

# Women on the Sidelines: Women's Representation on Committees in Latin American Legislatures

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*This article explores how new groups can be marginalized after they gain representation in the legislature. We use data from six Latin American legislatures to examine the effect of institutional and political factors on how traditionally dominant male political leaders distribute scarce political resources—committee assignments—to female newcomers. In general, we find that women tend to be isolated on women's issues and social issues committees and kept off of power and economics/foreign affairs committees as the percentage of legislators who are women increases, when party leaders or chamber presidents control committee assignments, and when the structure of the committee system provides a specific committee to deal with women's issues. Thus, to achieve full incorporation into the legislative arena, newcomers must do more than just win seats. They must change the institutions that allow the traditionally dominant group to hoard scarce political resources.*

When members of a traditionally underrepresented group, such as women, ethnic minorities, or indigenous people, begin to win seats in a legislature, legislative dynamics change. Newcomers may demand scarce political resources that the traditionally dominant group is accustomed to controlling for its own use, including legislative leadership positions or committee assignments. If new groups emerge in already established political parties, then party incumbents, who have considerable influence over distribution of these resources, have incentives to limit newcomers' access to them. Consequently, the new group will not be fully incorporated into the legislative process but will

be kept on the sidelines. In this article, we explore factors that affect the ability of a traditionally dominant group, men, to marginalize female newcomers in committee assignments, a scarce political resource. We focus on Latin American legislatures to extend the study of legislative committees and women's representation beyond the United States and Western Europe where it most often is centered.

We study women as an example of newcomers because women's representation in national legislatures has grown large enough to permit analysis, whereas ethnic minorities and indigenous people still are poorly represented in most countries.<sup>1</sup> Even in traditionally machista

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<sup>1</sup>It is important to note several qualifications when viewing women as a group as we do here. First, we recognize that women are not all the same nor do they necessarily want the same types of committee assignments. Some women may have a gender consciousness that implores them to prefer women's issue committees but other women may not (Chodorow 1978; Ruddick 1989; Skjeie 1991; Tamerius 1995). Even among women with a gender identity, party loyalty may override it (Htun 2003; Rodriguez 2003; Swers 2002). Relatedly, some women may enter politics to work on women's rights (Considine and Deutchman 1994; Darcy 1996; Diamond 1977; Kathlene 1994; McGlenn and O'Connor 1995; Thomas 1994; Thomas and Welch 1991), but other women may be interested in different issues. Secondly, differences between women and men may not be the same for all women and all men. Some female politicians may behave similarly to their male counterparts (e.g., McGlenn and Sarkees 1993; Rodriguez 2003; Swers 2002; Tolleson-Rinehart 2001), while others exhibit important distinctions, for example in their policy priorities (e.g., Jones 1997a; Taylor-Robinson and Heath 2003).

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societies, such as those in Latin America, women's representation has increased in recent years. In the Argentine Chamber of Deputies, the proportion of women grew from 5% in 1983 to 34% in 2003, and in Costa Rica's Assembly, it increased from 7% in 1974 to 35% in 2002. These two are among the top ten national legislatures in terms of women's representation (IPU 2004).

Committee assignments are a scarce resource in a legislative chamber. Committees provide resources that help representatives win reelection (Fenno 1973), and they are an important veto gate in the policymaking process since they can develop, modify, and kill legislation. Committee work also offers an opportunity to gain expertise in a policy area, so the types of committee assignments legislators receive influence their ability to shape policy and build a political career. Given that not all policy areas are equally important in a legislature, some committees are more desirable than others, and since the number of seats on a committee usually is fixed, there will be competition for the desired seats.<sup>2</sup> The group who has already established control over committee resources will not want to share them with newcomers. Those responsible for making committee assignments, male politicians, are likely to want to defend their turf in the legislative chamber and keep from newcomers, female legislators, the policymaking power or valuable political resources that come with "plum" committee assignments.

But will the traditionally dominant group always be concerned with hoarding scarce resources or at times might the "cost" of sharing be low? Does the dominant group have the capacity to relegate newcomers to the sidelines? In this article, we present a theory about how male legislators will behave towards female colleagues when making committee assignments under varying institutional and political conditions. The premise of the theory is that traditionally dominant groups will try to defend their access to limited political resources. We argue that the political and institutional environment of legislative chambers and characteristics of individual legislators and political parties will mediate the ability of male legislators to marginalize women. We test these hypotheses using committee data from six Latin American countries—Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Venezuela. We examine women's representation on four types of committees—women's issues committees, social

issues committees, economics/foreign affairs committees, and power committees.<sup>3</sup>

Table 1 presents some descriptive statistics on women's committee representation across all countries and congressional terms for which we have data. The table shows that women are unequally represented across committee groupings with more women sitting on women's issues and social issues committees than power or economics/foreign affairs committees. If gender did not matter, women would occupy the same percentage of seats across all types of committees. Women's committee representation also varies across countries. Honduras has the highest average on women's issues committees, 79%, compared to the two Colombian chambers that average around 8%. Women in Costa Rica sit on economics/foreign affairs committees more often than women in all the other countries, and the Venezuelan and Colombian Senates had no women on those committees in 1986–90 and 1984–89, respectively. The purpose of this article is to explain why this variation exists and define the conditions under which marginalization of women occurs.<sup>4</sup>

## **Incentives to Marginalize Female Legislators**

A number of studies indicate that male legislators can "control the treatment that women receive once elected" (Darcy 1996, 888–89). Men can be patronizing and impolite to women, creating a hostile environment, and they sometimes exclude women from leadership positions

<sup>3</sup>Our committee classification is similar to that of other studies of women's representation (Dodson and Carroll 1991; Htun 2003; Jones 1997a; Reingold 2000; Taylor-Robinson and Heath 2003). Women's issues committees deal explicitly with women and one of the primary locations of gender inequality—the family and home (e.g., equality in the work place, protection against violence in the home). Social issues committees deal with issues traditionally thought to be women's interests (e.g., education, health care). Economic policy and foreign affairs are "historically male-dominated areas" (Htun 2003, 121) that men may want to preserve for themselves. Power committees confer prestige within the chamber or provide exceptional personal vote-seeking resources.

<sup>4</sup>We assume that when seeking committee assignments, both male and female legislators should be motivated by policy priorities, reelection constituencies, and advancing status and power within the chamber (Bullock 1976; Fenno 1973). However, characteristics of the legislative environment may outweigh legislators' preferences. For example, if male legislators control committee assignments, women's committee preferences may be disregarded. Our focus is not on whether women receive their preferred committee assignments but whether women have equal access to committees.

<sup>2</sup>Legislators could expand the size of committees; however, we doubt male politicians will use that tactic to counter the threat posed to their political resources because a seat on the committee would become less valuable if more legislators could sit on it.

TABLE 1 Women's Representation on Legislative Committees

Country and Chamber (Years Data Available)	Size of Chamber* n	Number of Standing Committees** n	Average % Committee Comprised of Women (% Range)			
			Women's Issues Committees	Social Issues Committees	Power Committees	Economics & Foreign Affairs Committees
Argentina – Chamber (1983–1997)	254/257	27–45	51.6 (33–92)	19.4 (9–51)	4.9 (1–15)	4.2 (2–13)
Argentina – Senate (1983–1998)	46/72	27–45	37.5 (14–44)	12.5 (4–19)	5.2 (4–7)	5.5 (3–7)
Chile – Chamber (1990–2002)	120	17	40.6 (27–54)	8.0 (5–12)	7.2 (4–12)	4.2 (2–6)
Chile – Senate (1990–2002)	47/46	17	N/A	2.6 (0–8)	5.7 (4–7)	4.9 (4.6–5)
Colombia – Chamber (1974–2002)	191/166	7	7.8 (0–17)	8.8 (0–19)	N/A	6.7 (1–11)
Colombia – Senate (1974–2002)	110/100	7	8.9 (0–14)	5.5 (0–23)	N/A	3.0 (0–7)
Costa Rica (1974–2002)	57	6	N/A	18.7 (9–33)	7.3 (4–16)	10.4 (6–17)
Honduras (1986–2002)	134/128	31–54	78.9 (53–100)	15.5 (8–19)	6.3 (0–17)	5.8 (3–9)
Venezuela – Chamber (1966–1999)	approx. 200	up to 22	N/A	11.2 (4–15)	4.8 (3–7)	4.8 (2–7)
Venezuela – Senate (1966–1999)	approx. 47	up to 15	N/A	7.4 (4–13)	N/A	3.5 (0–12)

Note: N/A indicates that a chamber has no committees of this type (see Appendix for details).

\*Where chamber size changed over time, the first number is previous chamber size and the second is the most recent size. In Venezuela, the number of legislators varies as extra seats are added to make representation more proportional.

\*\*The number of standing committees varies over time in some chambers.

(Christman et al. 1976; Diamond 1977; Johnson et al. 1978; Kirkpatrick 1974; McGlen and O'Connor 1995; Thomas 1994). In a description of women and committees in the Mexican Congress, Rodriguez writes, "In spite of the increasing proportion of women in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate, it is discouraging to consider that, within the legislature, women are largely relegated to the less influential positions. For example, the committees they chair are usually those considered to be of minor importance and traditionally regarded as 'women's' committees" (2003, 145). What explains this isolation?

We propose that a number of factors at the chamber, party, and individual-level influence newcomers' committee assignments and, more specifically, whether they will be relegated to the sidelines. First, we develop hypotheses about four political and institutional characteristics of legislative chambers: the percentage of seats held by women in the chamber, the governing party's majority status, committee assignment rules, and the

committee system's structure. While differences in legislative chambers influence how traditionally dominant groups treat newcomers across chambers, neither a newcomer's political party nor the newcomers themselves are homogenous. Treatment of newcomers may vary within chambers. Therefore, we develop a second set of hypotheses arguing that party-level factors, membership in the governing party and party ideology, and an individual-level factor, legislative experience, may explain why some women in a chamber receive seats on prestigious committees while others do not.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Other party-level factors may also be important, particularly those related to internal party structure such as the role the backbenchers in selection of party leaders, personal vote seeking incentives, and candidate nomination procedures. However, in most of the countries studied here, these factors vary across countries rather than across parties within countries. Other individual-level factors that may influence newcomers' committee assignments include a legislator's prestige, background, vote-getting capability, or margin of victory. Unfortunately, data on these characteristics of legislators are not available for all of the legislators in our dataset.

## Chamber-Level Constraints

### Percentage of Seats Held by Newcomers

As previously underrepresented groups enter the political arena, they should obtain seats on committees in proportion to their numbers in the chamber. Yet, the traditionally dominant group is likely to feel more threatened as the new group increases its representation and will want to protect committee resources. Thus, rather than gaining full access to the legislative arena, newcomers may become increasingly isolated in their committee assignments.

Related specifically to women, a vast literature explores the thesis that a critical mass of women has important effects on the political process. The basic assumption is that “women are more distinctive once their numbers reach a certain threshold” (Dolan and Ford 1998, 77; also Kanter 1977). Scholars have studied the influence of a critical mass in assemblies by examining legislative style (Kathlene 1998; Saint-Germain 1989; Thomas 1991, 1994), policy priorities (Jones 1997a; Taylor-Robinson and Heath 2003; Thomas 1994), and the content of debates (Broughton and Palmeiri 1999; Grey 2002; Taylor-Robinson and Heath 2003; Trimble 1998).

Our theory expects that as representation of women in a chamber increases, they become a growing threat to male domination. They are a threat because more women in office means that female legislators will consume more scarce political resources. Indeed, isolation of women has been noted in the U.S. Congress. Thompson writes, “In the 1920s, the House of Representatives adopted the policy of appointing women to minor committees” (1980, 72). She also found that when there were very few women in the U.S. House “they excited little suspicion. As long as women were mere oddities, they posed little threat and were tolerated affably” (1980, 75). In the 1960s, female Representatives were still assigned mainly to minor committees or committees dealing with social issues (1980, 72–73). We hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 1:* As the percentage of the chamber occupied by women increases, women will be more likely to be assigned to women’s issues and social issues committees and less likely to be assigned to economics/foreign affairs or power committees.

The threat women pose to the traditionally dominant male legislators varies across chambers and over time in our dataset.<sup>6</sup> The percentage of seats held by women varies

<sup>6</sup>The threat could also vary across parties within a chamber as new women entering the chamber could be overwhelmingly concentrated in one or a few parties.

from a low of 1% in the Colombian Senate (1974–78 and 1986–90), to a high of 28.7% in the Argentine Chamber (1995–97; see Table 2).<sup>7</sup>

### Governing Party Power

The power of the governing party (i.e., the president’s party) can be defined by its representation in the legislature. If the governing party controls a solid majority of seats, after discounting the seats held by newcomers, then it can easily provide support for the president’s agenda and pass its policies without concern that alienating a small faction within the party’s caucus could cause it to lose its majority (e.g., ethnic minorities, women, or regional caucus within the party). On the other hand, if the governing party does not control a majority of seats, then political parties need to work together with their newcomers and with other parties to build coalitions in order to implement the president’s agenda successfully (if in the governing party) or to oppose it (if in an opposition party). In this case, parties are likely to try to place all of their members on important committees to retain as much power as possible. Specifically, in regard to women as newcomers, the following hypothesis emerges:

*Hypothesis 2:* When the governing party holds a majority of seats after subtracting out the percentage of seats held by women, female legislators will be more likely to be assigned to women’s issues and social issues committees and less likely to sit on economics/foreign affairs committees or power committees.

One important clarification must be made related to the idea that a party risks losing women’s support if it alienates female backbenchers by denying them access to the political resources that come with certain committee assignments. In some cases, the loss of support could be as extreme as legislators switching political parties (which is very common in Brazil), or splitting into party factions where they have more control over their political fate (as is common in Colombia). In other countries, female legislators may be unable to turn against their party, but committee assignment fairness can still contribute to women’s overall sense of being treated as equals within the chamber and their sense of having the same opportunities as their

<sup>7</sup>Since women comprise less than a third of any chamber in our dataset, we did not control for a natural limiting effect. However, as the number of women in a chamber increases toward parity with men, or beyond, the impact of an increasing percentage of women may become nonlinear, and nonlinearity should be explored in models.

TABLE 2 Description of Chamber-level Independent Variables

Case	Percentage of Chamber That Is Female*		Governing Party Has Majority after Subtracting Women** # Terms	Who Controls Committee Assignments	Chamber Has Women's Issues Committee
	Average	Range			
Argentina – Chamber	10.1	4.8–28.7	0	Party Leaders	Yes
Argentina – Senate	7.0	5.9–8.5	1	Party Leaders	Yes
Chile – Chamber	7.6	5.8–11.0	2	Chamber President	Yes (since 1994)
Chile – Senate	5.0	4.2–6.5	0	Chamber President	No
Colombia – Chamber	7.1	2.8–11.7	2	Floor Vote	Yes
Colombia – Senate	4.7	1.0–13.0	4	Floor Vote	Yes
Costa Rica	10.7	7.0–19.3	0	Chamber President	No
Honduras	8.9	7.1–10.7	0	Chamber President	Yes (since 1990)
Venezuela – Chamber	6.2	3.4–9.2	0	Party Leaders	No
Venezuela – Senate	4.5	1.5–8.5	2	Party Leaders	No

\*The percentage of seats occupied by women in a chamber is calculated based on the total number of legislators in our dataset. This is not always identical to the total number of legislators prescribed by the constitution because legislators leave the chamber and may or may not be replaced (e.g., death, appointment to executive branch post).

\*\*The governing party is the president's party except in Chile (all terms) and Venezuela (1994–1999) where it is the president's coalition.

male colleagues to pursue their legislative agendas. Female legislators do notice prejudicial treatment. In Honduras, they complain during Congress plenary sessions when a newly proposed congress leadership (*Junta Directiva*) contains no women. Women in some state legislatures in the United States complain that the real business of policy negotiation takes place off the chamber floor, but they are not welcome at or invited to these informal “meetings” (Stanley and Blair 1991). Either through outright rebellion or mere dissatisfaction, alienating female legislators (or other newcomers) poses a cost for parties.<sup>8</sup>

Governing party power varies within and across legislatures (Table 2). The need to maintain a majority may be a particularly important constraint to party leaders in Chile where the Concertación coalition has to maintain interparty harmony to have a majority in the Chamber. It has been relatively successful, and in two of the three congresses in the dataset, it held a majority after subtracting women's seats. In contrast, governing parties in several other countries were never able to reach a majority without considering their female members.

<sup>8</sup>Other factors may affect the cost of marginalizing female legislators, such as whether women's rights are part of a party's platform or the strength of party loyalty. Relatedly, if female legislators comprise a significant percentage of those who backed a candidate for a leadership position, then it would be short-sighted for that leader not to share the political resources of the chamber with women. We are unable to incorporate such constraints into our model because of the large number of parties represented in some of the legislatures and the lack of data available on many of them.

### Control over Committee Assignments

Rules that define how a legislature makes committee assignments could have a substantial effect on newcomers' committee assignments. Control over committee assignments generally occurs in one of three ways: chamber presidents assign legislators to committees, party leaders decide who in their party fill seats, or legislators elect one another in a floor vote.<sup>9</sup> When chamber presidents or party leaders are responsible for assignments they have primary control over who sits on which committees giving them the opportunity to isolate newcomers. For example, a female legislator in Costa Rica noted that it was an important event when she became the first woman to chair the economic affairs committee, as the economic affairs committee had traditionally been dominated by men (interview conducted with a legislator in October 1988). When a floor vote determines assignments, legislators must negotiate with one another and with party leaders to create lists of candidates that will win backing from other legislators. Here, newcomers should be better

<sup>9</sup>Other rules may shape the extent to which male legislators can marginalize women. For example, if parties must receive committee seats in proportion to their seats in the chamber (as they do in all of our cases except Costa Rica and Colombia), female legislators from small parties may receive “plum” assignments because all legislators from a small party must sit on many committees to comply with proportionality rules. Informal norms may allow legislators to make committee requests, but still the assignment decision is made by party leaders or chamber presidents.

able to get themselves onto more prestigious committees that can help them achieve their policy and political career goals. Related specifically to women, we hypothesize that,

*Hypothesis 3:* When party or chamber leaders make committee assignments, women will be more likely to be assigned to women's issues and social issues committees and less likely to be assigned to economics/foreign affairs committees or power committees.

Committee assignment procedures vary across countries, as shown in Table 2. In three countries, chamber presidents make assignments. The strictest case is Honduras where the Congress President makes committee assignments without consulting party leaders or asking legislators about their preferences. In Costa Rica, the Assembly President makes assignments, though legislators can later switch committees with another member of their party. Chilean assignments must be ratified by a floor vote, but this rarely disturbs the President's appointments. Committee assignments are made entirely by party leaders in Venezuela, and in Argentina, chamber presidents formally have committee assignment power, but the informal norm is to defer to party leaders. Finally, both houses in the Colombian Congress make committee assignments via a floor vote. Legislators form blocks that nominate slates of candidates. Given that nominations are made in anticipation of a floor vote, the slates reflect legislators' preferences and many slates are elected in their entirety. However, legislators can and do withdraw their name from one slate and add it to another during the debate, and some slates do not garner enough votes to be elected in full leaving some legislators unexpectedly assigned to different committees. Thus, the floor vote procedure used in Colombia is quite distinct from the procedure where chamber president or party leaders make appointments.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Sources consulted for background on each congress and its committee system included the following: Argentina—Eaton (2002); Jones (1997b, 2002); Jones et al. (2002); Mustapic (2002); personal communication with Mark Jones. Chile—Carey (2002); Siavelis (2000); personal communication with Lisa Baldez, John Carey, and Peter Siavelis. Colombia—Archer and Shugart (1997); personal communication with Brian Crisp; *Reglamento del Congreso*; transcript of 2002–2006 committee elections. Costa Rica—*Reglamento Interno de la Asamblea*; interviews with members of the Assembly. Honduras—*Reglamento Interior del Congreso*; interviews with members of the Congress. Venezuela—Crisp (1997, 2000); *Reglamento Interior y de Debates de la Cámara de Diputados*; personal communication with Brian Crisp.

## Structure of Committee System

If the committee system includes a committee that is explicitly charged with addressing issues of direct interest to a minority group, members of that group may be more likely to be assigned to the committee and less likely to sit on powerful committees. For example, ethnic minorities in Honduras may be more likely to receive assignments to the Ethnic Issues committee. In the case of women, a chamber having a women's issues committee could change how male legislators isolate their female colleagues.

*Hypothesis 4:* Where a women's issues committee exists, women will be more likely to be assigned to that committee and less likely to sit on social issues committees, economics/foreign affairs committees, or power committees.

Women's issues committees exist in Argentina, Chile (chamber only), Colombia, and Honduras beginning in 1990. Neither Costa Rica nor Venezuela have committees specifically designated to deal with women's issues.

## Party-Level and Individual-Level Constraints

### Member of the Governing Party

Newcomers from the governing party may be less likely than newcomers from the opposition to be isolated because of the prestige and visibility of being part of the president's party. In making decisions about which newcomers to isolate, the traditionally dominant politicians are likely to target those who are less influential so that potential repercussions are minimal. Thus, women from the governing party should be some of the last women to be isolated in committee assignments.<sup>11</sup>

*Hypothesis 5:* Women in the governing party are less likely to be assigned to women's issues and social issues committees and more likely to be assigned to economics/foreign affairs and power committees.

<sup>11</sup>Party leaders in the governing party control committee assignments when either the chamber president or party leaders make committee assignments. As the largest party, the governing party should also have the most influence on floor votes to determine committee assignments if it votes as a block. Thus, being from the governing party may be an advantage to newcomers regardless of committee assignment rules.

## Party Ideology

Legislative party ideology might affect the committees to which newcomers are isolated. Legislators from liberal political parties should be assigned to committees dealing with liberal issues, and left parties are known for promoting women's rights (Htun 2003). Consequently, an important control is the ideology of the political party that a newcomer represents. Since women's issue committees and social issues committees are both committees dealing with liberal issues, it would be easier for male legislators to isolate women from leftist political parties to these committees than women from rightist parties.

*Hypothesis 6:* Women from left-leaning political parties are more likely to be assigned to women's issues and social issues committees and less likely to be assigned to power and economics/foreign affairs committees.

## Legislative Experience

While all women or members of other underrepresented groups are relative newcomers to the political arena, some may have more legislative experience than others. For example, some women may be serving their third term in office while others are in their first. If the traditionally dominant legislators want to marginalize newcomers to unimportant committees, it may be easier for them to target first-time legislators than those who have been in the legislature longer.<sup>12</sup>

*Hypothesis 7:* The more terms a female legislator has served, the less likely she will be relegated to women's issues and social issues committees and the more likely she will be placed on power and economics/foreign affairs committees.

## Case Selection, Description of Variables, and Methods

The data we use for this project come from six Latin American democracies: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Venezuela. These countries provide 10 legislative chambers because Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Venezuela are bicameral while Costa Rica

and Honduras are unicameral. Selecting these countries allows us to hold constant culture, which might affect women's treatment in politics. Yet, they offer a range of experience with democracy, economic development, representation of women, and organization of the legislature, which provides substantial variation for testing our theory.

For the Third Wave democracies (Argentina, Chile, and Honduras) data begin with the establishment of the democratic regime. Though democracy was installed in Honduras in 1982, the formal committee system began with the second congress that took office in 1986 so our dataset begins there. For the Second Wave democracies (Colombia, Costa Rica, and Venezuela), more data are available due to the longer time horizon of those democracies. In Colombia, we begin with data from the congress inaugurated in 1974, the year that the National Front consociational power-sharing arrangement ended and politics became more genuinely competitive. So that the number of Costa Rican observations is equivalent, we start with the 1974 term of the Assembly. In Venezuela, records for the first two congresses of the democratic regime were scanty, so we begin with the third congress, inaugurated in 1969. Committee assignment data are from the congress archives.

Our theory is based on a few assumptions about a legislative chamber that lead to predictions about how the traditionally dominant group who is used to monopolizing political resources will treat a new group who makes claims to those resources. First, we assume the legislature has policymaking power. If it does not, then its committees would not be political turf worth defending by male politicians. During the second wave of democracy, Latin American legislatures were commonly labeled as marginal, meaning they have minimal support from political elites and modest policymaking power (Mezey 1979). Recent research, however, suggests that legislatures play a more significant role in policymaking (Cox and Morgenstern 2002; Mainwaring and Shugart 1997; Shugart and Carey 1992; Siavelis 2000). In the cases studied here, the legislature has at least moderate power. Legislators can initiate national-level policy bills, and they can modify and kill the executive's bills. Thus, we would expect a legislative seat to be a valuable political post and that a group who has obtained access to the legislature would not want to share the spoils of its success with a new group.

Second, we assume that committees have power over policy. In all of our cases, committees can amend and kill bills by not reporting them out of committee. The resources available to committees do vary, however. For example, Costa Rican committees have staff, permanent

<sup>12</sup>Seniority has long been recognized as an important consideration for committee assignments in the United States (Fenno 1973; Matthews 1960), but a seniority norm has not been documented in Latin American legislatures.

meeting space, and can call witnesses while Honduran committees have no budget, staff, or meeting space and no legal power to call witnesses.

## Dependent Variables

The focus of this article is the committee assignments of female legislators.<sup>13</sup> Our purpose is to determine the conditions under which female legislators are kept off of power committees and committees dealing with economics and foreign affairs and isolated to women's issues committees and social issues committees. To do this, we conduct two sets of analyses. For the first set, the unit of analysis is the female legislator.<sup>14</sup> This allows us to test the influence of chamber, party, and individual-level factors on women's committee assignments, all of which we expect to affect the types of committees to which women are likely to be assigned. Each legislator is coded for whether she sits on a "women's issues" committee, a "social issues" committee, an "economics/foreign affairs issues" committee, and a "power" committee (see the appendix for classification scheme).<sup>15</sup> This coding yields four separate, but not mutually exclusive, dichotomous dependent variables.<sup>16</sup> Where legislators can sit on multiple committees, they are coded "1" if any of the committees on which they sit fit into the dependent variable category. In Costa Rica and Venezuela, where committee assignments change annually, we compiled a composite of each legislator's committee assignments.

<sup>13</sup>In the analyses, we focus only on women's committee assignments because the issue of interest is women's likelihood of sitting on different types of committees. Explaining why women sit on some committees and men sit on others is an important question, but it is different from that which we are addressing here.

<sup>14</sup>To counter the concern that varying sized legislatures might bias the models, we reran the models with a weight variable. The results were not significantly different from those presented below, except for the economics/foreign affairs models where the control for chamber became significant. This is likely a consequence of moderate correlation ( $r = 0.57$ ) between chamber and the weight variable—upper chambers are usually smaller than lower chambers.

<sup>15</sup>We only include standing committees in our analyses, not ad hoc committees, as they are primarily set up to investigate specific problems, and do not have power to report on bills as a stage in the law-making process. In Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Venezuela, committee jurisdictions are listed in the chamber's rules of order. In those cases, we based our coding on a combination of reading the official jurisdictions of a committee and consultation with country experts. In Honduras, committee jurisdictions are not formally outlined, so we surveyed the types of bills assigned to the committees and again consulted with country experts.

<sup>16</sup>Some committees may not fit into any of these categories (e.g., Judicial Issues in Costa Rica).

In the second set of models, the chamber is the unit of analysis and the dependent variable is the percentage of seats occupied by women on each of the committee types—"women's issues" committees, "social issues" committees, "economics and foreign affairs issues" committees, and "power" committees. This approach allows better estimation of the chamber-level independent variables, which we find in the fully specified model below to provide the most prominent explanations, though it significantly decreases the size of the sample.

## Independent Variables

The first group of independent variables is measured at the level of the legislative chamber. We calculate the percentage of the chamber that is female based on the total number of legislators who actually received committee assignments for each chamber and term.<sup>17</sup> Legislators who leave the chamber after committees are established (e.g., to fill an executive branch post, death) and their replacements are both included.<sup>18</sup> Governing party power is a dichotomous variable for whether the president's party holds a majority of seats in the chamber after subtracting the percentage of seats held by women in the party from the overall percentage of party seats (coded "1"). We operationalize the method of making committee assignments with three binary variables—one for "Chamber president," one for "Party Leaders," and one for a "Floor Vote." Unless otherwise noted, models use "Floor Vote" as the excluded category to which the "Party Leaders" and "Chamber President" variables are compared. A dichotomous variable measures whether the chamber has a women's issues committee (coded "1").

The second group of independent variables is measured at the party or individual-level. For party membership, each legislator is coded "1" if she is a member of the governing party and "0" if she is not. We code

<sup>17</sup>The authors coded the gender of all the legislators in the dataset and consulted with natives of the countries concerning unusual names. For Argentina, Chile, and Venezuela we consulted with country experts, both U.S. and native scholars, who have interviewed legislators and were knowledgeable about the gender of legislators. The authors conducted extensive research and interviews in Colombia, Costa Rica, and Honduras; thus, we were aware of legislators' gender.

<sup>18</sup>In Honduras, Colombia, and Venezuela, each legislator is elected with substitutes. Hondurans elect one substitute, Venezuelans elect three, and in Colombia, the first, second, and third runners-up for a seat can serve as substitutes when needed. If a substitute is called to fill in permanently for the elected legislator, they either assume that person's committee assignment(s) or receive their own. If this happens, the substitute is included in our dataset.

political parties into a nominal variable with four ideological categories: rightist, leftist, centrist, and nonideological with rightist as the excluded variable in the models. Finally, we measure a legislator's experience as the number of terms she has served in the legislature. We include nonsuccessively served terms, which is particularly important for Costa Rica where immediate reelection is prohibited.

## Methods of Data Analysis

In the individual-level models, we use logistic regression to examine the determinants of women's committee assignments because each of the dependent variables is dichotomous. In the chamber-level models, the dependent variable is continuous, and we conduct a pooled time-series analysis. An important issue related to analyzing these two datasets is that the time-series are unbalanced. In the Argentine Chamber, Colombia, and Costa Rica we have seven temporal observations (a temporal observation = a chamber term), for Chile and Honduras we have three and four observations respectively, for the Argentine Senate we have five time points, and six for each chamber in Venezuela. This imbalance results from the different dates when democratic regimes were established and from variation in congressional term lengths (three to eight years). In the logit models, we control for the unbalanced nature of the design with a series of dummy variables for each set of time-serial observations (Beck, Katz, and Tucker 1998).<sup>19</sup> For simplicity, and because the dummy variables are theoretically uninteresting and largely statistically nonsignificant, we do not include them in the table below. In the pooled, time-series models, the unbalanced nature of the data is less problematic because STATA makes adjustments for these models. It computes standard errors from the data that is available in each comparable time-series.

Both models control for legislative chamber to distinguish differences for women in lower and upper houses. In the logit models, we also control for the total number of committees on which a legislator sits to account for some chambers allowing legislators to be on multiple commit-

tees. The more committees on which a woman sits, the higher the probability that she will be on women's issues, social issues, power, or economics/foreign affairs committees. In the pooled, time-series models, we include a control for the total number of seats in the chamber. None of the independent variables in the models correlate above the generally accepted  $r = 0.80$  threshold.

## Findings

Do female legislators sit on all types of standing committees or does gender bias committee assignments? What explains which women will be assigned to which committees? Table 3 presents the results of the logit models. Chamber-level factors emerge as the key determinants of women's committee assignments. Increasing the percentage of seats held by women in a chamber has significant effects on the probability that women will be marginalized for social issues and power committees. Calculating predicted probabilities to estimate the substantive effect of the variable reveals that the likelihood that female legislators will sit on social issues increases from 0.38 when the percentage of female legislators in the chamber is at its lowest value in the dataset, 1%, to 0.80 when the proportion of women is at its highest, 29%.<sup>20</sup> As expected, the predicted probability that women will be assigned to power committees declines from almost 19% with only 1% of the chamber being female to only 4% when 29% of the chamber is female. Thus, isolating women on social issues committees, which are rarely influential in the congress, appears to be a strategy used by male politicians to hoard scarce political resources in the chamber.

Contrary to our expectations, the percentage seats occupied by women in the chamber does not significantly influence the probability that women will be isolated to women's issues committees or kept off of economics/foreign affairs committees. The finding for women's issues committees may occur because most chambers have only one or two committees designated to deal expressly with women's issues (see the appendix). Once the number of women in the chamber grows so that

<sup>19</sup>To be sure our results are not a function of the unbalanced nature of the design, we ran a balanced set of models with three congresses in each country beginning in the late 1980's. The results are not substantially different from those presented below, except that party leaders and chamber presidents decline in significance in the social issues models and party leaders loses significance for women's issues committees. This may be because of the smaller sample size.

<sup>20</sup>We use *CLARIFY* software (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000; Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2001) in conjunction with the *STATA* statistical package to compute predicted probabilities. This program allows the user to hold all variables at constant values while estimating probabilities based on different values of a variable of primary interest. We hold continuous variables at their mean and dichotomous variables at their mode, which is an observed value in the dataset rather than the unobserved mean.

**TABLE 3 Factors Influencing the Probability that Female Legislators Will Be Isolated (Individual-Level Analysis with Logit)**

	Women's Issues Committees b (s.e.)	Social Issues Committees b (s.e.)	Power Committees b (s.e.)	Economic and Foreign Affairs Committees b (s.e.)
<i>Chamber-level variables</i>				
Percentage Women in Chamber	-.05 (.04)	.07** (.02)	-.07** (.03)	.03 (.02)
Governing Party with Majority	-1.57** (.60)	-.69 (.49)	.79 (.64)	-.44 (.39)
Control of Assignments				
Party Leaders	.97* (.51)	1.03* (.43)	.46 (.33)	-2.34** (.43)
Chamber Presidents	2.29** (.64)	1.23** (.43)	-	-1.40** (.39)
Women's Issues Committees	-	-.43 (.27)	-1.76** (.32)	-1.90** (.32)
<i>Party- and individual-level variables</i>				
Member of Governing Party	-.60* (.30)	-.51* (.22)	.39 (.27)	.05 (.21)
Party Ideology				
Leftist	.74 (.54)	.54* (.26)	-.17 (.31)	.09 (.26)
Centrist	.33 (.50)	1.06** (.37)	-1.47* (.62)	-.38 (.31)
Other	-.51 (.64)	-.60 (.52)	-.17 (.75)	.64 (.44)
Number of Terms Served	.15 (.14)	.004 (.13)	-.21 (.16)	.22 (.12)
Chamber	.96 (.53)	.24 (.37)	.06 (.58)	.08 (.33)
Number of Committees	.37** (.12)	.48** (.10)	.27** (.11)	.44** (.10)
Constant	-1.45* (.71)	-3.15** (.66)	-.92 (.88)	1.42* (.61)
n	366	544	407	544
$\chi^2$	76.92**	96.98**	72.53**	58.19**
Log likelihood	-195.72	-299.87	-210.71	-313.89

\*p &lt; .05, \*\*p &lt; .01.

it is no longer possible to isolate women on this committee alone, women necessarily spill over onto other committees. For example, in the Argentine Chamber, where the women's representation is higher than in any other case in this study, binomial tests for proportion show that women are significantly overrepresented on both women's issues and social issues committees. The finding for economics

and foreign affairs committees suggests that male legislators may feel it is more important to keep women from power committees than committees dealing with economics or foreign affairs when responding to the threat from increased women's representation.

The effects of governing party power are significant for women's issues committees but not other types of

committees.<sup>21</sup> When the governing party has a majority of seats in a chamber even after subtracting the proportion of seats held by women in the party, the predicted proportion of female legislators on the women's issues committee is 42%, but when the governing party does not have a majority, it drops to 16%. What is likely happening is that when the governing party has sufficient power it is isolating women but only on the women's issues committees—the easiest committee on which women can be isolated. Opposition parties may have only a small number of seats when the governing party has a strong majority and, thus, not have enough members to isolate women and still fill all their committee seats.<sup>22</sup>

Other factors may be at work in the governing parties in our dataset that could be causing the nonsignificant results. For example, if political parties are fractious, as in Colombia or Honduras, and female legislators are from the dominant faction, faction leaders might prefer to give desirable committee assignments to faction members regardless of their gender while isolating members of dissident factions. Another possibility is that a governing party may have achieved its large seat share in the congress in part by appealing to women voters (possibly by nominating more female candidates for the legislature), so it is reluctant to isolate its female members due to the risk of losing the female vote in future elections.<sup>23</sup>

The variable measuring who controls committee assignment decisions has the most substantial and consistently significant influence on women's committee assignments.<sup>24</sup> When male legislators feel their power may

be threatened by women's presence and they control the means by which committee assignments are made, they isolate women on women's issues and social issues committees more so than when all legislators participate in committee assignment decisions via a floor vote. The predicted probability that women will sit on women's issues committees is 0.23 for a floor voting system, 0.42 when party leaders control assignments, and 0.71 when chamber presidents make committee assignment decisions. Female legislators are significantly less likely to sit on economics and foreign affairs committees when party leaders (predicted probability of 0.06) or chamber presidents (predicted probability of 0.15) control assignments. No chambers in the dataset that decide committee assignments with a floor vote have power committees so the power committee model compares party leaders to chamber presidents. There is no significant difference between the two, which is understandable because in neither case do women have influence over the decision. Both party leaders and chamber presidents are usually male and have similar incentives for keeping women off power committees.<sup>25</sup>

The findings also reveal that when the structure of the committee system provides an opportunity to isolate female legislators, male legislators will take that opportunity to protect their scarce resources. Where a women's issues committee exists, women are less likely to sit on power and economics/foreign affairs committees. The economics/foreign affairs model predicts that women would comprise 30% of the committees where there is no women's issue committee but only 6% where there is. The existence of a women's issue committee has a negative, but not quite significant, influence on the probability that women sit on social issues committees. This suggests that women are more likely to be marginalized to women's issues committees than social issues committees, though we cannot be confident that this effect is generalizable.

Party and individual-level factors provide less impressive findings than the chamber-level variables. Women in the governing party are less likely to be isolated to women's issues and social issues committees than women in the opposition suggesting that being in the president's party may afford some latitude in whether a woman will be marginalized.<sup>26</sup> However, the substantive difference between women in the governing party and in the opposition

<sup>21</sup>The models are not presented in the table, but we also examined the impact of governing party measured continuously as the percentage of seats the president's party holds (after subtracting the percentage of seats held by women in the president's party). This hypothesis requires a polynomial function as the effect of the proportion of seats is nonlinear. We would expect women to be isolated when the governing party holds a small percentage of seats and when it has a large majority, but we would expect no marginalization of women when the governing party controls a moderate proportion of seats and parties have incentives to use all their members to dominate committees and fight for power. The variable was only significant in the economics/foreign affairs model. We also estimated the governing party power variable as whether or not it has a majority without taking the percentage of seats held by women into account. This measure also was only significant for the economics/foreign affairs committee models. Neither alternative measure substantially changed the other variables' effects.

<sup>22</sup>We thank one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing out this alternative perspective.

<sup>23</sup>Models interacting the power of the governing party and the percentage of seats held by women in the chamber did not yield statistically significant results for the interaction term.

<sup>24</sup>We ran models with an interaction between who controls committee assignments and the power of the governing party, and the interactions were not statistically significant.

<sup>25</sup>Only in a few instances have women held top posts in Latin American legislatures. For example, the chamber president was female in Costa Rica in 1986 and 2000 and in Venezuela in 1998; however, no women have held this top post in Argentina, Chile, or Honduras.

<sup>26</sup>An interaction between being a member of the governing party and governing party power is not statistically significant.

**TABLE 4** Factors Influencing the Proportion of Female Legislators That Are Isolated (Chamber-Level Analyses with Pooled Time Series)

	Women's Issues Committees b (s.e.)	Social Issues Committees b (s.e.)	Power Committees b (s.e.)	Economic and Foreign Affairs Committees b (s.e.)
Percentage Women in Chamber	1.92** (.31)	1.65** (.09)	.55** (.09)	.58** (.03)
Governing Party with Majority after Subtracting women	-12.72** (4.72)	-1.39 (1.39)	-.81 (1.71)	-1.36* (.65)
Control of Assignments				
Party Leaders	25.37** (3.99)	3.83** (1.11)	-1.30 (1.49)	-1.53** (.46)
Chamber Presidents	59.13** (6.77)	.23 (2.87)	- (.00)	-2.39** (.55)
Women's Issues Committees	-	.74 (1.60)	.53 (1.60)	-1.16* (.51)
Chamber	20.63** (5.77)	-1.45 (3.36)	.82 (1.99)	-2.38* (1.05)
Number of Seats in Chamber	.13** (.03)	-.003 (.02)	-.003 (.01)	-.02** (.01)
Constant	-27.15** (8.01)	-1.66 (4.04)	1.89 (2.05)	7.20** (1.40)
n	31	55	35	55
R <sup>2</sup>	.87	.83	.43	.80

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01.

is not as large as for some of the chamber-level variables—only predicted to be about a 12% difference for both women's issues and social issues committees. Party ideology does increase the probability that women will sit on social issues committees with leftists and centrists being more likely than rightists to be on those committees. But the only other significant role for ideology is that centrists are less likely than rightists to sit on power committees. Seniority has no effect on women's committee assignments. Although legislators are likely to distinguish between women in making assignments (through ideology or being in the governing party), their previous experience in office does not affect committee marginalization of female legislators.

Since the chamber-level variables appear to drive the explanation for women's treatment in committee assignments, we include a second set of models, presented in Table 4, that estimate only chamber-level variables.<sup>27</sup> The

results provide further support for many of the findings in the logit models. The percentage of seats held by women in the chamber is significantly and positively correlated with the proportion of women on each of the types of committees. This differs from the findings in the individual-level models for women's issues and economics/foreign affairs committees. Yet, the chamber models reveal an interesting trend, which is not altogether contradictory to the individual-level findings. As the proportion of women in the chamber increases, the positive effect is largest for women's issues (b = 1.92) and social issues committees (b = 1.65) and much smaller for power committees (b = 0.55) and economics/foreign affairs committees (b = 0.58). Although we initially might expect a decline in women's representation on power and

be sure the results were not a function of the ideology of the party in power. Interestingly, when the governing party is leftist, centrist, or nonideological, women are significantly less likely to be assigned to social issues committees. Ideology of the governing party was not significant in any of the other models nor does it substantially alter the results of other variables. Because this variable is tangential to our original theory, we do not include it in the main table.

<sup>27</sup>We ran models with a control for the governing party's ideology (nominal variable for whether the governing party is leftist, centrist, rightist, or nonideological with rightist as the excluded category) to

economics/foreign affairs committees, the positive but small effect simply shows that not all women can be placed on women's issues or social issues committees particularly when the proportions outgrow the available number of seats on those committees.

Argentina provides a good illustration of this. Women's representation in the Chamber of Deputies increased from around 5% in the mid-1980s to 29% in the 1995–97 congress. Increases in women's proportions on women's issues committees far outpace their increases in the chamber, as they became highly overrepresented on women's issues committees growing from 33% in the 1985–87 congress to 93% in the 1995–97 congress. Over the same period, women's representation on economics and foreign affairs committees also increased, from 2% in the 1983–85 congress to 13% in the 1995–97 congress, but the increase in representation has not been very large and women continue to be underrepresented. Thus, this finding makes clear that increasing women's representation in legislatures does cause male leaders to marginalize women—they limit women's representation on power and economics/foreign affairs committees and place them on women's issues and/or social issues committees.

As in the previous models, whether the governing party has a majority even after subtracting its female members affects the assignment of female legislators to women's issues committees. Thirteen percent fewer women sit on women's issues committees when the governing party has a majority, all else being equal. Governing party power also is significant for economics and foreign affairs committees in the chamber-level models. It too is negative, but substantively much smaller ( $b = 1.4$ ) than for women's issues committees. Women may not be marginalized to women's issues committees when the governing party is in the majority but neither are they receiving more seats on economics/foreign affairs committees.

Distinguishing who controls committee assignments has similar effects in these models and reveals a much larger substantive effect for women's issues committees than social issues committees. In both cases, women's representation is greater when party leaders or chamber presidents (for women's issues committees only) make assignments than when a floor vote occurs. When party leaders make assignments, 25% more women sit on women's issues committees than when assignments are decided by a floor vote. Only 4% more women hold seats on social issues committees when party leaders make assignments. When chamber presidents make assignments, 59% more women sit on women's issues committees. In part, these large substantive effects may be driven by Honduras where

chamber presidents make assignments and women's proportions on women's issues committees are quite large (see Table 1)—women held all the seats on the Women's Issues and Family committees in the 1990–94 congress. Similarly, Colombia uses floor votes to determine assignments and it has the smallest percentages of women on women's issues committees.

Lastly, the structure of the committee system continues to be important but only for the economics/foreign affairs committee models. The existence of a women's issues committee has a significant and negative effect on economics/foreign affairs committees, as it did in the previous table. Although not evident across all types of committees, the findings suggest that where women's issues committees exist (e.g., Argentina, Chilean Chamber, Colombia, and Honduras beginning in 1990), male legislators use those committees to marginalize female legislators by keeping them off of the more desirable economics/foreign affairs committees.

## Conclusion

Gender bias exists in Latin American committee assignments. Women are assigned disproportionately to committees that focus on women's issues and social issues, and they often are underrepresented on power committees and committees that deal with economics or foreign affairs. Uncovering this bias has several important implications. First, it makes previous findings of women's overrepresentation on women's issues committees in the U.S. Congress generalizable to new democracies in the developing world (Considine and Deutchman 1994; Darcy 1996; Diamond 1977; McGlenn and O'Connor 1995; Thomas 1994; Thomas and Welch 1991). Second, it reveals that women have little control over crafting policy in important issue areas such as economics, foreign affairs, defense, and budgets. Third, this kind of marginalization of women may explain the limited advancement of women into top executive branch posts in Latin America (Rodriguez 2003, 138–39). If women's service on committees dealing with economics and foreign affairs issues increased, there would be more female politicians with experience in these important issue areas who could be channeled toward appointment to top cabinet posts.

This study of women's committee assignments in a diverse set of Latin American legislatures finds that a number of factors explain the degree to which marginalization of women occurs. Chamber-level factors, specifically women's representation in legislative chambers and

political institutions, appear to be the key determinants of whether male legislators will marginalize their female counterparts. Increasing women's representation is a serious threat to scarce political resources, in the form of committee assignments, and male legislators will sideline women in an effort to preserve those resources. As the proportion of women in office has increased in Latin American legislatures, their representation on all kinds of committees has not increased equally. The percentage of seats occupied by women on women's issues and social issues committees has grown much more quickly than it has for power and economics/foreign affairs committees (see Table 4 again). This suggests that it will take more than simply winning seats in the legislature for women to be treated equally in the legislature.

Institutional design may well be the most important influence on marginalization of women. When it is *possible* to isolate female legislators on a women's issues committee, women are placed on those committees, and they do not get to serve on power committees or committees whose jurisdiction covers economics or foreign affairs. These findings underscore the importance of considering chamber rules and informal norms if we want to understand how new groups will be treated once they win representation in the legislature. When party or chamber leaders make committee assignments, how do they decide who sits on which committees? "Plum" committee seats may be given out based on party loyalty or being part of the chamber leader's clientelistic network, as in Honduras. They also may be based on party or chamber leader knowledge or stereotypes about the expertise of legislators. Where party leaders make committee assignments, they can make allocation decisions that benefit or harm female legislators from their party. For example, in 1973 the U.S. Democratic Party decided that each party member in the House would be given a major committee assignment. Since three-quarters of women in the next Congress were Democrats, the blanket decision by party leaders meant that female legislators would not be put on the sidelines by assignment to only minor committees (Thompson 1980, 72). Using stereotypes to determine appropriate committee assignments may complement male politicians' interest in marginalizing women if women as a new group entering the national political arena threaten male control of scarce resources.

Individual and party-level factors play a lesser role in explaining marginalization of women on committees but are still important. Our findings show that membership in the governing party and political party ideology can influence which women in a legislative chamber will be isolated to women's issues and social issues committees.

Yet, these are only a few of the party or individual-level factors that might affect the marginalization of women in committee assignments. The number of terms a woman has served in the legislature does not affect committee placements in Latin America but other aspects of a legislator's political experience, their occupational and educational backgrounds, or their ability to garner votes for their political party may influence which women are most likely to be marginalized. Political party institutions, such as rules defining selection of party leaders, centralization of candidate nomination processes, or personal vote-seeking incentives, could affect which parties are more likely to isolate women. Relatedly, the percentage of the party's caucus that is female could provide varying levels of "threat" within the chamber resulting in some parties marginalizing women more than other parties. These more nuanced differences in individual legislators and political parties were beyond the scope of this study, but they offer important avenues for future research.

Although this study focused on female legislators, the theory presented here could apply to newcomers from other underrepresented groups and may also be applicable to other scarce political resources, such as leadership posts or electoral list positions. As ethnic minorities or indigenous people begin to win seats in Latin American legislatures, it is important to consider what they will be able—or allowed—to achieve once they start to win representation. However, it is important to note that there are differences between women and minority groups that may need to be taken into account. Our theory is limited to newcomers in traditionally dominant political parties and would require adjustments to account for newcomer representation in the form of women's parties or indigenous group political parties. This said, the key conclusions that emerge from should be applicable to newcomers whose entry to the legislative arena cuts across party lines.

Traditionally dominant groups try to marginalize new groups so that they do not have to share scarce political resources. As representation of newcomers increases, traditionally dominant groups feel threatened and respond by sidelining newcomers in committee assignments; however, rules about how committee assignments are made and the structure of the committee system influence the dominant group's ability to do so. Consequently, new groups will not be fully incorporated into all aspects of legislative politics just because they begin to win significant numbers of seats in the legislature. Newcomers will have to push for significant changes to legislative institutions to achieve full legislative representation.

## APPENDIX: Committee Coding

	Women's Issues Committees <sup>†</sup>	Social Issues Committees <sup>†</sup>	Economics & Foreign Affairs Issues Committees <sup>†</sup>	Power Committees <sup>††</sup>
Argentina – Chamber	Family, Women, Children and Adolescents	Social Assistance and Public Health; Culture; Education; Elderly; Drug Addiction; Human Rights; Cooperation with NGO's	Foreign Relations; Budget and Treasury; Defense; Finance; Industry; Commerce; Economy	Foreign Relations; Budget and Treasury; Agriculture & Ranching
Argentina – Senate	Family & Minors	Education; Culture; Social Assistance and Public Health; Ecology and Human Development	Foreign Relations; Budget and Treasury; National Defense; Economy; Industry; Commerce	Foreign Relations; Budget and Treasury; Agriculture and Ranching
Chile – Chamber	Family	Human Rights; Education	Foreign Affairs; Treasury; Defense; Economy	Interior; Foreign Affairs; Constitution; Treasury; Defense; Health; Mines & Energy
Chile – Senate	none	Human Rights; Education	Foreign Affairs; Treasury; Defense; Economy	Foreign Affairs; Constitution; Treasury; Defense; Health; Mines and Energy
Colombia – Chamber and Senate	Seven – Women and Family	Six – Education and Culture	Two – Foreign Affairs; Three – Economics; Four – Budget	none
Costa Rica	none	Social Issues	Treasury; Economics; Government and Administration	Treasury
Honduras	Women; Family	Human Rights; Education; Health and Social Security; Culture, Tourism, Sport, Youth; Ethnic Issues	Treasury; Foreign Relations; Defense and National Security; Budget; Economy, Commerce and Industry	Defense; Human Rights (1990 – 1994); Budget (1994 – 1998); Constitution (1998 – 2002)
Venezuela – Chamber	none	Culture; Education; Health; Youth, Recreation & Sports	Defense; Economy; Foreign Affairs; Finance; Treasury	Agriculture; Defense; Administration; Economy; Foreign Affairs; Finance; Interior; Comptroller
Venezuela – Senate	none	Social Issues; Culture; Human Rights; Education; Youth & Sports; Health	Defense; Economy; Foreign Affairs; Finance; Budget; Treasury	none

<sup>†</sup>The authors coded women's issues, social issues committees, and economics/foreign affairs committees.

<sup>††</sup>Power committees were coded with the help of suggestions from country experts in personal communications. We especially thank Lisa Baldez, John Carey, Mark Jones, and Peter Siavelis. We thank Brian Crisp for the suggestion to code Venezuelan committees as powerful depending on their size. Powerful committees in Venezuela are those with more than 20 members. Powerful committees in Honduras are those to which the President of the assembly appointed himself.

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