Gender and political violence in Latin America
Concepts, debates and solutions

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Abstract: Violence against women in politics is increasingly recognized around the world —but especially in Latin America— as an emerging tactic to deter women's political participation. We survey how this concept has been defined by academics and practitioners across the region —largely in terms of physical and psychological violence— and draw on global data and research in various disciplines to propose expanding this concept to include two further forms of violence: economic and symbolic. We provide examples of all four types of violence in Latin American countries and then consider a range of solutions that might be pursued in light of this broader definition. We emphasize that a comprehensive approach provides the best means for tackling violence in all its forms.

Keywords: gender, political-violence, Latin America.

Género y violencia política en América Latina: Conceptos, debates y soluciones

Resumen: La violencia contra las mujeres en política es cada vez más reconocida alrededor del mundo, pero especialmente en América Latina, como una nueva táctica para impedir la participación política de las mujeres. En este artículo exploramos cómo ha sido definido este concepto por académicas y activistas en la región, frecuentemente en términos de violencia física y psicológica, y usamos datos de globales, así como estudios de varias disciplinas, para expandir este concepto e incluir dos formas adicionales de violencia: económica y simbólica. Proveemos ejemplos de los cuatro tipos de violencia en países de América Latina. Posteriormente, consideramos múltiples soluciones que pueden aplicarse dada esta definición ampliada. Enfatizamos que un abordaje más amplio es la mejor manera de combatir la violencia en todas sus formas.

Palabras clave: género, violencia política, América Latina.

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Over the last twenty years, the world has witnessed major shifts towards greater gender equality in elected office, driven by global and grass-roots campaigns associating gender balance in political life with a host of positive implications for democracy and society at large (Krook, 2009; Krook and True, 2012). More equal representation, supporters argue, is not only just —women form half the population and thus should occupy half of all decision-making positions— but also enhances the likelihood that all citizens' concerns will be reflected in public policy, in turn sparking greater citizen engagement with and confidence in political institutions (Phillips, 1995; Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler, 2005). These messages have resonated in the vast majority of countries, with a variety of measures —most notably, gender quotas— being adopted with the aim of electing more women (Krook, 2009).

There is growing awareness, however, that strategies like gender quotas do not fully level the political playing field. The gendered political environments in which they are introduced, for example, can continue to make it difficult for women to be selected as candidates and to exercise authority once elected (Bjarnegård, 2013; Krook and Norris, 2014; Puwar, 2004; Walsh, 2011). Initiatives such as quotas can also trigger various forms of backlash and resistance to women's political integration, ranging from explicit acts of violence and harassment to sexism in media coverage and social media platforms, directed at women *as women* with the purpose of leading them to withdraw from political life (Krook, 2015; Krook and Restrepo Sanín, 2014). Such acts pose a serious challenge to democracy when women are actively prevented from carrying out their campaigns or fulfilling their mandates. Electoral processes are thus effectively nullified, becoming subject instead to forces of intimidation and coercion.

The problem of "violence against women in politics," as these backlash effects have come to be known, has raised growing concern among international non-governmental organizations (NGO) around the world (Bardall, 2011; iKnowPolitics, 2007; Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2014; National Democratic Institute, 2014; South Asia Partnership International, 2006; USAID, 2013). This phenomenon, however, has thus far received the greatest attention in Latin America, where a host of actors —elected women, journalists, academics, international NGOs, and even electoral tribunals— have sought to render the problem visible and combat it through a variety of strategies to protect women's right to participate and better ensure the integrity of the electoral process. As a result, countries in the region provide

mounting evidence of violence against women in politics —and expose a wide range of potential solutions, including bills in congress to criminalize these acts. These experiences have the potential to enrich emerging global discussions, which have not advanced to the same degree in other regions. Yet data from other countries —as well as insights from related academic literatures— can also inform developments in Latin America, highlighting the pervasive nature of this problem and lending greater conceptual precision to these debates.

We begin in the first section by mapping the "state of the art" across the region in terms of debates around "political violence and political harassment against women" (*violencia política y acoso político hacia las mujeres*). We trace how activists across Latin America have defined this concept, working inductively from their experiences and observations. We find that the Bolivian case, where a long grassroots campaign culminated in legal reform in 2012, was seminal in three respects: giving a name to this phenomenon, highlighting psychological alongside physical forms of abuse, and developing legislation to criminalize these behaviors. In the next three sections, we put these developments in dialogue with global data and research in various academic disciplines in an effort to better theorize what violence against women in politics "is" and, in turn, what steps might be taken to reduce its impact. Attention to concept formation is vital for both scholars and activists as a means for understanding and analyzing the world in a more systematic way, as well as for devising effective solutions to pressing political problems (Goertz, 2006; Sartori, 1970).

We engage with various academic literatures in the second section, first, to distinguish violence against women in politics from related concepts like electoral and political violence and violence against women and, second, to theorize why such violence occurs and the significance of the particular forms it takes. In the third section, we incorporate feminist and non-feminist research on violence to argue for an expanded definition of violence against women in politics that renders explicit two further forms of violence —economic and symbolic— as well as inter-relations between different types. We substantiate this revised framework with examples of all four kinds of violence from various Latin American countries.

In the fourth section, we consider the theoretical and practical implications of opting for different definitions. We propose that broadening the concept to include more dimensions is vital for understanding the nature of the issue as well as for devising effective solutions. Indeed, this exercise

reveals widespread resistance to the full political incorporation of women, both in Latin America and across the world. We conclude by reflecting on why violence against women in politics should be a concern for citizens, as well as the larger academic community. Rather than being dismissed as "normal politics", we argue, these acts should be understood as efforts to undermine the civil and political rights of women, threatening broader prospects for inclusion and democracy and respect for human rights in Latin America and beyond.

Emerging debates in Latin America

Violencia política y acoso político hacia las mujeres describes behaviors that specifically target women *as women* to leave politics by pressuring them to step down as candidates or resign a particular political office. In Latin America, this concept made its first concrete appearance in Bolivia in 2000, when local councilwomen convened at a seminar at the Chamber of Deputies to discuss reports regarding harassment and violence against women in rural municipalities. Events that ensued from this meeting played a crucial role across the region in naming this phenomenon, defining its contours in terms of the types of acts constituting political violence and harassment, and privileging legal reform as the primary strategy for combating this growing problem.

The Association of Local Councilwomen of Bolivia (Acobol) has been the crucial actor in this process. Soon after their first meeting, Acobol gained a commitment in 2001 on the part of Congress to work on legislation to address the issue. A bill was eventually presented during the 2005-2006 congressional term, as a legislative initiative of civil society joining local elected women with female parliamentarians and civil society groups (iKnowPolitics, 2007, p. 16). To aid in this work, Acobol developed a reporting process to track cases via a statistical information system. By 2012, the group had assembled more than 4000 claims from elected women, mainly in rural areas with indigenous populations, testifying to the role of harassment and violence in negatively affecting their political work (Observatorio de Género, 2012, p. 1). The law remained controversial —and indeed, was opposed by some indigenous women who argued that it was a law against men (and, specifically, their sons) (Cabezas Fernández, 2014)— but it was approved in Congress in 2012 after the high-profile murder of local councilwoman Juana Quispe.

The resulting reform, Law 243 against Political Harassment and Violence against Women,[1] largely reflects the inductive work of Acobol and other female politicians and activists to name this phenomenon and identify its various manifestations. Law 243 protects female candidates, elected officials, appointees, and those exercising political functions who confront efforts to prevent their presence in decision-making positions for reasons of gender. The law defines "political harassment" as "acts of pressure, persecution, molestation, or threats" and "political violence" as "acts and/or threats of physical, psychological, or sexual violence", aimed at shortening, suspending, impeding, or restricting the exercise of a woman's political position, or inducing a woman, against her will, to commit an act or fail to do something related to her political mandate. Article 8 enumerates a long list of behaviors constituting harassment and violence against women in the political realm. Interestingly, while the legislation mentions physical and sexual acts, all of the examples given in this article fall under the heading of psychological violence, presumably because there may be less consensus that these actions constitute acts of "violence."

The behaviors enumerated in Article 8 include imposing, due to gender stereotypes, tasks unrelated to the job itself;[2] giving women erroneous or imprecise information leading to the inadequate exercise of their functions; preventing appointed or elected women from attending sessions or other activities involving decision-making; providing false or incomplete information to electoral authorities regarding the identity or sex of candidates;[3] impeding or restricting a woman's re-nomination or election when she uses her office correctly; restricting a woman's ability to speak in sessions, committees, or other meetings inherent in her job; restricting or impeding women from assuming office who have been elected through the procedures of indigenous or Afro-Bolivian groups; imposing unjustified sanctions that restrict a woman's exercise of her political rights; applying illegal economic sanctions or withholding women's salaries; divulging personal and private information to force women to resign or request a leave

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[1] See full text here: http://www.comunicacion.gob.bo/?q=20130725/ley-n%C2%BA243-contra-el-acoso-y-violencia-politica-hacia-las-mujeres

[2] What is meant by this phrase is not made explicit in the law, but interviews by one co-author with women in Latin America indicates that this might include making coffee or performing secretarial tasks for colleagues.

[3] In previous elections, political parties had attempted to circumvent the gender quota law by "misspelling" the male names on their candidate lists to appear as if they were female.

from their positions; spreading false information with the objective of discrediting a woman's leadership and obtaining her resignation or leave of her position; forcing women to resign their positions; and obligating elected women —through force or intimidation— to sign documents or take decisions against their will.

The law recognizes that such acts can be committed by one or more people, directly or through third parties, against female candidates and public officials as well as members of their families. Violations can be denounced by the victim, her relatives, or any other person, in verbal or written form. Penalties include two to five years of prison for political harassment, three to eight years for physical or psychological violence, and the prevailing sanction for sexual assault according to the criminal code. Aggravating factors that may increase these penalties include: *1)* acts committed against a pregnant woman, someone older than 60, with limited education, or with a disability; *2)* acts committed by a person in a leadership position in a political party, a citizen movement, or the public service, or if the person has recommitted acts of political harassment or violence against women; and *3)* acts committed by two or more people. Parties responsible for implementing this law comprise the ministry of justice, the electoral authorities, and leaders at different levels of government.

Prior to this path-breaking reform, debates in Bolivia already played a role in initiating broader discussions across the region. In 2007, soon after the legislative initiative was presented, the 10th Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean signed the Quito Consensus acknowledging the issue on a broader scale for the first time. Attendees agreed as a group to move to "adopt legislative measures and institutional reforms to prevent, sanction, and eradicate political and administrative harassment against women who achieve decision-making positions through election or appointment, both at the national and local levels, as well as in political parties and movements",[4] A project funded by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development with the support of UN Women was subsequently carried out in four countries —Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ecuador and Bolivia— with the goal of enriching the theoretical discussion on this particular theme through empirical case studies. The result of this inductive work has been to identify additional behaviors constituting political harassment and violence against women, like deliberating

[4] See http://www.cepal.org/publicaciones/xml/9/29489/dsc1i.pdf

failing to notify women of the day, place, and time of political meetings; hiding or not delivering correspondence; denying resources necessary to be an effective representative; and publicly disrespecting, ridiculing, and disqualifying the proposals made by women (Herrera, Arias and García, 2011).

In more recent years, female deputies and senators in a growing number of countries have proposed bills on the issue. In 2011, at the same time that the proposal was being considered in Bolivia, a bill on political harassment and violence was presented in Ecuador by Lourdes Tibán Gualá, a female member of the National Assembly. The bill alluded to various constitutional articles —state commitments to guarantee real equality, citizens' right to a life free of violence, principles of non-discrimination— and made note of some of the challenges that women face when contemplating running for office, like fewer economic resources and traditional gender roles, which together prevent women from becoming candidates. Despite these elements, this bill was otherwise very similar to the Bolivian bill in using the terms harassment and violence, classifying acts in terms of physical and psychological violence (although also adding "verbal violence"), and introducing aggravating factors like the pregnancy or minority status of targets and leadership roles of perpetrators. The bill was supported by nine other members of Congress, but the proposal was archived when it was deemed to be redundant with a proposal to reform the penal code recognizing the crime of political harassment, albeit without a gender dimension.[5]

A similar proposal found greater, albeit only partial, success in Mexico, where senator Lucero Saldaña presented a bill to this effect in November 2012. The bill explicitly referenced the Bolivian law on political harassment and violence against women, with many phrases taken directly from the original text. The Mexican proposal differed primarily in seeking to reform existing legislation —in this case, the Law on Women's Access to a Life Free from Violence and the Federal Electoral Code— rather than proposing a free-standing bill. The language and aims were otherwise the same, however: to criminalize acts of physical, psychological and sexual violence, perpetrated against one or more women seeking to impede their access to or carry out a position of political representation. The bill was approved by a unanimous vote in the Senate in March 2013, but was ultimately not taken up in the Chamber of Deputies. The issue nonetheless remained on the political agenda, with various events organized in 2014 on

[5] Personal communication with Lourdes Tibán, May 2014.

the topic, engaging the electoral authorities, the federal women's institute, and leaders and representatives from the various political parties. In April 2015, in the run-up to the June elections, the Senate issued an opinion calling on the National Electoral Institute, as well as the National Council on Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination, to intervene to respond to the rising number of cases of political violence against women being reported to the local electoral tribunals. The latter issued an urgent appeal to the political parties and distributed a guide for elections without discrimination.[6]

Bills have also been proposed elsewhere in the region. In February 2013, Verónika Fanny Mendoza Frisch, a female member of the National Congress in Peru, introduced a bill to tackle political harassment against women. Although the bill is, again, very similar to the Bolivian law, the word "violence" does not appear —avoided, according to sources,[7] due to its association with the history of armed conflict in Peru. Co-sponsored by seven other members of Congress, the bill focuses on violations and threats to the physical, sexual and psychological integrity of women in politics as well as their families. It lists many of the same acts previously mentioned, but adds behaviors like cursing and calling meetings at hours inadequate for personal security —the latter being an issue that women, more often than men, may find particularly difficult to navigate. In March 2015, the bill passed the committee stage and was put on the National Assembly agenda, but it has not yet been debated. The president of the national elections authority joined calls for this reform, noting that in the 2015 elections at least 40 per cent of female candidates had been victims of harassment.[8]

In March 2013, a bill sponsored by Pilar Porras Zúñiga, a Costa Rican female deputy, sought as well to prevent and eradicate political harassment and/or violence against women. This initiative calls attention to the Bolivian example, although it also references discussions in Ecuador. The bill focuses, again, on physical, sexual and psychological forms of violence and contains a word-for-word repetition of the Bolivian definition of harassment. Verbal violence, similar to the text in Ecuador, is listed later in the bill. The aggravating factors listed are nearly identical, albeit with no mention of ethnic minorities or lack of education. A new element is the bill's consideration of the impact of psychological violence, which is not restricted to the

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[6] See http://www.semexico.org.mx/archivos/889

[7] Personal communication with Susana Villarán, former mayor of Lima, February 2015.

[8] See http://elcomercio.pe/politica/elecciones/jne-4-cada-10-candidatas-victima-acoso-politico-noticia-1796224

fact that women leave office but also recognizes that —as a result— they may suffer depression, isolation, low self-esteem, and even suicide. The bill also specifies a novel punishment, which is that being convicted of such acts would cause a person to lose an elected or appointed positions, if they hold one, and to be disqualified from running for public office in the future.

These bills testify to clear diffusion —at least among some countries in the region— of initiatives to criminalize political harassment and violence against women. These developments, in turn, have inspired growing interest in the phenomenon among academics in Latin America. A review of this literature reveals that the vast majority of studies stick closely to the definitions given in the Bolivian law, adding new examples but staying within the framework of physical, sexual and psychological manifestations. As a result, the "psychological" category, in particular, has grown to encompass a massive array of different behaviors that, theoretically, might be better described as distinct forms of violence. A few contributions move in this direction, mentioning —but not necessarily elaborating on— terms like "symbolic" or "economic" violence (Cerva Cerna, 2014; Lamas and Azuela Maite, 2009; Machicao Barbieri, 2004; Medina Espino, 2013).

A second notable trend within this body of research is a tendency to have to explain to participants what political harassment and violence is —after which many respond by giving a wide range of examples emerging from their own experiences (Herrera, Arias and García, 2011; Incer Brenes, 2014; Machicao Barbieri, 2004). This exercise has the effect of reinforcing existing classification schemes, at the same time that these prior categories need to be "stretched" in order to accommodate a more diverse group of acts. Consequently, an opportunity is missed to draw on this rich qualitative data to "speak back" to and further elaborate prevailing frameworks via additional inductive analysis, developing a more nuanced and multifaceted conception of this phenomenon. Remaining close to the example of the Bolivian legislation, moreover, may lead academics and practitioners to over-emphasize legal reform as the primary answer, overlooking the many other potential strategies that might be pursued alongside —or in lieu of— legislation.

Definitions and concepts

Alongside discussions in Latin America, activists working on the ground in other regions have identified a strikingly similar set of practices which they label "violence against women in politics". A report by South Asia Partner-

ship International (2006), for instance, talks about acts perpetrated to hinder, punish or deprive women of their right to participate in politics. They identify physical acts like beating, pushing, molestation, sexual abuse, rape, kidnapping and murder. They also list types of psychological violence, like threats, harassment, verbal abuse, coercion, character assassination and threats against family members. Strikingly, the group frames violence against women in politics as a specifically South Asian problem, with no references to trends elsewhere.

Budding awareness of the cross-regional nature of this problem inspired the International Knowledge Network on Women in Politics to organize an on-line discussion on the issue in 2007 to engage politicians and activists from multiple regions. This exercise yielded further examples, including domestic violence, media harassment, defamation and slander, economic control, and targeting of relatives and supporters (iKnowPolitics, 2007). These discussions, however, much like those in Latin America, have proceeded with little reference to academic research on related phenomena, making it unclear how violence against women in politics is similar or different to seemingly associated concepts like political and electoral violence and violence against women. Drawing in this academic work not only helps to delineate the boundaries of this new concept, but also provides insights into why such violence occurs —and thus the broader meaning behind these acts for women, politics, and society.

Political and electoral violence

Political violence in elections, or electoral violence, has been defined as "any random or organized act or threat to intimidate, physically harm, blackmail, or abuse a political stakeholder in seeking to determine, delay, or otherwise influence an electoral process" (Fischer, 2001, p. 3). It generally takes one of two forms: cases of ethnic or communal conflict where incidents of violence occur or increase around election times, and instances where actors use violence to shape election results through acts like ballot rigging and interfering with voter and candidate registration processes (Höglund, 2009). Although men and women may be the targets of electoral violence, data from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems of more than 2000 cases of electoral violence in six countries between 2006 and 2010 reveal distinct patterns in the types of violence experienced: men were most likely to suffer physical harm, while women

were primarily the victims of intimidation or psychological abuse (Bardall, 2011, p. 13).

Simply gendering existing definitions of electoral violence, recognizing that women and men may experience similar and distinct forms of violence, does not, however, capture acts and threats perpetrated against female candidates, activists, and voters *as women*. Such attacks may be carried out in the election contexts, but may also occur in the three contexts of violence against women: family, community and state (USAID, 2013). Bardall (2011) thus proposes "violence against women in elections" as a broader field of practices than normally recognized within the literature on electoral violence, overlapping with but also extending this concept in new directions. She argues that such violence includes familial or social intimidation in private spaces, sexist rhetoric and harassment to inhibit and intimidate female candidates and activists, and verbal attacks on female politicians to diminish their personal credibility and question their competence for political office based on the fact that they are women.

Violence against women

Research on violence against women is similarly divided as to whether to limit the term "violence" to acts involving physical harm, or whether to extend it to a wider range of aggressive behaviors. Arguments in favor of narrow definitions suggest terms like "abuse" to describe non-physical acts of aggression (Kilpatrick, 2004). However, a growing number of researchers and government agencies contend that violence is multidimensional and is better characterized in terms of a continuum of violent acts (DeKeseredy, 2000). The International Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993) describes violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life". Global campaigns arguing that "women's rights are human rights" thus focus centrally on violence against women as an affront to human dignity "distinctly connected to being female" (Bunch, 1990, p. 486).

This is not to deny that women may be the targets of violence in society, with few gendered implications. Violence committed against women *as women*, however, takes on additional significance as a form of gender role enforcement, as a means of domination and control to subordinate women

as a group (Donat and D'Emilio, 1992). Being female explains both *why* violence occurs and the *particular forms* that it takes, with violence against women being used as a mechanism "to keep women in their place, to limit opportunities to live, learn, work, and care as full human beings, to hamper their capabilities to organize and claim their rights" (O'Connell, 1993, p. iii). In many societies, such practices are naturalized, including through gender stereotyping, leading them to be viewed as "non-political" and to remain largely underreported (Watts and Zimmerman, 2002). Yet violence against women is a problem in all countries, affecting women in every socio-economic group and life stage (True, 2012).

Violence against women in politics

Violence against women in politics, we contend, is a subset of violence against women and is slightly distinct from violence against women in elections. Whereas the latter includes acts during electoral periods directed at women as candidates, voters and activists, violence against women in politics is perpetrated against female politicians, during electoral campaigns but also afterwards as women assume political positions. It is vital to recognize at the outset that in all states candidates and elected officials do and should face criticisms and challenges related to their policy ideas and performance. Freedom of expression, moreover, is a central element in a healthy democratic society. However, we argue, certain behaviors "cross the line" from free speech to violence when they are directed at women *as women* with the purpose of leading them to withdraw from politics. As such, while inflicted on a particular woman, these actions are, in effect, directed at *all* women.

When female politicians are attacked for their political views alone, therefore, this is not a case of violence against women in politics. Ambiguity emerges, however, due to the fact that the *means* for attacking female politicians often relies on gendered scripts, focusing on women's bodies and their traditional social roles —primarily as mothers and wives— to deny or undercut women's competence in the political sphere. When adversaries rely on gendered imagery or stereotypes to attack female opponents, the act blends into a case of violence against women in politics, as it suggests that women *per se* do not belong in the political realm. These actions can have a powerful impact, because they are not directed solely towards one woman. They also seek to intimidate other female politicians, deter wom-

en who might consider a political career, and —even more insidiously— communicate to society as a whole that women should not participate.

In this respect, violence against women in politics shares important points of contact with hate crimes, using mechanisms of power and oppression against people with a particular identity as a means to reaffirm what are perceived to be threatened hierarchies (Perry, 2001). Like hate crimes, acts of violence against women in politics are "message crimes," intended to deny equal access to rights *and* to create a ripple effect that heightens the sense of vulnerability among other members of the community (Iganski, 2001). Yet a key challenge arises, in both cases, from the fact that victims may not experience the same sense of harm. Indeed, some female politicians may have naturalized these types of behaviors as simply the "cost of doing politics" —or they may deny the problem, concerned to deflect charges that they are "hysterical" or "not coping," in fear of justifying claims that women do not belong in politics (Gillard, 2014).

Crucial clues as to how and why violence against women in politics occurs can be found in feminist theory, noting an association in many societies between men and the "public sphere" of politics and the economy and women with the "private sphere" of home and the family. As feminist scholars have long observed, this public/private divide underlies many classic works in political theory which are premised upon the exclusion of women, removing women from the public sphere as a necessary first step in theorizing (Okin, 1979; Pateman, 1988). As women enter public life, therefore, their presence poses a challenge to reigning beliefs and practices regarding politics as a male domain (Sgier, 2004). Acts of violence against women in politics seek to reinstate this traditional divide, we suggest, by compelling women to leave the public sphere or by highlighting their private sphere obligations. Women's bodies —as connected to stereotyped social roles— thus become a central focus of violence.

Academic studies from a variety of disciplines bolster this interpretation and provide insights as to why challenges to gender norms are experienced so viscerally that they inspire intense reactions. Literature on violence against women finds, for example, that men who express the greatest hostility towards women tend to embrace traditional gender roles, resorting to violence against women to overcome feelings of insecurity and regain a sense of power and control (Stermac, Segal and Gillis, 1990). Research in psychology suggests that both men and women may "punish" women who behave counter-stereotypically by aspiring to leadership positions (Rud-

man and Phelan, 2008), such that they are evaluated more negatively than male leaders even when they have similar qualifications or levels of performance (Eagly and Karau, 2002). Sociologists observe that women's mere presence can be unsettling to reigning standards and practices of political life, precisely because the public realm has been constructed through women's exclusion, rendering women highly visible as "space invaders" (Puwar, 2004). Acts of violence against women in politics thus embody a form of backlash to women's greater inclusion in the political sphere, resisting the gains made possible by gender quotas and other mechanisms to empower women in decision-making (Krook, 2015).

Towards a revised framework

Debates in Latin America, as outlined above, have revolved around two categories of violence, physical and psychological, with occasional mention of sexual and verbal violence. These discussions, however, are rarely informed by academic research, at the same time that greater awareness of this concept has led to a proliferation of examples included under each category. Placing these developments in dialogue with the incipient global evidence —assembled using print and on-line news stories, NGO reports, academic research and original interviews— reveals striking continuities in these behaviors across regions, attesting to the widespread nature of this phenomenon. These patterns suggest that further work on concept formation might not only enhance academic analyses of violence against women in politics, but could also inform how activists understand the issue, better capturing the full range of behaviors seeking to drive women from politics in Latin America and beyond.

Integrating both feminist and non-feminist research on violence, together with the global data, we propose an expanded definition of violence against women in politics that *1)* collapses physical and sexual forms of violence into a single category of *physical violence* and *2)* divides the unwieldy existing category of psychological violence to distinguish between *psychological*, *economic*, and *symbolic violence*. This schema recognizes, however, that the boundaries between types are somewhat porous, with specific behaviors potentially falling into several categories. At the same time, multiple forms of violence may be perpetrated simultaneously or in an escalating fashion. These overlaps, we suggest, strengthen the case for connecting these various acts under a single umbrella concept. Emphasizing continu-

ities across different manifestations of violence against women in politics, moreover, acknowledges that distinct cultures may provide different "tools" for disciplining women, giving meaning to particular actions, as well as conditioning the degree to which such behaviors are normalized.[9]

Viewed globally, two trends emerge across these incidents of violence, further linking the types together and offering deeper appreciation of the perceived costs to women in pursuing a political career. First, women's sexuality is a potent symbol. Threats of rape tap into beliefs that women are vulnerable to —and can be punished through— acts of sexual assault. Questions about their sexuality morality are not unusual, with female politicians facing "accusations of being a prostitute, a lesbian, or otherwise sinful and/or sexually deviant" (Bardall, 2013, p. 3), including having extramarital affairs —charges that can destroy them personally and politically. Second, distinct from "regular" political violence committed by political opponents, acts against women in politics, similar to violence against women in general, may originate from varied corners. Evidence reveals that aggression may spring from society, like a woman's family, friends and community or religious leaders, as well as the media; the political sector, including colleagues and leaders from opposing parties as well as a woman's own party, and extending in some cases to civil servants and members of the executive branch; and state actors like security forces and the police (SAP International, 2006).

Physical violence

We classify physical violence in terms of acts affecting the bodily integrity of a woman, as well as bodily harm to her family members when she is the target. This definition thus encompasses sexual violence, although it is often listed separately from physical violence in some laws and conventions on violence against women —most likely to emphasize this issue as an especially important one for women. The empirical evidence indicates that physical violence may be perpetrated by outsiders, like activists from other parties, but it may also be inflicted by rivals within a woman's own party or even members of her own family. It is distinguished from other acts of

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[9] This approach is consistent with theories of feminist institutionalism (Krook and Mackay, 2011), highlighting the gendered nature of political institutions, and thus the institutional environments that may "normalize" and "legitimize" these acts of violence because women are seen as interlopers in these spaces.

physical violence in politics by its goal to prevent a woman's participation *as a woman*, not as an individual or party member *per se*. As such, despite these very personalized experiences of abuse, victims of violence against women in politics are largely "interchangeable."

There are abundant examples of this and other forms of violence, even when limiting the discussion to Latin America. Assassination is perhaps the most obvious manifestation of physical violence. In Mexico, a female candidate for municipal president, Guadalupe Ávila Salinas, was shot in broad daylight in 2004 by the sitting municipal president while she was holding a meeting with women from the community. According to a male federal deputy from the region, it was only the latest in a series of efforts among civil servants in the town to "quiet the voices of women." Despite witnesses, local police did little to capture the perpetrator and dismissed allegations that the murder was politically motivated (Jarquín Edgar, 2004). Women's family members may also come in harm's way: in Oaxaca, an assassination attempt against a female candidate for congress ended up killing her husband and injuring her and her niece (EFE, 2013). Other threats to women's physical integrity include kidnapping and beating. Another municipal president in Mexico, for instance, was kidnapped by her political opponents and her husband, following a campaign by members of her own party and the opposition to force her to give up her position —first by starting rumors about her being unfaithful to her husband, and later through less veiled threats at the hand of a machete. The council members who supported her told her this was happening "because you are a woman." A third municipal president received kidnapping threats against her children, causing her to move them to her brother's house, and later she and her son were attacked by a crowd in a confrontation with a man who wanted to become municipal president in her place (Vásquez García, 2011).

Psychological violence

Psychological violence inflicts trauma on the mental state or emotional well-being of individuals, creating anxiety, depression, and stress. We define it here to include threats of physical violence, as well as acts intended to socially harm the woman in question. The limited data on violence against women in politics indicates that this may be a tool particularly directed at female politicians (Bardall, 2011). Death and rape threats are unfortunately not uncommon. In Colombia, a female staff member for the

mayor of Bogotá was sexually harassed, including by male staffers who threatened to rape and kill her, and accused of having an affair with the mayor (Hoyos *et al*., 2014). Sexual harassment of women in politics is also often normalized, treated as appropriate behavior within political institutions. In El Salvador and Costa Rica, respondents reported that cat calling was used as a manipulation strategy by men to denigrate women who did not do as the men wanted (Escalante and Méndez, 2011; Herrera, Arias and García, 2012).

In other cases, female politicians are subject to character assassination. In Mexico, an indigenous councilwoman who denounced corruption in her town was herself threatened and falsely accused of being corrupt (Lamas and Maite, 2009). In a more oblique fashion, a local councilor in Costa Rica reported that she had received threats and been accused of negligence towards her father. At the same time, villagers would inquire about the state of the cleanliness of her house and yard (Herrera, Arias and García, 2011). In another case, a woman who became pregnant and another who took her 4-month-old son to the sessions were told to "go hold and take care of your baby" (Incer Brenes, 2014). Such accusations that a woman is a bad wife, mother, or daughter can be especially devastating in small local communities, where families share a dense network of social ties. False accusations of corruption can also stick more in the collective memory in small towns, affecting women's political careers (Medina Espino, 2013; Vásquez García, 2011).

Economic violence

Economic abuse is increasingly recognized as a form of violence against women (Fawole, 2008). We define economic violence in politics as acts seeking to control women's access to, or behavior in, the political realm by systematically restricting access to economic resources which are otherwise available to men. The aim is to make political work so difficult or frustrating that women are led to withdraw of their own accord, or to reduce the chances that women can do their jobs effectively, thus affecting their future political careers. Lack of financial support, the global evidence suggests, may pose greater barriers to women than men in politics, as women often lack access to the formal and informal networks that supply campaign funds or the personal resources to compensate for denied expense claims (Sidhu and Meena, 2007). As such, gender inequalities in

access to resources in society more generally can exacerbate acts to withhold funds from women, necessary for conducting their campaigns or day-to-day political work.

Some might argue that economic violence —and symbolic violence, discussed below— should not be considered at the same level as physical and psychological violence. Indeed, they are the two forms of violence that may generate the least cross-cultural consensus as forms of "violence" at all. Yet studies show that coercive control —a hallmark of economic violence— may feel worse than physical violence for many women. Coercive control includes efforts to "hurt, humiliate, intimidate, exploit, isolate and dominate" victims, a key strategy being the denial or appropriation of economic resources (Stark, 2007, p. 5). Acts of economic and symbolic violence are also rarely isolated behaviors, but elements in a larger pattern of aggressions that together have the effect of creating a hostile work environment for female politicians.

Economic violence is rarely named explicitly in the Latin American literature on political harassment and violence (an exception is Medina Espino, 2013), but examples are rife among the many lists of examples that have been generated, including in the widely influential Bolivian legislation, under the category of "psychological violence". Instances of economic violence can start in the pre-candidate stage. In Mexico, a 2008 reform sought to stimulate women's political participation by requiring parties to earmark 2 per cent of their public funding to activities supporting women's leadership development. However, when accounts were reviewed in 2011, it became apparent that funds were applied for other purposes, like cleaning supplies, stationery, and fumigation services (Romero, 2011). Even after a set of guidelines were issued by the Federal Electoral Institute in 2013, party officials openly asked its auditors how they might avoid using the earmark. Meanwhile, women's groups inside the parties express anger and frustration at their inability to access these funds.[10] Similar problems with earmarked training funds for women have also been noted in Costa Rica, with parties being unwilling to report how they have spent this money (Incer Brenes, 2014).

When women run for office, economic violence can entail denying women, but not men, the financial resources necessary to wage successful campaigns. Women in Costa Rica, El Salvador and Mexico express frustra-

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[10] Interviews in Mexico City in May and July 2014.

tions that not only did they lack financial support for their campaigns, but also that such resources were not equally distributed within the parties among women and men (Herrera, Arias and García, 2012; Incer Brenes, 2014; Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación, 2009). Data from the Federal Electoral Tribunal in Brazil show in stark terms that female candidates systematically get fewer funds than male candidates across all parties (Sacchet and Speck, 2012).[11] In Panama, female candidates complain that the rules for accessing party funds remain hidden to them, at the same time that their campaign materials are destroyed, further reducing their scarce resources (Hoyos *et al.*, 2014).

Once they gain political office, women can face additional economic challenges, the most dramatic and costly being the denial of their salaries and expense claims, sometimes for more than one year, as occurred in Bolivia (Corz, 2012). In Peru, one woman also reported that her husband denied her money after she became a councilwoman (Quintanilla, 2012). However, the most common tactic across the region appears to be refusal to reimburse travel claims for expenses incurred while performing the work of an elected official, like traveling to rural areas to meet constituents or attending meetings and courses with state and constituent women's groups, as reported by women in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico and Peru (Escalante and Méndez, 2011; Herrera, Arias and García, 2012; Incer Brenes, 2014; Medina Espino, 2013; Quintanilla, 2012; Vásquez García, 2011).

Elected women may also confront difficulties in gaining the most basic resources to do their jobs. In Costa Rica, for instance, a number of elected women were not supplied with offices or even a telephone, in contrast to their male colleagues (Sidhu and Meena, 2007). In addition, many female vice-mayors —elected in part due to a gender parity law requiring that mayors and vice-mayors be of opposite sexes— find that they are denied a budget by male mayors who do not set clear duties for their vice-mayors. A councilwoman in Peru protested that she had been refused an office, even though the town had space for offices and the men on the council had received offices (Quintanilla, 2012). Women in various countries testified, as a result, to having to use their own money to do their jobs, even when other members of the council did not —having received offices, phones, and even cars as members of the local council (Escalante and Méndez, 2011; Herrera, Arias and García, 2012).

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[11] Interviews in Brasilia, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo in October and November 2014.

Symbolic violence

Symbolic violence operates at the level of portrayal and representation, seeking to erase or nullify women's presence in political office. Such behaviors are only peripherally theorized as "violence" in existing NGO reports on violence against women in politics. Yet recent studies on misogyny and sexist media coverage lend support for conceptualizing certain activities as forms of aggression, harassment and outright discrimination (Perks and Johnson, 2014; Sawer, 2013). These acts, we argue, cannot be reduced to healthy media criticism or "normal" rude behavior by colleagues and opponents. Negative treatment "crosses the line" and becomes violence when it entails fundamental disrespect for human dignity, like producing and distributing highly sexualized and derogatory images, using social media to incite violent acts, or not recognizing, or explicitly denying the existence of, a female politician for the simple fact of being a woman.

"Symbolic violence" was theorized by Bourdieu (1984) as discipline used against another to confirm that individual's placement in a social hierarchy. As such, symbolic violence can be more powerful than physical violence because it is culturally embedded, making these forms of violence look or feel "right" (Galtung, 1990). Consequently, targets are often "complicit" with these acts, modifying behaviors and aspirations accordingly, but not viewing these forms of discipline as tools of domination *per se*. As Krais (1993, p. 172) notes, symbolic violence can be effective in sustaining women's oppression because it is "subtle, euphemized, invisible", such that even when some women recognize these acts as exercises of power, they may not be believed, even in societies with greater levels of gender equality. Due to the great diversity of cultures in the world, the form and content of symbolic violence vary more widely than the three other types, but it is present in all types of society.

Symbolic violence against women in politics seeks to delegitimize female politicians through gendered tropes denying them competence in the political sphere. Extensive research, for example, shows that women are often framed in the media as not viable, competent, or suited to higher office, with more attention paid to their appearance than their policy positions (Carlin and Winfrey, 2009). In Colombia, the qualifications of female politicians have been questioned on multiple occasions for the simple fact that they were women occupying positions like attorney general or minister of defense that have traditionally been occupied by men (Hoyos *et al.*,

2014). In Mexico, banners referring to a female gubernatorial candidate in Sonora stated that women did not belong in the governor's mansion but rather should be "pregnant and in a corner."[12]

Rather than being viewed as discriminatory, such coverage may be understood as the "cost of doing politics," with disparate treatment of men and women seen as "normal". Symbolic violence is perhaps most evident, however, when it involves sexual objectification, like highly sexualized media and social representations —or even the off-color remarks of political leaders. In Ecuador, President Rafael Correa has made several comments referring to the "pretty legs" of female assembly members, saying that gender equality had improved politics when there were so many women wearing mini-skirts. Social media has provided new opportunities to step up such attacks, as occurred in Honduras to Congresswoman Beatriz Valle, who reported receiving numerous obscene and sexualizing comments and threats via Twitter (Hoyos *et al.*, 2014).

Other forms of symbolic violence seek to render women invisible as political actors. This "invisibilization" can be literal. In Mexico, the municipal president of Oaxaca tore up the ballots certifying the victory of Eufrosina Cruz as the new municipal president in 2007, stating "women do not exist here", a reference to indigenous "uses and customs" that —he claimed— prevented women from holding positions of political authority in the community. She was also subject to rumors that she was mentally ill and had problems with her parents.[13] In a related fashion, a woman in Costa Rica was asked by the party leadership to be second on its list; second, they suggested, because it was not right for a woman to be first on the list (Escalante and Méndez, 2011). In Honduras, a female member of Congress recalls that, while other members of her party had a seats and plaques with their names in the chamber, she did not and had to "jump from chair to chair" when attending sessions (Hoyos *et al.*, 2014). Women can also be rendered invisible in a more figurative sense. A common strategy, witnessed in countries like Costa Rica and Mexico, is to appropriate women's contributions, projects, or ideas, either discussing them without her —and not presenting them as her initiatives— or not recognizing them unless a man proposes them, who in turn is given all the credit (Barrera-Bassols, 2014; Incer Brenes, 2014).

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[12] See http://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2015/04/30/1021739
[13] See http://elpais.com/diario/2008/02/10/internacional/1202598001_850215.html

Women's voices can be actively silenced when they finally do have the opportunity to speak. In Honduras, the president of Congress repeatedly denied Deputy Doris Gutiérrez the right to speak, in response to which she eventually covered her mouth with a handkerchief in protest, an act covered extensively by the press (Hoyos *et al.,* 2014). In other cases, women's microphones are cut off while they are speaking, as has been reported in Costa Rica (Escalante and Méndez, 2011), Ecuador (Arboleda, 2012) and Bolivia (Machiao, 2012). Female politicians in various countries like Costa Rica, El Salvador and Mexico also report difficulties in asserting their authority, which may be undermined by male subordinates, like civil servants or council members, when the women is a mayor, who refuse to be ruled by a woman (Barrera-Bassols, 2014; Escalante and Méndez, 2011).

Women may be rendered invisible, finally, by conflicts over the language used to address female leaders. These issues are raised in an acute form in countries where national languages —as they do in Latin America— take gendered forms, with opponents deliberately, and often provocatively, refusing to use feminine nouns. In Brazil, president Dilma Rousseff, like her counterparts in Argentina and Chile, has adopted the title "Presidenta" but the two main television channels continue to call her "presidente". As in similar debates in France and Italy, opponents justify their behavior by appealing to male-centered rules of grammar, reinforcing the notion that these positions cannot, and should not, be feminized. These conflicts also appear when referring collectively to members of congress as "señores diputados," language which has the effect of erasing women's presence from political institutions. While some chambers in the region have adopted more inclusive language, as in Mexico, where both masculine and feminine forms —*diputadas y diputados*, *senadoras y senadores*— are used when speaking to all,[14] others like the 2006-2010 legislature in Costa Rica have been prevented from using inclusive language in legislative texts by parliamentary administrators and language experts (Palmieri, 2011).

Interrelated violence

Our typology distinguishes four types of violence, but specific manifestations may be interrelated in at least two ways. First, one act may be attributed multiple meanings, due to different possibilities in terms of how it

[14] See http://www.diputados.gob.mx/inicio.htm

may be experienced or interpreted, by its target or by other observers. An example is the sexualizing images and comments that one Congresswoman in Honduras saw posted on her Twitter account. Received and read directly by her, these attacks could be framed as a type of psychological violence, leading her to feel isolated and disappointed in her political career —as she herself has reported (Hoyos *et al.*, 2014). Committed in the public space of Twitter, however, such acts could also be classified as symbolic violence, portraying her as a sexual object with the message that women are of little worth in politics.

Second, acts of violence may escalate over time, defying simple classification, but also substantiating our intuition that these various forms of violence should be understood as part of a shared field of practices, rather than as isolated incidents. In Peru, a local councilwoman who revealed the corruption of the mayor was verbally abused and physically assaulted when she was pregnant, resulting in the premature birth of her child. The mayor, who was also an obstetrician at the local hospital, changed her medical history and told her that she would pay for the wrongs she had done to him, pointing out that "everyone who has wronged me is now dead". His allies then posted pictures of her baby on Facebook, suggesting that the girl was in fact the mayor's daughter.[15] In this instance, therefore, the councilwoman in question was initially subjected to physical and psychological violence. When this did not work, opponents moved on to symbolic attacks to impugn her character, as well as harm her family, including a minor child.

Perhaps the best-known example of escalation, however, is the case of Juana Quispe, a local councilwoman in Bolivia, whose assassination precipitated passage of the 2012 law. In this instance, physical violence was the culmination of a series of prior psychological, economic and symbolic aggressions. Soon after being elected, Quispe was harassed and pressured to resign by the mayor, his supporters, and various council members. When she did not, they changed the times of the meetings and refused her entrance to the sessions. When this failed, they suspended her from her position. When she was reinstated after a seven-month legal battle, she was denied the salary from the time she was suspended, on the pretext that she was not present during the council sessions. One month later, she

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[15] See http://www.lacalle.com.pe/~lacallec/index.php/deportes/2495-arranco-la-copa-peru

was found murdered. In spite of the evidence, the police claim that she was murdered in an attempted robbery, further ignoring and rendering invisible the violence she suffered because of her work in politics (Acobol, 2012; Corz, 2012).

Concepts and practical solutions

Concept formation matters because it can restrict or expand how a particular problem is understood, in turn shaping the scope of action for developing solutions. Theorizing physical and psychological forms of violence, campaigns in Latin America have largely focused on legislation as the primary answer to the rising problem of violence against women in politics. Our expanded conceptualization —incorporating the four dimensions of physical, psychological, economic, and symbolic violence— suggests that legislative initiatives may not suffice to realize commitments to recognize, incorporate, and empower women as political actors. Rather, multiple strategies pursued simultaneously by state and civil society actors may be required in order to address these various manifestations of resistance, highlighting the need for a more comprehensive approach.

This is not to dismiss the potential of legal reforms, which may play an important role in naming and calling for action on a particular policy problem. The experiences of a female staff member working in the office of the mayor of Bogotá highlight the need for explicit legislation to combat holes in existing legislation —and the idea that such behaviors are "normal" in politics. Rape threats by a member of the mayor's staff could not be prosecuted, it was argued, because they were not made from a work phone, thus it could not be considered sexual harassment in the workplace. The threats also could not be treated as a case of violence against women, because they did not constitute "domestic violence" *per se*. Her colleagues told her, further, that she could not come to the office to do her work and pressured her to give up her position.[16] Her frustrations in this case reveal the importance of creating a legal framework to ensure that women can fulfill their duties as public officials.

To date, however, it must also be mentioned that the Bolivian law, which has inspired similar proposals in other countries across the region, has not

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[16] See http://www.kienyke.com/historias/habla-funcionaria-de-la-alcaldia-amenazada-de-violacion/

achieved its innovative goals. Of more than nearly 300 cases lodged by Acobol, only one case (that of local councilwoman Magda Haase Pérez) has been successful. After she reported that she had been coerced by six council members and the mayor to renounce her seat, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal ruled that she had been a victim of violence against women in politics and she was then reinstated to her seat. A key difficulty in ensuring compliance with the law is that local police tend to attribute these types of acts to "general insecurity" rather than to violence stemming from discrimination against women in the political sphere. In an effort to ensure that this legislation is respected, Acobol has initiated a project to monitor implementation of the law and push for the timely resolution of cases.[17]

While physical violence may be most appropriately addressed through legal channels, the other three forms of violence against women in politics —psychological, economic and symbolic— may require other types of interventions, alongside or separately from legislative proposals. While generally receiving less attention, there are examples of other initiatives in the region —and globally— that might serve as additional inspiration for campaigns across Latin America. To generate public awareness and support for change, civil society groups can create partnerships and networks to monitor, document and address violence against women in politics. In Ecuador, for example, the Association of Women at the Municipal Level collected testimonies from local female politicians to propose draft legislation, speaking to 100 town councilors and civil society representatives in 2007. The network also set up a call center to provide free advice from legal and political advisers, as well as to gather further testimonies, recognizing that the lack of data contributes to denial of the problem (NDI, 2014).

In addition to working to secure public pledges from political elites to ensure women's safety during elections, gender equality concerns can be integrated into electoral observation missions (Muñoz-Pogossian, 2013). The National Democratic Institute, notably, has begun to address gender-based electoral violence in its electoral observation analysis and reporting, as well as to share strategies to mitigate it during training sessions for female candidates (NDI, 2014). Political funding initiatives provide an opportunity to counteract the economic violence that women may con-

[17] http://totimes.no/mundo-hispanohablante/america-del-sur/america-central-del-sur/bolivia/bolivia-2013-la-situacion-de-la-mujer-boliviana-desde-las-leyes-del-estado-plurinacional-2/

front at the candidate stage. Countries in various regions have established incentives for parties to nominate and/or elect more women (Krook and Norris, 2014), a recent example being Chile, which introduced a financial bonus for electing women as part of a broader package of electoral reform approved in early 2015.

Symbolic violence appears to be one of the most pervasive forms of violence against women in politics, at the same time that it is one of the most naturalized. Rendering women more visible and accepted as political actors may be a tall order, given how deeply gender norms are engrained in many societies. Within legislative institutions, a promising path is to foster what the Inter-Parliamentary Union calls a "gender-sensitive parliament", rethinking practices and norms of parliament —and politics— from a gender equality perspective (Palmieri, 2011). In addition to establishing sexual harassment policies and introducing policies for better work-life balance, this may entail creating spaces within congressional buildings to portray and acknowledge women as political actors, combating the tendency to include only statues and portraits of men. In Brazil, for instance, there are photo exhibitions portraying all the female deputies and female senators, placed in corridors with extensive traffic by politicians as well as members of the media and the general public. Similarly, visitors to the presidential palace, as well as the president's reelection website,[18] prominently feature the title "presidenta."

Mobilizing mainstream and social media, finally, may be a powerful means for exposing and combating violence against women in politics. Programming funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development in several countries, notably, provides gender training for journalists and recruits female reporters to engage in political reporting as a double-pronged strategy to enhance gender-sensitivity in media coverage, including heightened attention to acts of violence against female politicians (Krook *et al.*, 2014). Social media can be an especially powerful way for citizens as individuals and as a collectivity to expose acts of violence and garner support for projects to empower women in politics. Training programs for female candidates can also address how to decrease vulnerability and respond effectively to on-line attacks (Bardall, 2013).

In sum, legislative initiatives are only one among many potential strategies that might be deployed to tackle the problem of violence against wom-

[18] http://www.dilma.com.br/campanha

en in politics. The need to devise such a comprehensive approach, however, only becomes fully visible with an expanded definition of this concept. The perspective advocated here, we propose, is closely in line with how inductive theorizing of this phenomenon has developed in recent years. Academics and practitioners list practices of economic and symbolic violence with their definitions of political harassment and violence in Latin America, although they subsume these practices under the larger heading of psychological violence. We argue that a revised and more precise vocabulary not only better reflects the larger literature on "violence," but also opens up new opportunities to comprehend and articulate the issue at hand —and in turn, devise more effective interventions to make politics more inclusive of women, giving them both access and voice within political institutions.

Conclusions

Violence against women in politics is increasingly recognized around the world —but especially in Latin America— as an emerging tactic to deter women's political participation as candidates and elected officials. In this article, we survey how this concept has been defined by academics and practitioners across the region, largely in terms of physical and psychological violence, and then draw on global data and research in various academic disciplines to propose expanding this concept to include two further forms of violence: economic and symbolic. These forms of violence, we emphasize, are already implicit in many existing definitions of violence against women in politics but have not yet been theorized as such. We provide examples of all four types of violence in Latin American countries and then consider a range of solutions that might be pursued by state and civil society actors in light of this broader definition. We argue that a more comprehensive approach provides the best bet for tackling violence in all its forms.

We contend that attending to these issues is important not only for women interested in pursuing a political career, but also to citizens and the academic community more broadly. Female politicians are clearly the ones most directly affected, with studies by NGOs suggesting that incidents of violence leave women demoralized and excluded from the centers of decision-making, leading them to be less likely than men to stand for reelection, or to leave after fewer terms served (Herrera, Arias, and Garcia, 2011; SAP International, 2006). In Bolivia, for example, 48 per cent of the women

leaving office in 2010 reported being victims of such violence (Acobol, 2012). In contexts where women are already much less likely than men to consider pursuing a political career (Fox and Lawless, 2005), these experiences can, in turn, depress women's political ambitions more generally. These difficulties signal ongoing challenges to women's access and voice not easily remedied by the introduction of gender quotas and other tactics to empower women in the political realm.

Yet the acts that we identify also represent a fundamental violation of the principles of equality and non-discrimination embedded in legal frameworks around the globe, highlighting the profound implications of these acts for protecting core democratic values. Constitutions in over 130 countries, for example, explicitly guarantee equality between women and men.[19] Moreover, Article 7 of the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, signed by 188 countries, states that governments will "ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right…to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government". Efforts to block women's inclusion *as women* thus can be framed as a core violation of women's political rights.

Violence against women in politics also poses a threat to core democratic values. The types of cases pursued by the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians,[20] which are in many ways similar to acts of violence against women in politics, suggest that such acts may even qualify as human rights violations —posing a threat both to citizens and to the integrity of the political system itself. Additionally, international organizations and national governments recognize the need to adopt or revise legislation on violence against women, with the United Nations pushing all states to adopt and enforce, by 2015, laws that address and punish all forms of such violence. Democracy, finally, is challenged when public officials are prevented —through intimidation and coercion— from exercising the functions to which they have been elected or appointed (Herrera, Arias and García, 2011). Violence against women in politics thus not only threatens to hollow out national and international commitments to gender-balanced decision-making, but can also affect the integrity of the political system itself. Pg

[19] http://constitutions.unwomen.org/
[20] http://www.ipu.org/hr-e/committee.htm

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