi-structured In-depth Interview Participants

Academics

Interview with academic, October 11, 2019-A.
Interview with minister, October 11, 2019-B.
Interview with minister, October 11, 2019-C.
Interview with academic, October 12, 2019-A.
Interview with academic, October 12, 2019-B.
Interview with academic, October 12, 2019-C.
Interview with academic, October 13, 2019-A.
Interview with academic, October 13, 2019-B.
Interview with academic, October 13, 2019-C.
Interview with academic, October 14, 2019-A.
Interview with academic, October 14, 2019-B.
Interview with academic October 20, 2019-A.
Interview with academic October 20, 2019-B.
Interview with academic October 20, 2019-C.
Interview with journalist, December 12, 2019-A.
Interview with journalist, December 12, 2019-B.

Senators

Interview with center-right male senator, October 15, 2019.
Interview with center-left female senator, October 15, 2019.
Interview with center-right-male senator, October 16, 2019.
Interview with center-right-male senator, October 18, 2019.
Interview with center-right-male senator, October 22, 2019.

Interview with center-right-female senator, November 14, 2019.

Interview with center-right-male senator, November 14, 2019.

Interview with center-left-female senator, November 22, 2019.

Interview with center-right-male senator, November 22, 2019.

Interview with center-right-male senator, December 5, 2019.

Interview with center-right-female senator, December 5, 2019.

Interview with center-right female senator, December 6, 2019.

**Deputies**

Interview with center-right male deputy, October 13, 2019.

Interview with center-left female deputy, October 18, 2019.

Interview with center-left-male deputy, October 20, 2019-A.

Interview with center-left-male deputy, October 20, 2019-B.

Interview with center-left-male deputy, October 20, 2019-C.

Interview with center-right-female deputy, October 20, 2019.

Interview with center-right male deputy, October 23, 2019.

Interview with center-right-female deputy, October 24, 2019.

Interview with center-left-female deputy, October 30, 2019.

Interview with center-right female deputy, October 31, 2019.

Interview with center-left female deputy, November 5, 2019.

Interview with center-left female deputy, November 8, 2019.

Interview with center-right male deputy, November 8, 2019-A.

Interview with center-right male deputy, November 8, 2019-B.
Interview with center-right male deputy, November 9, 2019.
Interview with center-left male deputy, November 9, 2019-A.
Interview with center-left male deputy, November 9, 2019-B.
Interview with center-right male deputy, November 19, 2019-A.
Interview with center-right male deputy, November 19, 2019-B.
Interview with center-right male deputy, November 19, 2019-C.
Interview with center-left male deputy, November 20, 2019.
Interview with center-left female deputy, November 22, 2019.
Interview with center-left female deputy, November 31, 2019.
Interview with center-right male deputy, December 4, 2019.
Interview with center-right female deputy, December 9, 2019.
Interview with center-left female deputy, December 16, 2019.

**Mayors**

Interview with center-right male mayor, November 23, 2019.
Interview with center-left female mayor, November 30, 2019.
Interview with center-right male mayor, December 8, 2019.
Interview with center-right female mayor, December 15, 2019.

**Vice-mayors**

Interview with center-right female vice-mayor, November 24, 2019.
Interview with center-left male vice-mayor, November 30, 2019.
Interview with center-right female vice-mayor, December 8, 2019.
Interview with center-right male vice-mayor, December 15, 2019.
Councilors

Interview with center-left female councilor, November 23, 2019.

Interview with center-right male councilor, November 23, 2019.

Interview with center-left female councilor, November 24, 2019-A.

Interview with center-left female councilor, November 24, 2019-B.

Interview with center-right female councilor, December 1, 2019.

Interview with center-left female councilor, December 7, 2019.

Interview with center-right male councilor, December 8, 2019-A.

Interview with center-right male councilor, December 8, 2019-B.

Interview with center-right female councilor, December 8, 2019-C.

Interview with center-left male councilor, December 9, 2019-A.

Interview with center-left male councilor, December 9, 2019-B.

Interview with center-left male councilor, December 9, 2019-C.

Interview with center-left female councilor, December 9, 2019.

Interview with center-left male councilor, December 10, 2019.

Interview with center-left female councilor, December 15, 2019.
C. Instruments for Interviews

Questions for Legislators and Local Government Leaders

The role of the legislator/councilor/mayor/vice-mayor in women’s substantive representation

1- What motivated you to pursue a career in politics?

2- What gives the most satisfaction about the work you do?

3- What Groups Do You Represent? If so, which groups?

4- What are your priorities in your role as legislator/mayor/vice-mayor-councilor?

5- Do you see women as a constituency group?

6- Do you represent women?

7- Do you feel responsible for representing women?

8- Do you think women are better able to represent women’s interests?

9- Do you believe that women have a different perspective that must be inserted in politics?

10- Do you believe that to be associated with gender or women’s issues is something positive for you?

11- Do you think that in your role as a Deputy/Senator/councilor/mayor/vice-mayor you have facilitated the inclusion of women’s themes in the political agenda?

Changes made to the operation of the Chamber of Deputies, the Senate or municipal government to benefit the women who work there.

12- Can you tell me of any changes made to the way the Chamber of Deputies/the Senate/municipal government operates that have benefitted the women who worked here or made things fairer for them?

13- Who initiated these changes?

14- Who supported these changes?
15- Who opposed these changes?
16- Was there a male-female divide between those who favor and opposed those changes?
17- Are there things in the operations of the Chamber of Deputies/the Senate/municipal government you think are disadvantageous to women?
18- Would it be difficult to make those changes? Why?

Collaboration with women’s organizations

19- Do you or have you ever collaborated with women’s organization? Which organization?
20- What is/was the nature of your collaboration?
21- Do you meet with women’s organizations? How often?
22- Do you believe that women’s organization play an important role in advocacy for gender equality? Why, or why not?

The impact of gender quotas on women’s substantive representation

23- Do you believe it fair to have gender quotas in the Chamber of Deputies and municipal governments? Why, or why not?
24- Do you think gender quotas have increased the number of women in the Chamber of Deputies and municipal governments Why, or why not?
25- Do you believe there should be gender quota in the Senate? Why, or why not?
26- Do you believe the preferential vote harms female candidates? Why, or why not?
27- Do you think gender quotas facilitated the inclusion of women's themes in the political agenda?
28- Do you believe women are discriminated in the Dominican Republic?
29- In your view, are female deputies/Senators/councilors/mayors/vice-mayors treated with the same respect that their male counterparts are treated by colleagues and staff?
30- Do the women in the Chamber of Deputies/the Senate/municipal governments face any form of discrimination? Please, elaborate.

**Questions for academics.**

1- Are women’s interests represented in Dominican politics?

2- Is there a difference between male and female representatives regarding women’s interests?

3- Do you know of legislators/councilors who identify themselves as feminists?

4- Do you believe female deputies and female councilors have a responsibility to act for women? How about female senators, should they have a responsibility too?

5- Do you believe that to be associated with gender or women’s issues is something positive for female deputies and female councilors?

6- Do you think that in their role as Deputy/Senator/councilor these politicians have facilitated the inclusion of women’s themes in the political agenda?

7- How would you classify political parties? What are, if any, the ideologies major political parties stand for?

8- Are there parties that support women more than others?

9- Are congressional politics partisan? In your opinion, how much freedom do legislators have to act on their own?

10- Are municipal politics partisan? In your opinion, how much freedom do mayors, vice-mayors, and councilors have to act on their own?

11- Do you think gender quotas have increased the number of women in the Chamber of Deputies and municipal councils? Why, or why not?

12- Do you believe there should be gender quota in the Senate? Why, or why not?
13- Do you believe the preferential vote harms female candidates? Why, or why not?

14- Do you think gender quotas facilitated the inclusion of women's themes in the political agenda?

15- In your view, are female deputies/senators/mayors/vice-mayors/councilors treated with the same respect that their male counterparts are treated by colleagues and staff?

16- Do the women in the Chamber of Deputies/the Senate/municipal governments face any form of discrimination that you know of? Please, elaborate.
### D. Bills Addressing Women’s Interests (1998-2019)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Legislator</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Party Ideology</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acta No. 3 del 11 de Marzo</td>
<td>Creates an advising commission to revise all codes and laws and find changes needed to eliminate discrimination against women.</td>
<td>All female deputies</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acta No. 44 del 24 de Julio</td>
<td>Makes mandatory to notify the death of a woman between the ages of 15 and 45 to the authorities</td>
<td>Rafael Kasse Acta</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acta No. 10 del 17 de Sept.</td>
<td>Makes women a priority in any social program such as housing and employment</td>
<td>Angela Altagracia Jáquez Rodríguez</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Expired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acta No. 3 del 4 de Marzo</td>
<td>Creates public childcare facilities so mothers can work outside of the household</td>
<td>Sahra Emilia Paulino de Solis</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acta No. 4 del 5 de Marzo</td>
<td>Commemorates the 23rd anniversary of Women's Day</td>
<td>Sahra Emilia Paulino de Solis</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acta No. 5 del 1 de Sept.</td>
<td>Recognizes Minerva Bernardino as an advocate and ambassador of women's rights</td>
<td>Ana Isabel Bonilla</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<td>Acta No. 32 del 17 de Nov.</td>
<td>Recognizes Hillary Clinton for being an advocate of women's rights</td>
<td>Sofia Leonor Sanchez Baret</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acta No. 18 del 14 de Oct.</td>
<td>Recognizes rural women for their work</td>
<td>Wilfrida Ramona García Pérez</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<td>Acta No.</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 del 9 de Marzo</td>
<td>Acta No. 5 del 9 de Marzo</td>
<td>Ensures domestic workers receive the salary 13</td>
<td>Ana Isabel Bonilla Hernández</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 del 23 de Sept.</td>
<td>Gender quotas for vice-mayors</td>
<td>Yvelisse Prats de Pérez</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<td>5 del 7 de Sept.</td>
<td>Acta No. 5 del 7 de Sept.</td>
<td>Gives married women several rights to buy and sale property while married</td>
<td>Angela Altagracia Jáquez Rodríguez</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 del 7 de Abril</td>
<td>Acta No. 14 del 7 de Abril</td>
<td>Recognizes women who advocate for women's rights</td>
<td>Wilfrida Ramona García Pérez</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 del 9 de Marzo</td>
<td>Acta No. 5 del 9 de Marzo</td>
<td>Regulates common-law unions</td>
<td>Sofia Leonor Sanchez Baret</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<tr>
<td>35 del 25 de mayo</td>
<td>Acta No. 35 del 25 de Mayo</td>
<td>Creates the Ministry of Women</td>
<td>Todas las diputadas</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<td>Acta. No. 19 del 7 de Oct.</td>
<td>Changes voting times so married women can vote easier in the morning</td>
<td>Mario José Fernández Saviñón</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PRSC</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<td>15 del 8 de Abril</td>
<td>Acta No. 15 del 8 de Abril</td>
<td>Regulates domestic workers' rights</td>
<td>Tirso Félix Mejía-Ricart</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>48 del 12 de Febrero</td>
<td>Acta No. 48 del 12 de Febrero</td>
<td>Increases quota laws to 40%</td>
<td>Milton Ray Guevara</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Senate</td>
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<td>2 del 29 de Febrero</td>
<td>Acta No. 2 del 29 de Febrero</td>
<td>Increases quota laws to 40%</td>
<td>All female deputies</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>5 del 6 de Sept.</td>
<td>Acta No. 5 del 6 de Sept.</td>
<td>Includes women bioanalyses professionals to a pension system</td>
<td>Gladys Sofía Azcona de la Cruz</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>34 del 22 de Nov.</td>
<td>Acta No. 34 del 22 de Nov.</td>
<td>Condemns the Afghan government for violating women's rights</td>
<td>Ana Isabel Bonilla</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2000</td>
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<td>Acta No. 44 del 30 de Mayo</td>
<td>Subsidizes propane gas</td>
<td>Ana Isabel Bonilla</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Center-right</td>
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<td>2001</td>
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<td>Acta No. 3 del 4 de Sept.</td>
<td>Modifies laws for protecting women from domestic violence</td>
<td>Julio César Valentín</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>Acta No. 168 del 8 de Mayo</td>
<td>Mandates public and private companies to give women 1 extra day off for a cervical smear</td>
<td>Ginnette Bournigal</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2001</td>
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<td>0003-2002-2006-CD</td>
<td>Creates safe houses for victims of domestic violence</td>
<td>Rafaela Alburquerque de Gonzalez</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRSC</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2002</td>
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<td>00723-2002-2006-CD</td>
<td>Penalizes women trafficking</td>
<td>Rafaela Alburquerque de Gonzalez</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRSC</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>Acta No. 2 del 30 de Julio</td>
<td>Creates a gender office in every town hall</td>
<td>Arsenia María Tejada Camacho</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
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<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2002</td>
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<td>Acta No. 6 del 11 de Sept.</td>
<td>Encourages women participation in politics</td>
<td>Radhamés Castro</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2002</td>
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<td>Acta No. 00015 del 19 de Nov.</td>
<td>Enforces laws for protecting women against violence</td>
<td>Melania Salvador de Jimenez</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2002</td>
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<td>01362-2002-2006-CD</td>
<td>Creates days for bringing awareness about violence against women</td>
<td>Minerva Tavárez Mirabal</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>A00656-2002-2006-CD</td>
<td>Mandates the creation of gender inclusive license plates for congressmen and congresswoman</td>
<td>Josefina Altagracia Marte Durán</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2003</td>
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<td>01364-2002-2006-CD</td>
<td>Demands the Executive power to allocate resources to prevent violence against women</td>
<td>Minerva Tavárez Mirabal</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2003</td>
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<td>00853-2002-2006-CD</td>
<td>Penalizes women trafficking</td>
<td>Ilana Neumann</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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<td>00448-2002-2006-CD</td>
<td>Allows women to get married right after getting a divorce</td>
<td>Teodoro Ursino Reyes</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Expired</td>
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<td>BRE No. 00067, 30 de Sept.</td>
<td>Recognizes International Alliance for Women for its advocacy for women's rights</td>
<td>Melania Salvador de Jimenez</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>2003</td>
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<td>Acta No. del 26, 14 de Febrero</td>
<td>Mandate public and private employers to give pregnant women extra time-off for medical care</td>
<td>Aníbal García Duvergé</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>2003</td>
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<td>02559-2002-2006-CD</td>
<td>Creates jails for those who commit violence against women</td>
<td>Ana Isabel Bonilla Hernández</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>2004</td>
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<td>01676-2002-2006-CD</td>
<td>Declares March 8 as a national holiday to celebrate Dominican women</td>
<td>All female deputies</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>2004</td>
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<td>02117-2002-2006-CD</td>
<td>Allows women to get married right after getting a divorce</td>
<td>Agne Contreras Valenzuela</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
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<td>2004</td>
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<td>02478-2002-2006-CD</td>
<td>Allow spouses to change the terms of their marriage</td>
<td>Licielott Catalina Marte H. de Barrios</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRSC</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Expired</td>
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<td>02514-2002-2006-CD</td>
<td>Regulates common-law unions</td>
<td>Ramón Alcéquiez</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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<td>02888-2002-2006-CD</td>
<td>Regulates the image of women in national television</td>
<td>Néstor Julio Cruz Pichardo</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
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<td>01545-2006-2010-CD</td>
<td>Recognizes Juana Ferrer Paredes for her advocacy for women's rights</td>
<td>Angel Acosta Félix</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PRSC</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acta No.</td>
<td>Recognizes several Dominican women for their advocacy for gender equality</td>
<td>Celeste del Carmen Gómez Martínez</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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<td>00127, 8 de Marzo</td>
<td>Recognizes the value of Dominican women</td>
<td>Maria Estela de la Cruz de Jesus</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2006</td>
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<td>Acta No. 2 del 7 de Marzo</td>
<td>Recognizes Mercedes Frias for her advocacy for women's rights</td>
<td>Minerva Josefina Tavárez</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>02442-2006-2010-CD</td>
<td>Requires gender parity in the selection of members to the Electoral Board and the Chamber of Accounts</td>
<td>Ana Quisqueya Lantigua de la Cruz</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2006</td>
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<td>02835-2006-2010-CD</td>
<td>Declares as high priority integrating the gender perspective in the works of the Chamber of Deputy</td>
<td>Lucía Medina Sánchez de Mejía</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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<tr>
<td>00189-2010-2016-CDE</td>
<td>Gender quotas for different electoral positions</td>
<td>Gladys Sofía Azcona de la Cruz</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
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<tr>
<td>04912-2006-2010-CD</td>
<td>Creates specialized units to assist victims of gender violence</td>
<td>Magda Rodríguez Azcona</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2007</td>
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<td>04926-2006-2010-CD</td>
<td>Celebrates a special event to bring awareness to the problem of violence against women</td>
<td>Cristina Altagracia Lizardo</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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<tr>
<td>04797-2006-2010-SE</td>
<td>Expands protections for victims of gender violence</td>
<td>Cristina Altagracia Lizardo</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
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<td>03512-2007-PLO-SE</td>
<td>Increases funding for the Ministry of Women</td>
<td>Cristina Altagracia Lizardo</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2007</td>
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<td>05112-2006-2010 CD</td>
<td>Recognizes outstanding Dominican women to celebrate Women's Day</td>
<td>All female deputies</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>00260-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Creates a scholarship for gender studies</td>
<td>Magda Rodríguez Azcona</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<tr>
<td>04948-2008-SLO-SE</td>
<td>Creates a program for women's nutrition</td>
<td>Amarilis Santana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2008</td>
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<td>05050-2008-SLO-SE</td>
<td>Creates a protocol to assist women victims of gender violence</td>
<td>Amarilis Santana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>05572-2008-SLO-SE</td>
<td>Improves rights for domestic workers</td>
<td>Amarilis Santana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2008</td>
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<td>05844-2009-PLO-SE</td>
<td>Recognizes Gladys Gutiérres for her advocacy for women's rights</td>
<td>Cristina Altagracia Lizardo</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2009</td>
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<td>08983-2006-2010-CD</td>
<td>Allocates resources for a special event conducted by the Ministry of women</td>
<td>All female deputies</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>08996-2006-2010-CD</td>
<td>Recognizes outstanding Dominican women to celebrate Women's Day</td>
<td>Magda Rodríguez Azcona</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2010</td>
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<td>01053-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Supports the campaign to fight breast cancer</td>
<td>All female deputies</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2010</td>
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<td>01053-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Supports the campaign to fight breast cancer</td>
<td>Eufracia Santiago Merán</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Left</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>08993-2006-2010-CD</td>
<td>Supports resources for a special event conducted by the Ministry of women</td>
<td>Magda Rodríguez Azcona</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>01032-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Recognizes Michelle Bachelet for her advocacy for women's rights</td>
<td>Abel Atahualpa Martínez Durán</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>00095-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Seeks the inclusion of women with HIV in the government insurance program</td>
<td>Jose Antonio Fabian Beltre</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2010</td>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<td>00702-2011-SLO-SE</td>
<td>Mandates that legislators who are replace must be replace by a person of the same sex</td>
<td>Julio César Valentín</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>00531-2011-PLO-SE</td>
<td>Prevention of teenage pregnancy</td>
<td>Juana Mercedes Vicente Moronta</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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<tr>
<td>04000-2010-2016-CID</td>
<td>Creates the Association of nurses</td>
<td>Franklin Isaías Peña Villalona</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>01943-2010-2016-CID</td>
<td>Requests the construction of a hospital to tend pregnant women</td>
<td>Carlos Borromeo Terrero Reyes</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>05788-2006-2010-CID</td>
<td>Protects women with terminal illnesses</td>
<td>David Herrera Díaz</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>01924-2010-2016-CID</td>
<td>Creates nursery rooms</td>
<td>Wellington Amín Arnaud Bisonó</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>00831-2011-PLO-SE</td>
<td>Prevention of violence against women</td>
<td>Amarilis Santana</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>00573-2018-PLO-SE</td>
<td>Gender parity in public jobs</td>
<td>Felix Bautista</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Center-right</td>
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<td>2011</td>
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<td>01502-2013-PLO-SE</td>
<td>Facilitates access to the judicial system for women victims of violence</td>
<td>Reinaldo Pared Perez</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
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<td>00993-2012-PLO-SE</td>
<td>Protects domestic workers</td>
<td>Adriano Sanchez Roa</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>02759-2010-2016-CID</td>
<td>Protects female sex workers</td>
<td>Esther Mirelys Minyety</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>Bill No.</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Sponsor</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Party</td>
<td>Political Position</td>
<td>Sponsor's Role</td>
<td>Status</td>
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<td>03287-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Includes violence education in the school curricula</td>
<td>Julio Encarnación</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2012</td>
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<td>01996-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Gender parity in political positions</td>
<td>Alexis Jimenez Gonzalez</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2012</td>
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<td>01751-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Promotes sex education</td>
<td>Cristian Paredes</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2012</td>
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<td>03195-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Penalizes femicides</td>
<td>Virgilio Merán</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>01253-2012-SLO-SE</td>
<td>Promotes education about violence against women</td>
<td>Amarilis Santana</td>
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<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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<td>01225-2012-SLO-SE</td>
<td>Designates legal aid for women victims of violence</td>
<td>Amarilis Santana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
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<td>2012</td>
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<td>00627-2018-PLO-SE</td>
<td>Prevention of violence against women</td>
<td>Felix Bautista</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
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<td>03976-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Recognizes several Dominican women for their advocacy for gender equality</td>
<td>Magda Rodríguez Azcona</td>
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<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>04822-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Protects single mothers</td>
<td>María Luisa Guzmán Calderón</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>04736-2010-2016-CD</td>
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<td>Franklin Isaías Peña Villalona</td>
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<td>PLD</td>
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<td>04742-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Recognizes Florinda Soriano for her advocacy for rural women</td>
<td>Abel Atahualpa Martínez Durán</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>02645-2016-PLO-SE</td>
<td>Regulates common-law unions</td>
<td>Amarilis Santana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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<tr>
<td>05027-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Recognizes Daisy Baez for her advocacy for women's rights</td>
<td>Adelis Olivares</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2014</td>
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<td>05531-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Regulates sexual work</td>
<td>Esther Mirelys Minyety</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>04637-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Childcare to aid women who want to work outside the household</td>
<td>Johnny Guzman Rodriguez</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>04988-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Prevention of violence against women</td>
<td>Magda Rodríguez Azcona</td>
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<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>05539-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Expresses support for the kidnapped girls in Nigeria</td>
<td>Eugenio Cedeño</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>00564-2018-PLO-SE</td>
<td>Allows women to get married right after getting a divorce</td>
<td>Felix Bautista</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2014</td>
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<td>01874-2014-PLO-SE</td>
<td>Protection for teenage mothers</td>
<td>Francis Vargas</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2014</td>
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<td>03408-2010-2016-CD</td>
<td>Education of gender violence</td>
<td>Magda Rodríguez Azcona</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>05072-2016-2020-CD</td>
<td>Creates a nursery room in the National Congress</td>
<td>Lucía Medina Sánchez de Mejía</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>05018-2016-2020-CD</td>
<td>Eliminates taxes for cervical cancer medication</td>
<td>Besaida Mercedes González de López</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PQDC</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2016</td>
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<td>05209-2016-2020-CD</td>
<td>Eliminates discrimination against women in divorces</td>
<td>Besaida Mercedes González de López</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PQDC</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2016</td>
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<td>00027-2016-SLO-SE</td>
<td>Mandates that legislators who are replace must be replace by a person of the same sex</td>
<td>Tommy Galán</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>2016</td>
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<td>05746-2016-2020-CD</td>
<td>Creates nursery rooms</td>
<td>Jacqueline Montero</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PRM</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<td>05595-2016-2020-CD</td>
<td>Declares year 2018 to raise awareness of violence against women</td>
<td>Magda Rodríguez Azcona</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<td>05596-2016-2020-CD</td>
<td>Creates a technical unit for gender studies in the Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>Magda Rodríguez Azcona</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<td>05309-2016-2020-CD</td>
<td>Enforce women's rights</td>
<td>Besaida Mercedes González de López</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PQDC</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<td>05178-2016-2020-CD</td>
<td>Declares year 2017 to raise awareness of violence against women</td>
<td>Magda Rodríguez Azcona</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<td>05311-2016-2020-CD</td>
<td>Enforces gender equality in job opportunities</td>
<td>Besaida Mercedes González de López</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<td>05031-2016-2020-CD</td>
<td>Ask the central government for the construction of a maternal hospital in La Vega</td>
<td>Agustín Burgos Tejada</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PRM</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>05375-2016-2020-CD</td>
<td>Enforces pregnant women labor rights</td>
<td>Rafael Méndez</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>00482-2017-SLO-SE</td>
<td>Penalizes femicides</td>
<td>Adriano Sanchez Roa</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Senate</td>
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<td>06427-2016-2020-CD</td>
<td>National Day to raise awareness of violence against women</td>
<td>Magda Rodríguez Azcona</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>05962-2016-2020-CD</td>
<td>Creates a program to education men about domestic violence</td>
<td>Angela Pozo</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<td>05920-2016-2020-CD</td>
<td>Creates safe houses for victims of domestic violence</td>
<td>María Cleofia Sánchez Lora</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>05625-2016-2020-CD</td>
<td>Girls’ national day</td>
<td>Gloria Reyes</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Chamber of Deputies</td>
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<td>05698-2016-2020-C</td>
<td>Promotes pregnant women's health</td>
<td>Agustín Burgos Tejada</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>2018</td>
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<td>05694-2016-2020-C</td>
<td>Enforces paternal responsibility to aid single mothers</td>
<td>Carlos Marién Elías Guzmán</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<td>05959-2016-2020-C</td>
<td>Eliminates discrimination against women in divorces</td>
<td>Víctor José D’Aza Tineo</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PRM</td>
<td>Center-left</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<td>00599-2018-PLO-SE</td>
<td>National Day of Mothers' health</td>
<td>Prim Pujals</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
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<td>06810-2016-2020-C</td>
<td>Creates a special prosecutor for gender violence</td>
<td>Rudy María Méndez</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>2019</td>
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<td>07033-2016-2020-C</td>
<td>Promotes education about violence against women</td>
<td>Magda Rodríguez Azcona</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Center-right</td>
<td>2019</td>
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