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Women's movements and their influence on policies*

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This article aims to determine whether and in what ways women's movements vary their strategies in order to influence the political agenda according to different political scenarios. It uses a qualitative small-N comparison in four South American countries. The findings suggest that women's movements collaborate with the state. However, this collaboration presents variations that depend on the political scenario at the time: critically, the status of the women's policy agency, the leaders' views and background, and the composition of the legislature. Finally, in all cases, the very type of issue under debate influences calculation of the need for more allies within and outside the government.

Keywords: Women's movement; political opportunity; feminism; Latin America; Southern Cone.

This article aims to determine whether and in what ways women's movements vary their strategies according to the political scenario they encounter. It focuses on policies and legislation regarding domestic violence against women (DVAW). The research question builds on the existing literature that recognises the key role of women's movements in bringing DVAW and other women's issues onto the public agenda and influencing political actors to adopt measures to tackle the problem. It also draws on literature that identifies the relevant actors who produce policies to deal with DVAW, particularly women legislators and women's policy agencies (WPAs). Finally, it uses for theoretical support the political process approach and considers those actors that can open opportunities for women's movements. It refers to the influence of international actors as well as to the policies and legislation actually adopted in the countries under analysis, although it does not develop those aspects, directing its focus more specifically on the strategies. Additionally, although women's movements is a complex concept that consists of women's organisations, activists and supporters, all dealing with women's issues, for practical reasons this article focuses only on the organisations, which can be more clearly identified.

Different types of women's issues involve different actors in the policy debate that the latter generate. DVAW, in particular, has been identified as a sensitive issue, where gender is more relevant than party affiliation or other features (SWERS, 1998; TREMBLAY, 1998; WÄNGNERUD, 2000). Within the political sphere, the literature suggests that two actors are particularly significant in adding DVAW to the public political agenda, namely women legislators and WPAs (McBRIDE and MAZUR, 2010, 2010; STETSON and MAZUR, 1995; SWERS, 1998; TREMBLAY, 1998; WÄNGNERUD, 2000).

The relevance that this article gives to women's movements arises from our knowledge that these are usually the first actors to identify DVAW as a problem, implement a response in the absence of a state response, and bring DVAW to public attention (WELDON, 2002). However, the process of developing political measures requires interaction between women's movements and political and social actors at a national and international level. This article gives a detailed account of the strategies that women's movements use in their interactions with all these actors. It uses the political process approach as a theoretical framework, and its concept of political opportunity structure to study the access that the latter can open or close for the movements. The study employed semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, using a comparative analysis in four South American countries, namely Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay. These particular countries were chosen because of the variation they exhibited regarding two main variables, namely: the percentage of women in parliament and the status of the WPA. The findings do not encounter important variations in the strategies that women's movements used to influence policies on DVAW, but they support the hypothesis that institutions, and more concretely the WPAs and women legislators, open up opportunities of which the movements take advantage.

Getting domestic violence against women onto the public agenda: political actors

Since the study focuses on the interactions between women's movements and political actors, I use the political process approach, which analyses social movements in relation to state actors (COSTAIN, 1992; FOWERAKER, 1995). A key concept of this approach is the 'political opportunity structure' (POS), which suggests that political institutions open or close opportunities for movements, for example through the presence or absence of elite alliances (McADAM et al., 1996). The political sphere is critical to the level of access that women's movements have to the policymaking process and their ability to influence it.

Since women legislators and WPAs are the main actors in enabling women's movements to gain access to the political sphere (albeit subject to a range of variations), this study focuses on the levels of political participation and representation of women in state institutions. There is, however, a debate in the literature about whether a higher percentage of women in parliament would increase the likelihood of gender issues being included in the public agenda (CHILDS and KROOK, 2006; CURTIN, 2008; SCHWINDT-BAYER, 2010). The concept of critical mass focuses on the possibilities for women to form alliances when their numbers increase, and identifies 30 per cent as the minimum proportion needed. With an increase of their participation in the national legislature, those women can form strategic coalitions to promote legislation related to women's concerns and they can influence men's behaviour in a feminist direction (DAHLERUP, 1988). According to another line of thought, critical actors can have a more relevant impact than critical mass, when they manage to build alliances to influence the policymaking process (CHILDS and KROOK, 2008, 2006; PISCOPO, 2014). Nevertheless, there is some consensus that parliaments that exclude important groups of its citizens, such as women, lack some legitimacy (HTUN, 2006). Finally, a third point of view suggests that women's caucuses can be relevant, since this can give access to the policymaking process to critical actors (COSTA, SAWER and SHARP, 2013).

Given the discussion above and the fact that DVAW is a sensitive issue, I follow the concept of critical mass; therefore, I expect that the higher the proportion of women in the national legislature, the more likely it is that policies concerning DVAW will enter the policymaking process. This means that, consequently, women legislators are more likely to play a critical role than the parties themselves are. If women legislators do not occupy a high percentage of seats in Parliament, the possibility of exerting pressure on their colleagues may be increased by collaborating with each other on some issues, for example through the establishment of a women's caucus (MACAULAY, 2006). Therefore, although a critical mass is expected to be highly relevant, two more factors are taken into consideration as determinants of variation: first, the presence of specific congresswomen who make a difference in this respect; second, the relevance of the alliances that the congresswomen form, substantiated as a women's caucus.

Along with congresswomen, another actor that gives women's organisations ac-

cess to the political sphere is WPAs. WPAs are governmental structures whose purpose is to improve the status of women (STETSON and MAZUR, 1995). They normally take part in debates on women's issues held in national legislatures (McBRIDE and MAZUR, 2010). Accordingly, the presence of WPAs that are explicitly concerned with women's rights increases the probability that governments will act on or at least debate DVAW. Success in securing policies depends on the type of agency, the issue debated and the policy environment (McBRIDE and MAZUR, 2010). Ideology and the sympathetic stance of the leaders of WPAs towards feminism are likely to influence their involvement in more controversial issues, such as abortion (HAAS, 2006). Also, WPA leaders can capitalise on their position, influencing policies in the direction of feminism (CURTIN, 2008). Consequently, the relationship between a women's movement and a WPA, including the support of the latter for the former, depends on the issue.

Women's movements can opt for an insider strategy to pursue their aims (BECK-WITH, 2007; CHAPPELL, 2002). Alternatively, they can try to create allies through collaborative links with those working for WPAs or opt for other strategies that they consider appropriate for their goals. Women's organisations recognise that the quality of the relationship with the WPA improves when members of the movement are absorbed into the leadership structure, or become part of the staff of the WPA. Yet, despite this, in none of the countries of this research did the women's organisations have an insider strategy in relation to either the WPA or Congress. Since there is no variation, this aspect has not been further developed in the analysis per country below.

In all cases, whether or not the WPA is interested in supporting a bill about DVAW, its involvement in the discussion of a bill is likely to depend on the agency's status within the executive branch (BLOFIELD and HAAS, 2005; McBRIDE and MAZUR, 2010; WELDON, 2002). If the WPA is a ministry, it is more likely that it will be involved, contributing effectively. Conversely, it is less likely that an agency can contribute effectively to a discussion if it has a lower position in the hierarchy and therefore a reduced power of negotiation. Nevertheless, as mentioned previously, other aspects of the WPA can be relevant to the access of women's movements to the policymaking process, such as the background and the views of the leader of the moment (see below).

The hierarchical status of the agency is relevant not only to the debate of a bill, but also to the debate of a policy, since if the agency's position is high in the hierarchy of the executive branch it can approve and execute policies on its own. However, if it sits low in the political hierarchy, the policy will need the intervention of another ministry to be approved and implemented. Consequently, if the WPA has high status, women's movements are expected to search for allies inside the WPA in order to influence policies or bills regarding DVAW. This would occur alongside the contacts they already have with women legislators.

Comparing women's movements strategies in four Latin American countries

I use a qualitative small-N comparison (LIJPHART, 1971; MASON, 2002) and the Most Similar System Design (MSSD) to compare four countries of the Southern Cone in Latin America, namely Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. My main forms of data collection were questionnaires and semi-structured interviews (FAURE, 1994; MASON, 2002) with members of women's organisations, given their relevance for the concept of women's movements and given the fact that they are more easily identified and graspable.

The proposed theoretical framework emphasises the interactions between women's movements and the political sphere, and concentrates in turn on two actors, namely women legislators and WPAs. In the former case, the most important variable is the percentage of seats they hold. Accordingly, for the selection of cases I employ a binary distinction of high and low representation, where having over 30 per cent of the seats in the national legislature is considered high. When it comes to WPAs, the most important variable is the status of the institution. Regarding institutional status, I also use a binary distinction of high and low status: high refers to ministries and offices dependent on the presidency or positioned at the top levels of the executive branch, and low refers to offices inside ministries or other institutions that are part of the executive branch or other state power. The combination of these actors and characteristics determined the number of cases that were selected for this research, namely, four (LIJPHART, 1971).

The selection of the countries took into consideration their similarities, but mainly their differences in relation to the political sphere, particularly women legislators and WPAs. Regarding the percentage of women in the national legislatures, the general tendency in the countries where the research took place is low representation, with the exception of Argentina. Whereas in Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay the percentage barely reaches 15 per cent (after 2014, it rose to 29 per cent in Uruguay's senate), in Argentina women make up more than 35 per cent of the total number of legislators (Inter-Parliamentary Union). On the other hand, all four countries have some form of WPA. They vary in their hierarchical status, their budget, and the method of their establishment.

Argentina's relevant agency at the time of this research was the Consejo Nacional de la Mujer (National Women's Council, CNM), which lacked the ministerial status it originally had (CRASKE, 1999). The original agency was the Secretaría de la Mujer (Women's Secretariat), established by President Alfonsin (WAYLEN, 2000). President Menem replaced it with the CNM, and eventually reduced its power (WAYLEN, 2000). Its budget decreased 80.3% between 2005 and 2007 (BIANCO and MARIÑO, 2010). Until 2003, the Brazilian agency was the Conselho National dos Direitos da Mulher (National Council of Women's Rights, CNDM), established in 1985 within the Ministry of Justice (ALVAREZ, 1994). In 2003, it became part of the Secretaria Especial de Políticas para as Mulheres (Special Secretariat of Policies for Women, SPM), the current Brazilian agency, which was part of the presidency until 2016.

In Chile, the Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (National Women's Service, SERNAM), the WPA at the time of this study, was created by law in 1991. It had ministerial status and accordingly could present laws to Congress and negotiate for their approval (CRASKE, 1999). The head of the agency had Cabinet status (WAYLEN, 2000) and the fact that it had been established by law explains its relative stability and invulnerability to the fate of any particular president. This agency had a large enough budget and infrastructure to accomplish its goals (CHUCHRYK, 1994; WAYLEN, 2000). Finally, the Uruguayan agency between 1987 and 1992 was the Instituto Nacional de la Mujer (National Women's Institute), an office within the Ministry for Education and Culture, without sufficient funds and personnel to achieve its aims. This institution became the Instituto Nacional de la Familia y la Mujer (National Institute for Family and Women's Affairs) between 1992 and 2005. In 2005, the agency became the Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (National Women's Institute, INM). Although it had a bigger budget than its predecessors did, the INM was still an office inside a ministry, namely the Ministry for Social Development. In addition, even though it increased its staff, it did not have enough specialised personnel, and they did not work full time (BONINO, 2007).

The timeframe is from the moment the countries started their democratic periods until 2010, when all the data was collected in face-to-face interviews and questionnaires. I interviewed members of seven organisations in Buenos Aires, ten in Sao Paulo, eight in Santiago, and eight in Montevideo. I analysed open questions using both descriptive statistics and thematic coding, and closed questions using descriptive statistics, classifying the answers per country (GILLHAM, 2008; KVALE, 2007). I received nine completed questionnaires from organisations in Argentina, 11 from organisations in Brazil, 12 from organisations in Chile, and 11 from Uruguayan organisations. The low level of response is always a problem when using questionnaires, which limits the possibility of generalising the results. However, the comparison of cases helps to avoid this problem, because one can see the similarities and differences in the cases and search for confirmatory patterns. Since the research focused on the strategies used by women's organisations to influence policies, I relied only on the answers given by them. The interest did not lie in understanding the success they may have had, but mainly their reasons in opting for the strategies they used.

Mechanisms used by women's movements to influence policies

Argentina

All Argentinian organisations surveyed sought to influence policies regarding DVAW and 89 per cent of the organisations aimed to influence bills. In the questionnaire, I asked how they intended to achieve this influence. I proposed a series of alternatives that included meetings with the leader of the WPA, staff of the WPA, staff of other ministries, sympathetic legislators, and legislators belonging to the committee dealing with DVAW.

Figure 01 summarises the answers.

Figure 1: Mechanisms used to influence the political sphere in Argentina
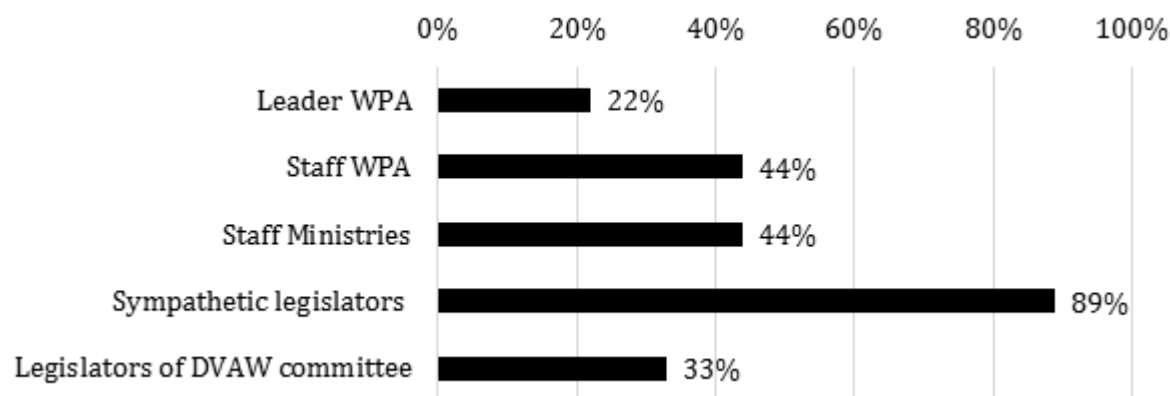
Source: Author's own elaboration.

The responses show that women's organisations in Argentina used a broad range of mechanisms to influence policies and legislation for DVAW, with very clear emphases on some of the mechanisms they chose. There was a clear inclination for interacting with legislators in preference to WPA and other institutions of the executive branch. The additional answers from respondents showed that they also interacted with the judicial branch and they intended to influence policies through the training of public servants. The wide range of mechanisms and the organisations' relations with different institutions reflect the multiple options that the organisations have when seeking to relate with the state, but also their inability to rely on their relationship with the WPA in order to influence policies.

Figure 01 shows that women's organisations did not establish regular contact with the CNM. The meetings that members of the organisations held were mainly with CNM staff rather than with its leader. Interviewees suggested that the CNM did not have suitable staff for the role it should play, nor did it have the economic resources to carry out its functions, and it had changed its focus from women to the family, something that was perceived negatively by interviewees (INTERVIEW BUENOS AIRES, 2009; MARIÑO, 2009; TUÑEZ, 2009; VACCARO, 2009). According to the narratives of these interviewees, the CNM lacked influence, which was one reason why it could not be relied upon to influence public policies. For example, the CNM was responsible for the implementation of the new law against violence (Law 26.485, for integral protection of women, 2009), which incorporates international standards of human and women's rights as well as demands from women's organisations (GIL, 2017), but organisations doubted that it had the capacity to do this (INTERVIEW BUENOS AIRES, 2009; MARIÑO, 2009). Some authors also highlight its limited budget and power within the state hierarchy (BIANCO and MARIÑO, 2010). Nevertheless, as Figure 01 shows, women's organisations did indeed establish some contact. Victoria Vaccaro (2009), for example, said that there was a commission to give advice regarding a new law against

violence and that many women's organisations worked with the CNM. In addition, Figure 01 shows that women's organisations did not try to influence policies and bills through contact with the leader of the CNM. Personal interviews revealed the reasons for this reluctance: interviewees believed that the leaders of the CNM were not suitable for their position, since they did not have previous knowledge or interest in women's issues (MARIÑO, 2009; VACCARO, 2009).

Analysis of the Argentinean WPA suggests that, although the agency's status is relevant to the decision of women's organisations to seek out alliances with it, there are other factors that could be of greater influence to this relationship, such as the focus of the institution and characteristics of the leader. The former becomes relevant with respect to the issues that women's organisations wish to influence. The fact that women's organisations had conflicts with the CNM during Menem's presidency is reflected in the interviewees' responses with respect to abortion but not with respect to violence against women. This fact is in line with the distinction that Htun and Weldon (2010) draw regarding women's issues between a doctrinal and non-doctrinal nature. In this particular case, even though the organisations had problems allying with the CNM on abortion, they were able to establish alliances on other issues. This possibility also argues for the importance of the focus of WPAs on a specific range of themes.

The information obtained shows that in fact women's organisations in Argentina linked with legislators more often than with either the CNM or ministries. In particular, they associated with female legislators more frequently than with male legislators. Interviewees mentioned that congresswomen presented all the bills about women's issues, although they did not agree on all. For example, interviewees stated that there was agreement about DVAW, but not about abortion (MARIÑO, 2009; TUÑEZ, 2009; VACCARO, 2009), which again reflects the relevance of the nature of the issue being debated. Particularly with respect to DVAW and violence against women, interviewees reported that their organisations had participated in the drafting of the national bill and provincial laws against violence (MARIÑO, 2009; VACCARO, 2009). Mariño and Vaccaro (2009) mentioned that the bill against violence, promulgated in 2009, was originally presented by a woman senator and all the congresswomen were crucial to its approval. They also suggested that for DVAW and other women's issues the female caucus in Congress played a key role in proposing and driving the discussion and negotiating with their colleagues.

Interviewees described a friendly and productive relationship with congresswomen, whom they saw as allies (INTERVIEW BUENOS AIRES, 2009; GONZÁLEZ, 2009; MARIÑO, 2009; TUÑEZ, 2009; VACCARO, 2009). This productive relationship resulted in women's organisations drafting bills, such as the bill for integral protection of women, giving advice to congresswomen, and supporting the work of congresswomen by lobbying their colleagues (MARIÑO, 2009; TUÑEZ, 2009; VACCARO, 2009). These statements showed fundamentally a link with congresswomen in general and not only with some of them who held

specific ideologies or feminist views. However, some interviewees' answers also suggested that part of the reason for the smooth relationship between women's organisations and congresswomen is that many congresswomen came from the women's movement, though none of the organisations had insisted that their members become legislators (INTERVIEW BUENOS AIRES, 2009; VACCARO, 2009). This would mean that, despite the general support from congresswomen to DVAW legislation, personal ties or feminist views could also be relevant.

Besides improving the congressional relationship with the women's movement, the presence of congresswomen had contributed to the presentation of bills related to women's issues. Although most of the interviewees' statements implied that the mere presence of congresswomen had helped, some interviewees also mentioned that there were some specific congresswomen that were closer to the women's movement, who played a more crucial role. This would mean that critical acts were relevant in Argentina's case, but also that critical mass had contributed in advancing specific relevant legislation.

In short, this case stands in accord with the research's framework, in the sense that women's organisations find in the presence of a large contingent of congresswomen an opportunity to access the process of legislation and influence bills on DVAW; in contrast, the low status of Argentina's WPA restricts access to the policymaking process. Nevertheless, this case also shows that the personal beliefs and ideology of key actors, both in the WPA and in Congress, give an opportunity, though within limits, for organisations to participate in the elaboration of bills and policies.

Brazil

In Brazil, as in Argentina, a significant percentage (82%) of the surveyed organisations answered that the mechanisms they used for DVAW were the same as the ones they used for other women's issues. As Figure 02 shows, women's organisations in Brazil built a relationship with the SPM, and with other ministries. Within the SPM, they contacted its staff more often than its leader. According to interviewees, the relationship between women's organisations and the executive had improved exponentially after President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva took office (2003), heading a Workers' Party government (GELATI, 2009; INTERVIEW SÃO PAULO, 2009). He had created the SPM, and this had a positive impact in the relationship between the women's organisations and the government because the organisations now had an institution inside the state to voice their suggestions, opinions, and demands (GELATI, 2009; HTUN, 2006; INTERVIEW SÃO PAULO, 2009; PEREIRA, 2009; Puello, 2009; TELES, 2009). Moreover, it was just after the creation of the SPM that women's organisations and the state managed to agree on a bill that later became the first Brazilian law regarding DVAW (SECRETARIA ESPECIAL DE POLÍTICAS PARA AS MULHERES, 2007; PEREIRA, 2009; TELES, 2009). As Rocha (2009) described, "the origin of the legislation was a group of organisations that presented a draft to the Secretariat (SPM). The

Secretariat incorporated those suggestions and created a group to draft the bill, which included us" (ROCHA, 2009, p. 05). Importantly, women's organisations allied with the SPM rather than with Congress to develop legislation. Moreover, Gelati (2009) suggested that before the SPM there were laws about women's issues which had a public security rather than a gender perspective, and that the SPM had changed this. Consequently, the SPM had an important role in developing legislation on women's issues, not only due to its status, but also to its focus on gender perspective. Additionally, Brazil has a law that requires health services to report cases involving violence against women, namely Law 10.778 from 2003 (BIANCO and MARIÑO, 2010).

Figure 2: Mechanisms used to influence the political sphere in Brazil
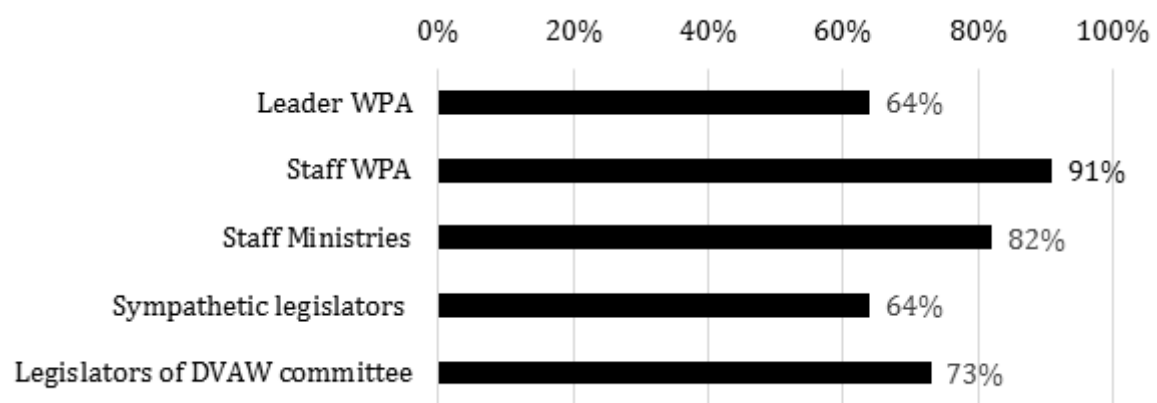
Source: Author's own elaboration.

The organisations had established a permanent alliance with the SPM not only to influence policies that depended on the SPM but also to influence other ministries so that they would approve some policies regarding women's issues (INTERVIEW SÃO PAULO, 2009; GELATI, 2009; PEREIRA, 2009; ROCHA, 2009; VIEIRA, 2009). Some organisations had a seat within the CNDM and, through it, within the SPM as well (PEREIRA, 2009). Others established relationships directly with the staff and even the leader of the SPM (GELATI, 2009; INTERVIEW SÃO PAULO, 2009; ROCHA, 2009). The SPM staff came from the women's movement, which the interviewees believed contributed to a productive and harmonious relationship between the SPM and women's organisations. Women's organisations interacted with the SPM both to draft bills and to develop policies about women's issues, such as policies for the prevention of violence against women and women trafficking (GELATI, 2009; IAMARINO, 2011; INTERVIEW SÃO PAULO, 2009; ROCHA, 2009; VIEIRA, 2009; PUELLO, 2009; TELES, 2009).

Since the SPM had been created very recently, interviewees could easily compare their situation at the time of the interviews with the previous one. Interviewees explained that before the SPM there was no relationship with the government, that the organisations had to provide more services, and that basically they just criticised the government's work instead of collaborating with it. Before the creation of the Secretariat, the organisa-

tions had to deal with various other state institutions, such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. Although these relationships had carried on, they had faded into the background, due to the presence of a state entity dealing directly with women's issues (INTERVIEW SÃO PAULO, 2009; TELES, 2009). The organisations' relations with the CNDM also changed: before the SPM's creation, the CNDM was part of the Ministry of Justice. Gelati (2009) suggested that the Ministry of Justice had a different focus and view, not centred on women's issues, so the relationship the organisations could establish with the CNDM and the achievements they could obtain from it when it was part of the Ministry of Justice were completely different. This implies, as in the case of Argentina, that the WPA's focus, beyond its status, is also relevant. One interviewee also suggested that before 2003, during the presidency of Cardoso (1995–2003), the organisations were in the opposition and thus they held meetings with the CNDM to express their views, but there was no collaboration (ROCHA, 2009). This last aspect illustrates how, apart from the power of the WPA, the party leanings of the government can influence the relationship between the government and women's organisations.

Women's organisations in Brazil established contact with the executive branch more frequently than with Congress, although most women legislators considered women's organisations among their main supporters (HTUN, 2006). Moreover, of all the mechanisms used in Brazil, those directed at Congress were the least frequent (see Figure 02). In fact, interviewees suggested that their contact with Congress did not flow easily by any means, and that in order to influence the approval of bills they first established links with other women's organisations, in order to present themselves as a united front and exert more pressure (INTERVIEW SÃO PAULO, 2009; PEREIRA, 2009; ROCHA, 2009; TELES, 2009). Interviewees perceived Congress as a conservative institution, which they only contacted because they sought to influence legislation but without expecting any major achievements (INTERVIEW SÃO PAULO, 2009; PUELLO, 2009; ROCHA, 2009; TELES, 2009). Puello (2009) stated that the relationship with Congress was difficult for the whole movement, but especially so for the organisation for which she works because of its focus on the legalisation of abortion. She said that there was a group of Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical Congress members against abortion who made their work difficult. This statement again reinforces the relevance of the distinction Htun and Weldon (2010) make between policies that are doctrinal and non-doctrinal in nature, which may be higher than the relevance of critical mass. In another study, Htun (2006) found that the legislator's gender is not relevant in discussions about abortion. She also concluded that in Brazil, given that congresswomen were organised in a caucus, Congress had passed legislation for women's rights. In any case, the organisations had a closer relationship with the SPM than with Congress members, including congresswomen. Interviewees saw the process of obtaining relevant policies and laws as a battle. Even after their approval, the organisations had to be continually aware of a possible backlash. For example, at the time of the fieldwork,

Congress was debating a new criminal code, which would have changed some aspects of the law regarding DVAW — a perspective requiring organisations to be alert so as to prevent any deterioration in the law's terms (ROCHA, 2009).

Summing up, the new and reinforced WPA in Brazil gave women's organisations an opportunity to access the policymaking process, including through the drafting of policies. Nevertheless, although the views of the institution's leader facilitated this openness even more, the critical aspect that made the difference in comparison with the other countries in the present study was the role that the organisations had within the SPM. The situation in Congress was the opposite, with only a small percentage of congresswomen and a group of religious members blocking bills on some women's issues: the situation pushed women's organisations into avoiding this institution and searching for other entry points to the policymaking process.

Chile

Unlike Argentina and Brazil, the data on Chile reveals no clear emphasis with regard to the mechanism women's organisations used to influence policies and laws. Within Congress, Figure 03 shows a slightly higher tendency to contact sympathetic legislators than more formal committees dealing with DVAW, whereas within the executive there was a stronger tendency to interact with the WPA than with other ministries. Respondents added some of their own mechanisms to the suggested questionnaire answers. For example, the organisations held seminars about DVAW, organised demonstrations, and petitioned Congress or the executive. They also focused on having their own publications and one had created a radio station. Finally, one organisation used emblematic lawsuits to press for a change in public policies. Three of the surveyed organisations did not intend to influence laws and policies on DVAW and therefore did not answer the question about the mechanisms employed; hence, all the percentages are lower than in the other cases.

Figure 3: Mechanisms used to influence the political sphere in Chile
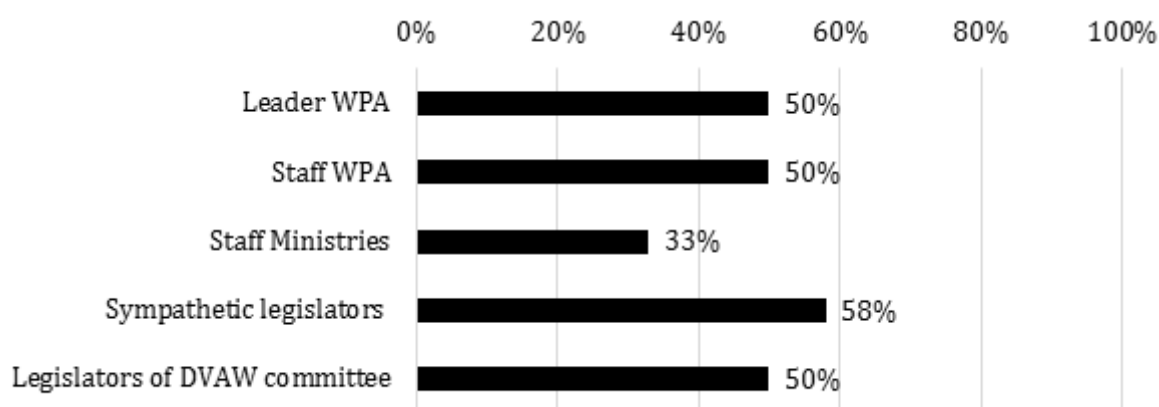
Source: Author's own elaboration.

Women's organisations are quite critical of SERNAM, the Chilean WPA at the time

of the interviews. Their objections related to SERNAM's power and to its leader. The objection to the former was that SERNAM did not have enough power and resources (FRIES, 2009; MAIRA, 2009; MATURANA, 2009; WEBER, 2009), even though it was one of the WPAs having higher status, together with the Brazilian WPA. The criticisms regarding the leader related to the fact that s/he had usually come from one of the most conservative parties among the parties of the "Concertación" (the coalition of parties in power from 1990 until 2010), which prevented the leader from adopting some policies that women's organisations were aiming to achieve (MACAULAY, 2006; MAIRA, 2009). As in other cases, this fact reveals the importance of the WPAs leader's views. However, this distance is more relevant regarding doctrinal issues than issues like DVAW. In the latter, it had created a distance between the organisations and the WPA, which does not mean that the WPA had not dealt with DVAW, as opposed to what had happened with the issue of divorce. These objections are likely to be the reason why a higher percentage of organisations did not interact with SERNAM's leader and staff. Nevertheless, they did indeed collaborate by offering advice, information or whatever else SERNAM needed from the organisations during the policymaking process. Quite frequently, each organisation established collaboration with SERNAM to advise the latter about violence or other topics, to give it information and develop material that SERNAM could use, to carry out programs, offer services, and to train SERNAM personnel or those from other public sector bodies (INTERVIEW SANTIAGO, 2009; PEYRIN, 2010; PUGA, 2009; WEBER, 2009).

Women's organisations also made alliances with SERNAM and with some congresswomen when they sought to influence legislation regarding women's issues (GALDÁMEZ, 2009; MAIRA, 2009; PEYRIN, 2010; WEBER, 2009), thus establishing contacts and collaborating with different government institutions. For instance, around 40 organisations had taken part in an advisory council on gender politics with the Ministry of Health (MAIRA, 2009; PEYRIN, 2010). One interviewee stated that her organisation had set up an intersectoral dialogue about violence against women, involving eight of the 11 sectors in charge of the implementation of the policy against violence (PEYRIN, 2010). However, although the organisations interacted with SERNAM and the executive, the interviewees believed that the government neither listened to civil society nor established regular channels of interaction to receive opinions and proposals from it (FRIES, 2009; INTERVIEW SANTIAGO, 2009; MAIRA, 2009; WEBER, 2009).

Regarding the relationship between women's organisations and Congress, although Figure 03 shows slightly more interaction with Congress than with the government, the interviewees described this relationship as quite a difficult and distant one. They repeatedly mentioned three congresswomen who had been instrumental in bringing women's organisations petitions and suggestions into Congress INTERVIEW SANTIAGO, 2009; MAIRA, 2009; WEBER, 2009). They had introduced bills for sexual and reproductive rights, about DVAW, and against femicide (INTERVIEW SANTIAGO, 2009; MAIRA, 2009). Only the last

two had become laws. This information supports the relevance of the critical act, instead of critical mass (CHILDS and KROOK, 2006, 2008), as without these specific congresswomen there would probably not have been bills on those particular issues and women's organisations would not have had access to the policymaking process.

Another interviewee, from an organisation that had taken part in the development of the second bill regarding DVAW, stated that her organisation had made an important contribution to the bill of Law 20066 regarding DVAW, together with congresswomen of that time, who produced its first draft. They had contributed by providing technical details for the bill, training women of the community as instructors, through activism, and through an unprecedented presence of the public in Congress when the bill was voted on (PEYRIN, 2010). This organisation also supported SERNAM's actions and brought women who had been victims of violence to recount their experience in Congress, in order to convince its members of the bill's importance (PEYRIN, 2010). Those testimonies show how difficult the process was and how women's organisations had required allies inside Congress and in the executive, in addition to the presence of many supporters of the bill to do lobbying and exert pressure.

Two of the organisations had included contact with Congress among their strategies and, after several years, they believed they had managed to establish themselves as experts on the subject inside the institution (FRIES, 2009; MATURANA, 2009; PEYRIN, 2010). Nevertheless, the interviewee explained that the outcome did not necessarily incorporate her organisation's suggestions.

In short, women's organisations managed, in some way or another, to influence some legislation, but mainly legislation to which there was not much opposition and did not focus on doctrinal issues. Additionally, they did influence the passing of legislation, but not necessarily its content, as in Argentina and Brazil. Again, DVAW is a good example; although the organisations pressed for legislation and did get it, they disagreed with the focus of the law (MAIRA, 2009; PORTUGAL, 2009). Interviewees also highlighted the role of SERNAM in the development and approval of bills about DVAW and femicide. However, some suggested that the executive would not support legislation for sexual and reproductive rights because it claimed that such legislation would endanger the concept of family, which the country had to protect (MAIRA, 2009; PEYRIN, 2010). Therefore, in this case, although the WPA had a high status, organisations found constraints to their access because of the leader's views. In Congress, on the other hand, some congresswomen were sympathetic to their cause, but they did not have enough influence to give them open access to the legislation process. The organisations searched for entry points to both institutions — the WPA and Congress — and although they found some, this access was limited to pressing for legislation or politics and not necessarily to influencing their content.

Uruguay

The findings on Uruguay indicate the least clear emphasis in terms of tactics among the four countries. Figure 04 summarises the Uruguayan interviewees' answers to the question about which mechanisms women's organisations used to influence policies and laws about DVAW. It shows that the surveyed organisations used all the suggested mechanisms to the same degree, with a slightly stronger tendency to work with the executive rather than the legislature, and with other ministries within the executive rather than the WPA. Apart from the suggested mechanisms, the respondents also mentioned providing training in DVAW and women's rights to groups of women and to politicians. According to one interviewee, the INM provided services but did not have sufficient capacity to do so, therefore the organisations stepped in to fill the gaps (INTERVIEW MONTEVIDEO, 2009). The organisations also monitored policies, evaluating the advances and obstacles from the organisations' point of view, as well as articulating their demands regarding the policies that should be created (GARCÍA, 2009). They also tried to influence policies through the development of research and materials to encourage political analysis and debates, and via the submission of shadow reports to the INM. Answers to the questionnaire show that women's organisations used the same mechanisms for DVAW and for other women's issues.

The INM had opened a door within the government for women's organisations, especially since Carmen Beramendi (INM's Director at the time), originally from one of the women's organisations, became its director (BORDES and BATISTA, 2009; INTERVIEW MONTEVIDEO, 2009; MEDINA, 2009; NOCETTI, 2009; SIMOIS, 2009). In fact, some institutions carried out programs for the INM, such as the 'Instituto Mujer y Sociedad', which offers psychological, legal, and social assistance in cases of DVAW in one Uruguayan city (BORDES and BATISTA, 2009). The remainder of the organisations that interacted with the INM did so through the Red Uruguaya contra la Violencia Doméstica y Sexual in the National Consultative Council to deal with DVAW (MEDINA, 2009; NOCETTI, 2009). Interviewees recognised that the INM had implemented programs and policies and was working toward the betterment of the condition of women (BORDES and BATISTA, 2009; CANEPALE, 2009; GARCIA, 2009; INTERVIEW MONTEVIDEO, 2009; MEDINA, 2009; MEZA, 2009; SIMOIS, 2009). However, they believed that the INM lacked the resources, staff, and power to bring about real changes regarding the condition of women. In fact, most of their positive outlook stemmed from the role of the INM's leader at the time of the interviews, and the comparison between the INM and the previous WPA (BORDES and BATISTA, 2009; GARCIA, 2009; INTERVIEW MONTEVIDEO, 2009; MEDINA, 2009; MEZA, 2009; NOCETTI, 2009; SIMOIS, 2009). Consequently, although the INM was very new and had insufficient power, interviewees believed that it represented a positive and important change with respect to previous WPAs. They also believed that it had provided the organisations permanent access inside the government. The difference between the former WPAs and the INM was due partly to

the presence of a former member of the movement in the WPA, though the movement had not intended to place her there.

Figure 4: Mechanisms used to influence the political sphere in Uruguay

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Apart from the INM, within the executive branch the organisations interacted with the Ministry of Health as well as with municipalities and local authorities (BORDES and BATISTA, 2009; GARCIA, 2009; INTERVIEW MONTEVIDEO, 2009; MEDINA, 2009). Usually, women's organisations had a good relationship with Congress, especially with the women's caucus, though not all organisations had a regular relationship with Congress. In one case, the interviewee commented that the organisation wanted to keep some distance from Congress, in order to be able to criticise the institution (SIMOIS, 2009). Normally, organisations established relationships with Congress through umbrella organisations, namely Red Uruguaya and CNS, and in connection with those specific bills that the organisations wished to influence. They first contacted the umbrella organisations in order to press for the approval of the bills (BORDES and BATISTA, 2009; MEDINA, 2009). Also, in the case of more sensitive issues such as abortion, women's organisations established strategic alliances with organisations that were not part of the women's movement, particularly organisations from the labour movement, to exert extra pressure on legislators (INTERVIEW MONTEVIDEO, 2009). In most cases, the relationship was with congresswomen — though its stability varied — and only very exceptionally had the organisations tried to establish alliances with congressmen. However, the majority of Congress members are men and the organisations believed that without such alliances they could not attain the desired legislation (BORDES and BATISTA, 2009; INTERVIEW MONTEVIDEO, 2009; MEDINA, 2009; MEZA, 2009; SIMOIS, 2009).

Interviewees highlighted the importance of the women's caucus in developing legislation on women's issues. Congresswomen lobbied for all women's issues, except abortion (BORDES and BATISTA, 2009; CANEPALE, 2009; GARCIA, 2009; MEDINA, 2009; MEZA, 2009; NOCETTI, 2009; SIMOIS, 2009). Interviewees stressed the role of Glenda Roldan, a

former Congresswoman from a right-wing party with roots in the Catholic Church. She was in the women's caucus and worked for women's issues, at least those on which the women's caucus managed to agree (BORDES and BATISTA, 2009; INTERVIEW MONTE-VIDEO, 2009; MEZA, 2009). Interviewees also suggested that women were more aware about violence and more convinced of the need to take measures, which is why congress-women contribute so much to the development of legislation (INTERVIEW MONTEVIDEO, 2009; MEZA, 2009; NOCETTI, 2009; SIMOIS, 2009). One of the interviewees had taken part in the development of the bill regarding DVAW (Law 17.514), and she described the process thus:

> "when they (congresswomen) had the draft of the bill, they invited several or-ganisations so as to form a group to work from different perspectives…I started to participate in the meetings from my mainly human rights perspective, and we brought complementary knowledge and we made up a good group with peo-ple contributing their expertise. We were having meetings with congresswomen twice a week in Congress to improve the original draft, which underwent many modifications. The law was passed because of a very shocking event: a man killed his wife and children with a hammer'' (MEZA, 2009).

She explained also that the government did not have any influence in the drafting and approval of the law (MEZA, 2009).

The above description shows several aspects of the legislative process. First, that congresswomen were involved in working on the project, rather than a committee or a mixed group of Congress members. Second, that there was a close collaboration between congresswomen and the women's organisations. Finally, that the will of the congress-women was not enough and that a dramatic event had to occur in order for the whole Congress to be persuaded to pass the bill. These points refer to the critical mass concept and the importance of a specific percentage. In this case, given that the congresswomen did not constitute a critical mass, they could not pass the bill or persuade their colleagues to do so. However, they did function as a critical mass in determining the content of the bill.

In addition to direct collaboration, women's organisations presented expert opin-ions to the committees that were discussing a bill or to any committee that required those opinions (INTERVIEW MONTEVIDEO, 2009; SIMOIS, 2009). Furthermore, women's or-ganisations had sometimes organised petitions to show Congress that a specific subject had popular support, thus pressing it for approval of a bill (NOCETTI, 2009). Organisations also negotiated the issue but without making the negotiations public. They only negotiated publicly when they knew that in a particular case this was the best way to achieve a result (NOCETTI, 2009).

To sum up, the Uruguayan structure did not necessarily close the opportunities to women's organisations, but nor did it open them. Some actors, both in the WPA and in Congress, gave them access to the policymaking process, though the influence of these ac-

tors was not sufficient to pass legislation or approve policies on their own. Additionally, the pressure that organisations could exert was not enough, needing additional sympathetic actors or external factors that could make the difference.

Conclusion

The information collected shows that in all four countries women's organisations interacted with the WPA. The data from the questionnaires does not show the existence of any clear-cut difference among the countries that could derive from the status of their WPA. However, in the two cases where the WPA enjoyed a high status, namely Brazil and Chile, women's organisations interacted with the WPA whenever they wanted to influence policies and legislation; on the other hand, in those countries with a low status WPA, namely Argentina and Uruguay, the organisations did not interact with the WPA when they wanted to influence legislation, only when they intended to influence policies. The data suggests that when a WPA has low status, women's organisations cannot seek support for the development of legislation, since the WPA does not have power to influence this process. Additionally, in the countries with a high status WPA, women's organisations favoured the interaction with the WPA over interactions with other institutions of the executive branch, whereas in countries with a low status WPA women's organisations interacted with either the WPA and ministries equally (Argentina) or preferred to interact with other ministries (Uruguay). Consequently, WPAs are always an access point to the political sphere for women's movements — independently of status, focus, and other factors. Nevertheless, women's organisations need other executive branch institutions to support their demands, especially when the WPA's status within the executive branch does not rank highly.

Although in each case women's organisations interacted with the WPA, the relations between them varied. The analysis showed that the background of the WPA's leader and especially her view of women's issues affected the quality of the relationship that women's organisations were able to establish with the institution. In fact, whenever the WPA's leader came from women's organisations, or when the leader was sensitive to women's issues, women's organisations were able to collaborate and interact more easily with the WPA than when its leader came from other spheres or had different sensitivities. The same holds true for the staff of the WPA, although their influence on the quality of the relationship between organisations and WPAs was less significant. Additionally, it appears as if the interaction between women's organisations and WPAs depended much more on some characteristics of the latter — focus, composition, power — than on some strategic decision of women's organisations. This idea is in agreement with the notion that the opportunities opening for social movements within political structures are more decisive a factor than the specific strategies decided by the movements themselves (McADAM et al., 1996).

Collaboration between women's organisations and a WPA improve when the WPA has established some permanent formal or informal channel of communication with the

organisations. In the case of Uruguay, for example, women's organisations engaged in a permanent dialogue with the WPA and collaborated in the development of policies, while, in the case of Chile, the organisations suggested policies and legislation and made demands but did not really develop policies and draft bills jointly with the WPA. This finding also points to the possibility that the relevance of the opportunities opened by the political institutions for the movement is higher than that of the opportunities created by the movement itself. Finally, women's organisations, in each of the four countries, interacted with ministries and other political institutions for two main reasons: first, because the WPAs did not have enough power and, therefore, women's organisations searched for institutions that were able to develop and implement relevant measures and policies. Second, because these political institutions dealt with some specific areas that the women's organisations wanted to influence: for example, education and health.

In women organisations' interactions with Congress, women legislators are in fact their main allies. In all four cases, women's organisations contacted congresswomen to suggest a bill or to influence a bill that was already in development. In three of the cases — Argentina, Chile and Uruguay — the women's organisations identified specific congresswomen to help them access the legislative process; this supports the literature claiming that the roles or acts of critical actors are more relevant than the role of a critical mass (CHILDS and KROOK, 2006, 2008). In each of the cases, women's organisations recognised that congresswomen in general supported bills regarding violence against women, but they were divided on other issues, like abortion. Therefore, gender identification can be the most important consideration when the issue is neither of a doctrinal nor of a socioeconomic nature (HTUN and WELDON, 2010). In that case, critical mass could entail the approval of a bill. The variation arises in the remainder of the policymaking process. In Argentina, with a high proportion of congresswomen, the organisations had access to the legislative process; they could make specific suggestions and they believed that they had an impact on the final legislation. It was mainly congresswomen who discussed the bills and negotiated with congressmen for their support of legislation. In Uruguay, where congresswomen held a low percentage of seats but had formed a women's caucus, congresswomen and women's organisations collaborated in the drafting process before congresswomen negotiated with their male colleagues. However, by itself such negotiation was insufficient. This conclusion supports the idea that, when women legislators do not occupy a high percentage of seats in Congress, women's organisations are required to exert extra pressure in order to obtain the legislation they demand.

In Brazil and Chile, some specific congresswomen requested the intervention of the executive and the collaboration of women's organisations in order to influence the final legislation. Consequently, there were normally some specific congresswomen who were the main allies of women's organisations and who initiated legislation on women's issues. Congresswomen in general supported legislation regarding DVAW and violence

against women, but not necessarily other issues. Finally, congresswomen only made a difference to the final approval of legislation when they occupied a high percentage of seats in Congress; when they did not occupy enough seats, they required additional institutional support or other factors that were useful to put pressure on Congress. These variations in the legislature formations were shown to have an impact on the strategies used by women's movements. When the percentage of women legislators is low, in order to increase the pressure on the legislature women's organisations were shown to turn to the social sphere or the WPA. In addition, these results suggest that for some issues, such as DVAW, critical mass could make a significant difference to the approval of a bill. However, for doctrinal or socioeconomic issues and in those cases where there is not critical mass, the critical act of some congresswomen is likely to be the most relevant factor.

To sum up, this research has shown that more than women's organisations varying their strategies according to the political scenario they face, it is the latter that opens opportunities which the organisations take advantage of. Thus, with high status WPAs, the organisations interacted to influence both policies and legislations, whereas with low status WPAs, the organisations interacted mainly to influence policies. In this scenario, they also searched for alliances with other political institutions, to assure their access to the policymaking process. The research has also shown that personal factors, such as the background and view of the leader and staff of the WPA can play a more relevant role than the WPA's status in terms of actual access to the policymaking process. In Congress, on the other hand, access to the policymaking process on DVAW was opened up by women legislators and women caucuses, in accord with the literature about critical actors. However, critical mass can make the difference in the final approval of a bill. Based on these results, future research might want to focus further on the variation in the actors relevant to the policymaking process regarding different women's issues, such as the church, and other social movements.

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