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Understanding the Role of Women as Leaders in Mexican Politics:
Looking Back and Moving Forward

by

Rafael Tovar y López-Portillo

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2016

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Abstract

The constant changes that occur in a globalized world have pushed gender equality to the forefront of many debates in the western world. Nevertheless, cultural values continue to influence the way in which governments, societies, and individuals behave in regard to the roles that men and women play. In Mexico, despite the cultural values that are embedded in society, women have been able to succeed in areas where, until a few decades ago, it would have been unimaginable. During the last forty years, the Mexican government has gone through a gradual transformation that has allowed women to become an active part of the political arena. Nevertheless, the path continues to be arduous, as deep-seated social values and prejudices still influence the thoughts of many individuals.

Few studies have specifically addressed the involvement of women in Mexican history and politics, especially using first-hand accounts. This study aims to fill that gap and help understand the importance of the involvement of women throughout the history of Mexico, and offer a privileged insight to their lives and experiences. To do so, twelve women who have actively participated in Mexican politics through direct appointment, elections, activism, and academia were interviewed. While the sample is small, these twelve women are part of a very small and select group of female political leaders in Mexico, which include former first ladies, ministers of the Supreme Court, senators, congresswomen, ambassadors, members of different presidential cabinets, academicians, and activists.

The common themes that the women interviewed discussed were culture and prejudice, the role of traits in leadership, gender quotas, the role of first ladies, the

importance of political parties, and the possibility of having a female president. None of the leaders identified as politicians first; rather, they saw their family as a primary focus.

This research gives a limited but rich and useful journalistic perspective on the careers of women who have helped shape contemporary Mexico. While the small convenience sample provides a limitation to generalizing the results, the women interviewed are all key leaders in Mexican politics and their experiences can inform the role and impact of women in Mexico.

Keywords: *Mexico, women, gender equality, politics, machismo, culture*



A la memoria de mi abuela, Da. Carmen Romano de López-Portillo,

Primera Dama, en todos los sentidos.

A las mujeres de mi vida; pasadas, presentes y futuras. A aquellas que no conocí

y a aquellas que todavía no conozco.

R.T.L.P.

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A mis padres, bastiones fundamentales de mi vida. Mis dos pilares, mis dos apoyos que han sabido guiarme siempre. Más, no puedo decirles.

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Preface

Since I was a child I have been interested in history, a discipline that has accompanied me throughout my life. As I read the biographies of the Queens of France, Tsarinas of Russia, and Empresses of Austria, I became more and more interested in how and why they governed, sometimes with much more political, military, and social success than men.

As I grew older, I began to realize that, throughout the history of Mexico, not *one* woman had been in power, and those who had gotten close to it had become secondary characters, whose historical importance and social value had been diminished. I then began to ask myself many questions about why women had been ostracized, and reached the conclusion that the main issue was cultural and social values and prejudices. These social predispositions were encouraged, among other things, by the Catholic Church, an institution that has had enormous power and influence throughout Mexico's history, as part of the Spanish inheritance. Nevertheless, as time passed, the influence of the Church—especially in politics—diminished, but certain values remained embedded in society.

As I thought more about the issue of gender equality, I was able to perceive certain differences in how the male and female roles have been played in distinct environments, including my own family. Having not only participated in the history of Mexico, through social, academic, and political presence, my family has also been active in the making of the country since its foundation. Nevertheless, as active as that social and political participation has been, women have had, until recently, a more secondary and hidden role.

Like many of my interests, history became a part of my life due to a familial influence. The relationship that I had with my grandparents allowed me to understand different point of views, opinions and experiences of a bygone era, where women were supposed to stay at home and take care of their family. Even though men in my family studied and had many different professions throughout our history, my mother's generation was the first one where women achieved an academic degree. Both my grandmothers, for example, went to school and had preceptors for certain topics; they had passions and qualities, but they continued to obey the social norm and took care of their families, thus forsaking their own interests.

It was not until 1976, when my grandfather became President of Mexico, that my maternal grandmother began contemplating the possibility of becoming partially involved in politics as First Lady, thus creating an enormous infrastructure that, among other things, helped children and women. Her views on gender equality were very clear. She stated that "the historical moment of the nation has made that the presence of women becomes an economic, social, and authentic necessity" (Romano, 1976). Her privileged position as First Lady, which is not a political one, but in which politics are needed to successfully carry it out, gave her the opportunity to work for the Mexican people, especially for women and children, creating wonderful social and cultural projects that continue to exist today, after almost forty years since my grandfather's presidency ended.

My grandmother's social empathy allowed her to understand the needs of those in less favorable conditions, and she did everything in her power to improve the precarious situation in which many people lived. Culture and education have been a necessity to improve the social problems that afflicted the country. For me, my grandmother became

an example of how a woman is as capable as any man to get involved with the people, to create projects, and support agendas that would improve the well-being of a country.

As a person who was brought up in a liberal family, without the dogmas of any religion, but with the opportunity of receiving an academic education and with the true belief that men and women should have equal rights in the personal and professional areas, I have always been astounded by how much social prejudices and cultural values continue to influence the actions of many. Therefore, I chose to discuss the historical role of women in Mexican politics, to go further and be able to understand how women were able to achieve certain positions of power throughout the history of Mexico when the odds were not in their favor.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background to the Study

Throughout the history of humanity, women have not been considered suitable to carry out certain professions. Even in areas such as the arts and sciences, where they did not necessarily compete with men, women who were once well-known, were silenced and remained in anonymity until the second half of the twentieth century, when some began to reemerge from oblivion. Apart from very few exceptions of women, most had been forgotten. Nevertheless, the memory of some women who were involved in politics throughout history remained in the collective imagination. Such are the cases of Nefertiti, Cleopatra, Joan of Arc, Isabella of Spain, Lucrezia Borgia, Anne Boleyn, Catherine the Great, Marie Antoinette, and Queen Victoria, just to give a few examples. The commonality among these women, however, is that they were all linked to political power through a monarchist system and the thought that sustains it: divine designation. Because of the thought that kings and queens were chosen by God to rule, the people usually accepted them without question, hesitation, or doubt, as monarchy was—in most cases—the only political system known to them.

In the particular case of Mexico, where there has not been a monarchic tradition, women have not had, until very recently, a truly recognized role in politics, where gender equality and the role of women have always been controversial issues. This is largely due to social and cultural prejudices, insecurities, and historical constructs that have shaped the way in which Mexican society has evolved to what it is today, greatly influenced by the values and dogmas of the Catholic Church. Women have been marginalized in many ways and they have not been afforded the opportunities they deserve, especially in male-

dominated areas such as politics. Nevertheless, the role of women has changed in the last few decades and they are now becoming an important part of the political arena, where they are a growing force. Even though they have walked a long path to achieve what they have today, the historical and social struggle of women in Mexico has been very difficult.

There have been many noteworthy female leaders involved in the history of Mexico and even though feminism has vastly been researched, the role of women in Mexican politics continues to be a mostly unexplored topic. There are some women who have participated in key episodes throughout the country's two hundred year history and who have been researched from different angles. Female participation, however, has not been the general rule because politics in Mexico continues to be a male-dominated area. Many women who have contributed to the history of the country continue to be hidden behind the curtain of history waiting for their story to be told and their voice to be heard.

It is impossible to understand the history of Mexico without comprehending the involvement of women, as they have played a major role in shaping the country since Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821, despite attempts to marginalize women and hide their involvement. Through the years, Mexican women have fought for their country in different ways and in different areas, thus gaining a stronger role in the political arena as time passed. That has allowed them to achieve a growing historical and social recognition, and to gain more political power.

Evidently, there is much to be done regarding gender equality in Mexico. A country that has the macho culture strongly embedded will accept only with difficulty that women and men have the same potential and, therefore, should have the same opportunities. As it will be shown in the following paragraphs, women have fought a long

social, cultural, and political battle in order to achieve gender equality. They have proven they can persevere and are immensely capable. Nevertheless, societal changes are essential if a greater number of women want to have the opportunity of advancement. Men will need to be more accepting and understanding of the fact that times have changed, especially now that the number of female heads of governments is rising to the point where the word “leader” is beginning to lose its gender reference (Genovese & Steckenrider, 2013).

In the end, we all shape the context in which we live and must make the best of it, understanding our culture as well as the equality of gender that should exist. We must ask ourselves to what extent has Mexican culture played a role in which women have not been recognized throughout the country’s history and why they have had limited occasions, due to many obstacles to exercise leadership roles.

Women have led countries all over the world, some with greater success than others. Angela Merkel, chancellor of Germany; Michelle Bachelet, president of Chile; Cristina Fernández, president of Argentina; Han Myung-Soon, prime minister of South Korea; even in France and the United States, where Marie Ségolène Royal and Hillary Clinton, respectively, have entered the political scene with great chances of becoming heads of State (Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). It is, perhaps, time that Mexico gives itself the opportunity to be led by a woman in order to achieve historical and cultural reconciliation with its past and to eliminate many social and cultural prejudices.

A president, man or woman, will be successful depending on the moment in which he or she governs. As it has been repeated several times throughout this study, the context has to be understood in order to comprehend the decisions taken by those who

lead. They can easily be judged by the people but, as one president of Mexico said: “I am responsible for the helm, but not for the storm.”

Adding to the body of knowledge in this area is important, especially today when Mexico has passed a political reform that requires, by law, equal participation of men and women in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. This new law clearly opens more doors to the possibility that women will be in charge of more ministries or even the presidency. Not only will they be involved in the development of laws and the creation of projects, they will also be more likely to have social recognition and visibility, and their political abilities will become much more noticeable.

To that extent, this study relies on the extant literature to consider the cultural and historical factors that have shaped the role of women in Mexican politics and provide information about the ways in which they have become more involved in the public arena. This study focuses mainly on two key areas—political and socio-cultural changes. These changes are analyzed from a historical and political point of view, giving enough background so the reader becomes familiar with the most relevant facts of Mexican history that have influenced the issue of gender and politics. This will help develop an understanding of the present role that women play as leaders in the decision-making process and the future of a country. Cultural aspects are further addressed in order to better understand the way in which Mexico functions as a society that continues to make harsh differences in the social roles between men and women. In summary, the study analyzes some issues that cannot be understood without the other: culture, history, and politics. Unfortunately, this is a topic that has not received the importance it deserves. Therefore, this study includes a historical background of the importance of women in

politics, based upon first-hand accounts of women who have actively participated in different professional areas.

Although many books have been written about Mexican culture, society, history, and politics, the role of women has been ignored by researchers until very recently. While socially aware journalists write about the feminicides¹ that occur in certain areas of the country and how that affects Mexico's internal and foreign political stability, more frivolous journalists write about what female politicians wore or their fashion style. Political detractors mostly focus on the limitations of female leaders and society judges them more harshly than men because of their mere appearance. Therefore, it is essential to create a more comprehensive study that will not only analyze the history and the culture of Mexico, but that also includes the points of view of women who have been directly involved in the struggle for gender equality and female recognition.

Culture and History

Because Mexico was a Spanish colony for over three centuries, the European country's social and religious influence was definitive in the way Mexican society was shaped. The male and female roles were well defined according to the precepts of the Catholic Church, and women were supposed to have children, raise them, pray, and stay at home. As the social situation began to change through time, and more employment opportunities became available for women, they began to gain more liberty and were able to work as the world evolved. Therefore, they sought more involvement in the political and social worlds. Nevertheless, in Mexico, as in other countries, they have been marginalized through the years in many ways, mostly in being excluded from male-dominated areas—such as politics—and due to societal norms, stereotypes, gender

¹ The systematic murder of women.

identity, and prejudices (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Efforts to limit female participation, however, was not always successful. There is vast historical documentation that a wide representation of women—with no distinction of social class—fought during the independence movement in 1821, the revolution in the 1910s, and throughout the long path to democracy during the twentieth century and until today (Krauze, 1997; Tuñón, 1987; Velázquez, 2010). Nevertheless, women have been pushed aside as a way of maintaining one of the cultural distinctions that characterizes Mexico: *machismo*, which has been defined as the behavior of males that is expected in certain societies, which is usually regarded as a negative trait of a false understanding of masculinity in cultures that have defined specific roles to men and women (Basham, 1976). In Mexico, machismo has been an everyday concept because of the way social construction has taken place, especially in male-dominated areas, mostly because of prejudices, stereotypes, and gender identity (Eagly & Carly, 2003).

Although women have been ostracized throughout the history of Mexico, and despite machismo, three women occupy very important places in the Mexican collective imagination as symbols of femininity: “La Malinche”, the Virgin of Guadalupe, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. These three women are embedded in the Mexican culture in such a strong manner that *Mexicanidad*² could hardly be understood without them. The many different meanings and attributions that they have in society, and their roles and importance are complex. “La Malinche” often refers to the birth of the nation because of her relationship with Hernán Cortés and because she was the first indigenous woman to give birth to the son of a Spaniard thus mothering the first mestizo. The Virgin of

² Mexicanidad is the quality of being Mexican, especially because of cultural and national heritage.

Guadalupe, who emerged from a Spanish belief, represents motherhood and national unity. It is considered by most people—believers and non-believers—the image that unites all Mexicans. Sor Juana, on the other hand, is the seventeenth century rebellious nun who sacrificed many aspects of her personal life in exchange for knowledge. She wrote some of the most profound and revered texts of Mexican literature and became the female representation of intellect (Tuñón, 1987). The importance of these three women in Mexican culture will be further explained and analyzed, using the texts of historians and intellectuals in order to show what they mean culturally and historically and the way they have influenced the collective thinking of Mexican society. Besides these three women, there is another female icon that is most important for Mexicans: “La Patria,” the motherland. When New Spain was formed after the Spanish conquest, there was a new way of representing the newly formed colony. They left aside the idea of a savage and uncivilized America, an idea that was adopted in Europe after the first expeditions. The newly founded territories started being represented as a land of promise and fortune, with a mestizo woman with European symbols, such as clothing and religious motifs. Since then, “La Patria” has been represented by a woman and, among many other representations, printed on the cover of every textbook published by the government since the 1920s until today, embedding the image in every child. Mexican culture has embedded the images of these symbolic and real women to its core with books, bills, coins, stamps, religious objects and art, but the struggle for gender equality has been a slow and painful process in Mexico’s two hundred year history.

Most women have not been protagonists. There have been, however, several women who have played a leadership role in Mexico since the struggle for independence.

They have had great historical, social, and political influence, yet they continue to be unknown by many. Their journey in a society that would prefer to marginalize them, rather than elevate them to a position of power, demands additional research. This study not only includes first-hand accounts and unpublished material of many female politicians, but it also deepens our understanding of the relationship between leadership, culture, history, politics, and the actions that Mexican women have taken to be successful.

Even though some women have played an important role in politics, they have acted many times behind the scenes and without the proper recognition because of the limitations that society often has imposed. Limitations have been blamed on what has been termed the glass ceiling (Cotter, 2001). The metaphor implies that women at the top of the professional pyramid may be more commonly at a disadvantage because their advancement is obstructed because of prejudices. Others argue that it is women themselves who are responsible for their lack of advancement because they do not seek more powerful roles—not only in Mexico but in other countries, as they believe that their family responsibilities would be compromised (Eagly & Carly, 2004). Nevertheless, there are authors such as Hymowitz and Schellhardt (1986), who believe that a more accurate representation of the limitations that women face today is not a glass ceiling, but a labyrinth, “a complex journey toward a goal [where] routes exist but are full of twists and turns [and] goals are attainable...but is not ultimately discouraging” (p. 64).

James MacGregor-Burns (1978) established that fields as divergent as political science, history, public administration, management, anthropology, biology, military sciences, philosophy, psychology, and sociology have contributed in many ways to a

better understanding of leadership, due to the fact that leaders emerge from different professions. It would be impossible to understand one without the other. The study of leadership would not be possible without the ideas of Plato, Confucius, Machiavelli, and Marx, or without understanding and knowing about Alexander The Great, Julius Caesar, Cleopatra, Jesus Christ, Richard The Lion Hearted, Elizabeth I; and in more contemporary history, individuals like Abraham Lincoln, Mohandas Gandhi, Winston Churchill, Mustafa Kemal, Martin Luther King, Golda Meir, Nelson Mandela, and so many others who, with their example, have made it possible to understand leadership as a field of study. Nevertheless, researchers cannot—and should not—only focus on the lives of these individuals without understanding the particular moment in time in which they were able to distinguish themselves and the context that supported or challenged their leadership success. It is necessary to create a better understanding of history, of the events that took place, of the particular moment in time, and the context in which so many elements—large and small, important and unimportant—had to merge in order to shape their professional life. In regard to this, and according to what MacGregor-Burns says, we have to consider the context—the whole—in order to get an unbiased scenario and to understand the influence of other individuals on the advancement of successful leaders.

Furthermore, there are important lessons historians can learn from the field of leadership studies, especially the way in which culture is conceived by the people. The particular culture of a people would not be possible without understanding history, because it is our common past that makes us who we are as a society, with the interconnection existing between national, ethnic, occupational and organizational culture

(Schein, 2010). It is important that history and culture are analyzed together in order to demystify not only concepts, but also individuals who are seen as demigods or as devils. It is here that leadership, history, and culture become one entity, which is the cause for the creation of an established and whole society. The merging of these fields of study will make it possible to understand in a holistic manner the way in which the role of women has evolved in Mexico.

Even though some authors suggest that gender is very much culturally defined (Tuñón, 2005), Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010) establish that there are various types of cultures—such as regional, ethnic, and religious—within countries, which “transcend the political country borders” and establish that “gender differences are not usually described in terms of cultures” (p. 45). Gender differences, which are usually very well defined, make it difficult to change the gender roles that are embedded in their culture and their traditions (Hofstede et al. 2010).

Researchers of history must be conscientious of how their field of study can change the perception a society has about their culture, because our foundation as a social group is based on the popular beliefs and legends passed from generation to generation. These beliefs will change over time, depending on how a particular historical event affected a specific generation (Hofstede et al. 2010).

Nevertheless, history is a complicated field of study because of two things: if what is being researched is an event that happened a long time ago, access to accurate information is limited. It is impossible to interview people who were related to such an event, or documents are nonexistent; if what we decide to investigate is a recent event, there is the risk of being too passionate about it, and will prove more difficult for

historians to be impartial, because their lives may have been affected by the decisions made by a historical figure. Another limitation to the study of history is how historians tend to focus on “The Great Man Theory.” History cannot be seen as the study of the individual, but rather as a way of understanding the greatest context, which will help comprehend what was really happening in different perspectives. As Schein says, “Social movements or new religions begin with prophets, messiahs, or other kinds of charismatic leaders. Political groups are initiated by leaders who sell new visions and new solutions to problems” (Schein, 2010, p. 219), but if the focus is limited on a perspective reflecting “The Great Man Theory,” the objective will be missed.

History is not made by good and evil, or by winners and losers, but by every spiritual, religious, political and social factions that made a particular context possible, and this becomes a key element in the creation of a particular culture. We must try to understand all the points of view in order to have a more comprehensive perspective of a particular historical moment, and not to fall into categorizing leaders into “good” or “bad,” but into contextualizing history. If we are able to do so, we will have a much better perspective of why we are who we are, instead of glorifying or destroying historical individuals and creating legends, which often leads to false nationalism.

As was established before, one of the purposes of this paper is to give a historical overview of the role that women have played in Mexican politics. The study considers historical decisions—both social and political—which have been made in order to include women in leadership roles in the democratic process. In order to do so, it is important to explain the main episodes of Mexican history and the way the country’s culture has constructed women’s involvement in politics. Short analyses of key moments

are presented in order to truly understand their significance, and the historical background will be roughly divided in the following way: Independence (1821), Forging of a Nation (1822-1876), Porfirismo (1876-1911), Revolution (1910-1920), Modern Mexico (1920-1968), and Mexico after Tlatelolco (1968-1975). Contemporary Mexico (1975-2015) will be explained in more detail and it will include the first-hand accounts of several women who have been politically active since the 1970s.

This dissertation explores the social, historical, and cultural constructs in order to offer a greater understanding on how the role of women in politics has evolved since Mexico's independence in 1821, up until 1975 when women emerged as an organized entity that fought publicly for their rights after the occurrence of social movements that shook the core of the country. The social movements and the efforts exerted by the government of Luis Echeverría—most specifically those of his wife, María Esther Zuno, who fought for gender equality during her husband's administration—gave Mexico the possibility to host the 1975 World Conference of Women, which coincided with the International Women's Year. In that conference, the main issue that was dealt with was the persistent discrimination that women suffered throughout the world in different areas. As a result, the Conference, together with the United Nations General Assembly, proclaimed that 1976-1985 would be the Decade for Women, opening the doors to a new era in the promotion of gender equality through international dialogue.

After reviewing the historical background from 1821 to 1975, this dissertation offers a detailed presentation of the way in which women have been involved in politics from 1976 to 2015. This specific time period was chosen because during the administration of José López-Portillo (1976-1982) there was important progress

regarding gender equality in the political arena. During his administration, the first female governor was elected, having the full support of the president; for the first time a woman became president of the House of Representatives; a female minister was appointed; and a female hero was remembered during the ceremony of the *Grito de Independencia*, Mexican Independence Day, in which the president traditionally names the most important heroes that have fought for the country. Since then, women have become a valued and permanent political asset in many areas. Cultural and social prejudices, however, continue to limit the positions to which they are assigned, mostly in the Presidential Cabinet, but their participation in the democratic process, mainly in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, has been evolving in a positive way. Since then, the role of women in politics has had a continuing evolution and they have been constantly and actively involved in the political arena in positions such as Supreme Court judges, ministers, deputies, and senators achieving a more prominent role in society despite the embedded gender inequality issues that exist in Mexico.

Throughout my research, the presidencies of José López-Portillo (1976-1982), Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988), Carlos Salinas (1988-1994), Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000), Vicente Fox (2000-2006), and Felipe Calderón (2006-2012) are analyzed in the areas pertaining to women in order to offer information on the way women's role in politics increased or decreased, the changes in legislature, personal and democratic appointments, what positions they held, their performance, and their achievements.

This research ends with the presidency of Enrique Peña Nieto and the recently passed reforms regarding terms of political gender equality. These gender quotas require that women have equal participation in both the local and federal House of

Representatives and the Senate and for the first time in Mexican history they have equal opportunities as men. Even if largely hypothetical, this political reform will allow women to have a greater chance of becoming president of Mexico in the next elections of 2018.

The political participation of women has not always been just the president's decision. It has been possible largely because of the gender equality reforms that the electoral institutions and the political parties promoted during the 1990s and since the beginning of the twenty-first century. In 1993, the Federal Code for Electoral and Institutions and Procedures (Cofipe) established that political parties would have to "promote" a larger participation of women, in the terms that they saw fit, for positions of popular election. In the years that followed, gender quotas were established at 70% - 30% and then at 60% - 40%. Because of how vague the Supreme Court was with these rulings, women were postulated only as substitute federal candidates and registered at the end of the proportional lists until the legal abstractions were reformed a few years later. The biggest legal breakthrough for gender equality in politics was the overall political reform that was made in 2014, which established gender equality in the process of electing local and federal legislators. By law, the Mexican congress will have to maintain a balance of 50% men and 50% women after the elections of 2015. This issue, however, may become a risk as it could make people doubt the reason for congressmen or congresswomen being elected, as their role will be purely statistic and not a reflection of their personal and political capabilities.

This study will help understand the way in which women have participated throughout the history of Mexico. Interviews of women who have actively played a role in Mexican politics and who have also participated as social activists and academic

researchers of gender equality and politics, describe their lives and experiences, therefore, certain topics are analyzed in order to have a more complete understanding on how they perceive politics and the participation of women in a country where national culture and social prejudices continues to diminish their participation.

Statement of the Problem

As noted before, women have dealt with many problems when it comes to their involvement in politics. Since the foundation of Mexico as an independent nation in 1821, women have been ostracized in many ways and they have not been allowed to exercise their full potential as decision makers, especially when it comes to politics, largely due to cultural and social prejudices (Eagly & Carly, 2007). The very few women who have participated in political movements—including the independence and the revolution—have seldom been recognized for their invaluable support and the immense role they played in the making of Mexico. Two hundred years later, women continue to be pushed to the side in the political arena.

Because Mexico was a Spanish colony for nearly 300 years, Spain's social and religious influence was definitive in the way Mexican society was shaped. At the beginning of the last century, women began to attend university, work in political organizations, and got involved in social movements that demanded gender equality. Through the second half of the twentieth century up to today, women have gained much more relevance and recognition in the Mexican political arena due to many issues: the media, globalization, gender equality movements, and social awareness. One example is that, as of April 2015, the Mexican Congress will be comprised of 50% men and 50% women due to the ratification of a law that established a gender quota of equal

percentages. Nevertheless, we will have to wait to see the performance of the congresswomen and compare it with past legislations.

Even though women gained terrain in the fight for gender equality—at least in the political arena—during the twentieth century, it was not until the end of the 1970s that they were able to achieve important political positions such as ministries, governorships, and seats in the Senate or in the Chamber of Deputies. Nevertheless, with few exceptions, women have not been appointed in positions that are fundamental for the country's development, such as foreign relations, economy and finances, or the Secretariat of the Interior. The presidency is, evidently and unfortunately, not even in sight for a woman in a male-dominated political arena in spite of the gender quotas that have been approved by Congress.

Nevertheless, women have not had it easy in politics. The problems they have faced are many and are, in most cases, a result of how notions of gender are embedded in the Mexican culture. Historical factors, such as the Spanish influence, religion, machismo, and even prejudices have caused a huge difference between the roles that men and women have been able to take up, especially in politics. Because of the culture that is embedded in Mexican society (history, machismo, objectification, religion), women have been ostracized when it comes to the political arena, which has been male-dominated since the foundation of the country. Even when women have had significant political involvement, they have seldom been recognized for it.

It has taken almost 200 years for women to achieve important political positions and, when they do become leaders, they are often the target of banal jokes and political dismissal. Many of the women who have achieved first level political positions have done

so by family influence or personal relationships, therefore not allowing them to gain such posts purely by personal achievements. Globalization has played an important role in the way women have become political leaders in Mexico due to the constant influence of foreign countries, organizations, and corporations. This has caused leaders—both men and women—to become influenced by the West thus losing their personal convictions and entering political systems that are might not be ideal for determined countries.

There is no doubt that politics is a male-dominated profession, but despite the social and cultural prejudices, some women have achieved political positions throughout the last few decades in Mexico. Some women have achieved important positions through family connections, popular elections, or social movements. Nevertheless, few scholars have researched their historical influence as leaders or how they have influenced politics in Mexico. In a time in which the Mexican Congress has created a 50-50 gender quota, it is necessary to learn from these women who, from different fronts, have had great influence in Mexican history, politics, and culture.

Even though it would be impossible to do a complete and comprehensive study of women in politics, this research attempts to give an historical background focused on the role of women in Mexican politics and to provide the insights of these women who have been actively involved in politics. These women have all agreed to participate in this research. The goal of this study is to comprehend why women have not been able to actively participate in the democratic process until very recently, as well as examine the social stigmatization that they have endured, the cultural prejudices they have been subjected to, and the ways in which these issues have changed throughout the history of Mexico. This will be achieved not only by offering a comprehensive historical

background of Mexican politics and the political participation of women, but by reporting on interview data from a group of women who have been politically active in Mexican politics during the last few decades, whose achievements are of value, especially for those women who will follow after them (Eagly & Carly, 2007).

In order to complement this historical research and to be able to gather as much information as possible on the participation of women in Mexican politics, I included the perspectives of a group of female leaders who have participated actively in different areas of politics and agreed to be interviewed for the purpose of giving testimony about their role in the fight for gender equality in Mexico's political arena. The examination of both historical and personal perspectives is useful in that it allows for an examination of documents, academic articles, and firsthand accounts that provide greater clarity of Mexican women's social and political participation.

By interviewing women who have participated in politics through presidential appointments, elections, or social movements and academia, this research is able to include contrasting points of view from women who have worked in different areas and that belong to opposing political parties. Their knowledge and experiences are recorded and analyzed in order to see if there are any similarities in their backgrounds, ideologies, characteristics, opinions, and perceptions and to see the way in which their participation has helped democratic consolidation.

The interviews address several relevant issues that are divided into three areas: personal life, political life, and socio-political thoughts. In the area dealing with their personal life, the participants answered questions about their background, their family, and the opportunities they had or did not have to receive an education, as well as the

personal sacrifices they had to make in order to have a successful political career. In the area pertaining to their political life, the women described how they became interested in politics, the kind of support they received throughout their careers, the political agendas they supported, and the way they feel they helped gender equality. Their personal accounts make clear the social and political influence they have had, as well as their failures and achievements. When they address their socio-political ideologies, they not only discuss the moments and people that they consider have been relevant to their path toward involvement in Mexican politics, but also their thoughts on political issues such as the role of the First Ladies, gender quotas, legislation, and the possibility of having a female president in the near future. By investigating the political, social, cultural, and historical issues and their interactions in the interviews, it is possible to see how the personal backgrounds of these women have influenced their ideologies and have shaped their successful political careers. By comparing all of the results across the accounts offered by these women, one can see the commonalities and differences among them and observe how their individual backgrounds and perspectives have influenced their thinking and their actions. This study does not over-rely on individual but recognizes that the social, political and historical context is also important to achieve success or experience failure. To this extent, a leader—man or woman—will have to rely on external factors to influence, positively or negatively, depending on gender, generation, and class (Hofstede et al. 2010).

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Leadership Research and History

There are lessons historians can learn from the field of leadership studies, especially the way in which culture is conceived. The particular culture of a people would not be possible without history, because it is our common past that makes us who we are as a society, with the interconnection existing between national, ethnic, occupational and organizational culture (Schein, 2010). We must also become aware of the creation of culture in our own experience in order to “demystify the concept of culture... to perceive how something comes to be shared and taken for granted, and to observe this particularly in the groups that we enter and belong to” (Schein, 2010, p. 197). It is important that history and culture are analyzed in order to demystify not only concepts, but also individuals who are seen as demigods or as devils. It is here that leadership, history, and culture become one entity, which is the cause for the creation of a whole.

History is not made by good and evil, or by winners and losers, but by every spiritual, religious, political or social faction that made a particular context possible. We must try to understand all points of view in order to have a more comprehensive perspective of a particular historical moment, and not to fall into categorizing leaders into “good” or “bad,” but into contextualizing history. If we are able to do so, we will have a much better perspective of why we are who we are, instead of glorifying or destroying historical individuals and creating legends. Context is necessary and researchers must make this clear in order to be objective. It is necessary to create a better understanding of history, of the events that took place, of the particular moment in time, and the context in

which so many elements—large and small, important and unimportant—had to merge in order to have a determined result

To that idea, Edgar H. Schein states that “By far the most important for cultural beginnings is the impact of founders” (Schein, 2010, p. 219), which I believe to be true, but after a certain period of time history needs to be questioned, because the importance that some historians give to the founder of a country, a religion, a political or social movement is greater than the consideration given to the context. As a society we must continually reflect on our past, because—as Schein stated— “If we cannot agree on what is real, how to determine the truth or falsity of something... society is not possible in the first place” (Schein, 2010, p. 115), but culture would not exist without a group (Schein, 2010, p. 73). “What is a fact, what is information, and what is truth—each depends not only on shared knowledge of formal language but also on context and consensus” (Schein, 2010, p. 123). Given the fact that, in order to make history, we tend to focus on individuals—religious, political, and social leaders— without considering their particular situation and context or the people that were around them— their families, councilors, friends and enemies, the whole purpose of studying history is lost because we do not have a grander perspective of what really occurred. Researchers of history must be conscientious of how their field of study can change the perception a society has about their culture, because our foundation as a social group is based on the popular beliefs and legends passed from generation to generation.

It is not only important to get information to the right place, but to get the right information to the right place, and to give facts—as they happened and without biases—to the people, so they can have a better understanding and, with it, an opinion of a

particular historical period. The difficulty of history lies within what we, as individuals and as a society, understand. But in the study of history, where the facts are already exposed and only the interpretation of historians has to be made, we must be diligent in being as pragmatic and impartial as possible— even if that means we are required to put aside our individual reality.

Historians should be focused on the context of an individual's life and the moment in which they emerged as leaders, taking into account not only their personal experiences as human beings but also the external factors that affected their life and their decision-making. Unfortunately, history is generally written by those who win, those who later become leaders and who, as such, want to be careful of how the past is shown to the future generations. Information is hidden, facts are destroyed, and numbers and statistics are disguised. To this regard, culture is created by leaders.

In a time of globalization and multicultural daily activity, many countries are losing their individual traits and adopting more international characteristics. Nations are in danger of losing their understanding of their own history, and unless history profits from what the leadership studies field has to offer, it will continue to be written in the same way it has been written until now. It is important, however, that we are able to create that process in order to make the study of history a more fruitful task from which generations to come will benefit; knowing the past, understanding the present, and being able to cope with the future.

Women in Mexican History

As established earlier in this paper, it is very difficult to understand Mexican Culture because of its complexity. It goes far beyond language, music, clothes, folklore,

and popular traditions. It is because of this complexity, resulting from a national inability to recognize the merging of the Spanish and Indian cultures, that certain topics—such as gender equality—have never been fully understood. The fact that women are absent from historical sources of determined periods of the history of Mexico does not mean they were not present in the evolution of the country. Women were pushed aside and have been considered secondary characters in the nation's narrative: mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, and lovers. Their role has been, to a great extent, purely anecdotal and has not been studied with the depth and seriousness the issue deserves. Nevertheless, there have been women who have been a prominent part of Mexican culture for many centuries.

Many books have been written about the role of women and leadership, and how they have struggled through time to achieve positions of power. Nevertheless, there has not been an abundance of research in regard to the role that women have played in Mexican politics or throughout the nation's history. Some of the books that have been published, such as *Women in Contemporary Mexican Politics* (Rodríguez, 2003) or *Women in Mexico: A Past Unveiled* (Tuñón, 2005), deal with issues that affect Mexico today or that have influenced the country in the past, but I have been unable to find a book that deals in a holistic way about important women leaders in Mexican politics. *Sex in Revolution* (Olcott, et al., 2006), deals with a specific period in Mexican history thus putting aside other important historical moments. Many books about Mexican history or Mexican politics, such as *The Metamorphosis of Leadership in a Democratic Mexico* (Camp, 2010), *Politics in Mexico* (Camp, 2014), *Mexico: Biography of Power* (Krauze, 2012), or *Nueva Historia General de México* (El Colegio de México, 2010), barely deal with the issue of gender.

What I propose to do is include, not only a historical background, but an analysis of the possible reasons that have ostracized women in the political arena. By giving a historical background, together with an analysis of Mexican culture, and the material gathered from the interviews, it will be possible to have a better understanding of the role that women play today in Mexican politics. They should be recognized as the important leaders that they are, thus allowing them to perform freely, positively, and successfully in today's Mexico.

As historian Julia Tuñón Pablos (1987) says, "A glance at the bibliography on women in Mexico points to the overwhelming significance of three historical figures: La Malinche, the Virgin of Guadalupe, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz" (Tuñón, 1987, p. xv). These three historical figures are of great relevance and *Mexicanidad* could not be understood without them because of how they are embedded in the culture.

La Malinche is a complex character who is often seen as treacherous because of her relationship with Hernán Cortés, conqueror of the city of Mexico-Tenochtitlán in 1521. She is considered a traitor because, even though she was an Indian, she attains the status of a Spaniard because of her relationship with Cortés. La Malinche embodies sexuality and the merging of two cultures and two races, as a result the first mestizos; the first Mexicans after the conquest. Octavio Paz has analyzed the figure of La Malinche and her role in Mexican culture, and stated:

Her passivity is abject: She does not resist violence, but is an inert heap of bones, blood and dust. Her taint is constitutional and resides, as we said earlier, in her sex. The passivity, open to the outside world, causes her to lose her identity: she is the *Chingada*. She loses her name; she is no one; she disappears into nothingness; she is Nothingness. And yet she is the cruel incarnation of the feminine condition (1985, p. 86).

Conversely, the Virgin of Guadalupe emerges from a Spanish tradition of the thirteenth century brought to New Spain and very much embedded in popular culture, where the Virgin represents motherhood and an image of unity throughout the provinces that later would become Mexico. On the other hand, the Virgin of Guadalupe is the embodiment of Catholic oppression and the emotional and spiritual manipulation of the Church that made easier to placate the Mexican people.

The third woman who has had a great influence in Mexican culture throughout the centuries is Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, a nun who is called the “Tenth Muse,” writer and poet of the most profound and revered texts of Mexican literature, who became the female representation of intellect (Tuñón, 1987). Sor Juana, however, also became the embodiment of female rebellion as she chose to write about carnal feelings and question many issues regarding the social and political system of the 16th century. With these three women representing at the same time sexuality, motherhood, intellect, treachery, oppression, and rebellion, national culture started to form.

Women throughout the Nineteenth Century (1821-1874)

By 1821, when Mexico became independent from Spain, a new social and political order was needed, but society, at its core, remained much the same in regard to the perception of women. Nevertheless, the “Motherland” began to be represented by a woman carrying a flag, incarnating everything that Mexico is. To this day, Mexico continues to be represented by a woman.

During the nineteenth century, however, liberal ideals were put in practice, such as private property and the separation between state and church, and there were some elements of continuity (Tuñón, 1987). The society that emerged from the Constitution of

1857, however, “rendered inadmissible any female participation outside the ‘holy zone’: the bedroom, the kitchen, the household chores, Mass, the confessional” (Olcott, 2006, p. 2). Nevertheless, some women had refused to stay inside the “Holy Zone” since much earlier. It was in this period of the nineteenth century that women of great political importance emerged, such as Josefa Ortíz de Domínguez (1773-1829), María Ignacia “La Guera” Rodríguez (1778-1850), Leona Vicario (1789-1842), or the *soldaderas*—women who fought alongside the men during the Revolution.

Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez was an insurgent who supported independence from Spain, and who is considered one of the heroes of that movement. Nevertheless, it was not until 1980 that she was publicly recognized in the ceremony that commemorates the Independence. “La Guera” Rodríguez was also a supporter of independence whose life has not yet been researched in depth due to the lack of information there is about her. Her intimate relationship with Agustín de Iturbide, however, influenced some political decisions that led to the Mexican Independence (Estrada, 2007). Leona Vicario, wife of Andrés Quintana Roo, was able to finance part of the independence movement. She is the only woman in Mexico to have received a state funeral and was named “Sweet Mother of the Fatherland” by a commission created by President Antonio López de Santa Anna.

These women have been less well known than La Malinche, Sor Juana, or the Virgin of Guadalupe, but their role in Mexican history and culture is not less important. Their financial, intellectual, and political strength and support were of great importance for the consolidation of the Independence and the Revolution.

Still, the role of women was confined at home where they maintained peace and order in a private sphere. They became mothers of soldiers who fought, politicians who

ruled, peasants who cultivated the fields, and so on. Women's roles were specific and well defined: "to maintain the place where the warrior could rest from warfare, whether military, industrial or entrepreneurial," (Tuñón, 1987, p. 47) and their values included moral superiority, religiousness and faith.

Women's status, however, changed during the first half of the 19th century in Mexico City. In some cases women could be considered an adult at twenty-one years instead of twenty-five, they were able to adopt children, bear responsibility for their children's education and, most importantly, husbands could not kill an adulterous wife anymore.

Frances "Fanny" Erskine Inglis, Marchioness Calderón de la Barca (1804-1882), a writer who lived in Mexico between 1838 and 1842, wrote extensively about her impressions of Mexican society. She noticed that,

If a Mexican girl is ignorant she rarely shows it. They have generally *de grandes disposiciones* for music and other accomplishments—and the greater possible tact, never by any chance wondering out of their depth or by word or look betraying their ignorance or that they are not well informed in the subject under discussion.

The Mexican women are never graceful, yet they are rarely awkward, and always self-possessed... they have plenty of natural talent, and where it has been thoroughly cultivated, no woman can surpass them (Tuñón, 1987, p. 54).

Some years later after the Marchioness' impressions, when Archduke Maximilian of Habsburg became Emperor of Mexico (1864-1867), one of the ladies-in-waiting of Empress Carlota, named Paula Kolonitz, wrote:

I never saw Mexican ladies with a book in their hands, unless it was a prayer book, nor did I ever see them occupied in any work. If they write, their handwriting shows clearly that they are unaccustomed to doing so; their ignorance is complete and they have no idea what history and geography are. For them, Europe is Spain, from whence their origin comes; Rome, where the Pope rules; and Paris, from whence their dresses arrive (Tuñón, 1987, p. 53).

Kolonitz was referring to women who were members of the ruling class, who could afford to import dresses from France and mingle in the imperial court. It shows urban and “sophisticated” women maintained the role of a delicate host, a good wife, and a nurturing mother. On the other hand, women of the popular classes worked as maids, seamstresses, nurses, or in the fields. In 1870, only three years after the empire collapsed, the Civil Code for Mexico City was modified and women could be legally separated from their husbands, and their property would—in such case—return to the woman.

Women during the Porfiriato (1874-1911)

During the Porfiriato—the period in which Porfirio Díaz ruled Mexico from 1876 to 1911, except for a short interval between 1880 and 1884—Mexico was able to reach a peaceful period in which international presence and national growth were continuous. Factories were built, railroads connected the whole territory, and the economy became stabilized. During this historical period, Mexican culture changed because the regime’s leaders were called *Los científicos* (The Scientists), since they wanted to distinguish themselves from the clergymen who had dominated the country in the past. The Darwinist principles were applied to social matters, according to the “nature” of people. Women were defined by two main aspects: “their biology and their affective temperament” (Tuñón, 1987, p. 74), so motherhood was exalted and continued to be their main role. Nevertheless, more independent and liberal women yearned for education, political, social, and legal rights, and emancipation from men. These sentiments were published in the first “gender” magazine called *Violetas del Anáhuac*, between 1884 and

1887, and demanded, among other things, women's suffrage and gender equality (Olcott, 2006).

During the Porfiriato, the new system worked under “order and progress” of which many women benefited. Women of the more popular classes began working in factories, while middle-class women began showing more interest in education and other areas. According to Tuñón (1987), in 1885, more than 180,000 women (26.5% of the economically active population) worked and by 1900, the number increased to 211,000. During those years, many schools opened doors only for women—such as the *Escuela Normal de Señoritas* and the *Escuela de Artes y Oficios*—and between 1886 and 1889 the first woman dentist, surgeon, and lawyer graduated (Vidales, 1980, p. 246). Even if women were entering the working force, the salaries were not equal to men, and varied by region.

Feminists strongly opposed the regime of Porfirio Díaz and discussed alternatives for the dictatorship, but with no hearable voice (Olcott, 2006). With the French cultural influence that permeated the upper-class of the Mexican population, women were able to attend the opera and the theatre, and more frivolous aspects of society influenced the role of women. Actresses dressed in provocative attires became a regular occurrence and they intrigued and scandalized the public.

By 1878 girls' primary and secondary schools were regulated and taught “obligations of the women in society and of the mother in her relations with the family and state” as well as home medicine (Tuñón, 1987, p. 79). During these years, many women who would later become teachers were educated, so civics and patriotism were important topics in female education.

With these reforms in female education, women began having more presence and more opportunity of awareness in regard to gender issues. They began participating in social organizations associated with feminist movements, and became aware of the inequality existing between men and women. At the end of the nineteenth century, several publications started to emerge, such as the magazine *La Mujer Mexicana*, edited by Dolores Correa Zapata, Mateana Murguía, and Laura Méndez de Cuenca, with the primary purpose to implement “the physical, intellectual and moral improvement of women, the cultivation of sciences, fine arts and industry, the mutual assistance of the members of said society” (Tuñón, 81), stated by the first woman lawyer, María Sandoval de Zarco. By the turn of the century, the same group of women who founded the magazine formed the Society for the Protection of Women. Another publication called *Vesper*, founded by Juana Belén Gutiérrez, advocated for gender equality, liberalism and equality, and became a strong opponent of the regime of Porfirio Díaz, becoming the first group of women openly participating in politics.

Social injustice and economic inequality became evident at the end of the Porfiriato, and society became more polarized. No depiction of what Mexico was going through at that time is clearer than with some German reporters who were visiting Mexico City wrote,

Women with simple dark shawls and a thick layer of dust on their yellow faces, and ladies in elegant dresses, which they coquettishly lift above their small white feet in white shoes, and who leave behind a layer of strong perfume. Women in impeccable dark frock coats with a flower in the buttonhole, alongside, once again, indigenous women, who, in ragged skirts... walk or, rather, silently drag their feet on the marble floor, while through the holes of their shirts their brown breasts show (Monjarás Ruiz, 1975, p. 38).

Inequality was, obviously, not exclusive to women. Men were exploited in brutal ways and social differences were abysmal. At some point, Emiliano Zapata, one of the most important figures during the Mexican Revolution, allegedly said that the horses of his master, Ignacio de la Torre y Mier, were treated better than the peasants of the state of Morelos. This social polarization, together with the sixth consecutive reelection of Porfirio Díaz in 1910, led to a general unrest that culminated with the president's forced resignation and exile. The Mexican Revolution had begun.

Women in the Revolution (1910-1921)

After Porfirio Díaz's resignation in 1911, Mexico continued to be immersed in a social and political struggle. Francisco I. Madero was elected as president and in 1912 was ousted in a coup d'état led by Victoriano Huerta—one of Mexico's most vilified characters. His regime was short lived because Venustiano Carranza and Francisco "Pancho" Villa were fighting against him in the north of the Mexican territory, while Emiliano Zapata was fighting in the south. A fight among all of them led to more disorder and Carranza considered himself as the legitimate president. In 1917, the Constitution expressing popular and revolutionary ideals was promulgated. Further, the Constitution gave women the same legal status as men, which included the right to manage property and sign contracts. Married women, however, still needed their husband's permission to work and continued to be obligated to take care of domestic issues. These articles were dismissed in the legal reforms of 1928, but women were not allowed to vote or become elected.

When Porfirio Díaz resigned and the revolutionary movement began to form in 1910 women, especially of the popular and middle classes, supported most factions of the

war “and their participation has determined many of the paths that they, as social subjects, have followed since” (Tuñón, 1987, p. 86). Nevertheless, daily life for women became increasingly harder due to the many factors. Abductions and rapes became constant and, as a result, the women who could move did so to the countryside, while the richer families moved abroad, and their properties were usurped or destroyed by the revolutionaries. The presence of women in the Revolution was decisive, and the *adelitas* and *soldaderas* have become mystified images in the collective memory and history of Mexico because they fought dressed as male soldiers and became commanders, thus adding to the country’s folklore. Others followed their husbands in order to cook for them and clean their clothes, as well as other more private duties. At the time of the revolution, women not only worked in traditional supportive tasks such as

nursing, delivering messages and spying, printing flyers and proclamations, sewing uniforms and flags, distributing weapons, and providing meals, laundering, and other personal services, but also in commands of troops, coordinating some major military operations, and participating in some high commands of the armed movements... (Olcott, 2006, p. 4).

Women began to be seen as fighters and many women participated in the armies of Venustiano Carranza, Francisco Villa, Emiliano Zapata, and Álvaro Obregón. Their involvement in the war allowed them to be perceived as less fragile and more autonomous, and many women gave their life in those many years of struggle. Nevertheless, many *soldaderas* were raped, and suffered rejection and victimization to such an extent that the Secretary of Defense called them “the main cause of vice, diseases, crime, and disorder” and ordered them to be expelled from the barracks (Olcott, 2006, p. 8).

As explained in the previous paragraphs, the revolution of 1910 is one of Mexico's most complicated and complex historical episodes because of the constant changes in leadership, the different political fronts that emerged, and the social instability that was caused by it. During that period, men and women fought for equality throughout the country, but genders continued to be very harshly differentiated.

Women in Post-Revolutionary Mexico (1921-1968)

Once the revolutionary fight was coming to an end and the country could begin to redefine its system, the Mexican Feminist Council was formed in 1919 "for the political, economic, or social emancipation of women" (Olcott, 2006, p. 14). It became the milestone for the many other organizations, publications, and movements that emerged in the future. A few months after the creation of the Council, the First National Feminist Congress met in Mexico City, where 110 women claimed the right to vote. It became the beginning of a social fight that did not end until 1953 when women achieved that right.

After the struggle ended in 1920, groups and leagues that fought for women's rights proliferated, but they continued to be repressed and controlled by the government. In 1922, Yucatán became the first state to allow women to vote and several women won popular election positions. Women such as Frida Kahlo, Antonieta Rivas-Mercado, Guadalupe Marin, and Tina Modotti became the symbol of female autonomy through painting, photography, and literature and embodied the female liberation of the first quarter of the twentieth century. In 1926, Guadalupe Zúñiga became the first female judge in the Juvenile Court, and three years later Palma Guillén became the Mexican ambassador to Colombia and Denmark. With them as examples, women all over the country became empowered and thought they could also have a professional career.

During the presidency of Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-1928), the Family Relations Law was amended and gave women more legal equality through the Civil Code, passed in 1884 and was completely anachronistic. In a period known as the Maximato³, the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) was founded in 1929, and the revolutionary ideals were institutionalized and consolidated.⁴ Women gained legal equality, but the road to attaining equality in politics was long. It was a battle that had been won, in part, because of the feminists—many of whom belonged to or were close to the Communist Party (Olcott, 2006).

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When Lázaro Cárdenas became president of Mexico in 1934, many grassroots organizations and unions emerged, helping to consolidate the ideals of the revolution. In 1935, the United Front for Women's Rights was founded, reaching more than 50,000 members of all social classes. The group demanded certain issues directly related to women, extending to indigenous women, such as equal rights in regard to property, education, and work life. After 1937, the Front dealt with more specific issues such as women's right to vote and even though it was independent from the State, it was

³ The Maximato lasted from 1928 to 1934 and former president Calles continued to have power and influenced presidents Emilio Portes Gil, Pascual Ortiz-Rubio, and Abelardo Rodríguez to manage the country.

⁴ This party later became the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (PRM), and later the Partido de la Revolución Institucional (PRI), which governed Mexico until the year 2000, and returned to power in 2012.

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supported by the PNR. During that same year, President Cárdenas openly spoke in favor of women's suffrage and the constitutional amendments were passed by the Congress. Publication of the law was not made until 1953, although an explanation for the delay was never given. The Front literally disappeared and became the "feminine sector," which produced "deputies, senators, high officials, and mayors who received their fraction of power under one condition: gratitude toward the men who had awarded them their public existence" (Olcott, 2006, p. 17). Women continued to be under the yoke of men, who dominated them ideologically and politically.

In 1939, Lázaro Cárdenas named Matilde Rodríguez Cabo head of the Department of Social Welfare for Mexico City, and Esther Chapa, who had fled from the Spanish Civil War, director of the Assistance Committee for Spanish Children (Tuñón, 1987) thus giving women public positions in areas of importance. Even though they had not achieved the legal ability to vote, women were gaining terrain in their struggle and becoming public servants in more recognized areas.

During most of the years of World War II (1938-1945), Manuel Ávila Camacho ruled Mexico (1940-1946) in a conciliatory manner. The Women's Front became the National Women's Bloc and became more clearly aligned with the government, which strengthened the industry and the economy. More women were going to the university and working, although in most cases in the worst-paying jobs. Even though women were becoming more integrated in society,

the mass media and the traditional ideological machinery transmitted an outmoded portrayal of them that was inconsistent with the lives of women who worked and struggled and who had to become competitive and tenacious if they wanted to climb the social ladder (Tuñón, 1987, p. 104).

Even if Mexican culture referred to women as sublime beings in the radio or the movies, they continued to be under the yoke of machismo, exploited in jobs that did not pay fairly and, most importantly, without the possibility to vote or participate in the political life of the country.

Actresses like María Félix adopted what they thought were European attitudes—more sensual, arrogant, and dismissive, thus becoming even more different than flesh-and-blood Mexican women. Félix became a role model of the independent women who dared to wear pants to her husband's funeral, who dared to speak the truth and, mostly, to do whatever she wanted. Frida Kahlo also became a role model for many women who admired her paintings, her open support of communism, and her friendship with Leo Trotsky. Women like María Félix, Frida Kahlo, Tina Modotti, and Lupe Marín helped, in their own and very different ways, to liberate the female gender in many aspects and somewhat influenced the political decisions that were made during the 1940s.

By 1947, during the administration of Miguel Alemán, women were allowed to vote in the municipal elections and in 1953, under president Adolfo Ruíz Cortines, they were finally given suffrage in the presidential elections. The world had changed after World War II and most developed countries had already granted women the right to vote. Their legal standing became stronger, but women continued to be the base of social morality and tradition. As Roderic Ai Camp (2010) explains:

Top Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) officials from that era have explained to me in interviews that effective female suffrage was purposefully delayed because of their belief that women were politically less sophisticated than men, were sympathetic to Catholic teachings, and would be likely to support the National Action Party (PAN) given its important Catholic roots (Camp, 2010, p. 104).

In 1958, when women were able to vote in a presidential election for the first time in history, “only 48 percent of women (compared to 82 percent of men) indicated they had done so” (Camp, 2010, p. 104). This can be a marker of many things: how little women wanted to be involved in politics, ignorance, fear, mere indifference, or a clear reflection that Mexican women continued to have *macho* elements embedded in their culture and everyday life.

Between 1954 and 1968, the economy grew at an accelerated pace. The presidential image was strong, and society was dependent on a stable and father-like State. The middle-class grew immensely, giving women the possibility to work outside of their homes and bring in an income that noticeably helped the activation and later stability of the Mexican economy. During those years women became more focused on experimenting with their liberty, their newly given political importance, and the liberation movements that emerged around the world.

At the same time the Western world was experiencing the beginning of what was known as “feminine liberation.” Contraceptive pills, the hippie movement, the opposition to the war in Vietnam, and the entry of women to the labor force also had a great influence in Mexican society. Even though they were shy and incipient at first, the conquests made by women today are the result of the possibilities that 1968 gave to them.

Women after Tlatelolco (1968-1975)

Very few events have marked the history of Mexico as the *Matanza de Tlatelolco*. Not only did it affect political stability and social safety, but it influenced the way many citizens felt towards the regime of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). It is because of this reason that the events of 1968 cannot be superficially explained. By then,

women had gone through a very important social liberation and their involvement in academia and social movements were giving them even more strength.

Between July and October 1968, several demonstrations occurred in Mexico City. As they became more violent, national stability was at risk. Mexico would host the Olympics that same year and, pressured by the perception of the international community, the government decided to imprison and question several demonstrators—mostly students, teachers, and intellectuals. On October 2, 1968, a large demonstration took place in Mexico City, where people were protesting the government for its repressing actions.

The government had to be exceptionally cautious in handling this matter because Mexico would host the Olympic Games that opened on October 12, 1968. It was the regime's opportunity to present Mexico as a peaceful and prosperous country, and it opened the door to other Latin American countries to the same possibility of hosting such an important event. President Gustavo Díaz-Ordaz (1964-1970), who knew that the matter needed to be handled carefully, trusted the Minister of Internal Affairs, Luis Echeverría, to control it and he did so. The government decided to send tanks and soldiers to guard the Technical National Institute (IPN) and the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), but on October 1, when peace was apparent, the army backed up. On the next day thousands of people gathered at center of Mexico's Federal District at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas, where the Ministry of International Affairs was located. The army was vigilant, especially of the orators who were constantly insulting the government of President Gustavo Díaz-Ordaz, who was becoming increasingly worried as the Olympics were going to be inaugurated ten days later.

What happened on October 2, 1968 was never fully clarified. What is known is that the demonstration, led by teachers and students, confronted the army, which reacted violently, shooting and killing many people. The total number of casualties was never published. The killing caused that certain social factions—including feminist groups—recriminated the government for the repressive actions. The government wanted to know who was behind the student movement, so several demonstrators were imprisoned. Some of them were never seen again. After the *matanza*, some intellectuals—who wanted to become paladins of the movement—began publishing texts against the regime. Among those intellectuals were women who, with the years became important writers and opinion leaders. Some others were invited by the government to serve the country and this caused a rupture among them. For the first time in many decades the government was publicly questioned, knowing that another repressive act could not be afforded. The intellectual world was fractured and those who criticized the government were divided from those who agreed to participate as public servants.

Perhaps for the first time in Mexican post-revolutionary history, the intellectuals were a part of that group of citizens who played such an important role. The Asamblea de Intelectuales y Artistas en Apoyo al Movimiento Estudiantil (AIME) played an important role during the time when the movement was consolidating. Even though the AIME was dissolved on October 3, 1968—one day after the killings of Tlatelolco—because of governmental repression, the members of the assembly oriented the way people should reflect about the issue, contributing to the debate about the relationship between thought, memory, and justice. The voices of Carlos Monsiváis, Juan García Ponce, José Revueltas, Rosario Castellanos, and Nancy Cárdenas questioned how an anti-authoritarian

movement that fought for solidarity and equality, with a huge ethical strength, could be the target of a repression, reaching a crescendo with the killing in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas.

It was a time of complicated decisions for the government and of political inclusion for several members of society who decided to come out of their self-imposed silence and talk about the regime of the PRI, the past, the present, and the future. It was then that several women—mostly academics and intellectuals—became aware that it was the time to fight for gender equality and the aftermath of Tlatelolco gave society the possibility to do so in the following years. Perhaps for the first time in Mexican post-revolutionary history, the intellectuals were a part of that group of citizens who played such an important role that resulted from the killings of many students and soldiers.

The upsurge of female politicians after 1970 may be well explained because women who were born in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s were able to live their lives with the possibility of a well-established work force in which public positions were a viable option, therefore constructing a political career option for women in a time where one out of every ten leading political figures was female (Camp, 2010).

During the presidency of Luis Echeverría (1970-1976), women were well represented for the first time in history. These women were entering their twenties and thus becoming involved in politics as a profession (Camp, 2010). Many of them continued their political careers as undersecretaries and other secondary positions, but, even though they began to be well-represented in certain political areas, women had not yet achieved primary posts. An important achievement for women under the administration of Echeverría was amending Article 4 of the Constitution in 1974,

establishing gender equality. The following year Mexico was designated as host of the First International Women's Conference, which was held by the United Nations.

When the United Nations announced its commitment of working to improve the condition of women and gender equality in 1945, the process continued to be doubted by many. Thirty years had to pass, throughout which the inequality between genders became more noticeable and the United Nations decided to act thus declaring 1975 as the International Year of Women and establishing Mexico City as the place where the First World Conference about Women would be held. The conference established a global plan that would help reach the three main objectives: equality, development, and peace. The United Nations also recognized that "the productive and reproductive functions of women were directly linked to the political, economic, social, cultural, juridical, educational, and religious that limited their advancement" (Chiarotti, 1995). It became the first intergovernmental meeting that had a program entirely dedicated to women.

It was also established that the 1975-1985 decade would become the United Nations Decennial for Women, a project that tried to eradicate every type of discrimination against women, especially after December 1979, when the General Assembly unanimously approved the Convention to Eliminate Every Type of Discrimination against Women. It was after the conference that women began to become truly considered as political leaders in high-ranking posts because the Convention established that women had equal rights in every social sphere, establishing that every woman could decide "freely and responsibly the number of children they have and the interval between their birth, and to have access to information, education, and the means that allow them to exercise these rights" (Chiarotti, 1995).

Additionally, multiple top-level Presidential appointments also reflected a strong female presence. Since then, presidents José López-Portillo, Miguel de la Madrid, Carlos Salinas, Ernesto Zedillo, Vicente Fox, Felipe Calderón, and Enrique Peña, have each—within their political possibilities, personal interests, and historical contexts—made decisions and reforms that have helped create a more equalitarian arena for women who want to participate in politics. During these last administrations, women have become relevant and recognized political actors, and their involvement today has no precedent.

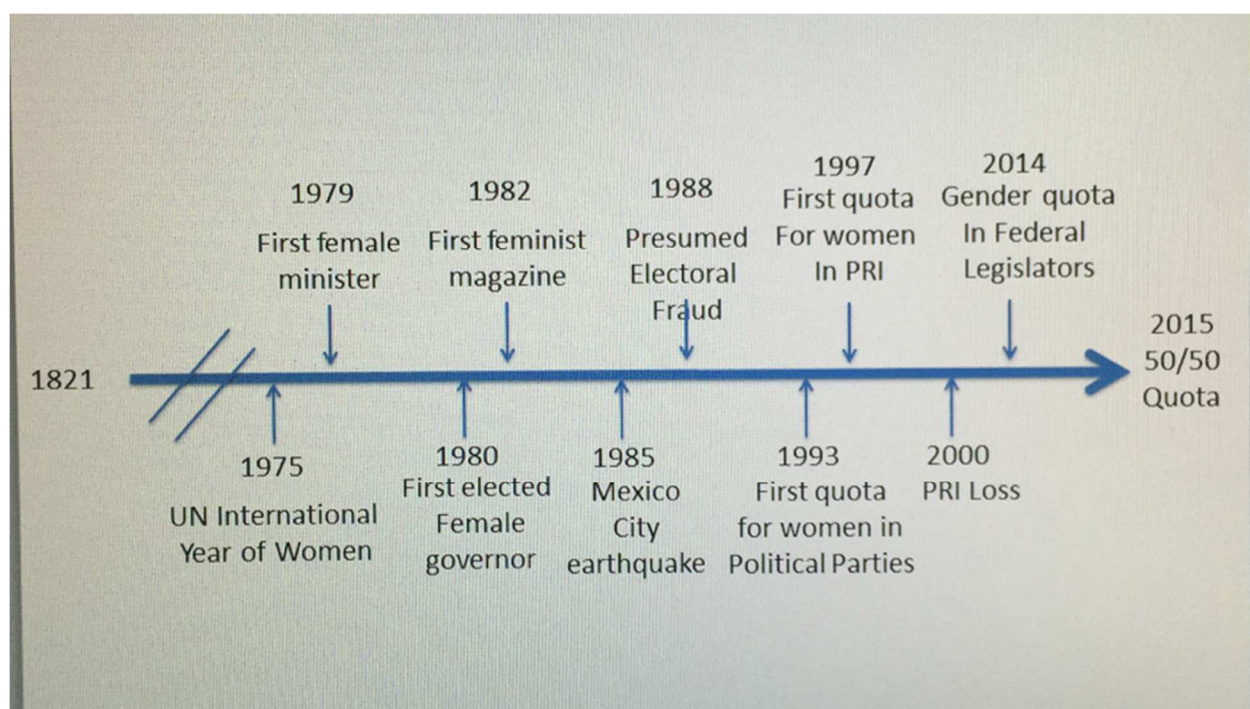


Figure 1: Milestones for Women (1975-2015)

Women during the Presidency of José López-Portillo (1976-1982)

An interesting aspect of the administration of José López-Portillo is that he was the only presidential candidate. The other major party—the PAN—experienced internal

difficulties and their members were not able to choose a viable candidate, while the rest of the parties also chose López-Portillo. Appalled by the idea of competing against himself, López-Portillo continued to campaign throughout the country in a powerful and intense campaign because he wanted to “truly convince the Mexican people that he was the best option... because of the true and honest belief that democracy and the Rule of Law is the best way to govern” (López-Portillo, 1988, p. 407-408). The administration of López-Portillo was marked by economic growth punctuated with the discovery of immense amounts of oil in the Gulf of Mexico, and the country’s GDP was able to grow during three consecutive years at an average rate of 7%. Infrastructure was built all over the country, together with cultural, educational, and social programs allowing women to participate in many areas. Nevertheless, because of the large amounts of money that were circulating, corruption became a big problem in many governmental agencies and on almost every level of the political ladder. The international oil crisis of 1981 became a determining factor for the abrupt cessation of growth.

As Roderic Ai Camp writes in *The Metamorphosis of Leadership in a Democratic Mexico* (2010), there had never been, up until that point in Mexican history, so many women appointed to public positions as during the administration of José López-Portillo.

The author states,

The level of female officeholders reached 12 percent under López-Portillo, the highest percentage ever achieved until Calderón was inaugurated, when women established a new plateau of 15 percent. Viewed differently, of the 206 women who form part of this elite group of politicians, 17 percent of first-time officeholders served during the López-Portillo administration (Camp, 2010, p. 106).

In 1981, Mexico ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women that was proposed in 1979 and women gained important positions in an unprecedented way. For example, Beatriz Paredes was the second woman ever to answer a Presidential State of the Union Address (1979); Griselda Álvarez was the first woman to become a state governor (1979-1985); and Rosa Luz Alegría was the first woman to become a State Secretary and member of the Executive Cabinet (1980-1982). López-Portillo was also the first president to name a woman, Josefa Ortíz de Domínguez, in the ceremony that commemorated the Independence of Mexico on the night of September 15, 1980.

López-Portillo wrote in his memoirs, “as I moved forward in political issues, together with the Party, I supported a female candidate, Griselda Álvarez, the first female governor in the history of Mexico... now, that time has passed, I can be aware that it was a wise choice, not only as a precedent, but because of her own right and work” (López-Portillo, 1988, p. 801). He continued by saying that supporting a female candidate “was not a political experiment, but a democratic achievement” (López-Portillo, 1988, p. 896).

These increases under López-Portillo are attributable to his personal attitude towards women in public office, the importance of the generation of women born between the 1920s and 1940s, as well as to the electoral reforms that increased the presence of opposition party representation in the legislative branches (Camp, 2010). By 1979, during the mid-term congressional elections, the number of seats went from 238 to 400, and the opposition political seats increased from 41 to 104, unintentionally “enhancing leadership diversity on the basis of gender, given the fact that women were better represented in the legislative branch than in the executive branch” (Camp, 2010, p.

107). This was a pattern that continued under the administration of Miguel de la Madrid, who campaigned in 1982 against Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, the first official female presidential candidate, who has been a noteworthy activist and a member of the Committee for Prisoners, Persecuted Persons, Exiles, and Those Disappeared for Political Reasons. Since her son disappeared during the Killings of Tlatelolco in 1968, Ibarra de Piedra has fervently fought for human rights through civil organizations and political movements.

Women during the Presidency of Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988)

The administration of Miguel de la Madrid started with Mexico submerged in an economic crisis promulgated by the internal crisis due to public indebtedness and an external crisis marked by low oil prices. Women continued to work in public positions, but only in elected positions, such as Governor Griselda Álvarez and members of Congress. The president did not name any women to be part of the Executive Cabinet, but some achieved important roles. Such is the case of Guillermina Sánchez Meza, official mayor of foreign relations during the López-Portillo administration, and then the official mayor of the National Executive Committee of the PRI, the first woman to achieve this post in Mexico (Camp, 2010). During the de la Madrid administration the most noteworthy event in which women became politically and socially involved took place after a tragic earthquake struck.

One of the events people remember most about the de la Madrid administration is the earthquake in Mexico City on September 19, 1985, greatly affecting the Mexican people. It pushed the society to reform in a way that had not happened since the killings

of Tlatelolco in 1968. The magnitude of the tragedy cannot be exaggerated. Civil society in Mexico organized and changed after this particular event.

The earthquake, which registered as 8.1 in the Richter scale, struck at 7:17am as millions of people began their daily routine. The exact number of how many people died as a result has never been known. Some say that between 10,000 and 60,000 were killed (Márquez, 2010), while others give a more exact number, stating 10,000 (Noji, 1997) or 20,000 victims (Krauze, 1997). The government issued—for a reason that is not known—a censorship on the files regarding that tragedy that were not opened until many years later.

After the grave situation the earthquake presented, “the government, stunned, and unprepared, reacted slowly and clumsily” (Krauze, 1997, p. 765). President Miguel de la Madrid’s first reaction—one day after the earthquake—was to declare a three-day mourning period in honor of the victims. He did not go to the streets to assess the aftermath of the earthquake and it took him three more days to visit the affected areas and to address the nation at a moment when leadership was most critically needed. The army and the police also failed to take action. Instead, they simply followed orders to guard the affected areas in order to avoid robberies and social disorder. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that “under absolutely no conditions would they accept help, especially from the United States” (Krauze, 1997, p. 766). Help, however, was needed. In the end, the government accepted cooperation from other countries and realized that there was not much to be done without the help on the international community and of civil society.

It has been said that civil society was born on the day of the 1985 earthquake (Cuevas, 2005). The main impact of this tragedy was the way in which civilians “discovered” they were able to plan, organize, act, and make a difference. “Societal discontent rose at the end of 1985 because of the authorities’ inability to react in an effective way after the disaster caused by the earthquake that shook Mexico on September 19, 1985” (Krauze, 1997, p. 752). Civil society began working as such; creating social movements and social conscience.

Civil society was not aware that it would be able to spread solidarity in a moment as such. The personal and material loss, fear of suffering another earthquake, compassion towards those who lost everything, created a multiclass conjunction of many thousands of people that volunteered to help. “In total contrast to the official rigidity, the civilian population—and most especially young people and women—showed courageous strength and resolution” (Krauze 1997, p. 766) and the military protected the streets and helped maintain order. Hundreds of soldiers abandoned their posts after seeing how much help was needed. It was the military, together with the students and other civilians, who helped save more than four thousand people.

Nevertheless, the government was proved wrong as, after this social reaction, civilians began to get organized in an unprecedented manner. Many sectors of society continued to organize in order to fight for their rights. Non-governmental organizations were created, as well as groups and associations of feminists, activists, and politicians fought for women, homosexuals, indigenous populations, the environment, and even animal rights. The political parties began to be discredited (Monsivais, 2005), and

civilians began to follow those leaders who were truly committed to a cause, many of whom were women who fought for gender equality.

Women during the Presidency of Carlos Salinas (1988-1994)

The administration of Carlos Salinas occurred just as women from the 1950s generation emerged as sufficiently prepared to enter high government positions. Because they were well aware of the social movements that surged following the killings of Tlatelolco in 1968, they were more prone to fight for gender equality. As a matter of fact, 56 percent of the voters in the 1988 elections were women (Tuñón, 1987). By 1990, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) established a quota for women congressional candidates, creating a precedent in regard to gender equality in politics. The PRI did the same thing, but not until 1996 during the Zedillo administration (Camp, 2010).

It is important to remember the percentage of Mexicans living in poverty in 1981 had dropped to 46%, but by 1988, however, the percentage of Mexicans living in poverty had risen to 60%, similar to the levels of 1977, and before the oil boom (Tuñón, 1987). Even though the Salinas administration launched the National Solidarity Program (PRONASOL), this proved insufficient and “women suffered from the ‘feminization of poverty,’ as they were the most affected by declining standards of living” (Tuñón, 1987, p. 107).

During these years, the government—which had been more conservative in regard to nationalism—began to be inclined towards neoliberal policies, especially in economic decisions. Salinas was the first president to have studied abroad, as did many members of the Cabinet. This influenced the administration and decision-making during the Salinas administration, which responded to the economic crisis by “slashing government

expenditure, privatizing state-owned companies, liberalizing foreign trade, and promoting exports” (Tuñón, 1987, p. 106). At the beginning of 1994, Canada, the United States, and Mexico launched the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), following the neoliberal policies of Salinas and his administration.

The same year of the signing of NAFTA, an indigenous uprising occurred in Chiapas under the flag of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), demanding better conditions for the indigenous population⁶. In these indigenous groups, many women hold important leadership roles in the rebellious ranks (Tuñón, 1987). Women of the *Zapatista* movement demanded important changes in their communities, such as the right to choose their husbands, limit the number of children they will have, and gain physical security.

During the presidency of Salinas, for the first time, two women were part of the Executive Cabinet: María de los Angeles Moreno as Secretary of Fisheries (1988-1991), who later became a member of Congress until 1994, and then the Secretary General of the Nacional Executive Committee of the PRI. María Elena Vázquez Nava, on the other hand, was appointed by President Salinas as Secretary of National Audit (1988-1994), and helped to elaborate and regulate laws in regard to public expenditure.

As can be seen during the administration of Carlos Salinas, women not only were achieving high-ranking positions in the government, but they began emerging in social armed movements with the *Zapatistas*, thus regaining—almost one hundred years after the revolution—a strength that was thought to be lost.

⁶ By 1990, 10 percent of the total population was indigenous and in 2000 it almost doubled.

The presidency of Salinas ended with an economic crisis that greatly affected the country's international image and the well-being of the general population. In addition to the general discontent of the people because of the Zapatista movements, the country clearly needed a change. It was also clear that no matter if the banks were nationalized—as it happened during the López-Portillo administration—or if they were reprivatized, like Salinas did, crisis in Mexico were a constant that depended on public policies and international factors. What was clear is that the system was exhausted and something needed to be done.

Women during the Presidency of Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000)

Ernesto Zedillo became candidate of the PRI because of a great tragedy: the assassination of Luis Donaldo Colosio in the middle of a campaign act in 1994. Zedillo had been Secretary of Education and then began to manage the presidential campaign of Colosio, but the possibilities of becoming the next President of Mexico were almost nonexistent. His administration began in the middle of a social, economic, and political crisis that—in one way or another—affected the entire population.

Instead of women increasing their political presence during the Zedillo administration, their numbers declined significantly (Camp, 2010). Nevertheless, the Executive Cabinet included four women: Rosario Green as Secretary of Foreign Affairs (1998-2000), Julia Carabias as Secretary of Environment and Fisheries (1994-2000), Norma Samaniego as Secretary of Expenditures and Administrative Development (1994-1995), and Silvia Hernández as Secretary of Tourism (1994-1997). It was the first time in Mexican history that a Cabinet had that many women. Men, however, continued to dominate the political scene in Mexico. On the other side, María de los Ángeles Moreno,

who had been Secretary of Fisheries during the presidency of Carlos Salinas, became the first woman to be elected president of the PRI (1994-1995). Also, during the administration of Ernesto Zedillo, the Women's National Assembly was formed in order to ensure an effective and more equal participation of women in politics. The group also pursued several political reforms that would encourage the consolidation of democracy in Mexico (Tuñón, 1987). A whole generation of women was, for the first time, scaling the steps to power. Their role was fruitful during the presidential elections of the year 2000, when the PRI, which had been in power for more than seventy years, lost. After a long struggle to achieve democracy, a party alternation was occurring and Vicente Fox became President of Mexico from a political party other than the PRI.

Women during the Presidency of Vicente Fox (2000-2006)

The PAN had been the constant opponent of the PRI since its foundation in 1939 by the Mexican Roman Catholics who opposed the regime. During those decades, the PAN was able to contend in many elections represented by women. In 1962, for example, Rosario Alcalá became the first female candidate for state governor in Aguascalientes and, although she did not win, her nomination became an important step in gender equality in Mexican politics because it meant that women were seen, by a few, as politically capable individuals. In 1964 Florentina Villalobos became the first female federal deputy, and three years later, Norma Villareal became the first female municipal president, representing the municipality of San Pedro Garza García in the state of Nuevo León. It was not until 1989, however, that the PAN won a state election. Since then, it has become stronger and won several other state elections.

The increasing representation of women was also linked to the increase of PAN members in presidential administrations. The “first female member of the PAN to reach a top position occurred in López-Portillo’s presidency, and she is the only female from PAN to do so... and only one more new female PAN member was added under Salinas” (Camp, 2010, p. 108). Women who were political leaders from PAN were 13, 26, and 36 percent during the presidencies of Zedillo, Fox, and Calderón, respectively.

Vicente Fox became the first president from a party other than the PRI. His informal style and politics contrasted with that of his predecessors. The fact that the PAN won the presidential elections meant the democratic experiment had worked in Mexico and that political transference was possible. Fox designated four women to become members of the Executive Cabinet: María Teresa Herrera, Secretary of the Agrarian Reform (2000-2003), Leticia Navarro, Secretary of Tourism (2000-2003), and Josefina Vázquez Mota, Secretary of Social Development during the most part of the Fox administration. Vázquez Mota asked for permission during the last year in order to accept the PAN’s nomination to run as a presidential candidate. In her place Ana Teresa Aranda, the fourth woman, took charge of the Secretariat. On the other hand, president Fox appointed Sara Guadalupe Bermudez to become the President of the National Council for Culture and Arts (2000-2006), an organism that directly depends upon the Secretariat of Education, and that is a part of the Extended Cabinet. The National Council is in charge of promoting and protecting the arts, as well as safekeeping Mexico’s museums and monuments.

Even if the triumph of the PAN in 2000 meant a step forward to democracy, some believe that women took a step backwards as a result of the conservative ideas of the

party. Victoria E. Rodríguez (2003) states that “more damaging, perhaps, is the generalized conservative backlash against women that has occurred in conjunction with the Fox/PAN victory in 2000” (Rodríguez, 2003, p. 249). Instead of having helped female involvement in politics, this election reduced the number of women in Congress and the Executive Cabinet did not have an increase in female appointments “and were mostly restricted to the lower-ranking ministries” (Rodríguez, 2003, p. 249). In the 2003 congressional elections, however, the number of female deputies increased significantly due to the implementation of a federal quota legislation. Forty-nine percent of the candidates of the PRI, PAN, and PRD were chosen by direct election. Even though gender quotas only applied to half of them, women won 23 percent in the 2003-2006 Legislature. This improvement ranked Mexico from 55th to 23rd in the percentage of women in the legislative branch worldwide, equaling it to Switzerland (Camp, 2014).

Women during the Presidency of Felipe Calderón (2006-2012)

In 2006, the PAN won the elections for a second consecutive time, and Felipe Calderón became president of Mexico. The elections were questioned, however, because of the alleged irregularities that occurred during the process. Calderón apparently made a deal with Elba Esther Gordillo, leader of the Teacher’s Union, and one of Mexico’s most powerful women at the time. The deal had “perverse consequences... which can last a long time unless the power of the State acts to revert it” (Ornelas, 2012). With the support of the union, the presidential elections of 2006 were supposedly manipulated, as Gordillo influenced the members of the union to vote for Calderón (Ornelas, 2012).

Only ten days after Calderón became president, the government decided to fight against the drug cartels launching what was called the “War against Drugs” on December

11, 2006. Because several drug lords were imprisoned or killed during his administration, some cartels did not have a leader and lost all possible organization. Therefore, internal rivalries emerged and disorganization became noticeable. This resulted in the multiplication of smaller and more disorganized cartels that sought to gain control over the production, mobilization, and marketing of their product which, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime “estimates that global drug trafficking generates \$500 billion in annual sales—a figure greater than the gross domestic product of 90 percent of the world’s states” (Williams, 2012, p. 301). The violence rates have greatly increased, particularly with the breakdown of Mexico’s major cartels (Donnelly & Shirk, 2009). During the first eighteen months of Felipe Calderón’s presidency, more than \$7 billion dollars were spent in the Drug-War (Kellerhals, 2008) and the Mexican government declared that the drug problem needed to be addressed—as it had been done in the past—in a joint strategy with the United States, but Calderón had one objective: “the state must exercise its monopoly of force” (Domínguez & Fernández, 2010, p. 21) so the army went to the streets and “the organizations responded by assassinating public officials, police, military personnel, journalists, and civilians” (Williams, 2012, p. 304).

Because the Mexican government did not release official data on the number of drug-related killings until 2008, the best available estimates to the public and researchers for drug violence in recent years come from news sources that keep an estimate, which to date fluctuates around 65 thousand people killed between 2006 and 2012 and around 17 thousand people in 2013. Even though it is impossible to give an exact number of how much the drug cartels earn every year, some researchers estimate that it ranges between \$13.7 billion to almost \$50 billion dollars (Donnelly & Shirk, 2009). The results of the so

called “War against Drugs” minimized other problems that Mexico had and that continued to be important. Society organized a public demonstration against the government—as it did after Tlatelolco in 1968 and the earthquake of 1985—in order to demand peace. Besides that, at the end of his presidency, activists accused the government that the militarization of the area, ordered by Calderón at the beginning of 2007, aggravated gender violence (Godínez, 2012). This led to a wave of protests and demonstrations signed by many feminists throughout Mexico, who criticized the actions of the government and the lack of response to protect women.

On the other hand, Calderón—sensitive to gender equality and human capacities—named seven women as secretaries during his administration. Never before had an Executive Cabinet been integrated with so many women. They were Patricia Espinosa, Secretary of Foreign Relations (2006-2012); Beatriz Zavala, Secretary of Social Development (2006-2008); Georgina Kessel, Secretary of Energy (2006-2011); Josefina Vázquez Mota, Secretary of Public Education (2006-2009), one of Mexico’s most important and prestigious positions in public life; Rosalinda Vélez, Secretary of Work and Social Prevision (2011-2012); Gloria Guevara, Secretary of Tourism (2010-2012); and Marisela Morales, Attorney General of the Republic (2011-2012). It was the first time in Mexican history that a woman was in charge of the investigation and prosecution of federal crimes. The National Council for Culture and Arts was, once again, led by a woman: Consuelo Sáizar (2009-2012).

The decision that Calderón made to name these women as Secretaries was a very important step for the implementation of gender equality not only because it was the first time in history that an Executive Cabinet had so many female members, but because a

woman was in charge of an organization that involved the direct combat against crime, which was the issue that affected Mexico the most during the administration of Calderón. It was a milestone in the struggle for gender equality. Another important issue in regard to women is that in 2011, “Mexico ranked thirty-second in the world in the percentage of women in both houses” (Camp, 2014, p. 127), demonstrating to the Mexican people and the international community how Mexico was able to create an inclusive political arena in which women played an important role.

Josefina Vázquez Mota, who had been Secretary of Public Education, became the PAN’s first female presidential candidate, with 55% of the preliminary votes. She was the first woman to have a viable and true possibility of becoming President of Mexico. Vázquez, however, was not fully supported by her party and got only 27% of the votes, obtaining a third place.

Women during the Presidency of Enrique Peña (2012-2018)

When Enrique Peña became President of Mexico, the country was living one of the most violent episodes in the country’s history. The people were tired of a constant struggle against drug dealers, which ended many innocent lives. This electoral triumph meant the return of the PRI and the apparent failure of the PAN after twelve years in power.

At the beginning of his administration, Peña did not create a formal and direct strategy to fight the drug cartels, which continued to be Mexico’s most important problem. The president stated in 2012 that without employment and social programs, millions of Mexicans had no other option but to get involved in criminal activities in order to survive (Shoichet, 2013). Peña has promoted a strategy to solve social and

economic problems, which can be considered one of the roots of drug-trafficking because of the inflation and the social vulnerability that a large percentage of Mexicans suffer.

For years the government oversaw many poor communities that were in need of schools, hospitals, and community centers. These impoverished communities are home to thousands of abandoned women who live in precarious conditions and with no real possibilities of improving their lives. President Peña's strategy has helped women to repel domestic violence, and children and teenagers from abandoning school and prevent addictions. This helped create a culture of peace and respect for the law (Shoichet, 2013), but two years have passed since Peña became president and the social instability has reached even graver levels.

If we compare the Executive Cabinet of Peña with that of Calderón, there was a noticeable decline in the number of women (It went from 7 to 3). In the initial cabinet there were only three women, all of whom were appointed in 2012. They were Rosario Robles, Secretary of Social Development; Mercedes Juan, Secretary of Health; and Claudia Ruiz Massieu, Secretary of Tourism. Little can be said about what will happen in regard to women in the next four years of Peña's government or if other women will participate in his government. What can be said, however, is that Mexico is at a crossroads in which anything can happen. The Peña administration, however, has made a breakthrough in gender equality because of the gender quotas that established a 50-50 percentage in the election of local and federal legislators. This means that the Congress will be composed of men and women on a 50-50 basis by 2015. Half of the members of Congress will be women and will be involved in the decision making processes of the

country, but then, many questions arise, one of the most important ones being: Is Mexico politically, socially, and culturally ready to be led by a woman?

Women after Gender Quotas (2015)

As it has been established in the previous paragraphs, Mexico is a country in which gender equality has not truly existed in certain areas due to many historical, social, and cultural aspects. Until recently, women needed the permission of their father or husband to leave the country and if both men were absent, her eldest son was in charge of giving them permission. This has changed over the last few decades and the modification of laws and social rules have allowed women to be freer and, in a somewhat short period of time, gender equality has been achieved in certain areas. However, gender inequality continues to be embedded in Mexican culture and, until not so long ago, certain areas of politics were one of them.

Even if it is not possible to know if Mexican society is ready to be governed by a female president, it is necessary to contemplate what we know in order to have a more comprehensive idea of the important role that women have played in Mexican history and how, little by little, they have been able to participate in the decision making process and start playing stronger leadership roles. It is impossible to assess if there is a correlation in political capacities in regard to gender since women have not traditionally participated as much as men in Mexican politics. The country has had a few female ministers, deputies, and senators, but there has never been a woman president. Therefore, there are no data to answer this question. Nevertheless, Mexican culture has been a very important issue in regard to gender and the way in which women have been pushed aside.

Most authors agree that political leadership in all countries has been dominated by men (Camp, 2014). Mexico is no exception. Nevertheless, women have made an important advance in national politics. Throughout Mexican history, especially since the second half of the twentieth century, many women have served as deputies, senators, and governors. Some have achieved being attorney general and Executive Cabinet members, although it has been sporadically. As Roderic Ai Camp (2014) says, “virtual lock on that domain, especially in the major agencies, although this has begun to change” (Camp, 2014, p. 124). President López-Portillo, during whose administration was appointed the first female secretary, to president Peña, who created a 50-50 gender quota in Congress, they have all had—with the exception of Miguel de la Madrid—female cabinet members and similar levels of representation.

Women have participated more actively in political parties during the first seven decades of the twentieth century due to their militancy. The perfect example is the PAN, which supported women in their candidacies for municipal presidencies and deputies in the 1960s, but did not show the same support when they won the presidential election in 2000. Nevertheless “it remains to be seen whether or not such intense militancy is beneficial to democratic consolidation” (Camp, 2014, p. 125).

As it was explained in previous pages, political parties experimented with a quota system. The PRD did so in 1990 and the PRI followed in 1996. After this implementation, affiliation of women deputies with the PRD increased from 8 to 23 percent and the PAN provided 45 percent of the 116 female members of Congress between 2006 and 2009 (Camp, 2014). Mexico began to improve its ranking in the

percentage of women in the legislative branch worldwide, equaling Switzerland in 2003 and continuing to improve also in the Senate in 2011.

A Look at Mexican Cultural Values

There are a vast number of reasons why culture is important. From an individual point of view, culture is what makes us who we are—both as persons and as members of a community—and which constantly changes throughout our lives according to our particular context. It is the result of all of our life experiences and the sum of everything we have lived. Those experiences shape our personality and our character is influenced, of course, by our personal history, our place of origin, our religion, our social environment, and our personal background, which makes us unique as individuals and impact the way we think, feel, and act.

From the societal point of view, culture is important because it helps to define us as part of a group with which we identify. We all base our identities on many aspects of our own culture. Still, the most important aspect of societal culture is how we react as a society, and how our behavioral, emotional, and cognitive actions change due to it. It is a common belief that women lead in a more democratic and collaborative way which, according to Eagly & Carly (2007), has elements of truth. Nevertheless, this usually depends on the moment and the context, as well as women's models of acting. In a country that has had a male-dominated political arena, the traits of women leaders change and they are constantly questioned—as they are in many other countries.

In order to understand a nation's culture, however, we must first consider the many levels of culture. These are organizational culture, group culture, and national culture, all of which can be modified and changed in order to obtain a common goal as a

society (Hofstede, 2010; Nahavandi, 2014). Leaders can use culture as a positive or negative tool to mobilize a group or an entire society. Therefore, the reshaping of cultural identity not only greatly affects people, but entire countries. In the case of Mexico, reshaping the perception that the general public has of women has taken many years. Throughout the country's history, women have gradually been able to become more involved in politics, academia, and other social institutions.

Models of National Culture

Culture plays an incredibly important role when it comes to leadership. A leader has to be able to understand cultural differences and how they create different perceptions among the people that he is leading. The leaders' own culture will influence the way in which they think and act, giving at times positive and negative results; and even how the society perceives them, depending on how distant they are from the people. Culture also impacts ideals of leadership and what is considered effective leadership (GLOBE studies). On the other hand, culture can be a negative thing if the leader is not able to adjust to the characteristics that the organization is expecting or what they are used to, as was the case of the Mexican government in regard to women and their participation in public life. Some of the attributes that promote effective leadership in one culture can have the exact opposite effect in another setting. If we become aware of how cultural differences can affect the relationship between two countries, two organizations, or two individuals, and we become tolerant of these differences, cultures might come into play and give positive results if there is a permanent and dynamic nature of culture and how it impacts society.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) establish the three possible ways that social organizations are organized hierarchical, collateral, and individual (Hills, 2002). In a hierarchical society the decisions should be made by those in charge and there is a distinct difference between leaders and followers, as is the case of Mexico. A collateral society, such as the Chinese or the German, believes that the best way to be organized and make decisions is as a group. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) addressed issues that become a constant in other studies: the orientation that a culture has toward time, the relationship of people to one another, and the relation to nature and space. The way in which the authors address these three topics is quite specific. In regard to time, they establish that cultures think about time in the past, such as Japan or England; the present, like the United States or Mexico; or the future, like Germany. They either decide to focus on the past, their history, customs, and traditions; believe that the present is everything so there should not be any worry about tomorrow; and those that are more focused on the future thus setting goals and making sacrifices today in order to have a better tomorrow. Hofstede's (2010) view of culture is focused on generations and how they see differently certain historical moments, depending on their involvement and general perception.

On the other hand, the way in which a culture approaches the concept of time is also important because it gives us the possibility to understand the pace that will be taken in reaching a goal, as well as the objectives that the members of a culture want. Nevertheless, it is very important to understand how a culture sees itself, its past, traditions, and customs. Some cultures, however, are more future-oriented and do not particularly look to their past; or more to present, caring only about today. These elements are key to understanding how a culture works.

Communication is also an important aspect needed to understand a culture and to become a leader within that community. Edward Hall (1976) focuses on how communications are the key to understanding culture. He establishes that High Context Cultures rely on environmental cues and context, and that trust is more important than formal processes. The way in which High Context Cultures work is through indirect communication and subtle cues. On the other hand, Low Context Cultures need explicit messages (verbal or written) and they are guided by formal and specific instructions. Triandis (2002) states, in regard to communication that cultures can be either tight or loose. In Tight Cultures, there is a high social expectation, norms are clear and deviation is punishable, while in Loose Cultures norms are loose and some deviation is allowed because individuals can make their own choices. In the case of Mexico, where certain contexts are more important, it has been implied for many years that women would play a more secondary role, as it will be further explained.

Key Elements of Mexican Culture

In regard to culture, it would be necessary to assert that globalization—westernized globalization, that is—has influenced Mexican culture in many ways and, to a certain extent, has influenced the way in which politics and politicians function at present. As time passes and movements in favor of equal rights flourish and prosper, the ways of politics in Mexico also evolves. The influence of westernized countries has modified certain aspects of Mexican politics regarding gender. That is why, throughout the last couple of decades, neoliberal governments have tried to emulate other governments in order to create equality or, at least, the illusion of equality. Nevertheless,

gender equality has become a reality in Mexican politics because of the latest reforms. The perception that the people have in regard to women, however, is another issue.

As it has been established throughout this work, gender equality in Mexico continues to have a long way to go. The machismo, so embedded in the culture, prevents the general population from accepting that men and women should have the same opportunities. Even though women have actively and directly participated in the fight for gender equality, men need to accept that times have changed and that the word “leader” has lost its gender reference, as reported by Genovese and Steckenrider (2013).

We are now at a crossroad, where several countries around the world are governed by women. Some have done so with more success than others, but the cultural importance of gender equality should not be diminished because of the political aspects of an administration or by one’s personal inclinations. It is very probable that the number of female heads of state will increase in the not-so-distant future, and it may even occur in the United States, where Hillary Clinton has a great chance of winning the 2016 elections (Kellerman & Rhode, 2007).

It may be time for Mexico to embrace the historical opportunity of joining those countries led by women, at a time when equality—gender, racial, and sexual—has become such an important and needed issue. It might be the way to gain a much needed reconciliation with the past, both historically and culturally, and accepting the fact that men and women have equal rights and traits to be successful in every professional area. Nevertheless, whoever the president is, the time and context in which that person governs will make the administration successful or unsuccessful. As previously established, we all are responsible for understanding our own context and our own culture, which depends

on our very own personal history (Hofstede et al. 2010). By now, living in a freer country, where same-sex marriage is allowed, where discussion to legalize certain drugs has already reached the Senate, and where gender has reached some amount of equality in some areas, we must question to what extent has our own culture played a role in discriminating—and at many times erasing—women from Mexico's history.

Purpose of the Study/Research Questions

After providing a historical overview of the role women have played in Mexican politics, this exploratory study will focus on the perspectives of women who have been directly involved in politics through direct appointment, elections, social activism, and academia perceive the matter of leadership, gender equality, and gender culture in Mexico, as well as female involvement in politics more generally. Through this study, I examine the factors that help and hinder women in achieving political leadership positions in Mexico and assesses, among other things, whether, from their perspective, if Mexico is ready for a female president.

This study has several purposes: to understand the way in which Mexican women have fought for gender equality throughout the country's history; to understand the social and cultural constructs that have helped or hindered female inclusion and participation in politics; and to analyze the first-hand accounts of women politicians, activists, and academicians who have played a significant role in the struggle for gender equality and their inclusion in the political arena. By doing so, this work will provide a comprehensive way in which to understand how certain cultural issues, political decisions, and personal experiences have influenced the Mexican women in this study.

This research uses historical documents, academic texts, books of history and politics, and articles, as well as unpublished material such as notes and memoirs of key political characters who are now deceased. By having privileged access to this material, the understanding of the role of women in Mexican politics will be more complete, as the research will include new information not previously analyzed.

The purpose of this dissertation is to focus on the way in which the role of women in Mexican politics has changed throughout the country's history. It also wants to analyze their participation and incidence in gender politics. Another issue that will be addressed is the way in which women have achieved political success. By analyzing these issues, I will include the historical background, culture, and social organization of Mexico in order to truly understand the many problems that women have faced and the lack of historical and political recognition that exists towards the female gender. It is important to address this problem in order to understand the way in which women have created a path to important political positions in a country where politics have always been dominated by men. In order to analyze the possibility of having a female president in the near future it is necessary to have the perspectives of certain women how have been active in the Mexican political arena.

The study considers the role that women have played in Mexican politics throughout the country's history, not only providing a historical background of their influence since the times of the Independence (1810-1821), but also analyzing the importance of women in shaping the country.

It will explore the ways in which women began to get involved in politics during the remainder of the nineteenth century, through the twentieth century, and up until

today, and how the importance and influence became more and more noticeable, to the point where, during the presidential elections of 2012, a real possibility of a woman becoming President of Mexico became viable.

As established by the historical background, women have played a limited role in Mexican politics since Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821 up until 1975, when women emerged as an organized entity that fought publicly for their rights after social movements that shook the core of the country occurred. Afterwards, this paper will offer in more detail the way in which women have been involved in politics between 1975 and 2015, using the information that twelve women were willing to share for the purpose of this study.

These dates were determined because 1975 was when the International Year of Women, supported by the United Nations, that was held in Mexico City thus opening new doors to gender equality. One year after that, important political reforms began to be confirmed and women began to gain top positions and influence during the administration of José López-Portillo, whose administration supported the participation of women in politics.

It was important to examine these gender issues in contemporary society as well as historically because, during the presidency of Enrique Peña Nieto, some important reforms in terms of gender equality in politics were passed. The gender quotas, initiated in the end of the 1990s, gave women participation in both the local and federal House of Representatives and the Senate for the first time in Mexican history. That political reform allowed women to have a greater chance to participate in politics.

This study explores the personal, professional, ideological, and cultural aspects of a group of women who were and are still active in Mexico's political life in order to understand—firsthand—the way in which female political, historical, and social participation is perceived by these main actors who have actively participated in it. The study answers the following questions:

- How has the role of women in Mexican politics changed throughout the country's history?
 - What political and socio-cultural factors have influenced, challenged, or supported women's efforts to become leaders in Mexican politics?
 - What are the personal factors that influence a woman to succeed in Mexican politics?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Many authors have addressed the issue of gender equality in leadership and the different theories that deal with women gaining power (Cotter, 2001; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hofstede et al. 2010; Hymowitz and Schellhardt, 1986). Nevertheless, theories such as the glass ceiling and the labyrinth continue to apply to Mexico because of cultural prejudices. Women are, as it will be seen in the following chapters, victimized by the cultural values that are embedded in society, with machismo as the one that affects the professional development of women the most.

The purpose of this study has been to understand how women have gained access to high-level political positions in an environment that has been male-dominated since the foundation of the country. This section includes an overview of the methodology that was used to understand the role of specific women in Mexican politics, and includes a list of the women who agreed to participate in the study, an explanation of the qualitative research methods that were used, and the way in which data was collected and analyzed.

Research Design

This research was an exploratory qualitative study that addresses the role and importance that certain women have had in Mexican politics throughout the country's history, exploring multiple cases and analyzing them across cases. It was based on historical and political documents as well as interviews with key political female Mexican leaders who provided a privileged insight into how active participants have been a part of the struggle for gender equality in Mexico.

As Corrine Glesne (2006) says, "In qualitative case studies, data tend to be gathered through the ethnographic tools of participant observation and in-depth

interviewing” (p. 13). What this study intended to achieve is to research the personal and professional aspects of the interviewees in order to have a more profound understanding of their lives and political participation. John W. Creswell (2014) writes that qualitative research “is used as a broad explanation for behavior and attitudes, and it may be complete with variables, constructs, and hypotheses” (p. 64). This data made it possible to gather information that, in some cases, related between some of the participants, thus allowing us to understand the reaction of a group of women who have knowledge, in one way or another, in Mexican politics. The topics to which I refer are their backgrounds, and personal and political ideals. The data was individually analyzed for each of the twelve women who were interviewed and then a cross-case analysis followed, comparing the commonalities among the interviewees and issues that they addressed. The differences amongst them are also discussed. It has to be understood that, among the twelve interviewees, no generalities were made, as they all came from different familial, ideological, and political backgrounds.

The case study analysis allowed all of the interviewees to talk about the personal experiences that they have had throughout their political careers. Nevertheless, those who have not had a political career gave their opinion on how they believe women have played a role in politics throughout the history of Mexico and about the advancements and setbacks that continue to exist. On the other hand, the cross-case analysis included some of the similarities and differences that these female politicians and academicians have in regard to how women have been and continue to be involved in politics, and the ways in which they have reached those positions of power.

Participants

Twelve female leaders from different areas of the political life—including women who were directly involved in politics, media, nonprofit organizations, academia, diplomacy, and human rights—were interviewed. A list of interviewees and a brief biography for each is presented in Appendix A, where the reader can gain access to both personal and professional information about them, as well as the type of education they had.

The interviewees were all women between 50 and 80 years old, professionals with at least a Bachelor's degree who have participated in different areas, such as politics, press, nonprofits, academia, diplomacy, and human rights. Their personal lives are different in many ways. Some come from wealthy families, while others come from more humble backgrounds.

Nevertheless, there are many issues that have made them successful: their vocation and commitment to serve the nation, the passion they have put in doing so, and the education they were able to receive. The twelve interviewees did their undergraduate studies in Mexico, although Beatriz Paredes is the only one that did not finish her studies thus did not receive a degree. Nine of the women have completed graduate studies; two in Mexican universities and seven who decided to go study in France, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

In regard to their families, they represent grandmothers, mothers, single mothers, married, divorced, single, and/or partnered. It would be fair to say that, at first glance, their only commonality is that they have all been interested in politics and gender equality. They were chosen because of the access that I had to them through personal or

family connections and because they had all achieved a significant level of participation in Mexican politics or in the academic world thus becoming respected researchers on this topic.

The sample was one of convenience based on the researcher's personal connections and access to the participants. These women represent three specific areas of interest: women who directly participated in politics by direct appointment or elections, women who have been involved in political activism and female academicians who have researched gender politics. The chosen interviewees represent, as Patton (2002) states, a rich sample that is unusual because of their success.

Even though all the women who participated in this study were very busy persons, they agreed to meet for an interview and, in some cases, for a follow up interview. Most of them live in Mexico City and the interviews took place there, with two exceptions. Those interviews took place, in every case, in their offices. The women who agreed to participate in this project enriched this work with their knowledge, their personal experiences, and their opinions. Having worked in many areas, they all have made a difference in the way women are perceived and they arguably have made a positive impact on gender equality as indicated by Tuñon (1987). The women who were interviewed are listed on the following pages, together with a brief paragraph that summarizes their trajectory and occupation.

The Interview Procedure and Protocol

In the following paragraphs, I will describe the way in which the interviews took place and the procedure that was done in order to gain access to them, as well as the process in which I obtained information from different public and private documents. All

of the interviewees, except one, live in Mexico City where I went three times in order to meet with them. Because all of these women are busy, the interviews occurred on the date that was most convenient for them and lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours depending on the time they had in their schedule.

In order to secure an appointment with them, I explained through a formal petition letter (Appendix B) that I live in San Diego and that I could go to Mexico City to meet with them. That gave me the possibility to see all of them on an organized schedule. The letter also established that I am a PhD candidate and that the interviews would be used for an academic purpose only. It also included all of my background information. Once they agreed to participate I organized an appointment, in most cases, through their secretaries. One of the interviewees lives in Brazil, but she agreed to do the interview by phone or to answer the questions in the form of a questionnaire by e-mail.

There were follow-up interviews by phone with five of the twelve participants because some issues remained unclear or incomplete. In those meetings they inquired more about my work and how the research was going. As I answered their questions and told them who else was participating, several of the interviewees became more relaxed and open with their answers.

As it was previously explained, the type of interview for this study was exploratory in nature, but was guided by a questionnaire (Appendix C) in order to explore certain issues that could enrich the research. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) state that these types of interviews are usually open, with not much structure and that they are useful for studying individuals who understand the world and environment and who are able to describe the experiences they have had. The exploratory interviews gave me an

opportunity to manage it as a conversation, so the interviewee felt comfortable and would be willing to discuss topics of interests for the study. Depending on the interviewee, I was more focused on the area in which they are or were involved, but always taking the interview guide into consideration in order “to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed” (Patton, 2002, p. 343).

The interviews dealt with three main topics that helped answer the research questions: background, leadership, and politics. As the conversations developed, more issues came to light and the interviewees were able to reminisce about their lives and experiences both as individuals and as professionals, opening new and unanticipated doors to gain more information (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

Nevertheless, the research could not have been complete without having had access to archival data such as documents that included books, media sources, and personal documents from the interviewed women, some of which were newspapers or magazines that detailed previous interviews, academic essays that they have written, and photographic albums related to their political career. The books that were used for these interviews were related to the history of Mexico, gender studies, international relations, biographies, leadership studies, and feminism. The archival data were collected from the documents and books stated above, from which I was able to gather important information about the way in which the role of women has changed throughout the history of Mexico by periods, presidential administrations, and social movements.

As was established before, this study is an exploratory research, so the qualitative exploratory method was used. Patton (2002) argues that this type of research is the product of an inquiry that is made using several sources, primarily interviews,

observations and document analysis. The cases of the women that were interviewed were analyzed and compared to the historical episodes that occurred at the time they participated. Their personal experiences, opinions, and recollections have made this study richer and the historical episodes more complete (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). For those women whose participation in politics in Mexico is highly relevant but who were not alive at the time of my study, I relied on biographies, memoirs, articles, and unpublished material to which their families granted me access. Nevertheless, and even though a historical background can provide an overview of the roles that women have had in Mexican history and how the female role is embedded in the country's culture, this work could not have been complete without interviewing some of the women leaders who have played decisive roles in the last few decades. I chose these twelve women to participate in this research because of their success in politics and in academia.

I opened the conversation asking them to talk about their life. From there, the interview had four parts. The first part consisted of gaining information regarding their background the sacrifices they have made, their challenges, and achievements, as well as the sacrifices that they have had to make in order to have a successful career. I posed questions about leadership and the way they see themselves as politicians or, in the case of those who have not been directly involved in politics, their thoughts on how women have influenced equality or inequality in the Mexican political arena. The third part of the interview was directly about women in politics, their involvement throughout history, the possibility of having a female president, the recently established gender quotas in Congress, and the only constant role that women have had in politics: as first ladies. That part of the interview concluded with questions regarding their perspective on the

possibility of having a female president in the near future and the expectations they have for gender equality in Mexico, considering the challenges and obstacles that are visible to them. The fourth and last part of the conversational interview was about Mexican culture, which included topics like machismo, religion, society, and stereotypes that have affected positively or negatively influenced the involvement of women in politics.

Confidentiality

In regards to confidentiality, in order to make a greater impact with this study, I requested the women I interviewed to waive anonymity by signing a letter (Appendix D) or by agreeing through an e-mail. Even if they did not allow me to release their names, they would have been identifiable because of their public success and the positions that they have held throughout their lives.

All of the twelve women that were interviewed for this research agreed to waive anonymity. Because they all have been public characters, their identities would be easily identifiable by anyone who is familiar with Mexican politics. By agreeing to participate in this study and releasing their identity, the research gains validity because of the women who were interviewed, who have been presidents of universities, notary publics, editors, journalists, academician, first ladies, senators, congresswomen, ambassadors, governors, presidents of political parties, Supreme Court ministers, members of the presidential cabinet, and presidential candidates, and Nobel Prize nominees.

Positionality

As a researcher of Mexican history, culture, and politics, I had to be especially attentive in order to avoid any bias related to my positionality in this study. Glesne (2006) suggests that researchers should reflect upon one's subjectivity and the way in which we

do our research. As a researcher I had to have a clear differentiation between rapport and friendship “because of the hazards of sample bias and loss of objectivity” (Glesne, 2006, p. 116). Alan Peshkin (1988), on the other hand, says that the researcher’s subjectivity does not necessarily become a liability for the study if it is consciously monitored. Therefore, I was particularly observant with this issue, especially because of the fact that I am Mexican and that my family has been involved in politics for many generations. I realize I have tendencies to sympathize with certain ideals and political positions. Another issue that could have influenced my own positionality is my feminist personal vision and the fact that I support and truly believe that men and women should have the same rights and opportunities. Nevertheless, I endeavored to manage my own biases in order to be totally objective in order to avoid premature conclusions. A useful tool to do so was to be to engage in document analysis that helped maintain my personal biases in check.

Because the interviews were conversational, many topics came up during different parts of the conversation, but if I wanted to have a deeper understanding or go into detail about a particular issue, I would pose the question again in order to have a more detailed answer. All of the interviews were held in Spanish and they were recorded with the Voice Memo App included on all iPhones.

All the data was transcribed in Spanish in preparation for coding. Once the data was collected and organized, the information that was considered relevant, useful, and important for this study was translated to English. This was decided by the way in which the answers of the interviewees related to the research, thus making the information useful for finding out the way in which women have been successful in Mexican politics.

To have translated all the interviews would have taken too much time, especially if we take into account that, because of the conversational nature of the interviews, some parts were not relevant for this research because they related to more personal aspects of their lives such as information on their childhood and time in university.

When the data from the interviews was transcribed and translated, the information was gathered and divided in order to see the commonalities between the interviewees. In order to see if the paths of these women in Mexican politics have similarities I analyzed their lives and the role they have played. Nevertheless, the participants have been involved in politics in different ways: through family connections, popular elections, and social activism. Even though those differences exist in their careers, I analyzed the data and looked for certain common ground in regards to the way they have become leaders and how they manage that leadership.

In order to do so, the data was manually coded with structural codes that came from the research questions. These codes became categories and themes. The five categories were Leadership, Politics, Personal, Culture, and History (Appendix E). Johnny Saldaña (2009) establishes that “Structural Coding is designed to start organizing data around specific research questions” (p. 51). In order to do so successfully—Saldaña (2009) continues—the coding should be a provocative thinking exercise and not a puzzling or confusing one. To this regard, the coding was done with a hard copy of the transcripts and different symbols, and the categories became themes as the research moved forward.

Once all the interviews were coded, the data was divided in order to write a description of each of the participants, as well as their background, them as individuals,

their views on leadership, and their views on politics. These brief descriptions can give the reader the idea that all of these women are of value to this study because they are proof of success, which makes the sample “unusual and special” (Patton. 2002. P. 230-231). The sample is of value because of two reasons: the women who have amply researched gender equality and the role of women in Mexican history, and the women who have actively participated in Mexican politics. All of them are women who have succeeded as academicians, researchers, activists, and politicians, which make them unusual and special, especially in Mexico, where women continue to fight for equality. After having written the individual pages about each interviewee, the data was then cross-referenced to analyze and compare their lives, thoughts on women in power, characteristics, careers, gender quotas, the possibility of a female president, and future projects.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Results

In the following pages, I begin with a brief summary of the twelve women who were interviewed for this research. Each summary is divided into four short sections: Professional Background, Personal Background and Dispositions toward Gender and Politics, Perspective on Leadership, and Experiences and Attitudes toward Women in Politics. In the Background section, the interviewee's career is briefly described, detailing the most prominent positions each woman has held. In the Personal section, her familial environment and education are described, as well as her personal preferences in regard to women in history and politics. In the area pertaining to Leadership, I offer their thoughts on what women need to do to exercise leadership and what they believe are the specific traits women need to become leaders. In the section on Politics, I explain their thoughts on today's female participation in politics, as well as their own experiences in politics. In the cases of the women who have not directly participated in politics, that portion describes only their thoughts on the current political environment and the governmental policies that are in place to offer gender equality.

The second part of this chapter includes my cross-case analysis, in which some of the issues that were brought up by several or all of the twelve interviewees will be analyzed by topic and the similarities and differences across cases are described.

Cristina Alcayaga

Background

Cristina Alcayaga (DOB unknown) is currently the President of Nafinsa in Quintana Roo. She was the first woman to occupy the presidency of the Council for Business of the Caribbean and has been a congresswoman in the Legislative Assembly of

Mexico City. Her constant fight has been for the rights of women and children and has done so as a member of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), to which she has been affiliated for years. Alcayaga was the first woman to occupy the presidency of the Business Council of Quintana Roo and she was the President of the World Association of Women Writers and Journalists. She was the Secretary of Cultural Affairs of the PRI between 1997 and 2000; coordinator of Social Communication of the Secretariat of Agriculture in 2000; and coordinator of the National Movement of Citizens in 2002.

Personal

Alcayaga's social capital and intellectual formation have given her the opportunity to occupy important positions in the business and political arenas. She studied sociology at the Universidad Iberoamericana and Social Sciences at the Sorbonne University in France, giving her a different perspective and an international experience that she has applied in her political career. Her career started in 1987 when Manuel Camacho Solis, one of the closest men to president Carlos Salinas, asked her if she would like to become a congresswoman.

Alcayaga thinks that she has been privileged to participate in Mexican politics, especially during the political reform of Mexico City, fighting to defend Human Rights, and in the Executive Committee of the PRI, of which she is an active member. Alcayaga regrets not having had an earlier start in politics, where she believes, she could have had a more successful career.

Alcayaga states that she admires those Mexican women who have no face; those who are mothers and who have to take care of their families; the victims of gender violence, those who have three jobs; the indigenous women who live in very precarious

conditions; those who work in hostile environments, soldiers, nurses, teachers, and all those who build this country.

Leadership

In order to be a political leader, Cristina Alcayaga believes that there are certain characteristics that are needed: “vocation, commitment, and a sincere wish to transform to improve. That wish, together with hard work, makes politics a more amicable environment to work at, even though it continues to be dominated by men.”

In regard to leadership positions occupied by women, Alcayaga believes that things have changed in the last twenty-five years. She recalls a time when the spaces were more limited to women and their presence in politics was the exception. Even if women had access to that arena, they would adopt masculine traits, which were not always viewed positively by male peers. From her perspective, the glass ceiling continues to be present in the business world.

When it comes to social and cultural characteristics for a woman to have a successful political career, Alcayaga states that in a country with so many economic and social differences like Mexico, “it would be very difficult to create a profile that would be liked by the majority of the people because they are more inclined towards popularity rather than academic or political backgrounds.” Alcayaga believes that “those singers, football players, and telenovela actors and actresses who have had access to positions of representation, do not have the vocation or the preparation to occupy them, except [in] very few cases.” According to her, this is one of the reasons why there are more and more independent candidates nowadays; because political parties have deteriorated their own

image and many of the current candidates they postulate are not prepared for the positions.

Politics

Even though politics has been an area that was almost prohibited to women for centuries, Cristina Alcayaga believes that the advances that we see nowadays are enormous and that women have an important opportunity to participate, especially women in the urban areas of Mexico. In 2012, Alcayaga recalls, “the number of women who won in Congress was the highest ever, reaching the Goal of the Millennium of the United Nations, which consisted of having more than 30% of women in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. To the regard of dictating gender quotas, Mexico has responded positively to these goals.

Alcayaga states that the PRI has supported political agendas that have helped create gender equality in the different organisms of political representation, such as the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, and has evolved to the times we live in today and supports female candidates’ advancements to governorships and in Congress. It is important to note, however, that this same support is lacking in the municipalities.

One of the most important reforms—according to Alcayaga—are the gender quotas that are now implemented in Congress, which “even though they should disappear with time, they are now needed to allow more women to have access to the political arena.” Nevertheless, she believes that “we must be aware that in every political party, men felt displaced when they were forced to obey the 50-50 quota in the candidacies so their parties would not lose the registry.

Even though gender is important, Alcayaga believes that professionalization is more important, because “the fact of being a woman does not necessarily guarantee efficiency, honesty, and commitment.”

As far as believing that Mexico is ready for a female president, Alcayaga states that “it would be preferable to level the ground between men and women, and have a 50-50 presidential cabinet, and then think of a woman in the presidential chair.”

Sara Bermúdez

Background

Sara Bermúdez was born in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, in 1950. She started working in the Press Department of the Presidency during the administration of President López-Portillo, and then in the Mexican Television Institute (Imevisión), which is a broadcaster funded by the State. The station was sold in 1993, during the presidency of Carlos Salinas, and is now known as Televisión Azteca. She later started working at Canal Once, as director of cultural programs, where she was able to create a platform that helped artists and the cultural community.

During Bermudez’s career, she has conducted and produced several television programs about culture, believing that television is a valuable tool to spread culture and traditions. In 1986 she began producing and hosting the program *Hoy en la cultura*, which dealt with culture related news. In the year 2000, she became the Coordinator of the cultural area of the Alliance for Change and for the Transition Team, which worked in making the political transition smoother after the presidential election in which the PRI lost after more than seventy years in power. Once Vicente Fox, the first person from an opposition party—the PAN—became president in 2000, Bermúdez was appointed to

President of the National Council for Culture and Arts (Conaculta), becoming the first woman to do so. She remained there until 2006, when the Fox administration ended. The institution, which in December 2015 became the Secretariat of Culture, was a federal organization that was responsible for every cultural and artistic related issue, including museums, archeological sites, exhibitions, cultural international exposure, and national heritage.

Since 2006, Bermúdez has continued with her journalistic career, promoting Mexican culture with television shows and collaborating with several national and international newspapers and magazines.

Personal

Since Sara Bermúdez was a child, she was interested in two things: journalism and culture. Having always been interested in other cultures, she studied in the Institute for Interpreter Translators of Mexico and then French Civilization at the Sorbonne University in Paris. As she grew up, Bermúdez became more aware of the problems that affected Mexico and wanted to do something for her country. She recalls that she has always been fascinated by art, knowledge, and intellectual life; likings that she enjoyed sharing with her friends and later, with her children, who she describes as discreet, hard-working, well-prepared, and cultured. Bermúdez does not believe that her career has made her sacrifice anything related to her family, because she was a very present mother who was there as her children discovered the world and enjoyed life. When she was asked what she was most proud of, she immediately answered “of my children,” making it evident that they are very close.

Sara Bermúdez defines herself as a person who enjoys team work and helping others, and who is able to bring people together in order to complete a common goal. She believes she has always been committed to the causes she believes in; she is responsible and dedicated to her work.

Bermúdez greatly admires Simone de Beauvoir, one of the driving forces behind the avant-garde feminism, with which she agrees mainly because “it has been through work, that women have been able to diminish the distance that separates them from men, because work is the only way that women will be able to achieve absolute freedom.”

Leadership

Bermúdez considers herself someone who firmly believes in team work, instead of considering herself a leader. She believes that, especially in politics, leadership must be based on good communication among people who have a common goal.

She does not believe that men and women have specific traits in regard to leadership. The characteristics that she believes both must have in common are a “profound and genuine love for their country, their state, their municipality, their people, and a will to contribute to the transformation of that society.” In regard to the characteristics that she believes that differentiate women and men, Bermúdez states that leaders—without gender differences—must be able to “have empathy with those he or she serves, listen to their needs and comprehend them in order to do something to fulfill them.” Commitment and sensibility, honesty and prudence, imagination and expertise are some of the adjectives that she uses to define what a true leader is.

Politics

Bermúdez affirms that politics is an area in which a woman can professionally develop and be successful. Nevertheless, she states that today, women can enter the work force in any area and have a fruitful career because of the changes that have reshaped the way certain societies think about gender. Bermúdez does not recall being excluded from anything because of being a woman, or having had disagreeable experiences in politics because of her gender. Nevertheless, she states that when she worked as a journalist, she had to deal with harassment, both in Mexico and in the United States. Those unfortunate experiences cost her professional opportunities, but she does not regret having been coherent and true with her ideals.

Even though Sara Bermúdez never thought about entering politics, she wanted, like many other young Mexicans, a democratic change in the country. Due to her career as a journalist and television host, she was offered the opportunity to work in the pre-campaign of Vicente Fox. When the PAN emerged triumphant in the presidential elections of 2000, Bermúdez recalls, “the circumstances were configured for her to enter politics.” She thinks that the fact that she was a woman influenced President Fox to include her in his team because he thought that the integration of women in politics was important, particularly in issues in regards to the issues in Mexican culture around gender.

Once Bermúdez was named President of the National Council for Culture and the Arts by President Vicente Fox, she became the first woman to occupy that position. It was an experience that she remembers as the most “intense and stimulating of her life,” which gave her the opportunity to work for her country. During her time in Conaculta,

Bermúdez created a balance among her collaborators by surrounding herself by both men and women. She remembers her female team members as true leaders, with an accomplished personal and professional capacity.

When Bermúdez became President of Conaculta, she thought that people were treating her differently for being a woman, but as time passed, she realized that those criticisms—especially those by the press—were because of the importance of her position and not related to gender issues. Nevertheless, Bermúdez was aware that as the first female President of Conaculta, she had to demonstrate that she was capable to manage such a large and important institution thus having to demonstrate she was capable of managing it.

In talking about the support that women have gained in the last few years, Bermúdez believes that the important thing is not to cover quotas, but to make political leaders aware that there are just as many capable women with the background, talent, calling, commitment, honesty, democratic conviction, and love for their people and country, as there are men with the same characteristics.

In regard to gender quotas, Bermúdez, who is not affiliated with any political party, thinks that the government—any government—has the obligation of opening spaces to every citizen; both men and women, with equal rules. Even though gender quotas are now necessary because “we know full well that in almost every country in the world there is discrimination against women,” the important thing is for governments to promote and defend integrity and rights, and to create laws and programs that can create awareness about negative cultural practices. Bermúdez believes, however, that Mexican society is evolving and becoming more respectful. In politics, Bermúdez says, women are

being “valued more and more for their trajectory, experience, preparation, responsibility, honesty, and the results they give.” She speculates that it is that change of cultural values that will “allow Mexico to have a female president in the not-so-distant future; women are a growing and ascending force.”

Gabriela Cano

Background

Gabriela Cano was born in Mexico City in 1960. She is an academic who holds a PhD in History and was the dean of the Gender Study Masters at the Colegio de México (Colmex). She is currently a professor at the Colegio de Mexico and at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Cano has focused her work in gender studies, sexuality, and gender history in Mexico in the 19th and twentieth centuries. Cano is a member of the National System of Researchers and of the Mexican Academy of Sciences. She was awarded, among other prizes, the Omecihuatl Medal for her fight in favor of human rights for women, as well as the Salvador Azuela Prize—given by the National Institute of Historical Research of the Mexican Revolution—and the José Pagés National Award of Communication and the Martin Duberman Medal from the University of New York. She was also a visiting scholar at Stanford University.

Cano is an active participant of the editorial committees of the Fondo de Cultura Económica, in Mexico, as well as on the editorial board of publications from the University of Minnesota and the University of Glasgow.

Personal

Cano has dedicated her life in academia, to writing books about women and their historical importance, as well as to the study of sexual diversity during the last decades of

the 19th century, the Porfiriato, the Revolution, and the post-Revolutionary period. She has researched the life of Amalia Castillo Ledón, as well as other women who participated actively in politics throughout the twentieth century; the stories of women in Spain and Latin America, and their relationship between power and politics in modern Mexico. Besides researching, she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses at UNAM and El Colegio de México. She is in a constant quest to “understand the logical construction of politics as a masculine space.” At present, Cano is writing a Minimal History of Feminism in Mexico that will include women’s story since the time of the Colony until today.

Leadership

Cano believes that there is no group of characteristics that women need in order to have a successful political career. It depends on each particular situation—she states—and believes that a generalization would be absurd. As a historian, she believes in processes, not in general theories, and her way of conducting research, does not allow her to see or privilege generalities.

Cano is a fervent believer in maternalism, which refers to women participating in the public world as “social educators, activists, leaders, and in other roles that are represented as feminine.” She does not want to see women who have had successful careers as exceptions, but wants to understand the reasons why they have triumphed in certain specific areas, such as health, assistance, education, and diplomacy, which she argues, “is not coded as a totally masculine space.” Cano does not believe gendered positions are not because of a historical tradition, but because of a cultural construct.

Women are often represented—according to Cano—as being moral, with a greater capacity to impart justice and morality.

Politics

Gabriela Cano states that the 1970s is when women began to receive a better education in Mexico, especially after the demographers from El Colegio de México designed the demographic policies of that decade, establishing that “the better education a woman had, they would have fewer children.” The generation of the baby boomers, many of whom did not have a college education, but had access to a life of well-being, started profiting from that context and entered new areas of work. That resulted in an increase of women in the work-force, including the political arena.

According to Cano, Political parties also influence the discourse of gender. The way women are portrayed as mothers, politicians, or workers often depends on the social constructs of their governmental policies. Cano states that the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), a left wing party, “always accentuates the most conservative areas of women,” but that it depends more on the generation that manages a particular party.

Cano recalls that today’s scenario is completely different from that of the 1970s, especially in politics. She believes that the importance of women in politics is equal to that of men, and example of that trend is the gender quotas that were passed in the last legislation. Cano believes that women are very important and very much needed today although she thinks that the 50-50 percentage is too aggressive. She said, during the interview that “in order to retribute affirmative action, it should have been 70-30 during a couple of decades, so men learn to do other things...because it’s a conservative institution.” Mexico, as a Latin American country, continues to be seen as very

conservative, and “the gender quotas were a wise decision that surprised everyone...no one knows where it came from and suddenly the law had passed.”

Although Cano thinks that Mexico is ready to be governed by a female president, she believes that there would not be any immediate social or cultural changes. The most important change that would exist—she states—is the way in which boys and girls would think, their expectations from life, and their professional possibilities. Machismo, Cano explains, would begin to change as well, because children would not see a marked differentiation in the social, intellectual, and professional possibilities between men and women.

Lucía García Noriega

Background

Lucía García Noriega was born in Mexico City in 1944. She worked as cultural attaché in the Mexican Embassy in France from 1998 to 2001, and was a member of the cultural council of the Mexican Embassy in Spain between 2001 and 2004. García Noriega was also the director of the National Center for Conservation of the National Heritage and the Secretary of Culture of Mexico City between 2012 and 2013.

Personal

García Noriega comes from a big family that was dominated by women. Her mother had nine sisters and her father had seven. Her grandmothers—both widows—made an effort to give the best they could to her respective twelve children, educating them in equality. She is certain that “it was her grandmothers and her parents who made her who she is, always receiving the same opportunities as her two sisters and four brothers.” She recognizes, however, that she admired all her superiors, both men and

women, from whom she learned many things. One of her inspirations, García Noriega says, “was Mrs. López-Portillo, when she was First Lady, because of her immense passion for culture and everything beautiful.”

García Noriega studied commerce and accounting at the Escuela Bancaria y Comercial, and later studied arts in the École de Beaux Arts in Paris. She then began to work as a cultural consultant, and was named director of the Universal Cultural Forum of Monterrey and cultural attaché at the Cultural Center of the Mexican Embassy in Paris, and later worked as an advisor in the Mexican Embassy in Madrid, working on issues relating to culture, education, and science. Before becoming Secretary of Culture of Mexico City, García Noriega directed the National Center for Conservation of the National Heritage.

During the interview, García Noriega opened up and was sincere about the sacrifices that she has made to have a successful political career, something that many of the other interviewees did not do. She states that she has been careless about her health, and has not spent as much time as she would have liked with her family and friends. She regrets being arrogant, “which has kept me from seeing my mistakes with clarity.” Nevertheless, she says, that she is proud of being Mexican and for having always been persistent and coherent with her objectives, which many times have been to work for those women who she admires: those who have to struggle to take care of their families.

Leadership

For Lucía García Noriega, being a leader is synonymous for organization, responsibility, and commitment. Without those characteristics the risk of disappointing others becomes a constant issue, because goals and results would seldom be achieved.

Someone who enters politics must have morals and ethical values that are always respected, as well as openness to listen to other opinions, dialogue and make collective decisions that benefit all. One can only become a leader, García Noriega states, if we are not happy with what we do. In order to become a true leader, one has to follow a vocation.

Politics

Lucía García Noriega understands politics “as a means to an end; as an activity that uses power in an ethical way to achieve objectives that are of general interest.” When she has held public office, she recalls using public power to achieve goals that are beneficial to society. García Noriega states that it is a privilege to have the vocation of public service, which is absolutely needed to fully develop oneself in politics. Another tool that is important to become successful in politics is to have the backing of a political party, until independent candidates can become strong enough to compete against a well-built political system.

The participation of women in politics is due, to a great extent, to how the federal, judicial, and legislative branches have found a way to publish certain laws that give women the right to vote and be voted for, especially in regards to issues such as work conditions and public policies that refer to gender equality.

Throughout her political career, García Noriega has met with obstacles, because “the balance will usually be inclined to the man,” so a woman with the same characteristics is often pushed aside because of her gender. Those differences are not only social but practical, “you can see it in the salary differences between men and women,”

where the percentage in Mexico—even though it is beginning to change—continues to be much higher for men.

For women, García Noriega recalls, “it costs twice the effort to be considered...and be heard.” Nevertheless, she has never demanded any privilege just because she is a woman, because that would have made her lose time and energy from the true objectives and goals that she had. She believes that in every job she has had, actions, decisions, and public policies were made in order to support certain agendas in favor of women, such as “breastfeeding in work spaces, daycare, flexible schedules to help sick children, education, empowerment, fight against family violence, programs against discrimination, and sexual harassment.”

Even though García Noriega considers gender quotas in the Senate and Chamber of Deputies “an atrocity,” because she believes that they should not be needed, but she is aware that they can be the beginning of a change which, in the future, could empower women even more. The fact that more and more women are well prepared, educated, and successful in so many different areas—many of them in the different instances of the government—gives the possibility to a woman to become president of Mexico.

Roberta Lajous

Background

Roberta Lajous was born in Mexico City in 1954. Her career has always been directed towards diplomacy and foreign affairs, occupying important positions in different countries. Before becoming a member of the Mexican Foreign Service, Lajous was a professor in the Political Science department of UNAM between 1978 and 1981. She became a member of the foreign service in 1979, working in the Secretariat of

Foreign Affairs as Director General for North American Affairs from 1983 to 1986, and then as Director General for European Affairs from 1986 to 1988. In 1989, Lajous founded and directed EXAMEN Magazine, a publication she directed for six years. Between 1989 and 1994 she became a member of the National Executive Committee of the PRI, becoming involved in national politics. In 1995, Lajous was an advisor to the General Secretary of the United Nations for the International Conference for Women. That same year she became ambassador of Mexico in Austria, where she stayed until 1999, a time when she was also the permanent representative before the United Nations in Vienna, presiding over the General Conference for Atomic Energy in 1998. From 1999 to 2001, she was the president of the Commission of the Mexican Foreign Service. She later went to New York, where she was the permanent representative in New York, coordinating the participation of Mexico in the United Nations Security Council. Between 2002 and 2005, Lajous was ambassador in Cuba and then in Bolivia from 2007 to 2009. She then entered El Colegio de México for a three year commission, where she expanded the already vast list of academic publications. She is a member of several non-profit organizations and has also been the president of the International Women's Forum and has been, since 2013, the Mexican ambassador to Spain.

Personal

Lajous was born into a privileged family that has been involved in many areas, such as business, politics, and academia. She recalls that she was always interested in international politics and that her parents always expected her to go to university and have a professional career. Lajous states that the influence of her sister—eight years her senior—determined her character and inspired her to study and work from a young age

because she “never doubted in following her steps.” Lajous grew up in a family where public policies, both national and international, were always a motif of analysis. She was educated at El Colegio de México, the institution founded by exiled Spaniards during the time of the Spanish Civil War, where she studied International Relations. She later went to California, where she did a Masters in Latin American Studies at Stanford University. She was married to Fernando Solana, who has been Secretary of Commerce, of Education, and of Foreign Affairs, with whom she remained married until 1989. She then married Alain Ize Lamache, a doctor in Economy from Stanford University and a recognized academician.

She defines herself as someone who is tenacious and disciplined, but especially as being proud of being a woman who has never pretended to be someone she is not. Lajous believes that the most admirable Mexican women are working mothers, because those who fulfill a double shift—both professional and personal—should have the recognition of society. Lajous defines her career as a privilege, where she has been able to find her true calling thus feeling satisfied and gratified.

Leadership

Roberta Lajous has occupied many different positions, where she has proved her skills as a leader. Besides her diplomatic career, Lajous represented the PRI internationally during three presidential campaigns where—she recalls—character and determination were two of the most important traits that helped create good team work and to achieve her goals. Those characteristics, she said, are needed by every leader.

Lajous believes that women in Mexico have proved to be good leaders and that people have begun to get accustomed to them achieving powerful political positions thus

trusting them more. According to an interview she gave to the Spanish newspaper *El País*, “Mexico is not a country of machos” (Maestro, 2015). Nevertheless, Lajous believes that women continue to have difficulties in achieving certain positions, although she believes that female leaders can have a better chance to succeed in the political arena.

Politics

Ambassador Lajous has been a member of the PRI since 1979. She thinks that political parties are important to have a successful political career because “politics is done through parties. Solitary voices, male or female, as assertive as they can be, are unable to mobilize society.” Therefore, being a part of a political group is needed to get support.

Lajous has stated that politics is an area in which women can fully develop and achieve important positions, much more than other areas. One only need to see how many female heads of state and government there are now all over around the world to see how culture in many countries is changing. Mexico, however, continues to fight against several cultural prejudices of which she has also been victim. Lajous recalls that she has “received a differential treatment for being a woman, which sometimes has been an advantage, although most of the times it has been a disadvantage, because in all of the societies I have known a good dose of machismo continues to prevail.” Nevertheless, she has adapted to working in a male-dominated environment where she is proud of “having put in his place more than one abusive man.”

Although her role in Mexican diplomacy is important, Lajous says that she has never thought about her becoming a part of history, at least not until now because she has

been too busy trying to have a successful career, especially fighting against all the difficulties that existed and continue to exist in regard to gender.

Ambassador Lajous believes that she has mostly helped gender equality when she was the Permanent Representative before the United Nations—four years in Vienna and two in New York—giving a voice to women. She recalls that when she represented Mexico in the United Nations Security Council, she was “the only woman occupying a seat and to participate in the discussions.” Lajous has always been aware of the disparity that exists between men and women in the work force, and that is why she has always tried to surround herself by capable people, but creating a balance of gender. She is proud that, as the Mexican ambassador to Spain, she has promoted a campaign to celebrate the Día Naranja, which creates awareness against gender violence.

Now that women have become more equal to men in Mexico, due to a shift in cultural values and political strategies, Lajous believes that a balance could be achieved even though it had to be done through gender quotas in the Mexican Congress. She believes that such quotas “are indispensable for a phase and still needed in Mexico.” When she was asked her opinion about whether Mexico was ready to be governed by a woman, Lajous’ answer was clear and decisive: “Yes, Mexico is ready. It is time.”

Marta Lamas

Background

Marta Lamas was born in Mexico City in 1947. She is a Mexican anthropologist who has fought for women’s rights since the 1960s, a founding member of the newspaper *La Jornada*, one of Mexico leading newspapers, as well as a founder of *Fem*, the first feminist publication in Mexico. She has been the editor of the *Debate Feminista*

magazine since 1990 and contributes to Mexican and international publications. She has also worked in many organizations that fight for women's rights and in 2000 she founded the Simone de Beauvoir Leadership Institute, which focuses on women's leadership with a gender perspective. Lamas has participated actively in many national and international publications, such as *Proceso*, *La Jornada*, and the Spanish newspaper *El País*.

In 1990, Lamas founded Semillas, an organization that helped women understand many of the problems they face, such as human rights and gender equality, and that actively participates in 24 states of Mexico. Two years later, she founded Grupo de Información de Reproducción Elegida, which created awareness about abortion and reproductive and sexual health. One of the most important issues that the organization dealt with was not who was for or against abortion, but who had the right to choose to continue or terminate the pregnancy. This organization made a fundamental change in the way that abortion was seen in Mexico.

Even though Lamas has never been directly involved in politics, her activism has influenced issues regarding feminism, abortion, gender, prostitution, and abuse, and many times has helped to shape certain political agendas since 1971, when she began to become a part of the feminist movement and participated in the foundation of several organizations that promote women's rights such as the Centro de Apoyo a la Mujer Violada in 1974, and Coalición de Mujeres Feministas in 1976. In 2005, Marta Lamas was recognized by the international community and nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for her work in promoting gender equality, as part of a project called "1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize for 2005" (Gender Across Borders, 2009).

Personal

Marta Lamas was born to Argentinian parents in a wealthy and liberal family, in which religion was never a part of their life. Her mother was a feminist Francophile, who wanted Marta to be educated according to her social status in the French School of Mexico City. Her father, a banker, was surprised when Marta began sympathizing with the left, but was somewhat accepting. In order to fit in in Mexican society, her parents adopted the social behavior and schemes that corresponded to their group, somewhat different to their life in Buenos Aires, where they could live with more freedom. They began to behave like the Mexican privileged class, where “men talked business, and women shared recipes, but my mother did not like that.”

Lamas studied in the National School of Anthropology and History and later received a masters and a doctorate in anthropology at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico (UNAM), where she began exploring different worlds to those she had been used to. Marta Lamas says that, because her family has always been anti-clerical, “it didn’t matter to get into a fight with the Catholic Church because of my thoughts on abortion.” She is aware that her fight was even harder, because everyone is against gender violence, but the issue of abortion continues to divide society. She became interested in feminism in 1971, when Susan Sontag gave a series of conferences in Mexico City, where she talked about gender equality, sexuality, and the power of women. At the time when Marta began exploring different worlds from what she had been used to, it was difficult for her because she was considered “a rich blondy,” so she had to demonstrate to them and herself that she was much more than that.

Leadership

Marta Lamas is aware that her participation in regard to gender equality, violence, and feminism has not been from a political position. Nevertheless, she states that “I have done many things for this country, but there are many places from where you can do that. Leaders can be found in any area, and I’d rather do something from the outside, not from inside the Chamber of Deputies.”

Lamas believes she is a leader because she has never betrayed her own convictions. Even though she considers herself a minority within a minority, she is happy with the way she has led her life and defines herself as a reformist leader, who has helped to change certain laws.

Leadership in the feminist movement, Lamas states, can be difficult to find because “they are very irascible and they do not see that the issue of gender is also the burden that men have in regard to masculinity and virility, so they are anti-intellectual, and I don’t like anti-intellectual people.”

A woman who wants to become a political leader “has to know the rules of the game, which continue to be very masculine. A woman can innovate, but she has to be intelligent and know how to play the game”—Lamas believes. Another topic that Lamas addressed was the way in which a woman can achieve a position of leadership. She believes that

A political career depends basically on two things: social capital and economic capital. Someone who is well connected or who has money has more opportunities than a woman who comes from a more humble background and, although it is not common, there are many valuable women who are able to make their way in politics even if they don’t have wealth or connections.

So, to this extent, Lamas believes that politics should be based on merit and not connection, like it happens in Mexico and so many other countries. It is also needed to break with the taboos that are embedded in Mexican culture. People need to respect sexual diversity and understand that work and family are not areas that should be confronted. Both women and men can be wonderful parents and successful professionals.

Politics

Marta Lamas believes that women have not been active in many areas—politics included—because of the cultural values that were implemented since the times of the Spanish Colony, especially the Catholic Church, “that continues to believe that the place of women are their house and motherhood.” Lamas never wanted to become involved in politics, even though the PRI and the PRD offered her the opportunity to become a congresswoman, because she defines herself as “very impatient, so just the thought of being there, sitting down, surrounded by people... listening to the speeches of an imbecile of the PAN or any other party.”

The big change started after the earthquake of 1985 and after the system’s fall in 1988, when Salinas was accused of manipulating the presidential election in his favor, “It was after that moment that women began to be vindicated.” At that moment, society began going out to the streets, “when women politicians began to look at feminists, because until that day, they didn’t even know we existed.”

Lamas has been friends with many women who have been or continue to be involved in politics. Her career as a feminist, an academician, and an editor have given her the opportunity to move around very different circles, the political one being one of them. She was a very good friend of Beatriz Paredes, “until she, as President of the PRI,

supported the reforms that were pro-life... and decided to create an alliance with the Catholic Church. That's when the friendship ruptured." Lamas believes that Beatriz Paredes was one of the women who were "truly interested in the issue of gender equality, feminism, etc. and who did many things in favor of those topics."

For Marta Lamas, the issue of gender quotas is interesting because she defines quotas as "a mechanism of equality before a situation that does not correspond to the demographic situation of the human species." Quotas, she believes, are needed to accelerate a process and to give voice to those who were, until very recently, underrepresented, but Lamas states that "they can create a gender balance, but they do not guarantee at all that those women are good politicians, honest or intelligent." She also believes that gender quotas "must be understood as a good initial mechanism, but not as one that promotes quality; neither for men nor for women."

As far as a woman governing Mexico, Marta Lamas believes that it is time for that change. At some point she believed that Beatriz Paredes would be the PRI presidential candidate, "but the PRI did not dare to postulate her because of the group she was with. Nevertheless, I think she would have been a splendid president... but the political system preferred to have a president like Peña Nieto, while punishing a woman who did a lot for the party."

Even if Mexico is not governed by a woman in the immediate future, Marta Lamas believes that there are two areas that need to boost the participation of women: the Secretariat of the Interior and the Secretariat of Finance, because their participation in those areas would help to manage the budget with a gender vision.

The PRI—and the rest of the political parties in Mexico—have become aware that it is not possible to pass as a modern country, which is important to the government, and not to have women in important political positions. That is why things have to continue to change.

Carmen López-Portillo

Background

Carmen López-Portillo was born in Mexico City in 1955. She is a Mexican lawyer and academician who is the president of the Universidad del Claustro de Sor Juana, a non-profit private university in Mexico City. She is a founding member of the Consejo Consultivo para el rescate del Centro Histórico, a non-profit organization that promotes and maintains in good form the Historic Center of Mexico City. She is the daughter of former president José López-Portillo, who governed Mexico between 1976 and 1982.

Personal

Carmen López-Portillo was raised in a family that has been involved in many areas, politics being one of them. Nevertheless, in 1974, she decided to study law at the recently founded Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico City. Even though she has never held public office, López-Portillo has been close to political power throughout her adult life. During her father's administration, she participated in political, cultural, and international activities which gave her an understanding of how the system worked at the time. Her then-husband, Rafael Tovar y De Teresa—later Secretary of Culture during the administrations of Carlos Salinas, Ernesto Zedillo, and Enrique Peña—became cultural attaché to the Mexican Embassy in Paris between 1983 and 1987, while López

Portillo got her master's degree in political science at the Sorbonne University, writing her thesis about the Mexican political system. Back in Mexico, she began working at the Universidad del Claustro de Sor Juana (UCSJ) where she “works with a group of people that are convinced of the educative project and of the commitment they have with the country, offering a space where people can think and express themselves, and where solutions and alternatives are born.” López-Portillo believes that academia is a more generous environment for women than politics and that she has been lucky to work in a place that is committed to women's issues, even though the world outside academia can be less fair towards them. That is why López-Portillo believes that many of Mexico's problems can be solved with education, creating equal opportunities for men and women so they can all participate in the democratic project.

Having worked for so many years in the space where Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz lived for twenty-seven years and died, López-Portillo has done extensive research into the nun's life, stating that she greatly admires her because “she dared to fight for freedom and for the right for women to gain knowledge.” She also admires those women who “continue to fight today for a fairer and more equal country; women who, in silence, make the difference in Mexico, and those who support their families despite all the sacrifices.”

López-Portillo describes herself as a privileged woman, who has worked for the last twenty-five years in the place she loves and doing what she wants, and hesitated to say that she would have liked to spend more time with her children, although she believes that “a parent educates their children through example and, at the end, what matters is the quality of time that we have spent together.”

Leadership

López-Portillo believes that the recognition of leadership depends on others and not in how we perceive ourselves. She defines leadership as a way “to achieve that others display all of their capacities, their qualities, and everything they are in order to develop a common project.” “The true leader, she continues, is not the one who decides or gives orders, but the one who works the most, leading with example, who pushes the rest of the team by convincing them of an idea in order for it to become a common project, which they enrich and help to make better.”

A good politician, López-Portillo believes, needs to lead with example and to know how to dialogue and listen in order to create consensus, so the decisions are not taken lightly, especially in countries like Mexico, “where corruption and impunity are so common...and the idea of democracy has become perverted.” Democracy, therefore, is not only the possibility to guarantee that people can vote, but of creating a system of justice and participation where every citizen feels included and represented.

López-Portillo does not think that women and men need to have different characteristics to enter politics, among which are “vocation, social conscience, honesty, conviction, coherence, intelligence, knowledge, passion, commitment, love for others and the community they will represent, logical thinking, and emotion.” Nevertheless, these characteristics need to be more evident in women, because the opportunities continue to be different between both genders. She then quoted her grandfather, who used to say “the virtues of a good human being, are the weaknesses of a politician.”

Politics

As noted before, Carmen López-Portillo has never been directly involved in politics, but does not make her uninterested in it. From her position as president of the UCSJ, López-Portillo has a certain amount of incidence in politics by offering a space for dialogue, especially through her participation in INMUJERES, in both the federal and local levels, by protecting girls and women from violence and by building their capacity to become significant social participants. Another indirect form of participation is through the alumni that studied at the UCSJ, “who are good professionals, good citizens, good people, who are capable of astonishment and indignation and who are committed to the country.”

López-Portillo explains that in ancient Greece, the *idiotes* (the idiot) was the one who had no interest in the public affairs, and that there are many ways of being involved in the *res-publica*, not only politics, but also education, culture, urbanism, social works, art, journalism, businesses and the creations of jobs. Nevertheless, López-Portillo states, that the consequences of politics have more influence in everybody’s lives because politics affect the personal situation of a large number of people in a more direct way.

According to López-Portillo, “politics imply power, responsibility, notoriety, recognition, but also risk, criticism, and discredit, especially in a moment where most of the politicians have lost credibility and legitimacy.” That is why someone who wants to become involved in politics needs to truly have a vocation to be a public servant, and know their qualities, strengths, weaknesses, and limitations because knowing them, it would be impossible to transform the reality “and to solve an eternal struggle between justice and liberty.” In regard to political parties, López-Portillo believes that their

prestige has deteriorated because of many of their members who have been accused of corruption and impunity, giving space to independent candidates—both men and women—who, have an important trajectory, presence, and legitimacy in their community.

Now that gender quotas have been implemented, López-Portillo believes that they will serve well as an initial tool to increase the participation of women. Nevertheless, they do not guarantee that the women who participate in politics will improve the level of politics because many of them are in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies because of personal connection, but the same thing happens with men. One of the problems that she sees is that “many of the female politicians have a trajectory in the media as telenovela actresses, who do not have the preparation or vocation to represent anyone.” Nevertheless, she believes that there have been and continue to be many women who are truly committed to making Mexico a better country and is convinced that Mexico is culturally, socially, and politically ready to be governed by a woman, stating that “present day society is much more modern than politicians think.”

María Angélica Luna y Parra

Background

María Angélica Luna y Parra was born in Mexico City in 1943. She is currently the Director of the Institute of Social Development (Indesol), a position that she obtained in 2012. She has held several public positions in different social and political organizations. She was the representative of the Álvaro Obregón municipality, one of Mexico City’s largest delegations, where she was able to reduce urban violence thanks to a program of public spaces and social cohesion. She began working in the PRI with Luis

Donaldo Colosio, the presidential candidate who was assassinated in 1994, with whom she created a strategy to open the political party to those sectors that had lost their trust in it. Luna y Parra was also a local congresswoman in the Legislative Assembly of Mexico City, where she presented laws that prevented domestic violence and protected the rights of women. She has also worked at the National Institute of Public Administration as a member of the board and Executive Director. She also worked as general under director of the National System of the Integral Development of Families (SNDIF), where she was able to create different campaigns to help families in vulnerable situations. Luna y Parra has participated in several conferences and debates regarding regional development, public policies, and vulnerable societies. She is also a member of the National Institute of Women and other organizations that promote gender equality and is one of the co-authors of the statutes that rule Mexico City.

Personal

Coming from a liberal family of social, cultural, and political tradition since the nineteenth century, Luna y Parra was educated in a world of books, intelligent conversation, and sophistication. She decided at a very young age that her calling was to work in the public sector, although she did not see it as a political job. She decided to study Social Communications at the Universidad Iberoamericana, which was a new career at the time and included philosophy, sociology, and economy. During that time, television began to be used as an educative tool, and she was able to become part of that initial team thus merging her two main interests: communications and public service.

She recalls that her family, who always supported her, consisted of herself, her parents and four sisters. In her case, her father, Luna y Parra recalls that he never

questioned if his daughters were going to study and work or not. The question was *what* they were going to study and *where* they were going to work. Her parents greatly influenced this way of thinking, which was not the commonality for her generation.

Leadership

From the privileged position that she has had, Luna y Parra has helped women because she believes that they continue to be in a frail position when it comes to certain rights and prerogatives. She recalls being committed to many political agendas that were not the system's way of thinking in either the political arena, nor the economic and social ones. As a leader, she is aware that new agendas have to be made in order to create gender equality because, she believes, that 30% of contemporary legislation does not come from the logic of the system, but from the logic of society, which has helped create agendas in areas such as the environment and human rights. The meaning of this is that the legislation that comes from the system supports gender equality, especially in a time where society is so involved in politics through participation through social media.

In regard to the different kind of leadership between genders, Luna y Parra believes that women and men have different ways of doing things; different ways of communicating with society and of relating to certain ideals, especially in the Mexican culture where genders are given very specific roles. Nevertheless, she is aware that those roles have started to change and that—even if there will not be a shift in the near future—at least there will be some equality in certain sectors.

Luna y Parra believes that it was as late as 1975, when the United Nations Conference for Women took place in Mexico, that women became truly empowered as leaders. It was a time when women who worked in politics, in the private sector, or in the

streets as prostitutes, became united for a common goal even if their backgrounds were completely different to change a society that is tremendously discriminatory.

Politics

Even though Luna y Parra had already worked in the public service, she formally started her political career when she became the representative for the municipality of Álvaro Obregón in the 1980s. During that time she was able to create different programs that helped to reduce violence in the area, programs that created public spaces, such as parks, libraries, auditoriums, and recreation centers where people could create a sense of community and eliminate the ghettos.

Even though she has always worked for the PRI, Luna y Parra believes that one has to learn how to survive political parties. Nevertheless, she thinks that political parties are a tool to create communication with society and to understand its needs. If they do not make a real effort to communicate with society, political parties tend to alienate from certain sectors.

When Luna y Parra became a congresswoman, she was involved in the creation of harsher laws for rapists and those who committed gender abuse. She created a Penal Code reform that continued to perpetuate laws that allowed men to administer all of the family's monies and take charge of the children after a divorce, etc. At that moment she created a coalition with congressmen and congresswomen from the PRI, the PAN, and the PRD in order to break party blocks and create a successful reform.

María Angélica Luna y Parra, who does not like to talk about her having a successful political career and is humbled by any compliment, thinks that she has been able to help people from a position of privilege, but more so because she is passionate

about what she does, not only politically, but personally. She believes that women have not had the opportunity, until very recently when the gender quotas were established, to become as equally involved as men in the Congress. She believes that the hermeneutics of the system will never be broken if such quotas or racial integration continue to exist.

When she was asked about the possibility of having a woman president, Luna y Parra said that she believes that Mexico is ready in every sense, but that such a woman should be very well educated, with knowledge of the law, and thinks outside the box in regard to the traditional agenda. She would like that woman to be committed to the gender cause, supporting women.

Beatriz Paredes

Background

Beatriz Paredes was born in Tlaxcala, Mexico, in 1953. She is currently the Mexican Ambassador to Brazil. Paredes was the first woman to serve as governor of Tlaxcala and the second woman to serve as a state governor in the history of Mexico (the first one was Griselda Álvarez in Colima). She was also the second woman to have formally answered a State of the Union Address in 1979, when José López-Portillo was President. She has served in many public positions, which include undersecretary for Agrarian Reform, undersecretary of State three times, deputy in four occasions (LI, LIII, LVIII, LXI Legislatures), senator (LVII legislature), During the year 2000, she was President of the Chamber of Deputies when the political alternation between PRI and PAN occurred. She was also president of the Colosio Foundation, and ambassador to Cuba. Paredes ran for mayor of Mexico City in 2006, but lost the election. Between 2007 and 2011, she was the third woman to be president of the PRI, but the first one to become

elected to occupy the position. She expressed her support for same-sex marriage and is pro-choice on abortion.

Personal

Beatriz Paredes was born in a small rural town in the State of Tlaxcala. Her father was a self-taught man who was a sailor and also involved in politics. She defines her mother as a hard-working woman, modern and cosmopolitan, involved in certain projects that may have been ahead of her time. Because her parents were separated, she spent her educative years between a rural environment of Tlaxcala and Mexico City, where she was able to understand both worlds. At some point she left for Veracruz, where she wanted to study music and literature. Nevertheless, she then realized that she wanted to write about the affairs of human beings, and became interested in politics. Even though her calling—which was music—did not match her personality, she had to choose a path and understood that her true calling was politics. She then moved permanently to Mexico City, where she began to study sociology.

Paredes defines herself as someone who has her own interpretation of reality and of the solutions to problems. She also believes that one of her qualities is that she is moved by people because of her social empathy. Paredes became a congresswoman when she was only 21 years old, wanting to change the environment of Tlaxcala which she lived and suffered as a child and supporting the ideological commitment in favor of the peasants.

Even though Paredes is happy with her life and her achievements, she regrets that, having entered politics at such a young age, she was not able to study for a master's degree or a doctorate abroad, and that she had to put her personal life in a secondary role

because, as she states, “people judge women much more severely when it comes to their personal relations.”

Leadership

Beatriz Paredes considers herself an innate leader, who was always in charge of representing people, even in her teenage years when she was able to represent her classmates. She was class president in more than one occasion. She credits her oratory skills and ability to communicate well with people for her success.

She defines leadership as the ability to interpret the expectations of a social conglomerate and represent them and being able to influence its evolution through moral values and historical perspectives. Paredes is convinced that leadership has to do with context and with the historical moment it represents, indicating that there is change throughout time. Democratic leadership, as she calls it, needs to have a mixture of educated reflection, consultation with other experts, and an analysis of the social demands. In regard to how she has supported women, Paredes says that what is really transcendent is to support women who are at the bottom of the pyramid, so their objective conditions change in order for them to have more opportunities and respect for their integrity as women.

Having studied gender for a long time and participated for many decades in the political arena, Beatriz Paredes has been able to see the difference between how men and women are treated. She believes that the private life of female leaders is much more harshly judged, and is determinant in their political ascent. She believes that there is “more permissibility for male leaders” in politics. Another way that women are judged is in their appearance. Paredes believes “women have to be more concerned about their

personal image, which is not a relevant factor for men.” On the other hand, she has seen that women have better capacities for negotiations, and that they are more interested in the wellbeing of children. She also believes that women who are in politics need “the same things as a man, but multiplied.” It is her belief that there are no different characteristics that a man and a woman who enter politics must have, but in the case of women, those characteristics must be more noticeable in order to make others aware of their political capabilities.

Politics

Paredes became a local congresswoman, representing Tlaxcala, when she was only 21 years old and at that time she also was the coordinator of the state’s congress. In 1979, when she was 24 years old, she presided over the Congress and responded to the State of the Union address of José López-Portillo, who she defines as “an enlightened man, a man of letters, and a great speaker.” Even though she was not the first woman to have answered a Presidential Address, her young age impressed people and made a great impact because of her intelligent remarks.⁷

When Paredes was 33 she became the first woman to become governor of Tlaxcala, and the second woman to become governor, during the administration of Miguel de la Madrid, who was aware of her commitment to the people of Tlaxcala. During that time she created several programs that improved the lives of women in different fields: peasants, teachers, nurses, students, and stay-at-home mothers. Another important program that she created was the public ministry agencies that specialized in responding to violence against women. Paredes was also the first woman to be the general secretary

⁷ The first woman to respond to a Presidential Address was Luz María Zaleta, a member of the PRI, who did so in 1966, while being President of the Chamber of Deputies, in the Second Address of President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz.

of National Confederation of Peasants, an organization that fights for the rights of the fieldworkers, and also directed the National Commission of Indigenous People, an organization of the Federal Government that is in charge of the rights of the indigenous populations across the country. In 1994, while she was working as Undersecretary of State, she was responsible for creating the relations between the Electoral Federal Institute (IFE) and the existing political parties for the presidential elections of that year, thus directly participating in the democratic movement.

One of her greatest honors, as Paredes recalls, was to work with Jorge Carpizo, who was Secretary of the Interior, during the presidential elections of 1994, what Paredes defines as “one of the most difficult moments in Mexican politics.” She is also particularly proud of having been President of the Congress and the leader of the opposition in the Chamber of Deputies when the PAN was in power for the first time during the administration of Vicente Fox (2000-2006).

Paredes defines her passions as being people and society. As long as politics allows her to be close to the people to transform reality, then politics is fundamental for her. Paredes states that in order for someone—man or woman—to enter politics, the primary requirement is that he or she must have a genuine interest in the people and a true commitment to society, consistency and perseverance, and that they are aware that it is not an easy activity and that troubles are constant.

Consuelo Sáizar

Background

Consuelo Sáizar was born in Acaponeta, Nayarit, in 1961. She is an editor, author, and politician. Sáizar was the first woman to become director of the Fondo de Cultura

Económica (FCE), a publishing institution that is funded by the government and one of the most prestigious publishing houses in Latin America, founded more than eighty years ago, has always been directed by men. In 2009, she became president of the National Council for the Arts (Conaculta) during part of the presidency of Felipe Calderón, becoming the second woman to preside over the institution in charge of the cultural life and activities of Mexico.

Personal

Since she was a child, Sáizar was interested in books because her family owned a printing shop and a newspaper. She began to define her interests and then moved to Mexico City and began to work as Chief of Press of the Fondo Nacional para Actividades Sociales (Fonapas), a cultural institution founded by first-lady Carmen Romano de López-Portillo, and funded by the government, which promoted cultural activities. During that time she wrote columns in different newspapers in Nayarit and Mexico City. She then pursued a formal education and enrolled in the Universidad Iberoamericana, where she studied communications between 1979 and 1983. After she graduated, Sáizar participated in several editing houses and became general manager of Jus Editorial until 1990, when she opened Hoja Casa Editorial, which she directed until 2002. At that time, President Vicente Fox named her director of the Fondo de Cultura Económica (FCE), where she was able to innovate and transform the institution, publishing new collections, translating several Mexican authors to English, and internationalizing the presence of the FCE in Spain and several Latin American countries.

In 2009, President Felipe Calderón asked Sáizar to preside over the National Council for the Arts during the final three years of his administration, because the

previous president of the council, Sergio Vela, had to resign after allegations of excessive spending. On the one hand, during her direction, the bicentennial of the independence (1810) and the centennial of the revolution (1910) were celebrated, but much to the dismay of the people the festivities were opaque and disorganized. On the other hand, Conaculta was able to buy the libraries of many important Mexican writers thus making them available to the public. Defining herself as someone who is proud to be the type of person who admires others, Sáizar states that she regrets nothing and that she has sacrificed “absolutely nothing” to be where she is.

Leadership

When Sáizar was asked about what she thought about her being considered a leader, she preferred to be silent and just answered “Those who think so should have the proof to sustain it.” Unfortunately, all of her answers were equally short, but they gave a good—if superficial—insight to her life and her thoughts. Even though Sáizar believes that politics is an area where a woman can be successful, she says that the characteristics that they must have are “often imposed by those who introduce that specific woman to that specific environment.” Therefore, she became aware of how her collaborators worked and adopted certain ways in order to fit in. For her, who has never questioned the difficulties that working in a male-dominated arena imply the relations with both men and women have always been respectful. Sáizar does not recall having ever been victim of abuse because she is a woman, and states that she has always worked well with men.

Politics

Sáizar makes it very clear that she has never had an interest in participating in politics and that her participation has always been in public service, where she began

working after the “invitations from friends or people with whom she identified.” She does not identify with any political party, and does not think that parties are important unless someone wants to build a political career.

Even though most contemporary presidents of Mexico have supported gender equality and the introduction of women in the political arena, Sáizar thinks that “apart from the opportunities that they were given, the great majority of women with political careers have achieved success in their own right.”

If Mexico is ready to be governed by a woman, Sáizar states, “it depends on the people.” She is convinced that Mexico needs someone with honesty, charisma, a well formulated project and a capable team, without giving too much importance to gender issues.

Olga Sánchez Cordero

Background

Olga Sánchez Cordero was born in Mexico City. She was the first female notary public in Mexico City and the 9th woman to be a member of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation (SCJN). She is considered one of the most noteworthy jurists in Mexico and one of the country’s most influential women. She has also been a professor at UNAM and other Mexican universities. Sánchez Cordero is one of the most liberal Justices and has competed several times to become President of the Supreme Court. She is a published author of several books about jurisprudence and has received a Doctor Honoris Causa from three Mexican universities. She was considered by Forbes Magazine in 2013, one of Mexico’s fifty most powerful women.

Personal

Sánchez Cordero comes from a privileged family that always supported her professional decisions. Her parents told her, like she recalled in the interview, that the only limits that she would encounter were those that she imposed on herself. In 1968, she marched alongside the Rector of UNAM, Javier Barros Sierra, Jorge Carpizo (future Secretary of the Interior), and 300 thousand students during the social movements that demanding justice and freedom of speech during the turmoil that occurred in Mexico after the Matanza de Tlatelolco, which occurred on October 2, 1968, and that was explained in the introduction to this research.

In 1970, while she participated in that movement, Sánchez Cordero was studying law at UNAM, where she graduated after writing the thesis entitled “A Revolution in the Interpretation of Law.” She later started to teach in different schools and work as Secretary of Student Affairs at the UNAM School of Law until 1979. In 1984, she became the first woman to be a Notary Public in Mexico City, and then began her ascent in the judicial spheres of Mexico. She has always wanted to become President of the Supreme Court, a position for which she has worked many years.

Coming from one of the first generations that were part of the feminine liberalization in Mexico, Sánchez Cordero has often heard that the success of men is their job, and that the success of women is their family. She states that this is a stereotype that must end, because work and family are human conditions and not an issue of gender. Personally, she recalls having worked with men who are committed with daily work and with bringing justice and who, in their majority, were not prejudiced with pre-established roles. Sánchez Cordero remembers having many mentors and people that helped her in

her professional career. Nevertheless, she says that the support that she received was, in no way given to her because she was a woman. She has been a great influence on her three children, not only personally, but professionally. Her first daughter is a district judge, her son is a notary public, and her youngest daughter also wants to become a notary public (Forbes, 2013)

Leadership

Sánchez Cordero is proud of her trajectory as a lawyer and as a Supreme Court Minister, but especially of her role in fighting for gender equality. She believes that her position has given her the opportunity to help more women break the glass ceiling and achieve positions of power. She defines leadership as the possibility to inspire other people to increase their self-respect, to discover their potential, to exploit their capacity, and to reach their goals. Sánchez Cordero states that a true leader does not necessarily have hierarchical authority, but has the capability to take the initiative, manage, convene, promote, encourage, motivate, and evaluate a group of people.

Sánchez Cordero thinks that still today, it is not easy for women to occupy roles of leadership, and the Supreme Court of Mexico is one example where women struggle. She recalls that when she was a Minister, there were only two women among eleven members. Nevertheless, she feels that during the 21 years of being a Supreme Court Minister, she was able to exercise leadership because she was able to give a voice to those who did not have a voice. By delivering fair sentences, and by leading a group of collaborators of the highest judicial and moral quality, she was able to reach the goals that women sought more than two decades ago.

As a woman leader, Sánchez Cordero questions other women who do not support their gender. She encourages other women to form a union where they could support each other. On the other side, she believes that men support themselves much more than women (Excélsior, 2014). She believes that history has demonstrated that women who are in public office are more prone to worry for the social wellbeing thus usually supporting programs that help women and children in need.

Politics

As Supreme Court Minister, Olga Sánchez Cordero has not directly been involved in politics, but her decisions as a judge have influenced many aspects of politics and society in the 21 years she worked as a Minister. During that time she reviewed the constitutionality of the law and acts of government, including the unequal treatment which men and women have experienced in Mexico. During that time she broke many taboos, and advocated for gender equality, defending women, supporting abortion and same-sex marriage. She has often said that it is important to support other women who want to enter politics, because it is a mechanism that, in the future, will guarantee the access of more women in areas where it was impossible to enter before. The professionalization and specialization of young women is a cultural change that will help to eradicate the stereotypes of gender and discrimination of women.

Sánchez Cordero believes that one of the first social programs that began helping women with federal funds was the National Program for the Developmental Integration of Women—founded in 1980 by President López-Portillo—that set out the necessity to promote the participation of women in the development of the country, not exclusively as mothers, but also as workers and citizens. This program also emphasized training women

to introduce them to the work force. This organization, later became the National Program for Women-Alliance for Equality, during the administration of Ernesto Zedillo; the National Commission for Women in 1998, also during the Zedillo administration, and finally became the National Institute of Women in 2001, during the presidency of Vicente Fox. Nevertheless, Sánchez Cordero is aware that not only the Executive Branch of the government has encouraged gender equality, but also the legislative branch, which recently implemented gender quotas that force equal opportunities for men and women to access public office in Congress.

She states that the Mexican Judicial System has been at the vanguard concerning gender equality, establishing gender parity in order to achieve a 50-50% statistic in the National Congress, local Congresses, and city councils, an arrangement which she considers a necessary tool to implement mechanisms that give women access to opportunities that were previously denied or difficult to take advantage of. Sánchez Cordero believes, however, that if gender quotas are not well-managed, they will create a new kind of discrimination in the long run, because political parties could utilize women just to cover the quota without considering their political abilities. This happened in 2012, when women were used by certain political parties and became members of congress and, less than two months later, they suddenly resigned and their substitutes—all men—became congressmen. In support of disadvantaged women, the Judicial Power has also implemented laws that give indigenous women the right to be voted into office, despite their community's organization and traditions.

Sánchez Cordero believes, as she said in the interview directed for this research, that “politics is not a matter of gender, but a matter of passion, commitment,

determination, discipline, self-sufficiency, and of love for our nation, our roots, our culture, and our people.” She also describes the ideal politician as someone who is organized and administers his or her time in an efficient manner, who reaches the goals that are imposed by themselves; who is informed and is aware that leadership is a form of power and uses it in benefiting everyone; and who knows how to grow, creating opportunities for the people that surround them.

Margarita Zavala

Background

Margarita Zavala was born in Mexico City in 1967, and is currently (2016) a presidential pre-candidate. She has been a Congresswoman two times; first as a Local Deputy in the Assembly of Mexico City from 1994 to 1997, and then as a Federal Deputy from 2003 to 2006. She is married to former President Felipe Calderón (2006-2012) with whom she has three children. During his administration, Zavala carried out the role of First Lady thus putting aside all her political aspirations. Nevertheless, during the six years of her husband’s administration, she supported gender equality and the protection of Mexican children both in Mexico and in the United States.

Coming from a very conservative family, Zavala—who considers herself, as she stated for this interview, “*muy mocha*” (very religious)—was educated in a religious school, following her parents’ catholic beliefs. She then entered the Escuela Libre de Derecho, one of Mexico’s most prestigious law schools, during which she became a member of the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN). Since the beginning of the 1990s, she has worked in different law firms, taught at her former school, and continued a successful political career.

From 1993 to 1994, she worked as Legal Director of the Executive Committee of the PAN, and from 1994 to 1997 she was a Local Deputy in the Legislative Assembly of Mexico City, where she began focusing on areas that interested her, such as migration, children, and women. From 1999 to 2003 she was the National Secretary of Women's Political Promotion. She then became a Federal Deputy in the Chamber of Deputies from 2003 to 2006, where she continued to promote several initiatives regarding minors, gender, and migration. During that time she was also named Under Coordinator of Social Politics of the PAN given her involvement in certain social and political areas. Her family's involvement with the PAN, of which Zavala is very proud, has made her an active member of the party.

As First Lady of Mexico, it has been customary since the late 1970s to become President of the National System for the Integral Development of Families (SNDIF), which she did with great success. She continued her work with addictions, women and children, and unaccompanied underage migrants thus creating a web of different national and foreign institutions, in order to create more viable solutions avoiding the repetition of functions within different institutions. She also created programs to expedite adoption processes, and to help areas that were affected by natural disasters.

In June 2015, Zavala publicly announced through an internet video, that she will run for President in 2018. She stated that she would work to improve Mexico's economy, as well as the rule of law, especially where there is "a huge gap between politicians and citizens" (Zavala, 2015).

Personal

Margarita Zavala has seen two very different sides of politics. On the one hand, she has worked throughout her life to escalate the political ladder of the PAN, where she has worked since 1991. She has held several positions inside the party bureaucracy and has been elected as a congresswoman two times. Nevertheless, she saw the other side of the coin when her husband, Felipe Calderón, became President of Mexico. During that time, Zavala not only continued to teach in her former high school and be present to her three children, but carried out the functions of First Lady that are expected by the people.

Zavala says that it is very difficult to talk about regrets when one has a calling and a job that she is passionate about. She believes that every decision she has taken has led to sacrificing or not, but she has given certain matters the importance they deserve, such as family. Nevertheless, she thinks that her three children have always been used to her working, not only during her husband's administration. Therefore, that made it easier for her to travel and be away from them. In that regard, Zavala is aware that her children support her and that they know that she will support them in the career decision they make, such as it happened with her own mother, who she describes as a hard-working lawyer who has been her example. Coming from a family where both parents worked as lawyers, and with six siblings, Zavala always felt she could choose her profession and be respected and supported by them.

Leadership

Zavala's vision of leadership is quite clear. She believes that in the area where she has worked her whole life, and in her calling—which is politics—one is obligated to exercise leadership, which is obviously not perfect, but is related to the common good,

with doing others a service. Zavala does not believe that in order to consider leadership as such, it has to be a positive leadership, because it is a discipline that has to be focused on doing good. If the exercise of power has a negative outcome—like in the case of Adolf Hitler—then that should not be considered leadership. She truly believes that, in order for a woman to become successful in politics, she needs to be a leader, but that means taking a group of people to a determined end, with proposals that generate good. In the measure that this is more politic, the good will become more public, because more people will notice it and profit from it.

In regard to the differences between men and women, Zavala states that particular characteristics are needed in leadership, but they are not different between genders. The most important qualities for a leader to have are discipline, responsibility, decision-making, and knowing that they are more responsible than others in achieving a common goal. Nevertheless, she recalls, there are differences between the way that men and women carry out being leaders; women, for example, are leaders who listen more.

Politics

During the more than twenty years that Margarita Zavala has been in politics, she has lived the many changes that her gender has suffered—both good and bad—in the different power spheres in Mexican politics. She is much more involved now than she was a couple of decades ago, and today, women are in positions where decisions are made. This does not mean, however, that it has been easy. Women have more obstacles and it is much more difficult for them, especially in the political arena.

Zavala recalls that many of the decisions she has made during her political career have served to integrate women into the work force and into different areas of labor. She

is particularly proud of the National Institute of Women (INMujeres), from which many other campaigns have emerged in the last few decades, such as fighting to avoid gender violence, gender discrimination, and the inclusion of women in areas of the work force where they had been ostracized until recently.

In regard to the newly applied gender quotas in the Mexican Congress, Zavala thinks that they are an affirmative action even though she believes that the ideal way for it to happen, would have been without the passing of a law and instead through a social metamorphosis that would allow women to become active participants in the political spheres. She believes that gender quotas, however, accelerated the inclusion process and that they will do great good, not only in politics, but in the society in general.

Even though Margarita Zavala did not like to be referred as the First Lady, but as the wife of the President of the Republic during her husband's administration, she worked hard to promote several campaigns that promoted gender equality. Her formal education as a lawyer made her see things in a particular way. She recalls that, even though her position as First Lady did not have any formal authority, she was at liberty to create different programs and campaigns for the service of the people and the common good. Zavala was the first wife of a President to have a political career, which has now opened the discussion of her decision to run for President in the 2018 elections. To that matter, she has found that those who are 50 years or older formulate more questions about having a female President than those who are under 40. Nevertheless, she is absolutely convinced that Mexico is culturally, socially, and politically ready to be governed by a woman. She considers herself a woman who has always put Mexico before herself, and is proud of the work she has done and of having created the family she has.

Cross-Case Analysis

To understand what political and socio-cultural factors influenced, challenged, or supported women's efforts to become leaders in Mexican politics, I conducted a cross case analysis. Some of the topics that were brought up by the twelve interviewees are discussed in this part of the research. I examine these women's points of view in a more specific manner thus being able to compare their perspectives on background, culture, politics, leadership, and personality. This way, I was able to understand their perspectives and the way that their background is related to their success. Their personal background has influenced, without a doubt, their careers and their success as leaders in academia, activism, and politics.

Family

The families of the women who were interviewed here were described as having a great influence on them. Their familial environment helped shape their personalities and define their interests to varying degrees. Apart from the economic background of the families of my interviewees and the educational opportunities they were able to receive, most of them talked about the way in which their families supported them not only financially, but also emotionally.

Former minister of the Supreme Court, Olga Sánchez Cordero, recalls her parents telling her "you will never have any limits, except those that you impose on yourself." Not only did she grow up in a privileged social environment, but she always had the unconditional support of her siblings, her children, and her husband, with whom she has been with for forty-seven years. Like Sánchez Cordero, Marta Lamas grew up in a protected and safe environment due to her father being a banker. Her mother, whom she

defines as a feminist, always supported her dreams and allowed her to see the different aspects of the country, without limiting her experiences because of her social class. Her work does not prevent her to see her son and she spends quality time with him. In the case of Carmen López-Portillo, who also grew up in a comfortable environment, the support of her family has been crucial and she recalls, “They have always supported me. I am proud of my family and my heritage, for which I have always fought to deserve and preserve.” She expresses that her father was her example and that she studied law because of him. Even though she continues to preside over the University of the Claustro de Sor Juana, López-Portillo spends her free time with her children and grandchildren. Ambassador Roberta Lajous’ family’s privileged position in society helped her receive the best education. In her family, “public policies were always of interest and a cause for analysis,” and recalls that her older sister was her example because she went to college and worked at the same time, “which for me, being only 11 years old, was impressive.” María Angélica Luna y Parra’s family is one of great tradition in the liberal sphere. She remembers that her father “always made us work and study, even during the summers. It was out of the question to become a housewife.” She continues by saying that “for my father we were all Madame Curie.” Today she is a wife, a mother, and grandmother, and continues to work does not let that prevent her from spending time with her family. Margarita Zavala, who comes from a more traditional background, but who always received a good education, remembers her parents always “supporting my decisions and those of my six siblings. That is why we have one of everything in my family,” says jokingly. She expresses that her mother is her example, because she always remembers her working. Today, Zavala’s teenage children support her active political career, as they

have always done. On the other hand, Beatriz Paredes, who grew up in a more modest environment in the state of Tlaxcala, recalls that her parents “always supported my decisions and gave me the opportunity to study what I wanted.”

The perspectives that these women have on their familial backgrounds allow us to understand the importance that their families have had in their lives. Culturally, the concept of family in Mexico is one of the most important ones, and they make it noticeable with their responses. However, the concept of family has changed throughout the history of Mexico and today it is clear that, in some cases, roles have shifted or, at least, changed. Even if the families of the twelve interviewees were “traditional” in what was expected a few decades ago, they make clear that being single mothers, homosexuals, or divorced is more common than before. Although some of them continue to live in what is considered “standard” families that does not influence their professional success. What is noticeable, however, is that, whatever the type of personal life they lead, the support of their loved ones is an important factor in succeeding.

Sacrifices

Even though one might think that in order to have a successful political career these women had to make many sacrifices, most of them do not recall having to sacrifice anything. Consuelo Sáizar exclaims that she has sacrificed “absolutely nothing!” Bermúdez also explained not having any regrets. She recalls never having seen her career as a sacrifice because she has been able to work in the benefit of Mexico. Luna y Parra and Sánchez Cordero believe that managing their time in an organized way was the reason why they were able to have both a family and a career. Sánchez Cordero explains she has “always been able to give everyone—including myself—the time they deserve.”

Others, however recognized sacrifice. Beatriz Paredes recalls having started her political career when she was 21, and regrets not having had the opportunity and time to pursue a graduate degree. In a more intimate manner, she says “I had to choose and, in a way, relegate my private life.” Zavala, López-Portillo, and García Noriega regret not having spent as much time with their families because of their multiple occupations. Interestingly, however, they did not define this as sacrifice because they felt they were able to give their loved ones a good example. Even though some sacrifices might have been made, Margarita Zavala, Cristina Alcayaga, and Roberta Lajous believe they followed their vocations, so they have led happy and complete lives because they are complete in terms of family and profession.

Although many of the interviewees admit that they have had to make some sacrifices in order to have professional success, they do not regret making them. The majority of them believe that those decisions helped them to become an example to the future generations. Those who have children, believe that the fact that they have had professional lives, have influenced their offspring in becoming productive, hardworking, and useful to their country. Some of the children of the women who were interviewed even decided to follow their mother’s steps and career path. That means that, even if they made certain sacrifices, they had a good result.

Women they admire

The historical background of this research indicates that Mexicans have created myths surrounding three women: La Malinche, the Virgin of Guadalupe, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. There are other women who have participated throughout the history of Mexico who are also worthy of respect and admiration, as it can be seen in the following

paragraphs where the opinions of the twelve interviewees are expressed. Having these role models has been important to them because the interviewees relate to them in one way or another. These women, who have been embedded in Mexican culture and who have participated in areas such as history, literature, religion, politics, arts, and society since the foundation of the country are an example to those women who live today and an inspiration in the way they act as women.

Sor Juana—Olga Sánchez Cordero believes—“is the most wonderful exponent of the female gender in the Golden Century of Hispano American literature, and it is a duty of the female gender to feel admiration for her.” Similarly, Sari Bermúdez believes that the poet nun, of whom López-Portillo said that “she fought for intellectual liberty and for knowledge,” and is worthy of admiration.

Leona Vicario and Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez, the two women who fought during the War of Independence, and who have entered the popular imagination as the heroines of that time, are admired by Zavala, Bermúdez, and Sánchez Cordero. The latter states that “to admire and respect them is an historical duty.”

López-Portillo also admires Carmen Serdán (1875-1948), who sympathized with President Francisco I. Madero and one of the key figures of the Mexican Revolution. López-Portillo defines her as “a woman who always stood by her word and her ideals, fighting for what she thought was right.” Gabriela Cano greatly admires a woman who she has greatly researched: Amalia de Castillo Ledón (1898-1986), who was the first Mexican woman to become ambassador and a noteworthy writer and feminist. Sánchez Cordero and Bermúdez admires Rosario Castellanos (1925-1974), who is considered by many one of the most important Mexican writers of the twentieth century, whose work

greatly influenced gender studies in Mexico. Alcayaga expressed her admiration for Rosario Green (1941), who was Secretary of Foreign Affairs during the Zedillo administration and Secretary General of the PRI. On the other hand, Margarita Zavala gave a more general statement, saying that she admires “those women who have participated in political parties creating a change thus influencing the political life of Mexico.”

The interviewees in this study admire women from every possible discipline, but there were certain commonalities: six of them stated they admire Griselda Álvarez (1913-2009), who, among other things, was the first Mexican female governor, who Beatriz Paredes considers to be “a great politician to which all the women who are in the political arena should be grateful, because she was the milestone.” López-Portillo, Alcayaga, Cano, Lamas, and Sánchez Cordero also believe that she was one of the most important and strongest figures in gender equality.

Another commonality that women had in regard to women they admire, is that García Noriega, Alcayaga, Lajous, López-Portillo, and Bermúdez considered that mothers and teachers are worthy of everyone’s admiration because of many reasons. García Noriega states that she admires “women of the populace because they do everything to improve the living conditions of their families,” and López-Portillo talks about the mothers and teachers, “who make the daily difference in Mexico, despite all the sacrifices that they have to do to have a better life.” Bermúdez also recognizes mothers, because “they get over obstacles, limitations, and everyday risks.” Alcayaga and Lajous express their recognition to mothers who work in terrible conditions because they fight for their families and for a better future in a country where equality does not exist.

The most important finding in regard to the women they admire was to see how they consider Griselda Álvarez as the role model of contemporary women in Mexican politics. This does not mean that they do not admire those women who are considered symbolic in Mexican culture, but that the interest and admiration has shifted. Their admiration for Álvarez reflects the way in which they admire someone who is tangible, who some of them even met, read about in the newspapers, became involved with in their careers, and relate to personally and professionally. The fact that this shift is made allows them to follow a more concrete path of Álvarez as a role model because she was a wife, a mother, and a grandmother; but who also was an intellectual, an author, a successful politician, and a woman who fought for gender equality and for the empowerment of women in Mexico. This is significant because one can see the way in which the role of women has evolved throughout the country's history and, even though those symbolic women continue to be admired by many, the contemporary role models are modern women.

Culture and Prejudices

Prejudices and cultural values are issues that are perceived differently by all, depending on social and personal perceptions. In Mexico, where machismo continues to be a part of the culture, many prejudices continue to exist towards women who, in many cases, are not given the same opportunities as men. Nevertheless, that has not been the same for all. As it can be seen in the following paragraphs, some of the women who were interviewed for this research have different perceptions and experiences, although they all agree that opportunities are not the same for women and men, and the work conditions are often unfair.

Gabriela Cano, who has extensively researched gender differences and the role of women in history, believes that “women have tended to work in fields that are considered feminine, such as education, health, and social assistance,” because they have been thought of as “more just and moral because of motherhood,” therefore they work in positions where they take care of others such as children, elderly and sick people. Nevertheless, some argue that prejudice is not as strong as before and women can be successful in every area if the condition is the right one. That condition has been changing in the last few decades when it comes to politics in Mexico, and women have more importance in the democratic process of the country. Nevertheless, inequality continues to exist because of the social perception that the Mexican society has of women. That difference between men and women is not only social, but it affects everyday life, because there is a huge difference in regards to salaries. International organizations believe that in Mexico, the difference between the salary of a man and that of a woman is between 15 and 20%. The gender difference in pay increases to 40% when it comes to high-ranking positions (Flores, 2015). According to the International Work Organization, it will not be before 2086 that equality of salaries between men and women will be reached (Flores, 2015). To that extent, López-Portillo, García Noriega, and Lamas agree that lower salaries are a commonality among the female workers, even if they work in the private sector, and one of the most noticeable differences that affect the economy of women.

Marta Lamas, one of the most recognized feminists in Mexico, believes that “machismo continues to influence a great deal of the population, but an intelligent politician would never say anything offensive in regard to gender, because of political

correctness, but they are, in fact, machos and homophobic and would rather have the wife in the kitchen baking cakes.” In regard to machismo, Gabriela Cano believes that it would be eliminated little by little if a woman became President of Mexico, because it would allow everyone—man or woman, boy or girl—to aim high. Roberta Lajous agrees that, even though there continues to be a lot of machismo culture around the world, the only way of eliminating it is for “women to be authentic, not pretending to be something she is not, and that starts with being proud of being a woman.”

Carmen López-Portillo, who has dedicated her life to education, believes that “We live in a world where women still do not have the same opportunities as men, and that change will come through education.” Lucía García Noriega, on the other hand, states that “obstacles exist and the balance will always incline for a man,” and, like López-Portillo, she believes that education is the only way to defeat those prejudices that makes gender inequality. Olga Sánchez Cordero who, as Minister of the Supreme Court always supported gender equality agendas, believes that “a cultural change is much needed in order to eradicate gender stereotypes and to approach in a different way the traditional distribution of work.” She is also aware that those differences exist because of the structural and ideological barriers that Mexican culture has imposed on society, and that those prejudices need to change. Agreeing with them, María Angélica Luna y Parra believes that “we have to make men and women truly aware that gender equality is needed, which will only happen through education.” Even though Cristina Alcayaga also believes that education is a key element to become a successful politician, “people tend to like more someone who is popular, instead of someone who is educated.” Media has always been a big part of political campaigns, but certain areas of society “tend to vote

for those who have access to media, such as football players, singers, actresses, who do not have any type of political vocation,” states Alcayaga, with whom López-Portillo agrees and defines the new political scenario as “deeply influenced by those who are highly exposed to media, such as actors.” Bermúdez also agrees by saying that “people will vote by those with whom they identify.”

Marta Lamas states that “prejudices have self-limited many women, such as Beatriz Paredes, who could have had a much more important political career.” These self-limitations can exist for many reasons, but sexuality has played a major role in determining them. Paredes, who has always been very careful with her private life, believes that “the private lives of women are much more severely judged than that of men, and that becomes determining in someone’s political ascent,” referring to her own personal experience. We can also become familiar with the experience of Margarita Zavala who, as First Lady, became the target of attacks because of trivial things. She recalls that “prejudices are immense, and an example is ambition. If a man is too ambitious, it’s a good thing; if a woman is too ambitious, it becomes a negative characteristic.”

Cristina Alcayaga believes that prejudices have evolved and that “women can now be feminine without being mocked, because in the past they even had to adopt masculine personalities in order to become successful.” Beatriz Paredes agrees and states that “women have to be more careful with their personal image, which is not a truly relevant factor for men. Nobody likes a disheveled woman.” Margarita Zavala, who was severely judged because of her personal image, says that “those criticisms get you at first, but after a while you end up not even noticing them, and people start to notice other

aspects of you.” Nevertheless, those other aspects are not always recognized. Mexicans, according to López-Portillo and Lamas, believe that personal connections continue to be a key element to have a successful career, be it in politics or in the private sector. While López-Portillo states that “people continue to think that women who enter politics do so because of personal connections,” Marta Lamas accepts that it was because of her family that she was able to “do things that seemed important, like many other privileged women” and, in regards to politics, she states that “the Mexican political environment continues to be very masculine, so social and economic capital continue to be a part of why certain women participate in it.” To that extent, the daughters of important businessmen and powerful politicians have become congresswomen despite their young age and lack of political experience.

Despite the prejudices that have been exposed in the previous paragraphs, not all the women who were interviewed have suffered discrimination. Consuelo Sáizar and Sari Bermúdez, both former Ministers of Culture, and María Angélica Luna y Parra, state that they have never been treated differently because of their gender. Bermúdez, however, recalls having had “uncomfortable experiences during my journalistic career, both in Mexico and in the United States,” while Luna y Parra was well aware that, even though she was not treated differently, she was the exception to the rule. On the other hand, Roberta Lajous, who has had a successful diplomatic career and lived in many countries, states that she has been treated differently because of being a woman, “most of the times to my disadvantage.” Zavala also recalls having had a difficult time throughout her political career before her husband’s administration because, as she puts it, “women have a harder time to become successful politicians in our society.”

Even though many of these women—if not all—agree that Mexico continues to be a country in which gender roles are very well established and embedded in our society, and that machismo is still a part of Mexican culture, they agree that it is beginning to change because of the exponential female participation in many areas, including politics. Nevertheless, Mexican society continues to be prejudiced toward women and both genders limit them. It is not only men who continue to have socio-cultural prejudices, but women as well. Therefore, some continue to lock themselves in the pre-established social order and building a glass-ceiling. This is not the case of the interviewees, however, who have fought to have a successful professional career and overcoming personal, social, cultural, and political obstacles.

Media

The media has also have played an important role in Mexican politics, especially in the last few decades, where actors and actresses, football players, and celebrities become members of Congress, senators, and mayors. In a democratic country, the Congress represents all the people, and it is somewhat normal to have members of the show business in Congress. The problem is, however, their lack of preparation. As López-Portillo states, “people tend to vote for those who have access to media, such as football players, singers, actresses, who do not have any type of political vocation.” Luna y Parra also believes that “the political scenario is deeply influenced by those who are highly exposed to media, such as actresses.” Marta Lamas is more blunt when talking about the way in which media has influenced politics. She believes that “women tend to be sexualized and men want to see big breasts, so the option is to vote for women who are in the show business.” Cristina Alcayaga, on the other hand, is more prudent and

states that the “media has greatly influenced the perception of women.” To this regard, it is noticeable the way in which television, telenovelas, and celebrities have created a new niche in politics, promoted by the big television stations, such as Televisa and TV Azteca. Some of the women who have been members of the Mexican Congress and that have been involved with those companies are Ninfa Salinas, daughter of the owner of TV Azteca, and actresses María Rojo, Silvia Pinal, Irma Serrano, and Carmen Salinas, who is currently serving as a congresswoman.

If these women are capable to be in Congress is an issue to be addressed in another study, but what is clear is that the influence of the media stations in the political arena is growing stronger every day. The fact that these women become politicians from one day to the other may affect the general perception of women because of the way they are seen in movies, the theatre, or worst, in telenovelas. That general perception may be a prejudice, but what is alarming is the way in which they switch careers without preparation, vocation, or political knowledge. When Carmen Salinas was asked about her projects while serving as a Congresswoman she colloquially answered “*No la hagas de pedo porque ahorita no las tengo (las iniciativas)*”, (El Universal, 2015), which would roughly translate to “I don’t have any initiatives, so stop bugging.”

Leadership and Traits

Many are the traits that my interviewees consider that a leader must have. They talked about such characteristics depending on their own experiences, taking into account their participation as leaders in both politics and academia. Gabriela Cano is aware that, even though she is not a politician, leadership depends on each individual context, and that “it is not the same to enter the political arena on the municipal level or the federal

level.” Even though she did not want to make a generalization of the traits “because historians avoid making generalizations,” she states that women tend to be more responsible, although not as a trait, but because they are aware that they are more severely judged and criticized. On the other hand, the rest of the interviewees were able to find certain specific characteristics that they believe female leaders should have.

The characteristic which most of the interviewees agreed that a leader should have is skills to work with a team. Sánchez Cordero states that “a leader is someone who does not use their hierarchical position to take the initiative for a determined project that motivates a group of persons,” while Luna y Parra—in a very similar way—believes that “to be a leader is to know how to ask for things by not using power or hierarchy to demand.” López-Portillo, on the other hand, states that “because the recognition of one as a leader depends on others and not on oneself, the leader has to lead by example.” García Noriega, Alcayaga, and Bermúdez also agree with the importance of team work, especially in politics, because collective decisions are made all the time.

Another characteristic that they believe is important for women to have in politics is the ability to dialogue. Beatriz Paredes, who started as leader of the farmers’ union and became one of the most prominent members of the PRI, states that a leader “must, must, must be willing to listen and dialogue.” In a similar thought, García Noriega and Sánchez Cordero believe that communication and dialogue are characteristics that a good politician—man or woman—should have. Zavala, who agrees with the importance of dialogue, thinks that “women who are leaders tend to listen better.”

Sánchez Cordero believes that “politics is not a matter of gender, but of passion, commitment, determination, discipline, and love for our nation, our roots, our culture and

our people,” and Bermúdez, who agrees with her, states that “women who enter politics should have the same characteristics as men: a genuine love for the country and a will to help make a better society.” Beatriz Paredes, however, believes that women tend to be better negotiators and that “that they tend to care more for children, so they create more programs to improve their situations.”

Luna y Parra states that a woman who enters politics and who wants to become a leader should be committed to new agendas and to truly fight for gender equality, because she is “very disillusioned to see women in politics that are not committed to our gender or to the real causes of society, whose speeches are shallow and superficial.” Paredes, more aware of a common past, believes that leadership is the way to interpret the expectations of a group and to represent them faithfully in terms of history and ideology, because “it has to do with the context and the historical moment that is presented.”

García Noriega, Bermúdez, Paredes, and Zavala brought up “the common good,” and that leaders should always keep in mind that they are working for the people, to create a better country for all. They also believe that social empathy is transcendent to be a leader who impacts positively on others. In order to become positive leaders, other characteristics are needed. Alcayaga believes that commitment and vocation are needed, while Lajous talked about character and determination. Bermúdez believes that honesty and empathy are the most needed characteristics that a leader should have, and Paredes, who also talked about honesty, included social empathy, integrity, and consistency. Sánchez Cordero believes that only through inspiring others to discover their potential one can be called a leader, and Luna y Parra, in a more pragmatic way, stated that a

woman who enters politics should be well cultured and have a legal mind. Nevertheless, Lamas did not give any particular characteristic and stated that a “woman who enters politics has to know the rules of the way and be everything that the situation demands.”

Even though there was not a general finding in regard to the traits that a woman must have to become a successful politician, the general consensus was that most women rely on team work, dialogue, and communication. They believe that the importance of a team that is prepared and working in synchrony is absolutely necessary to properly function and give positive results.

Women in Mexican Politics

On the one hand, Roberta Lajous and Sari Bermúdez believe, without a doubt, that women can fully develop professionally in politics. Lajous even believes that women can have a more successful career as a politician “than in many other professions.” On the other hand, Gabriela Cano and Marta Lamas, both researchers of gender studies, believe that politics is a conservative environment where the rules continue to be very masculine. The rest of the interviewees, however, believe that politics is an environment where women can have a successful career due to the times and context in which we are living, but with certain limitations. López-Portillo and García Noriega believe that success in any area depends on whether the person is fulfilling their vocation, and knowing that they are not entering one area or the other for the wrong reasons or personal ambition. According to López-Portillo, that is the case many times, especially in Mexico, where “the idea of democracy has become perverted, so one has to have the strength to defend our own essence and core as persons.”

Luna y Parra, Paredes, and Zavala have had long and fruitful political careers, throughout which they have been able to see the changes that have happened in benefit of women. Paredes sees the triumph of Griselda Álvarez as Governor of Colima, as the milestone for women in Mexican politics and recalls that “after that point, there was no going back. Since then, Paredes continues, “women have been able to gain true political strength.” Admitting that the change has been immense in the last few decades, Zavala believes that “it is important to have women in every government, cabinet, decision-making groups in both the public and the private sector.” Lamas believes that in order to have true political equality between men and women would be by having a woman in the Secretariat of Internal Affairs and in the Secretariat of Economy, as it would be the only way to distribute the budget with equality thus creating an umbrella effect throughout the country.

Unfortunately, not all areas of the government are gender inclusive. Alcayaga, Cano and Luna y Parra agree in saying that, even though women are more politically successful than some years back, that limits to the urban areas and that women are not supported in the municipalities, where education tends to be lower and prejudices greater. López-Portillo believes that this is due to higher levels of education in urban environments and, that in the provinces of the country, especially in the countryside, education continues to be very limited.

Even though all of the interviewees who have participated directly in politics say they have worked for the common good, the reasons for entering have been very different for them. While Consuelo Sáizar says she entered politics “because I had invitations to participate from friends and people with whom I identify,” Bermúdez and Paredes state

that they wanted a change for Mexico. On the other side, Sánchez Cordero states that her interest “was not in becoming a politician, but to serve my country by dedicating my efforts and my life in the impartation of justice.” Her vocation was very clear since the beginning, although she was always aware that becoming a minister of the Supreme Court would give her great influence in the political life and decision-making of Mexico.

In this section, each of the interviewees expressed their own opinions in regard to politics, their involvement in it, and the way they have perceived its evolvement in regard to gender. One of the concerns that several of these women expressed is the way in which gender equality changes between urban and rural areas. Women tend to be much more participative in politics in the large cities of Mexico, such as Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey, but their involvement in the municipalities continues to be minimal. This is due to the levels of education, which, as López-Portillo says, “continue to be very limited in the countryside.” Nevertheless, this is beginning to change and more women are becoming more involved in all levels of the political arena in many states of the country.

Role of the First Ladies

The role of the First Ladies in Mexico is, like in every republican country, a formally and legally non-existent position. Throughout the history of Mexico, some First Ladies have played a significant role in areas such as culture, education, and health thus creating cultural organizations, supporting the construction of museums, concert halls, schools, and hospitals. Others have been less active in the activities that were expected from them. Active or inactive, however, the First Ladies of the recent decades have always been the target of popular criticism (Appendix F).

Their role is definitely a polemic one although, as Consuelo Sáizar says, “some have performed with admirable dignity.” While Roberta Lajous believes that “the more discreet, the better” Sari Bermúdez states “they have to have a relevant role, with an agenda that agrees with the policies of the president.” Alcayaga agrees with Bermúdez and believes that they should have a more active role. On the other side, Marta Lamas has a stronger opinion of them and believes that “the role of First Lady is very traditional and conservative. It’s messed up.” Cano, however, believes that the position has become more powerful in some countries in the last few years, because “in Mexico with Zavala, the United States with Clinton, and Argentina with Kirchner, they have become an antechamber for becoming president.”

Sánchez Cordero believes that the role of First Lady must be particularly difficult in Mexico because “even though they are not elected or named, they are exposed to public opinion and scrutiny, as well as being expected to work in determined projects without compensation.” As it was established before, these projects have usually been social, cultural, and educational, as López-Portillo, García Noriega, and Bermúdez agree thus influencing the micro cosmos: family.

Nevertheless, the only person who can directly talk about the role of First Lady is Margarita Zavala, as she has been the only one of my interviewees who was in that role. She believes that they “should have certain freedom to decide what they do, even though there is no formal authority. It is a place from which one is able to know the country inside out and to evaluate the exterior from the interior.”

The role of the first ladies has been important in Mexico because of their participation in social projects and the political influence they have had during the

administrations of their husbands. Their impact has been different in every administration, and Mexico has seen very active first ladies and others who have remained in near anonymity. In the first half of the twentieth century, they carried their role in a discreet manner, focusing in projects that would help very specific social areas. During the second half of the twentieth century, some first ladies had more impact because of their personalities and their political discourse, which always supported their husbands' policies. However, the first ladies of the PRI never sought a political career of their own. Nevertheless, that changed after the year 2000 when the PAN gained access to the presidency. The wife of President Vicente Fox, Martha Sahagún, whose only political participation was as mayoral candidate of a small town in Guanajuato, stated in 2015: "I wasn't the presidential candidate because I didn't want to... my political life was one of the biggest renouncements" (Proceso, 2015). Even though her participation in politics was only as First Lady during five of the six years of the Fox administration, as they got married once Fox was president, she was the first First Lady to openly say she would like to run for president. On the other side, Margarita Zavala, wife of President Felipe Calderón, had a political career of her own—she was a congresswoman twice—which she paused during her husband's administration. It was until 2012, when Calderón's presidency ended, that she stated that she would seek the presidency.

The evolution of the role of First Lady is clearly visible as now, as they are gaining more political power than before. Not only because of the influence that they gain during and after their husbands' administration, but also because of the media. The case of Zavala, however, is different because she has a political career of her own. Nevertheless, it would be highly improbable that a former congresswoman would have

any true possibilities of becoming a presidential candidate had not she been married to a president.

Gender Quotas

Since gender quotas were proposed in the Mexican Congress, they became a polemic issue. People were divided in whether accepting them was as a good or a bad thing, and some harshly criticized them. In a country where culture is so strongly embedded, the possibility of having equality between men and women would have been more complicated and would have taken more time. While some interviewees believed gender quotas were a great way to advance the process of equality, others believed that they would make the Mexican Congress more corrupt and inefficient. This thought was not without foundation, because in 2009 the Congress—which by then had a 70-30% quota—had the problem of the “Juanitas,” which were congresswomen who were nominated just to comply with the quota and were later made to resign in order to have their substitutes—all men—take charge.

Similar to the society that was divided back then, the interviewees who participated in this research were also divided. While Lucía García Noriega exclaimed “I consider them a barbarity!” Cano stated that “gender quotas were a success that surprised everyone... they are very important for gender equality.” Nevertheless, she states that they could have been less aggressive, “perhaps two decades of 70-30% so men learn to do other things.” On the other hand, García Noriega, who does not agree completely with them believes, like the rest of the interviewees, that they can be the beginning of a change.

Carmen López-Portillo believes that gender quotas “are a good first step to allow women to participate in the legislative arena, although they need to be structured so their participation becomes significant.” To that regard, Alcayaga and Lamas agree that they are a mechanism of demographic equality, not a mechanism that guarantees quality. It does not mean that because gender quotas exist, women entering Congress will be good politicians. Intelligence, honesty, education, and vocation are traits that will continue to be needed in order to be successful.

Olga Sánchez Cordero says quotas are necessary, “but they must be considered a means and not an end, because if they are not well managed, they can cause a different type of discrimination.” Nevertheless, she agrees with Sáizar, Alcayaga, Lamas, Lajous, Luna y Parra, Zavala, López-Portillo and Bermúdez, that gender quotas are necessary for the time being in order to accelerate the process of political inclusion for women and that, with time, they could disappear.

The general consensus in regard to gender quotas is that they are a first step in political equality. Many of the interviewees believe that such quotas should have not been necessary in a perfectly equal society, but in Mexico, where politics has been a male-dominated environment, they will help to make the process much faster in order to create a balance between men and women. The legal regulations that the quotas imply make it easier for them to participate, although people continue to be skeptical about them entering Congress for their political knowledge and capacities and not only because they are women. As women become more participative in Mexican politics, these prejudices will begin to dissolve as they begin to prove themselves as highly capable politicians and lawmakers.

The Importance of Political Parties for Women to Succeed

Political parties have played an important role in the political life of Mexico. Even though the PRI was in power during 71 years straight, parties of opposition emerged throughout the twentieth century and continue to do so now, supporting certain agendas and candidates. Nevertheless, as several of the interviewees expressed, political parties have become corrupt and people do not trust them as much as they did in the past. The lack of trust that many people have now in political parties, has given as a result the surging of independent candidates that have won elections as governors, mayors, and other political positions. In regard to independent candidates, López-Portillo believes that “some of the members of political parties have shown immense levels of corruption and impunity that have deteriorated their image. This has resulted in the surging of independent candidates who, as charismatic as they may be, have to prove their moral and ethical legitimacy.” Referring to independent candidates, García Noriega believes that they will become more important in the near future, and Lajous states that “as capable as they may be, they do not have the capacity to mobilize the masses.” Bermudez also believes that independent politicians have become great representatives of the population, especially because people relate to them. The materialization of the democratic consolidation—Sánchez Cordero believes—was when citizens were legally allowed to run as independent candidates thus opening new doors to people with capabilities to do a good job.

Alcayaga, Luna y Parra, Zavala, and Paredes believe that it is important to be a part of a political party because of their influence. Alcayaga, who has been a member of the PRI for many years, thinks that political parties continue to be relevant because they

are a tool to give capacitation and funds. Luna y Parra, also a member of the PRI, believes that they continue to have a great political and social influence, especially outside the urban areas. Nevertheless, she thinks that “one has to learn to survive political parties, especially now that they have become more isolated from society and have lost their main channels of communication because of the polemic issues of corruption.” Zavala, a member of the PAN and one of its most active members, states that political parties are a very important and necessary tool for the democratic life of Mexico. However, she is aware that “we do not trust political parties nowadays.”

Contrary to the thought that political parties are necessary, Lamas thinks that their political importance is not as great as in the past, mostly because people have realized that independent candidates can become a viable option. Bermúdez recalls that, “even though many people with wonderful political trajectories have been members of political parties, we now have new options and new ways of making politics.” From Sánchez Cordero’s standpoint, political parties are not important to a successful politician because, nowadays, “politics does not limit itself to positions of popular election, so a successful political career will depend on the qualities that the person has, and not on the political party they sympathize with.”

Even though the twelve interviewees have different perceptions when it comes to political parties, some consider them to be useful, especially because of the infrastructure that they have to move the masses and create powerful and significant campaigns. Nevertheless, the rampant corruption that exists inside the parties has influenced the way in which society votes today. Independent candidates have become more powerful and a viable option, especially in governorships. The most noteworthy case is Jaime Rodríguez

Calderón, who became Governor of Nuevo León, one of the richest states in Mexico, with almost 50% of the votes. His triumph became international news because it broke bipartisanship in the state. Even though there has not been an independent female candidate who has won an election for governor, the electoral reform of 2014 definitely has opened the door for it to happen soon.

A Woman in the Presidency of Mexico

Perhaps the epitome of the success of gender equality in Mexican politics would be to have a female president. Like several of the interviewees expressed, being a woman does not necessarily mean that she will be a good politician, or honest and intelligent. Nevertheless, many social taboos could cease to exist if a woman would occupy the Presidency, and most of the women who were interviewed for this research tend to believe so. When they were asked whether Mexico was ready to be governed by a woman, most of them exclaimed a resounding “Yes!”

Margarita Zavala, who has been campaigning to become the presidential candidate for the PAN, states that “Yes! Mexico is ready,” although she is aware of certain generational differences, because people above 50 question more the possibility of a female president, while those under 40 are much more open to the idea.

Nevertheless, Consuelo Sáizar is more doubtful about a female president and believes that “it does not matter if it is a woman or a man as long as they are honest, charismatic, and with a good governmental project.” Alcayaga does not see the necessity to support someone just because of gender and prefers that the course is more well-thought out and responsible so she states that she “would like to see more people in the Presidential Cabinet, and then think about a female president. We are going through a

process, and when it becomes a part of the democratic normality, it will be natural to elect a woman.” Sanchez Cordero and Luna y Parra think that the perception of society has changed and that not too much time will pass before a woman sits on the Presidential Chair because there is always a real possibility for that to occur, although it will not be an easy process.

Bermúdez, Cano, Lamas, Lajous, López-Portillo, and García Noriega are much more enthusiastic and hopeful that a woman will become president in the near future. Bermúdez states that the reason is because “in Mexico there are capable, sensible, brave, and honest women who can become president. I don’t think that such a political position or any other should be reserved for men.” García Noriega is aware of the social and educational changes that have shaped the country in the last few decades and states that “women are much more prepared and have successfully participated in many areas of the Mexican government.” López-Portillo expresses that Mexico is ready for a woman president and that “society is much more modern than what politicians think.”

After the presidential election of 2012, in which Josefina Vázquez Mota obtained 28% of the votes, a woman had finally true opportunities to become president of Mexico. Nevertheless, she had the support of the PAN, its infrastructure, and political and economic means. Until that moment, candidates continued to be registered with a political party, which limited those who wanted to be independent candidates. Nevertheless, after the electoral reform of 2014, which allows independent candidates, men and women from around the country will be able to become a part of the political life. This is one of the most important tools that might empower women, without the necessity to be supported by any political party. This opens the door to have a more

active, diverse and wider range of options when it comes to presidential candidates, thus allowing more women to become a part of politics. These factors, together with a society that is constantly changing and supporting women, might offer Mexicans the possibility to have a female president in the near future. As it has been established before, social and cultural prejudices have changed and many Mexicans are open to embrace that scenario. The sample used for this research has established that, as ten out of twelve women think that Mexico is ready to be governed by a woman. However, only time will tell.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Significance and Limitations

Despite the extensive scholarly research that exists on Mexican history and on some aspects of women throughout the development of the country—such as art, education, and social issues—there has been very little inquiry on the role that women have played in Mexican politics. Nevertheless, with the growth of female participation in politics, some scholars have gained interest in the topic. This is largely due to the political reforms that were made in 2014 and the possibility that now women have to have an equal percentage than men to participate in Congress and other elective positions, changing some aspects of the male-dominated political arena due to cultural changes.

The significance of this project is that it is not only a historical research of what women in politics have done, but also what other key women leaders in Mexico have done. The twelve women who were interviewed, their experiences, and their perspectives were analyzed in order to have a more holistic understanding of the way in which women have participated in the political life of Mexico, a country that continues to have social and cultural prejudices toward women. Even though the sample is small, the fact that I had access to these women is significant because it allows us to understand the roles they have played in Mexican politics. This study also gives us the opportunity to have an in-depth understanding, through first-hand accounts, of the lives of women who have directly participated as leaders in politics and other fields since the second half of the twentieth century, thus providing a rich picture of women in the contemporary Mexican political, diplomatic, academic, and social life.

The research is also significant because it has analyzed certain topics that were mentioned by the interviewees and that are needed to understand past, present, and future political life in Mexico. Such issues are of great relevance, not only to understand the country's history, but also to understand the way in which politics have evolved in the last decades in regard to gender equality. Throughout this study, not only have I analyzed the role of women in Mexican history in different areas, but I have also been able to include the experiences and thoughts of women who have had successful careers. Therefore, including the past and the present, I have also analyzed—with the help of my interviewees' statements and opinions—the possibilities that women will have in the future to participate in politics in much higher positions.

The limitations of this research are several. First of all, this research is exploratory in nature and the sample that was used for this purpose consists of only twelve women. Even though all of the interviewees have been involved with politics in one way or another—through direct participation, social activism, or academic research—they could have limited themselves to answer what they thought was necessary and manage the information in the way they saw fit. Since some of them are in high public positions, they may have been very political in their answers, which may have masked critiques, which otherwise would have been expressed. After all, many of them are politicians. Because the interviewees have lived first-hand a leadership role in Mexican politics, the information they decided to share is important in order to learn how they have been able to achieve such positions, the sacrifices they have made, their struggles, the people who helped them in their political journey, the obstacles they found, and the role they have played.

If we take their perspectives into account, from the three-hundred elections that have taken place since 1953, when the female vote was granted, only in eighty-six elections did political parties postulate women as candidates for a governorship and only five women have been presidential candidates (Appendix G). Eighteen women have been member of the Presidential Cabinet (Appendix H) and seven women have been governors (Appendix I).

If we put the sample that participated in this study in perspective, we become aware, once again, that it is small. Nevertheless, the sample is not only representative, but also significant. The experiences of the interviewees can give us an idea of the roles that they have played in Mexican politics, the challenges they have suffered, the successes they have celebrated, and the way in which they have dealt with both personally and professionally.

Even though the literature on Mexican history and Mexican politics is very vast, women have not been yet understood as a political and historical force therefore the information is very restricted. Another limitation that this study has is that I requested the women who participated in this study to sign waivers of confidentiality that will help identify them as active participants in politics from many different fronts, as well as my own positionality and the fact that I will have to be conscious to push aside my personal and political ideas.

The richness of this research relies on the historical background that has been provided in order to explain how the role and the importance of women in Mexican politics have been transformed throughout the history of Mexico. It also relies on the

interviews that have been analyzed in this text in which twelve women have shared their ideologies, as well as their personal and political thoughts and experiences.

Implications

Perhaps the most important implication that this study has, is the way in which it portrays women: as strong, capable leaders, who have dedicated their professional life in improving the country. If women are portrayed that way in academic research, it will contribute to make a change in the way society perceives them. As that change begins to occur, the new generations will have a completely different perception of gender and about the role of women in society. While society begins to evolve and normalize female political participation, political parties will have to change their way of doing politics. It has been difficult for them, as rampant corruption and impunity have disappointed many people, thus reducing the number of votes. As explained in previous pages, this has resulted in the appearance of independent candidates who have gained considerable strength. This new way of making politics, which opens more doors to women, allows independent candidates, and creates gender quotas, empowers women in ways that had never been seen in Mexico. Nevertheless, it will be through education and research that people will change from the core, eliminating the cultural and social prejudices that have been so embedded in Mexican culture, giving as a result a social and political change in the way the country is governed.

Another implication that this study has, is the way in which contemporary women have contemporary role models. That does not mean that they deny the importance of those women who have participated in the arts, politics, or social movements during the Spanish colony, the independence, or the revolution. However, the role models that

women—at least those in this research—have today, are tangible women with whom they are more familiarized because they share ideologies, time, and space. Therefore, this research has found that contemporary Mexican female leaders are empowered by the lives of tangible women who are more similar to them, thus giving up old political, social, and historical models, and creating new ones. This is an example of how society is creating its own way of thinking and stopped relying on the “official history” that was written by the system.

As said in the first pages of this study, history is not made of good or evil persons. Researchers have to be responsible of providing the context of a specific event so that others can fully understand it. What this study has tried to do is to bring to light the lives of certain women who have actively participated in several professional areas, but who continue to fight for women’s rights and for gender equality from their own trenches.

Conclusion

After having analyzed the lives and experiences of the women who were interviewed for this research, many things can be said. As was expected, no generalizations except their common gender could be found. Nevertheless, they all agree on the cultural prejudices that exist in Mexico and that machismo continues to affect today the way in which women develop professionally. As far as political issues go, these women agree on the fact that the gender quotas that were established in 2015 for Congress is a way to create gender balance, but insufficient to create gender equality, which will only come if society is willing to evolve and embrace change. Politically, that change will exist when a woman is elected President of Mexico, which has many implications, such as the way in which society perceives women and allows them to

occupy the most important position in the country. Nevertheless, we have to be aware that being a woman does not necessarily imply that she would be a good president. As many of the interviewees expressed, a woman in that position has to have certain characteristics in order to become a true leader who gives positive results.

The twelve women who were interviewed for this study are different when it comes to age, political party, occupation, family, civil status, sexuality, political affiliations, and personal backgrounds. Ten of them come from what in Mexico would be called a “privileged position,” which has allowed them to develop professionally helped by their social and economic capital.⁸ In part, that has helped them gain access to certain groups of people that have propelled their careers, both in politics and in academia. Nevertheless, education, vocation, and passion are what have made them successful. They have all had access to an academic education in Mexico, where they all did their undergraduate studies, with the exception of Beatriz Paredes, who did not complete the degree. Of the twelve women, nine have graduate studies. Two studied in Mexico and seven studied abroad, where they obtained their graduate degree in places such as France, the United Kingdom, and the United States.⁹ This is an important fact because, once again, the importance of academic education becomes evident in order to have a successful career. Beatriz Paredes, who was the only woman not to have completed her degree, began her political career as a congresswoman in 1975, when she was only 21. That was a time when female participation was not common and her lack of academic background must not have been important. Nevertheless, it would be much more difficult

⁸ Alcayaga, Bermúdez, García Noriega, Lajous, Lamas, López-Portillo, Luna y Parra, Sáizar, Sánchez Cordero, and Zavala.

⁹ Alcayaga (France), Bermúdez (France), García Noriega (France), Lajous (USA), López-Portillo (France), Sáizar (UK), and Sánchez Cordero (UK).

for someone to have a political career without at least a bachelor degree. The rest of the interviewees, however, had at least undergraduate studies by the time they obtained more important positions, evidencing that education is an important tool in order to have professional success.

The vast majority of the women with political careers identified themselves not as politicians, but as family members. Six of them are married¹⁰ and eight of them have children,¹¹ which they say to be their priority. Only Beatriz Paredes identified primarily as a politician, while the rest consider their careers as a secondary aspect of their life. However, they all referred at some point during the interviews to the economic, social, or emotional support that they have received from their families, which helped them evolve and become successful despite the many cultural and social prejudices that exist in Mexico.

In regard to prejudices, they all agree that Mexican culture continues to be plagued with them, and that women continue to be the victims of lower salaries and difficulties in obtaining specific positions, especially on the municipal level. Although several of the women state that they have never been the target of those problems, they are aware that thousands of women are. These prejudices will become less embedded in the culture if, and only if, society embraces the fact that women are as capable as men. Nevertheless, it is not only men who have these prejudices. Women continue to live with the glass ceiling limiting their own possibilities, or lost in the labyrinth of Mexican culture, self-imposing what they believe is the pre-established norm. This continues to occur because of the way that Mexican women throughout the country's history have

¹⁰ Alcayaga, Bermúdez, Lajous, Luna y Parra, Sánchez Cordero, and Zavala.

¹¹ Alcayaga, Bermúdez, Lajous, Lamas, López-Portillo, Luna y Parra, Sánchez Cordero, and Zavala.

been perceived. Only very few examples of female success are known, while many others continue to be hidden in the pages of history.

As it was established at the beginning of this study, there are certain women whose image has become embedded in the Mexican culture. It was expected that several of the interviewees would express their admiration for La Malinche or Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, or even refer to the Virgin of Guadalupe. However, from those three figures, only Sor Juana was referred to by three of the interviewees. Sari Bermúdez, Olga Sánchez Cordero, and Carmen López-Portillo expressed their admiration for her because she was able to confront the conservative system of the seventeenth century, when the power of the Catholic Church was at its peak. The fact that she was a nun who rebelled from the system makes her worthy of their admiration, they say. Nevertheless, the surprise came when six of the interviewees stated that they admire Griselda Álvarez who, as it has been said in previous pages, was the first woman to become governor in the history of Mexico.¹² Not only did they say she was an efficient governor, but a true politician who fought for the state of Colima and for Mexico, but also for gender equality. The role of Álvarez in the gender struggle is noteworthy and is becoming more important today. She is starting to become the symbol of the contemporary woman who dedicated her life to empowering women, not only politically, but also socially and culturally. This discovery is significant because a new role model for women is emerging. Álvarez embodies the woman who had it all. Not only was she a wife and a mother, but also a very successful politician who was well respected before, during, and after her governorship. The admiration that people express for her is not without reason,

¹² Alcayaga, Cano, Lamas, López-Portillo, Paredes, and Sánchez Cordero.

because most, if not all of the interviewees met her at some point, so she is not a myth like Sor Juana or a woman who lived two hundred years ago, like Josefa Ortiz or Leona Vicario. Women are in search of modern leaders and figures with whom they can relate and Griselda Álvarez has evidently become that. Her role in the fight for gender equality is unparalleled, not only because of her political role, but also because of her importance in academia and social movements. She has become the role model for many women, especially for those who enter the political arena. This could affect the future because her positive leadership, her honesty, good government, and social participation have become an inspiration for the future female leaders.

Even she was aware of her historical importance. When she assumed office on November 1st, 1979, she wrote:

My inauguration as governor was a national event: for the first time in the history of Mexico, a woman became governor, and that woman was me: Griselda Álvarez. The mere thought shook me internally. Had I become a symbol? Very possibly so: the symbol of equality between men and women in politics. I knew I was able to govern Colima; before me, so did my father in 1919, and my great grandfather, who was the first governor of Colima in 1857. They never imagined that I, a woman, would also become governor. I had dared to enter their terrain, I was in their level, in their executive category: a woman for the first time. And them, whatever they said, had a hard time recognizing it (Álvarez, 1992, p. 113-114).

When the political reform was made to establish gender quotas in the Mexican Congress so that it would be comprised of 50% men and 50% women, a significant polemic emerged. Nevertheless, all of the interviewees agree that they are the only way to create gender balance in a country where women continue to be ostracized in many ways. The gender quotas are seen as an accelerator to eradicate inequality in politics and create a more balanced arena when it comes to public office although some of the interviewees see them as a last measure. Nevertheless, not all of them were as enthusiastic to have a

female president. Even though they all agreed that it would be a determining factor to crown the fight for gender equality, Alcayaga continues to believe that the Presidential Cabinet should include more women before thinking of a woman president. On the other hand, Sáizar believes that gender does not matter as long as the individual has certain characteristics that are positive for the country.

After having analyzed the history of Mexico, the lives of some of the women who have participated in it, and the experiences of twelve contemporary women who have either actively participated in Mexican politics or done extensive research about gender and politics, it becomes clear that the path for gender equality has been long and difficult, but that the struggle has been worth it. For the first time in Mexico, half of the Congress is comprised of women, and there are female governors, ministers, and presidential candidates. It continues to be too soon to know what will happen in the presidential election of 2018, but there is, for the first time in history, the real possibility of having a female president. This is not only because many women have proved their intellectual, social, and political value, but also because political parties have lost strengths and independent candidates are emerging as a real option to govern the country in the municipalities, the states, the congress, and the federation.

Perhaps having a woman as President of Mexico not only will be a triumph for gender equality, but a way to change cultural prejudices that have been embedded in Mexican society since the foundation of the country. Although it is only speculation, it could be a way of breaking certain taboos throughout the country and, perhaps, reduce violence against women. It could be the beginning of a true cultural and social change that will allow the future generations to live in a more equal country, where both men and

women will be able to participate in any area they want. Having a woman in the presidency of Mexico not only will empower women who have experienced the changes of the few last decades in regard to gender, but will also empower those girls who could hold the future of the country in their hands in some years.

The fact of empowering women in every area is important but, as indicated from the findings in this study, politics is the one that is more visible to all because it is through the State that progress, infrastructure, and change are mostly done. This could be the beginning of an enormous cultural change that could discredit machismo, not only because it is anachronistic and absurd, but because it is just and fair that every Mexican—man or woman—can participate in creating a better Mexico in a moment where improvement and equality is very much needed.

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Appendix B

Table of Interviewees

Appendix A

Table of Interviewees

	DOB	Current Occupation	Married	Children	Undergraduate Degree	Graduate Studies	Political Party	Previous Occupations	Notes
Cristina Alcayaga	N/A	President of Council of Nafinsa in Quintana Roo	Yes	Yes	Sociology (Iberoamericana)	Social Sciences (Sorbonne, France)	PRI	President of the Business Council of Mexico, President of the Coordinating Council of the Caribbean, President of the World Association of Women Writers and Journalists.	First woman president of a Nafinsa Business Council, first woman to occupy the presidency of the Business Council of the state of Quintana Roo.
Sara Bermúdez	1950	TV Host, Cultural Promotor	Yes	Yes	Translator (Instituto de Interpretes y Traductores de México)	French Civilization (Sorbonne, France)	N/A	President of the National Council for Culture and Arts, TV and Radio host, and journalist.	First woman to occupy the presidency of the National Council for Culture and Arts
Gabriela Cano	1960	Academician, Activist	No	No	History (UNAM)	History (UNAM, Mexico)	N/A	Researcher at El Colegio de México focusing on Gender Studies, Sexual Diversity, Women in Mexican Society and Politics	
Lucía García Noriega	1944	Cultural Analyst	No	No	Accounting (Escuela Bancaria y Comercial)	Arts (École de Beaux Arts, France)	N/A	Secretary of Culture of Mexico City, Director of the Universal Cultural Forum of Monterrey, Director of the Cultural Center of the Mexican Embassy in France	
Roberta Lajous	1954	Ambassador to Spain	Yes	Yes	International Relations (El Colegio de México)	Latin American Studies (Standford, USA)	PRI	President International Women's Forum. Ambassador to Austria, Cuba, and Bolivia. Representative before the UN in	

								Vienna and New York.	
Marta Lamas	1947	Academician, Activist	No	Yes	Anthropology (ENAH)	Anthropology (UNAM, Mexico)	N/A	Editor, journalist, activist, Nobel Peace Prize nominee.	
Carmen López-Portillo	1955	President of Universidad del Claustro de Sor Juana	No	Yes	Law (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana)	Political Sciences (Sorbonne, France)	N/A	Rector of the Universidad del Claustro de Sor Juana.	
María Angélica Luna Parra	1943	Director of Indesol	Yes	Yes	Communications (Iberoamericana)	N/A	PRI	Congresswoman, Delegate of Álvaro Obregón, President of México Ciudad Humana	
Beatriz Paredes	1953	Ambassador to Brasil	No	No	Sociology (not finished) (UNAM)	N/A	PRI	President of the PRI, Congresswoman, President of the Chamber of Deputies, Ambassador to Cuba, Secretary General of the PRI, Governor of Tlaxcala.	Second woman to respond to a State of the Union Address.
Consuelo Sáizar	1961	Editor	No	No	Communications (Iberoamericana)	Modern Society and Global Transformation (Cambridge, UK)	N/A	President National Council for Culture and Arts, Director of the Fondo de Cultura Económica	
Olga Sánchez Cordero	1945	Lawyer	Yes	Yes	Law (UNAM)	Social Politics and Administration (University College of Swansea , UK) *Honoris Causa (UA Morelos and Nuevo León, Universidad Interamericana de Morelos, Mexico)	N/A	Supreme Court Minister	First woman Notary Public.
Margarita Zavala	1967	Presidential Candidate	Yes	Yes	Law (Escuela Libre de Derecho)	N/A	PAN	Congresswoman, First Lady of Mexico	

Appendix B

Petition Letter for Interview

Appendix B

Petition Letter for Interview

Presente

Por medio de la presente carta quisiera presentarme como estudiante de la Universidad de San Diego, en donde estoy escribiendo mi tesis doctoral titulada *Understanding the Role of Women as Leaders in Mexican Politics*. Al ser Usted una mujer con amplia experiencia en política mexicana, quisiera solicitar a Usted el que participe en dicha investigación. Su participación constaría de una entrevista, misma que se llevaría a cabo en el lugar y fecha que le acomode. Esperando que acepte colaborar con mi investigación, quedo de Usted.

Atentamente,

Rafael Tovar y López-Portillo

With this letter I would like to introduce myself as a student of the University of San Diego, where I am currently in the process of writing my doctoral thesis, entitled *Understanding the Role of Women as Leaders in Mexican Politics*. Because you are a woman with ample experience in Mexican politics, I would like to ask to participate in my research.

Your collaboration would consist of an interview, which would take place where and when you choose. I hope that you agree to participate.

Sincerely,

Rafael Tovar y López-Portillo

Appendix C
General Interview Guide

Appendix C

General Interview Guide

1. Many people consider you a leader. What can you tell me about that?
2. Do you believe that politics is an area in which a woman can fully develop as a leader, politician, or individual?
3. Do you believe that a woman who enters politics must have certain characteristics? If so, which ones?
4. How has it been working in an environment which has been historically male-dominated?
5. Throughout your political career, have you perceived any differences in how people treat and relate to you because you are a woman?
6. Please tell me how it is that you were interested in becoming involved in politics.
7. Did you have mentors? If so, how did they support your career?
8. Have you ever reflected on being a part of history in regard to gender equality?
9. Throughout your career and the many positions you have held, which one is where you most helped the fight for gender equality?
10. In what ways do you consider that the Presidents of Mexico have helped women in becoming politicians?
11. During your career, have you favored certain agendas that help other women just for the fact of being women? Can you give me certain examples?
12. Do you consider it important to be a member of a political party in order to have a successful career?
13. What do you think of the role that First Ladies have in Mexico?
14. What can you tell me about gender quotas in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate? Are you in favor of them? Do you believe they are useful?
15. What social and cultural characteristics do you think influence people to approve or disapprove that a woman has an important political position?
16. Do you believe that Mexico is culturally, socially, and politically to be governed by a woman? Why?
17. What Mexican women do you admire? Why?
18. Have you sacrificed anything to be where you are?
19. Do you regret anything?
20. What are you most proud about?

Appendix D
Confidentiality Waiver

Appendix D
Confidentiality Waiver

Rafael Tovar y López-Portillo,

Yo, _____, comprendo y acepto participar en la investigación dirigida por Usted, titulada *Understanding the Role of Women as Leaders in Mexican Politics*.

Entiendo que, por la naturaleza de dicha investigación, mi participación será más útil aceptando que utilice mi nombre y cite los comentarios hechos a lo largo de la entrevista.

Es por ello que acepto que no habrá confidencialidad.

Atentamente,

Nombre y Firma

Rafael Tovar y López-Portillo,

I, _____, understand I will be participating in the research *Understanding the Role of Women as Leaders in Mexican Politics*. Because of the journalistic nature of the study, I am aware that my participation will be more useful if I agree to waive confidentiality and that my name can be used, as well as the comments said during the interview.

Sincerely,

Name and Signature

Appendix E

Coding

Appendix E

Coding

Leadership (L)

- Male leaders (Blue LM)
- Female leaders (Red LF)

Women in Politics (P)

- Difference between men and women (Red DIFF)
- Characteristics (Red CH)
- Expectations (Red EX)
- Possibility of having a female President (Red PDTE)
- Gender equality in Congress (Red =)
- Legislature (Red LEG)
- First Ladies (Red 1st L)
- Challenges (Red X)
- Obstacles (Red OBST)

Personal (PERS)

- Background (Green BK)
- Challenges (Green CHL)
- Sacrifices (Green SAC)
- Achievements (Green ACH)

Culture (C)

- Machismo (Orange MACHISMO)
- Religion (Orange +)
- Society (Orange SOC)
- Stereotypes (Orange STY)

History (H)

- Women who they admire (Blue MODEL)
 - Sor Juana (Blue SJ)
 - Griselda Álvarez (Blue ALV)
 - Josefa Ortiz and Leona Vicario (Blue INDEP)
- Women who have helped gender equality (Blue HELP)
- Key historical moments (Blue HIST)

Appendix F

First Ladies since 1975

Appendix F

First Ladies since 1975

Name	Husband	Years
María Esther Zuno	Luis Echeverría	1970-1976
Carmen Romano	José López-Portillo	1976-1982
Paloma Cordero	Miguel de la Madrid	1982-1988
Cecilia Ocelli	Carlos Salinas	1988-1994
Nilda Patricia Velasco	Ernesto Zedillo	1994-2000
Vicente Fox	Marta Sahagún	2000-2006
Felipe Calderón	Margarita Zavala	2006-2012
Angélica Rivera	Enrique Peña	2012-2018

Appendix G

Female Presidential Candidates

Appendix G

Female Presidential Candidates (Terra, 2012)

Name	Year	Political Party	Votes	Percentage
Rosario Ibarra	1982	Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT)	416,448	1.76%
Rosario Ibarra	1988	Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT)	74,857	0.39
Cecilia Soto	1994	Partido del Trabajo (PT)	970,121	2.75%
Marcela Lombardo	1994	Partido Popular Socialista (PPS)	166,594	0.47%
Patricia Mercado	2006	Partido Alternativa Socialdemócrata y Campesina	1,124,280	2.71%
Josefina Vázquez	2012	Partido Acción Nacional (PAN)	12,786,647	25.41%

Appendix H

Female Members of Presidential Cabinets

Appendix H

Female Members of Presidential Cabinets

Secretariat of Tourism

Name	Administration	Year
Rosa Luz Alegria Escamilla	José López-Portillo	1980-1982
Silvia Hernández Enríquez	Ernesto Zedillo	1994-1997
Leticia Navarro Ochoa	Vicente Fox	2000-2003
Gloria Guevara Manzo	Felipe Calderón	2010-2012
Claudia Ruiz Massieu Salinas	Enrique Peña	2012-2015

Secretariat of External Affairs

Rosario Green Macías	Ernesto Zedillo	1998-2000
Patricia Espinoza Cantellano	Felipe Calderón	2006-2012
Claudia Ruiz Massieu Salinas	Enrique Peña	2015-incumbent

Secretariat of Public Education

Josefina Vázquez Mota	Felipe Calderón	2006-2009
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Secretariat of Social Development

Josefina Vázquez Mota	Vicente Fox	2000-2006
Ana Teresa Aranda	Vicente Fox	2006-2006
Beatriz Zavala Peniche	Felipe Calderón	2006-2008
Rosario Robles Berlanga	Enrique Peña	2012-2015

Secretariat of Agrarian Reform

María Teresa Herrera Tello	Vicente Fox	2000-2003
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Secretariat of Energy

Georgina Kessel Martínez	Felipe Calderón	2006-2011
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Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources

Julia Carabias Lillo	Ernesto Zedillo	1994-2000
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Secretariat of Agrarian, Territorial, and Urban Development

Rosario Robles Berlanga	Enrique Peña	2015-incumbent
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Attorney General

Arely Gómez González	Enrique Peña	2015-incumbent
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National Council for Culture and the Arts (now Secretariat of Culture)

Sari Bermúdez	Vicente Fox	2000-2006
Consuelo Sáizar	Felipe Calderón	2009-2012

Extinct Secretariats

María de los Ángeles Moreno	Secretariat of Fisheries	Carlos Salinas	1988-1991
María Elena Vázquez	Secretariat of Accounting and Administrative Development	Carlos Salinas	1988-1994
Norma Samaniego	Secretariat of Accounting and Administrative Development	Ernesto Zedillo	1994-1995

Appendix I
Female Governors

Appendix I

Female Governors

Name	State	Administration	Year
Griselda Álvarez	Colima	José López-Portillo	1979-1985
Beatriz Paredes	Tlaxcala	Miguel de la Madrid	1987-1992
Dulce Maria Sauri	Yucatán	Carlos Salinas	1991-1993
Rosario Robles	Mexico City (Interim)	Ernesto Zedillo	1999-2000
Amalia Garcia	Zacatecas	Vicente Fox	2004-2010
Ivonne Ortega	Yucatán	Felipe Calderón	2007-2012
Claudia Pavlovich	Sonora	Enrique Peña	2015-incumbent



Institutional Review Board Project Action Summary

Action Date: September 21, 2015 *Note: Approval expires one year after this date.*

Type: New Full Review New Expedited Review Continuation Review Exempt Review
 Modification

Action: Approved Approved Pending Modification Not Approved

Project Number: 2015-09-010

Researcher(s): Rafael Tovar y Lopez-Portillo Doc SOLES
Dr. Afsaneh Nahavandi Fac SOLES

Project Title: Understanding the Role of Women as Leaders in Mexican Politics: Looking Back
and Moving Forward

Note: We send IRB correspondence regarding student research to the faculty advisor, who bears the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research. We request that the faculty advisor share this correspondence with the student researcher.

Modifications Required or Reasons for Non-Approval

None

The next deadline for submitting project proposals to the Provost's Office for full review is N/A. You may submit a project proposal for expedited review at any time.

Dr. Thomas R. Herrinton
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