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DIALOGUE: GENDER QUOTAS

Democracy, gender quotas, and political recruitment in Mexico

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Do male and female legislators have different qualifications, experience, and backgrounds? If so, what are the main differences and what explains these differences? Are women more likely to rely on personal connections? Are well qualified women routinely passed over in favor of similarly qualified men? Do gender quotas and transitions to multiparty democracy affect the recruitment patterns of men and women? Do gender quotas lead to the recruitment of less qualified women? This article attempts to explain how informal gendered selection norms change over time using detailed data from over 500 Mexican Senators since 1964. The data provide evidence of discrimination in that to be successful, female senators need to have more legislative experience and more party experience than male senators. We also find evidence that traditional gender roles lead women to follow different paths to power. After the transition to democracy and the implementation of gender quotas, the importance of local legislative experience increased, discrimination against female aspirants declined, and a more diverse group of women entered the Senate. Our data show that women are no more likely than men to rely on personal connections to get into power.

Keywords: comparative; democracy; Latin American politics; women and gender

Do male and female legislators have different qualifications, experience, and backgrounds? If so, what are the main differences and what explains these differences? Are women more likely to rely on personal connections? Are well qualified women routinely passed over in favor of similarly qualified men? Do gender quotas and transitions to multiparty democracy affect the recruitment patterns of men and women? Do gender quotas lead to the recruitment of less qualified women? Women are dramatically underrepresented in all types of political positions across the globe, making up just over 20% of national legislatures worldwide (IPU 2015). Many countries have implemented gender quotas to increase women's representation (Krook 2009). This article attempts to explain how informal gendered selection norms change over time using detailed data from over 500 Mexican Senators since the first women took office in 1964. This long time-series allows for a more comprehensive analysis of change through time than any other research to date, providing the opportunity to analyze how gender quotas and democratization have influenced political recruitment. The data come from Roderic Camp's *Mexican Political Biographies* (2011), which includes biographies of 3000 leading national politicians in Mexico from 1935 to 2012.

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Building on the insights of the feminist scholarship on candidate selection (e.g., Norris and Lovenduski 1995; Norris 1997; Krook 2010; Mackay and Krook 2011; Hinojosa 2012; Bjarnegård 2013), this article examines how informal practices of discrimination and traditional gender roles interact with formal rules to influence the career trajectories of male and female politicians. In Mexico the formal rules of candidate selection changed substantially in the 1990s as electoral codes were rewritten, gradually ending one-party rule. At the same time new mechanisms to increase women's representation were incorporated into the electoral codes. Since informal practices such as discrimination are difficult to observe and often pass unnoticed (Waylen 2014), we hope to shed light on these often unperceived informal institutions by examining their influence on patterns of political recruitment.

While overall, the career paths of men and women are quite similar, we find evidence that before the transition to democracy and the introduction of voluntary quotas, women faced discrimination in that to become a senator, women had to be *more* qualified than their male peers. During the transition to democracy, but before effectively sanctioned quotas were introduced, women's qualifications declined compared to their male colleagues, but after the implementation of enforced quotas, women's qualifications increased. Women on average have more legislative experience than men across all time periods, and women are more likely to come to politics from traditionally female dominated careers. After the transition to democracy, elective experience, especially local experience, became more important for both men and women; and after the implementation of gender quotas, discrimination against female aspirants declined and a more diverse group of women entered the Senate. In contrast to much "common wisdom" about women in politics, we find that women are no more likely than men to rely on personal connections to get into power.

Critics of gender quotas have been concerned that quotas will result in less qualified women gaining positions of power. Our data provide clear evidence that over the long-term quotas do not bring unqualified women into positions of power. Understanding the paths women take to positions of political power is essential for understanding the role of women in politics. If women come from similar backgrounds and have similar experience as their male colleagues, then it is less likely that the entrance of large numbers of women into the political system will change political outcomes in profound ways. On the other hand, if women follow different paths to power, come from different backgrounds, and have different types of experience than their male colleagues, then we should expect to see more meaningful consequences when women gain positions of power. Moreover, we can shed light on the obstacles facing female politicians by comparing their backgrounds with male politicians and analyzing change over time.

Theoretical expectations

The dominant approach to gender and political recruitment focuses on the supply and demand for female candidates. Those who are both eligible and aspire to office make up the "supply" of candidates. The "demand" for candidates is determined by the nomination process in which candidates are selected and the elections in which candidates are ultimately chosen (Lovenduski and Norris 1993). A lack of resources (Norris and Lovenduski 1995) and a lack of ambition (Fox and Lawless 2004) contribute to a reduced pool of female candidates. Qualified women may not aspire to public office because of gendered family responsibilities or because they have not been socialized to seek public office (Lawless and Fox 2005). Political elites may more actively recruit and groom young men for public office, creating a greater supply of male candidates. Krook (2010) critiques the supply and demand framework for not paying attention to the institutional context and the ways gender distorts the political market for candidates. She focuses attention on how rules, practices, and norms interact to shape candidate selection and shows

that the consequences of changing formal rules such as gender quotas depend on informal practices and norms.

Party candidate selection procedures play a central role, affecting both the supply and demand of candidates (Kenny 2010; Hinojosa 2012). Party leaders may pass over qualified women in favor of men due to their own prejudices or their presumption of prejudice among the electorate (Franceschet 2005), and informal eligibility requirements are especially important at this stage of the candidate selection process (Rahat and Hazan 2001). The informal requirements, such as access to clientelist networks, are more likely to be gendered than formal requirements (Bjarnegård 2013). Women benefit from clear rules for promotion (Lovenduski and Norris 1993; Babcock and Laschever 2003), and informal rules that are not publically communicated and enforced make it harder for women to break into tradition power networks (Hinojosa and Franceschet 2012). We also know that women do better in political systems where candidates are chosen by other elites (such as closed proportional representation) rather than through direct elections (Norris 1985; Baldez 2007). Local power monopolies and clientelist networks present important obstacles for women in politics (Hinojosa 2012; Bjarnegård 2013). More exclusive and centralized candidate selection processes help women to overcome the obstacles of self-nomination and local power monopolies (Kenny 2010; Hinojosa 2012).

How do gendered selection processes affect the types of candidates who are successful? Previous research on the recruitment of political elites has found relatively few differences in the career paths of men and women (Schwindt-Bayer 2011). Among legislators, men are more likely to be married (Schwindt-Bayer 2011; Franceschet and Piscopo 2014). In some cases men have more electoral experience (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2008; Schwindt-Bayer 2011), especially in local executive positions (Murray 2010; Franceschet and Piscopo 2014). Legislative women are more likely to come from careers in teaching (Schwindt-Bayer 2011), have specialized educational experience, and be party loyalists (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2008). Compared to women in the general population, female legislators are more likely to be urban, well-educated, and from the middle or upper classes (Saint-Germain and Metoyer 2008). Building on the insights of these studies and others, this article examines the interaction of rules, informal practices, and norms to argue that discrimination and traditional gender roles influence the political and social backgrounds of successful politicians.

Informal practices of discrimination

Discrimination may lead to different career paths for men and women. Women were prohibited from voting and holding political positions in most countries throughout most of history. As a result, political parties and other institutions have been historically dominated by men. Insofar as “old boy’s networks” have functioned to recruit men into politics and exclude women, women must either seek alternative paths to power or work harder to get into politics. Discrimination takes place when women are passed over in favor of men with similar qualifications. Discrimination can also take place if women are not actively recruited and encouraged to participate in politics when men are. There is evidence that party leaders discriminate against female candidates by disproportionately placing them in losing districts (Langston and Aparicio 2011).

Following Norris and Lovenduski’s (1995) logic of a “political market,” if party elites or the electorate prefer to nominate men, then we would expect the women who are successful to be either “higher quality” candidates than their male counterparts or have access to more personal power networks to support their candidacies and overcome the discrimination they face. Catalano and Baldez (2015) define the quality of candidates in terms of political experience, education, and high occupational status. The most relevant experience for a Senate seat is prior legislative experience in either the lower house or a state legislature. Since women may only be considered

“qualified” if they exceed the qualifications of their male colleagues (Kenney 1996), women may be more highly educated and have more specialized degrees or more experience directly related to their political work than men. In fact, women themselves may be less likely to consider themselves qualified (Fox and Lawless 2004; Saint-Germain and Metoyer 2008). And women who are facing discrimination from traditional power monopolies that prefer to recruit their male peers may choose to invest further in their educations. Women who face discrimination may have to put in more years of service as party activists before being nominated to a powerful position (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2008). If successful women have more education and experience than their male counterparts, this would suggest that equally qualified women were passed over in favor of less qualified men, thus providing evidence of discrimination.¹

In addition to being more qualified, women facing discrimination may need greater access to power networks through personal connections or kinship ties to the political elite (Saint-Germain and Metoyer 2008) (Jalalzai 2013). Family connections can help to eliminate obstacles faced by female candidates. Wives and other relatives of popular politicians have name recognition and greater access to media attention. People with close connections to political elites are more likely to be socialized into politics and are able to build on the political capital of their families (Hinojosa 2012, 118–120). In fact, most of the early women to win presidential elections in Latin America were widows of popular political leaders (Perón, Chamorro, Moscoso), and some women get involved in politics when politically active husbands or children are jailed or killed (Bouvard 1994; Tula and Stephen 1994). While popular stereotypes have focused overwhelmingly on women’s personal connections, male politicians also benefit from personal connections. Are women *more* likely to have personal connections than their male counterparts? If women are more likely to have a relative in political life, that may indicate that they need personal connections to overcome discrimination against them.

The intersection of traditional gender roles with geography and social class

Traditional gender roles in most societies call on women to take on the majority of the responsibilities for childcare and housework while men pursue public life. These differences create obstacles for women in the traditional male paths to power (Franceschet and Piscopo 2012). Women might make different choices about work-family conflicts, making family a greater priority than men do. Women with young children may be more likely than men with young children to scale back careers, especially if they live far from their jobs and require long hours to commute (Murray 2010; Slaughter 2012). Women who live in or near the capital city may be able to maintain national political careers and manage household obligations more easily. Traditional gender roles enforced by conservative religious ideas about gender may be stronger and more pervasive in rural areas (Chaney 1979). Thus, women who live in rural areas and far from the capital city may face more obstacles to a political career.

Social class also intersects with traditional gender roles in important ways. Middle and upper class women are more able to hire others to help with their domestic responsibilities, thus allowing them to more fully participate in public life. Working class women are likely to work as domestic servants for wealthier women in addition to taking care of their own families (Blofield 2009). Whereas working class men may gain political power through activism in labor unions, working class women are more likely to do informal work with little chance for union organizing and the political opportunities that come with it. Teaching is one avenue that has historically been open to women, including women from rural and working class backgrounds. Among the earlier generations of women, especially those from modest socio-economic backgrounds, normal school (teacher training college) was a common path for upward social mobility. Most graduates of these schools, men and women alike, were from humble, rural families. Teachers’ unions have

been an important mechanism for recruiting women into politics especially in Mexico where the teachers' union is large and influential (Foweraker 1993; Cook 1996).

Where traditional gender roles are prominent, we would likely see important differences in men's and women's career paths and social backgrounds. Women who come from wealthy, urban backgrounds and live in the capital city may be more easily able to overcome the obstacles created by traditional gender roles. We may also find that women are more likely to follow traditional female careers such as teaching, while men follow the classic path from law school to politics.

Change through time: transition to democracy and gender quotas

How has the transition to democracy and the implementation of gender quotas affected the career paths of men and women? Because the transition to democracy in Mexico took place through a series of electoral reforms that included a gradual implementation of gender quotas, it is impossible to disentangle the consequences of democratization and gender quotas. Therefore, we examine them together and conceive of gender quotas as part of the transition to democracy. Some research has been pessimistic about the ability of democratic transitions to empower women (Jaquette 1994; Waylen 2007a). And some scholars have posited a tension between gender equality and democratizing and decentralizing reforms (Baldez 2007; Kenny 2010; Hinojosa 2012). But other studies have found that women's activism together with a favorable political opportunity structure can lead to important gains in gender equality (Waylen 2006, 2007b, 2008; Beer 2009).

Proponents of gender quotas have suggested that quotas will bring more diverse women into politics, while opponents have worried that unqualified women will gain power (Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo 2012). Some research has found that elite women and women with ties to powerful men are the main beneficiaries of gender quotas (Bird 2003; Pupovac 2005; Rai et al. 2006), but Murray (2012) finds that after quotas were introduced in France, women come from somewhat more diverse backgrounds, and Franceschet and Piscopo (2012) find that women elected with gender quotas in Argentina come from more diverse professional backgrounds, but have similar levels of education and political experience. Catalano and Baldez (2015) find that in Italy, gender quotas increased the quality of legislators, in that women elected via quotas had more local government experience and lower absenteeism than their male counterparts.

Because legislative gender quotas increase demand for female candidates and democratization opens up the candidate selection process to more actors, we suspect that democratization and gender quotas will lead to decreasing discrimination against women. In fact, many opponents of quotas have argued that quotas will increase the demand for female candidates so much that parties will be unable to find qualified candidates. As we argued above, when women face discrimination we expect to find that successful women will have more education and political experience than men. After the implementation of quotas, we expect to find that women will have the same or perhaps less education and political experience because there will be greater demand for female candidates and more competition among men for fewer positions. We also expect to find that over time conservative gender roles will decline, and thus male and female career paths will look more similar.

We expect to find that a transition to democracy will result in more inclusive and decentralized candidate selection processes (Langston 2008; Camp 2010). Thus, after democracy we expect that senators will be more likely to have experience as mayor and state deputy. Local political experience may be even more important for women because local power monopolies may be especially resistant to female candidates imposed from above (Langston and Aparicio 2011; Hinojosa 2012).

As the transition to multiparty democracy leads to a more inclusive process to select candidates, the influence of traditional power brokers will likely decline. As a result we expect to find that senators will be less likely to rely on personal connections.

We present three hypotheses to explain gender differences in political recruitment patterns: (1) discrimination decreases the demand for female political leaders, so that the women who are successful must be *more* qualified than their male counterparts or have access to greater personal connections, (2) traditional gender roles create greater obstacles for women from lower class and rural backgrounds and increase the likelihood that women come from traditional female careers such as teaching, and (3) changes in the formal rules entailed by the transition to democracy and implementation of gender quotas will reduce the influence of discrimination on careers paths of men and women, and traditional gender roles will decline through time.

In sum, in circumstances where women face discrimination, we expect to find that women have *more* education, *more* legislative experience and *more* party experience than their male colleagues. Women who face discrimination are also more likely to need personal and family connections in order to be successful. When traditional gender roles are strong, women will be more likely to come from careers in teaching rather than law. Also women will be more able to overcome the obstacles of traditional gender roles if they come from wealthy, urban backgrounds (especially the capital city). After the implementation of gender quotas, we expect to see less evidence of discrimination against women. We expect to see a decline in traditional gender roles over time. After the transition to democracy we expect to see more local electoral experience and less influence of political families.

The recruitment of senators in Mexico

This article focuses on the recruitment of senators in Mexico because senators are the highest elected officials with sufficient numbers of women to analyze. There has not yet been a female president, and only one female major party presidential candidate. There have only been six female governors. Senators enjoy more prestige than federal deputies, and we have a near complete set of data for senators. Mexico has a presidential system with a bicameral legislature. The Senate (upper house) shares responsibilities with the Chamber of Deputies (lower house) for making all federal laws, except budget bills, which are the sole preserve of the Chamber of Deputies. The Senate has exclusive responsibility for ratifying international treaties, appointing interim governors if state governments are dissolved, and approving executive appointments, including Supreme Court Justices.

There are 128 senators.² Each of the 31 states plus the Federal District elect three senators. Two seats go to the party with the most votes, and one seat goes to the party with the second highest vote share. Another 32 seats are elected at large and distributed through proportional representation. Senators serve six year terms that run concurrent with the presidential term. The formal rules in Mexico have included a prohibition on consecutive reelection for all elected legislative offices and a complete prohibition on reelection for executive offices.³ The ban on reelection in Mexico has led to constant turnover and circulation of elites. As a result, a wide variety of people have served in the legislature (Langston 2001).

Women first won the right to vote in national elections in 1953. The first women were elected to the Senate in 1964. Both María Lavalle Urbina and Alicia Arellano Tapia were elected to the Senate in 1964. Lavalle Urbina was from the state of Campeche, where she attended a normal school (teacher training college), then went on to become the first woman in the state of Campeche to earn a law degree. She served as a judge before being elected to the Senate. Arellano Tapia was a dentist from the state of Sonora. She was the mayor of her hometown Magdalena de Kino, then after serving in the Senate she went on to become the mayor of Hermosillo, the

Table 1. Females senators, 1964–2018.

Presidential term	Number of women	Total number of senators	Percent women
1964–1970	2	58	3.4
1970–1976	2	60	3.3
1976–1982	5	64	7.8
1982–1988	6	64	9.4
1988–1991	10	64	15.6
1991–1994	4	64	6.3
1994–1997	16	128	12.5
1997–2000	19	128	14.8
2000–2006	22	128	17.2
2006–2012	35	128	27.3
2012–2018	45	128	35.2

Source: Rodríguez (2003), 142–143 and <http://www.senado.gob.mx>.

capital of Sonora (Tuñón 2002). The number of women in the Senate increased slowly until the first gender quotas were introduced, and by 2012, 35% of the Senate was female. See Table 1.

Throughout most of the twentieth century Mexico had an authoritarian one-party system governed by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). The PRI was ideologically diverse and inclusive; it ruled more through cooptation than repression. Early leaders were deeply anticlerical, and the secular nature of the regime allowed for many early advances in gender equality (Baitenmann, Chenaut, and Varley 2007). During the period of PRI hegemony (1928–1988) the PRI won every major elected office and controlled huge majorities in both houses of congress. Senators and deputies were chosen by the incoming presidential candidate, which provided presidents with compliant legislatures that operated as a rubber stamp for most presidential initiatives. The PRI built a corporatist system with official sectors to represent the peasants and the workers. This brought substantial numbers of lower class people into the formal political system, especially the legislature where seats were traditionally reserved for representatives from each sector (González Casanova 1970). The role of party elites in recruiting and grooming new members is especially powerful. Political elites have traditionally been recruited through political cliques known as *camarillas* in a process that starts when potential recruits are very young, in university or even high school (Camp 2002). Given this very early, elite driven recruitment process, the lack of women may be driven by gendered preferences of party leaders (Langston and Aparicio 2011).

The transition to democracy in Mexico was slow and incremental. A series of electoral reforms carried out during the 1990s ushered in a new competitive electoral regime. The transition to democracy changed patterns of political recruitment in important ways. Political recruitment became less centralized, and more inclusive. Local experience became more important and primaries were used more frequently (Beer 2003; Langston 2008; Camp 2010). In other contexts we might expect that a transition to democracy would bring in more politicians with lower class backgrounds. In Mexico, however, the one-party system incorporated peasants and unionized workers through government sanctioned peak organizations. Government positions, especially legislative seats, were informally reserved for loyal leaders of the peasant and worker confederations. The main beneficiary of the transition to democracy was the rightist Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), which draws its support mainly from the middle and business classes. Thus we expect to see fewer representatives from lower class backgrounds after the breakdown of the corporatist system and the transition to democracy.

As a part of these electoral reforms new mechanisms were gradually introduced to increase women's representation in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. The Federal Electoral

Code (COFIPE) of 1993 ordered parties to increase the participation of women. The 1996 COFIPE recommended that no more than 70% of candidates be of the same gender, but included no effective sanctions. A compulsory 30% quota with a placement mandate and sanctions was enacted as a part of the 2002 COFIPE. The electoral reforms of 2008 increased the quota from thirty to 40% and also directed 2% of the public financing of parties toward the development of female leadership (Medina Espino 2010). Starting in the 1990s most state legislatures also began to enact gender quotas, which vary from state to state (Cervantes et al. 2006; Reynoso and D'Angelo 2006; Pacheco Ladrón de Guevara 2007). In 2014 a new constitutional amendment called for gender parity in all state and national legislatures.

Each new attempt to improve women's representation was met with new strategies to undermine the reforms. Parties were able to comply with the 1996 quota law by nominating women as alternates rather than as the primary candidate⁴ and also by placing women in unelectable positions on the proportional representation lists. To combat these attempts to undermine the goals of the quota, the 2002 reforms included a placement mandate and specified that the quota could not be met with alternates. The 2008 reforms were subverted by the so-called "Juanitas." The Juanitas were women who stood for election so that their party could meet the gender quotas, then resigned immediately after the election to let their male alternates take the seat. In 2009 eight female federal deputies resigned in favor of male alternates (Camil 2009; Proceso 2010). Further reforms to the federal election law required primary candidates and alternates to be the same sex.

Data and results

This research compares the career paths and backgrounds of male and female senators in Mexico over time. We compare family ties, education, political experience, and social background of male and female senators, using data from the *Mexican Political Biographies* project, which includes detailed information on nearly 3000 influential politicians from 1935 to 2012. Political elites were chosen for inclusion in the data set because they held the most influential political posts in Mexico from all three branches of government, including supreme court justices, cabinet-level secretaries and assistant secretaries, repeating members of the congress, top party leaders, and state governors (Camp 2011). We created a data set from the *Mexican Political Biographies* project with senators from 1964 (when the first women won seats) to 2012. The data set includes 541 individuals, 53 of whom are women. Because of the relatively small number of women, it is difficult to reach standard levels of statistical significance with these data, especially when we divide the data by gender and time period. Therefore, we include relationships that only reach the 90% confidence level in addition to more standard significance levels.

To compare the career paths of male and female senators we use a variety of indicators: a relative in public life, educational attainment, elective experience, and party activism. We also use a variety of indicators of social background: class, urban versus rural birthplace, region of birth (Mexico City versus elsewhere), and the type of degree earned (law versus normal school). Class is measured by the occupation of the politician's parents (peasant or urban working class versus middle or upper class occupation). Urban birthplace includes any municipality with more than 5000 inhabitants. To test the discrimination hypothesis and the traditional gender roles hypothesis, we compare the career paths of men and women in the entire data set, 1964–2012. To test the democratization and gender quota hypotheses we compare the pre-democratic era (1964–1994) with the democratizing era (1994–2006) and the democratic era with compulsory gender quotas (2006–2012). The pre-democratic period includes senators elected before 1994. The democratizing era includes senators elected in 1994 and 2000. The democratic era with compulsory gender quotas includes senators elected in 2006. The transition to democracy

in Mexico was a slow and incremental process that took place over many years. The year 2000 is most commonly used as the date for the transition to democracy, but important electoral reforms began after the contested presidential election of 1988. The new federal electoral code of 1993 made important advances toward competitive democracy and also included the first mandate for greater representation of women. Thus the Senate elections of 1994 were an important first test of the newly reformed electoral laws and new efforts to recruit more women. The 2000 Senate elections took place in an even more democratic context, but legally enforceable gender quotas were not adopted until 2002, so the 2006 Senate elections were the first elections in which compulsory gender quotas were in place. Because of the gradual nature of the democratic transition and the gradual implementation of gender quotas, there is no one moment when Mexico achieved democracy or implemented quotas. The approach used here compares three key time periods to allow us to examine change through time.

Discrimination

As we can see from the data presented in Table 2, there is evidence to support the discrimination hypothesis in terms of legislative experience, but not education or personal connections. The difference in personal connections of male and female senators is very small, and the data on education are mixed. Men are more likely to have a university degree, whereas women are more likely to have attended graduate school. Women are also more likely to have a normal school degree, but these are not university level degrees. They are more comparable to obtaining a high school teaching diploma. Striking evidence of discrimination is seen in legislative experience. Women are significantly more likely to have legislative experience in both state legislatures and in the national lower house, the Chamber of Deputies. In contrast, men are more likely to have served as mayors, though the difference does not reach statistical significance. Women are slightly

Table 2. Male and female senators career paths, 1964–2012.

	Percentage of men	Percentage of women
<i>Personal connections</i>		
Relative in public life	38.97	41.51
<i>Candidate quality</i>		
University education	81.33 ⁺	71.70 ⁺
Some graduate education	33.61	43.40
Mayor	18.07	11.32
State deputy	25.26**	43.40**
Federal deputy	74.59**	90.57**
Party militant	71.93	75.47
Party leader	70.29	73.58
<i>Social background</i>		
Middle or upper class parents	74.09	76.47
Urban birthplace	73.15	76
Born in Mexico City	10.25	16.98
Law degree	35.32***	13.21***
Normal school degree	3.94*	11.32*
N	488	53

Chi-squared significance ⁺ $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

more likely to have experience as party activists and party leaders, but again the differences are not statistically significant.

The interaction of traditional gender roles with geography and social class

There is also evidence to support our hypothesis that traditional gender roles interact with geography and class to influence career paths. We argued that traditional gender roles create obstacles that middle and upper class and urban women are more likely to be able to overcome. Both men and women are overwhelmingly from the middle or upper class and from urban areas. While none of the differences are large enough to be statistically significant, women are slightly more likely than men to be from middle or upper class families and from urban areas, especially Mexico City, suggesting that women with more economic resources and who are geographically closer to centers of power are more able to overcome obstacles to their political careers. Men are significantly more likely than women to have a law degree, whereas women are significantly more likely to have a degree from a normal school (teacher training college). This supports our hypothesis that traditional gender roles will lead women to follow different paths to power.

Change through time: transition to democracy and gender quotas

There are quite substantial differences in the qualifications and backgrounds of senators through time. The data in Table 3 compare all senators in three different time periods, before democracy (1964–1994), during the transition to democracy (1994–2006) and during the period of multiparty

Table 3. Senators before and after democracy and quotas.

	Percentage of all senators		
	Pre-democracy	Democratization	Democracy + Quotas
	1964–1994	1994–2006	2006–2012
<i>Personal connections</i>			
Relative in public life	41.22	41.32	29.35
<i>Candidate quality</i>			
University education	73.55***	88.02***	86.96***
Graduate education	26.45***	37.52***	50.00***
Mayor	12.46**	20.36**	27.17**
State deputy	17.79***	33.53***	43.48***
Federal deputy	63.12***	90.42***	90.22***
Party militant	66.67**	80.84**	73.91**
Party leader	65.96**	79.64**	68.48**
<i>Social background</i>			
Middle or upper class parents	66.84**	81.30**	86.96**
Urban birthplace	69.14 ⁺	79.64 ⁺	74.71
Born in Mexico City	4.96***	17.96***	16.30***
Law degree	35.59	29.34	32.61
Normal school	7.61**	2.40**	0.00**
<i>N</i>	282	167	92

Chi-squared significance ⁺ $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p > .001$.

democracy and compulsory gender quotas (2006–2012). After the transition to democracy senators were less likely to have a relative in public life, though the difference is not statistically significant. Over time Senators were more likely to have a university degree and graduate education. Prior electoral experience became more important, with recent senators more likely to have served as mayor and as state or federal deputy. Party activism increased during the transition to democracy, and then decreased later. During democratization and afterwards, Senators were more likely to be from middle or upper class backgrounds and from Mexico City. Over time the number of senators with normal school degrees declined significantly.

Hypothesis 3 predicts that gender discrimination will decline after democratic reforms and gender quotas are implemented. We also suspect that traditional gender roles will decline gradually over time. The data in Table 4 provide evidence to support the discrimination hypothesis and the traditional gender roles hypothesis. The data in Table 4 compare the differences between male and female senators in three different time periods: before democracy (1964–1994), during the transition to democracy (1994–2006) and during the period of multiparty democracy and compulsory gender quotas (2006–2012).

There are no statistically significant differences in personal contacts between men and women in any of the three periods. We predicted that women would be more likely to have personal contacts before democracy and gender quotas in order to overcome discrimination. In fact, women had *fewer* personal connections than men before democratization. Women’s personal contacts took on increased importance during the transition period, but then after the implementation of compulsory gender quotas, the percentage of women with a relative in public life declined to

Table 4. Male and female senators before and after democracy and quotas.

	Pre-democracy 1964–1994		Democratization 1994– 2006		Democracy + Quotas 2006– 2012	
	Percentages		Percentages		Percentages	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<i>Personal connections</i>						
Relative in public life	41.86	33.33	39.60	55.56	28.21	35.71
<i>Candidate quality</i>						
University education	73.33	76.19	91.28***	61.11***	88.46	78.57
Graduate education	25.88	33.33	38.93	44.44	48.72	57.14
Mayor	12.31	14.29	21.48	11.11	30.77 ⁺	7.14 ⁺
State deputy	17.31	23.81	32.21	44.44	38.46*	71.43*
Federal deputy	61.69 ⁺	80.95 ⁺	89.26	100.00	89.74	92.86
Party militant	65.13 ⁺	85.71 ⁺	82.55	66.67	74.36	71.43
Party leader	64.75	80.95	81.21	66.67	67.95	71.43
<i>Social background</i>						
Middle or upper class parents	65.17 ⁺	86.67 ⁺	82.57	71.43	90.24 ⁺	60.00 ⁺
Urban birthplace	67.87	85.00	80.54	72.22	76.00	66.67
Born in DF	4.98	4.76	17.45	22.22	14.10	28.57
Law degree	36.92	19.05	31.54*	11.11*	37.18*	7.14*
Normal school	6.67*	19.05*	1.34**	11.11**	0	0
<i>N</i>	261	21	149	18	78	14

Chi-squared significance ⁺*p* < .10.

**p* < .05.

***p* < .01.

****p* < .001.

levels similar to the pre-democracy level. The percentage of men with a relative in public life declined through time.

The data on candidate quality provide evidence consistent with our discrimination hypothesis. In the pre-democratic era women had more education, more elective experience, and more party experience than men. The differences were statistically significant for federal deputy and party militant. During the democratic transition period, when voluntary gender quotas were first put in place, the percentage of women with university degrees dropped substantially, but the percentage of women with graduate degrees increased. The percentage of women who had served as mayor also decreased while the percentage of men increased. Women continued to have more legislative experience than men, but during the transition, female senators had less party experience. After the transition to multiparty democracy and the implementation of compulsory gender quotas, the dip in women's university education reversed, but remained lower than men's. Women continued to have higher rates of graduate education and legislative experience, but women lagged even further behind men in terms of mayoral experience. Women were dramatically more likely to have been state deputies after the implementation of compulsory gender quotas in 2006. While less than 40% of men had served in state legislatures, over 70% of women had. This suggests that local experience is especially important for women. In the post-transition period, men and women had similar levels of party experience. Overall our data support the hypothesis of gender discrimination before 1994 and less discrimination after 1994.

The data in [Table 4](#) provide evidence to support the hypothesis that the obstacles created by the interaction of traditional gender roles with geography and class have declined through time. Whereas female senators were more likely than men to come from middle or upper class families before 1994, they were significantly less likely than men to come from middle or upper class families after democracy and quotas. Forty percent of female senators after 2006 came from working class families. This suggests that the democratic reforms and the gender quotas resulted in the recruitment of substantially different types of women, and that after 2006 women with few economic resources could more readily overcome obstacles created by domestic responsibilities. Men were more likely to come from middle and upper class families over time whereas women were less likely, suggesting that democratization made it more difficult for working class men to enter the political elite, while simultaneously providing new opportunities for working class women. Though the differences are not statistically significant, before 1994, women were more likely than men to be from urban backgrounds (any town with more than 5000 inhabitants), and after 1994 women were less likely than men to be from urban backgrounds. Women continue to be more likely to come from Mexico City, even after 2006, suggesting that proximity to the capital continues to facilitate women's national political careers. The importance of normal school degrees declined dramatically, with no Senators earning a normal school degree after 2006. In contrast, the gap between men and women with law degrees increased over time.

While the quality of female senators declined during the transition period, this decline was only temporary. By 2006, once sanctions for gender quotas were in place, the dip in women's qualifications evened out so that women were similarly qualified as men. The short-term effect of the quotas suggests that there may have been a lack of available women in the short term, but once women realized that there were opportunities for them in politics, qualified women moved in to take advantage of the new opportunities, thus increasing the supply of women to meet the higher demand.

Conclusions

Patterns of political recruitment for Mexico's senators changed in important ways after the transition to democracy and the introduction of gender quotas. The importance of electoral

experience, especially local electoral experience, increased during the transition. Democratization and gender quotas also seem to have reduced discrimination against women and brought more diverse women into the Senate. Whereas women had higher qualifications than men for all of our measures of candidate quality before democracy, and were *significantly* more likely than men to have federal legislative experience and party experience before democracy, during the transition to democracy the gap between male and female federal legislative experience narrowed and the gap for university education and party experience reversed. We have argued that this was the result of increased demand for female candidates and increased competition among men after the introduction of gender quotas. The transition to democracy also brought more women from lower class and rural backgrounds into the Senate, but had the opposite effect on men. While fewer women came from urban areas in general, more women came from Mexico City. We have argued that the shift in class and geographic background is evidence that the obstacles to female participation created by women's traditional domestic responsibilities have declined over time.

While we do see the quality gap between men and women narrow after democratization and gender quotas, and even reverse somewhat during the transition period, our data suggest that over the long term there is no evidence to support the fear of quota opponents that unqualified women will gain legislative seats. There may be a limited supply of female candidates in the short run, but as women learn of the new opportunities, the supply of women increases. Even after the implementation of compulsory gender quotas, women continue to have more graduate education and more legislative experience than men.

While women consistently have more legislative experience than men, they have had less executive experience since 1994. Comparative research has found that women are more likely to serve in legislatures than in executive positions, especially when legislative seats are allocated through proportional representation (Norris 1985; Lovenduski 1986). Hinojosa and Franceschet (2012, 766) found more discrimination against women in mayoral elections than in legislative elections in Chile. Female candidates were equally likely to win legislative races, but less likely to win mayoral races. They argue this is because executive offices are more powerful and prestigious and because voters tend to associate executive positions with traditional masculine traits. Men may also dominate executive positions because these positions are valuable for clientelism (Bjarnegård 2013; Franceschet and Piscopo 2014). Because executive positions are highly sought after, women may face more obstacles in getting these nominations and compete instead for legislative seats. It is also important to note that in Mexico gender quotas have been in place for legislative seats in most state legislatures and the lower house, creating a greater supply of women with legislative experience; but there are no quotas for executive offices and there have not been comparable increases in women in executive positions.

The data on personal connections are very interesting, given the overwhelming assumption that women are more likely than men to depend on personal connections. The difference between the numbers of male and female senators with a relative in public life is small, and before 1994 men were actually *more* likely to have a relative in public life than women. While common wisdom suggests that wives of politicians frequently enter politics, in Mexico political wives have not been as visible as in other Latin American countries. Rodríguez (2003, 232–236) notes that in Mexico most political wives have been “seen but not heard,” and only a relatively small number of political wives have gone on to political careers. Media coverage of the quota law in Mexico has been dominated by the “Juanitas,” women who run for office to meet quota requirements, but then give up their seat, sometimes to a male relative. After the implementation of compulsory quotas in 2002, female senators were less likely to have a relative in public life than during the previous two electoral cycles. Thus the quota law does not appear to be increasing

nepotism in Mexican politics. Moreover, our data provide no evidence that women politicians are significantly more likely than men to have family connections.

Recent research on women in politics has been concerned with the impact of growing numbers of women in positions of power. We shed new light on this issue by comparing the career paths of men and women in political office in Mexico over time. If women have similar backgrounds and experience as men, then we may not see meaningful changes when women enter politics. However, if women are following different paths to power, their growing numbers may lead to important transformation in the way political institutions function. We find that contrary to common wisdom, family connections are not significantly more important for women. This provides evidence that women are likely to get to power because of their own abilities, rather than serving as “proxies” for their husbands or other powerful family members. In fact, women are more likely than men to have state and federal legislative experience, and the transition to democracy and introduction of gender quotas has brought in more women from rural and lower class backgrounds. Rather than overcoming discrimination by relying on personal connections, our data show that women gain access to powerful political positions by working harder and logging more hours in less prestigious positions than their male colleagues.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes

1. Some might argue that there are fewer women in positions of power because women have less ambition than men, not because of discrimination. There is substantial evidence that women have less political ambition than men and that women have to be more qualified than men before they believe themselves to be qualified (Lawless and Fox 2005). Thus we would expect a candidate pool with fewer women (if women have lower ambition overall) and more qualified women (if women only put themselves forward if they are highly qualified). Faced with such a pool (with fewer, more highly qualified women) party leaders choosing solely on the basis of qualifications would presumably choose a higher proportion of the women than the men, and thus we would find men and women equally qualified. If instead party leaders chose men with less experience and education over women with greater experience and education, that presumably reflects discrimination against the women in the pool. Moreover, it is important to remember that ambition is always changing and almost certainly endogenous to the candidate selection process.
2. The number of senators increased from 64 to 128 in 1994.
3. In 2014 the ban on reelection for members of congress was removed. Senators elected in 2018 will be eligible for reelection.
4. Every legislative seat in Mexico has a *propietario* (owner) and a *suplente* (alternate). Both are elected on the same ticket. The alternate takes over if the owner has to abandon the seat either temporarily or permanently.

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