# 3

# Preferences and Priorities

## *Gender and the Political Attitudes of Legislators*

The political preferences that legislators bring to the political arena are the starting place for substantive representation. They provide information about the priorities that legislators place on constituents, legislative activities, and political issues, which in turn can affect the way that representatives behave in office. Although attitudes and behavior are often similar, they are not identical. A legislator may think that women's equality is an important political issue but not expend any policymaking effort toward women's equality issues. Thus, it is necessary to examine both the attitudes and behavior of elected representatives to determine whether female legislators represent women—and if not, why.

In this chapter, I analyze the political attitudes of representatives in Argentina, Colombia, and Costa Rica to determine whether female representatives have different preferences and priorities than men. Specifically, this chapter answers three of the overarching questions posed in chapter 1: do female representatives represent women through their political preferences, do they represent *all* constituents to the same extent that male representatives do, and to what extent do gender differences in political preferences vary across countries? I answer these questions using data from an original survey of legislators in the three countries. Findings from analyses of these data provide a baseline from which to compare the behavior of female representatives analyzed in the following chapters.



### Gender and Political Preferences in Latin American Legislatures

In Latin America, Elsa Chaney's (1979, 21) seminal research suggested that women in office are *supermadres*—"tending to the needs of her big family in the larger casa of the municipality or even the nation." She found evidence of this by interviewing women in government in Chile and Peru in the 1960s and early 1970s. Chaney's conclusions about women in office being supermadres dominated thinking about women's representation in the region for many years (Chaney 1998; Jaquette and Wolchik 1998; Craske 1999). What her conclusions suggest is that female and male representatives will differ from one another in their attitudes toward social issues and traditional men's issues, with women tending to social issues and men focusing on men's issues. Yet, Chaney's research took place when few women worked outside the home, entered institutions of higher education, or participated in politics. Over the past 30 years, women's status has changed significantly (Craske 1999).[1] Societal views of women in the region are more supportive of women entering the labor force and being in politics (Gallup Organization 2001; Latinobarómetro 2004). Women are working in the paid labor force and entering institutions of higher education in growing numbers (World Bank 2007). And they have entered legislative and executive branches of government with increasing regularity (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005; IPU 2008). As a result of these changes, the political attitudes of female representatives may differ today, such that the supermadre label no longer fits.

Indeed, recent research questions the applicability of the supermadre model in Latin America and lends support to the hypothesis articulated in chapter 1 that women will place higher priority on women's issues than men and may be similar in the importance that they place on social issues and men's issues (Furlong and Riggs 1996; Htun and Power 2006; Schwindt-Bayer 2006). Furlong and Riggs (1996) found little evidence to confirm Chaney's classification of women in government as supermadres in Costa Rica. They showed that women in government still accept traditional gender roles in the private sphere but not in the public sphere. In office, women see themselves as being highly capable officeholders who could hold a wide range of political positions, not just traditionally feminine ones. Similarly, Saint-Germain and Chavez Metoyer (2008) found that female representatives in Central America have strong predispositions to representing women but see this as being above and beyond their responsibilities to constituents or their political party. Statistical research also has shown that women represent women's issues but are not very different from men in the importance they place on more feminine issues or men's issues (Htun and Power 2006; Schwindt-Bayer 2006). Htun and Power (2006) found that female legislators in Brazil are more supportive of gender quotas and labor rights but that party matters more than gender in explaining attitudes toward abortion rights and gay rights. In an earlier study, I reported that female

legislators in Latin America view women's equality and children and family issues as more important issues than men do but that no differences exist on issues of education, health care, or the economy (Schwindt-Bayer 2006). Thus, initial evidence supports the theory that although female representatives are likely to prioritize women's issues more than men do, fewer differences may emerge in the areas of traditionally defined gender issues—social issues and men's issues.

Building on the theoretical framework posed in chapter 1, I test five specific hypotheses in this chapter. The first two address the question of whether women are representing women through their political preferences—specifically, preferences toward women as a constituency and women's issues. I argue that female representatives should place higher priority on female constituents and women's groups than male representatives due to their shared history of societal subordination and feeling a special responsibility as women to represent women (Phillips 1995; Mansbridge 1999; Young 2000; Weldon 2002a; Mansbridge 2003). This should also lead female legislators to place higher priority on women's issues. The second three hypotheses address whether women are representing *all* constituents through their political attitudes. Female elected officials are likely to recognize that they cannot ensure their political future or fully do their job as representatives by focusing only on women (Dahlerup 1988; Thomas 1994; Carroll 2002; Grey 2006). As a result, they should seek out a range of other important constituencies to represent. Female and male representatives are likely to place similar priority on constituencies, such as the poor, ethnic minorities, farmers and fishermen, and blue-collar workers. In addition, female constituents should view all legislative activities—policymaking, sitting on committees, constituency service, giving public speeches—as important vehicles for representation. Finally, I expect that female representatives will give social issues and men's issues the same priority that male representatives give them. Men's and women's similar preferences should reflect the fact that they are first and foremost representatives of their parties and constituents, not just of women.

In 2001–2002, I conducted a survey of legislators in Argentina, Colombia, and Costa Rica asking about their political preferences, backgrounds, previous political experiences, and political ambition (see appendices A and B). In this chapter, I use the legislators' responses to examine the priority that representatives in Argentina, Colombia, and Costa Rica place on different types of constituents, various legislative activities, and a range of political issues. Representatives were asked to respond to all of the questions about their preferences on a 5-point scale from "very low" priority to "very high" priority. I analyze these responses using ordered probit statistical models that estimate the probability that a legislator will give each of the five possible responses. Rather than presenting numerous tables of statistical results, however, I present figures and tables of the substantive effect that a legislator's gender has on political priorities that emerge from the models (i.e., the predicted probabilities).[2] These illustrate where men and women have



statistically significant differences in their preferences and show the substantive size of these differences.

The variable of most importance here is the gender of the legislator. But other factors also affect the political preferences of representatives, and sometimes outweigh the effect of gender (Tremblay and Pelletier 2000; Wangnerud 2000b; Poggione 2004; Htun and Power 2006). In this chapter, all of the statistical models control for four sets of additional influences on legislators' political preferences—legislators' personal characteristics and backgrounds, their prior political experience, their political ambition, and the nature of their electoral district. Specifically, the control variables are a representative's ideology, age, marital status, education level, occupation, legislative experience, prior political experience, political ambition, and urbanness of the electoral district.[3] Appendix C details the coding of these variables. By controlling for these additional influences on legislators' political preferences, it is possible to isolate the effect of a legislator's gender from other factors that may affect their attitudes.

## Perceptions of Constituents

Most research on representation assumes that a legislator's constituents are the citizens living in the district from which the representative was elected. In other words, representation takes place *dyadically* between a representative and the constituents in his or her electoral district (Miller and Stokes 1963, Bartels 1991). Building on the idea that constituents are located within an electoral district, Fenno (1977) argued that representatives have four concentric circles of constituents within their district. A representative begins with a geographic constituency of all voters in his or her district, then maintains a reelection constituency separating supporters from nonsupporters, then focuses on a primary constituency by dividing strong from weak supporters, and finally distinguishes the closest circle of personal supporters. The representative has different relationships with the different constituencies and represents them in different ways.

However, *constituency* does not refer *only* to citizens in a geographic district. The concept of a constituency can be perceived in a myriad of ways. Some representation scholars argue that representatives should view all citizens in the country as their constituents and representatives from one district can represent those in another district—in other words, collective representation or surrogate representation (Weissberg 1978; Hurley 1982; Mansbridge 1999, 2003). Mansbridge (1999, 642) wrote that "in the United States, voters have many of their most vital interests represented through the 'surrogate' representation of legislators elected from other districts. Advocates of particular political views who lose in one district, for example, can hope to be represented by advocates of those views elected in another district." This view suggests that women elected from one district can

be surrogate representatives for women in other districts who may not have a female member of congress. Similarly, Eulau and Karps (1977, 248) argued that constituents could be viewed as solidary or functional groupings of organized and unorganized interests. In other words, constituents could be the individuals residing in a representative's electoral district, but they could also be organized groups, such as women's groups, unions, religious organizations, or unorganized groups of individuals with common characteristics, such as women, minorities, or the poor. Both of these views of *constituency* underscore that representatives may view women as a constituency whose interests and concerns deserve representation. Whether legislators actually view women this way, however, is an empirical question.

Existing literature finds strong empirical evidence that although female representatives first and foremost view their job as representing all constituents in their district, they also view women as an important constituency (Thomas 1994; Reingold 2000; Wangnerud 2000a; Childs 2001; Carroll 2002; Childs 2004; Saint-Germain and Chavez Metoyer 2008). In interviews she conducted with female British MPs, Sarah Childs (2004) found that women identify their district as the primary locus of representation but many also recognize a need to represent women. Similarly, in her earlier research, Childs (2001) found that female MPs in Britain see representation as a way to generate closer ties between female constituents and representatives. Wangnerud (2000a) found that in Sweden women were significantly more likely to view promoting "the interests/views of women" as very important—55% of women felt this way compared to 10% of men. They also were more likely to interact with women's groups.

In a study of two U.S. states, Reingold (2000) found that although all legislators reported viewing women as an important group, female legislators were more likely to see female constituents as strong supporters. Her study found few gender differences in representational activities of Arizona and California representatives, but their perceptions of constituencies was one area in which legislators differed. Similarly, Thomas (1994, 69) found that "57 percent of women state legislators considered representing women very important; only 33 percent of men responded similarly." This pattern also emerged in the U.S. Congress. Almost all female representatives and senators felt that "in addition to representing their districts," they have a special obligation to represent the concerns of women (Carroll 2002, 53). In addition, most of the female legislators in Central America interviewed by Saint-Germain and Chavez Metoyer (2008, 188–189) said that they feel a special obligation to represent women; however, few female representatives mentioned women as a special constituency prior to being asked about it.

Interviews that I conducted with female representatives in Argentina, Colombia, and Costa Rica illustrate that women almost always state that their first and foremost responsibility is to the people, their constituents, or their political party. Argentine Deputy Graciela Rosso stressed that it is not her party, her province, or her gender that she represents but ideas: "It is ideas that we defend. The most important thing is to defend that which betters the lives of the people who live in our country" (Rosso 2006). Similarly, another Argentine deputy stressed that her



> political obligation as a deputy is to represent the people . . . I believe that one should represent the interests of the people in general. As a political theme, I always work for the most vulnerable sectors. Poor women in Argentina are a very vulnerable sector . . . Women and poor women are, for me, one of the most important political groups . . . But that doesn't mean that a woman only represents feminine interests. I also have other interests. (di Tullio 2006)

Sonia Villalobos in Costa Rica stressed that nonwomen's groups have been critical to her career as a deputy in the Assembly (Villalobos 1999). In her district, Puntarenas, the fishing industry is very large. She developed a strong relationship with this group, composed almost entirely of men, and the group has helped her immensely in politics. She points out that it is necessary to have strong support not only from women and women's groups but from all camps. One Argentine deputy described her priorities very clearly: "For me, I am fanatic about my district. I represent the people first. After that, I represent my gender and after that my party" (personal interview, June 20, 2006).[4]

Many female legislators, however, also emphasize the importance of representing women. Deputy Alicia Fournier wrote in the Costa Rican Legislative Assembly's parliamentary journal, "Today we are confronted with a new responsibility, to be adequate channels for feminine voices that clamber for justice and respect for human rights" (Fournier Vargas 2001, 38). Deputy Isabel Chamorro of Costa Rica noted that "women [in society] depend on us. The role that we play is important for the future representation of women in the congress" (Chamorro 1999). Costa Rican Deputy Sonia Picado attributed her desire to get elected to the Legislative Assembly in part to wanting to represent women: "I think that just by being here I am sending a message to other women that we can do it" (Picado 1999).

## Survey Results

Do empirical analyses support this anecdotal evidence that women in Argentina, Colombia, and Costa Rica view women as an important constituency to represent? Analysis of the survey results in these countries reveals that women view all constituents as important, but also place special priority on women. I analyzed two survey questions to determine this—the first question dealt with views of various social constituencies (unorganized groups), and the second question asked about representatives' views of different organized groups in society.

Male and female legislators in all three countries place relatively high priority on most unorganized social constituencies. Specifically, men and women both view minorities, the poor, environmentalists, business owners, blue-collar workers, professionals, farmers, and fishermen as important constituencies in their districts. Significant gender differences do exist in some countries, however, in whether legislators view women as an important unorganized constituency. In Argentina and Costa Rica, statistical models reveal that female legislators place much higher priority on female constituents than do male legislators. Figure 3.1 shows the predicted probabilities that emerge from the multivariate models in each country. In Argentina, 59% of female legislators see women as a "very high" priority compared to only 15% of men. Almost all female legislators place "high" or "very high" priority on women, whereas only 70% of men do. In Costa Rica, 80% of female deputies place "very high" priority on women, whereas only 67% of male deputies

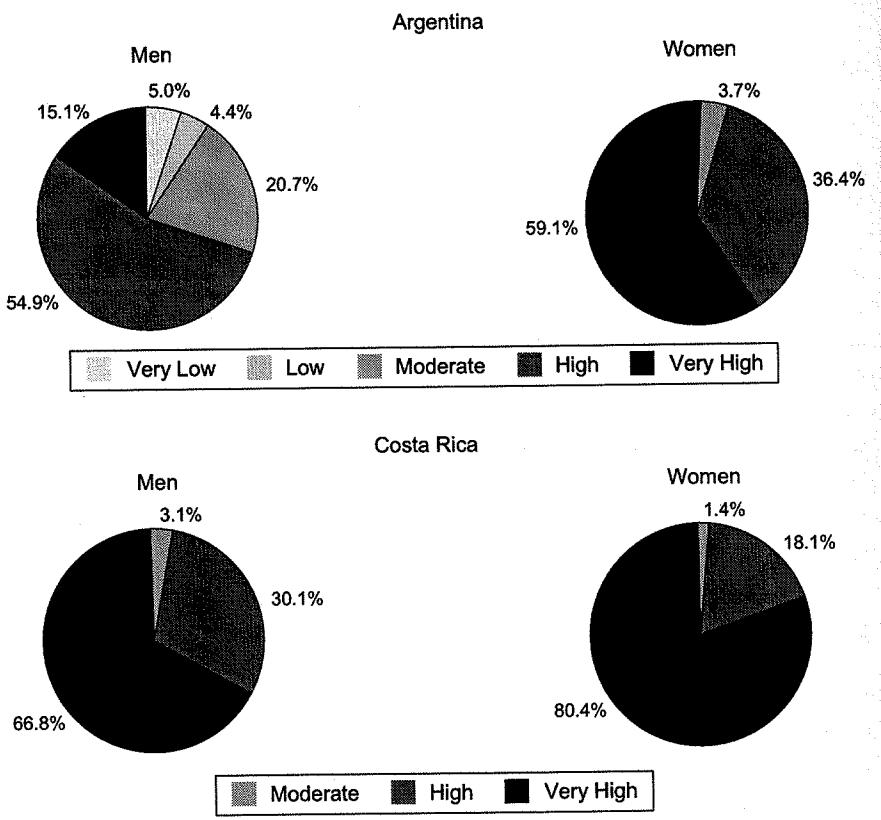


FIGURE 3.1. Predicted Percentages of Legislators with Priorities for Women as a Constituency



place a similar priority on female constituents. In contrast to the significant gender differences that exist in Argentina and Costa Rica, no gender differences emerge in Colombia after accounting for legislators' backgrounds, political experience, ambition, and electoral district. Women and men are equally likely to place priority on women as a constituency needing representation.

Another view of constituents is as organized groups whose interests are promoted by interest groups and NGO's. Quite a few significant gender differences emerge in the importance that legislators place on various organized constituencies, after accounting for legislators' backgrounds, prior experience, political ambition, and electoral districts. Of primary interest here, female representatives place significantly higher priority on women's groups than do male representatives in Argentina, Costa Rica, and the Colombian Chamber of Representatives but not in the Senate (table 3.1). In Argentina, 46% of female legislators are predicted to place "very high" priority on women's groups, and 84% give them either "very high" or "high" priority. In contrast, only 18% of male representatives rank women's groups as a "very high" priority, and a little less than half (42%) think they are only a "moderate" or "low" priority.[5] In the Colombian Chamber of Representatives, female representatives also view women's groups as more important than do men, but the difference is primarily in the extent to which they place "very high" priority on women's groups. As table 3.1 shows, the statistical model predicts that 77% of female legislators view women's groups as a "very high" priority compared to less than half of men. Most male and female representatives, however, think that women's groups are of at least high importance to their legislative work.

This pattern is similar to what the priorities of deputies in Costa Rica reveal (table 3.1). The probability that female deputies will place "very high" priority on women's groups is 0.89 compared to 0.70 for male deputies. The probability is less than 0.05 that male and female deputies will rank them as having less than "high" priority. The gender difference in Costa Rica is partially related to the fact that

TABLE 3.1. Predicted Probabilities of Priority that Legislators Place on Women's Groups

| | Argentina | | Colombian Chamber | | Costa Rica | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Low | .21 | .06 | .08 | .02 | <.05 | <.05 |
| Moderate | .21 | .10 | .09 | .03 | .03 | .01 |
| High | .40 | .38 | .35 | .18 | .26 | .10 |
| Very high | .18 | .46 | .48 | .77 | .70 | .89 |

Note: The statistical models from which these predicted probabilities are calculated also control for the legislator's ideology, age, marital status, highest education level, occupational experience, number of terms in the legislature, prior office-holding experience outside of the legislature, future political ambition, and whether they represent an urban district. The predicted probabilities are estimated in Stata 10.0 with CLARIFY holding continuous variables at their mean and dichotomous variables at their mode.

women are disproportionately more likely to be single rather than married. When marital status is omitted from the statistical model, the gender difference is strongly significant and the substantive difference in priority is larger. Once the fact that women are less likely to be married than men is controlled, however, the size and significance of a legislator's gender shrinks ($p = .09$). Single women appear to be more likely to prioritize women's groups as a constituency than married women.

In addition to differences in views of women's groups, a legislator's gender also influences the way representatives view other organized constituency groups in the three countries, though in varying ways. For example, in Argentina, women place greater priority on unions than do men, but in the Colombian Senate, women place less priority on them than men do. In the Colombian Chamber of Representatives, female legislators think that business groups are a higher priority group than do men, but in the senate, women think they are less important than do men. This lower priority that women place on business groups is also found in Costa Rica. Another organized constituency where gender differences emerge is religious groups. In both the Colombian Senate and Costa Rican Assembly, women prioritize religious groups less than men do.

No gender differences exist in the priority that legislators in Colombia and Costa Rica place on their political party, but statistical models do show that both male and female legislators in Colombia place much less importance on parties than legislators in Costa Rica. In Colombia, only 61% of representatives in the chamber are predicted to place "very high" priority on political parties and only 70% of senators feel that way. Some legislators in both chambers give parties "very low" and "low" priority. In contrast, almost 90% of deputies in the Costa Rican Assembly are predicted to place "very high" priority on political parties, and none of those surveyed accorded them a priority lower than "moderate." This makes sense given that Costa Rica is a more party-centered system than Colombia.

In contrast to the lack of gender differences in Colombia and Costa Rica, male and female deputies in Argentina do have significantly different views of their political parties. Women in Argentina place much higher priority on representing the party and its platform than do men. Figure 3.2 shows the predicted probabilities from a statistical model estimating the effect of gender after accounting for other reasons that legislators may place different priorities on their parties and reveals that almost all women (99.5%) are predicted to view representing political parties as a "very high" priority. In contrast, only 64% of men feel this way about parties. This suggests that a very different dynamic exists between women and parties than men and parties in Argentina. Women appear to be much more dependent upon their parties, which could facilitate their marginalization in office. Whether this occurs or not is the subject of the next several chapters, but this finding suggests that parties in Argentina may have a particularly strong ability to influence their female deputies.



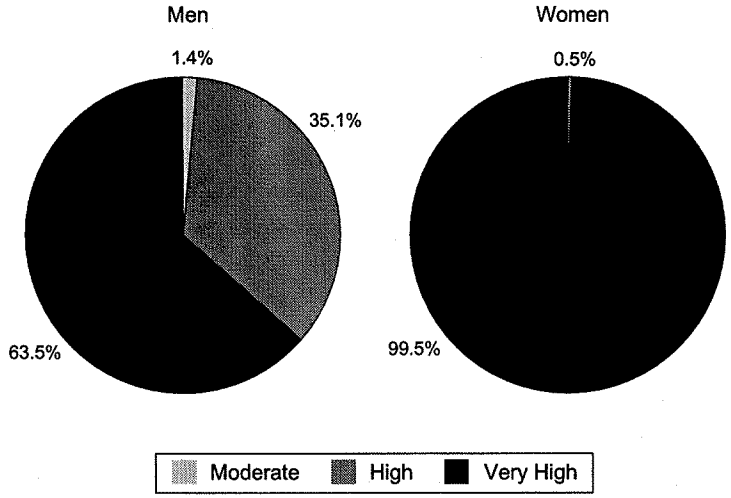


FIGURE 3.2. Importance that Male and Female Legislators in Argentina Place on Political Parties

Overall, these findings show that women and men differ significantly in their views of women as unorganized social constituents in Argentina and Costa Rica and in their views of women's groups in all three countries. Men also place priority on women and women's groups but are significantly less likely than women to view them as a top constituency needing representation. This matches the interview evidence presented earlier from Argentina and Costa Rica, suggesting that women do view women as an important constituency, and corresponds to findings from other countries around the world about how women in office view female constituents and the women's groups that often help get them into office to begin with. These findings also provide an important first piece of the puzzle of women's representation. Representatives represent an array of different constituent groups, and their perceptions of constituents can affect the way they represent them. The importance that a representative places on specific constituency groups, for example, may affect the amount of constituency service that he or she directs toward those groups (Prewitt and Eulau 1969; Zeigler et al. 1974). Representatives who view certain constituents, such as women, as particularly important for their reelection may spend more time working on women's issue policies and speaking on behalf of women in public presentations in an effort to cater to the women's vote. Examining the way that representatives view constituents and the way they view women as a constituency, specifically, is critical for better understanding women's substantive representation.

## Perceptions of Legislative Responsibilities

Representatives have numerous responsibilities as part of their job of representing constituents. They sponsor, debate, and amend legislation, sit on legislative committees, hold leadership posts, give public speeches, hold meetings with constituents, do casework on behalf of constituents, and attend political activities in their district. This book groups these responsibilities into three sets of legislative activities that comprise a large part of substantive representation—policymaking, committees and leadership, and home style. Because of the importance of all of these activities to the process of representation, representatives need to participate in all of them to fully represent their constituents. Consequently, female representatives in Latin America should recognize that these are key tools for achieving their representational goals and be as likely as men to place priority on policymaking, committees and leadership, and working with constituents.

Early research on women's representation in countries around the world has found some systematic differences in the types of activities in which men and women participate. Thomas (1994, 38) reported in the United States that "based on the research on women and men legislators of the 1970s, it is clear that women participated in the range of legislative behaviors [participating in committee meetings and floor sessions, meeting with lobbyists and other representatives of various interests, and bargaining with lobbyists and legislative colleagues to achieve desired outcomes] to a lesser degree than men." By the 1980s, female legislators in the United States "participated in all aspects of legislative life" (Thomas 1994, 53). In addition, studies found that women did more constituency service than their male counterparts and had different home styles (Diamond 1977; Thomas 1992; Richardson and Freeman 1995; Friedman 2000). Yet, little empirical work confirmed that women placed greater *priority* on these activities, just that they *participated* in them more often than men. Further, no research in Latin America has analyzed gender differences in representatives' preferences for legislative activities. In this chapter, I examine gender differences with regard to the priority that representatives place on different legislative activities. I use a question from the survey of legislators that asks representatives about the priority they place on six different parts of their job—sponsoring legislation, working in committees, constituency service, distributing pork, giving public speeches, and promoting the political party's platform.

### Survey Results

Some gender differences do emerge in legislators' priorities for legislative work, but they vary across countries. In Argentina, gender differences are present in three legislative activities, and in all three, women place higher priority on them than men do



(figure 3.3). Specifically, women view distributing pork, sponsoring bills, and promoting the party platform as more important parts of their job than do men, after accounting for how legislators' characteristics, political experiences, ambition, and districts affect their attitudes. Almost 90% of women are predicted to place "very high" or "high" priority on distributing pork and promoting the party platform compared to 70% and 63% of men, respectively. Both men and women think that sponsoring bills is at least a "high" priority, but female deputies are more likely to think that it is a "very high" priority. The higher priority that women place on promoting the party platform echoes the finding from the previous section that women are more likely to view their political party as a very important group. Women in Argentina placed higher priority on the political party than men did.

Fewer differences exist in Colombia and Costa Rica (figure 3.4). In Costa Rica, significant gender differences exist only in the priority that deputies place on sponsoring bills. About 70% of female deputies are predicted to place "very high" or "high" priority on sponsoring legislation, whereas almost all men do. This contrasts with Argentina, where women actually place higher priority on sponsoring legislation than do men. In the Colombian Chamber of Representatives, gender differences emerge only in the area of committee work. Fewer women place "very high" priority on committee work than men, although both are predicted to think that it is at least of "high" priority.

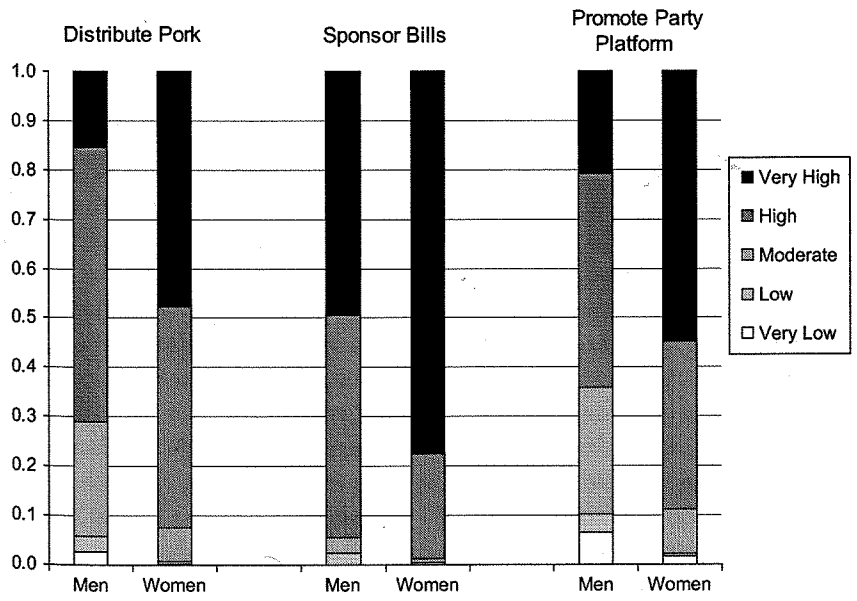


FIGURE 3.3. Predicted Probabilities of the Priority that Legislators Place on Three Legislative Activities in Argentina

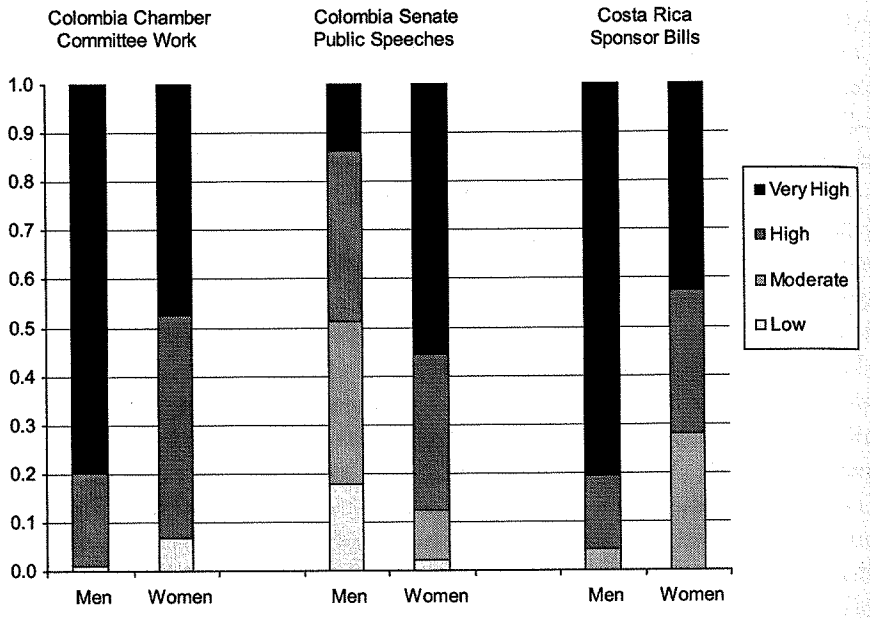


FIGURE 3.4. Predicted Probabilities of the Priority that Legislators in Colombia and Costa Rica Place on Legislative Activities

In the Colombian Senate, women's priorities differ from men's in the activity of giving public speeches and presentations (figure 3.4). Almost 90% of female senators view giving public speeches and presentations as a "high" or "very high" priority. In contrast, just under half of male senators think this is an important priority, and they have a probability of near 0.20 of thinking it is only a "low" priority. This is somewhat surprising given the traditional thinking that women are less comfortable than men with speaking in public and often defer to men in that area. It does, however, suggest that women recognize the symbolic importance of speechmaking to their legislative work. Speeches are often considered a form of symbolic politics that allows politicians to express support or concern for something without having to commit actual time and resources to it (Edelman 1964; Ragsdale 1984). This priority could indicate that women in the Senate are strategic in their behavior. Speechmaking allows them to make themselves seen and heard on a range of issues in a heavily male-dominated environment.

Despite arguments that women prefer certain types of legislative work, these findings suggest that men and women in Latin America are quite similar in the priority they place on different parts of their job. Where women and men differ, it does not match the perception that women prefer less high-profile tasks, such as constituency service. These preferences should translate into legislative behavior as well. Women should be key players in Argentina in promoting the party platform, distributing pork, and sponsoring legislation, given the priority they place on these issues. They may be less active than men in committee work in the Colombian Chamber and less active than men sponsoring bills in Costa Rica because they prioritize these issues less, but they should be equally likely to do other types of legislative work. If they do not, it is not because women and men differ in their preferences for different kinds of activities.



## Issue Preferences

The issue preferences that representatives bring to the legislative arena are a key part of substantive representation for several reasons. First, the issues that legislators place priority on give an indication of the issues that are important to the represented. According to the congruence theory of representation, the preferences of the represented should be congruent with the preferences of the legislators that they elect to represent them (Miller and Stokes 1963). Second, legislators' issue preferences can provide information about the personal interests, beliefs, and political issues that motivate them. In addition to bringing the concerns of the represented to the political arena, representatives are also motivated by their own beliefs and experiences. Finally, issue attitudes should be important determinants of the behavior that legislators exhibit with regard to their focus on policymaking, debating, committee work, or constituency service (Thomas and Welch 1991; Wangnerud 2000b; Dodson 2001; Lovenduski and Norris 2003; Schwindt-Bayer 2006).

Comparative politics research has consistently found strong support for the hypothesis that women have more positive attitudes toward women's equality issues than do men. This has particularly been the case in the United States (Diamond 1977; Johnson and Carroll 1978; Thomas 1994). Further, in the 1980s and early 1990s in Sweden, Wangnerud (2000a) found that female MPs had more positive attitudes toward gender equality in society and parliament than male MPs, and she reported similar findings for the Nordic region as a whole (Wangnerud 2000b). In Britain, women have consistently prioritized feminist issues more than men, favoring affirmative action and liberal gender equality issues, in general, and have more liberal positions on issues of abortion, rape in marriage, domestic violence, and equal opportunities for men and women (Norris 1996; Childs 2001; Lovenduski and Norris 2003; Childs 2008). Similarly, research found that female legislators in Rwanda prioritize economic advancement for women, female solidarity within parliament, and international female solidarity issues (Devlin and Elgie 2008).

On other issues, specifically social issues and traditional men's issues, findings have been more mixed. In early studies of women in U.S. state legislatures and

Congress, scholars reported wide differences between men's and women's attitudes toward social welfare issues, economics, and defense, with women being more favorable toward social welfare issues and less interested in economics and defense (Diamond 1977; Leader 1977; Johnson and Carroll 1978; Thomas 1994). These differences persisted into the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s (Thomas 1994; Poggione 2004) and over time have led to women creating a distinctive set of policy priorities on which they act (Thomas and Welch 1991; Thomas 1994). The issues that have been found to comprise women's distinctive policy priorities in the United States include health, education, social welfare, and the environment. These policy priorities also have been found to carry into women's legislative leadership positions (Little et al. 2001). Gender differences in attitudes toward social issues and men's issues exist in other countries as well. In Sweden, Wangnerud (2000a) found that female MPs were more predisposed toward social welfare issues in the 1980s and early 1990s than male MPs. Other studies, however, have reported more similarities than differences in the gendered attitudes of legislators toward social and men's issues (McAllister and Studlar 1992; Reingold 2000).

## Survey Results

Very little research exists on representatives' issue attitudes in Latin America (see, however, Chaney 1979). In this study, I use a question from the survey of legislators asking how important legislators believe various issues to be. Analysis of this question revealed that male and female representatives in Argentina, Colombia, and Costa Rica have very similar issue preferences on a wide array of issues. Specifically, they place similar priority on issues of education, health, the economy, inflation, minority equality, housing, poverty, and political violence. On a couple of issues, significant gender differences emerge among legislators in one country or another. For example, in Costa Rica, women place significantly lower priority on issues of employment than men do, and in Argentina, women place significantly lower priority on crime. In the Colombian Chamber of Representatives, female legislators place slightly higher priority on education than male legislators do. In general, however, male and female legislators bring very similar issue preferences to the legislative arena.

Three exceptions to this are women's equality issues, family and children issues, and agriculture. In all three countries, women place significantly higher priority on women's equality issues than men do after accounting for other factors that affect preferences. As figure 3.5 illustrates, the statistical model predicts that more women will place "very high" priority on women's equality issues than men in all three countries. In Costa Rica and Colombia, more than 60% of women are predicted to place "very high" priority on women's equality compared to approximately 30% of men, and most of the remaining women place "high" priority on this issue. In Argentina, 54% of women are predicted to place "high" priority on



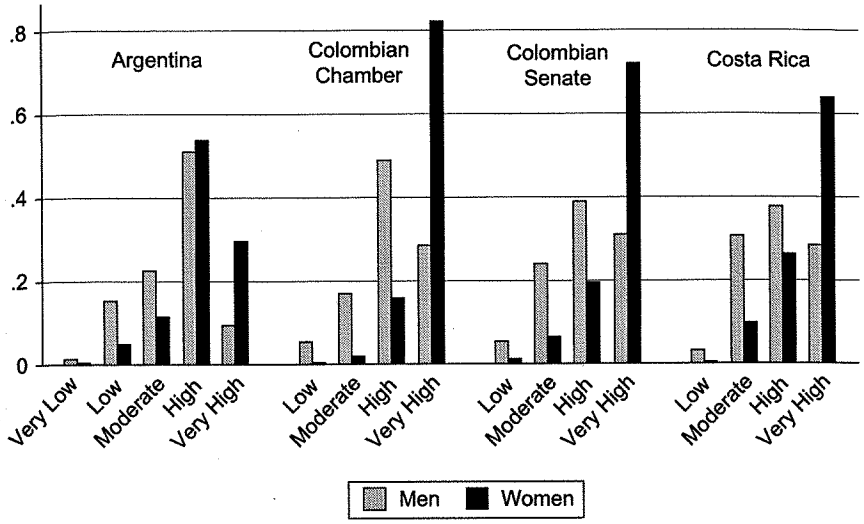


FIGURE 3.5. Predicted Probabilities of the Priority that Legislators Place on Women's Equality

women's equality and about 30% to place "very high" priority on the issue. The disparity between men and women in the "very high" priority category is 20 percentage points. Clearly, women in all three countries view women's equality as a higher priority than do men.

Importantly, however, men do place priority on women's equality issues. The priority that they give it is not as high as women's, but the majority of men see women's equality as being of "moderate" or "high" priority. Whether they truly believe in women's equality as a cause or have learned over time that placing priority on equality is politically correct, they do see women's equality as an important issue. Female legislators, however, see it as even more important.

The different views that male and female legislators have of women's equality issues match the underlying expectation of this study. Women have had different life experiences than men, have suffered decades of discrimination that has only recently abated somewhat, and may have a stronger gender consciousness than men. In addition, women are more likely to view themselves as representatives of women, as the previous section suggested through its findings that women place higher priority on representing female constituents and women's groups than men do. This is clearly observed through the different priority that women place on women's equality as a political issue. These findings also correspond with interview evidence from the three countries. Almost all the women I interviewed for this project stated that they view representing women's issues as very important to their legislative work. At the same time, however, they also stressed the

importance of other issues. Argentine Deputy Juliana di Tullio, for example, noted that although the theme of gender is important to her, so too are issues of children, health, social action, and foreign relations (di Tullio 2006).

The importance of nonwomen-specific political issues to female legislators is evident in the survey results. Female and male legislators place very similar priority on most social issues and men's issues. The only two issue areas in which men and women do have different priorities in Argentina, Colombia, and Costa Rica are the family and agriculture. Family and children issues are a higher priority for women than men in the Colombian Chamber of Representatives and Senate, but no gender difference emerges in Argentina or Costa Rica. Figure 3.6 shows that many more women than men in the Colombian Chamber and Senate are predicted to place "very high" priority on family and children issues, after accounting for legislators' backgrounds, political experience, ambition, and electoral district. The disparity in the predicted probabilities is about 0.45 in both chambers. In other words, the difference in the percentage of women and men predicted to place "very high" priority on family and children issues is 45%. Although almost all women place either "high" or "very high" priority on these issues, the majority of men fall into the "moderate" or "high" priority categories. Male legislators in Colombia do see family and children issues as important but not *as* important as women perceive them.

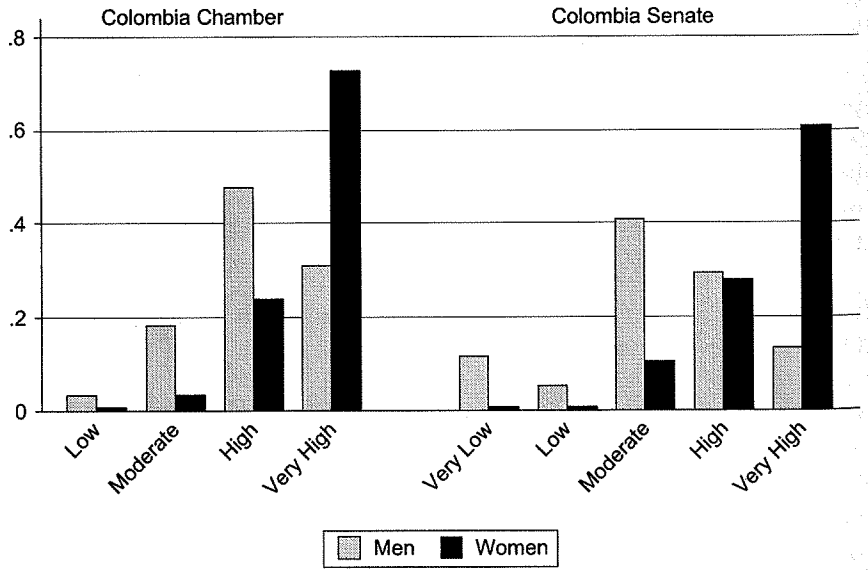


FIGURE 3.6. Predicted Probabilities of the Priority that Legislators Place on Family and Children Issues



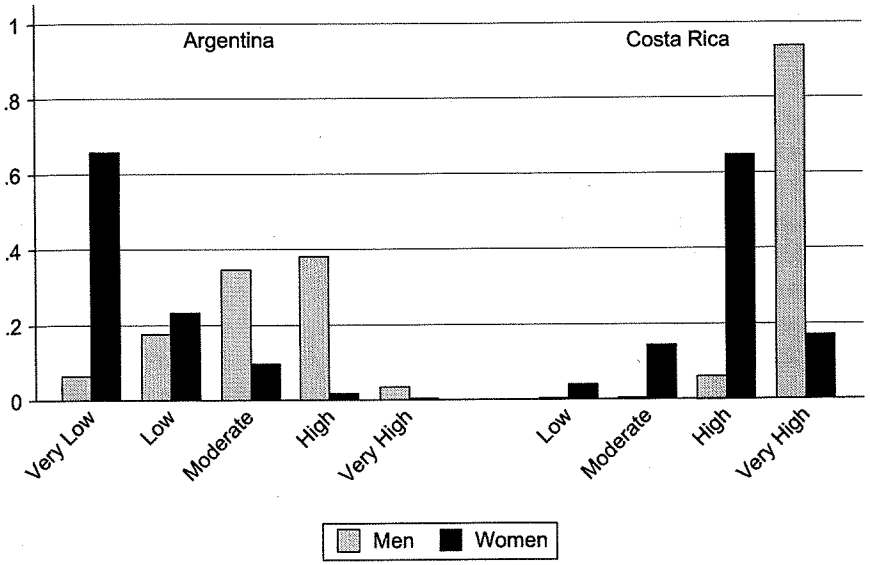


FIGURE 3.7. Predicted Probabilities of the Priority that Legislators Place on Agriculture Issues

The final issue on which male and female legislators differ is agriculture. The differences emerge only in Argentina and Costa Rica (figure 3.7), however, which are the two countries whose economies are still highly dependent upon the agricultural sector. In both countries, women place less priority on agriculture than men. Surprisingly, women in Argentina place almost no priority on this issue. The statistical model predicts that more than 60% of Argentine female legislators place "very low" priority on agriculture issues. This may reflect the fact that agriculture has always been a male-dominated economic activity and one into which women have made few roads in recent years despite the rising numbers of women in the paid labor force. Most women who enter the workforce do so via professional jobs, working class jobs in urban factories or businesses, or the informal sector, which is rarely recorded among national statistics. In 1994, 75% of women worked in jobs classified as being in the service sector, whereas less than 10% of women were involved in agriculture in South and Central America (Women in Development Network 1995). The very low priority that women in Argentina give to agriculture as a political issue clearly reflects this. Male legislators in Argentina also give agriculture less priority than many other issues, but the vast majority of them are predicted to rank it as at least a "low" priority. Although agriculture continues to be a large part of the Argentine economy, legislators give that issue less priority than other issues. In Costa Rica, agriculture is still a top political priority for both male and female legislators but fewer women rank it as a "very high"

priority compared to men. The statistical model predicts that only about 18% of female legislators place "very high" priority on agriculture compared to almost all male legislators. Most female legislators rank it as a "high" priority.

Issues that fall into the traditional dichotomy of "women's domain" (e.g., family and children, education, health) and "men's domain" (e.g., economics, inflation, employment, development) yield few gender differences in the priority that legislators place on them. Women in the Colombian Chamber of Representatives do see the family and education as more important than men do, and female deputies in Argentina and Costa Rica place less priority on agriculture. For the most part, however, the traditional distinction between social issues and men's issues does not match the issue preferences that legislators bring to the political arena. This suggests that male and female legislators should represent these issues in similar ways in their legislative activities as well. In contrast, the issue area on which women's behavior should differ from men's is women's equality issues. As this chapter has shown, female legislators in Argentina, Colombia, and Costa Rica think that these issues are more important than do men, and this priority should translate into women placing higher priority on women's issues through the act of legislating. Whether this happens is the subject of the next several chapters.

## Conclusion

Three overarching findings emerge from this chapter. First, female representatives do represent women and women's issues more than men do. Female representatives place higher priority on female constituents and women's groups in society (though, not as much in Colombia), and they view women's equality issues as a higher priority than men do. Female representatives in Latin America appear to draw on the shared experiences of discrimination that women have long faced and view themselves as having a special responsibility to be representatives of women and women's equality issues.

Second, female representatives also appear to recognize the need to represent all constituents, not just women. Female legislators do not differ from male legislators in the importance they place on most constituencies, the types of legislative activities that they use to represent their constituents, and various political issues. Like men, they perceive most categories of constituents, activities, and issues as being of at least moderate importance. Women in office have no underlying predisposition to spend more time representing traditionally feminine issues while ignoring traditionally masculine issues, nor do they have a predisposition to focus on female constituents at the expense of other constituents or constituent groups. Instead, women reveal a predisposition to represent constituents, participate in legislative work, and promote political issues to the same extent that men do. Women prioritize women above and beyond other demands of the job.



Third, these findings are more similar than different across countries. Female legislators in all three countries view women's issues as more important than male legislators view them, with the exception of the Colombian Senate. And, similarities in the preferences of men and women dominate in all three countries on most other activities and issues. One exception is that gender differences exist for bill sponsorship in Argentina and Costa Rica but not Colombia. The other exceptions are the gender differences in the priority that legislators place on agriculture issues in Argentina and Costa Rica but not Colombia and the different views that men and women have of children and family issues in Colombia but not Argentina or Costa Rica. For the most part, however, this chapter shows that women are representing women and representing all constituents through their political preferences.

These findings offer important information about the nature of substantive representation of women in Latin America. They show that descriptive representation of women does lead to greater substantive representation of women in terms of the political preferences that representatives bring to the legislative arena. Women in office substantively represent women by seeing them as a special constituency deserving political representation and by holding similar political preferences to them. Just as in the United States and Western Europe, women in office in Latin America are representing women. Of course, this chapter only looks at substantive representation as political attitudes, but it provides one piece of the larger puzzle of women's representation in Latin America.

Finally, the findings in this chapter provide an important baseline for the next three chapters, which examine representatives' behavior in office. Women's political preferences should translate into their political behavior if women have legislative equality with men. Women should turn their higher priority for women, women's issues, and other issues into related legislative action. Yet, as I argued in chapter 1, women in Latin American legislatures are unlikely to be entering a setting in which they have full equality with men. Instead, they enter a gendered institutional environment that has long been male dominated. Male representatives and male party leaders are unlikely to want to cede their dominance or legislative power to female newcomers. As a result, women may be unable to translate their political preferences into legislative behavior. In the next three chapters, I examine the extent to which this holds true.