

Sustaining Gendered Practices?
Power, Parties, and Elite Political Networks in Argentina

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Abstract

This paper investigates whether and how gender shapes access to elite political networks, using the case of Argentina, the first country in the world to adopt a national-level quota law in 1991. Quotas have significantly improved women's access to elected office, without altering either the gendered hierarchies or gendered power networks that govern political advancement. We find that while both men and women elected to the national congress have considerable political experience, men are more likely to have held executive office, particularly posts that provide access to resources that sustain clientelism. We further find female legislators are less likely to be married and have children than male legislators, indicating that women's domestic responsibilities circumscribe their political careers.

Comparative scholars have produced a large literature explaining the persistence of sex differences in men's and women's access to political office. Less is known about how gender shapes elite political networks and women's and men's career paths. Yet, sex differences in political participation actually reflect gendered social processes, which assign different roles, responsibilities, and opportunities to men and women. Gender affects both the routes women take to office and the experiences they bring with them. Indeed, many arguments for increasing women's presence in politics assume that women bring different perspectives and policy interests to politics—precisely because of their different backgrounds. Yet women's different policy perspectives will not produce political change unless women also access and participate in the elite political networks traditionally dominated by men.

In this paper, we argue that gender—by which we mean the differing roles women and men play in society, as well as the differing expectations and opportunities associated with these roles—shapes access to office and participation in elite political networks. Although the recent, global diffusion of candidate gender quotas reduces the extent to which sex poses an obstacle for women's election, quotas alone do not transform the gender hierarchies that structure political careers and power networks. Argentina is an ideal case study for exploring these dynamics. An effective quota law was adopted in 1991 and all parties now recruit women for legislative elections. Yet a close examination of differences in men's and women's backgrounds, access to politically powerful posts, and their overall career paths reveals the persistence of gendered hierarchies in political arenas.

We compare the demographic profiles and political trajectories of men and women in the Argentine national Congress between 1999 and 2009, finding sex differences in both categories. The demographic differences highlight women's greater child-rearing responsibilities and the predominance of women's education in the liberal arts, both of which reflect the gendered division

of labor in the public and private spheres. More revealing are the differences in political career paths. While both men and women in Argentina's Congress have considerable political experience, men are far more likely to have held the coveted executive posts that provide politicians with access to resources that fuel and sustain clientelism. Although these political hierarchies are shaped by the contextual features of Argentine politics, namely, clientelism and federalism, our findings have broad comparative relevance, in that all political systems have pathways that bestow more prestige and rewards than others. As the global diffusion of electoral gender quotas draws more women into office, gender differences in political trajectories mean that women may nonetheless remain outside power circles. This, in turn, may reduce the broader political and policy impact of women's public presence.

Gender and Power Hierarchies in Political Office

Previous work on political recruitment has not sufficiently explored sex and gender. While the extant literature has considered whether politicians are insiders or outsiders, loyalists or entrepreneurs (see for instance Siavelis and Morgenstern 2008), few studies address how these dynamics affect women and men differently. Yet establishing sex differences between male politicians' and female politicians' profiles may be insufficient: According to Joni Lovenduski, "the use of sex as a simple, dichotomous variable will distort unless it is located in a gendered frame of reference" (1998, 339). Differences between male and female officeholders must be assessed in relation to how gender beliefs, roles, and expectations structure access to political institutions.

Karen Beckwith explains that sex differences emerge from the functioning of gender as both *category* and *process*. As a category, gender refers to the "multidimensional mapping of socially constructed, fluid, politically relevant identities, values, conventions, and practices conceived as masculine and feminine" (2005, 131). These identities, norms, and practices are particularly

disadvantageous to women in political institutions: because the underlying rules were created by men, they “ensure that the qualifications of men [are] better valued and [lead] more reliably to power and rewards” (Lovenduski 1998, 347).

As process, gender reproduces rules, norms, and values, leading to outcomes more favorable to men (Beckwith 2005, 132). In political institutions generally, and in candidate recruitment specifically, gendered processes make sex an obstacle for women: the association of masculine traits—such as aggression and competition—with politics means that men are automatically assumed to be qualified for public office. Likewise, women’s association with feminine traits—such as nurturing and softness—means that women are seen as less politically viable.¹ These gendered processes also structure social realities, ensuring that women shoulder greater familial responsibilities and thus face additional constraints in pursuing political (and other demanding) careers.

Theoretically, then, gender is an organizational principle within institutions. As scholars applying a feminist lens to institutionalism have explained, gender structures the power relations within organizations: “women are thereby disadvantaged in the power play over which ideas matter and who accumulates institutional resources” (Mackay, Kenny, Chappell 2010). Research on industrial organization, for instance, has documented how women’s exclusion from managerial and leadership networks hinders their status, advancement, and compensation relative to men (Timberlake 2005; Oakely 2000). Building upon these insights, as well as the call from feminist political scientists to consider how institutions embody gendered power relations (Kenny 2007; Krook and Mackay 2011), we examine patterns of women’s inclusion or exclusion from political posts and political networks in Argentina.

To structure our case study, we consider three ways in which institutions are gendered: in the sexual division of labor; in beliefs about men’s and women’s political capacities, which scholars

have characterized as “gendered selection criteria” (Krook 2010; Murray 2010a); and in the resulting disparities in men’s and women’s access to resources, power, and prestige. We draw on existing comparative studies to distill three hypotheses.

First, norms that assign women greater domestic responsibilities than men mean that women often enter politics when least burdened by motherhood. Studies show that female politicians are less likely to be married and less likely to have children when compared to male politicians (Black and Erickson 2000; Dodson 1997; Saint-Germain 1993) and to women in the general population (Saint-Germain and Chávez 2008). These patterns have important consequences: since women may delay entry into public office, or take time off to raise families, they “will have fewer years to serve, to build careers in the institution, [and] to accumulate seniority” (Dodson 1997, 574). Even if women enter politics with similar qualifications as men, the fewer total years that they dedicate to public service may hinder their advancement through the ranks, thus reducing their chances of reaching the most prestigious offices.

Second, while elected women may share the same class status as elected men, the presence of gendered selection criteria means that elite women will differ when compared to elite men. In terms of class, the well-off enjoy greater access to elected office: in a comparative study of three Latin American countries, Schwindt-Bayer shows that elected women “are more similar than different from men in their backgrounds, paths to power, and political ambition” (2011, 2; also Saint-Germain and Chavez 2008). Yet because gender norms associate masculine traits with political leadership, female candidates often need to exceed the qualifications of their male competitors. Thus, studies also find that female officeholders have superior education credentials when compared to male officeholders (Black and Erickson 2000; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor Robinson 2008; Verge 2011). This research further reveals differences in men’s and women’s education and career profiles: female candidates are more likely to come from the public, non-

profit, or education sectors (Black and Erickson 2000; Bird 2003; Schwindt-Bayer 2011) and more likely to have participated in partisan or community organizations (Saint-Germain 1993).

Third, evidence of gendered political hierarchies appears most strongly when comparing men's and women's participation in elite networks. Female legislators are less likely to have occupied the prestigious posts from which high-profile national careers are launched. For instance, studies from France and Spain show that few female candidates have served as mayor, posts which are crucial launching pads for national political careers (Murray 2010a; Verge 2011). We find similar patterns in Argentina, where women enjoy less access to clientelism than men and are thus less likely to become political powerbrokers. Bjarnegard (2009) finds the same in Thailand, where clientelist networks—and thus top-level party politics—exclude women. Our results differ, however, from Schwindt-Bayer, who concludes that women in Argentina, Costa Rica, and Colombia do not bring unique political experiences to elected office (2011, 28). This divergence may stem from different data: whereas Schwindt-Bayer uses survey data that samples legislators from one congressional period, we use population data that reflect all men and women elected in Argentina over five congressional periods.

Our study contributes to the literature on gender and institutions. By using a comprehensive dataset on Argentine men's and women's political backgrounds, as well as contextual case knowledge, we show how pathways to elected office and the power networks within them contain gendered hierarchies. What is more, these hierarchies endure despite institutional changes stemming from the adoption of gender quotas and the corresponding increase in the number of elected women. Our findings therefore underscore how political institutions can accommodate newcomers while “powerful gendered legacies” nonetheless persist (Kenny 2007; Mackay, Kenny, and Chappell 2011). We concur, arguing that the differing value placed on certain backgrounds reduces women's political clout relative to men.

The Argentine Case: Context and Hypotheses

Women's access to elected office expanded considerably following the adoption of a national quota law (*Ley de Cupos*) in 1991. The law's full effect became evident in the legislative elections of 1995, when women's seat share in the lower house rose to 27 percent²; this proportion continued to increase, reaching 38.5 percent in the 2009 elections. The *Ley de Cupos* first applied to the upper house in 2001, where women's presence subsequently jumped from 5.7 percent to 37.1 percent.³ Argentina's quota law has been numerically effective, yet our study reveals that gender continues to structure access to other political offices.

Analyzing gendered political careers in Argentina requires careful attention to the country's political landscape. Most important, Argentine politicians do not consider election to the federal legislature as the capstone of their political career. While legislators in North America and Europe may seek executive branch positions, many consider parliamentary office noteworthy in itself and lengthy legislative careers are not uncommon. In contrast, a mere 19 percent of federal deputies were reelected between 1989 and 2003 (Jones and Hwang 2005, 126). Rather than developing the legislative expertise common among parliamentarians in Anglo-American and European democracies, Argentine politicians move between the provincial and federal levels and between the executive and legislative branches. The practice of rotation in office, with a preference for provincial posts, has led Jones et al (2002) to characterize Argentine officials as "amateur legislators" but "professional politicians."⁴

A second notable feature of Argentine politics is clientelism, which also produces gendered patterns of political recruitment. Legislative careers are devalued in Argentina because they offer scant opportunities for patronage. Argentine deputies and senators do not exercise sufficient control over the budget to distribute pork, but the lack of public financing for political campaigns means

that candidates must raise resources through clientelistic activities (Abuelafia et al 2005). The dependence on clientelism in both rural and urban districts raises the value of executive branch positions, specifically those elected and appointed offices that receive and distribute federal monies to constituents. In Argentina, the posts of governor and mayor, as well as certain ministerial posts in provincial and federal cabinets, offer the greatest opportunities for clientelism. Individuals holding these positions deliver party votes through distributing pork, raising their prominence within the party.

Clientelism therefore shapes political recruitment in Argentina. Provincial governors are the most powerful party bosses, and governors' power is enhanced when their party controls the federal executive (Jones 2008). Since the Argentine Congress is elected via closed party lists at the provincial level, candidate recruitment for the federal congress is controlled by the provincial party bosses (either the governor or the leader of the opposition parties). In most cases, candidate selection is top-down, with provincial leaders determining candidacies and list positions (De Luca, Jones, and Tula 2002). Even when primaries are held, victors are determined "less by personal characteristics and policy positions than by the amount of material resources that the machine has at its disposal" (Jones 2008, 47). Individual legislators thus depend on the party bosses' favor to seek reelection and, at any rate, most prefer to attain the more prestigious, executive branch posts.

We combine the patterns shaped by federalism and clientelism to craft hypotheses about gendered political institutions in Argentina. The higher value party bosses accord to executive positions, particularly ones with access to resources, combines with the quota law to reinforce gendered selection criteria. The quota law requires parties to allocate 30 percent of the lists positions to women, with one female name appearing in every triad of names.⁵ Since 1991, all but two provinces in Argentina have adopted their own quota laws, increasing the likelihood that women elected to the national congress have some legislative experience (Borner et al 2009). Yet,

most party bosses are male, and executive experience is more highly prized, reducing women's influence over and success in the candidate selection process (Marx, Borner, and Caminotti 2007).

We thus anticipate that female candidates will neither occupy the top ballot positions nor come from prestigious posts. More specifically, we anticipate that fewer female legislators will have high-level executive experience (i.e., serving as mayors, governors, or ministers in provincial or federal cabinets). We expect that fewer female politicians will have enjoyed access to clientelism in their previous posts. Instead, because men will mostly be drawn from subnational executives, and because the quota applies to most subnational legislatures, we hypothesize that more female deputies will have municipal or provincial legislative experience. Confirmation of these hypotheses would indicate that gender structures political recruitment and participation in elite networks.

Our expectations for female legislators' demographic distribution and educational backgrounds follow the comparative literature more generally. We hypothesize that, because the prevailing gender ideology values women's caretaking roles, female legislators will have chosen between their family and their careers: female deputies will be more likely to be divorced and/or single, and have fewer children, when compared to male deputies. With respect to education, we anticipate that women will have attained the same, or higher, educational level as their male colleagues. If women possess superior education credentials compared to men, gendered barriers will be indicated: women need more credentials to compensate for the disadvantage of being female (Escobar-Lemon and Taylor-Robinson 2009). Yet we expect that university degrees will reflect traditional gender role socialization: we hypothesize that more male legislators will have professional careers, and that more female legislators will study liberal arts.

Data and Methods

Our study is based on data taken from the *Directorio Legislativo*, an Argentine research NGO created in 1999. The *Directorio Legislativo* promotes political transparency, and its flagship publication is a congressional “yearbook” that reports the demographic, socioeconomic, educational, and political attributes of each deputy and senator. The *Directorio* data are based on paper surveys administered to legislators serving each term, with NGO workers using office visits to obtain a 100 percent response rate.

Using the *Directorios*, we assembled a database of all members of the Chamber of Deputies (lower house) from 1999 to 2009. The Chamber contains 256 members serving four year terms. Elections are biennial, during which half the Chamber is renewed. Our dataset accounts for five of Argentina’s two-year congressional terms: 1999-2001, 2001-2003, 2003-2005, 2005-2007, and 2007-2009. Deputies represent their home provinces, with each province receiving a number of seats relative to its overall population.

Our dataset consists of 688 legislators, 242 (35.2 percent) of whom are women and 447 (64.8 percent) of whom are men, including deputies who resigned as well as their replacements. This inclusion does not bias our results, since we focus on the attributes legislators have upon entering office. Likewise, we capture how politicians’ pathway data changes over time by counting legislators for each term served, when appropriate. For instance, we count incumbent legislators twice when analyzing prior posts: the first time, they are coded as having no previous lawmaking experience, and the second time, they are coded as having experience. Where legislators’ biographical data does not vary between terms—education degrees, for instance—we count legislators only once.⁶ However, we checked the analyses both ways (single-counting and double-counting), with no significant alteration of the results.⁷ For consistency, we report double-counting only in instances where incumbents’ background data changed between terms.

In the dataset, the unit of observation is the legislator, and the attributes are the variables of interest. Each attribute received a categorical code that reflected a relevant category of meaning: degrees, for example, were grouped based on their type, such as liberal arts or technical. To ensure that our categories reflected knowledge of the Argentine case, we checked our code key with local experts. For entries that remained ambiguous, or that respondents had left blank, we dropped the observation of that attribute for that legislator. For these reasons, the total number of observations in our analyses is always less than 688. These dropped observations led to non-systematic patterns of missing data.⁸

Our study of gendered political institutions in Argentina explores those attributes identified as relevant in the existing literature: sociodemographics (age, marital status, and children), education (degree type and specialization), and political experience (level, branch, and prestige of prior offices). Since our dataset begins four years after the *Ley de Cupos* had its largest numerical effect (in 1995) and six years after the quota law first applied (in 1993), we cannot compare pre-quota and post-quota realities. That means we cannot make inferences about the quotas' effects on behavior. We can, however, compare the types of women elected post-quota to the types of men elected post-quota, revealing important patterns in gendered careers and networks. Following Schwindt-Bayer (2011) and Murray (2010b), we descriptively compare the group of female legislators to the group of male legislators. We use categorical data analysis to generate cross-tabulations of men's and women's possession of each attribute, employing a chi-squared test for statistical significance.

Demographics

Our study broadly supports the hypothesis that the gendered division of labor in the private and public spheres constrains women's political careers. We find that that legislators typically serve

terms during their 30s, 40s, 50s, and 60s—and most during their 40s and 50s—with no meaningful or statistically significant difference between men’s ages and women’s ages.⁹ The average age for deputies in our dataset was 51 for women, and 53 for men. Differences do appear in marital status, however: women are far more likely to be single and somewhat more likely to be divorced or widowed. Eighty percent of male legislators reporting their marital status are married or in common-law relationships, compared to 55 percent of women. Conversely, only 5 percent of male legislators are single, compared to 22 percent of female legislators. The results on marital status are statistically significant at the 1 percent level.¹⁰

Looking within age cohorts shows the pattern more starkly. We find that 31 percent of female deputies in their 30s are married, compared to 71 percent of male deputies in that age group. This pattern continues: 58 percent of women and 76.5 percent of men in their 40s are married, and 61 percent of women and 78.5 percent of men in their 50s. Of those legislators in their 60s, an overwhelming 92 percent of men are married, compared to only 60 percent of women. These figures indicate differences in the relationship between political service and private life for men and women. Gender as process means that women face greater challenges in reconciling their obligations in each sphere.

Variations in family size further underscore this point. Overall, male legislators have children more than female legislators. Ninety-six percent of male legislators have children compared to 86 percent of female legislators. Moreover, female legislators with children have fewer than their male counterparts: most women have between 1 and 2 children (42.8 percent), whereas most men have between 3 and 7 children (61.1 percent). These differences are statistically significant at the 1 percent level, giving empirical weight to the conclusion that reconciling family and work is more challenging for female officeholders.¹¹

Education

Argentine legislators are highly educated, with 82 percent holding either a community college, university, or graduate degree. Yet we see important differences between men and women: of the legislators reporting their education, 21 percent of men have no degree, compared to just 11 percent of women, a gap which is statistically significant at the 1 percent level.¹² The fact that female deputies are more likely to be educated than male deputies supports our hypothesis that women need superior credentials to compensate for possible disadvantages arising from their gender.

Notable differences appear when we examine legislators' level and type of degrees. Dividing university degrees into four categories (technical, professional, liberal arts, and graduate), we find that men are more likely to hold professional degrees (75 percent of men versus 34.5 percent of women), while women are more likely to have liberal arts degrees (48 percent of women compared to just 12.5 percent of men). Yet women are more likely to fall in the highly educated category: more women than men have graduate degrees (16 versus 9 percent). Additional analysis of occupational segregation showed that the vast majority of legislators hold law or business degrees, with female legislators represented more in this category than male legislators (69 percent compared to 59 percent). Namely, more female legislators hold degrees in education, and fewer female legislators specialize in the math-based professions of accounting, engineering, and the social and physical sciences. The differences in degree level are statistically significant at the 1 percent level, but those for occupational segregation are not significant.¹³

In sum, our hypotheses are supported. Women display the same or greater educational credentials as men, thus signaling their competence, but their educational specializations reflect patterns of gender segregation in the workforce. Female legislators either present stronger

credentials than their male counterparts by holding a graduate degree in law or business, or conform to gendered expectations by concentrating in the “softer” liberal arts, especially education.

Political Experience: Parties and Prominence

Numerous insights into the gendered dimensions of political networks and careers can be gained by comparing the past political experience of male and female deputies. Our dataset contained multiple variables for measuring legislators’ political resumes, including party membership; prior legislative terms at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels; past appointments to the executive branch at these levels; and previous posts as party directors, interest group leaders, policy advisors and other non-elected officials.¹⁴ Very few legislators in our dataset—ten women and fourteen men—reported no experience whatsoever. In other words, among the legislators for whom we have complete pathway data, a mere 4 percent (24) have blank political resumes, and 96 percent (584) have held at least one elected or non-elected post. Yet important gender-based differences are evident. Fewer women have held positions that provide access to resources, status, and prestige. Men therefore dominate the elite political networks that structure Argentina’s political landscape even as the number of women in congress grows substantially.

Beginning with party membership, existing studies have suggested that women fare better within left-leaning parties. Indeed, left-leaning parties frequently adopt internal gender quotas (Caul Kittilson 2006; Krook 2009). The ideological poles of “right” and “left” in Argentina, however, are difficult to identify. Argentina’s politics are characterized by a stark division between government and opposition (Alemán et al 2009), and the parties are largely non-ideological groupings based on opportunistic vote-seeking behavior and ever-shifting personal allegiances (Coppedge 1998; Levitsky and Murrillo 2006). The two dominant parties—the *Partido Justicialista* (the “Peronists”)

and the *Unión Cívica Radical* (the UCR)—contain elements that trend both left and right (Jones and Hwang 2005).

Thus, to examine female legislators' prominence within their parties, we chose size rather than ideology. We selected size to account for Argentina's division between the traditional, behemoth parties—the Peronists and the UCR—and the smaller third parties, many of which are new players. Further, since many third parties, like the traditional parties, are fluid alliances of individuals, size varies across the party system more than party institutionalization. Finally, though scant research exists on the relationship between party's size and women's success, Caul Kittilson has proposed that smaller or newer parties may be more flexible, innovative, and open when promoting women's candidacies (2006: 56-57). Similarly, feminist institutionalism, in emphasizing how gender change occurs within institutions, implies that some organizations—in this case, smaller or newer parties—may be more adaptive than others (Mackay, Kenny, Chappell 2011).

We studied four types of parties seated in congress: unipersonal (one legislator), small (electing fewer than 10 legislators), midsize (electing between 10 and 50 legislators), and large (the Peronists and the UCR, electing more than 50 legislators). Of these groupings, only the Peronists and the UCR have dedicated women's wings; no parties consistently apply internal quotas that exceed the mandated 30 percent.¹⁵ Only the midsize parties are clearly ideological: the Socialist Party is linked to the international socialist agenda, *Acción por una República Igualitaria* (ARI) is a left-leaning party founded by a noted feminist, and *Propuesta Republicana* (PRO) is a center-right party favoring neoliberalism.¹⁶ We found that women comprise 32 to 35 percent of the congressional delegations of unipersonal, small, and large parties, which matches the proportion mandated by the quota law. However, women comprise roughly 45 percent of the midsize parties' delegations. While ARI and the Socialists are leftist parties known for supporting women's

candidacies and women's rights, women are also well-represented in the rightist PRO, indicating that party size, rather than ideology, matters.

There are several reasons why women comprise nearly half the membership in Argentina's newer, midsize parties. First, these well-organized parties have national profiles but win in the country's urban centers, namely the capital district of Buenos Aires and the provinces of Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, and Mendoza: the pool of viable female candidates may thus be larger where these parties are strongest. Second, these parties are competitive enough to offer aspirants legislative careers, but not so successful as to capture provincial governorships. Both female and male members thus have fewer opportunities to jump to the executive branch. Third, with the exception of the Socialist Party, the midsize parties are young enough such that no entrenched "old boys" network hinders the integration of newcomers. Taken together, midsize parties may achieve a balance that provides some advantages to female candidates: the parties are large enough to attain modest electoral success, but small enough to have fluid internal hierarchies. This finding suggests that new or midsize institutions may be more women-friendly because they lack the informal rules that reinforce masculine privilege.

We examine this conclusion further by looking at legislators' prominence within their party, as indicated by their position on the electoral list. Since lists are organized at the provincial level, those in the top position—the "list-headers"—are important figures: they serve as the public face of the party's provincial campaign and may receive a leadership role within the party's congressional delegation. The top spots on party lists are coveted and prestigious. As Table 1 shows, there is a significant gender gap among those 426 legislators who received either the first or second position on their party's list. Of the 268 list-headers in the dataset, women occupy only 17 percent of these prize positions, with men occupying an overwhelming 83 percent of the top slots. Women are more likely to be found in the second spot, holding 62 percent of those positions compared to 40 percent

for men. Overall, only 34 percent of either the first or second position are occupied by women, indicating that gender is a strong predictor of the value that party leaders assign to candidates.

[Table 1 HERE]

In terms of party size, women comprise 12 to 15 percent of the list-headers in unipersonal, small, and large parties, thus repeating the general pattern. The exception again appears in mid-size parties, where female legislators comprise nearly 40 percent of these parties' list-headers. As with party membership, women fare better within midsize parties—including the rightist PRO—when compared to women from other parties. This trend is especially notable when comparing the electorally-competitive midsize parties to the electorally-dominant traditional parties: while 25 percent of female candidates from the midsize parties hold the top list position, only 13 percent of female candidates from the PJ and UCR hold this coveted spot. This lends further evidence to the conclusion that newer or midsize parties, in lacking “old-boys’ clubs,” have power hierarchies more permeable to women.

Nonetheless, across all parties, men are more likely to hold the number one spot. This conclusion is strengthened by considering how a party's choice of list-header interacts with the quota's placement mandate. Since the quota law requires placing a woman in every third list position, placing a woman first will affect the remainder of the list: women will have to appear 1st, 4th, 7th, and 10th (compared to the alternative sequences of 2nd, 5th, and 8th or 3rd, 6th, and 9th). Parties may thus avoid nominating women as list-headers, since doing so imposes high costs on the rank-ordering of *all* candidates. This cost increases substantially when parties contest fewer than three seats, in which case the placement mandate requires that women be positioned in either the first or second slot (a 50 percent quota). Our findings indicate that parties generally place female candidates in the lowest position that still complies with the quota law.

Political Experience: Prior Posts

List position reflects parties' perceptions about the value of female candidates. To examine how gender shapes men's and women's pathways to office and participation in elite networks, we take four additional cuts of our data. First, we explore whether deputies served previously in a lawmaking body, including the federal congress, provincial legislatures, or municipal councils. Second, we explore whether deputies have previously held other political posts, meaning non-elected positions in the executive branch, the legislative chamber (i.e., analyst), the parties, unions, and interest groups. Third, we analyze the level (federal, provincial, or municipal) and significance (access to pork) of these non-elected positions. Fourth, we devise an aggregate measure of overall experience by combining the three previous measures.

1. Past Legislative Experience

As shown in Table 2, the vast majority of legislators have lawmaking experience: Of the 607 legislators for whom we have data on this measure, 419 (69 percent) served in either a municipal, provincial, or federal chamber (including both regular parliamentary terms and special constitutional conventions). While men have slightly more legislative experience than woman (71 percent compared to 65 percent), this difference is not statistically significant.

[Table 2 HERE]

We then analyzed the highest level reached by those deputies who reported previous legislative experience. As Table 2 also shows, deputies' federal legislative experience divides evenly between reelected officials and congressional newcomers (meaning those who served previously only in municipal and provincial legislatures). Again, the differences between women and men are small and not statistically significant. Qualitative observations may explain these findings. First, the existence of federal- and provincial-level quotas accounts for women's high rates of participation at these levels. Second, slightly more women than men enter the federal congress

from the municipal level. Indeed, female deputies report finding local office easier when attempting to balance family commitments with political activism, since local positions do not demand weekly, time-consuming travel between the capital and the home district.¹⁷ In general, however, neither a discernible nor robust trend differentiates between men's and women's prior legislative experience.

The one exception is incumbency rates for the federal Chamber of Deputies. If we look at the 210 legislators with previous federal legislative experience, we find that 47 percent of these multiple-term deputies are incumbents. Significantly, women are reelected in greater proportions than men: 57 percent of female legislators are incumbents compared to 42 percent male legislators, a difference which is statistically significant at the 10 percent level.¹⁸ Female legislators appear more likely to continue in congress. Midsize parties in particular provide avenues for women's legislative careers, again because these parties are not capturing executive office: women comprised nearly 60 percent of incumbents from midsize parties, compared to between 22 and 38 percent of incumbents from other parties.

Related, Schwindt-Bayer (2011) finds that female legislators in Argentina exhibit less progressive ambition than men. Yet we argue that, given the gendered nature of political institutions, female deputies may remain in the Congress because they are dissuaded by gender roles and domestic responsibilities from seeking higher office or because they remain outside party power networks and are thus less likely to receive more prestigious appointments. The latter is evidenced by the data on list position, presented above, and the data on access to executive posts and clientelistic resources, presented below.

2. Past Experience in Non-Elected Posts

Given the greater prestige and value associated with executive posts, we expect to find more gender-based differences in non-legislative positions. These posts include executive positions,

bureaucratic offices, or public service jobs; the latter includes policy advisors, trade union leaders and interest group leaders, school board members, university rectors, and leadership roles.¹⁹ Most deputies in our dataset (88 percent) have held at least one such post prior to entering Congress. Nonetheless, we find substantial differences between men and women.

To begin, nearly 57 percent of deputies report prior elected *and* non-elected experience. These figures confirm scholars' characterization of Argentine legislators as professional politicians who, over their career, occupy many offices. Further, while there is no statistically significant difference between male and female legislators reporting either form of experience, there is a statistically significant gap between male and female legislators reporting both forms of experience—60 percent compared to 50 percent, respectively.²⁰ This difference may reflect the fact that male politicians have enjoyed longer careers, whereas the quota has only recently created opportunities for women to enter politics. Women's domestic responsibilities may also reduce the overall length of their political careers, as frequent entries and exits into politics makes attaining multiple offices and accessing elite networks more difficult.

For a more specific analysis, we divided non-elected positions into three categories: executive offices, bureaucratic offices, and public service positions. Based on case knowledge and consultations with local experts, we assigned higher values to executive offices, as these positions allow politicians to control pork.²¹ We categorized executive offices as follows: past presidents and vice-presidents, cabinet ministers (federal level), governor, vice-governor and cabinet secretaries and ministers (provincial level), and mayors and municipal cabinet secretaries. We categorized bureaucratic offices as non-cabinet positions in the executive branch (generally sub-secretaries, directors, and chiefs) as well as judges and magistrates. These posts offer fewer patronage opportunities and, therefore, less influence. Both executive offices and bureaucratic offices are situated within the executive branch, while public service positions are distributed across

government branches and levels and include non-state posts. Legislators holding these positions, which range from university chancellorships to party secretaries, do accumulate experience and become better prepared for elected office. Yet these jobs constitute a residual category, in which politicians do not typically amass the political capital that party bosses prioritize. Table 3 reports deputies' previous experience by type, reflecting the highest position held by each person in the dataset.

[Table 3 HERE]

Significant and meaningful differences appear between men's and women's patterns of office-holding. Roughly half of the male deputies (51 percent) have served as either a chief executive or cabinet minister at the federal, provincial, or municipal level, compared to just over one quarter (27 percent) of female legislators.²² Most women enter Congress from posts in the bureaucracies or public service (57 percent combined), positions that do not allow direct access to the executive branch resources controlled by presidents and governors. Male legislators, by contrast, are underrepresented in the bureaucracies. This finding implies that women have had fewer opportunities to access executive office.

3. Level and Significance of Non-Elected Posts

We explore this hypothesis further by situating value in relation to the level and prominence of these posts. The importance of provincial party politics in Argentina is confirmed by the fact that half of all legislators have served in non-elected positions at the provincial level (49.9 percent). In contrast, 23.9 percent have held non-elected offices at the federal level and 26.2 percent at the municipal level, with no statistically significant difference between men and women.

[Table 4 HERE]

To further explore the gendered hierarchies of political institutions, we interacted the level of previous post with its type, as shown in Table 4. The findings, while not empirically conclusive, nonetheless merit discussion. The proportions reinforce the existence of gendered selection criteria for prestigious offices. Looking first at bureaucratic offices, we find that an overwhelming majority of female bureaucrats held these positions at the provincial level (nearly 68 percent of women compared to barely 53 percent of men). Fewer women than men came from the federal bureaucracy (about 22 percent of women compared to about 39 percent of men). Lastly, a slightly greater proportion of women than men come from the municipal level. Female politicians are thus concentrated among those lower-level positions that do not permit direct access to, or immediate personal connections with, the provincial governor.

Greater differences emerge when we look at executive offices. We find a much higher concentration of male legislators with executive experience in the coveted provincial branch: 49 percent of men, compared to barely 35 percent of women. Of these legislators who were provincial governors (as opposed to provincial ministers), 1 was female and 10 were male. Thus, female legislators not only have fewer connections to the powerful provincial governors than male legislators; they are less likely to *be* powerful themselves. Female legislators are more likely to come from the noteworthy, but less-coveted and less-prominent, federal and municipal executives. In fact, the vast majority of female legislators (nearly 46 percent) come from the municipal executive. Yet even here, women were ministers rather than chief executives: of those legislators coming from the municipal executive, 73 men were mayors, compared to just nine women.

Taken together, these trends underscore two conclusions. First, relative to men, women fill more local than national offices. The concentration of women in non-elected municipal offices echoes our earlier finding about the preponderance of women having served as elected municipal councilors: local positions keep female politicians closer to home, allowing them to reconcile their

public and private obligations more easily. Second, where women do make in-roads into more prestigious offices, they remain underrepresented relative to men in the posts with the highest status. This finding echoes research from France (Murray 2010a; 2010b) and Spain (Verge 2011), which shows that, even as the number of female legislators rises, women remain far less likely to have occupied the posts from which politicians in each country launch powerful careers. Not only do the data reveal that elite networks remain relatively closed to women despite their growing presence in legislatures, but they challenge simplistic assumptions about women's progressive ambition, as not all political offices are equally open to both sexes.

Further evidence appears by examining legislators' past access to clientelism. Among all posts, the *most* valuable are those which allow the officeholder to control and distribute financial resources, goods and services, government contracts, and jobs. These positions include provincial governor and vice-governor, who receive federal monies as direct transfers from the central government; federal and provincial cabinet chiefs, who manage the policy agendas; mayors, who receive transfers from the governor; and ministers of finance, economy, infrastructure, public works, development, welfare, and social security at all levels. Ministers holding these portfolios have large budgets and wide discretionary powers to maintain clientelistic relationships, thus converting them into highly valuable politicians for their party.

We thus measured "access to clientelism" as whether legislators reached the national congress from prior service in any of these advantageous positions. As noted, such posts are typically capstones rather than stepping stones for Argentina's "professional politicians," meaning that most deputies finish their careers in these posts (rather than leave them for the less-lucrative federal legislature). The data clearly show gendered patterns.

First, nearly 41 percent of legislators have served in at least one post that permitted access to pork. In this group, we find a significant difference between men and women: just 23 percent of

female legislators held such positions compared to 49 percent of their male colleagues. Conversely, more than three-quarters (77 percent) of women have never controlled clientelistic resources, compared to just over half (51 percent) of men. These differences are statistically significant at the 1 percent level.²³

Second, legislators accessing clientelism at all government levels are overwhelmingly male. Table 5 shows the proportions of pork-controlling legislators by the highest level at which a post was held. Nearly 24 percent of men, compared to just 6 percent of women, arrive at the federal legislature from a clientelist position at the provincial level, and 22 percent of men, compared to 14 percent of women, previously controlled resources at the municipal level.

[Table 5 HERE]

Looking at patterns by party size, we see that no women forming unipersonal parties previously controlled clientelistic resources at the federal or provincial level. In the small, midsize, and traditional parties more men than women held posts with clientelist potential. The gap between women's and men's access to patronage was most narrow, however, in the midsize parties: 7 percent of men in the midsize parties held positions with clientelist possibilities, compared to 4.5 of women. In the small parties, by contrast, 10 percent of women had previous access to clientelism, compared to 24 percent of men. In the traditional parties—the PJ and the UCR, where internal networks are most entrenched—the gap was the widest: 10 percent of women compared to 32 percent of men. Thus, while the midsize parties remain too minor to offer most members access to the executive branch, women have a greater opportunity to attain these positions when they are available. In all other parties, and especially in the traditional parties, male legislators are much more likely than female legislators to have patronage connections.

What is more, we find that the value accorded to control of clientelist resources differs for men and women: having distributed pork doubles men's prominence when compared to women.

Sixty percent of men from “high pork” posts became list-headers, compared to just 25 percent of women. These findings indicate that gender shapes how parties value and reward experience. Even those female politicians who access elite power networks are less likely than similarly-experienced men to be rewarded with the top spot on party lists, again suggesting that women’s progressive ambition is tempered by the gendered hierarchies within institutions.

4. Overall Experience

Finally, we combined all the pathway data into summary measures of legislators’ past experience. We designed a code scheme that captured whether Argentina’s “professional politicians” had four levels of overall experience: none, low, medium, or high. Legislators with low overall experience have no past lawmaking experience, but have held bureaucratic office at the municipal level or have undertaken previous public service. Legislators with medium experience have some legislative service at either the provincial or the municipal level, or have held bureaucratic office at the provincial or federal level, or have completed at least one term in either chamber of the federal congress. Legislators with high experience have held executive office at the provincial or federal level, have served three or more legislative terms at the provincial or municipal level, or have completed two or more terms in either chamber of the federal congress. In cases where legislators reported multiple elected and non-elected offices, we always counted the highest office attained.

[Table 6 HERE]

Table 6 reports our findings. As noted earlier, just four percent of legislators in our dataset lack political experience: neither male nor female deputies are neophytes. Yet, as we have emphasized throughout, sex differences do appear, and these sex differences reflect gendered selection criteria and relatively closed elite networks. Women are far more likely than men to have

“medium” levels of past experience (57 percent of women compared to almost 40 percent of men). This confirms that women’s pathways to the federal congress are more likely to originate at the municipal and provincial levels, but more important, that women tend to come from the less valuable local legislatures and bureaucracies. In contrast, nearly half of all male legislators have “high” levels of past experience. Men’s pathways are thus more likely to pass through the coveted provincial executives and the prominent federal government. While female legislators have increased their overall visibility in Argentine politics, gender roles and opportunities limit their ability to become power brokers.

Comparative Significance and Conclusions

Our study demonstrates that political opportunities and networks are structured by gender, producing notable differences in men’s and women’s political careers in Argentina. Although the 1991 quota law opened women’s access to elected office, our research shows that the more coveted and high-status political offices remain male-dominated. Women are far less likely than their male colleagues to hold posts as governors, mayors, or cabinet ministers, which in turn limits their access to the resources that sustain clientelism. The upper echelons of elite networks appear relatively closed to women. Nonetheless, the quota law has clearly facilitated women’s legislative careers. Female deputies have significant prior experience in subnational legislatures and as federal incumbents, signaling the quota’s effectiveness in narrowing the gap between men’s and women’s access to legislative office.

More extensive qualitative data on the procedures governing political recruitment and cabinet formation at the provincial and national levels is necessary to explain why gendered power networks persist despite women’s growing political participation. Our study nonetheless indicates two potential causes. First, the gendered division of labor in the public and private spheres

constrains women's political careers, as evidenced by the differences in men's and women's family patterns and their tendency to occupy local offices close to home. Second, selection criteria appear gendered: the higher value assigned to masculinity means that women must often possess greater credentials than their male competitors in order to compensate for any perceived weaknesses associated with their sex. We found evidence of party leaders' preferences for men in women's higher education credentials and in women's less frequent ascension to the position of list header.

Our data on the relationship between party size and women's careers also merits future scrutiny. Our data indicate that midsize parties offer women the most access to legislative office and higher posts. Yet, women's relative success in midsize parties may—paradoxically—be an artifact of these parties' electoral limitations. Midsize parties are too small to capture provincial governorships and, unlike the traditional players, they lack clientelistic coffers. Midsize parties' internal networks may be more permeable to women precisely because, in the absence of patronage resources, high party posts are less valuable. Indeed, we find that women and men in midsize parties do not differ significantly in their access to pork.

Together, these findings signal three further points. First, future work should explore the connections between parties' structure and female members' participation in elite networks. Second, the presence of gendered selection criteria, when combined with the persistence of old boys' networks (particularly in traditional parties), complicates existing understandings of women's progressive ambition. Women may remain absent from the upper echelons of power not because they lack ambition, but because they are excluded. Third and finally, context remains paramount when assessing women's political credentials. Gendered hierarchies in public office in Argentina are shaped by the logics of clientelism and federalism. While the factors that determine the prestige of different political offices will vary across cases, our study suggests that, relative to each

country's political system, gender shapes access to the most competitive, valued, and prestigious posts.

Finally, the findings of this study speak to the emerging literature on gender as an organizational principle within institutions. Krook notes that gender quotas constitute a form of "institutional layering" in which "some elements of existing institutions are renegotiated but other elements remain" (2009, 50). In particular, quotas transform some internal hierarchies while leaving others intact. In the case of Argentina, quotas compel parties to recruit women for legislative office, while leaving gendered norms that assign greater value to male candidates, especially male candidates with access to patronage, unchanged. These informal rules may even be strengthened as male elites defend their privileges against female newcomers. Future research is needed to examine how elite recruitment shifts over time, as well as how these practices shape policymaking. Do female legislators face barriers in passing their legislative initiatives because of their relative exclusion from power networks, or do they succeed in the legislature and eventually make inroads into parties' and executive branches' top posts?

Endnotes

¹ Social processes attribute these traits to men and women, irrespective of whether individual men or women display them.

² The first post-quota elections were held in 1993, when women's seat share increased from 5 to 14 percent. Since Argentina renews half of the chamber every two years, the quota's full effects were not realized until 1995.

³ All figures are drawn from Marx, Borner, and Caminotti (2007).

⁴ Martínez Rosón likewise classifies the Argentine deputies as "experienced politicians" rather than "experienced legislators" based on the number and type of past political offices held (2008, 243).

⁵ An executive decree to regulate the 1991 quota law specified the placement mandate: women must occupy 30 percent of the seats that the party expects to win (Krook 2009). A subsequent decree in 2000 specified that, if only two seats are being renewed, a woman must occupy either the first or second spot; if more than two seats are up for renewal, then a woman must appear in one of the first three spots (Archenti and Johnson 2006).

⁶ In a few instances, a legislator's marital status, number of children, or highest degree did change; in these cases, when analyzing sociodemographic characteristics and educational attainment, we counted the legislator twice.

⁷ No legislators were triple- or quadruple-counted, because those (very few) legislators serving more than two terms were not accumulating other political experience. Their background data did not change, save for additional congressional terms.

⁸ We discerned no systematic pattern to the missing data. A systematic pattern would occur if certain types of legislators consistently ignored the survey (i.e., no incumbents completed the survey), or if many legislators consistently refused to answer the same questions (i.e., many ignored

questions about marital status). However, the “no responses” are sufficiently randomly distributed among the population of legislators that dropping these observations will not bias the results.

⁹ $\text{Chi}^2(5) = 4.5534$; $\text{Pr}=0.473$.

¹⁰ $\text{Chi}^2(3)=54.35$; $\text{Pr}=0.000$

¹¹ $\text{Chi}^2(4)=33.37$; $\text{Pr}=0.00$

¹² $\text{Chi}^2(1)=9.86$; $\text{Pr}=0.00$

¹³ $\text{Chi}^2(3)=87.92$; $\text{Pr}=0.00$ for degree level.

¹⁴ Legislators’ volunteerism in civil society groups or non-governmental organizations is not considered.

¹⁵ While the charter of the UCR party mandates a 50 percent quota for electoral lists, this rule is not enforced in practice. The charter of the Socialist Party, however, does extend the 30 percent legislative quota to posts within the party organization.

¹⁶ ARI formed an alliance with other parties for the 2007 elections, becoming the *Coalición Cívica* (Civic Coalition). Observations about party behavior are based on Author NAME’s interviews with legislators in Buenos Aires in 2009.

¹⁷ Author’s NAME interview with PJ deputies in Buenos Aires, April 23 and August 6, 2009.

¹⁸ ($\text{Chi}^2(2)=3.62$; $\text{Pr}=0.06$). A 47 percent incumbency rate is high, given that party bosses practice rotation in office. One explanation is that our figure includes legislators from small, local parties. Argentina has witnessed the growth of multiple minor parties in the mid- to late-2000s. The closed-list proportional representation system allows small parties to capture legislative seats but not governorships, and so many members of small parties remain in Congress.

¹⁹ *Asesores* in Argentina are advisors to legislative or executive branch personnel or offices. These individuals are highly skilled, knowledgeable about the policy process, and have expertise in specific policy areas. University rectors and university board members are political appointees.

²⁰ $\text{Chi}^2(1)=4.5520$; $\text{Pr}=0.033$.

²¹ We thank NAME and NAME for details on congressional politics in Argentina.

²² This finding is consistent with a study by Borner et al (2009).

²³ ($\text{Chi}^2(2)$: 28.01; $\text{Pr}=0.00$).

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Table 1: Legislators' Electoral List Position, 1999–2009

	Men	Women	Total
Position 1	82.8% (222)	17.2% (46)	100% (268)
Position 2	40% (60)	62% (98)	100% (158)
Total	66.2% (282)	33.8% (144)	100% (426)

Table 2. Legislators' Past Legislative Experience, 1999–2009

	Any Legislative Experience*			Highest Level of Legislative Experience**			
	No	Yes	Total	Municipal	Provincial	Federal	Total
Men	29% (114)	71% (279)	100% (393)	12.8 % (36)	36.3 (102)	50.9% (143)	100% (281)
Women	34.6% (74)	65.4% (140)	100% (214)	15.9% (22)	35.4 (49)	48.6% (67)	100% (138)
Total	31% (188)	69% (419)	100% (607)	13.9% (58)	36% (58)	50.1% (210)	100% (419)

*Statistical Significance (no): $\text{Chi}^2(1) = 2.0119$; Pr=0.156

** Statistical Significance (no): $\text{Chi}^2(2) = .7724$; Pr=0.680

Table 3: Legislators' Past Political Experience, 1999–2009

	None	Executive Office	Bureaucratic Office	Other Public Service	Total
Men	11% (38)	51.3% (177)	18.3% (63)	19.4% (67)	100% (345)
Women	15.8% (27)	26.9% (46)	38% (65)	19.3% (33)	100% (171)
Total	12.6% (65)	43.2% (223)	24.8% (128)	19.4% (100)	100% (516)

Statistical Significance (<1%): $\chi^2(3)=35.8049$; Pr=0.000

Table 4: Legislators' Past Executive Branch Experience by Level of Office, 1999–2009

	1. Executive Office*				2. Bureaucratic Office**			
	Federal	Provincial	Municipal	Total	Federal	Provincial	Municipal	Total
Men	14.1% (25)	49.2% (87)	36.7% (65)	100% (177)	38.7% (24)	53.2% (33)	8.1% (5)	100% (62)
Women	19.6% (9)	34.8% (16)	45.6% (21)	100% (46)	21.5% (14)	67.7% (44)	10.8% (7)	100% (65)
Total	15.2% (34)	46.2% (103)	38.6% (86)	100% (223)	29.9% (38)	60.6% (77)	9.5% (12)	100% (127)

*Statistical significance(no): $\text{Chi}^2(2):3.096$; Pr=0.213

** Statistical significance(no): $\text{Chi}^2(2):4.468$; Pr=0.107

Table 5: Legislators' Previous Access to Clientelism, 1999–2009

	None	Federal	Provincial	Municipal	Total
Men	50.8% (156)	3.6% (11)	23.6% (72)	22.1% (68)	100% (307)
Women	77.1% (111)	2.8% (4)	6.2% (9)	13.9% (20)	100% (144)
Total	59.2% (267)	3.3% (15)	18% (81)	19.5% (88)	100% (451)

Statistical Significance (<1%): $\chi^2(3)=31.1964$; Pr=0.000

Table 6: Legislators' Overall Experience, 1999–2009

	None	Low	Medium	High	Total
Men	3.1% (12)	9.5% (37)	37.8% (147)	49.6% (193)	100% (389)
Women	4.5% (9)	9.5% (19)	56.8% (113)	29.2% (58)	100% (199)
Total	3.6% (21)	9.5% (56)	44.2% (260)	42.7% (251)	100% (588)

Statistical Significance (<1%): $\chi^2(3)=24.4258$; Pr=0.000