

Female and black occupation of the Brazilian Legislature: a case study¹

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Introduction

The importance of political representation for Brazilian democracy is indisputable, as well as the inseparable relationship between parliamentary action and policymaking. On the one hand, work and research in public administration tend to focus on the executive branch; studies within the scope of other powers are scarcer, especially regarding the legislative branch. On the other hand, there is a long history of studies in this area in political science, both in legislative studies and especially in studies on the political representation of women in parliaments.

Debates on the exercise of political representation tend to take place in a critical manner. Democratic institutions, increasingly complex, progressively face demands from the whole populace, not only because of a desired democratic

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deepening, but also because of distrust or discredit in its parliament's performance. In the Brazilian case, this is worsened by information that the population obtains about what city councilors, deputies, and senators do, which is opaque and falls short on the density that a democratic system requires. Faced with the appearance of an excessively strengthened executive branch, a commonly disseminated image is that of a clientelist legislature, which prevents the former from executing and implementing public policies. To deconstruct the perception of irrelevance or ineffectiveness, evaluation studies of parliamentary terms in office emerge.

This paper presents the results of a survey that evaluated a Brazilian state deputy. The evaluation period covers 2019-2022, from election to her last year in office. To carry out the evaluation, we relied on a review of current methodologies on parliamentary evaluation and on literature on gender and policy studies, focusing on gender and political representation with the aim of examining broad structural and institutional challenges to political representation exercised by women parliamentarians. It inquires on the effectiveness of women's mandates, that is, their ability to materially represent women's interests or perspectives, and the various obstacles to their achievement. We employ literature on the relationship between the descriptive, substantive, and symbolic representation exercised by women in political positions, with a focus on effectiveness (Childs; Lovenduski, 2013).

The case studied is representative Andreia de Jesus. She is a black woman from Belo Horizonte, capital of Minas Gerais state, Brazil. Living in an impoverished urban region, Andreia got married young and became a mother at 19. At 12, she began her professional life as a maid, until 2008, when she was employed as a kindergarten teacher. At 35, she entered law school with a full scholarship from the Brazilian government (ProUni), which allowed her to work as a cause lawyer. In college, she joined the Brigadas Populares (literally, "Popular Brigades"), where she also encountered social movements related to the struggle for land, homelessness, and prisoners' rights. Subsequently, she started to work within a team of municipal councilors. In 2018, Andreia was elected state representative in the Minas Gerais Legislative Assembly, re-elected in 2022. This choice was due to the existence of a broad set of public data ALMG parliamentarians and access to it and its defining features. It proved to be particularly suitable for the intended analysis.

We aim to understand what happens when a black woman is present in politics given the background and literature. Additionally, we ask: do groups with reduced presence in the legislature – that is, a single or few black women in the context of a state legislature – manage to influence the different components of the legislative process, as suggested by Philips (1995), Mainsbridge (1999) or Mateo Diaz (2005), among others? By “different components”, we mean intangible processes and resources, that are necessary for the implementation of parliamentary work, such as pre-existing institutions (rules, processes, procedures, organizational culture), institutional resources and access to them, and the work within the office. As well as the relations within different actors - parliamentarians, benches, committees, party leaders, among others. We seek to include all these dimensions in the subsequent analysis.

Theoretical-empirical framework

In 2024, Brazil ranked 133 out of 190 countries in terms of “female representation in national parliaments” according to the *Inter-Parliamentary Union*. In that same year, only 17.5% of the Chamber of Deputies and 17.3% of the Senate seats were occupied by women, lower than the global average (IPU, 2024).

At the time of the Brazilian local elections of 2016, more than half of the electorate was comprised of women (52.5%) and a large percentage identified themselves as black (28.2%). For the City Council, women were third of all candidates, but this drops to 15.4% for black women. When analyzing the election results, female and black participation decreases even more, with only 5% of city council seats occupied by black women. In 2020, elected women remained below the proportion of voters, with only 12.1% elected to the country’s city councils, 3.8% of which were black women (Péret; Braga; Saraiva, 2021).

In other branches, women continue to be underrepresented. In the 2018 election, a little over 15% of elected state and federal deputies were women, with 11.5% elected to the Senate. Regionally is a more dire situation, with only one woman elected governor. In the 2022 elections, the percentage women deputies increased to 18%, with black women representing 21% among state deputies and 20% among federal deputies. In the Senate, the number of elected

women rose to 15%, although none identify as black. In the executive branch, only two women were elected governors. Consequently, Brazil occupies the 129th position in women in national parliaments (TSE, 2022).

Black women are the largest ethnic group in Brazil, at 28%, and its largest workforce, highlighting the relevance of these data. They have a lower rate of participation in the economically active population and higher unemployment, and occupy less prestigious and low-paid positions, being they are the majority among domestic workers (almost 60%). They are also the majority in care work in general, including domestic, health, and education. These are positions which reinforce colonial period customs and the role of black women as “servants”.

Public service reproduces this social hierarchy. Among professionals with higher education, black women earn, on average, less than half of a white professional (40%). This inequality is explained not only by the discrimination of gender and race, but also by how they are inserted in the occupation. Black women are underrepresented among civil servants in the most prestigious activities and positions. About 65% of black women employed in the public service are in the municipal sphere, which has the worst average earnings.

The low representation of women in political positions has been deeply explored by gender policy studies. Their lower presence in parliament is explained by the literature by several factors, including cultural, socioeconomic, and political factors (Childs; Lovenduski, 2013). The literature also indicates that the number of women selected as candidates varies according to the party organization, the rules of the game, and the party’s ideology (Norris; Lovenduski, 1995). Studies agree women have fewer resources to participate in the electoral game than men do.

Araújo, Calasanti and Htun (2018), exploring obstacles to female political representation in Brazil, conclude that the reasons for the low number of women in elected positions derive from the features of the country’s political institutions, including: candidate-centric electoral rules, a fragmented party system, and decentralized selection procedures within political parties. The high cost of political campaigns, incumbency, and access to television time for candidates also add to existing barriers.

The concept of the politics of presence (Philips, 1995), that is, the importance of the bodies that occupy politics and how they perform it (Htun,

2018), among other fundamental debates to assess the character of democracy, of democratic spaces and the subjects that make it up must be highlighted. This literature reveals the importance of the approach focused on descriptive representation because, among other reasons, it tends to increase substantive representation, that is, the production of policies and other initiatives that serve the interests of underrepresented groups, therefore improving the quality of deliberation and the production of benefits that extend to the entire political system (Mansbridge, 1999).

The literature dedicated to evaluating the effectiveness of women parliamentarians' representation focuses on attitudes, political priorities, and initiatives carried out by them. Results show that, in fact, they are more likely to act in favor of women when compared men. However, they also show that women parliamentarians face additional and varied challenges, and this is because "parliaments have a strong capacity for self-regulation, their own logic, a strong inertia, very little room for innovation and many ways to socialize or assimilate dissidents" (Mateo Diaz, 2005, p. 225). Thus, legislatures tend to reproduce the sexual and racist division of labor, placing women parliamentarians in areas of public policy considered soft areas, which generally have less political relevance, often including women's issues committees.

Heath, Schwindt-Bayer and Taylor-Robinson (2005) explore how women are marginalized after gaining representation in the legislature. They argue that institutional and political factors affect the way in which traditionally dominant male political leaders allocate scarce political resources – most notably committee assignments – to women newcomers to parliament. In addition to acting in a paternalistic and impolite manner, creating a hostile environment for women, they create devices to exclude them from leadership positions. Their results indicate that women tend to be isolated in committees that discuss social and women's issues, and keep them out of committees that hold power: "Thus, to achieve full incorporation in the legislative arena, newcomers must do more than just win seats. They must change the institutions that allow the traditionally dominant group to accumulate scarce political resources" (Heath; Schwindt-Bayer; Taylor-Robison, 2005). In their research on legislatures in Latin America, Schwindt-Bayer and Alles (2018) also show that women parliamentarians do

not have access to various committee leadership positions or reach senior leadership positions to the same extent as men.

The concept of “critical mass” also helps to understand limitations on the performance of women parliamentarians. It is frequently used “to explain why women do not always appear to represent women once they are in political office” (Childs; Krook, 2008, p. 725). According to this argument, it is due to the relatively low number of women elected; once women can form a larger group of legislators, they will be able to promote women’s concerns in politics and influence their male colleagues to support those bills.

The idea comes from the pioneer work of Kanter (1977), who observed the status of women in a large-scale corporation in the United States and concluded that token members are not numerically sufficient to make meaningful changes, having to accept the culture of the dominant group. Dahlerup (1988) is responsible for the application of Kanter’s work in political analysis and using the term “critical mass” to discuss the limitations of parliamentary women’s power to act. The critics of “critical mass theory” theory point out that the increase of female office holders doesn’t necessarily equate to more women-friendly legislation. Nevertheless, these earlier contributions were fundamental to the research of women’s substantive representation (Childs; Krook, 2008).

The concern with the presence of women in political spaces is even more relevant when we focus on the case of black women and in post-colonial societies such as Brazil. It inherited a model of liberal democracy that was not critically questioned given structural issues in our society, such as the racism and sexism on which it is based, and result in significant consequences for black women. Despite being an important group in terms of population, they occupy the most subordinate places in society, experiencing the greatest number of situations and conditions of exclusion. Thus, black women face the greatest obstacles accessing positions of prestige and power in society, such as legislatures and other institutionalized political spaces. When confronting this structure by occupying such spaces, it systematically faces the most violent reactions.

Consequently, an intersectional approach is fundamental to this kind of investigation. The intersectional approach is born out of black feminist movements that made harsh criticisms of the feminist movements that had emerged until then, led by white middle-class women who, deliberately or

not, neglected racial and class issues within the search for gender equality. It defended the idea that the understanding of women as a homogeneous and static category should be extrapolated and drew attention to the need to address the distinct demands of political minorities among women themselves.

The intersection of multiple systems of oppression, operating in the most diverse social organisms, define intersectionality. The authors seek to address the different systems of oppression that would arise from the combination of unique contexts of discrimination and that create distinct power relations and different realities and disadvantages (Collins; Chepp, 2013). The intersectional approach is important, therefore, to understand the specific role of black women in parliament, as well as the specific barriers faced by them in political spaces.

The research on black Latin American parliamentarians by Htun (2014) adopts this approach and argues that the political representation exercised by them tends to be holistic. It reaches broader interests and demands than those traditionally focused on by the “traditional” (or white and Eurocentric) woman. However, in order to achieve these results, a variety of barriers must be crossed.

These barriers range from specific difficulties in accessing politics, such as an educational or professional background to facing more intense levels of political violence. Violence against women in politics or gender-based political violence has been the object of increasing attention and analysis in recent literature. It is a phenomenon that has received attention in the world, but especially in Latin America (Krook; Sanín, 2016), a region that has pioneered legislation on the topic. It encompasses attacks, defamation, and harassment specifically directed at political actors because of their identity as women – or as black people, indigenous people, or members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Comparatively, these groups face more severe levels of violence, even though they are not directly involved in institutional politics. This creates a significant and additional barrier to the participation of traditionally excluded groups in politics and reinforces the status quo in places of power (Bardall; Bjarnegård; Piscopo, 2019; Sen; Vallejo; Walsh, 2019).

Matos (2021) and Kuperberg (2018) propose an intersectional approach to the problem of gender based political violence. They argue that women in politics is not a homogeneous group and, therefore, it is necessary that their experiences in politics be analyzed in a way that contemplates the multiple facets

of their identities, such as race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and ideology. Research by the Marielle Franco Institute (2021) analyzing the time in office of eleven Brazilian parliamentarians pointed out that the specificity of gender-based political violence has a more powerful impact on black and transgender women.

Seeking to evaluate the term in office of a black woman state deputy, as well as the institutional difficulties faced, our study sought to consider the set of questions previously presented in a summarized way to the already traditional methodology for evaluating parliamentary mandates. Next, we explain the model we developed.

Methodology

Data collection and analysis methods

The research used different forms of collection and data, with availability proving to be essential to its development. The triangulation of information was important to compensate for the partial insufficiency of available sources. The work of systematizing data that was dispersed was also central.

The bibliographic review analyzed eleven documents on the subject of parliamentary evaluation in addition to the analysis of dozens of articles and publications related to the theme of the political representation of women. It also included academic works that made direct reference to initiatives in which the deputy participated. This step was particularly important for refining hypotheses and building the analytical methodology, in addition to historically and socially contextualizing the subject under analysis.

The document search encompassed and analyzed dozens of items related to legislative production (bills, among others), meeting records, requests made by the deputy during the term of office and other components of the legislative process. Secondary data from the Legislative Assembly of Minas Gerais's widely publicized databases provided through an application were used. Data from De Jesus's websites and her social media were also analyzed.

Primary data were collected in nine individual and collective interviews with the deputy's team, focus groups with community leaders from non-governmental organizations, and a survey to acquire the population's opinion.

Methodological foundations of the parliamentary term evaluation model

The evaluation model we proposed presupposed the combination of quantitative and qualitative variables and analyses. When used together, they are able to develop more complete and complex information, enabling a more comprehensive and dense analysis, with greater explanatory potential.

Although possible, our evaluative model was not intended to promote comparison between parliamentarians nor to be classificatory, as most existing ones. This choice stems from the limits of classification and its effects, which are not always positive on parliamentary activity, given that it encourages competition that is not always fruitful. Furthermore, there is no way to compare with purely quantitative indicators, candidates who are part of the majority or minority of a legislative house or who are part of more and less privileged segments of the population. Demands for equity in political representation in the study of applied social sciences cannot be disregarded when evaluating a parliamentary term.

Another concern is the empirical usefulness of the evaluation constructed for the evaluated mandate. It was important that the research also contributed to interpreting her performance from a democratic and non-productivist perspective. In this sense, we privileged aspects of the parliamentarian's activity that contributed, after all, to the strengthening of democracy.

The choice of model variables was based both on the theoretical-empirical review and on the availability of information, resulting from the application of the concepts and based on national and international theories and practices that brought a scope not contemplated by other models. The term analysis was guided by four evaluative dimensions, as in Table 1.

The following subsections are organized according to the evaluative dimensions presented. Within the limits of this publication, we present very summarized results, highlighting those considered most relevant.

Table 1. Evaluative dimensions and questions.

Dimension	Question	Rationale
Descriptive and symbolic representation ⁶	Does the office have representativeness that contributes to overcoming the existing democratic deficit in the Brazilian parliament?	Recognition of the demand for democratic consolidation places attention on the problem of unequal representation of population groups that are underrepresented, invisible, oppressed or without due recognition, considering the intersections with other sub-representations.
Parliamentary Activity	Is the office capable of exercising the parliamentary function adequately, considering its legislative and supervisory functions?	It emphasizes the intensity of parliamentary action in: the number of bills, requirements, etc.; the effectiveness of parliamentary action (success of proposals and their implementation); impact of parliamentary action in relation to substantive representation and what was within its reach.
Office Management	Does it contribute to the development of parliament and cabinet?	Evaluates aspects related to good office management practices, which reflect the efforts to gather the necessary resources for the best performance of the functions of the mandate. The following representativeness of the team, technical competence, ability to vocalize the themes that were the basis and guidelines for the election of the parliamentarian, capacity to accept contingency demands, adapt to adverse circumstances, among others.
Substantive Representation	Does it contribute to the consolidation of democracy?	It takes into account the effort made by the mandate to implement changes towards what was proposed since the election campaign verifies the adversities faced in view of the political context and the structure of the legislative house itself; identifies the strategies used to achieve substantive representation; the capacity of the carry out, with propositions, votes and consistent and forceful performance all activities related to the content related to the invoked representation.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Analysis of results

Descriptive and symbolic representation

To assess the mandate's descriptive representation, it was necessary to know the representation of the Legislative Assembly of Minas Gerais between 2019-2022. The data showed that it was a mostly male (87.0%) and white (79.8%) legislature, highlighting the lack of representation of some groups, that is, that the composition of the legislature does not mirror the composition

⁶ Although in the literature on political representation, descriptive and symbolic representation are two distinct dimensions of representation, we chose to analyse them together for two main reasons. First, the fact that if the empirical literature on descriptive representation has advanced a lot, that of symbolic representation is still incipient. Second, some feminist scholars point out that women's participation in politics is itself a form of symbolic representation, as in this place they configure distinct models of representation (Lombardo and Meier, 2018: p.328). They are bodies that were absent in the public space and, therefore, their presence breaks the established idea of who should be included in the representation of a nation.

of the electorate. Table 2 below shows that women, black people, and young people are underrepresented in this legislature.

Table 2: Social characteristics of the Minas Gerais electorate and those elected, 2018

Social group		Minas Gerais Electorate	Elected members (2019-2022)		Is this group underrepresented?
Women		51,9%	10	13,0%	Yes
Black ¹ (<i>preto</i>)		11,8%	4	5,2%	Yes
Mixed-race (<i>pardo</i>) ² and black (<i>preto</i>)		60,0%	16	20,8%	Yes
Age group	21 to 24	8,1%	1	1,3%	Yes
	25 to 34	20,3%	5	6,5%	Yes
	35 to 44	20,2%	24	31,2%	No
	45 to 59	24,8%	32	41,6%	No
	60 to 69	11,4%	13	16,9%	Yes
	70 to 79	6,1%	2	2,6%	Yes

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on TSE (2018).

Notes: (1) There is no data on the electorate by color/race. Therefore, we used the population of the state of Minas Gerais in the reference year as an approximation.

(2) The Portuguese word “*pardo*” refers to a racial category used in Brazil to describe individuals with a mixed-race ancestry, typically a combination of Indigenous, European, and/or African heritage. This term is specific to Brazil's historical and social context and may not have an exact equivalent in other languages or cultural settings.⁷

Women and non-white people are underrepresented majorities in Brazilian politics in general. It can be said that these constitute the deputy's “place of origin” – woman, black, 40 years old when taking office. In a piece De Jesus wrote during her pre-candidacy, she states: “occupying politics is affirming popular power in institutions, inserting our struggles for rights, our representativeness and our ancestral memory of resistance into their daily lives” (De Jesus, 2018). This statement indicates that, when running for office, the deputy was aware of the importance of improving the dimension of descriptive representation in the process of promoting democracy.

The data show that her presence in the legislature contributed to the reduction of the democratic deficit related to descriptive representativeness. This statistical evidence is reinforced by the responses of the overwhelming

⁷ The racial discussion in Brazil includes in the category “blacks” (negros) what the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics considers to be “blacks” (pretos) and browns (pardos). The orientation is based on the idea that racism in Brazil operates based on the phenotype, in addition to the fact that the Brazilian brown population either has African ancestors or originated from the indigenous population. This is due to a historical claim of the black movement, especially from the 1970s onwards, when the movement began to adopt and reaffirm the meaning of the term “black” in the construction of racial consciousness. It is also due to the movement's claim that the method of collecting information on race should be based on the respondent's self-declaration.

majority of people who participated in the *survey* and focus groups. De Jesus, even for those who expected more from her mandate, is seen as a female, black representative who “represents” the participants.

It is also interesting to note that all women elected for the ALMG’s 2019-2022 legislature have university education, as shown in Table 3. It is almost a requirement for them to reach this position, one that is not always met by male representatives.

Table 3: Education of the Minas Gerais electorate and those elected, 2018

Educational level	Electorate of Minas Gerais	ALMG Elected members (2019-2022)		
		Total		Women Percentage
		Percentage	Quantity	
Basic education	6,4%	2,6%	2	
Secondary education	18,3%	10,4%	8	
Tertiary education	6,8%	80,5%	62	100%
Tertiary unfinished	3,3%	6,5%	5	

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on TSE (2018).

De Jesus sought to take the place of peripheral black women in politics during and post-election, given the description of her professional and political life in the campaign materials, in her biography on the ALMG’s (ALMG, 2022a) and her own website ((De Jesus, 2022). She also occupies symbolic spaces, such as that of a single mother, former domestic worker, lawyer, and municipal civil servant. This set of characteristics brings her closer to an important part of the Brazilian and Minas Gerais population, but also distinguishes her from the symbols associated with this space of power. When analyzing De Jesus’ campaign video, Silva Júnior and Araújo (2019) point out that it centralizes issues of race and gender, emphasizing the self-sufficiency of black people. In their interpretation, the protagonism and narration of the candidate herself brought to the campaign “an element of female empowerment, in the image of a dark, smiling and active black woman, which can be considered a reversal of the traditional models of political actors” (Silva Júnior; Araújo, 2019, p. 11). Thus:

It is in this advertising piece that we can see the inversion of the traditional political figure being made, it is the reallocation of the

stereotype of a black woman and warrior, to the space, which until then was denied her, that of politics, suggesting her as a person able to offer transformation, since it is a black voice, not predominant in this space of power (Silva Júnior; Araújo, 2019, p. 11).

In addition, her formal education and professional career make her stand out from her social group of origin, being an example or reference of overcoming difficulties. Thus, it also illustrates the “model effect” of women in politics (Childs; Lovenduski, 2013).

During her campaign, De Jesus formalized her commitment to the agendas of these three non-hegemonic groups: women, black people, and young people, and their intersectionalities. In her campaign materials, she spoke emphatically about the fight against racism and discrimination, especially against young black people, especially by politics and security agents, and the promotion of culture, in relation to black people, in riverside and impoverished urban regions. Once elected, she reiterated her commitment to black youth and expanded the relevance of the agenda to combat violence against women, evidenced in her biography, both on the ALMG's and on her own websites.

On the Brigadas Populares's website, her election in October 2018 was identified as a historic milestone for the movement. The relationship with the movement was maintained throughout the mandate and highlights the social legitimacy of her campaign and mandate, bestowed by a social movement also focused on occupying public spaces of representation and power.

The identification of the party coalition for which De Jesus ran as a candidate was evident in campaign materials – Frente Minas Socialista (literally, Minas Socialist Front), with the Socialist and Liberty Party (PSOL) and the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB). It also highlights collective “Muitas pela Cidade que Quero” (Women for the City I Want), born in 2015, proposing collective action against the hegemonic policy by seeking horizontality and active and popular participation towards “insurgent citizenship” (Fonseca; Gonçalves, 2018, p. 4).

In the 2018 campaign, they submitted seven candidacies for state deputies and five for federal deputies in Minas Gerais, all from the Minas Socialist Front, a PSOL and PCB coalition, with De Jesus being elected as a state representative

and Áurea Carolina as a federal representative. Campos (2021) classifies it as a “collective candidacy experience, which can be classified as an ‘innovative socio-political technology’, as they provoked changes in the Brazilian political field by diversifying the cadres of elected parliamentarians, challenging the personalism and individualism of candidacies, enhancing electoral legitimacy, ‘hacking’ political institutionality and, finally, promoting no less significant dimensions of political re-enchantment in a country where the ‘hatred of politics’ is sacred” (Campos, 2021).

It is also important to point out that “Muitas” was one of the collectives that built “Ocupa Política” (Occupy Politics). It calls for “a confluence of organizations, civil society collectives and (currently) 17 Politician-Activists [...] together to occupy institutional politics, leverage activist candidacies, and articulate a supra-party policy of progressive national renewal!” (OCUPA POLÍTICA, 2022). Among the listed principles, four stand out that directly refer to the functioning and quality of democracy: construction based on social foundations, and commitment to struggles; opening of the political system, and popular reform that allows society to influence institutions; popular education and citizenship as transforming practices; and democratic radicalization, transparency and accessibility. These show a collective effort to enable people with a diverse profile and closer to the country’s reality to occupy the place of representatives and the concern with the citizen participation and political integration. It can be argued that, as stated by Fonseca and Gonçalves (2018) about open mandates, this initiative also consists of a practice that points to an alternative path to individualism and competitiveness in formal and institutionalized environments, creating incentives for innovation. The distinction between open and collective offices is something that appears in the literature on innovative socio-political technologies, which will be deepened below.

Based on the above, we can state that De Jesus’ candidacy emerges from popular progressist parties and the eruption of various social movements that have been seeking political representation beyond party boundaries. The feelings and attitudes evoked by the deputy’s election and her strategies were explored in focus groups and in the survey we conducted. Its results show that the practices and attitudes of the deputy are seen by the population as factors

that strengthen representativeness and generate expectations of improvement in the legislative process.

Parliamentary activity

In addition to supervising the executive branch, the functions of a Brazilian parliamentarian include bill proposal. Data available on the ALMG's website show that in the 2019-2022 legislature, De Jesus proposed Ordinary Laws, followed by Constitutional Amendments, Resolutions and Complementary Laws (Table 4).

Table 4: Propositions by De Jesus in the 2019-2022 legislature.

Propositions	PEC	PLC	PL	PRE
Andréia de Jesus	39	1	49	0
Confidence Interval (CI)	26,3 – 31,7	1,5 – 2,4	41,3 – 59,1	2,5 – 5,5
Relative position to CI	Above CI	Bellow CI	Within CI	Bellow CI
Median	30	1	49	0
Quartile	4º	Median	3º	Median

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on ALMG (2022b).

The performance of De Jesus focused on the authorship of PECs (Constitutional Amendments), PLs (Ordinary Laws) and PLCs (Complementary Laws), in that order. It is interesting to observe that the number of PECs in which she appears as author is in the fourth quartile, that is, she is among the 25% of the most active deputies. PECs are projects of greater importance and complexity; therefore, they have several authors. In none of the PECs is the deputy the main author.

As for the authorship of PLs, she is positioned in the third quartile, which means that she is among the 50% of the most propositional parliamentarians and the first among women (in proposed and approved PLs). Among the projects in which she appears as an author (49), it was possible to identify process details for 47. De Jesus is the main author in 30. Among the PLs whose main authors are other parliamentarians, joint action with the Workers' Party female representatives stands out.

The legislative process is complex and long. Between each bill and its transformation into law there is a specific path, determined by the legislature's

internal regulations. Data on the processing of bills in which the deputy appears as author show that, among the 38 PECs, 27 are still being processed, and five were approved. The only Complementary Law Project that she signed was still in process at the time of completion of the research. As for the 47 Law Projects, for which data were available, seven were approved, and 29 were still being processed. Up to the time of data collection, the success rate in both cases was around 13%.⁸

Furthermore, in a space of power such as the ALMG, the occupation of leadership positions has a great impact on legislative action, affecting a parliamentarian's chances for success. During the interviews it was found that she acted as leader of the Minority Block. Data available on the website show her performance as a member of several committees (Table 5). We emphasize her performance as chair of the Human Rights Committee, normally undervalued in national parliamentary evaluation studies, but considered by international organizations to be extremely important for the preservation and promotion of democracy.

Table 5: Membership of De Jesus in committees, 2019-2022 legislature

Committees		Number of times	Type of membership
Special	Committee of members of the standing committees - § 1 of Article 204 of the Internal Regulations	2	Active member
	Committee on Proposed Constitutional Amendment No. 14/2019.	1	Alternate member
	Committee on Proposed Constitutional Amendment No. 34/2019	2	Active member and President
	Committee on Proposed Constitutional Amendment No.36/2019	1	Active member
	Veto Committee No. 28/2021	1	Active member
Permanent	Public Administration Committee	1	Alternate member
	Women's Rights Defense Committee	3	Active member (2) Vice president (1)
	Human Rights Committee	4	Active member (2) Vice president, President
	Popular Participation Committee	2	Alternate member

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on ALMG (2022b).

⁸ This was limited to verifying the approval rate of the proposals presented by the parliamentarian herself; comparison with other mandates was beyond the scope of this analysis.

A term in office can be constrained by several factors, compromising legislative activity. The first to highlight is inexperience in parliamentary activity. Parliamentarians in their first term, without previous experience in legislative activity have a learning cost. They need time to learn the dynamics of the legislative process, political and administrative. This can impact their production and success (or effectiveness). The second type of constraint analyzed is discrimination. In our case, sexism and racism were the two forms of discrimination suffered, carried out by other parliamentarians, civil servants, and citizens.

Finally, there are threats to the life of the parliamentarian, which had an impact on the operation of the office and the physical and mental health of all involved, as well as incurring in political and financial costs. Threats made the dissemination of the candidate's agenda impossible, restricting communication with the population. It also affected planning and carrying out of all her travels, she needed security escorts, and had to use strategies to protect her life. Her interviews and her team's also showed the mental exhaustion generated.

Political office organization

A political office's operation is a function of the parliamentarian and her team's experience, the provision of skills development by the legislative house, and the parliamentarian's efforts in innovating and promoting new practices.

The lack of technical support from the ALMG makes the learning process dependent on the team's initiative and on the network of contacts that individuals establish with technicians in the house and professionals from other offices. Being the only elected representative from her party, the PSOL, and its first candidate to occupy a seat, she also could not count on its assistance in transferring knowledge and support. This situation is very different from other first terms, in which the party has an elected group and already had several representatives in that space, as is the case of the Workers' Party, to which the deputy recently transferred. This scenario has become more challenging in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which imposed remote working at various times.

We observed a relative difficulty in coordinating activities, especially in view of the workload, the lack of more effective planning, and the prevalence of

a “more reactive attitude to demands”. This was aggravated by the team’s very high turnover, which, in turn, impacts the ability to establish the mandate’s trajectory – it becomes dependent on individual strategies and generated lack of continuity in some information and accountability instruments.

About the third element – the parliamentarian’s innovation efforts to promote new management practices – we highlight here the “Gabinetona”. This initiative qualifies as an experience of citizen occupation of institutional politics. It began with the election of “Muitas”, in 2016, electing Áurea Carolina, a black woman who is active in youth and gender movements, and Cida Falabella. They decided to share their teams and act together, promoting social participation and representation, giving rise to the Gabineteona (Lima; Silva, 2019, p. 52-53). As documented by Fonseca and Gonçalves (2018), the physical and political space occupied by the two councilors was named Gabineteona in reference to their feminist positioning and the appreciation of women in urban struggles. In addition to the elected councilors, Gabineteona had women, black people, indigenous people, people from the LGBTQIA+ community, members of social and cultural movements that consolidate representation around the city. De Jesus was part of Gabineteona as a parliamentary advisor.

In 2018, the Gabineteona expanded to the three levels of the legislative branch, with Cida Falabella and Bella Gonçalves as municipal representatives; Andréia de Jesus elected to the Legislative Assembly; and for the Chamber of Deputies, Áurea Carolina. Differently from the previous experience, in which the sharing experience took place at a single federative level, presenting a horizontal format, this new experience involved parliamentarians at the three federal levels. This new, vertical configuration proved to be more challenging, given the very difference between the legislative houses, culminating in the end of Gabineteona, in 2020. Despite the difficulties inherent to management, the experience enabled the development and consolidation of several social technologies issues that will be dealt with in a specific section.

De Jesus’s term was built on principles shared by Gabineteona. These principles and practices inspired by them were maintained even after the end of the initiative, such as the composition of a diverse office, including women, black people, LGBTQI+ people, indigenous people, among others.

Substantive representativeness

Coherence is an important factor of substantive representativeness, as it shows a positive relationship between the expectations created by the representative throughout the campaign and how they were transformed into actions of interest to those represented throughout the term. Hence, considering the importance of the trajectory, the point at which the parliamentarian finds herself on the path affects her options and choices, especially if she has expectations of building an upward trajectory, of re-election, or of election to an executive position or broader representation.

Regarding programmatic coherence, there is a process of disseminating the agenda proposed in the campaign throughout the term. Table 6 illustrates how parliamentary activity enabled the deputy to deepen her performance and define her thematic and public niches. It was built from content analysis of the campaign materials, the website, and her legislative proposals. Except for “public transport”, all the other themes were object of her action as a parliamentarian.

Table 6: Illustration of the thematic evolution throughout the mandate.

Campaign	Website	Parliamentary activity ^a
Right to the city	Rights of those affected by mining	Basin of the Doce River, Brumadinho, Colônia Santa Isabel, Governador Valadares, Itabira Itabirito, Mariana, Nova Lima, Porteirinha Riacho dos Machados, Sabará, São Gonçalo do Rio Abaixo, Serra da Piedade, Serro and Triângulo Mineiro.
		Right to housing
		Women's empowerment Female emancipation
Security	Women and gender-based violence	Incarcerated mothers Quilombola women Women in situations of violence Women victims of violence in rural areas Transgender women
	Human rights and anti-prison issues	Former prisoners Incarcerated individuals Prison system Human rights violations

Campaign	Website	Parliamentary activity ^a
Racism	Anti racism	Dissemination of Nazism
		Practical investigation of the crime of racism
		Confronting racism
	Quilombos and traditional communities and territories	Eradication of slave labor
		Racial slander
		Religious intolerance
		Racism in childhood
Culture	Anti racism	Combating intolerance crimes
		Haitians, migrant population
		Congado, Januária, São Domingos do Prata, São Francisco, Virgem da Lapa
	Quilombos and traditional communities and territories	Indigenous schools
		Indigenous populations
		Venezuelan indigenous populations
Work and income	Agroecology	Caxixós, Katuramãs, Kamakam Mongoiós Kiriris, Maxakalis, Nahô Xohã, Taipuru Puris Tuxá, Xucuru kariri, Xakriabás, Xokleng, Kaingang and Guaraní
		Urban cultures of impoverished regions
		Hip hop
Public transport		Graffiti
		Food security
		Public servants
Public transport		Public servants' pension system

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on ALMG (2022), De Jesus (2018) e De Jesus (2022).

Note 1: Topics surveyed related to parliamentary activity produced from the analysis of legislative proposals.

Interaction with the population is not only an important precept for democratic consolidation; it is also a principle of work, expressed in the campaign, in the proposal of “Muitas” and “Gabinetona”. The survey and focus groups results showed the importance of this commitment after the election, when it came to perception of the quality of the representation provided.

De Jesus used the instruments provided by the legislature to interact with the public - such as public hearings, audience with guests, public debate and forum, and new social technologies created by Gabineteona that were used and continued to be even after 2020. They are:

- a) Public consultations or “Amendment with Andreia”: instrument to democratize access to resources, especially related to budget amendments corresponding to 0.8% of the state budget. The allocation of this resource was made through public notices and constitutes an open and participatory process for the allocation of individual parliamentary amendments. With this social technology, an attempt is made to oppose the electoral logic that often guides the allocation of public money.
- b) “GForte” or strengthening groups: spaces for permanent dialogue. Formed by researchers, activists, representatives of associations, institutions, collectives, forums, and other people interested in contributing to the political view of the mandate, functioning as a learning and interlocution channel. The population participates directly in parliamentary action and, from this interaction, actions such as debates, public hearings, requests for information, and other legislative interventions may result, as well as the influence over the term.
- c) Map of Struggles: gather information on important groups of organizations and social leaders by theme. It is a way of organizing work in constant dialogue with the population, to identify priority guidelines and facilitate these groups’ access to institutional policy instruments.
- d) “LabPops” or Popular Law Laboratory: exchange spaces in which legislative proposals are elaborated. Through conversation and working groups, bills are constructed and strategies to influence proposals presented by other parliamentarians or by the executive are created. They are summoned on issues of relevance, related to the guidelines for action. In addition to the references in the Map of Struggles, people, movements, and institutions linked to the subject and who can help in the construction of new proposals are invited.

These methodologies constitute innovative socio-political technologies that propose to build mediations between social majorities and spaces of power (GABINETONA, s.d). On the other hand, as verified in the interviews, these spaces were in the background in view of the possibilities for expanded debates offered by the ALMG’S instruments themselves, such as the public hearings. At the beginning of their term, they were promoted once or twice a month.

During the pandemic, despite enabling the participation of people from various regions of the state using online tools, such spaces did not have the same potency. With the return to face-to-face work, the mandate organized three to four hearings per month. The hearings promoted by the cabinet sought to discuss important issues (mining, political violence, “zero evictions”, threats against the *quilombola* community), in addition to the mandate’s priorities.

The analysis of laws by De Jesus’s mandate also constitutes evidence of substantive representation and helps to highlight the relationship between substantive representation and effectiveness. Four laws provide measures to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. From her point of view, these laws represented a relevant legislative articulation effort to build comprehensive and inclusive legislation in an adverse context. Specifically, we highlight Law 23645/2020 (Bill 1820/2020), which provided measures related to social protection and combating violence against women in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. This law was of outstanding importance due to the significant increase in domestic violence against women. Law 23663/2020 (Bill 1972/2020) established the need for a racial perspective in the care of the population with Covid, an exemplary measure so that a significant segment of the population has its demands met by the state with the due specificities.

Law 23,758/2021 (Bill 2180/2020) authorized the state executive to donate to the Union a property located in the municipality of Caldas on behalf of traditional indigenous people. Finally, Law 24099/2022 (Bill 1544/2020), which promoted legal changes aimed at people in low-income situations when public calamity occurs. It was specifically aimed at women in situations of violence, who may be beneficiaries of housing programs developed through the State Housing Fund. Such bills clearly meet demands coming from its political base and the programmatic vision set out in the mandate.

Social perception of the mandate

The survey was the first strategy used to assess the perception of external actors regarding the De Jesus’s mandate. Survey research is a quantitative research method used to collect data and information from the characteristics and opinions of groups of individuals.

The questionnaire was answered through telephone calls to contacts in the mandate's mailing list database and through their social networks. Thus, two non-random convenience samples were constituted, with intentional bias. We consider that the use of a random sample would not be convenient, as a very specific knowledge of the deputy was necessary. The questionnaire underwent a pre-test, which allowed for adjustments, and it was validated after the second pre-test.

The first wave of respondents via telephone calls took place between 3-27 June, 2022. An attempt was made to contact 663 telephone numbers, 73 of which agreed to participate. The dissemination to the second sample of respondents was done through the mandate's social networks and WhatsApp messages. It was the same questionnaire, in this case self-administered. It took place between 27-30 June 2022, with 138 responses.

Within the limits of this publication, the sample's profile will be presented in aggregate form. Of the total set of interviewees, 56% identified themselves as female, followed by 42.8% as male. When addressing their color/race, most (35%) identified themselves as white, followed by black (33%) and brown (32%). About 80% had tertiary education.

Before specifically assessing De Jesus's time in office, the respondents were questioned about the importance of the political representation of black women: 95.2% of respondents said they agreed that the election of black women is important in terms of social justice; 91% believe it advances the agendas of women and the black population; 88.7% of respondents agree that it changes the way politics is done; 79.6% of respondents agree that black women have a different approach and style of political action.

When asked about the factors that account for a candidate's good political representation, most respondents (84.6%) believe that a history of activism in social movements and organizations is the most important aspect, followed by values and principles that the candidate defends (68.2%).

We asked if the respondents followed De Jesus's mandate, which was confirmed by (73.4%). Only these answered the questions that follow. When asked about the positive aspects of the deputy's mandate, elements of descriptive and symbolic dimension are more frequently highlighted: "being a woman and her trajectory are very important"; "its representativeness, being a black

woman in the legislature”, “a black woman who represents minorities”; “having worked as a maid”; “since black women have a more humanized way of doing politics”. They also mention substantive dimension elements: her engagement in the “defense of *quilombola* people, with urban occupations, indigenous communities, feminist movements”; “combating racism, sexism and religious prejudice in the ALMG”; chairing the Human Rights Committee; and the supervision of the Executive “on prison guidelines and racial discrimination”. Finally, her resistance to death threats and her “willingness to listen to the population, trying to act with a participatory mandate” are remembered.

Respondents were asked whether they agreed with other aspects or innovations developed during De Jesus’s term in office. The highest degree of agreement was with the statement that the mandate encourages the participation of traditionally disregarded groups in politics (73.5%). Most respondents agree that consulting the population about parliamentary amendment allocation enables an important form of participation in decisions (71.8%). In addition, 68.1% agree that public hearings increase the discussion traditionally disregarded issues in politics. On the other hand, the statement that was most disagreed with was that De Jesus’s mandate inaugurates the representation of black people in the Minas Gerais regional parliament (36%).

Given that quantitative techniques are not adequate to understand the causes behind the responses captured or the complexity of social dynamics, the research used focus groups as a complementary technique to obtain and qualify the perception of De Jesus’s time in office.

Four focus groups were held throughout June 2022, each with four individuals. The saturation technique was used to assess the number of focus groups held. Each group was conducted by a moderator, two observers and a rapporteur. For participant selection, De Jesus’s office sent information about the groups and their representatives. In addition, contacts of the researchers themselves were mobilized. About half of the participants live in rural areas, with the remainder in the state capital and the metropolitan region.

Table 7: Target audiences and topics covered in the focus groups

Focus group 1	Focus group 2
Traditional peoples ("quilombolas" or maroons) Afro-Brazilian religious groups ("terreiros") Traditional peoples (indigenous) Occupations	Occupations
Focus group 3	Focus group 4
Feminist organizations Traditional peoples (quilombolas)	Black youth Feminist organizations Traditional peoples (fianzeiros)

Source: Prepared by the authors.

All participants, in all sessions, used positive qualities and attributes about the deputy, associating with a warrior personality: "strong woman", "determined", "battling", "warrior", "woman of struggle", "woman of courage", "woman of persistence", "with a lot of determination and good will". They bestowed on De Jesus descriptive representation and symbolic attributes: "black and marginalized woman"; "single mother"; "former domestic worker"; "university degree - even in the face of so many obstacles"; "the first black deputy to occupy the Legislative Assembly of Minas Gerais", "a person who represents the history of the *quilombolas*", "a fighter against oligarchies", "active in the human rights agenda", "a black woman who faces very difficult struggles".

This result reinforces, to a certain extent, the survey's findings. Some participants also pointed out the difficulty in maintaining a political office like hers, which aims to "open paths".

Except for one, all participants stated they would vote for her in the next elections. The motives were related to the three dimensions of representativeness: they explain that the deputy's profile represents them, how much she mobilizes their political views, and the results delivered. We highlight below the main points of progress and limitations presented by the participants, according to De Jesus's target audience.

Indigenous leaders gave a very positive evaluation, highlighting that "she represented and contemplated the communities' needs". On the other hand, the black youth representative assessed that, due to its many agendas, De Jesus's mandate struggles to contemplate all of them. However, he considered it positive to bring them up for discussion in the Legislative Assembly. He is also aware of the difficulties of a political office that acts alone and reinforces

that as chair of the Human Rights Committee, De Jesus has contributed to minimizing struggle of black youth and to protect their lives.

Quilombola representatives had a mostly positive perception; De Jesus's office has been committed to the fight for traditional peoples and developing actions that impact communities positively. One of the representatives pointed out that the community to which she belongs, "in all its history, has never felt so well represented as with De Jesus".

The perception of representatives of Afro-Brazilian organizations was also generally positive, but points of attention were brought to the debate. One of them states: "I have never seen any representative do what Andréia has done, which is to be present and defend social needs, even in the face of risks to her physical and moral integrity". On the other hand, one of the participants, even though satisfied with her performance, says he "does not feel fully fulfilled by the years his community was neglected". Feminist organization representatives highlighted that there was little direct dialogue and assessed that "women's agendas" were not addressed as others were:

Issues related to coping with violence against women, concerning children as victims of violence. There are many demands, so we see little actions. With the Gabinete, there were expectations, as there was representation in the three levels: municipal, state and federal, so there was hope for this joint work, but it remained a wish.

Final remarks

The positive aspects of De Jesus's office are evident given the results presented. In addition to her clear contribution to descriptive representation as a black, marginalized woman, a single mother, and former domestic worker, this was her first term, while being her party's only representative in the legislature. Despite these structural and institutional difficulties, she showed great capacity for political articulation, managed to establish a set of partnerships enabling an above-average parliamentary action, and to occupy relevant spaces, such as chair of the Human Rights Committee – a historic committee of great prestige in the context of the Legislative Assembly of Minas Gerais.

From the point of view of symbolic representation, the values, feelings, and attitudes evoked by the election of De Jesus, as well as the performance and practices of her office, were seen by the population as factors that strengthened representativeness and generated expectations of improvement in the legislative process.

In addition to having a significant approval rate for bills, the analysis of legislative production has shown its relevance and potential in terms of social impact. In order to advance the guidelines, it set out to defend (substantive representativeness), it is worth emphasizing the programmatic coherence and the way in which the agenda expanded and consolidated over trajectory, establishing its place more explicitly. The research showed how the parliamentarian was able to frame the debate (Lombardo; Meier; Verloo, 2013) from an expanded agenda: women, the black population, traditional peoples, those affected by mining, victims of rights violations. These aspects challenge the simple expectation that “women seek to articulate women’s interests”. In the case evaluated here, as her access to positions increased, a greater range of issues was articulated by her.

It is also important to mention the attention dedicated to communication with its social bases and to its accountability. The perspective adopted was not limited to answering and reporting accomplishments but included the very design and planning of activities through innovative methodologies and instruments.

The investigation also highlighted the challenges that were imposed on De Jesus’s mandate. The main weaknesses observed were related, firstly, to the scope of office management – not only, but mainly, due to lack of support from the parliament’s technical team, as well as from the party itself. Communication was also a point of attention, more focused on debate and less on ways to involve or disseminate to the population the enormous set of actions taken. The survey showed that even supporters and/or people who followed her time in office have little knowledge of its achievements.

Finally, it is important to reinforce the challenge related to political violence. The findings corroborate to the hypothesis that black women’s parliamentary mandates in countries like Brazil suffer from much more intense levels of attacks. In addition to the multidimensional impacts of this type of violence, not only personal and professional, it is also necessary to highlight

the risk it poses to democratic advancement. Political violence can create such important obstacles to the trajectory of parliament to the point of causing its interruption. This is a topic that demands urgent attention from academia and the political field in general.

The results also reinforce the need to rethink the models and assumptions of parliamentary evaluation. Based on lessons learned, guidelines from international organizations, and theoretical assumptions present mainly in gender studies, we proposed a model that we consider more adequate to apprehend the democratic contribution of the parliamentary mandate.

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Female and black occupation of the Brazilian Legislature: a case study

Abstract: Given the importance of political representation for Brazilian democracy, as well as the inseparable relationship between parliamentary action and policy making, this article presents the results of a study that evaluated the mandate of a Black Brazilian state representative. On the one hand, research in public administration tends to focus on the executive branch; studies about other powers are less common, especially regarding the legislative branch. On the other hand, there is a long history of studies in this area in political science, both in legislative studies and especially in studies on the political representation of women in parliaments. The mandate was evaluated for effectiveness, that is, its ability to materially represent the interests of women and the groups it intended to represent. Mobilizing literature on the relationship between descriptive, substantive, and symbolic representation exercised by women in political positions, we evaluated the mandate's contribution to dimensions such as: democratic strengthening, political administration, and results of parliamentary action.

Keywords: politics, representation, black women, parliamentary evaluation, gender, race.

Ocupação feminina e negra do parlamento: um estudo de caso

Resumo: Dada a importância do tema da representação política para a democracia brasileira, assim como da indissociável relação entre a atuação parlamentar e o *policy making*, este trabalho apresenta os resultados de pesquisa que realizou a avaliação do mandato de uma deputada estadual, negra, brasileira. Partimos de uma revisão das metodologias correntes sobre avaliação parlamentar, feita a partir dos *gender policy studies*, que se debruça sobre o tema da representação política de gênero. Realizou-se a avaliação do mandato, buscando considerar sua efetividade, ou seja, sua capacidade de representar materialmente os interesses ou as perspectivas das mulheres e dos grupos que pretendeu representar. Mobilizando os debates sobre a relação entre a representação descritiva, substantiva e simbólica exercida por mulheres em posições políticas, avaliamos dimensões como: a contribuição do mandato

para o fortalecimento democrático, a gestão do gabinete e os resultados da atuação parlamentar.

Palavras-chave: política, representação, mulheres negras, avaliação parlamentar, gênero, raça.

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