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GENDER BLINDNESS IN LATIN AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Abstract:
This article reflects about the weight women have had in the field of Political Science in and about Latin America during the last decade. This text not only describes and analyzes the existing gender gap in compared research about Latin America, but also it focuses the attention in how the discipline as a profession is exercised. The main objective of this paper is to generate initial reflections about of the status of women in the discipline in Latin America as well as how we do research, what we teach and what we publish (and with whom) in the discipline. The women are underrepresented in Political Science meetings, syllabi, and editorial boards. This is done under the premise that Political Science is a gendered discipline that reproduces exclusionary views, beliefs, and practices and also operates under a certain level of “gender blindness”.

Keywords: Latin America, political science, women’s underrepresented, biases gender.

Streszczenie:
Artykuł ten porusza kwestie znaczenia i miejsca kobiet w naukach politycznych w Ameryce Łacińskiej, na przestrzeni ostatnich dziesięciu lat. Opisuje i analizuje również istniejące nierówności płci w porównawczych studiach latynoamerykańskich oraz skupia uwagę na tym, jak realizowane są studia i wykonywany zawód w zakresie nauk politycznych jako dyscypliny. Głównym celem tego artykułu jest przedstawienie wstępnych refleksji na temat statusu kobiet w zakresie nauk politycznych w Ameryce Łacińskiej, a także tego, jak my politologowie przeprowadzamy badania, czego uczymy i co publikujemy. Kobiety są niedostatecznie reprezentowane na konferencjach politylogicznych, w programach nauczania i radach redakcyjnych czasopism naukowych. Odbywa się to przy założeniu, że nauki polityczne są dyscypliną płciową, która odtwarza wykluczające poglądy, przekonania i praktyki, a także działa na pewnym poziomie „ślepoty płci”.

Słowa kluczowe: Ameryka Łacińska, nauki polityczne, socjologia, niedoreprezentowanie kobiet, nierówne traktowanie ze względu na płeć.
Introduction

There have been important developments in the field of Political Science, and especially the work on Latin America, recently. Since the transitions to democracy, the discipline has systematically improved at the regional level both qualitatively and quantitatively (Freidenberg 2017a; Altman 2017; Barrientos del Monte, 2012). The contributions to comparative politics have also been important (Munck, 2007) regardless of the debate and criticism made to the discipline2. In Latin America, there is now a greater number of departments with bachelor’s and post-graduate degrees. There is also a vibrant community of students, researchers and professors in the region who have established connections among them, their universities and with the universities abroad. There is also a significant number of publications, some of which are included in journals with high impact factors as well as professional associations. There is also a greater social recognition about the contributions of the discipline to other realms of society3.

Regardless of this substantive growth, the analysis on the power and the functioning of the political system from the point of view of women’s presence or absence, for that regard, has been limited (Freidenberg, 2017b). Historically, politics has been analyzed as “a man’s thing” (Pólit, 2008). This influenced the view that this was the normal way of doing politics, and political science research has also been influenced by this androcentric view. Neither “the science” nor “the practice” of politics have escaped the ubiquitous asymmetrical social order between men and women. Regardless of the progress led by feminist leaders and the suffragist movements in the 19th and 20th centuries, political parties and the elites did not focus on generating conditions for equality between men and women. Thus, we have had a certain level of so-called “gender blindness” (Murray, 2010). These political parties and elites have ignored or, at least, not acted against the evident obstacles faced by women to develop a political career or a career in the discipline, as if it was possible to have a democratic political system or an

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2 The debate on the state of Political Science can be best summarized in two groups: those who consider that the discipline “is moving forward” (Colomer, 2004) and those who assert that there is a crisis in the discipline’s methods, identity and explanatory capacities (Sartori, 2001). The interesting point is that none of these works about the discipline has criticized gender bias as a key limitation of the discipline. Moreover, a preliminary review of the main Political Science manuals or handbooks used to teach the discipline in Latin America or Europe do not have a dedicated chapter on gender and politics, on feminist politics and generally lack a feminist perspective.

3 The data behind these statements is found in various published chapters, including Freidenberg (2017a), as well as in other works where the view of a “sustained but disparate growth” of the discipline among countries is substantiated (Bulcourf et al., 2017: 24).
The institutionalized field of Political Science, without women⁴.

The objective of this article is to analyze, in an exploratory manner, the weight women have had in the field of Political Science in and about Latin America, as an object of study and as a professional career. The purpose is to provide initial reflections about how we do research, what we teach and what we publish (and with whom) in the discipline. Differing from previous research (Freidenberg, 2017a; Freidenberg, Malamud, 2013), this article incorporates a “gender mainstreaming” perspective (or “a gender equality perspective”) to assess how knowledge is produced in academia and how power relationships are conceptualized. This is done under the premise that Political Science is a gendered discipline that reproduces exclusionary views, beliefs, and practices and also operates under a certain level of “gender blindness”⁵.

These identifies biases gender in the comparative literature in Latin American Political Science, as well as the obstacles that female colleagues and researchers have faced in their profession. Although there are important efforts to mainstream gender in the discipline, in terms of the type of research currently being carried out and of innovative actions (such as the emergence of new professional networks or the diffusion of manifestos for gender equality in the discipline), the field of Political Science in general, and in Latin America in particular, has still strong resistance to gender equality.

With regards to other areas of the Social Sciences, Political Science has been one that has experienced the greatest resistance to women (Esarey, Bryant, 2018; De la Fuente, 2017; Krook, MacKay, 2011; Ritter, Mellow, 2000; Lovenduski, 1998), favoring what has been termed “masculinized gender politics.”⁶ At the same time, this approach has reproduced the implicit gender biases regarding women’s role in teaching, research or professional practice (Bealieu et al., 2017; Manifiesto Red de Politólogas, 2017; Verge Mestre, Alonso Alvarez, 2017).

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⁴ As indicated by Ericka López Sánchez, in a review of this text, “Women have also had to abandon (or relegate) their femininity to be able to integrate themselves in this world; they have had to speak, enunciate and study what is imposed by the hegemonic androcentric perspective of the field”.

⁵ The notion of “gender mainstreaming” is taken from the field of public policy and based on what was proposed by the Council of Europe (1999). The CoE defines gender mainstreaming as “the organization (or the reorganization), the improvement, the development and evaluation of political processes so that the gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies, at all levels, and in all stages by the actors generally in charge of adopting these policies.”

⁶ In other words, the process “through which the discipline itself has been shaped by the prevalent beliefs about the intersection of biological sexes, socially constructed gender categories and political life,” adopting “male characteristics and preferences” (Tolleson-Rinehart, Carroll, 2006: 508).
net result has been a “sexist science” (Lovenduski, 2015)\(^7\), both in terms of the object of study (in the dominant epistemology) and of the exercise of the discipline (as a profession)\(^8\), which has had a differentiated impact on the chances of success in the discipline for men and women (Atchinson, 2018: 280).

This article has three sections. In the first part, the gender biases that condition the exercise of the discipline (in terms of research, teaching and professional practice) are assessed. Second, the paper puts forward a series of arguments on the benefits of carrying out Political Science work with a gender perspective. Finally, the key tenets of a “gender mainstreaming” agenda for the development of Latin American (as well as Latin Americanist) Political Science are delineated; the focus is on introducing issues, beliefs and practices that promote critical thinking and that contribute to the exercise of a profession with a gender lens that seeks to achieve “substantive equality” for men and women\(^9\).

Machiavelli is the father of Political Science... but who is the mother?
Women’s invisibility in the Discipline

The links between gender studies and political science are directly related to

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\(^7\) The category “sex” refers to the group of physical, biological and anatomical differences that divide individuals within a specie in male and female. Gender, on the other hand, is the social and cultural construct that configures social and power relations between men and women (De la Fuente, 2017: 103). Gender biases reproduce “unconsciously the dominant social beliefs with respect to gender roles and the status men and women have in society” (Verge Mestre, Alonso Alvarez, 2017).

\(^8\) Institutions are gendered because gender is in “the processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distribution of power” (Acker, 1992: 567). Gender can be defined in a scale of masculinity and femininity; in the scale one can place behaviors and attitudes (Krook, MacKay, 2011). This is evident via the codes, norms and behaviors that reflect the accepted (but possibly changing) dimensions of masculinity and femininity. All actors within an institution have a gender; the experiences of the members within an institution vary according to their gender and the gendered institutions “produce and reproduce gender” (Kenney, 1996: 456-457).

\(^9\) The concept of “substantive equality” comes from the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) General Recommendation No. 25, paragraphs 8 and 9, which reads: “In the opinion of this Committee, a purely formal juridical or programmatic perspective is not enough to achieve de facto equality with men, which the Committee understands as ‘substantive equality.’” Moreover, the Convention requires that women have the same opportunities from the outset and that she has an environment that will allow her to achieve equality in terms of results. It is not enough to ensure equal treatment for women. It is equally important to consider biological differences between men and women, and the differences that society and culture have created. In some circumstances, it would be necessary to have a non-identical treatment of women and men to compensate for those differences. The achievement of the objective of substantive equality requires an effective strategy tailored towards correcting the insufficient representation of women, and a redistribution of resources and power between men and women.”
the development of the feminist movement (De la Fuente, 2017; Ritter, Mellow, 2000; Fernández, 2006), which has exerted pressure for the inclusion of gender issues in politics and in the discipline. Regardless of this, Political Science has been conservative (Lovenduski, 2015); it has resisted covering feminist issues and perspectives and has been constructed under conceptual, theoretical and methodological notions that inherently have a profound male bias (Tolleson-Rinehar, Carroll, 2006: 508). This, at the same time, has reproduced the “generic symbols of expertise” regarding who is an expert and who is not, which topics are important, and who is not that relevant in the discipline.10

Women have been almost completely absent in the field of Political Science in the United States (Atchison, 2018; Esarey, Bryant, 2018; Bealieu et al., 2017; APSA, 2004). They have also been absent in the Latin American Political Science communities (Rocha Carpiuc, 2016; Martin, 2013; Fernández, 2006) and in European academia (Verge Mestre, Alonso Alvarez, 2017; Bates, Savigny, 2015; Elizondo, 2015; Kantola, 2008). Although there has been a substantial increase on the research about women and politics in the last few decades11 and on the number of female graduates and researchers, the field of Latin American Political Science has overlooked the feminist revolution, the same as in other political science communities (Silverberg, 1990: 43)12.

In practice, women continue to be underrepresented as professors in university departments and their participation diminishes as the level of power in academic administration increases13. They are invited less often as Keynote Speakers

10 In a study about Finland, Kantola (2008: 203) finds “generic symbols of expertise in Political Science.” In other words, symbols “that reproduce men as the norm when identifying a political scientist, and force women to interpret their own position as marginal or as outsiders”.
11 Since 2013, the Latin American Association of Political Science (ALACIP, for its Spanish acronym) has a female Secretary General. This is also the case for the Chilean and Uruguayan Associations. Also, since 2017, the Spanish Association of Political Science (AECPA, for its Spanish acronym) has a female president and a Working Group on Gender has been established within the Association. The feminist perspective has also begun to be introduced in the discipline manuals, with chapters on gender and politics (Bustelo, Lombardo, 2017; De la Fuente, 2017) and new ‘Introduction to Political Science’ manuals have been developed adopting a gender perspective (Lois, Alonso, 2014).
12 “Women represent an average of 48% of the registered graduate students, and a similar proportion in undergraduate studies in Latin America. However, women’s registration in educational programs diminishes in each subsequent stage: women represent 43% of master’s degree students, and 37% in doctorate programs” (Rocha Capiuc, 2016). For similar data for Spain, see Elizondo (2015).
13 “The proportion of female scientists in university departments is 31%. An analysis of the distribution of the faculty members, male and female, by position shows that there are less women in higher level posts […] Of the current research programs for which information was available, around 35% of the researchers in Political Science are women” (Rocha Capiuc, 2016).
in academic conferences\textsuperscript{14}, they are quoted less in lists of references and academic publications\textsuperscript{15}, they are less included in editorial committees, in the councils of the discipline associations (Rocha Carpiuc, 2016; Red de Politólogas, 2017) and even in the number of entries of profiles in Wikipedia, where the category “Political Scientist” (in its Spanish version: politólogas) and the presence of female political scientists from Latin America is almost inexistent.

There are also persistent inequalities in terms of the resources, incentives and visibility in the profession; publications are predominantly male.\textsuperscript{16} This is also the case in terms of the direction of research groups; debates on media outlets tend to be manels (male panels) and studies with a gender perspective have been absent from syllabuses and the manuals to teach the discipline;\textsuperscript{17} university departments lack research lines or dedicated positions on gender studies, and there has even been a certain “ghettoization” in the publication of certain issues related to gender (Rocha Carpiuc, 2016)\textsuperscript{18}, many of them absent from edited volumes and from the content of academic journals (except in special volumes or dossiers).

In many instances, topics related to power, democratization, political parties or the functioning of institutions have been studied without taking into

\textsuperscript{14} The idea that “there are no qualified women” to deliver Keynote Speeches is normalized within the discipline, even though they represent an important percentage of panel presentations, as individual authors, in conferences. In an analysis of ALACIP conferences, of the total of papers presented (N = 6545), 36% were written by women, 54% by men, and 10% by male-female teams (Rocha Carpiuc, 2016).

\textsuperscript{15} Comparative data on this point within Political Science is still not available although a preliminary review suggests that there is a strong gender bias in the quotes in Latin American and Latin Americanist publications. For the case of the state of the field in the United States, see Lake (2013); Esarey and Bryant (2018) and Atchinson (2018).

\textsuperscript{16} In the only comparative study on the state of Political Science in Latin America, Rocha Carpiuc (2016) demonstrates that of the total number of articles analyzed: (N = 647), “61.5% were written by men, 25% by women, and 13% by mixed teams. When they consider only articles written by either men or women (N = 563), it can be deduced that 71% of the articles were exclusively written by men and 29% were written exclusively by women”. This data is similar to that of Evans & Moulder (2011: 797) and Atchinson (2018) on articles written by women in the main journals in the United States. This pattern is also replicated in Spanish Political Science publications (Elizondo, 2015).

\textsuperscript{17} There still has not been a systematic review of the syllabuses used in bachelor’s degree programs in Political Science in Latin America that can be used for this study. Verge Mestre & Alonso Alvarez (2017) and Verge et al. (2018) present empirical evidence about this “gender blindness” in Political Science programs in Spain.

\textsuperscript{18} Female political scientists tend to publish less in the more prestigious journals and are underrepresented as single authors or as the main authors in publications (Rocha Carpiuc, 2016). In many academic communities, being able to publish in these prestigious journals is directly linked to the capacity of developing an academic career (promotions, salaries, incentives, and professional recognition), and it can even be an instrument to measure the impact of academic work on the discipline.
consideration a gender perspective (Krook, Macay, 2011; Paxton, 2008) and matters relating to women, diversity or gender relations have been largely ignored, marginalized and even undervalued within the discipline (Blazquez Vilaplana, 2014; Krook, Childs, 2010; Kantola, 2008)\textsuperscript{19}. In national academic communities in Latin America, there are implicit gender biases and beliefs which make researchers think that Political Science with a gender perspective is a less rigorous science, it’s a second-class discipline, and that it is not worth doing it because it does not deserve a space in the substantive dialogues and debates within the discipline\textsuperscript{20}.

These biases are found in the type of research that is carried out, the way it is taught, how concepts are operationalized, in the way that progress happens in an academic career, and in how the profession is exercised. Since the majority of the politicians and the political scientists have been men, it is not surprising that both, politics and the discipline, reproduce visions, perspectives and patterns associated with male behaviors. Until very recently, Political Science would place women as minorities. For example, the first edition of the \textit{Tratado de Derecho Electoral Comparado de América Latina} included women and legislation about their rights as if they were minorities that required affirmative action measures to change their underrepresentation\textsuperscript{21}.

Various research projects have identified the analytical gaps in basic concepts such as democracy, institutions, parties, and political representation, among others. For example, in the study of transitions, the role of women and women’s movements in the region, in particular, has been almost absent (Waylen, 1994: 327; Jaquette, 1989; Alvarez, 1980) regardless of the importance of the role they played for many countries of the region (Jaquette, 1989). The definition of democracy, and the ways to measure it, has also ignored women (Paxton, 2008). Various proposals to operationalize the concept have been thought of following a purely procedural approach (Miranda Leibe, Suárez-Cao, 2018; Paxton 2008).

\textsuperscript{19} Not just women and studies about women have been invisible. Studies about sexual dissidence and gender identity have also been absent.

\textsuperscript{20} The Rocha Carpiuc (2016) study confirms that only 10\% of all the work evaluated covers issues of diversity. Journals containing more articles related to diversity tend to be those that have included a special issue on the topic (dossier, symposium, among others). Regarding subthemes, the more frequent one is “women/gender” (40\% of the articles followed by those on “diversity” (37\% of the articles). After that, ethnicity/race/multiculturality are 32\%. Studies on LGBT issues and disability are almost inexistent in published or debated works in the field of Latin American Political Science.

\textsuperscript{21} The \textit{Tratado de Derecho Electoral Comparado de América Latina} is one of the main publications on elections, parties and democracy, published in Spanish in the 1990s.
and most of them have used indicators that do not take women into account. These approaches have focused on debating whether what is being observed can be described as “half-democracies” or “low-quality democracies” when in fact these are not democracies by virtue of the systematic exclusion of women (Freidenberg, 2015; Paxton, 2008). Indeed, this limitation on the study of democracies did not prevent the use of the term ‘democracy’ to describe political regimes where there were no women competing for elected office or women in government positions, and much less, where public policies addressing women’s issues were inexistent.

The same occurred with the analysis of the division between “the public /the private realm,” where the public realm has been interpreted as a space with male predominance (Pateman, 1988), whereas women have been relegated to the private space (to the family, and the care of other members of the household) (De la Fuente, 2017: 111; Pateman, 1988). Research on political parties has also lacked a gender perspective (Celis et al., 2016; Murray, 2010). Candidate selection processes have generally been controlled by small groups of men who, in an oligarchic manner, reproduce the micro-machismos; they have historically not been interested in including women as candidates or party leaders and have not included women in their lists either (Hinojosa, 2012). Clientelism has also been a banned space for women. Parties are convinced that the local political brokers (punteros, mapaches, as they are called in Spanish) must be generally men. Regardless of all this, the field of Political Science has not stopped qualifying these regimes as democratic (although half of the population is excluded from decision making)

22 As identified by Miranda Leibe, Suárez-Cao (2018), the literature on democratization was explicit in considering that democracy only needed male suffrage to be in place in order to be considered as such (Dahl, 1971). Moreover, Huntington (1991) even proposed to measure democracy as a regime in which “fifty-percent of the men can exercise their right to vote”.

23 As asserted by Line Bareiro when reviewing this manuscript, “the real rejection to so-called ‘democratic’ systems, that is, systems without women’s inclusion, only happened with the democratic transitions in the 1980s. First, the call to question these systems came from feminist intellectuals. Later research centers and universities joined the call”.

24 Paxton (2008) points to the limited attention given to gender in various discussions on the concept of democracy. In her study, she affirms that the decision to exclude women from measurements of democracy can affect research in three areas: (1) in the descriptions about the emergence of democracy, (2) in terms of the estimates of the demographic or regional prevalence of democracy, and (3) in understanding the causes of democratization processes.

25 Even though political parties have approved regulations to oblige themselves to place women in electoral lists, they have also acted as important barriers when women have attempted to have a political career (Franceschet et al., 2012; Hinojosa, 2012). Although party processes have not been that transparent –even for men, women have had to face stronger resistance when seeking a candidacy with the party (Hinojosa, 2012) or when running their campaigns (Došek et al., 2017).
process). It has continued to refer to the internal democracy of political parties, although they have had no women in the party leadership or as candidates. The field has also considered public space as inclusive, even though it has been male-dominated, with strong obstacles for women to have access to, and exercise their political rights.

Even though there is a substantive difference between the inclusion of a gender perspective and the gender dimension of the profession (Lovenduski, 2015), a potential explanation of the absence of studies with a gender perspective lies in the erroneous understanding that these issues and perspectives are exclusively for women to deal with. However, not all female political scientists have (nor should they be required) concerns or questions specifically related to gender and politics, nor do all employ a gender perspective in their work. It is also a fact that studies about women and gender should not be exclusively conducted by women. Many male colleagues have conducted excellent analysis and research projects about women, diversity and/or masculinities (Diez, 2015; Jones, 2009; Ravecca, 2010). Gender mainstreaming must be understood as a strategy belonging to both men and women to generate more equal disciplines and societies and should not be a space “of” and “for” women only.

The Benefits of Doing Political Science with a Gender Perspective: What Can be Seen When the Veil is Removed

What are the effects of using a “gender lens” to assess the discipline? There are various reasons why a feminist Political Science is a more plural, diverse and inclusive discipline. First, both Political Science and feminism are interested in understanding and studying power (Lovenduski, 2015). The research being conducted in the field of Political Science, in general, and the field in Latin America, in particular, can be enriched with a gender perspective. Political Science offers concepts, procedures, and definitions that structure the research, and although it

26 “The level of women’s activism outside of academia has drastically differed from the roles and points of view of women within the discipline. Female political scientists have not only been absent from the list of those commonly considered the founders of Political Science but also of the discipline. Only 10 women received a Doctorate in Political Science between 1890 and 1919, a mere 5.5% of all those who finished their doctorate in the three decades” (Tolleson-Rinehart, Carroll, 2006: 508).

27 As indicated by Diana Maffia in a recent interview: “Not all women are feminists; it is not a hormonal but a political issue. Therefore, not all women are feminists, and not only women are feminists. Men, trans people can also be feminists.” Published in Diario Femenino, July 15, 2018. Available at: http://diariofemenino.com.ar/v2/index.php/2018/07/15/diana-maffia-varones-y-personas-trans-tambien-pueden-ser-feministas-2/.
tends to ignore gender in the analysis, a look at the issue of inequality in power relations between men and women will surely enhance the understanding of what power is\textsuperscript{28}.

Second, the presence of female scientists enriches the discussions about politics because of the way they understand diversity and political inequality, and because of their own experiences and learning processes (Beaulieu et al., 2017; Lovenduski, 1998). The increased presence of feminist women is changing paradigms, and introducing different ways of understanding, including issues and views that were marginalized. It has also changed discussions about “measurement units, their methods of verification, the supposed neutrality of the discipline theoretical terminology and the pretensions of universality of their models and metaphors” (Cobo, 2005: 255). The case of the definition of democracy is a very good example of this.

Third, when studies are conducted with a gender perspective, it is generally easier to correct previous biases of the discipline. The link between gender and politics is actually an exceptional laboratory to know the interstices of power (Celis et al., 2016; Murray, 2010) because the individual decisions and activities of the parties and/or of the political institutions are not “gender neutral” (Krook, MacKay, 2011). Instead, they assemble their complex web of norms, symbols, evaluations and practices with a differentiated impact for women and men. When this perspective is incorporated, the “veil” used to observe political processes “is removed.” This makes it easier to identify and overcome the implicit bias. Therefore, it is relevant to give training on a gender perspective to students in their first undergraduate courses as a way to prevent the creation of gender stereotypes from which to analyze the political reality once the person exercises the profession.

Fourth, given that there is a new emergence of research with a gender perspective, there are important changes happening in the way of defining existing concepts and introducing largely ignored dimensions (Mazur, Goetz, 2008: 17)\textsuperscript{29}. For example, observing political realities “with a gender perspective” can promote political reforms that can generate changes that democratize political institutions.

\textsuperscript{28} For example, feminist institutionalism functions as a synthesis option by allowing the operationalization of different types of power, as well as by identifying and explaining sexist power relations and the way these cross with the functioning of political institutions (Lovenduski, 2015; Krook, Mackay, 2011).

\textsuperscript{29} These reflections about concepts, however, do not systematically connect to the “mainstream” of comparative politics, and much less to Latin American Political Science. Even though this is recently changing, especially in specific research lines, much of the work is “a fugitive literature, hidden in specialized research articles that are difficult to find or in chapters hidden in edited volumes” (Mazur, Goetz, 2008: 17), that are also difficult to find.
In this regard, institutions can adopt measures to reduce or eliminate the obstacles women who want to participate in politics confront (economic autonomy, resources for political campaigns, care policies) or rather, parties can process political-electoral reforms with a differentiated perspective as an opportunity to democratize (“re-energize”) their own political organizations.

Fifth, to work with a gender perspective means not only quantifying if there is research about “women’s issues” (as typically called by those who do not have a gender perspective) or counting the number of women within the discipline, being there as references or quotes in the texts. Even though this is important in and of itself because it is the empirical expression of the “glass ceilings” in the discipline, it is also about interpreting reality through a wider definition of politics and power, breaking the roles and stereotypes associated with gender. In a way, it is about modifying the way in which Political Science “understands what is its own object of study” (Fernández, 2006).

Finally, incorporating women and men with a feminist perspective presupposes greater critical thinking capacity, the inclusion of diversity, of the different gender relations (and not just men-women), as well as the introduction of the intersectionality of traditional practices (that do not only have to do with men-women) but with other sensibilities and other forms of exclusion (race, sexuality, dissidence, among others). Although various studies (such as Rocha, 2016) have concluded that there is a relative “critical mass” in national political science communities, this critical mass has lacked the impact needed to generate the much needed epistemological, methodological and empirical transformations for a feminist perspective to take hold when generating social knowledge.

### A Feminist Latin American Political Science: The Pending Agenda

Gender studies have become one of the central fields of the social sciences (Cobo, 2005). In the last few decades there were efforts to correct the omissions and distortions that were part of the discipline (Krook, MacKay, 2011; Saporta-Sternbach et al., 1990). These efforts, many being done by feminist female political scientists, have confronted multiple ways of resistance. Regardless of this, they have been able to mainstream a gender perspective as an analytical tool to improve political knowledge while also having a political impact.³⁰ Throughout

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³⁰ According to Line Bareiro when reviewing this document, “Since the 1980s, critical and analytical work produced in Latin America often, although not always, went in tandem with the academic mainstream seeking to generate a gender institutionality as well as public policies and norms, including constitutional changes with high political impact, with a gender perspective”. 

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the decades, the discipline has demonstrated its transforming capacity and ability to adapt to its environment (Tolleson-Rinehart, Carroll, 2006). It should be expected therefore that the discipline will be able to provide answers to new challenges that more pluralist societies demand, including gender studies as well as those that consider race, sexual identity and orientation or youth, among others.

Latin American Political Science faces various challenges that condition its strength and institutionalization. These challenges have to do with the unequal levels of development within each country, and inequality in this development between countries, its heterogenous development, and the theoretical and methodological fragmentation. This has generated “separate tables” without many connections amongst them and with very divergent paradigms and results (Freidemberg, 2017a; Bulcourf et al., 2017; Ravecca, 2010). In this regard, the introduction of a feminist agenda also represents the challenge for the discipline. Without women, without a gender perspective and without feminist perspectives, the analysis that results are only partial and do not consider the existing differences and inequalities.

The goal is therefore to promote gender mainstreaming in the different spaces of the discipline: in teaching, in publications, in research, in the administration of departments and faculties, in teaching evaluations, in incentive systems, and in academic careers. It also implies developing a conscious commitment on the part of both male and female political scientists with regards to the need to have a more equal, inclusive and diverse Political Science (in themes, in theories and in methods). Moreover, at some point there will be a need to have a debate about institutional reforms oriented to the promotion of parity representation of women in university positions, in committees, commissions, association posts and in research teams, emulating what some European countries (like Spain) have already done.

It is very probable that reality will also generate pressures on the discipline and will demand for the discipline to “update” itself and to transform its concepts, formative strategies, methodologies and professional dynamics. Given the fact that Political Science must provide the tools to help society understand power dynamics, and its transformations, the feminist changes that are taking place in the region will put pressure on the discipline to introduce these themes, perspectives and discussions in the research. In this sense, public debates about the proliferation of electoral reforms to increase women’s representation in politics (Došek et al., 2017; Franceschet et al., 2012); the increase in women’s descriptive representation (Ríos Tobar, 2008); the challenges of law and public policies on equality that require substantive representation (Schwindt Bayer, 2018) or the
construction of parity democracies (Bareiro, Soto, 2015) will put pressure on female and male political scientists to describe and explain these phenomena\(^{31}\).

Latin American female political scientists (and also Latin-Americanist ones), same as in the United States, have decided to push for transformations in their academic communities. An example of this is the generation of networks such as the Female Political Scientists Network (Red de Politólogas – #NoSinMujeres, in Spanish), created in June 2016 and that, until now, has 340 members in 25 countries in Latin America, Europe and the United States. The Network seeks to make visible the existing gender gaps in research, in the perspectives utilized, in professional opportunities, and in the beliefs and symbols that reproduce ideas (not always very accurate ones) about who knows and how the profession can be exercised\(^{32}\). In this sense, social media Twitter and Facebook accounts of Red de Politólogoas have been fundamental in the last few years to empower Latin America-focused academic women, to generate networks of contacts and to make visible the work carried out by them in the discipline.

Although women have generated significant advances in Latin American Political Science through teaching, research and career development, there are still important challenges for a greater weight of studies on the obstacles faced by women in political life, as well as regarding the institutionalization of egalitarian practices of exercising power within the discipline. A gender perspective requires a review of the explanations about political power in terms of equality (Loveduski, 2015). Studies about the role of women in politics assert that no aspect related to power and the political system can be understood without a real understanding of the ways in which gender implicitly affects knowledge premises and its dynamics. At the same time, it cannot be asserted that Political Science has lacked a “gender policy”, namely of an active commitment to achieve a more egalitarian, diverse and inclusive discipline. Although this may represent epistemological, theoretical, and empirical challenges, it is a task that the discipline must confront in order to comply with the basic conditions for its institutionalization.

\(^{31}\) Other issues include the move towards parity cabinets in Costa Rica, Colombia or Mexico; the configuration of parity legislatures such as in Bolivia or Mexico; the formulation and implementation of public policies with a gender perspective, as demanded by civil society and the public, such as the Argentinian movement for the legalization of abortion (“AbortoLegalYA”), among others.

\(^{32}\) Although a similar initiative emerged in the United States (by February 2016), the experience of this network #NoSinMujeres was not based on the notion that women also know stuff (#womenalsoknowstuff), but on making female Political Scientists visible. The interesting point here is that both initiatives emerged almost simultaneously to combat the implicit bias that lead to women’s underrepresentation. In the end, both networks’ objective is to guarantee that women’s expertise be included and for this expertise to improve research by women and on women in Political Science (Bealieu et al., 2017).
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