

Female Officeholders and Women's Political Engagement: The Role of Parties

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February 24, 2019

Abstract

The ability of women in office to inspire other women to enter politics can be an important process in undoing longstanding gender gaps in political representation. Previous research on this potential role model effect of female officeholders finds mixed results in terms of female candidacies across a wide range of contexts. Explanations for these mixed findings include that positive effects are conditional on the nature of women's incorporation in a given context, and also suggest female incumbents can lower the perceived need/utility of more women running. I take a wider view and test for role model effects across different levels of the candidate emergence process. In doing so, I put a spotlight on a potentially pivotal variable: the role of parties and their candidate selection processes in moderating role model effects. Through a case study of Mexico, I find evidence of engagement effects among women in the mass public as well as women seeking party nominations, but no evidence for role model effects at the candidate-level (either within or across districts) in congressional elections. Using data on the candidate nomination processes of the PAN, I find evidence that party decisions in candidate selection methods attenuate possible role model effects.

Can female officeholders inspire other women to enter politics? The potential for women in office to serve as a catalyst for the political engagement of other women is important considering the gender gap in political representation that characterizes politics across the world. Previous research on this process, commonly referred to as a role model effect, finds mixed results across a diverse set of contexts. This paper makes two contributions. First, I propose that researchers take into account the larger candidate emergence process when testing for role model effects, rather than focusing on the final stage of candidacies. Second, I argue that political parties, especially in their choices over candidate selection methods, can exert considerable influence in the gender composition of candidates and thus influence the potential for observing role model effects at the candidate level.

This paper is organized into two parts, first I provide a rationale for taking a larger view of candidate emergence when testing for role model effects. Using the case of Mexican legislative elections, I find no evidence for role model effects at the level of candidacies, but I do find evidence for role model effects from female officeholders at earlier stages of the candidate emergence process (among the mass public and aspirants for parties' nominations). In the second part of the paper, I develop a theoretical justification for how the gendered consequences of candidate selection methods interact with parties' strategic considerations about which methods to use, resulting in party influence that can attenuate any role model effects. Again, using data from Mexican parties, I show that parties' choices at this stage can wash out any effects of female officeholders on female aspirants for office. These findings have important implications for future research on role model effects.

Women's Representation and Role Model Effects

A key dimension of political representation is the extent to which a governing body resembles or mirrors the citizens it is tasked with representing (Pitkin 1967). This concept of descriptive representation is particularly important for legislative institutions, which serve as the primary representative body of government. Yet, a widespread feature of legislatures across the world is the under-representation of women in office. These deficits in descriptive representation are argued to have significant implications for the substantive representation of women (Phillips 1995, Mansbridge 1999). Moreover, unequal representation in deliberative bodies along gender lines is associated with diminished legitimacy for the institution (Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005) as well as for its policy decisions (Clayton et al. 2019).

Given the importance of descriptive representation for a political system, researchers have focused on the factors that impede (or improve) the numerical representation of women in government. Research in the U.S. and U.K. contexts finds that women fair as well as men in comparable elections (Norris et al. 1992, Seltzer et al. 1997). However, a negative bias for female candidates among voters has been found in other contexts (Schwindt-Bayer et al. 2010, Langston and Aparicio 2011), especially in systems with electoral rules that facilitate such biases in voting behavior (Batista Pereira 2015). Nevertheless, the disparities in whether men and women run for office are an important contributor to the overall inequalities in descriptive representation across the world. Scholars have thus focused their attention to the question of female candidacy for office, as the lower frequency of women running for office is found to be a driver of women's under-representation among officeholders (Lawless and Fox 2010).

This focus on the disparities in candidacies has been paralleled by developments in the policy-making sphere towards the implementation of gender quotas for parties'

lists of candidates. These quotas are meant to fast-track the process of opening the political sphere to traditionally excluded groups (Tripp and Kang 2008). They do so by correcting for the strongest determinant of whether a member of such groups (in this case women) wins office: whether they run for office. The expansion of women in office that has been brought about by such policies, as well as in non-quota systems, has raised the question of their potential symbolic effects. The concept of symbolic representation refers to the emotional or affective response for constituents from the descriptive characteristics of the representative (Pitkin 1967, 100). A woman winning political office is theorized to influence the political engagement (specifically, the office-seeking behavior) of other women through these symbolic effects as well as other practical means such as influencing candidate recruitment. This has great normative implications as the potential for symbolic effects on women's political attitudes and engagement entails a virtuous cycle of women winning political office in unequal contexts. A sizable body of research has developed around the empirical testing of such symbolic effects from female politicians.

Previous work has identified significant gaps in political ambition and engagement between men and women in their early lives that result in gender gaps in the composition of those who run for office (Dolan et al. 2007, Fox and Lawless 2014). Therefore, much attention has been placed on the effects of female officeholders on the political engagement of their constituents and especially among adolescents. On this front, studies find a positive link between the presence of female politicians and the political interest of women, including adolescents (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006). There is comparative research in support of the hypothesis that female officeholders influence women's political participation (Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007, Desposato and Norrander 2009). However, there are also mixed or null results (Lawless 2004, Dolan 2006) as well as arguments in favor of conditional effects based on party congruence between politician

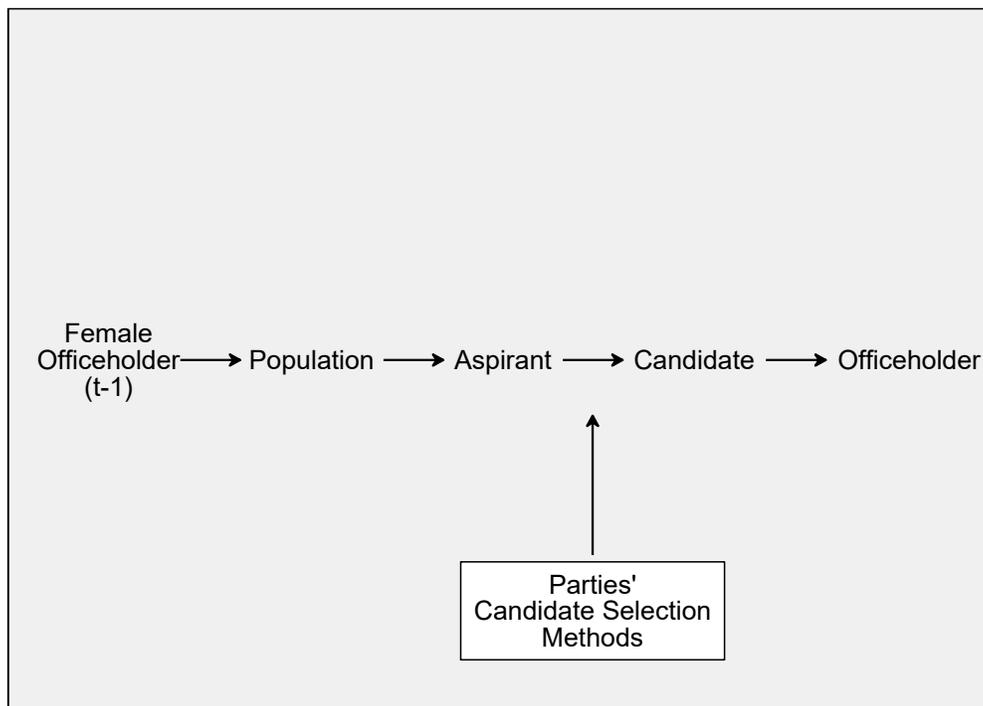
and citizen (Reingold and Harrell 2010) as well as the political competitiveness of seats (Atkeson 2003). Moreover there are questions about the generalizability of these effects for all regions of the world (Liu 2018). Evidence of backlash effects (worsening political engagement from female politicians) is found in contexts where strong quotas may generate negative stigmas for female politicians (Clayton 2015, Kerevel and Atkeson 2017).

The logic of symbolic benefits can apply to the level of office-seeking, a particularly intense form of political engagement. Along with the symbolic mechanism, female officeholders may be in a position to improve the political recruitment of women. Despite the theorized relationship, previous research on the role model effect of female officeholders on other women's decision to run for office finds mixed results. Moreover, these mixed results come from a variety of political contexts. Studies from a unique policy experiment in India that randomized assignment of gender quotas find evidence for persistent positive effects on the likelihood that women stand for and win public office in constituencies with female officeholders (Beaman et al. 2009; Bhavnani 2009). However, in a study of Indian state legislatures, Bhalotra et al. (2018) find that positive effects in subsequent elections are driven by female incumbents and there is in fact a reduction in the entry of new female candidates. In a different context, Broockman (2014) finds no positive effects from women winning nearby state legislative seats on women's political engagement (measured as turnout and running for office). Moreover, any positive effect in the number of women candidates and probability of women winning office in subsequent elections seems driven solely by female incumbents. In a study of Swiss local elections Gilardi (2015) finds that the presence of female officeholders is positively associated with the number of women who subsequently run for office in neighboring districts. This effect is especially strong in the period following women's political enfranchisement and diminishes over time.

Authors have attempted to provide system-level explanations for these mixed results. One potential explanation is that positive effects are conditional on the level of women's incorporation into the political life of a given context. Gilardi's (2015) work grapples directly with this question by suggesting that the symbolic importance of a female officeholder is particularly pronounced at early stages of women's political inclusion and becomes negligible once some sufficient level of political inclusion is achieved. This may explain why no effects are found in the US context. However, the contrasting findings from the same context of India (Beaman et al. 2009; Bhavnani 2009; Bhalotra et al. 2018), where the societal-level political inclusion of women is low, cast doubt on this potential explanation. Another potential explanation is that female incumbents can lower the perceived need/utility of more women running, or perhaps deter female newcomers. As the analysis of the Mexican case will highlight below, this incumbency explanation may also be insufficient.

This paper makes a theoretical contribution to the study of role model effects by placing a spotlight on the role of parties. Previous work that has found no support for role model effects at the level of candidacies fails to account for the many stages of the candidate emergence process. Figure 1 demonstrates the stages of the candidate emergence process and how role model effects from female officeholders are theorized to take hold. At the start, there is a female officeholder who wins office in the previous period. This would result in increases in the political engagement of women in the general population. At the next stage, women activated by the role model effect become more likely to seek the nomination of parties for elected office. Subsequently, parties make selections based on the pool of aspirants (or pre-candidates) for the general election. Between the aspirant and candidate stage, parties exercise a tremendous amount of influence in their ability to shape the composition of nominees for public office. Finally, a greater share of women candidates is expected to lead to more women

Figure 1: Role Model Effects and Candidate Emergence



officeholders.¹

There are three important takeaways from the process illustrated by this figure. First, candidate emergence entails multiple stages, any of which can serve as a bottleneck for female newcomers. Second, this has implications for the ability of researchers to observe role model effects, which begin at an earlier stage of the pipeline and may eventually lead to candidacies. If studies operationalize the presence of role model effects from female officeholders in terms of changes in the composition of candidates, this may ignore changes in political engagement earlier in the process. Third, parties can exercise a substantial amount of influence between the aspirant and candidate stages, particularly in their candidate selection methods, that may serve as a potential

¹As Lawless and Fox (2010) argue, the deficit in women's representation is due in larger part to deficits in the number of women candidates than deficits in electoral performance compared to men. Langston and Aparicio (2011) find similar patterns in the case of Mexican legislative elections, the focus of this paper.

bottleneck for any role model effects.

The process outlined in Figure 1 also underscores the other main contribution of this paper for the empirical study of role model effects. Lawless and Fox (2010) analyzed gender dynamics at different stages of the candidate emergence process to identify the decision to run as the most important factor in women's underrepresentation in the United States. I adapt this framework for testing for and understanding role model effects. I propose future research eschew making conclusions about the strength and nature of role model effects from a test at a single stage (and especially at the final stages of the process as in the previous work on female candidacies cited above). Instead, I argue that researchers should take into account tests of the relationship between female officeholders and women's political engagement throughout the process of candidate emergence. This approach has three advantages. First, it provides a more comprehensive assessment of role model effects in a given political system. A narrow empirical null result at the level of candidacies may lead to the erroneous conclusion that female officeholders do not provide an inspiration for women to enter politics when there is such a relationship at earlier stages. Second, this approach can aide researchers in identifying the factors that may attenuate potential role model effects (as this paper will demonstrate with candidate selection methods and the Mexican case). Finally, a comprehensive approach will encourage the integration of the large body of research on symbolic representation and mass behavior and attitudes (referenced above) with research on political ambition and nomination-seeking.

In the following section, I test for role model effects from female officeholders at different stages of the candidate emergence process in Mexican legislative elections. First, I find no evidence of role model effects at the level of candidacies. However, unlike previous research, I do not conclude that there is no overall effect, but instead examine earlier stages of the candidate emergence process. This leads to my second

set of empirical results. I demonstrate that there is evidence for role model effects at the level of the mass public and (focusing on one of the major parties) at the stage of pre-candidacies (those who are seeking a party's nomination for office).

Observing Role Model Effects in Mexican Legislative Elections

To demonstrate the importance of political parties for role model effects, I focus on the case of Mexico's Chamber of Deputies. This is a particularly useful and critical case for examining role model effects for three reasons. First, strict term limits mean that at each legislative election there are no incumbents running for the same seat. Previous studies examining the causal effect of female officeholders on the future electoral prospects of women in a district have been unable to disentangle the effects of office holding and personal incumbency advantage (Bhavnani, 2009; Broockman, 2014), or indicate the effects are solely driven by incumbency with a negative effect on newcomers (Bhalotra et al. 2018). Since Mexican deputies were constitutionally barred from seeking immediate reelection in the period under study, any observed effect of a woman winning office at time $t-1$ on the likelihood of women running in the district at time t can be attributed solely to female office holding and not personal incumbency advantage. Moreover, term limits also serve to remove an institutional barrier to the proliferation of female candidates and officeholders (Schwindt-Bayer 2005). Without the impediment of an incumbent running for reelection, women inspired to run for office should face one less institutional barrier. Second, over the previous two decades, Mexico has adopted increasingly strict gender quotas for legislative candidacies (Baldez 2004). This creates conditions where it may be in the interest of parties to facilitate role model effects (with engagement beginning in the mass public and extending to the

candidate level). Third, despite the rapid expansion of women’s numerical representation in the federal legislature, they remain significantly underrepresented in local and executive posts. Therefore, there is little evidence that Mexican society has achieved a necessary level of women’s political inclusion such that one would not expect role model effects. For these reasons, Mexico is a case where one should expect to observe role model effects. And to the extent that there are no such observable effects, it is incumbent on researchers to understand why this would not be the case in an otherwise accommodating test of the theory.

I first test for potential role model effects at the level of candidacies in legislative elections. The dependent variable is the share of female candidates in a district.² The main independent variables of interest are an indicator for whether a woman won in the district at election $t-1$ and the share of female winners in neighboring electoral districts at election $t-1$. Districts are neighbors if they share a border. Therefore if a district is bordered by five other districts, I take the the total number of women candidates in those five districts and divide that number by the total number of all candidates in those five districts in the previous election. This second variable is meant to capture any potential spatial effects, which have been the focus of much of the previous work in role model effects on office-seeking behavior (Broockman 2014; Gilardi 2015). Together these variables are meant to test for any role model effects both within and across districts (via spatial diffusion). The data consists largely of electoral returns and candidate lists made available by the National Electoral Institute (INE) of Mexico. I use data from the 2006, 2009, 2012, and 2015 congressional elections since these featured the same single-member electoral district boundaries. Using the candidate lists provided by INE, I coded the gender for each of the 7,482 candidates in

²It should be noted that given Mexico’s mixed electoral system, which distributes votes in the proportional representation (PR) tier based on votes in the single member districts (SMDs), parties and coalitions have an incentive to and do field candidates in every congressional district so as to maximize the number of votes for the larger PR tier districts.

these four elections based on their name. Since there are 300 single member districts, the total number of district races at time t that can be influenced by an election at time $t-1$ is 900.

Table 1: Models of the Percent of Female Candidates in a District (2009-2015)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	% Women	% Women	% Women
% Women (t-1)	0.176 (0.269)	0.109 (0.282)	
% Women among Neighbor Winners (t-1)	7.500 (5.486)	-1.288 (2.677)	1.414 (3.872)
Woman District Winner (t-1)	-1.480 (1.626)	-1.524 (1.641)	-7.892*** (1.811)
PRD and Left	1.221 (1.808)	-0.265 (1.615)	1.990 (2.938)
PRI-PVEM	5.832* (2.663)	0.766 (1.116)	3.043 (2.109)
year=2012		10.12*** (0.532)	9.801*** (1.653)
year=2015		17.65*** (3.328)	18.82*** (1.713)
Constant	30.44** (9.317)	28.07*** (8.166)	30.66*** (1.741)
Observations	900	900	900
R^2	0.052	0.143	0.240

Standard errors in parentheses

For models (1) and (2), Prais-Winsten regression coefficients with panel corrected standard errors in parentheses. For model (3), district dummies are not reported.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

I utilize two widely used estimation methods for time-series cross-sectional data: a district fixed effects model, and Beck and Katz's (1995) OLS with panel-corrected standard errors. I also control for the partisan affiliation of the district winner at the

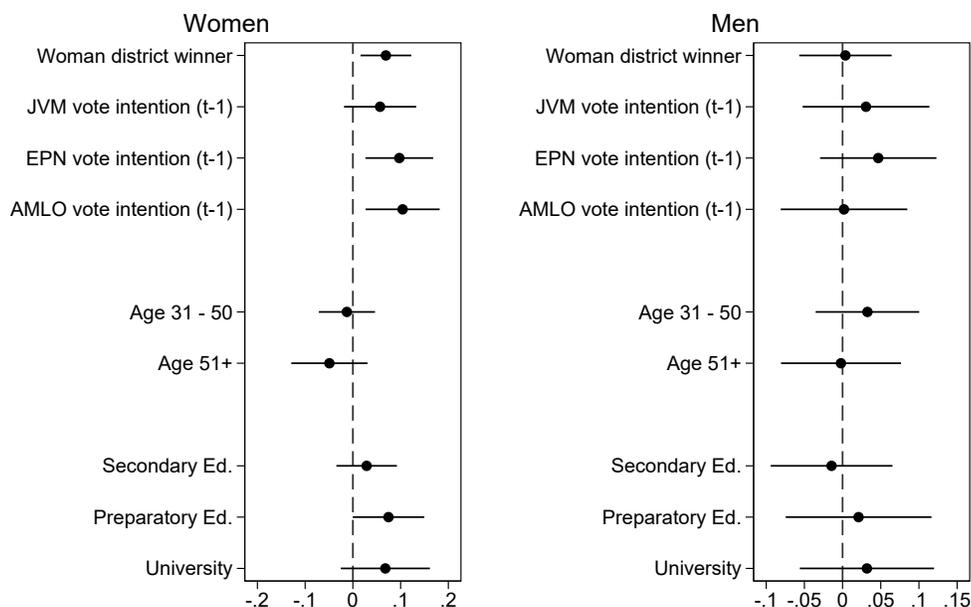
previous election (PAN as the reference category) and election year dummies. These election year dummies are particularly important in controlling for the effect of gender quotas that were strengthened between each election. Table 1 reports the results of these different models. In no case is there a significant positive effect from a female officeholder on the percent of candidates who are women in the next election. In the fixed effects model, the coefficient for having a woman win in the previous election is in fact negative and statistically significant, but the statistical significance does not appear robust across models. The sign on the coefficient for the spatial role model effect also flips across models. It is clear from these results that there is at least no statistically positive effect from female officeholders (either within districts or from neighboring districts) on the share of female candidates in a district.³

While I do not observe a role model effect at the level of candidacies, this does not mean there is no effect from female officeholders operating at other stages of the candidate emergence process. I now test for role model effects at the level of the mass public. To do so, I use survey data from the 2012 Mexico Panel Study which surveyed respondents prior to and after the 2012 federal elections.⁴ The dependent variable of interest here is post-election interest in politics as measured from a survey item asking “How much interest do you have in politics: a lot, some, a little, or none?” Responses are coded to range from 0 (none) to 1 (a lot). The main independent variable is an indicator for whether a woman won in the district in the 2012 legislative elections. The panel structure of the data allows me to control for pre-election interest in politics as well as a series of demographic variables as well as the respondent’s pre-election

³Count models with the number of female candidates (rather than the share) as the dependent variable and controlling for the total number of candidates produce similar results.

⁴Senior Project Personnel for the Mexico 2012 Panel Study include (in alphabetical order): Jorge Domínguez, Kenneth Greene, Chappell Lawson, and Alejandro Moreno. Funding for the study was provided by the Centro de Estudios Sociales y de Opinión Pública de la Cámara de Diputados (CE-SOP) and the Secretaría de Gobernación; fieldwork was conducted by DATA OPM, under the direction of Pablo Parás.

Figure 2: Models of Post-Election Political Engagement by Gender



Source: Mexico Panel Study, 2012. Notes: Points represent coefficients for models of post-election political interest. Solid lines indicate 95% confidence interval. Each model controls for lagged political interest (coefficient not plotted).

vote choice (with not voting as the reference category). To examine the gender-specific impact theorized by the role model effects literature, I estimate separate models for men and women.⁵

The results of these models of post-election political engagement presented in Figure 2 demonstrate that there is a positive and statistically significant role model effect.⁶ Having a woman win the legislative district has a positive effect on the self-reported political interest of Mexican women, controlling for pre-election political interest, demographic variables, and pre-election political preferences. There is no such effect in the model of post-election political engagement of Mexican men. This provides evidence that female officeholders do have a positive effect on the political engagement

⁵An alternative strategy would be to pool both men and women together and include an interaction term between gender and the indicator for a woman winning in the district. I opt for sub-setting the data in this way, which is equivalent to a fully interacted model.

⁶Table 3 in the appendix summarizes the estimates and fit statistics for these models.

of women at the earliest stage of the candidate emergence process (political activation among the mass public). Do these role model effects carry on to the next stage of the process, when women seek the nomination of parties for elected office? I address this question in the following section.

Studying the dynamics of candidate emergence at the level of pre-candidacies, when aspirants for office seek the nomination of parties, is made difficult in the comparative context by the tendency of parties to obscure what can be very contentious intra-party contests, prompting scholars to refer to this as ‘the black box’ (Kenny and Verge 2016). In this section, I focus on the aspirants for office of one party, the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), in the lead-up to the 2015 federal elections. From party documents, I collected data about the method of selection and the list of pre-candidates for each of the single member districts.⁷ As with the candidate-level analyses, I coded the number of women and the number of men for each district where the PAN held a primary to select candidates.⁸ These counts for each district serve as the dependent variables for the aspirant-level analyses below. Mirroring the candidate-level analyses, the independent variables of interest are an indicator for whether a woman won in the district at election $t-1$ and the share of female winners in neighboring electoral districts at election $t-1$. To the extent that there are role model effects on the likelihood that a woman seeks a party’s nomination, I expect to find positive effects for these variables. I also control for the electoral value of the district by including an indicator for whether the district is a safe PAN seat. A district is categorized as being a safe PAN seat in 2015 if the party won the seat in the 2006, 2009, and 2012 elections.

I estimate two poisson regression models. One for the count of female pre-candidates in a district and another for the count of male pre-candidates. Table 2 summarizes

⁷Documents from the party’s Electoral Organizing Committee are available at <http://www.pan.org.mx/estrados-electronicos-coe-archivo/>.

⁸I do not have data on districts where the party simply designated a candidate, since there is no self-nomination by pre-candidates in those cases.

Table 2: Poisson Model of Number of Pre-Candidates in a District

	(1)	(2)
	No. of Women	No. Of Men
Woman District Winner 2012	0.489** (0.169)	0.0886 (0.164)
% Women among Neighbor Winners 2012	0.634 (0.348)	0.252 (0.300)
Safe PAN District	0.560* (0.280)	0.471* (0.215)
Constant	-0.740*** (0.161)	0.230 (0.131)
Observations	224	142
Pseudo R^2	0.023	0.012

Standard errors in parentheses

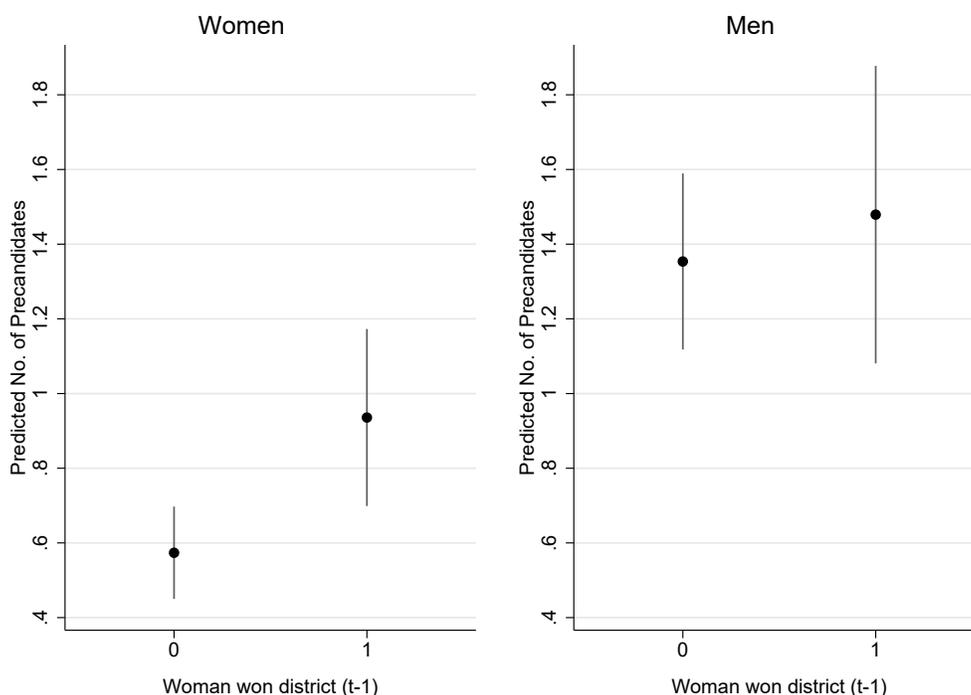
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

the results of these models.⁹ The first column demonstrates that there is evidence for role model effects at the level of aspirants for office. Having a woman win the district in the previous election as well as an increase in the share of women who won in neighboring districts leads to a higher count in the number of female pre-candidates. This association is statistically significant for the former and marginally so for the latter. As expected, there is no such effect for the number of male pre-candidates. Safe districts draw a higher number of aspirants for office among both genders.

To provide an interpretation of the substantive significance of these effects, Figure 3 plots the predicted number of pre-candidates as a function of whether a woman won the district previously. There are two takeaways from this graph. First, the role model effect among women is substantively meaningful. A district where a woman won previously has an expected pre-candidate count of .94 compared to a predicted

⁹The reason the two models have a differing number of observations is because the PAN reserved some primaries for only female pre-candidates in 2015. The results here are robust to including an indicator for this reserved primary system in the model for the number of female pre-candidates.

Figure 3: Role Model Effects on Aspirants for PAN Nomination



count of .57 for a district with a male winner in the last election.¹⁰ For reference, the average number of women pre-candidates in a district is around .7. Second, the figure demonstrates a persistent gap in political ambition between men and women, even when considering the role model effect. This is in line with previous work showing that gaps in women’s descriptive representation begin with gaps in ambition for seeking office (Lawless and Fox 2010). This also underscores the importance of role model effects for chipping away at this gap in political ambition.

The preceding series of empirical results demonstrate that null findings at the candidate level do not preclude overall role model effects in a political system. Using the case of Mexico, I demonstrated that role model effects are observable at earlier stages of the candidate emergence process (in the mass public, and among aspirants for party

¹⁰Holding the share of neighboring women winners ($t-1$) at its mean value and the safe PAN indicator at its mode of zero.

nominations). As Figure 1 at the start of the paper illustrates, I argue that political parties, in their influence over the candidate selection process, play an important role in whether role model effects are observable at the final and crucial stages of the candidate emergence process (when citizens stand for public office in a general election). In the second part of this paper, I draw on the literature on parties and develop an explanation for why candidate selection methods play an important role in obscuring the presence of role model effects in Mexican legislative elections. Using data on the PAN's 2015 selection methods, I find support for this explanation.

Candidate Selection Methods

To develop an explanation for the mixed results in the behavioral literature on role model effects, I draw on the institutional research on the effects of political parties on women's descriptive representation. Scholars have looked to a variety of party characteristics that can directly influence the gender composition of their candidacies (Caul 1999; Kunovich and Paxton 2005), such as party ideology (Funk et al. 2017), candidate quota adoption (Caul 2001), candidate recruitment (Sanbonmatsu 2002), and the bureaucratization of candidate selection (Bjarnegård and Zetterberg 2016). I focus here on candidate selection methods, since they are the most visible means by which parties exert influence in the composition of nominees for office. As Kenny and Verge (2016) note, candidate selection is central to the question of how political parties facilitate or block women's access to political office.

Research in this area has demonstrated that there are gendered consequences from parties' candidate selection procedures. In Latin America, Hinojosa (2012) shows that certain selection methods are better suited for producing women candidates than others. Specifically, selection methods that are exclusive and centralized by the party

leadership are more likely to produce female nominees than inclusive and decentralized selection methods. In practice, an exclusive-centralized method often takes the form of a central party committee designating candidacies nationally. An inclusive-decentralized method often entails a primary held at the level of the electoral unit for the general election. The reason for the gendered outcomes of these methods, Hinojosa argues (44-52), is that exclusive and centralized methods avoid the problem of self-nomination and neutralize power monopolies. Traditional power monopolies tend to favor political insiders and therefore exclude many women. The problem of self-nomination refers to the underlying gap in the likelihood of seeking elected office between men and women. These obstacles for female aspirants are present in open and decentralized selection methods such as primaries.

Additionally, these selection methods are not decided at random by parties. Leadership must take into account their own desire to select candidates suited for the electoral and political environment of the general election as well as party members' and activists' desire to exercise local influence over candidacies. Previous work has found that the major Mexican parties make strategic choices about their candidate selection methods in response to the electoral environment (Langston 2006; Wuhs 2006, 2008). Research on the PAN, the party on which the aspirant-level analyses focused, finds that the party's membership has traditionally favored decentralized primaries with voting open only to party members and activists. This has resulted in patterns where the party tends to favor using closed primaries in its strongest areas with the greatest concentration of members and activists (Bruhn and Wuhs 2016). A similar pattern holds for the PRD, the main leftist party up until the 2015 elections. The PRI has also favored more decentralized methods, such as state-level conventions or allowing governors to choose candidates, in more competitive areas (Langston 2006).

Crucial for this paper's focus on the role of parties in facilitating or attenuating the

political engagement effects from female officeholders is how parties' strategic considerations interact with the gendered consequences of selection methods addressed above. If the type of selection methods that parties employ in their strongest districts tends to be more open and decentralized, then these are precisely the types of methods that disfavor the emergence of female candidates. The selection method choices of the party can then greatly reshape of the composition of candidates for office from the original pool of aspirants for the party's nomination.

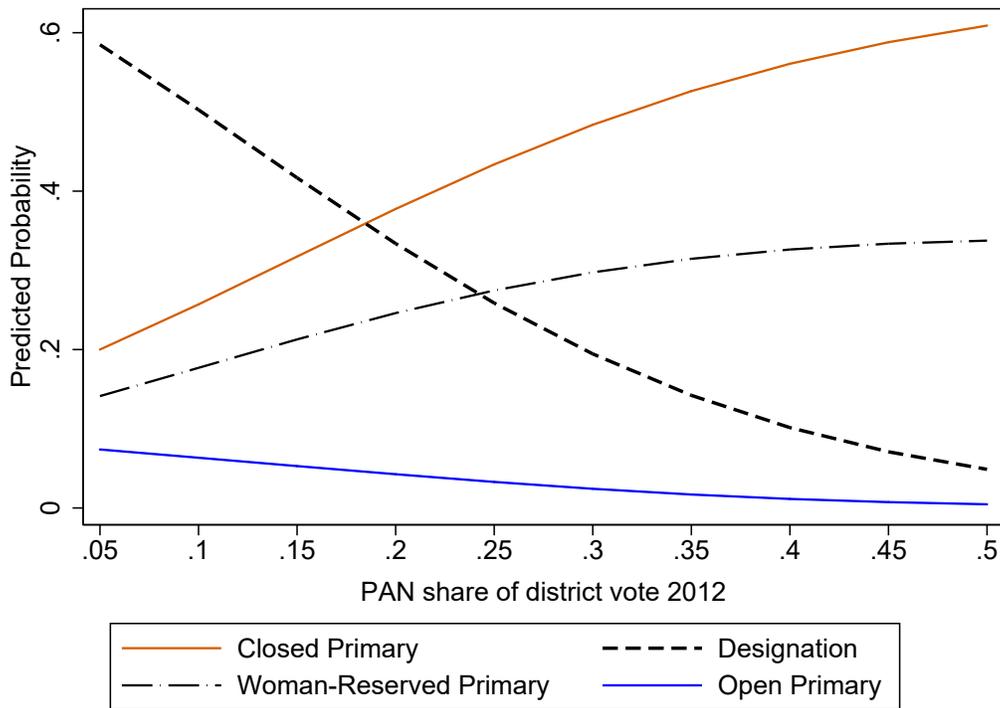
To illustrate this dynamic, I focus on the candidate selection methods of the PAN in 2015. The party used four different methods for selecting candidates across the 300 SMDs: Closed primaries (election by members), designation, closed primaries reserved for female pre-candidates, and open primaries.¹¹ The share of women nominees to come out of each selection method was 18%, 60.5%, 94%, and 50% respectively.¹² This pattern is in line with previous work showing that designation is more conducive for female candidates compared to primaries. Although women seem to perform better than prior research would expect in open primaries, this selection method was only used in 4 districts in 2015, so one should be cautious to conclude that PANista women fare well in open legislative primaries.

Having established that the PAN's candidate selection methods had clear consequences for the likely gender of the nominee, such that traditional (non-reserved) primaries disfavor women and designation favors women, I now show how this maps onto electoral competition resulting in a disruption of role model effects. Figure 4 presents the predicted probabilities from a multinomial logit model of the candidate selection method used by the PAN in 2015, as a function of the party's share of the district

¹¹The breakdown of how frequently each method was used across the 300 single member districts is as follows: Closed primary - 138, designation - 76, woman-reserved primary - 82, open primary - 4.

¹²The reason the share is only 94% percent for primaries reserved for women is that in cases when no pre-candidate emerges in a primary the party simply designates a candidate, which can be man. In both the reserved and non-reserved primaries, there are instances when no pre-candidate emerges in districts where the party is nearly guaranteed to lose.

Figure 4: PAN Electoral Performance in 2012 and Party Selection Method in 2015



vote in the previous election.¹³ This is the sole predictor in the model. This figure shows that in districts where the PAN fared best in 2012, the party is more likely to utilize selection methods that disfavor women (such as closed primaries). Conversely, the party is much more likely to use selection methods that favor women in districts where the party has performed very poorly in the past (such as designation).¹⁴ The relationship between the use of reserved primaries (which was a new method employed in 2015) and previous PAN share is flatter than the associations between closed primaries/designation and PAN vote share. Moreover, as the aspirant-level analyses in the previous section demonstrated, both men and women are much more likely to seek

¹³Table 5 summarizes the estimates for the model used to plot Figure 4.

¹⁴Figure 5 in the appendix plots the distribution of the PAN's electoral performance in 2012 across the single member districts. One should note that given Mexico's multiparty system, parties rarely receive more than 50% of a district's votes. The first-place party in a district typically wins with a plurality considerably below the 50% mark.

out nominations in areas where the party performs well rather than serve as sacrificial lambs. These empirical patterns taken together, the gendered effects of selection methods and the party's preference to utilize methods disfavoring women in its most valuable districts, result in a substantial dampening of any role model effects immediately prior to the candidate stage. While women may have been activated by the inspiration of a female officeholder at earlier stages of the candidate emergence process (as I found above), parties' choices about selection methods serve as a significant bottleneck and wash out any such pattern at the candidate level. Ultimately, these choices by party leadership serve to obfuscate patterns in the political behavior of women in the party's grassroots.

Discussion

This paper has demonstrated that in order to provide a full assessment of the presence of role model effects in a political system, researchers should examine the larger candidate emergence process. Mixed results in tests for role model effects from female officeholders should avoid a narrow focus on the candidate level for two reasons. First, this may lead to the erroneous conclusion that female officeholders do not provide an inspiration for women to enter politics in a given political system. It may simply mean that this effect is not observable at the final stage of candidacies in the pipeline starting from the general population and ending with party nominees for office. Second, a broader examination of the candidate emergence process may help researchers pinpoint where in the different stages of candidate emergence is there no evidence for role model effects. This can help identify reasons for why a role model effect is attenuated in a given context. This point leads to the second contribution of the paper, which is to place a spotlight on parties and how they may facilitate or attenuate role model

effects. As I have argued and shown using the case of Mexico and the PAN, party decisions, especially with respect to candidate selection, can greatly influence the makeup of candidates for office. This has the potential of obscuring any role model effects. Researchers who find null results (or positive results for that matter) should consider the potential influence of parties in creating the conditions for or against role model effects from female officeholders.

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Appendix

Table 3: OLS Models of Post-Election Political Interest

	(1)	(2)
	Women	Men
Political Interest (t-1)	0.275*** (0.0462)	0.252*** (0.0477)
Woman district winner	0.0692* (0.0271)	0.00373 (0.0308)
JVM vote intention (t-1)	0.0570 (0.0385)	0.0307 (0.0422)
EPN vote intention (t-1)	0.0973** (0.0361)	0.0467 (0.0387)
AMLO vote intention (t-1)	0.104** (0.0395)	0.00189 (0.0421)
Age 31 - 50	-0.0126 (0.0300)	0.0325 (0.0345)
Age 51+	-0.0492 (0.0407)	-0.00209 (0.0400)
Secondary Ed.	0.0288 (0.0323)	-0.0144 (0.0406)
Preparatory Ed.	0.0747 (0.0382)	0.0210 (0.0485)
University	0.0680 (0.0475)	0.0319 (0.0447)
Constant	0.196*** (0.0436)	0.288*** (0.0527)
Observations	495	388
R^2	0.138	0.102

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for 2012 Panel Data of Mass Public

	mean	sd	min	max	count
Political Interest	0.43	0.30	0	1	889
Political Interest (t-1)	0.44	0.32	0	1	1281
Woman district winner	0.30	0.46	0	1	1288
JVM vote intention (t-1)	0.21	0.41	0	1	1288
EPN vote intention (t-1)	0.32	0.47	0	1	1288
AMLO vote intention (t-1)	0.22	0.41	0	1	1288
age_group==Age 30 and under	0.33	0.47	0	1	1288
age_group==Age 31 - 50	0.42	0.49	0	1	1288
age_group==Age 51+	0.24	0.43	0	1	1288
edr==None or Primary Ed.	0.32	0.47	0	1	1287
edr==Secondary Ed.	0.31	0.46	0	1	1287
edr==Preparatory Ed.	0.21	0.40	0	1	1287
edr==University	0.16	0.37	0	1	1287
Woman	0.52	0.50	0	1	1288

Table 5: Multinomial Logit of PAN Selection Method in 2012

	method
Designation	
PAN Share 2012	-6.643* (2.798)
Constant	1.107 (0.711)
Woman_Reserved_Primary	
PAN Share 2012	-1.764 (1.287)
Constant	-0.0184 (0.443)
Open_Primary	
PAN Share 2012	3.962* (1.920)
Constant	-4.801*** (1.103)
Observations	300

Standard errors in parentheses

Closed Primary is the reference category.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 5: Distribution of PAN Performance in 2012

