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Gender Quotas are not Enough: How Background Experience and Campaigning Affect Electoral Outcomes*

Importante

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Abstract

This paper asks why women politicians tend to do worse in SMD districts than in their PR counterparts, even with gender quotas. Mexico is an excellent case to study this phenomenon because it has a PR and a SMD tier, both with a quota rule, and a ban on consecutive reelection that limits the effects of incumbency advantage. This setting allows us to explore a key difference between SMD and closed list PR seats: campaigning. Despite the fact that most female candidates are sent to losing SMD districts in Mexico, we cannot know conclusively whether party leaders ignore quality female candidates in competitive and bastion areas in favor of their male co-partisans. Thus, this paper analyzes the role of candidate's background and experience in a sample of SMD candidates. We found that the gender gap in vote shares and in the probability of victory is mitigated once prior experience and party strength are controlled for. We use interviews with winning and losing candidates of both genders to understand how prior backgrounds can help a SMD candidate. We found that legislative campaigns in Mexico depend heavily on the ability of the deputy hopeful to procure local political brokers who are able to control or mobilize blocks of voters. Moreover, the candidate's prior experience in the locality helps create a valuable reputation for access to government services that these brokers need to deliver selective goods to their followers.

Resumen

Este documento busca explicar porqué, a pesar de la existencia de cuotas de género, las candidatas tienden a recibir menor apoyo electoral en distritos uninominales que en los de representación proporcional. México resulta un excelente caso de estudio para explorar este fenómeno debido a que cuenta con un sistema electoral mixto, con cuotas de género en ambos principios y sin reelección consecutiva, lo cual limita la ventajas de los titulares. Este contexto permite explorar una de las diferencias clave entre los distritos uninominales y los plurinominales: las campañas electorales. A pesar de que la mayor parte de las candidatas son nominadas en distritos débiles, no es posible discernir si los líderes partidistas ignoran a candidatas calificadas en distritos competitivos o bastiones por favorecer a candidatos. Con base en una muestra de candidatos de ambos sexos en distritos de mayoría, este documento analiza el impacto de la experiencia previa de los candidatos en los resultados electorales. La evidencia estadística indica que la brecha de género —tanto en el porcentaje de votos como en la probabilidad de victoria—, disminuye cuando se condiciona por la experiencia previa de los candidatos y la fuerza electoral del partido. Por otro lado, a

partir de entrevistas con candidatos ganadores y perdedores de ambos sexos se busca entender de qué manera la experiencia previa ayuda a los candidatos. La evidencia cualitativa sugiere que las campañas legislativas en México dependen en gran medida de la habilidad del candidato para acercarse a líderes locales capaces de controlar y movilizar el voto. Además, la experiencia previa del candidato le permite tener acceso a los bienes y servicios públicos necesarios para negociar con líderes locales y beneficiar a sus simpatizantes.

Introduction

Much scholarly work on female legislative representation around the world has been dedicated to asking not only why different nations choose to enact gender quota laws, but also the effects these laws then have on vote shares and seat counts in the legislature. In this line of research, electoral systems and structural differences in how well women are inserted in the economy have taken center stage in explaining why some nations have far higher representation of women than others. One of the most important findings is that female candidates in single-member-district (SMD) plurality races have a more difficult time winning legislative seats than those who run in proportional representation (PR) systems with closed lists in which voters cannot change the order of candidate names (Jones, 2009; Rule, 1987). To better understand this finding, this work uses a unique electoral system—Mexico’s mixed SMD-PR form of representation, which constitutionally prohibits consecutive reelection—to provide a complimentary explanation that fills a gap in the current gender quota literature. By studying how prior political background can affect campaigning, this work provides a more complete mechanism to understand why SMD systems are harder on female politicians than those with other forms of electoral systems that do not require candidate-centered campaigning.

Using an electoral system in which consecutive reelection is prohibited gives us the opportunity to test at least some of the existing arguments about SMD effects on quota effectiveness. One of the main reasons given to explain why SMD systems tend depress female representation is that the incumbency advantage to help male candidates, who are usually the incumbents. But under Mexican constitutional law, no elected official can enjoy the advantages given by incumbency, yet females are still under-represented, even with the current quota law that dictates (with important exceptions) that 40% of the candidates should be of the same gender. This allows us to develop a more complete explanation that takes into account a fundamental fact about plurality races: candidates run campaigns.

Closed-list PR systems tend not rely on candidate-centered campaigning because voters react to a immovable list of candidates with a party label attached, so that parties sell their brand, and the reputation of candidates on that list matters little. But in SMD races (and others, such as single-non-transferable-vote and open list proportional representation), candidates cannot depend solely on the advantages offered by a popular brand name: they must sally forth and either persuade or mobilize voters (or both) to win on election day in a geographically delimited area. While great variations exist among different kinds of SMD campaigns, personal image does have more weight in plurality campaigning than it would for PR races.

The prime input of a candidate's image is her prior background, such that this professional experience or lack thereof can help or hurt campaign efforts in SMD races because it is this type of experience that helps create a personal image (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina, 1987). In Mexico, this paper will demonstrate that women who have more prior political experience win a higher proportion of votes compared to their party's historic average than those women in similar districts with little to no political experience prior to winning the nomination. What is more, greater background experience tends to erase the gender bias one finds in overall voting.

But knowing that prior experience helps female candidates erase the gender deficit does not explain why this is the case, so we use extensive interviews with congressional candidates to capture why prior experience is so important for female candidates to reach the Chamber via SMD races.¹ We find that prior experience helps SMD candidates of both genders in a variety of ways, the most important of which is to give them access to one of the most important campaigning tools in Mexican congressional elections: a valuable reputation with the political brokers at the neighborhood level who move blocks of voters in return for selective government resources. Other authors (Norris and Lovenduski, 1993) have found that female candidates tend to have fewer resources and a weaker network of alliances than their male counterparts. One of the reasons is that they often compete without the extensive prior experience of their male counterparts.

Even with Mexico's high legislative gender quota, in which 40% of the legislative seats (for which a quota can be applied) are reserved for candidates of the same gender, female politicians win only 28.2% of the seats in the federal Chamber of Deputies (as the Lower House of Congress is known in Mexico). While almost 40% of *candidates* to the Lower House were women in the 2009 mid-term legislative races, less than *two-thirds* of those women who ran for a seat in San Lázaro actually won a seat. This low number causes even more concern when two other facts are taken into consideration. First, a new quota law was passed in 2007 (as part of a larger electoral law), which increased the gender quota from 30% of the candidates to roughly 40%; yet this increase did not help women reach the Chamber in greater numbers—27.4% of all federal deputies were women in the 2006 Chamber versus slightly more than 28% in the 2009 congress, after the law was applied, not an appreciable increase.

The picture is even darker if one takes into account the number of female candidates who won victories in plurality races in single-member-districts (SMD) versus those who entered San Lázaro via the closed proportional

¹ We do not know of similar research on being done on races for other types of elected office in Mexico, so we cannot make comparison, for example, with female gubernatorial or mayoral candidates.

representation (PR) lists.² Of the 31.3% of the total number of female candidates who ran in an SMD race in 2009, only 18% of them were women, meaning that the great majority of female deputies come from the closed PR lists, and that women have serious problems in winning nominations to SMD seats and finally, in conquering party rivals at the ballot box.³

Of course, the SMD versus PR differences are not the only reason for less than stellar results. As we will show below, so few women hold seats in the Chamber of Deputies because the parties tend to discriminate against their own female politicians, by nominating many to run in plurality races in losing districts.⁴ In fact, party leaders tend to shunt female politicians to the most electorally difficult districts, what we call losing districts, whose recent average margins are above 5%. Party leaders who control nominations to SMD candidacies seem to be extremely reluctant to nominate women to either competitive districts (fearing they will lose) or bastion districts (arguing that they do not “deserve” such a privileged spot).

Related to this (and perhaps not unique to Mexico) is that parties refuse to abide by the “spirit” of their own gender laws. Gender quotas are rules that are meant to change behavior and outcomes,⁵ but as this paper will show, Mexican party leaders use several different types of tactics to avoid having to fully respect the quotas, the most common of which is using “democratic” or “open” primaries to choose the candidate for the SMD races.⁶ A slightly more egregious tactic has cropped up as well, in which women are nominated to a high spot on a PR list, but once they win the seat, they quickly decline in favor of their alternates (*suplente*), who are invariably, men.⁷ As Cleary points out (2011: 12), “political elites will adopt quotas instrumentally, and work around such institutional reforms as dictated by the level of gender bias present in the voting population.”⁸ One of the reasons, then, that SMDs tend to be a more difficult access point to the legislature is that parties the

² Mexico has a mixed single-member-district/proportional representation system, with 60% of the Chamber’s 500 seats elected in SMD plurality races and the remaining 40% (or 200) in five closed multi-member PR lists.

³ Of the 2,028 registered candidates in SMDs in 2009, 635 were women, or 31% of the total. Nonetheless, only 53 of the 300 SMD seats were won by women, or 18% of these kinds of seats.

⁴ There is no consecutive reelection in Mexico. Deputies must leave office after a single three year term, wait out a term, and then later run again.

⁵ Krook (2009: 48) writes that legislative quotas ...“entail amending constitutions or electoral laws to legitimize positive action, foster more equal results, and recognize ‘sex’ as a category of representation.”

⁶ One should note that before the 2002 reforms, the parties could also manipulate the PR lists, by sending women to the bottom of each of the five 40 person lists, or place them as only alternates. Since these rules have been cleaned up, it is now much more difficult to exclude women from PR representation.

⁷ It should be noted that, in legal terms, the parties in Mexico scrupulously adhere to the quota rules. We thank Matthew Cleary for bringing the PRI’s manipulation of at least one of its PR lists in 2009 to our attention. The Green Party (PVEM) was caught red-handed for its *Juanitas* (women who declined) as well.

⁸ Cleary’s data (2010: 12) help demonstrate that many nations that do not have gender quotas have high levels of female representation in the legislature, so quotas cannot cause representation. Rather, the cultural attitudes toward women are a better predictor of the percentage of women in the legislature.

current PR quota rules make it far more difficult for party leaders to manipulate the nominations.⁹

While many different factors help explain why female candidates tend to do poorly in SMD races, the focus of the paper is on the relation between professional backgrounds and campaigning. We use a mixed method approach which takes advantage of our candidate background and district level voting data, and our access to interview data from interviews with winning and losing candidates, both male and female. First, we review the literature on the effects of gender quotas. Then, we describe the complicated quota system in Mexico, which is different for SMD and PR seats, and explain candidate selection rules and practices in Mexico. Then, we examine the types of districts –bastion, competitive, or losing– into which party leaders place their male and female candidates. Next, using the 2009 legislative electoral cycle, the authors randomly selected 200 SMD candidates from the overall cohort of 300 from each of the nation’s three major parties (the center-right National Action Party or PAN; the former hegemonic Party of the Institutional Revolution or PRI; and the center-left Party of the Democratic Revolution, or PRD). We found these candidates (who included both winners and losers) in a newspaper cutting service and constructed a database of their prior professional posts. We discover a gender bias in district level electoral data, but find that its effects are mitigated when the candidates’ background experience is taken into account. To understand this finding, we then conducted interviews with a carefully selected group of 2009 candidates and discovered that experience has three effects in SMD campaigning: one, it gives candidates a reputation for providing access to valuable government services which political brokers in the neighborhoods need to mobilize voters; two, it gives party leaders some guarantee that female politicians in particular, are capable of running a campaign and winning office; and finally, it gives the candidates name recognition among voters, since the prior experience is almost always in the immediate locality of the federal legislative district.

⁹ Our intuition as to why the party leaders in Mexico were willing to rectify the PR rules, but allow important exceptions on the SMD has to do with winning elections: 60% of the lower house in Mexico is made up of SMD seats; one must run campaigns in the SMD races (but not in the PR races, as will be discussed below); so if voters or party leaders are going to punish female politicians, it will be in those districts that can be lost because of the actions of the candidate, not of the party or the economy.

1. The Consequences of Gender Quotas

There are two broad types of studies on the effectiveness of quotas: country specific works, focused on the particularities of each political system and its electoral rules (Baldez, 2004, 2007; Davidson-Schmidt, 2006; Gray, 2003; Jones, 1996, 2004; Schmidt and Saunders, 2004); and cross-country comparisons where the effect of quotas is studied in a more general manner (Caul, 1999; Jones, 1998, 2009; Jones and Navia, 1999; Htun and Jones, 2002; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009). Electoral rules and district magnitudes are the institutional factors that have been found more relevant in explaining quota effectiveness (Jones, 1998; Matland, 2006; Matland and Studlar, 1996). Plurality systems in single member districts are associated with fewer women elected than in proportional representation systems, especially those with closed lists and larger district magnitudes. According to these works, women may find it difficult to succeed in plurality races for a number of reasons: the incumbency advantage of male legislators who tend to be men, nomination barriers from party leaders (Niven, 1998), the potential bias of voters against female candidates, as well as other differences between male or female candidates, such as political backgrounds, or political ambition (Lawless and Fox, 2005; Schwindt-Bayer, 2005, 2011).

On the other hand, it is easier for political parties to include women in their PR lists as a means to broaden the appeal of their platforms and as a result, gender quotas have been proven to be more effective in PR lists than in plurality systems. Within a given electoral system, the effectiveness of gender quotas in helping more women win election depends on the target percentage set by the quota, the existence of a placement mandate (*i.e.*, in the ranking in the lists or in the electability of districts), and on the actual enforcement of the quota law (Htun and Jones, 2002; Jones, 2009; Schmidt and Saunders, 2004; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009).

While these explanations are theoretically and empirically successful in explaining aggregate level outcomes such as the percentage of women in a national legislature, there are a number of issues that have not been explored. Clearly, electoral rules have a strong impact on election outcomes but the underlying mechanism is not as simple or straightforward as the cross-country evidence suggest. The path from electoral rules to the success of women at the polls involves several stages that must be successfully navigated. Before taking office, a potential female candidate must have an interest in running for office, which requires ambition. Next, she has to succeed in getting a nomination by a political party in a non-losing district or a viable position in a PR list, which requires winning a primary or winning a candidacy from party leaders. Finally, the candidate has won a candidacy for a single-member-district race or one in an open list system with high district

magnitude, she has to run a successful campaign, which requires resources and skill to mobilize and persuade voters. If a female candidate fails in any of these stages of the electoral process, she will not get a seat (Norris and Lovenduski, 1993; Schwindt-Bayer, 2011).

If one observes the proportion of women in a single legislature, it is hard to elucidate the effects of district, partisan, or candidate level characteristics. Candidates differ in a number of dimensions such as their background or campaign experience, and whether they are incumbents or challengers. Similarly, an equally qualified candidate can be more successful running in a swing district, under a more popular party label, than in a losing district or with a minority party, which of course can affect vote shares. This also implies that the effects of candidate quality may differ between party labels, or between different types of districts.

Some studies have focused candidate-level data –even though they are difficult to gather. Norris and Lovenduski (1989) examine the differences in backgrounds and attitudes between voters, candidates, and members of parliament in order to distinguish between the demand side (what voters want) and the candidate supply side (the willingness to run for office). For example, it could be that female politicians are punished because voters are simply not willing to trust in their abilities to legislate. The problem with the different surveys they carried out is that they cannot compare winners versus losers, but rather, they compare attitudes across polling instruments. Other studies have focused on the differences in backgrounds between male and female legislators, and in their campaign experiences (Schwindt-Bayer, 2011). Schwindt-Bayer focuses on three nations and she has gathered comparable data on career backgrounds for female and male candidates. However, her work cannot compare winning and losing candidates because only winners is included, producing findings that are biased because they cannot tell us anything about whether winning women have different backgrounds than those who lost their election.

At any rate, there is scant literature on candidate-level data in a systematic way, except for the recent work by Schwindt-Bayer, Malecki and Crisp (2010), who work with data on 2000 winning and losing candidates in three nations that share a common electoral system (STV), and as a result, are able to control for district and candidate characteristics. They want to distinguish whether gender of candidate has an effect on vote shares or whether backgrounds have a differential impact on these shares. Our work follows closely on theirs, in that we too use candidate level data on both winners and losers and district level vote shares. As important as this work is in moving the field forward, we believe it is necessary to explore the relationship between professional background and electoral outcomes by studying how prior experience can help or harm one's campaign (in the case of Mexico, in SMD races).

Why might a candidate's prior career trajectory matter for electoral outcomes? One can speculate that a "quality candidate" would be more attractive to voters; but in a system such as Mexico's, with its constitutional prohibition against consecutive reelection, it might be that voters do not pay much attention to candidate image. Instead of simply assuming that quality, as measured by prior political experience, necessarily leads to higher vote counts than the historical district average, we sought to fill in the causal gap between candidate quality and selection and electoral outcomes. To do so, we asked whether women with more experience might campaign differently than those without it; and more generally, whether women use different campaign tactics than their male counterparts.

What is a campaign? Agranoff (1976: 3) defines it simply as the "coordinated effort to elect candidates to office ... (and) the human and material resources to do so." In the US, it was thought that campaigns mattered little because of the strength of partisan identification and the importance of retrospective (economic) voting (Converse *et al.*; Lazarfeld *et al.*, 1948).¹⁰ That is, strong identifiers would vote for their party's candidates no matter what, or, voters used retrospective cues on pocket-book issues and did not need campaigns to tell them whether they were better off or not (Gelman and King, 1993). However, a counter-current in this literature was soon born, and many different types of scholars began to measure just how important campaign work was, especially in voter mobilization and turnout. Herrnson (1989) for example, argues that party organizations play an extremely important role candidate recruitment, issue placement, and media strategies, as well as voter mobilization and voter contact. Several different authors have now measured the impact of different types of campaigning activities on many types of outcomes, such as turnout, voter interest in elections, and percentage of votes (Gerber and Green, 2000; Hillygus and Jackman, 2003; Holbrook, 1996; Shaw, 1999). While one can argue that campaigning might only have "minimal" effects¹¹ in the best of cases (such as the presidential race because of the great amount of interest generated), candidates continue to run expensive, time consuming, and draining campaigns in the belief that they can decide a race.

¹⁰ An active debate has been taking place in US academic circles; see Green, Gerber and Nickerson, 2003; Holbrook, 1996; Hillygus and Jackman, 2003 as against Gelman and King, 1993.

¹¹ Bartels, 1993 and Herr, 2002.

2. The Mexican Case

Mexican electoral rules giveth and they taketh away: Art. 219 of the 2007 electoral code (Código Federal de Procedimientos Electorales, or COFIPE in the Spanish initials) holds that 40% of the candidates —not alternates— for the Lower House must be of the “same gender.”¹² The following section of the same article then goes on to weaken the impact of this 40% rule by allowing an important exception: if the parties use “democratic” means to nominate the candidates (which so far, only holds for SMD seats, not for the PR lists), then the gender quota will not apply. And, fortunately, the parties themselves define which nomination procedures are “democratic”¹³ and which are not. Thus, no quota necessarily applies for the 300 SMD seats because the parties can simply state that the nomination method they happen to use was in fact, “democratic”.¹⁴

The rules of the PR seats, however, are not as forgiving as those for the SMDs, and these help increase the quota’s influence on final seat outcomes. The PR seats make up 200 of the 500 Lower House total, and are broken into five closed-list circumscriptions representing different regions of the nation. Each of the five closed lists is made up of 40 names, whose order cannot be changed by the voters. The top (PR) tier is not elected on a separate ballot, as it is in Germany; rather, the lower tier (SMD) ballot totals in each of the five regions are used to determine the number of names each party will win from each top list tier.¹⁵ The COFIPE uses a very clear rule to determine the quota from the PR lists: or each set of five names, at least two must be from a single gender, and each gender must be alternated, which in effect, means the PR quota is 50%, not 3/5s. This clear rule makes it more difficult, yet not impossible, to evade the spirit of the quota law.

¹² Art. 219-1 states, “De la totalidad de solicitudes de registro, tanto de las candidaturas a diputados como de senadores que presenten los partidos políticos o las coaliciones ante el Instituto Federal Electoral, deberán integrarse con al **menos el cuarenta por ciento** de candidatos propietarios de un mismo género...” The problema, however, lies in the second point of the same Article, which reads “Quedan exceptuadas de esta disposición las candidaturas de mayoría relativa que sean resultado de un proceso de elección democrático, conforme a los estatutos de cada partido.” COFIPE, 2007.

¹³ The last quota rule used the word “open.”

¹⁴ By the same token, the mechanisms by which quotas are translated into practice have ramifications for who gains election through quotas, and thus the degree to which their presence may or may not transform —politics as usual (Franchesca Piscopo, p.7).

¹⁵ For example, if the PRI wins 40% of the vote in the 5th Circumscription, then it will be able to place the first 16 names of the closed list in the Chamber.

TABLE 1
2009 Elections for the Mexican Chamber of Deputies (SMD races)

Political Party or Alliance	Candidates			Winners		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
PAN	192	108	300	54	16	70
	<i>64.0</i>	<i>36.0</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>77.14</i>	<i>22.86</i>	<i>100%</i>
PRD	213	87	300	32	7	39
	<i>71</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>82.05</i>	<i>17.95</i>	<i>100</i>
PRI	188	49	237	112	26	138
	<i>79.32</i>	<i>20.68</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>81.16</i>	<i>18.84</i>	<i>100</i>
PVEM	141	96	237			
	<i>59.49</i>	<i>40.51</i>	<i>100</i>	-	-	-
PANAL	194	97	291			
	<i>66.67</i>	<i>33.33</i>	<i>100</i>			
PSD	194	106	300			
	<i>64.67</i>	<i>35.33</i>	<i>100</i>			
Primero México (PRI + PVEM)	57	6	63	46	4	50
	<i>90.48</i>	<i>9.52</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>100</i>
Salvemos a México (PT+Conv.)	214	86	300	3	0	3
	<i>71.33</i>	<i>28.67</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>100</i>
Total	1,393	635	2,028	247	53	300
	<i>68.69</i>	<i>31.31</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>82.33</i>	<i>17.67</i>	<i>100%</i>

Figures in italics denote row percentages.

Source: Aparicio and Langston (2009)

It is important to note that thanks to the exception clause; very few of the parties actually nominate 40% of the same gender for SMD races. The only party that does is a minor player, the Green Party. The three majors are, on average, hovering around 28.5%, although the PAN is the closest at 36%. As one can see from this table on only SMD candidates, the PRI has the largest number of female deputies, and the PAN has the highest percentage of women in its caucus. However, the numbers also tell a story about the differences between how many women are nominated (the PAN at 108 has the highest number; the PRD second at 87, and the PRI bringing up the rear with 49) and how many actually win a spot in the Chamber.

Party leaders generally control candidate selection for federal legislative seats, although great variation exists among parties. However, for the most part, leaders of party organs at both the state and federal levels, as well as governors are likely to have either decided or strongly influenced which party politician represents the party, no matter the formal nature of the statutes.¹⁶ Governors and each of the three national party HQs are particularly heavy

¹⁶ This is the most common for the PRI and the least common for the PRD nominations. However, the PRD's national party leadership tends to reserve those nominations for districts in which it thinks the party has a chance of winning, if and only if the party does not have a governor to decide. Even for the PRD with its strong internal factions, sitting PRD governors still have enormous influence on which politician wins a nomination to which post. Because the PRI has many governors, they decide many of the SMD candidacies and even some of the PR slots. The PAN's governors are also active in candidate imposition, but must share this influence with a strong national party HQ.

influences on deputy selection. Few if any of the candidates are chosen in “true” primaries, in which more than one candidate is on the party ballot, and does not enjoy an unfair advantage.

Since party leaders at both the state and national levels, and both formal party leaders, as well as factional bosses and governors, by and large control or at the very least, influence which politician is chosen for almost all of the SMDs for the three major parties, one can ask: which type of SMD district do female candidates tend to get nominated: bastion (historically won by their party); competitive; or lost. We find that female candidates are much more likely to be nominated to historically losing districts than their male counterparts (from the same party and across parties, generally).

TABLE 2
SMD candidates for the Mexican Chamber of Deputies in 2009
Candidate gender and election outcome by district type

District type	Candidates			Winners		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Losing	361	176	537	65	16	81
%	55.5%	70.7%	59.7%	26.6%	30.2%	27.3%
Competitive	99	27	126	47	9	56
%	15.2%	10.8%	14.0%	19.3%	17.0%	18.9%
Safe	191	46	237	132	28	160
%	29.3%	18.5%	26.3%	54.1%	52.8%	53.9%
TOTAL	651	249	900	244	53	297
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Includes PAN, PRI and PRD candidates in SMD districts only.

Competitive districts are those with historical margins of victory of $\pm 5\%$ between 1997 and 2006.

The p-value for the chi-square test is 0.001 for candidates and 0.846 for winners.

Source: Aparicio and Langston (2009).

With information provided in the table, one can see that female politicians are by and large sent to losing districts —that is, those districts in which the historical average since the onset of democracy (which we place in 2000) would show that the party does not have a chance to win. Of the total 249 districts (for all three major parties) for which women were nominated, by a huge margin they landed in losing districts: almost 71% of all female districts (as it were) were nominated where they had little chance of winning the general election.¹⁷ Only 11% of all female candidates were placed in competitive districts, while a healthier 18.5% won the right to run for a safe district.

¹⁷ The 249 figure can be found in Table 1 by adding up the number of female candidates for the PAN, PRD, PRI and PRI+PVEM.

Of course, one cannot abstract intentions from outcomes. Although it might seem from these figures that party leaders deliberately punish their female co-partisans by sending them to unwinnable districts, it could in fact be the case that no experienced women are available to run for competitive or bastion districts, and that the only female party members with the requisite ambition are found in areas in which the party has no possibility of winning. Because we have no data on *potential* candidates in a representative sample of districts (Stone and Maisel, 2003), we cannot be sure that this is not the case, although it seems odd that ambition in Mexico is present only in those districts without political opportunity, rather than those where there is. At this point, it is simply too soon to tell whether party leaders punish women because they do not have enough experience or because of some more profound bias against them.

3. Empirical Analysis of the Political Backgrounds of SMD Candidates

This work uses an original dataset built by the authors containing the previous experience and political backgrounds of a random sample of 600 SMD candidates to the Mexican Chamber from the three most important political parties that participated in the 2009 federal election. The sample includes 200 candidates from the PAN, PRI and PRD, respectively, and it is representative of the proportion of female and male candidates nominated from each of these parties.

To collect this information we consulted local and national newspapers available online or via news databases such as *Infolatina*, which collects newspaper and magazine stories on economic, political and social issues of Mexico and Latin America. Clearly, once elected, winning candidates publicize more information about themselves in official websites and the like. To reduce this source of bias against information on losing candidates, we ignored the personal resumes that deputies make available online *after* they took office, that is to say, our coding was based on online or news sources that were available before election day. The data we collected consisted of whether or not the candidate had held any elected, bureaucratic, or party position before running for congress. We also distinguish between sub-national and federal level previous experience as well as social movements or business experience.

Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the previous experience of our sample of candidates, and two split samples: winners and losers, on the one hand, and men and female candidates, on the other. We measure past political experience with a series of binary or dummy variables for three types of backgrounds: bureaucratic appointments, elective offices, and political party positions. Bureaucratic posts include municipal, state or federal

government appointments such as secretaries, undersecretaries or general directors. Partisan positions include experience in municipal, state or national committees. Elective positions include members of the municipal assembly (regidor), state deputy, former federal deputy or senator. We also collected information on national or local sectors (corporatist organizations typically affiliated with the PRI) as well as participation in social movements or business groups.

TABLE 3
Descriptive statistics
Backgrounds of SMD candidates for the Mexican Chamber of Deputies, 2009

	Full sample	Winners	Losers	Males	Females
Female candidate=1	0.2733 [.446]	0.1863 [.3903]	0.3182 [.4664]		
Ranking of previous position	4.187 [2.0266]	4.578 [1.7121]	3.8111 [2.2293]	4.2836 [2.0486]	3.8462 [1.921]
<i>Bureaucratic appointments</i>					
Municipal government	0.155 [.3622]	0.2206 [.4157]	0.1212 [.3268]	0.1628 [.3696]	0.1341 [.3419]
State government	0.2217 [.4157]	0.451 [.4988]	0.1035 [.305]	0.2569 [.4374]	0.128 [.3352]
Federal government	0.0667 [.2497]	0.1078 [.3109]	0.0455 [.2086]	0.0803 [.272]	0.0305 [.1725]
<i>Electoral posts</i>					
Municipal president	0.2067 [.4053]	0.3235 [.469]	0.1465 [.354]	0.2546 [.4361]	0.0793 [.271]
Local deputy	0.2583 [.4381]	0.4314 [.4965]	0.1692 [.3754]	0.2798 [.4494]	0.2012 [.4021]
Federal deputy	0.1167 [.3213]	0.1716 [.3779]	0.0884 [.2842]	0.117 [.3218]	0.1159 [.321]
Senator	0.0133 [.1148]	0.0245 [.155]	0.0076 [.0868]	0.0161 [.1258]	0.0061 [.0781]
<i>Partisan posts</i>					
CDM-municipal committee	0.1083 [.3111]	0.2206 [.4157]	0.0505 [.2193]	0.1124 [.3162]	0.0976 [.2976]
CDE-state committee	0.1433 [.3507]	0.2255 [.4189]	0.101 [.3017]	0.1514 [.3588]	0.122 [.3282]
CEN-national committee	0.0233 [.1511]	0.0392 [.1946]	0.0152 [.1223]	0.0252 [.157]	0.0183 [.1344]
Observations	600	204	396	436	164

Means and standard deviations in brackets.

The sample includes 200 candidates from the PAN, PRI and PRD, respectively.

Source: authors' calculations.

As Table 3 indicates, there are clear differences between the political backgrounds of winners and losers in our sample of candidates. Winning candidates from the PAN, PRI or PRD have more political experience than losing candidates: About 22% of all candidates have had a bureaucratic post at the state level but this proportion increases to 45% among winners, whereas only 10% of losers had such experience. Prior experience in an elective office also differs significantly between winners and losers. About 26% of all candidates were local deputies but this proportion is 43% among winners and 17% among losers. Similarly, 22% of winning candidates have worked in their party committees either at the municipal or state level, whereas this proportion is less than 10% among losing candidates. It is worth noting that, among winners, the proportion of state bureaucrats is about as high as that of state deputies (45%).

Our sample includes 164 or 27.3% female candidates, and 436 males. The last two columns in Table 3 split our sample by gender. In general, the differences in backgrounds between male and female candidates are smaller than those between winners and losers. For instance, 25.7% of male candidates worked in the state government whereas only 12.8% of females had such experience. Similarly, 28% of male candidates were local deputies but only 20% of females held such office before running for a seat in the federal congress. Because these data cover only candidates for plurality races, few had experience in the federal government: 8% for men and 3% for women.¹⁸

3.1. Political Backgrounds and Electoral Outcomes

The outcome of the 2009 legislative elections in SMD races can be summarized as follows. The PRI nominated female candidates to 18.3% of the 300 SMD seats, whereas the PAN nominated 36% and PRD, 29%. On election day, the PRI received an average of 40% of the valid votes (which excludes null votes and those of parties that lost their registration), the PAN got 28.7% and the PRD 13.9%. By comparison, the PRI did slightly better than its average record observed between 1997 and 2006, 37.1%. These vote returns mean that the PRI won 188 seats of the SMD seats (62.7%), the PAN 70 seats, and the PRD 39. The average district margin of victory in SMD races was 14.5%.

Are female candidates penalized at the polls in Mexican legislative races? If we compare the unconditional vote returns of female and male candidates we observe an average difference of about 5 percentage points in favor of men. However, as depicted earlier (Table 2), the gender gap in vote shares may be in part due to the fact that political parties nominate most of their female candidates to relatively weak districts, meaning that voters do not

¹⁸ In a future version of this paper, we will also gather data on PR candidates from the three parties.

necessary punish female deputy hopefuls, but rather political leaders who control candidate selection do. To reduce this source of statistical bias we estimate the effect of candidate gender with a series of regression models that control for three types of covariates: first, the historical strength of each candidate's political party, measured by the *average vote share* observed at the district level between 1997 and 2006. Second, the *party label* of the candidate, which we measure with two dummy variables for PAN and PRD candidates, respectively, so that we keep PRI candidates as our baseline or comparison group. Third, a vector of political *background variables* that control for bureaucratic, elective or partisan experience before running for congress. With this regression specification we seek to estimate whether female candidates receive more or fewer votes relative to otherwise similar districts. Our second goal is to estimate to what extent do political backgrounds offset or widen the gender gap in legislative SMD races in Mexico. The general form of our regression equation is the following:

$$\text{CandidateVote}_i = b_0 + b_1\text{Female}_i + b_2\text{PAN}_i + b_3\text{PRD}_i + b_4\text{PartyStrength}_i + b_5\text{Background}_i + u_i$$

Table 4 below summarizes the estimation of four OLS regression models to explain the vote shares that each candidate received in 2009. Our sample includes 200 SMD candidates from the PAN, PRI and PRD, respectively, for a total of 600 observations. The explanatory variables of interest are the gender of the candidate, on the one hand, and four different sets of political background covariates, on the other. Each model controls for the party label of the candidate as well as the average vote share received by the political party of any given candidate between 1997 and 2006, which we consider a proxy of party strength or the historical vote share in the district.

TABLE 4
Political background of legislative SMD
candidates and 2009 vote shares (OLS)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Female candidate	-1.446	-1.699	-1.666	-1.588
	[0.716]**	[0.724]**	[0.709]**	[0.712]**
PAN candidate	-7.049	-7.679	-7.55	-8.297
	[0.967]***	[0.960]***	[1.060]***	[0.955]***
PRD candidate	-15.224	-15.802	-15.592	-16.347
	[1.014]***	[1.005]***	[1.085]***	[1.009]***
1997-2006 vote share	72.664	74.392	75.079	75.204
	[2.644]***	[2.631]***	[2.502]***	[2.481]***
<i>Bureaucratic appointments</i>				
Municipal government	0.253			
	[1.017]			
State government	2.962			
	[1.006]***			
Federal government	0.418			
	[1.356]			
<i>Elective position</i>				
Municipal president		3.034		
		[0.974]***		
Local Deputy		0.752		
		[0.885]		
Federal Deputy		-1.276		
		[1.026]		
<i>Partisan posts</i>				
CDM (municipal committee)			3.299	
			[1.198]***	
CDE (state committee)			-1.607	
			[1.116]	
CEN (national committee)			-0.414	
			[2.175]	
<i>Other</i>				
National Sector				-5.007
				[2.561]*
Local Sector				-0.698
				[1.402]
Business				-2.917
				[1.648]*
Constant	12.323	12.387	12.529	13.378
	[1.271]***	[1.255]***	[1.351]***	[1.284]***
Observations	600	600	600	600
R2	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.74

OLS estimates with robust standard errors in brackets.

*, **, and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10, 5 and 1%, respectively.

Source: authors' calculations.

The four models in Table 4 suggest that the vote shares of female candidates are between 1.4 and 1.6 percentage points lower than those of males, controlling for party strength, party ID and different types of political experience. This gap is statistically significant at the 5% level. Model 1 in the Table estimates the effect of previous bureaucratic experience in legislative vote shares. We find that candidates with prior state government experience receive 2.9 percentage points more votes than those without such qualification. On the other hand, bureaucratic experience in municipal or federal governments does not seem to have a statistically significant payoff in votes.

With a similar specification, Model 2 indicates that former municipal presidents also receive 3 points more at the polls, whereas former local or federal deputies have no impact on vote shares. Perhaps surprisingly, Model 3 finds that candidates with partisan experience in municipal committees receive 3.3 points greater vote shares but party posts at higher levels have no significant impact. Finally, Model 4 suggests that candidates with national sector experience or prior business affiliations receive fewer votes. Moreover, to test whether the effect of prior backgrounds differed between male and female candidates, we also estimated a series of models with interactive effects between gender and backgrounds. None of the interaction terms proved significant, which suggests that the premium for political backgrounds is gender neutral.

To sum up, our OLS models for legislative vote shares find that former state bureaucrats, municipal presidents or members of municipal party committees receive a similar premium at the polls of about 3 percentage points. It is worth noting that the premium of these kinds of backgrounds is about twice as big as the gender gap in vote shares (about 1.5 points). On the other hand, former legislators or higher posts in party committees have no significant impact.

The previous models estimated the effect of political backgrounds in observed vote shares. Clearly, a 3 point advantage in expected vote shares may not be enough to secure a victory in a SMD race, especially since the average district margin is about 14%. It may be the case that a given candidate's rivals may have even more experience, or the race may simply be lopsided against a given candidate. However, in competitive races these effects may turn out to be determinant in increasing the chances of securing a seat. Thus, a second outcome of interest is to estimate the probability of victory from a given candidate, a binary outcome that can be estimated with a logistic regression.

Table 5 below summarizes the results of four logistic models, analogous to those in the previous table, to estimate the effect of political backgrounds in the probability of victory in a SMD race in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies in 2009. The first result of note is that the gender dummy variable, while

negative, is *not* statistically significant in none of the four models. This means that even if female candidates from the PAN, PRI and PRD seem to receive fewer votes, this effect is not decisive in the election outcome: once we control for party strength and candidate backgrounds, male and female candidates are just as likely to win. This is a very important result because it suggests that if potential female candidates acquire enough experience they can run a successful campaign for congress.

TABLE 5
Political background of legislative SMD candidates
and probability of victory in 2009 (Logit)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Female candidate	-0.186	-0.272	-0.314	-0.312
	[0.279]	[0.268]	[0.272]	[0.267]
PAN candidate	-1.535	-1.657	-1.738	-2.03
	[0.289]***	[0.284]***	[0.315]**	[0.294]***
PRD candidate	-1.617	-1.74	-1.699	-2.053
	[0.276]***	[0.279]***	[0.303]***	[0.284]***
1997-2006 vote share	10.914	11.325	12.226	12.185
	[1.163]***	[1.194]***	[1.160]***	[1.182]***
<i>Bureaucratic appointments</i>				
Municipal government	0.062			
	[0.306]			
State government	1.062			
	[0.290]***			
Federal government	-0.064			
	[0.452]			
<i>Elective position</i>				
Municipal president		0.241		
		[0.290]		
Local Deputy		0.588		
		[0.268]**		
Federal Deputy		-0.213		
		[0.375]		
<i>Partisan posts</i>				
CDM (municipal committee)			1.043	
			[0.410]**	
CDE (state committee)			-0.476	
			[0.339]	
CEN (national committee)			-0.637	
			[0.679]	
<i>Other</i>				
National Sector				-1.63
				[0.764]**
Local Sector				-0.761
				[0.439]*
Business				-1.12
				[0.527]**
Constant	-3.644	-3.696	-3.768	-3.383
	[0.450]***	[0.449]***	[0.461]***	[0.452]***
Observaciones	600	600	600	600
Pseudo R Cuadrada	0.37	0.36	0.36	0.36

Logit estimates with robust standard errors in brackets.

*, **, and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10, 5 and 1%, respectively.

Source: authors' calculations.

As before, Model 1 in Table 5 indicates that candidates with state bureaucratic experience are more likely to win. The estimated effect implies that, all else being equal, candidates with state government experience are 21% more likely to win regardless of their gender. Model 2 finds two results that contrast with the OLS models. First, even if former majors receive larger vote shares, their actual chances of victory remain unchanged. Second, former local deputies are in fact more likely to win a seat, even if their vote shares did not change significantly. The estimated effect implies that, all else constant, prior local deputies are 10% more likely to win regardless of their gender. Finally, Model 3 reinforces the finding that experience in a municipal party committee increases the likelihood of winning a SMD seat by about as much as having state government experience.

To sum up, our logit models that estimate the probability of victory in a SMD race find that former state bureaucrats, local deputies and members of municipal party committees are more likely to win than those without such backgrounds. Moreover, these effects are not different between women and male candidates because gender has no statistical impact on the likelihood of winning.

So far, our statistical analysis for a sample of 600 SMD candidates from the PAN, PRD and PRD has pointed out the kind of political backgrounds that most significantly affect vote shares and the likelihood of winning a plurality seat. However, regression analysis alone cannot explain the mechanisms underlying these effects. To understand why political experience and certain backgrounds matter in Mexican legislative races we need to understand the actual workings of political campaigns in contemporary Mexico. We turn to precisely this issue in the next section where we discuss the findings of in-depth interviews with a number of candidates.

4. Why Prior Experience Matters for Successful Campaigning

To capture why a more extensive career background (as we have measured it) matters for vote-winning, one must understand how legislative campaigns are run. As we have pointed out above, very few works have recognized that prior background is an important element in enabling female politicians to reach a legislative seat. And, to our knowledge, none has recognized the link between background and more successful campaigns.

Why might a candidate's prior career trajectory matter for electoral outcomes? One can speculate that a "quality candidate" would be more attractive to voters; but in a system such as Mexico's, with its constitutional prohibition against consecutive reelection, voters might not pay much attention to candidate image. Instead of simply assuming that quality, as measured by prior political experience, necessarily leads to higher vote counts than the historical district average, we sought to fill in the causal gap

between candidate quality, selection, and electoral outcomes. To do so, we asked whether women with more experience might campaign differently than those without it; and more generally, whether women use different campaign tactics than their male counterparts.

What is a campaign? Agranoff (1976: 3) defines it quite simply as the “coordinated effort to elect candidates to office... (and) the human and material resources to do so.” In the US, it was thought that campaigns mattered little because of the strength of partisan identification and the importance of retrospective (economic) voting (Converse *et al.*; Lazarfeld *et al.*, 1948).¹⁹ That is, strong identifiers would vote for their party’s candidates no matter what, or in an alternative view, voters use retrospective cues on pocket-book issues and do not need campaigns to tell them whether they are better off or not (Gelman and King, 1993). However, a counter-current in this literature was soon born, and many different types of scholars have measured just how important campaign work was, especially in voter mobilization and turnout. Herrnson (1989) for example, argues that party organizations play an extremely important role candidate recruitment, issue placement, and media strategies, as well as voter mobilization and voter contact. Several different authors have now measured the impact of different types of campaigning activities on many types of outcomes, such as turnout, voter interest in elections, and percentage of votes (Gerber and Green, 2000; Hillygus and Jackman, 2003; Holbrook, 1996; Shaw, 1999). While one can argue that campaigning might only have “minimal” effects in the best of cases (such as the presidential race because of the great amount of interest generated),²⁰ candidates continue to run expensive, time consuming, and draining campaigns in the belief that they can decide a race.

To better understand campaigning for the Chamber of Deputies in Mexico, the authors conducted interviews with more than 20 federal deputy candidates.²¹ These interview subjects were carefully pre-selected from the list of all the 2009 deputy candidates for the three major parties (PAN, PRD and PRI) to include male and female candidates; those who had run in bastion, competitive, and losing districts; from the three major parties; those who ran in rural and urban districts; and most importantly, both those who had won and lost their plurality election. The interviews were conducted over the course of several months in the summer and fall of 2010 with candidates who had competed in the 2009 intermediate legislative races, and on average, they lasted between one hour to one hour and 15 minutes. The main goal of

¹⁹ An active debate has been taking place in US academic circles; see Green, Gerber and Nickerson, 2003; Holbrook, 1996; Hillygus and Jackman, 2003 as against Gelman and King, 1993.

²⁰ Bartels, 1993 and Herr, 2002.

²¹ Another 25 PRI deputy candidates were interviewed from previous electoral cycles, and the findings from those candidates coincided with these new interviews. The major difference between the two sets of interviews is that in the first, the issue of gender was not explicit; rather, the focus was on how campaigns were run after the transition to democracy in 2000.

these interviews was to verify whether women and men ran different sorts of campaigns and to determine whether and how prior experience can affect campaigns. In the interviews, the authors asked the former candidates roughly the same questions in a similar order, and our findings are based on what can be considered consensus answers from the respondents.²²

4.1. The Typical Chamber Campaign in Democratic (post-2000) Mexico

Federal legislative campaigns in Mexico are characterized by a strange mismatch between national party leaders and district level candidates who run in plurality races. As Carey and Shugart (1995) explain, electoral systems without the possibility of consecutive reelection should remove most incentives to promote a personal vote; that is, one that is based on the personal image and past performance of the candidate because one cannot use personal performance in office to win a future term. Furthermore, in the Mexican case, national party leaders control public monies that come from IFE: these millions of pesos are not sent directly to candidates; rather, each party HQ receives the financing and allocates it to both candidates and state parties largely as it sees fit.²³ Third, it is (and has been since the 1996 electoral reforms) illegal for individual candidates to hire, plan, or pay for mass media appeals that could bring their personal image to the attention of voters.²⁴ The combination of non consecutive reelection and the lack of local media efforts should mean that legislative elections—even those run in SMDs—are won or lost because of a combination of the state of the economy, party identification, and national media appeals that sell the party, not the candidate.

²² The interview questions followed basically the same template:

- Did your campaign search out party identifiers or more volatile areas? Did you focus more on mobilization or persuasion?
- What themes did you focus on in your campaign? More economic (jobs, inflation) or more social oriented points (health, education)?
- Did you use campaign professionals in your campaign?
- Did you organize mass rallies? How many and at which points in the campaign?
- What types of activities did you use to reach voters? Walk-about; canvassing; concerts, etc.?
- What kinds of support did you receive from local leaders; brokers; etc.
- What kinds of communication aids did you use?
- Did you use volunteers or paid campaign workers?
- Did you receive support from your local or state party? If so, what type of support?
- Did you raise funds on your own?
- Did you use the internet; phone-banks; or any other more “modern” tactics?

²³ The party HQ decides how much time each state receives for its federal senate and deputy campaigns (Art. 61 of the 2008 COFIPE).

²⁴ Art. 49, 3 to 8 of the 2008 COFIPE.

However, Mexico's legislative campaigning does not fulfill theoretical expectations fully; to the contrary, candidates in district races are extremely active in their campaigns, despite no consecutive reelection and the centralized spending of the national party HQs. And thanks to the fact that the campaigns are so active, the backgrounds of the candidates that lead them come into play. At least two reasons help explain why campaigns and candidate image matter: first, district candidates can in fact raise funds, both legal and illegal, and campaign finance audits are extremely weak (IFE can only audit the money that has been reported; it has no way of actually going to districts to count how many trucks, buses, dishwashers, bags of cement were used or given away in any given SMD campaign). Because of weak auditing practices and rules, both the individual candidate and the party have strong incentives to spend money in the field, that is, in the neighborhoods.²⁵ Second, most candidates believe that personalized campaigns produce better results.²⁶ This has been the case since the late 1990s, when the former hegemonic party faced such serious electoral competition that it lost the congressional majority for the first time since its formation.²⁷ National party leaders tend to believe that elections are won because of their efforts, while candidates are convinced that the media appeals of the national HQ might be of some use, but the real work is done on foot, in meetings, and in the markets.²⁸

To understand why prior background experience could help campaigners, it is necessary to understand how legislative campaigns are run in democratic Mexico. Candidates reach out to and mobilize voters using several techniques, the most important of which are house to house canvassing in urban areas and walk-about.²⁹ Many of the candidates—both men and women—, from all parties and areas of the nation, talked about how important it is that the

²⁵ Most candidates who were interviewed stated that their *opponent* had overshot the legal limit, which is strangely low, considering how much money is spent on Mexican elections overall. Depending on whether the election is concurrent with the presidential or intermediate, the limit is roughly US \$72,000. Most accused their rivals of spending up to 3.5 times that amount, but few had evidence.

²⁶ The congressional campaigns last 90 days when they are in concurrent electoral years, and 60 days when they are not (Art. 237-1/2).

²⁷ Not all national party leaders think that district campaigning and candidate image are unimportant. Gustavo E. Madero had lost the mayoral race in 2002 in his native Chihuahua by 2 percentage points. The president of the CEN of the PAN, Luis Felipe Bravo Mena, called him up in 2003 and personally asked him to participate again as candidate for the Chamber because Madero already had high name recognition due to his attempt to win the mayoral race. Madero said that if he had not run previously for mayor, he would never have won the congressional nomination. If candidate name recognition matters, this can only be because voters place some importance on candidate image when choosing how to vote. And if this is true, then candidates must actively campaign to bring their image to the attention of a wider public without the help of media.

²⁸ Interview with Dep. (Dr.) Hugo Rodríguez, May 13, 2004, who was from an urban district. Interview with the Dep. Jorge Utrilla, Chiapas, mixed district, May 25, 2004.

²⁹ When asked about a defeated rival's campaign tactics, a winning woman in a losing district stated that the candidate had less contact with voters; he participated in fewer walk-about and so, even though had better publicity (bought somewhat less than legally), she still defeated him. Author interview with Dep. Norma Leticia Orozco Torres, from a rural district of Guanajuato, interview, August 28, 2010.

voters see you (“que te vean”); that you have contact with your district’s residents; that they have heard of you.

In addition to the meet and greets, campaign teams organize as many small meetings with local social and business leaders as they can. As one losing candidate stated, “If you don’t have prior political work in the locality, then you have to do everything with money. On the other hand, if you already have connections with the local leaders, you spend less.”³⁰ These local leaders are crucial for hiring the campaign workers (called brigadistas) and for financing them. The problem with the brigadistas was that they often did not do their work. The “natural leaders” in the area put their people in as brigadistas, so if they weren’t working, it was because the natural or local leaders either did not care enough about your election to force them to, or they did not think you could win, or they did not want you to win. The local leaders in any given municipality or district are those who control votes or money. These more important local leaders have contacts with the lower level neighborhood leaders who are capable of mobilizing blocks of voters.³¹ The identity of these local leaders of course depend on the type of neighborhood involved, but almost always include: *padres de familia*, which is the rough equivalent of members of the PTA; leaders of the *colonias*; probably the most important group who are made up of leaders of neighborhoods, blocks, and housing developments, and finally, those who are in charge of the markets, among many others.

Prior political background is an important base for electoral returns because those who have worked in the same area, as a local deputy, a bureaucrat in the municipal government, or the owner of a factory or a pharmacy not only are better known in the voting district, they also have pre-established contacts with local and neighborhood leaders who control votes, money, or campaign workers. For example, a losing PRD candidate in Mexico City believed that he did not have the support of the local leaders for two reasons: first, he was not local - meaning he was not from the delegation or municipality that controlled the federal district and second, he did not have enough money to buy them off.³² There was plenty of competition from both the PAN and the PRI candidates who could pay for the services of these leaders. On the other hand, a winning PRD deputy said his job as Director of Urban Services in a city borough in Mexico City (that encompasses the federal district) was probably the most important one for his campaign victory, because people had known him for twenty years as someone who could get things done. *Gestoría* is an extremely important word in Mexican politics and

³⁰ Interview with Fernando Pérez Rodríguez, losing candidate for the PRD in a Mexico City district, August 30, 2010.

³¹ Interview with Carlos Rey Gamiz, August 6, 2010. He lost the 26th Dtto, Magdalena Contreras and Álvaro Obregón in the 2009 dip fed elections

³² Interview with Fernando Pérez Rodríguez, losing candidate for the PRD in a Mexico City district, August 30, 2010.

it means the ability to get things done, to help people get what they need from an incompetent and nonresponsive government office.³³ The neighborhood leaders who matter in many types of districts are those who are constantly are doing *gestoría* for their neighbors. The deputy hopeful has to have a reputation for getting access to government goods and services for their people.³⁴

In several interviews with both men and women, winners and losers, it became clear that no differences could be drawn between how successful men and women approached vote mobilization: those women who had prior experience in the district in question stated that they could make credible promises to provide selective government goods and services because of their prior work in the area. On the other hand, unsuccessful male and female candidates were usually quite open about why they had done badly: they had not enough experience in the locality and not enough money to buy off the local leaders. Of course it is important to point out that not all areas have the same needs for basic services, such as public lighting and clean water. *Gestoría* takes different forms depending on the socio-economic status of the district. But even in wealthier areas, neighbors want to know that if they have a problem, they will have access to a public official who will be capable of solving it and the best guarantee of ability and interest is past experience as a politician or social leader who been committed to these kinds of activities in years past.³⁵

The campaign team itself is usually made up of carefully selected and trusted allies, friends, or family members of the candidate. In almost all cases, workers have to be hired to carry out all the non-strategic activities involved in campaigning. Often, the more trusted members of the campaign team have to monitor the work of the local campaign workers and the broker.³⁶ In terms of advertising, the candidates used to saturate the district with printed posters, banners, and billboards; but after the 2007 reforms, they now must ask permission to hang campaign material from private homes

³³ A female winner in a lost district explains how working with local leaders is done: First you go talk to them to win their confidence and trust. You have to eat and drink, go to fiestas, spend money on these fiestas of la santa de la iglesia de la esquina. Then you go to a second meeting, which is for work. Here you promise them *gestoría* for their people's problems. Then these leaders would get their people out to vote on election day. All the leaders work their structure downward. They man the phones, they knock on doors. Interview with María De La Paz Quiñones, June 14, 2010, PAN.

³⁴ Hector Hugo Hernández Rodríguez, a winner in a PRD safe district, DF, July 29, 2010. A PAN woman in a bastion district remarks that because of her prior contacts with local leaders in the area, she was able to reach them and make credible commitments to *gestoría*. Because of her prior post as head of Social Services in the municipal government, she had already been on recorridos of the area, she had worked with the poor; she had given out money and municipal resources. Interview with Lucila Del Carmen Gallegos, Sept. 19, 2010.

³⁵ Interview with PRI Dep. Rodrigo Reina Liceaga, July 26, 2010, who won a difficult urban district in a suburb of Mexico City that had once been a bastion of the PAN, Naucalpan.

³⁶ Hector Hugo Hernández Rodríguez, a winner in a PRD safe district, DF, July 29, 2010.

and buildings.³⁷ To get voters interested in the elections, the campaign teams send trucks around the neighborhoods to smaller festivals, concerts, or food kitchens are set up during the course of the campaign. The team hands out promotional materials in the form of little gifts such as cups, key rings, hats.

Large rallies used to be one of the signature elements of a PRI campaign under hegemony.³⁸ Now, usually only two to three are held throughout the months of campaigning because it can be very dangerous for the candidate who holds a rally to which nobody shows up. And even if they do come, there is no guarantee that they will vote for the candidate who organized the event.

To conclude, prior experience is one of the basic building blocks of winning a legislative election, or at least improving the party's historic average in the district, although of course, many other factors influence the final outcome.

A solid political or social trajectory in the same locality in which one is running for elected office helps in three major and related ways: first, name recognition among voters. However, because most voters tend not to know the name of their favored candidate, this is perhaps the least important factor. Second, prior experience, especially in political office, provides party leaders or governors who control candidate nominations to with some assurance that the candidate will be able to stand the rigors of campaigning as well as vote in the correct fashion once the seat has been won. However, as we have seen, party leaders might be more receptive to a female candidate with more experience if only because this prior political work would give her the ability to cause problems if she were not nominated.³⁹ This point should not be over exaggerated - business people with little prior political background are always welcome to run for office, because they can pay for their own campaign efforts, which frees up financing for other races. Finally, a proven track record provides a reputation to local political brokers who control or at least influence blocks of votes that the candidate in question is both willing and able to provide access to services or to policy makers, usually at the municipal level.

³⁷ The requirement to ask permission to place banners on private dwellings has further strengthened the localist nature of campaigning for the Chamber because the candidate's team must enjoy close contacts with residents to be able to put up signs. See Art. 236 of the COFIPE.

³⁸ Interview with PRI Dep. Humberto Cervantes, June 1, 2004, winner of a mixed district.

³⁹ Interview with Lucila Del Carmen Gallegos, Sept. 19, 2010, winning PAN candidate from a bastion district.

Conclusions

This paper asks why women politicians tend to do worse in SMD districts than in their PR counterparts, even with gender quotas. The common answer given for the greater difficulty for non incumbents in SMD races is not as satisfactory as one might believe. Mexico is an excellent case to study this phenomenon because while it has a PR and a SMD tier, both with a quota rule, the Constitution prohibits consecutive reelection, so that incumbency cannot explain the differential levels of female representation in two tiers. Of course, there are many answers to this question, including fairer rules that are easier to observe on the PR side. However, we argue that one must take into account the primary difference between SMD and closed list PR types of representation, which is campaigning. While women certainly are sent to losing districts in Mexico, without a survey of the universe of potential candidates, we cannot know conclusively whether party leaders ignore quality female candidates in competitive and bastion areas in favor of their male co-partisans.

This paper, instead, turned to the issue of background experience and found that indeed, while a gender bias exists in the aggregate voting numbers; its effects are mitigated once prior experience is taken into account. Rather than simply asserting that the quality of the candidates has an effect on vote shares, we then used interviews with winning and losing candidates of both genders to understand exactly how prior backgrounds can help a candidate. We found that campaigns in Mexico depend heavily on the ability of the deputy hopeful to procure local political brokers who are able to control or mobilize blocks of voters. The candidate's prior experience in the locality helps create a valuable reputation for access to government services that these brokers need to deliver selective goods to their followers.

One should of course note that not all SMD campaigns are run like those in Mexico, with little to no personal media appeals, the lack of an incumbency advantage, and the enormous importance of political brokers in the neighborhoods. But what this type of campaigning helps illustrate is how political backgrounds do matter - even when a personal image with voters does not have the same weight as in the US case. Prior background matters for vote mobilization, and probably (although we cannot know for sure with our data) for convincing reluctant party leaders to place women in more "winnable" districts. The Mexican case is a first step in placing both prior experience and campaigning squarely into a more comparative framework.

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