

# Does Politics even use Lipstick? A study on power, gender, and legitimacy in Brazilian Politics

¿Realmente la política se pinta los labios? Un estudio sobre poder, género y legitimidad en la política brasileña

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*Abstract.* Although societies have made some progress in gender equality, in most countries, women remain a minority in parliaments. In Brazil, women work, vote, syndicate, and exercise other fundamental rights. However, in many areas, especially those related to work, the participation of women still needs to be questioned, as is the case of political participation. This investigation aimed to investigate how Brazilian female political representatives see the scenario of female participation in the country's politics. For this, the theories of the Glass Ceiling with that of Max Weber's Legitimacy of Power were associated. The study is qualitative in the qualitative approach and the narrative method, with structured interviews applied to state and federal deputies and Brazilian senators; the discourse analysis technique was used. The fusion of the two theories provided resources for the analysis of power if considered gender and the understanding of the role of sexism in the low rates of female participation in politics. There is a vicious circle in which the female population hardly gets involved in public life because it oversees private life and the few women who participate face many obstacles. It is up to the parties' fundamental role to include women in their staff, not only to comply with Brazilian legal provisions but also to eradicate the idea that politics is masculine.

*Keywords:* Glass Ceiling, Legitimation, Power, Gender, Politics.

*Resumen.* Aunque las sociedades han hecho algunos progresos en materia de igualdad de género, en la mayoría de los países las mujeres siguen siendo minoría en los parlamentos. En Brasil, las mujeres trabajan, votan, se sindicalizan y ejercen otros derechos fundamentales.

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\*The authors would like to highlight that this metaphor with the Lipstick is for emphasizes how women still need to fight for space in politics. So, we "play" with the idea that more colorful Lipstick would be like more space for women in politics. Moreover, making the paper more attractive at first sight for the reader is good.

Sin embargo, en muchos ámbitos, sobre todo los relacionados con el trabajo, la participación de las mujeres sigue siendo objeto de cuestionamiento, como es el caso de la representación política. El objetivo de la presente investigación fue investigar cómo ven las representantes políticas brasileñas el escenario de la participación femenina en la política del país. Como fundamento teórico se utilizó las teorías del Techo de Cristal con la Legitimidad del Poder de Max Weber. El estudio es de abordaje cualitativo y el método utilizado narrativo, con entrevistas estructuradas aplicadas a las diputadas provinciales y federales y a las senadoras brasileñas. Para el análisis de los datos se utilizó la técnica del análisis del discurso. La fusión de las dos teorías proporcionó recursos para el estudio del poder si se considera el género y la comprensión del papel del sexismo en los bajos índices de participación femenina en la política. Se da un círculo vicioso en el que la población femenina casi no se involucra en la vida pública, porque se encarga de la vida privada; y en el que las pocas mujeres que participan se enfrentan a muchos obstáculos. Corresponde a los partidos el papel fundamental de incluir a las mujeres en su plantilla; no sólo para cumplir con las disposiciones legales brasileñas, sino también para erradicar la idea de que la política es masculina..

*Keywords:* Techo de cristal, Legitimación, Poder, Género, Política.

## 1. Introduction

The Western world is progressively developing gender equity, especially in education, culture, security, and specific public policies. Changes are slow and shallow from the angle of a hierarchical division of labor (Vaz, 2013; Duarte & Spinelli, 2019). In Brazil, the Federal Constitution of 1988, in its 5th article, ensured that in the eyes of the law, all are equal in rights and obligations. However, the rights granted to men must also prevail for women. *Liberdade* of manifestation and association, conscience and belief, for the exercise of any work, universal suffrage, among other rights, are also guaranteed by the Constitution (BRASIL, 2016).

Despite this situation and a growing perception of women's space gain in many areas, female participation is still to be problematized. In politics, only from the late 1980s, women begin to insert themselves, and yet, in a subtle way. In the second decade of the 21st century, despite the Brazilian population being 51.7% of Brazilian voters (IBGE, 2016<sup>1</sup>), and having already had a woman in the face of the presidency of the Republic, the presence of women in positions of political representation is still little expressive. In 1995, Electoral Law 9,100 was enacted, which states that female candidacies must provide at least 20% of the seats of each party or coalition. In 2009, the Superior Electoral Court – TSE adjusted this percentage to 30% of women holding representation positions. Even so, female representation remains almost unchanged two decades later (PORTAL BRASIL, 2012).

Political parties need help complying with the legislation and attracting women to their staff. The phenomenon of lower female participation in politics is a problem that represents itself as more complex than just numbers once the political parties act, corroborating how society is structured. Historically, the parties are controlled by men and most public and private organizations. The small percentage of women who hold management positions do not do so because of ineptitude, female malpractice, or the lack of women able to represent society but instead of the discrepancy between the filling of spaces by men and women.

<sup>1</sup> The most current version of the survey dates from the year 2016.

Exist in society and the thought that politics is a masculine space and that women in the political environment are not in their proper place. Women are prone to underplay politics by reinforcing the practice of archaic conduct that women need permission to enter the field of politics since traditional power relations are prevalent between genders (Perrot, 2017). The lack of interest in women in politics may be due to the lack of training opportunities, public interest, and inequalities that end up demotivating this aspect (Firmino, 2020).

Historically fought roasters continue to exist even if they may seem invisible, clearly an example of the Glass Ceiling Theory. The theory describes the existence of obstacles that so tenuously seem translucent but still exist and suffice to prevent the female rise to hierarchical positions, affecting a contingent of women in a particular way, such as the case of women in politics (Steil, 1997). Political parties need help complying with the legislation and attracting women to their staff. There is a problem that presents itself as more complex than a question of numbers. Political parties emulate how society is structured, which is more prejudiced than other questions about female participation in politics. Historically, the parties are managed by men and most public and private organizations (Miguel & Biroli, 2014). The short percentage of women who hold management positions do not do so because of ineptitude, female malpractice, or the lack of women able to represent society but instead of the discrepancy between the filling of spaces by men and women.

In daily organizational life, the successive exclusion of women from hierarchical positions can represent the mirror, still existing, of the principles, morals, and male standards, in which such spaces are not relevant to the female sex, which even leads to a “masculinization” of women to fit the positions (Henderson, Ferreira & Dutra, 2016). The peculiarities and feminine attributes, and their actions and conduct, are considered by many as inadequate and justify the claim that women do not fit high positions (Shipani et al., 2009).

In this context, this paper aims to investigate how, in the perception of female political representatives, being a female ruler can weigh on the course of their **mandates**. **Also, it wants to investigate how political representatives see female participation in Brazilian politics from their experiences in public management positions. Furthermore, identify how gender-related facts can influence the view that the people and civil society have associated with their image and the viability of their mandates.**

The study is justified by the importance of conducting research based on the perception of the few female political representatives of contemporary times. It is necessary to understand the issues of representation and the legitimacy of women’s power in Brazilian politics to make significant changes in this scenario. The following topics are the theoretical arguments supporting the analyses performed to answer the research objectives.

## 2. Glass ceiling

Different theories have been constructed to understand why racial and gender differences exist within organizations. Some of these claims that there are differences between women and minorities argue that the low representation of minorities is responsible for

their differentiated treatment. Other studies argue that discrimination on the part of the population is the leading cause of inequalities because the prejudices and stereotypes practiced by white men in power are responsible for the slow progress of women and minorities. Moreover, a third active focus identifies discrimination as a systemic, structural, and entrenched process; in which society discriminates by offering differentiated treatment to some to the detriment of others, reaffirming inequalities and, therefore, the policies and practices disseminated in the social system, perpetuating the discriminatory treatment of women (Morrison & Glinow, 1990).

The concept that sought to prove the persistent inequalities between genders was the Glass Ceiling (Steil, 1997). It indicates the occurrence of subtle and invisible barriers, but existing and impossible the rise of women to hierarchical positions within organizations, using biological differences between genders as the basis for this differentiation between the sexes (Folke & Rickne, 2016).

Within organizations, the selection processes of promotion to high position positions can be skewed by abstract concepts of gender stereotypes rooted in society (Ramos & Félix, 2019). This scenario is still very present nowadays. What feeds the existence of the Glass Ceiling is the presence of numerous career plans and positions or functions divided between those that must be filled by men and those that women must fill, in which men compete with those of greater visibility and power (Shipani et al., 2009; Moreira, Fleck & Viana 2020).

The precepts of domination and excellence can incite judgments about skills and competencies and result in vicious tendencies, in which the idea of vocation and propensity is intertwined with the analyses of the social personality of the subject who is unimportant to professional competence (Chies, 2010). Impartiality in professions should have long been a practice. Science, being neutral, should no longer exalt skills that result from the social, ethnic, or gender-based levels belonging to some individuals and should no longer place them as determining factors of success or competence (Shipani et al., 2009). Most women hold positions that require a low degree of authority and remuneration in organizations. Such a situation is the same in government institutions (Morrison & Glinow, 1990; Vaz, 2013).

In the United States and much of the West, the glass ceiling phenomenon is erroneously attributable less to structural and organizational barriers. That notorious sexual segregation plays a role in restricting the entry of female individuals to high levels of management, especially for Afro-descendant women (Shipani et al., 2009). Female subordination concerning males is thought of society, independent of profession or occupation; from minors to higher positions, women will generally be less recognized (Chies, 2010; Moreira, Fleck & Viana, 2020). Men and women tend to use different styles of leadership and power, and these differences reinforce stereotypes. (Shipani et al., 2009).

A women's study (2016) conducted by *Overview* and with the cooperation of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Getúlio Vargas Foundation – FGV, Institute of Applied Economic Research – IPEA, UN Women itself, Municipal Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality - SMPIR of the City of São Paulo and the International Labor Organization - ILO; published by the Ethos Institute in May 2016, analyzed the social, racial and gender profile of the 500 largest companies in Brazil in the fields of industry, commerce, services,

and agricultural products and their affirmative actions. It was the sixth edition of the research, which is further characterized as the only research on gender and the labor market in the country. The results showed that most organizations that answer respondents do not have affirmative actions that stimulate the participation of women and blacks. When companies have them, they are usually ephemeral interventions and not concrete policies; most organizations do not even have that kind of policy. Very few organizations have facilitating aspects between personal and professional life or mechanisms responsible for reporting bullying or racial harassment. Companies are little concerned about advertising campaigns of discriminatory content; the training and training of employees, as well as strategic guidelines (mission, vision, values, objectives, and others), also exclude the approach to the theme of diversity and gender equality (UN WOMEN, 2016).

The research shows that, within organizations, the female gender is interiorized compared to the male. A narrowing of opportunities for hierarchical positions results in female exclusion, which is very present in the reality of the unequal filling of high-scale positions. In the executive board, for example, women had almost equal participation in 2010, with 13.7%, and in 2016 with 13.6%. Figure 1 shows the distribution by gender concerning the positions in the organizations surveyed in 2016<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 1.** *Distribution of positions by gender.*

	<b>Man</b>	<b>Woman</b>
Management Board	89,0	11,0
Executive Committee	86,4	13,6
Management	68,7	31,3
Supervising	61,2	38,8
Staff	64,5	35,5
Trainees	57,4	42,6
Intern	41,1	58,9
Student	44,1	55,9

*Source: UN Women (2016).*

Although little mentioned, the Glass Ceiling is a reality in public organizations. Multiple indications show that the glass ceiling does not evade the public sector because, even Today, the cases in which women fill high positions in public management or even in public teaching and research organizations are fortuitous. (Vaz, 2013). Arbitrarily to what can be imagined because even the public tender is the gateway to the investiture of public office. Moreover, even the filling of technical positions generally depends on approval in events. The Glass Ceiling is also present in public careers, needing to be more problematized to the point of seeming nonexistent.

According to Fontenele-Mourão (2006), the heterogeneity of female participation in the different spheres of the administrative hierarchy of the public sector is not exclusive to Brazil, as this scenario can also be perceived in countries such as Great Britain, the United States, Australia, and Canada. In France, the Glass Ceiling in public organizations also

shows no way of overcoming, even though the laws of France, as well as those of Brazil, establish the promotion of competitions for public office and guarantee parity of rights due to career plans; segregation in the hierarchy remains the reality:

[...] although women represent 59.1% of the 5.2 million public servants, they occupy 16% of the management positions... the low female representation in command positions is verified in the three segments in which the French State is divided. In the central government [*État*], 6, 8 women represent 50.8% of the staff, with only 15.3% of the [exclusive military] leaders. In public services related to the administrative subdivisions of territories 7 or 9. They see their representation –which is 61%– decrease to 16.1% in the upper hierarchy. Finally, in public health, 8,10, although they make up more than 3/4 of the servers, are only 16.4% of the leaders. [Direction Générale de l'Administration et de la Fonction Publique – DGAFP, 2008 apud VAZ, 2013 p. 772].

According to Vaz (2013), in Brazil, the hypothesis of the occurrence of the glass ceiling in the public area promoted research that aimed to investigate the conceptions and opinions of leaders regarding the presence of women in high public management positions. The National School of Public Administration – ENAP conducted 2006 a qualitative and quantitative survey with the holders of senior management and advisory functions – DAS, as well as ministers, executive secretaries, and some advisors to the Presidency of the Republic. Most male respondents reported that they do not consider gender inequality in the echelons; the finding of discriminatory practices against the female gender was higher among respondents (85%) and (57%) among men. Discrimination was mainly observed by the lower frequency of female participation in the highest levels and by the way women are spoken to, mentioned by 35% of male respondents (Vaz, 2013).

Since then, no further studies have been observed, deepening the issue confirming the argument that research on Glass Ceiling in the public area is still primary and not comprehensive, mainly exploring aspects related to the work of managing women professors in public universities, as can be identified in a search in the SPELL database. In the last five years (2017 to 2021), eight articles have been published that mention the Glass Ceiling theory. They only mention women and management in a public organization (Grangeiro & Militão, 2020), and none speaks of women in politics.

In 2011, for example, Dilma Rousseff was sworn in as Brazil's first female president. Rousseff ended up suffering prejudice for being single, older, unfeminine, and with an assertive stance (Palacios, Fleck & Abbondanza, 2021). In addition to other political issues of the opposition, Rousseff faced the construction of her public image linked to gender stereotypes. She was often compared to other women, such as Marcela Temer, the young wife of former vice president Michel Temer considered “beauty, maidenlike and housewife” (Palacios; Fleck & Abbondanza, 2021). In 2016, she suffered an impeachment process that, among other things, highlighted gender bias in the discourses of male politicians as a backdrop.

By exploring the occurrence of the glass ceiling in public organizations and bringing the debate to Brazilian society and parliamentarians, may be aware of the current conditions and characteristics of female participation in politics and public bodies.

### 3. Power and domination as Max Weber

Domination is understood as the occasion when a desire of the dominator or the dominant agents is made explicit about exerting influence on the attitudes of others; the dominated. The dominator of the dominant agents succeeds in such a way that the dominated appropriate this desire and execute it as if they departed from themselves. Thus, the command can prove compelling about warrants due to factors such as intuition, inspiration, or rational persuasion, or the association of these three elements that cause a particular origin on the part of the warrants. The warrants can then accept the representative out of fear, the conviction of agreement, by obligation, by habit, or to obtain individual income. To guarantee domination, the acts of the dominant must be concerning the principles of the legitimation of power (Weber, 2012).

For Weber (2012), the validity of power and domination is manifested through a set of rational norms that can be determined or agreed upon and which rules result in obedience to the dominant individual. This system of rules legitimizes the trustee, and his power is seen as legitimate as long as he exercises it under the agreed norms. That is, there is much more obedience to the norms than the figure of the trustee, but the power can also be based on the personal authority verified.

The power of command in personal authority, according to Weber (2012), is based on tradition, in what is customary and which can preserve obedience before specific individuals. Alternatively, arbitrarily, is based on the belief in the extraordinary. Moreover, in the charisma, individuals who may bestow or benefactors are considered prophets or heroes of any nature. For Weber (2012), these types of leaders represent what the author places as pure fundamental types of the structure of domination. The combination of pure types results in the profiles and affirmation of domination: charismatic, traditional, or rational-legal. Through these three categories of domination, the dominator imposes legitimacy on the dominant. A dominator does not exclusively exercise one type of domination; because when domination occurs, even if tenuous, characteristics of the other types are manifested (Weber, 2012).

Charismatic power emanates from the presence of particular attributes considered exceptional and is presented when supernatural powers or qualities are conferred on a given individual (Weber, 2012). For Bergue (2010), political leaders and rulers, in general, present the charisma as a determined; characteristic that is seen as a valuable means of domination.

Traditional power comes from faith in the superiority of traditions. Obedience and obedience are provided to the individual who best represents tradition and translates everyday habits to a given place (Weber, 2012). For Bergue (2010), the powerful traditional families, whose position derives from the historical trajectory in the economic and political scenario, exemplify this type of power. In this pure type, the loyalty of the followers of the traditional leader establishes the nature of the given orders (Ibid).

The rational-legal type as a form of legitimation is in the conviction of individuals in juridical law, rules, and laws. The individual who exercises this type of domination does

so because of rationality (Weber, 2012). According to Bergue (2010), the belief of groups in the lawfulness of laws and administrative acts legitimizes the power emanating from the rational-legal type.

According to Weber (2012), historically, when the social action of a form of domination is based on the rational associative link, its pure type is in bureaucracy since the patriarchal model exercised social action based on traditional authorities. The composition of charismatic domination is sustained by an authority whose characteristics are not based on either rational or traditional thoughts.

Thus, Weber's theory is associated with the theory of the Glass Ceiling when elements presented as relevant to the exercise of power and legitimacy may be linked to gender. In his theory about power and legitimation, Weber did not address the gender factor. Supposedly because, in the historical context of the time of his writings, as a rule, women did not exercise positions of power.

The theory of the Glass Ceiling deals with the issue of women in high hierarchical positions and the subtle barriers they face in the exercise of power and the process of professional ascension. A more current and, therefore, more comprehensive theory in this respect may complement the understanding of the nuances that concern power.

#### 4. Method

This article has a qualitative approach and descriptive-exploratory character. Its objective was to investigate, as in the perception of female political representatives, how exercising office in politics and being a woman can weigh on their mandates. Whereas the theories used are already consolidated, considering them individually. However, bringing them closer to work brings a different perspective on analysis. It is considered that the descriptive-exploratory character is appropriate and its definition. The same for the qualitative approach, since it is about exploring the perceptions of women who work in politics from reports of their experiences.

The work was developed in the form of a narrative inquiry. As pointed out by Creswell (2014), this type of study presents an equally wide variety of analyses from the experiences reported by individuals. In the narrative inquiry, the focus is on the individual's life, starting with the significance of his experiences. This study requires the researcher to look closely at the particularities of the individual or group researched to capture, discern and group the reports and experiences of the same (Creswell, 2014). There needs to be constant cooperation between researcher and researcher so that one can examine the stories told. Once again, thinking about the objective of the research, the narratives on the experiences lived by these women throughout their trajectories in politics demonstrate the adequacy of the narrative inquiry method as a strategy to answer the research question.

The data collection technique used was the online interview through a self-administered online form sent to women who occupy positions of political representation in the country. The choice of the way to conduct the interviews was for convenience so that po-



litical representatives from all over the country (congresswoman and state representatives) could be covered, and a wealth of information and details about a subject as personal as gender and its implications for women's daily lives could be obtained.

Most of these women indicated that they would be the most effective way to participate in the research since the demands of their agendas made it challenging to schedule interview hours simultaneously, in person or online. The women participating were all those who were willing to contribute to the research. We chose to contact all women fulfilling their mandates at the state and federal levels and accept all those who responded to the research as study participants.

Discourse analysis was used in data analysis. For Orlandi (2003), no discourse analyzes the spoken individual; discourse analysis understands language as a precious means between the individual and his social reality, in which the analysis cannot only conceive the language as an abstract system but as a way to give meaning to what was expressed by the individual. Discourse analysis is essential in the study because it enriches the research by allowing the researcher to analyze what was said between the lines. That is, what the language or the form and language allow to deepen beyond the counting and categorizing words.

A message was forwarded to the institutional emails of all congresswomen, federal deputies in office, and all state representatives of the State of Rio Grande do Sul.<sup>2</sup>, along with a letter of presentation of the research proposal and instructions. After that, forms were sent to the institutional mails of every political representative who expressed intention to participate in the research.

Seventeen returns confirmed the participation, but only eight responses have received the survey, two senators, three federal deputies, and three state deputies from different parties, both left, and proper orientation. It attributes little adhering to the flaws that may occur in the system of redirecting emails sent to institutional addresses to the personal accounts of political representatives or advisors. To preserve anonymity, when reporting the statements of the respondents, we chose to name them by their position followed by a number according to the order of reply to the online form.

## 5. Presentation and discussion of results

The first question was how the scenario of female participation in the country's politics is perceived. State Representative 1 reported that *"Women are still underrepresented in Brazilian politics. The minor political reform has not changed in any way the female representation. Our current scenario is the worst-case scenario in recent years, where a woman suffered a coup d'état, President Dilma Rousseff was prevented without any crime [...] I was elected a councilwoman when a minority of women came to power in the 1980s. We still have a long way to go."* The placement of the congresswoman corroborates the proposition of Portal Brasil (2012) that despite the minimum quotas of female candidacies pro-

<sup>2</sup> Only women of Rio Grande do Sul participated because of the proximity of the researchers with this State.

vided for through electoral law 9,100 of the year 1995 and the increase in the minimum percentage of applications in 2009, female representation has hardly suffered increases; political parties still appear to have difficulties with compliance with such quotas and society itself may present resistance to female participation.

It is assumed that little participation or under-representation is a sociological phenomenon because, in society, there are still positions and functions classified for men other than those classified for women, in which men have the most power and evidence (Shipani et al., 2009; Moreira, Fleck & Viana, 2020). The congresswoman puts it that with the removal of former President Dilma Rousseff, the framework of participation in politics has regressed. This placement may also be due to the positions of gender equality rankings and the possible decrease in Brazil's position with the impeachment of Rousseff.

The speech of Senator 1 illustrates the statements of the previous respondent. When reporting the percentage of the female population in the country and the percentage of female political representatives, *"We have a scenario of under-representation. We are 52% of the population, but women are represented in the National Congress in the order of only 10% [...]"*. The speech reinforces the said by Perrot (2017), where the non-participation of women is not the only thought of male individuals but of subjects of both sexes and; women, when aiming to participate only in the social and or informal terrain, are inclined to ignore the policy of robust the practice of obsolete behaviors, which dictate that they lack consent to dent in politics since traditionally power relations are predominant between genders.

Congresswoman 1 said, *"[...] women are not yet represented in the spaces of power. Although we have already come a long way, with some victories, there is still much to do for women to be represented in percentage and diversity. Generally speaking, this is bad for politics and specifically feminine agendas, which end up being seconded or ignored [...]"*. Some benches defend various flags within politics. In the current political system, it is necessary to have the political strength to pass projects and laws. With under-representation, public and health policies aimed at women, for example, can stay off the agenda.

For Morrison and Glinow (1990), some theories identify discrimination as a systemic, structural, and ingrained process and that society, by offering differentiated treatment to one to the detriment of others, reaffirms inequality. Therefore, the policies and practices disseminated in the social system perpetuate the discriminatory treatment of women, which may justify the lack of women in public spaces.

State Representative 2 also points out, *"The participation of women in Brazilian politics is a shame. Brazil is one of the countries with the lowest female participation. Here, more than 50% of the eligible electorate comprises women. However, the Federal House of Representatives has only 45 women out of 513. There are only eight of us in the Legislative Assembly of RS, out of 56 [...]"*. The response of the State Representative illustrates that just as in the Senate, in the Gaucho Assembly, the numbers of elected members still need to be improved.

Soon after, still in her answer to the same question, State Representative 2 reports: *"[...] now, running away from the numbers, I will talk a little about how I feel, acting as a state representative in RS. The Legislative House is still a very macho environment. Most Members have a double journey. I, for one, am almost always with my children. [...]"* However,

*the spaces here are not humanized at all. The members and members of the Legislature do not have, for example, a space to breastfeed their children or store the milk they remove from the breast [...] I have a bill of breastfeeding support rooms, which makes public and private companies, with a certain number of employees, be required to have space for employees to store their baby's milk [...]. However, the projects could be more active in the Legislative Assembly. Members do not give due value. Besides the issue of breastfeeding, which is not valued at all, I also do not feel comfortable bringing children here because it bothers some people. For me, it is a need to be with them. I cannot let politics make me out. However, many see this as "opportunism" on the part of women. I feel uncomfortable. There needs to be aware that we women have a double journey. My husband helps a lot, but whether he likes it or not, he is the woman with the most responsibility for her children."*

The report on the double days of women, the lack of interest in the agenda of issues pertinent to women, the division of spaces between females and males, and the issue of breastfeeding reflect a situation experienced in other spaces such as organizations, for example. According to Shipani et al. (2009), the characteristics and attributes of women, as well as their actions and behaviors, considered by many to be inappropriate, serve to justify the argument that women do not fit in the exercise of positions with high power. Statements such as that women do not prioritize their careers; they do not like to take risks; they fear asking for an increase; be afraid of success, or that after obtaining training from organizations, they will marry and raise a family, giving up their positions, still inhabit the popular imagination and end up hindering or harming the performance of women.

Congresswoman 2.- *"We are a majority of the population and voters, and we have only 55 members, equivalent to 10.7% of the seats and 13 senators, 16% of the 81 parliamentarians. We hope that PEC 134/2015, which sets quotas for women in Parliament, will be approved and help reduce this inequality. The world's average female presence is 22.1%. The average female presence in Middle Eastern countries is 16%. Brazil is after nations where women's rights are restricted".* Despite the advances that the West has been experiencing in gender equity, for Steil (1997), the changes are few if the thought of in the angle of a hierarchical division of labor. This narrative of the political representative reaffirms what Steil (1997) mentions as an exclusion of women to positions evident in organizations that are seen as male spaces.

State Representative 3 commented: *"I think there are some advances, but there is still a lot to improve. Women can and should participate much more and occupy the spaces with quality. We are more than half the population, but we are far from having a proportional representation in governments and parliaments throughout Brazil."* Thus, although we already have women in public spaces, female participation is simple.

Senator 2.- *"It must be said that I observe the scenario from the point of view of militant and encourage women's participation in politics. I often say that this is the key agenda that can change the course and the referral of all other agendas of interest to women. Therefore, as The Senate's Women's Attorney, we take the women's caucus of senators and congress members forward, the More Women in Politics project. As one of the products of this initiative, we have published books, maps, and research results that help us monitor women's*

*political participation, not only in the Legislature but also to pay close to the Executive and the Judiciary. Thus, I can say, objectively, that about the powers of the State, we live in a scenario of great reflux of female participation, nod. Also accusing the effects of this coup, the municipal elections of 2016 show a scenario of great concern since 1,290 municipalities did not elect a councilwoman even, for their Chambers [...] answer to your question, cannot be restricted to the scope of the State. I think there is the political field of social movements, in which the growing prominence of women led them to hold large demonstrations such as the March of the Daisies and the March of Black Women. They show that, increasingly, we do not speak only in the singular –in “woman”– when talking about female participation, but in a plural, “women,” necessary to include a large set in which there are harmonies and contradictions, linked to everyday struggles and specific struggles [...] “*

There is concern on the part of female representatives to monitor and stimulate the participation of more women in politics so that representativeness grows and, with it, the various agendas relevant to the female population gain visibility. There is a joint policy project that encourages participation not only in politics but also in other spaces of society. The Senator points out that the growing prominence of women has caused demonstrations to emerge that problematize specific struggles of black women, for example, because in addition to the under-representation of gender, there may be an under-representation of ethnic groups.

The second question referred to how and why the entry into politics occurred. The interviewees answered that their participation was motivated by several factors, including participation in the student movement during graduation; support of family members who already participated in public life and because they had a family political legacy; education and creation focused on the political debate; participation in professional trade unions; after performing social work and even after the premature loss of a child due to violence. Below are some answers:

State Deputy 1.– *“I started my social militancy in Youth Ministry in the late 1980s. I was a Member of CPERS (teachers’ union of the State of RS), and in 1992 I was elected councilwoman in Alvorada at the age of 26”.*

Congresswoman 1.– *“Politics has always been part of my daily life. My father was a teacher and a militant, so either by example or by conversations and debates at home, my mother is also attentive to events, and politics has always been present. So political militancy happened naturally when I went to the Faculty of Engineering [...]. I was part of the DCE and THE UNE”.*

State Deputy 2.– *“ I was born in a political environment. In my house, I often say we “breathe” politics daily. We were talking about politics-breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I grew up with my grandfather’s example. He has always been very attached to his grandchildren and present in my life. I grew up admiring him and his passion for the Brazilian people. I think it motivated me, over time, even without realizing it. He wanted me to be a judge. I got young in law school. However, the desire to change people’s lives and give dignity to those who need it most was greater. I have been affiliated with the party since I was 18. The party was my second home. I was always involved in the student movement. That is when I ran for the city council for the first time. I had much encouragement from people close to me because*

*of the last name; it would continue my grandfather's legacy. Nevertheless, we get "there" and realize that it is not easy at all."*

Congresswoman 2.- *"Social work in the area of health developed for people in need in Ceará boosted my entry into politics in 1988. I often say that I chose physical therapy and politics chose me."*

Senator 2.- *"It was from my entry into the student movement when I entered the university."*

Congresswoman 3.- *"I lost my eight-year-old son to urban violence and embraced the cause of the struggle for the end of impunity. I realized that we needed to update the laws, so I decided to go into politics to represent all mothers and families' victims of violence."* Regarding how they perceive the Brazilian population's receptivity about women's presence in politics, the representatives answered: Congresswoman 1 *"Still needs to evolve a lot. Voters absorb information but are not voting considering equity [...] we would have to have a better job, more awareness on the part of the subtitles. Men and women are different.*

*Furthermore, Today, Brazilian society is practically relieved of the strength that the woman's gaze would bring to Parliament if it could be on an equal footing in number or close to that, at least with men. It is a significant loss for our society, as attested by societies in which female political representation is more egalitarian, as the result of companies that look at the gender issue."* The member's speech refers to the possible damage that gender inequality can entail.

State Deputy 2.- *"I am always very well received where I come from. However, I often see that it is the surname that is very well accepted. I see colleagues not being very positive precisely because they are women. I know women who do amazing political work, but at the time of voting, the population still has some prejudice. Just look at the number of elected mayors in RS. We had only one elected governor as well [...]"*. This congresswoman is the granddaughter of a politician widely known in the country. When analyzing her response, it is perceived that she sees that the population legitimizes her as a parliamentarian because of the surname that binds her to her grandfather. The imagination of many voters can have meaning continuity of the work of the same who is already deceased. The link to a surname and a traditional family in a given branch that holds power is seen as an attribute of the pure type of power, suggested by Weber (2012), where traditional power comes from belief in the superiority of traditions. Obedience and deference are given to the individual who best represents tradition and translates everyday habits to a particular place. Therefore, from a sociological point of view, even if it faces mild barriers (which perhaps its political colleagues face for not carrying such a surname), its acceptance and legitimation of power as a woman and politics, it may owe more to its family tree and less to itself and its deeds, since gender can be determinant for the legitimation of power. She also talks about the excellent work done by her colleagues and that seeing the results of the polls may have less visibility since very few women were elected in the State.

Senator 1.- *"We have the arduous mission of fighting the long years of machismo. We have several negative points: the multiple workdays of the woman, the lack of incentive of the parties, win the confidence of the voter because if the woman does not have a family*

*political tradition, she needs to have a consolidated work that sustains her election.*” Again comes the question of a family political legacy linked to a candidate’s image. A remarkable trajectory and a good curriculum alone may not suffice to elect a political representative because society does not see the legitimacy of power from a rational-legal or charismatic point of view, but only in figures seen as traditional. The multiple working days, cited by the member, may not be attractive for the proposed women’s political candidacies since more than one respondent cites the lack of incentives from political parties. A paradigm can be identified when women are not elected, they may not be able to have consolidated political work, and not having a political job, they will not be elected either.

State Representative 3.– *“I think there is an increasing acceptance, even if there seems to be a resistance to choosing women representatives.”* Women are elected, but according to previous reports, there is still much resistance to electing them. Senator 2 reported: *“We had the opportunity to conduct important research in this regard. Conducted by the Data Senado Institute, the Women in Politics survey shows that for most Brazilians, the gender of the candidate does not interfere with the vote choice. Nevertheless, if the electorate says it has no restriction on the gender of candidates and claims to vote for women, how to explain then the low representation of women in politics? According to the survey, the lack of party support is the main reason for few women in politics [...]”*. The Senator’s speech affirms the initial proposition that despite the legislation, political parties need help fulfilling it and attracting women to the elections. Again the little female participation in politics is also linked to how parties think and act and how society organizes itself. If the population is unrestricted to voting only for men, the discrepancy between the filling of spaces by men and women may result from various factors. Congresswoman 3 replied that *“The stereotype of women who do not understand politics has decreased every day [...]”*. According to the speech, stereotypes that reinforce gender disparity have decreased; however, according to Steil (1997), drastic transformations or paradigms are rare. The consecutive exclusion of women to positions of evidence may represent the mirror of male principles, morals, and standards, which assumes that such spaces are not related to the female gender; and that the identity of those who practice a profession is associated with the characteristics necessary for professionals according to the image exposed by the area of activity and the image represented by gender, the expectation one has for a given profession (Chies, 2010).

On how they perceive the receptivity of political men about the presence of women in politics, State Representative 1 put it, *“It also needs to evolve a lot. They are refractory. They save space. Otherwise, political parties would have enabled more access for women to political training programs; would invest more in women’s campaigns. What we achieve, timid results, are the fruits of the quota policy in the subtitles. To grow more, now we aim to reserve seats in the legislatures.”* State Mp 2 commented: *“Most of our fellow Members have much respect.*

*Nevertheless, unfortunately, some uncomfortable situations are inevitable. If we fight, we are a joke. We are hysterical, or we do not sleep well. If we point out a mistake, it increases the voice. They do not like it. However, we do not put our heads down. Members of the House, regardless of political position, are very close. They fight hard for the defense of spaces,*

*especially for equality.”* The propositions of the male parliamentarians disqualifying the speeches of parliamentarians reinforce Schipani et al. (2009) that men and women tend to use different leadership styles and power, and these differences reinforce stereotypes. Politics is seen as a male place, and when women adopt firm or energetic postures, which are considered masculine and result from gender stereotypes, such postures are not seen positively. Power and, consequently, its legitimacy may not be associated with the female figure; therefore, the controversial propositions pertinent to politics made by women may not represent the political environment the same that would represent the same propositions if made by men. Such a reality may be of importance during the mandates, visibility, and speeches as representatives.

State Representative 3.– *“In general, there is respect and acceptance. However, in a somewhat subtle way, it is common for some men to be resistant to the protagonist of women, acting as if allowing us to participate, but never lead.”* This placement affirms the existence of the glass ceiling phenomenon since many advances have already been achieved. However, there are still barriers, such as obstacles, according to Steil (1997), subtle but present and sufficient to impel the ascendancy of women to high positions, as is the case of political positions. Women need permission from men to enter the spaces, currently already participating in politics, but they are not allowed to lead broad groups and parties (Perrot, 2017).

Senator 2.– *“I think many men still do not support the presence of women in the Legislature. Former Minister José Serra even said on a visit to Mexico that for male politicians in Brazil, the high participation of women in the Mexican country’s politics ‘is danger.’* The speech of politics may represent what a portion of male political representatives still think about the presence of women in political spaces, where the insertion of women in typically male environments should not occur without the proper consent of men and the political area being filled by women, although very inexpressively, is a dangerous or unwanted fact. This account goes to the meeting with Perrot (2017) that in society, there is the thought that politics is a science that is not up to women and that those that are part of such a medium are not in their proper place.

When asked how they feel in the political environment, the interviewees unanimously report that they encounter barriers. Congresswoman 1: *“I feel good because prejudice is not **obvious, but I watch it all the time.** We are still dealing with an environment guided by a sexist culture.”* State Representative 2 said: *“I miss humanization in the environment.”* Mrs. Federal 1 commented: *“Today, I feel respected and recognized for my experience of 8 mandates. I understood that women have the competence to work in budget areas, develop and contribute proposals for the country’s social-economic development.”* State Representative 3 mentioned: *“I feel excellent, despite the resistance I still encounter.* Senator 2 states: *“When we refer to the political environment, we refer to a world that forces us to many displacements and interlocutions. Sometimes too tiring, the first; sometimes, hard, superficial, irritating, and frustrating, the second. The soul complains, and the body complains. However, I chose politics. In particular, I have made an option for a policy of collective transformation of society for the benefit of everyone and everyone. Tiredness makes us want to stop, sleep, look elsewhere, but this project wakes us up, animates us, fills us with life, gives meaning to what we do.”*

About the time of action in politics, some have worked since the late 1980s, one for 39 years, and another since 1984. One of the members reported that she has been in the political environment as a representative for 13 years but has always been involved with politics due to the family environment. One of them started almost 30 years ago. The interviewee with the longest time in public life has been working since 1979, and the one with less time for nine and a half years.

Regarding their political experience and in which positions they have worked and have acted, the interviewees were unanimous in answering that they have had more than one term of their current position; some have been councilors, vice-mayors, and mayors before being congress members, State or federal, as well as before being federal deputies or senators they have been stated deputies, which propose that the interviewees have built a trajectory of political representation over the years.

Some interviewees have already acted as ministers and secretaries of State and as coordinators of institutes; there is one who acts as president of a political party, another who was once the youth president of his political party, one who was the first woman to chair the Central Directory of Students of a federal university and two who currently hold the positions of Women's Attorney, one in the House and one in the Senate.

Apart from the ignorance of theories such as the Glass Ceiling, the interviewees perceive the under-representation and sexism in the political spaces. Even with the advances already made in terms of say and representativeness, there is the possibility of setbacks against the few advances achieved because the rates of female participation in Brazilian politics, which were already low, declined after the impeachment of Dilma and the last elections because a tiny number of women were elected. The interviewees are aware of the importance of associating other independent female colleagues from a party position to plead political strength and greater representativeness.

## 6. Final considerations

Thus, the answer to the title question of this work is: yes, politics even use Lipstick, but the shade of this Lipstick is very similar to the shade of the mouth and almost does not appear. Especially when we find that in any sphere, the percentage of political representatives in Brazil is low and does not exceed 17%. Despite the advances that have been made, women still encounter resistance from parties or society. Most of the political representatives have been in politics for more than 20 years; most have an academic background and have participated in the student movement. Most have a considerable political trajectory, usually starting in the student movement and as councilors, after mayors and congress members or as congressmen and senators, also going through leadership positions, positions in Ministries and Secretariats, Women's Attorneys, and others. There is an upward construction of the political career of the representatives, and there was participation in political spaces even before the mandates, which makes it possible to attest that the re-



representatives have historical baggage and professional experience that can be considered necessary for the election of a political representative.

There may be cases of women who enter the political environment due to factors such as the succession of husbands or family members or even by electoral legislation that provides for the candidacy of a minimum number of women. However, contrary to what could be proposed, for the most part, the political representatives inserted themselves in the environment for motivations that went beyond that, emanating that these women wanted to be in the political environment. Such speeches broke with the idea that women were not interested in politics.

Women still encounter resistance from society, parties, and male parliamentary colleagues who sometimes disqualify women's discourses and still understand politics as a male place. However, despite sexism, the representatives are unanimous in stating that they feel good in the political environment, despite this adverse scenario and the lack of humanization in the workplace. The reports stress that they are allowed to participate, but they are rarely allowed to command.

The statements illustrate the lack of recognition of the legitimacy of power by parliamentarians concerning political colleagues. The viability of the mandates is then linked to the issue of gender, even if it can be shown with subtlety. The respondents see sexism and realize this hinders parliamentarians and the approval of the matters they propose. It reflects on deficits in the agendas aimed at the female population because men may not think public policies are as aimed at the female public as women would think. In a scenario of gender under-representation, the few female representatives lose political strength to pass laws and projects that deal, for example, with domestic violence or even the problem-own participation of women in public spaces and other topics pertinent to the female population.

There is a vicious circle where the female population hardly participates in public life because it oversees private life and the few women who participate face many obstacles. The interviewees make propositions that encourage improvements and seek to offer incentives so that the spaces also have a female voice. However, because of the small contingent of women elected, there is no legitimacy of power. A vicious circle can be identified when it is found that if women do not qualify for political office, they may not get a consolidated political job. They do not have a notorious political job and also have less eligibility. There needs to be more support from society and political parties. It is up to the parties to play the crucial role of participating in the women of their cadres, not only to meet legal predictions but to ensure that the thought that politics is male is eradicated.

Political reform should be considered that restructures not only the political system but also the organization of parties. The policy must have representation of all the portions of society so that the most diverse demands pertinent to the different social groups are contemplated. Once the barriers of sexism, the glass ceiling, and patrimonialism that encompasses the purely traditional profiles of power that preach, for the most part, the presence of men of surnames and traditional families considering power to the detriment of curriculum and vocation, will move towards a more egalitarian society.

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