Pathways to power in presidential cabinets:
Do men and women appointees differ?

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Abstract: This paper is part of a book project that explores pathways to different types of cabinet posts in presidential democracies by drawing on a study of all cabinet ministers in the 2-4 most recent presidential cabinets in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and the United States. In this paper we examine minister traits to assess whether there is evidence of a gendered nature to cabinet appointments. We analyze data about political connections and experience, group links, education and career backgrounds, and policy expertise. We present findings about differences in the incidence of individual traits for men and women for cabinets overall, then partition portfolios into three broad categories. We conduct multivariate analysis to determine traits that correlate with appointment to portfolios in these broad categories and whether they differ between women and men. For the dataset overall, men and women are generally similar. However, when we divide ministries into economics, social welfare, and “central” categories, we find significant differences between men and women that have the potential to affect the ability of women in cabinets to be successful in their posts. Multivariate analysis showed that 1) gender is a determining factor in predicting the portfolio category a person receives even when we control for other background traits, and 2) that for men and women the background traits related to type of ministry appointment are distinct. Based on this evidence, we conclude that there are gendered aspects to cabinet appointments, but that there is also evidence that women are becoming more thoroughly integrated into cabinets.

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Presidents consider many dimensions when selecting cabinet ministers such as experience related to the policy area of the portfolio, connections to key groups and constituencies, paying off political debts, balancing party factions, and the need to build a coalition to facilitate governability with the congress. We explore what traits appear to influence appointments to different types of cabinet posts by analyzing data about political connections and experience, group links, education and career backgrounds, and policy expertise. With this analysis we can draw conclusions about whether there is a gendered nature to cabinet appointments and whether women are becoming better integrated into cabinets.

This paper is part of a book about women in cabinets in presidential democracies. Little is known outside of the U.S. case about the credentials, political experience, and group connections that cabinet members bring to their posts in presidential systems. This lack of information is unfortunate because cabinet members’ backgrounds and connections can impact what sectors of society receive representation at the highest levels of policymaking and implementation. Two common popular beliefs are 1) that people receive appointments as political rewards or due to connections and are not qualified for the job; and 2) that women who are appointed to the highest level of government are tokens or policy outsiders. Popular assumptions, whether or not they are empirically accurate, affect the government’s legitimacy and ability to address the country’s policy needs. In anticipation of such beliefs, presidents might select a woman only if she is even better qualified than a man, expecting a woman to

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receive greater scrutiny and people to be skeptical of her ability to do the job. Research in public policy indicates that the qualifications of public managers affect the outputs of government (see Meier and O’Toole 2002; Avellaneda 2009; Hicklin and Godwin 2009). Cabinet ministers are the top level of public managers, so we examine their qualifications, and in particular whether the growing numbers of women ministers means that new backgrounds are now found in cabinets. This project contributes to the literature in comparative politics about government capacity and women in politics, providing a more nuanced understanding of descriptive representation of women and whether women and men in cabinets differ.

To briefly summarize our findings, in the aggregate men and women in the cabinet look very similar, but when we partition the cabinet into three broad categories of ministries we find significant differences in the backgrounds and experience of men and women. We also find that gender is a determining factor in predicting the category of portfolio a person receives even when we control for other background traits. Our findings, which are mainly apparent when the cabinet is partitioned, indicate that cabinets are gendered institutions, yet overall it appears that women are becoming more integrated into presidential cabinets even though gender integration is still not complete.

**Why compare male and female cabinet ministers?**

One of the arguments made for why women need to be included in politics is that they will bring a woman’s perspective to policy (Phillips 1995: 6; Reynolds 1999: 548; Htun 2004: 444; Paxton and Hughes 2007: 4). Is that expectation accurate? Are the women who are appointed to cabinet posts different from the men in their educational and career backgrounds; do they have distinctive political experience; or connections to different civil society or interest groups? If cabinet ministers differ systematically based on gender, what is implied by their
difference? What are the implications for cabinet studies of applying a male standard of what is the expected experience that qualifies a person to enter the cabinet?\(^2\)

A challenge for this book is to operationalize quality job credentials for cabinet posts. Do some portfolios demand expertise in the policy area of the portfolio, while others require political experience or group connections? Do some portfolios require multiple types of credentials? There are practical, political, and policy dimensions that influence president’s appointments. The president needs to determine if the preferred appointee is willing to leave their current job to take on a cabinet post with the attendant job tenure uncertainties, and possible pay-cuts (Nicholls 1991). If a president’s party lacks a majority in the congress, the president can weigh potential benefits of using cabinet posts to build a coalition against possible costs of losing control over policy in key areas. As diversity and inclusiveness have become ways that presidents are judged by the press and public, they need to be conscious of the picture – often a literal photo in the press – presented by their cabinet. A president may want to fill some posts with persons who have policy expertise and who are also trusted confidents. Some posts may be important due to their high profile, such as Finance and Foreign Relations. Because there is little comparative literature about cabinet ministers in presidential democracies, a goal of our book is to examine the “type” – the common experience traits – for ministers in different portfolios. We can then use those data to examine whether the women who make it into the top level of presidential governments bring different experiences, backgrounds, and connections to government than their male colleagues.

Literature about elite circulation, group dynamics and incorporation of new groups into politics offers reasons why women in cabinets might differ from men, and why they might be

\(^2\) We thank Karen Beckwith for pointing out the importance of problematizing the default “necessary credentials” for a cabinet minister of either gender, to insure that there is no implicit acceptance of women’s difference (if there is difference) equating with inferiority.
very much like the men. Prewitt and Stone (1973: 168) write that “Elite circulation is not necessarily the replacement of high officeholders by different persons; it is instead the replacement of officeholders by different types of persons.”

When women are tokens they can be quite different from men as their purpose is to stand out as special because they are representatives of women, and they may have been appointed to signal that the government does not discriminate against women. Other tokens may try to not stand out because they do not want to draw attention to themselves (Kanter 1977: 974). A token can also be “someone who meets all of the formal requirements for entrance into a group but does not possess the ‘auxiliary characteristics’ (especially race, sex and ethnicity) that are expected of persons in that position” (Zimmer 1988: 65 referencing Hughes 1945). In that case, women in the cabinet may differ from their male colleagues in their gender, not in other credentials or traits.

Literature about incorporation of new groups offers reasons why we might expect that women in the cabinet would be “just like the men.” Top political posts are a scarce resource and the “in group,” in this case men, will not want to share this resource with other groups unless there is intense political pressure to do so (see Mills 1957; Lukes 1974). Women will only be appointed to full cabinet posts when male politicians perceive a potential political cost to continuing to not incorporate women, and women will receive the smallest feasible number of appointments. Social control theory predicts that when an emergent social interest becomes

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3 The label “token” comes from Kanter’s research studying women in a large industrial corporation. “Token” is Kanter’s term to describe group dynamics where the minority population is a very small proportion of the total group (a skewed group). The cabinets included in our study have multiple women, but 18 of the 110 women are the first to be appointed to a portfolio in their country, and could be viewed as tokens.

4 Work on Latin American cabinets has shown that when women began to be appointed to the cabinet they were over-represented in less prestigious posts, and even with the passage of time women are still under-represented in high-prestige posts (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005). This is consistent with the expectation in sociology that a “discriminatory reaction to the intrusion of women into prestigious male-dominated occupations
important enough to require that it be included in politics, governing elites will try to manage conflict by permitting the entry of members of the new social interest, but select as those “representatives” people who are strictly held to well-established, though informal, standards in recruiting appointees (see for example Coser 1964; Duke 1976). If social control theory is correct, female ministers will not differ from the “typical” male appointee in ways other than their gender, and they will not be credible representatives of women’s groups, or have a history of work with women’s organizations, because such women would be too different from the male profile expected of a cabinet minister.

Borrelli (2002: 57; also Martin 1989: 166) found in the U.S. that female cabinet secretaries in traditionally masculine posts (e.g., Labor, Transportation) are “policy outsiders” with respect to both the policy jurisdiction and constituency of their ministry. They are appointed to posts outside their area of expertise as a way to limit their “opportunities to effect change” (p.61). The women U.S. presidents appointed to their cabinet in response to electoral pressures “possessed credentials and could lay claim to political resources that equaled and often exceeded those of the men with whom they were nominated” yet they typically were “‘nominated away’ from the departments in which [they] would have been a specialist or a liaison” (Borrelli 2002: 74). If female ministers tend to be policy outsiders, women may look like men in background and credentials in an aggregate study of the cabinet, but closer examination will reveal that women are appointed to portfolios where they lack policy expertise

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5 Carroll (1984) tested this proposition with data from a 1981 survey with men and women holding cabinet-level posts in U.S. state governments. The survey asked about the education and occupation credentials, social status, and indicators of appointee loyalty to the governor. She found some evidence that women are strictly held to established standards concerning credentials and loyalty.
and that they lack the political resources to bring new perspectives into government or to represent groups typically associated with a ministry.\textsuperscript{6}

From the group dynamics and social control literatures, we hypothesize:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{H1: Women will have education and occupation backgrounds, political experience and connections, and group associations just like men.}
  \item \textit{H2a: Women will be marginalized in the cabinet by being more likely than male appointees to lack policy expertise related to their portfolio.}
  \item \textit{H2b: Women will be marginalized in the cabinet by being more likely than male appointees to lack connections to constituents of the ministry.}
\end{itemize}

\textbf{Case selection and data overview}

We study cabinet ministers in 5 presidential democracies: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and the U.S. We selected these four Latin American countries to facilitate comparisons on several dimensions. Costa Rica and Colombia are two of the oldest democracies in the region, so expectations and norms about cabinet qualifications have had several decades to develop.\textsuperscript{7} Chile and Argentina represent cases of re-democratization during the Third Wave,\textsuperscript{8} plus both have female presidents: Michelle Bachelet (2006-10) and Kristina Fernandez (2008-present).\textsuperscript{9} These Latin American countries have higher levels of economic and human

\textsuperscript{6} This hypothesis acknowledges critiques of Kantor (1977) that question whether increasing the proportion of women in an organization will be enough to overcome women’s marginalization. Zimmer (1988: 64) argues that “increasing the number of women, without addressing the sexist attitudes imbedded in male-dominated organizations, may exacerbate women’s occupational problems” (also Yoder 1991).

\textsuperscript{7} Costa Rica’s democratic regime was installed in 1949 after a brief civil war, and during much of the ensuing half century two centrist parties dominated Costa Rican politics. Colombia’s democratic regime was installed in 1957 with the National Front agreement that allowed the Conservative and the Liberal Parties to share power in a consociational fashion as a way to end the partisan violence that had led to a military intervention. The National Front lasted from 1958 to 1974, after which new parties were free to form and compete in elections, though until 2000 the two traditional parties continued to dominate politics.

\textsuperscript{8} The Third Wave of Democracy in Latin America refers to the period beginning in the late 1970s and continuing through the 1980s when virtually all countries in the region installed democratic regimes. Argentina returned to democracy in 1983 following a military dictatorship. For much of the twentieth century Argentina alternated between democratic regimes and military rule. In Chile the military governed from 1973 to 1989, when elections returned civilians to power led by the center-left Concertación coalition. Prior to 1973 Chile had the longest experience with democratic rule of any Latin American country.

\textsuperscript{9} Laura Chinchilla took office as president of Costa Rica in May of 2010, but our data end with the Arias administration.
development than are found in many countries of the region, which facilitates comparison with each other and with the United States and Europe. These five countries provide theoretically interesting variance on government centralization, ranging from a relatively centralized unitary system in Costa Rica and Chile, to a decentralized unitary system in Colombia, to decentralized federalism in Argentina and the US. We include cabinets from the Clinton and George W. Bush presidencies in the U.S. both because women have fared relatively worse in the US in terms of cabinet appointments compared to Latin America and because this comparison provides a way to benchmark our findings against the United States where the gendered nature of the bureaucracy has been more extensively studied.

Our dataset includes all ministers of full cabinet rank, initial and replacement, regardless of how short or long their service. Due to the near impossibility of obtaining in-depth biographical data further back in time, particularly to obtain coverage of all ministers, our study is of the most recent presidents:

- Chile: Lagos (2000-6), Bachelet (2006-10) – 94 ministers (33 women, 35%)

To make comparisons across portfolios, we group together like posts across time and across countries. In some cases this is simple as a ministry has a discrete policy domain and every country has a very similar ministry (e.g., foreign relations, education). For other cases we determined that the policy domain of portfolios was relatively similar across countries despite differences in names, by studying the mission statements, dependent agencies, and organizational
structures of current cabinet ministries (e.g., justice & security, transportation & public works). For some portfolios we formed groups based on what appears to be the predominant mission of the ministry, though some policy components do not completely overlap across time or countries. We verified the accuracy of these groupings by consulting country experts. This exercise produced 16 portfolio categories (for details see the Appendix).

The data for this study consist of biographical information about each minister. Biographical information was obtained from Web searches drawing on government websites, newspaper reports, and personal and university webpages. Our data code for publicly known credentials. There could be additional traits that make a person suited for their post, but those qualifications are not widely known. Our logic is that it is publicly known traits that send signals to citizens, client groups, and the international community about ministers’ qualifications.

Fortunately for our ability to compare our findings with other studies, they often drew their data from newspaper coverage and “Who’s Who” sources, so they were generally limited to public information about the ministers.

To investigate minister backgrounds, experience and connections and to test the hypotheses identified above we include the following variables in our analysis:

**Political connections.** To explore the value of political connections we include 3 measures in our analysis: Connected to the president – coded 1 if an individual had a formal

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10 We thank David Altman, Claudia Avellaneda, Jon Bond, MaryAnne Borrelli, Felipe Botero, Ernesto Calvo, Miguel De Luca, George Edwards, Susan Franceschet, Erik Godwin, Jonathan Hartlyn, Mark Jones, Patricio Navia, Sebastian Saiegh, Peter Siavelis, Jorge Vargas Cullell, and Bruce Wilson for their help and advice.

11 Most of the data obtained on the web come from ministry webpages that often include an official biography of the minister, newspaper coverage of president’s initial cabinet appointments and of cabinet shuffles that typically includes commentary on the backgrounds and credentials of the ministers, webpages from organizations, businesses, and universities where former ministers are currently employed that often include resumes or biographical descriptions of their members/employees, and candidate webpages when former ministers later ran for office. Some ministers received awards from international organizations and award press releases include biographical information. Where we were not able to obtain enough information about a minister’s background to know, for example, where they went to school, they are coded as missing on that variable only.
connection (e.g. campaign manager), friendship or family ties, or at the time of their appointment they were described in the press as a close confidant of the president (134 ministers in our dataset [30.3%] are “connected). Friend of the president – coded 1 if the minister is known to be a friend of the president or was described in the press as a close confidant of the president (56 ministers, 12.6%). To be classified as a friend a minister had to be more than just connected to the president; professional association was not enough to meet the threshold of friend. Political family – coded 1 if the minister is a member of a leading family in the country’s politics (e.g., the Kennedy family in the U.S., the Barco family in Colombia) (32 ministers, 7.2%).

**Political experience.** Political experience can take multiple forms. Any elected office – coded 1 if an individual held prior elected office at the local, regional, state or national level (155 ministers, 35.0%). National-level elected office – coded 1 if an individual was elected to an office in the national government (110 ministers, 24.9%). Appointed post – coded 1 if an individual had previously been appointed to a high level post (minister, vice-minister, central bank chief, agency head, ambassador) (236 ministers, 53.5%). Prior minister/vice-minister – coded 1 if an individual had previously been appointed minister or vice-minister in the same or in a different portfolio (179 ministers, 40.7%). Political insider – coded 1 if they had previously held a cabinet post, been a vice-minister, or built a career in national government (237 ministers, 53.5%). “Outsiders” may have worked for the government for years, but not in a high-level post or not in the capital, or they entered the cabinet from the private sector. This concept comes from Borrelli’s (2002) study of US cabinets. Organizational partisan – coded 1 if an individual

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12 Borrelli’s measure of “insider” status was more stringent than ours. She only coded a cabinet secretary as an insider if they changed directly from one cabinet post to another, entered directly from the sub-cabinet, or had an established relationship with the DC community from building a primary career in national government. We made modifications to accommodate differences in political career paths and the history of democracy in our Latin American cases. We relaxed the requirement that a person move directly from a sub-cabinet post into the cabinet or directly from one cabinet post to another, but we did not count breaks that were so long that it was not reasonable to expect the same people would still be players in national politics, such as having served as a minister prior to the
held a post in their party (national, local, party office in congress), managed a campaign, or served as a presidential campaign advisor (141 ministers, 31.8%). This concept comes from Cohen’s (1988) typology of party activity in the U.S.

**Group links.** Ministers can have a formal association with a group (e.g., member or president of the National Chamber of Agricultural Producers, labor union leader, affiliation with an environmental or women’s organization). Work may have brought a person into regular and close contact with international aid organizations, lending agencies, or with business by serving on the boards of various companies. Ministers can have professional associations (e.g., the Colegio de Médicos). In addition, if the press touted a new minister as “well known with the business community” or “applauded by environmentalists” we coded them as having a link to that group. In the analysis presented here we focus on links to business and international links because they are relatively common (115 ministers [26.2%] have business links, 159 ministers [36.2%] have international links). We also tracked whether ministers have links to organized labor and women’s organizations, but only 12 ministers have links to labor, and 16 have links to women’s groups. We code a minister as having links to ministry clients if any of the minister’s group associations as described above overlapped with the policy purview of their portfolio (185 ministers, 42.1%).

**Education and career background.** Most ministers in our study are highly educated, typically having post-graduate education and often earning their degrees at prestigious institutions. However, ministers vary in the academic fields they studied, and we present data intervention of a military regime, and returning to the cabinet 10+ years after the restoration of democracy. A “career” in national government is often shorter in our Latin America countries than in the U.S. due to lower reelection rates to congress and no immediate reelection in Costa Rica. Particularly in Costa Rica, having a career in national government typically means a person worked in the private sector in between top-level posts in government. In Argentina and Chile we code a “career in national government” as having held a seat in congress or a top executive branch post for most of the time since the return to democracy.

1 Only 9 ministers do not have a college degree (5 in Argentina, 1 in Chile, 2 in Colombia, 1 in Costa Rica).
about whether ministers have degrees in law (172 ministers, 40.8%), economics\(^{14}\) (102 ministers, 24.2%), business\(^{15}\) (83 ministers, 19.7%), medicine/health (28 ministers, 6.7%), engineering (44 ministers, 10.4%), and political science/policy\(^{16}\) (70 ministers, 16.6%). A minister may be coded 1 in more than one academic field category.

Ministers vary in the types of careers they built before taking a cabinet post. Ministers’ overall career is coded 1 for government sector (235 ministers, 53.4%). Moving in and out of government we code as a “revolving door” career (61 ministers, 14.2%).\(^ {17}\) We also code their primary occupation. For 184 ministers (42.7%) we coded two types of occupations because they held more than one type of job for an extended period of time, or they held two types of jobs simultaneously for many years (e.g., consultant and university professor, lawyer and business owner). Occupation categories are law (49 ministers, 11.4%), business/banking (102 ministers, 23.7%), medical (15 ministers, 3.5%), education/academic/research (75 ministers, 17.4%), consulting (55 ministers, 12.8%), and national government (181 ministers, 41.0%).\(^ {18}\)

**Portfolio relevant expertise.** We use education and work background as a rough way of judging if a person has background that gives them policy expertise for the particular agency to which they are appointed. Some ministers had obviously built a career in a related area and have much experience. Others had no obvious experience. To be coded 1 for policy expertise the minister’s level of experience needed to be extensive (309 ministers, 69.9%). A minister who had worked a year in a related field or had obtained a related academic degree many years prior might have some experience, but they do not rise to the level of policy expertise. Ministers can

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\(^{14}\) We include economics, agricultural economics, and development economics in this degree category.

\(^{15}\) This category includes business, finance, international management, organization management, and accounting.

\(^{16}\) Includes degrees in political science, international relations, public administration and public policy.

\(^{17}\) In Latin American countries many university professors, doctors, and other medical professionals are employed by the government, at state universities or hospitals. Despite the source of the funds for their paychecks we did not code such posts as government jobs on the grounds that working for a state university or in a public hospital does not mean the professor or doctor was involved in making policy.

\(^{18}\) Public sector careers can be divided into numerous categories, but the most common is national government.
be liaisons to groups whose interests overlap with the policy areas of their portfolio if they have long-standing relationships with ministry clients. We code a person as specialist + liaison if they have at least some relevant policy background combined with extensive group client connections (118 ministers, 26.6%).

Do backgrounds, experience, and connections of ministers differ for men and women?

As our first benchmark for this analysis we look at the entire dataset, not differentiating ministers by the type of portfolio they hold. Figure 1 (upper-left panel) presents our findings for political connections and experience, and links to organized interests or societal groups. Figure 2 (upper-left panel) presents findings for education, type of career, and occupation.

< insert Figures 1 and 2 about here >

In the aggregate there are few areas in which the differences in percentages of men and women who have a trait meet conventional levels of statistical significance. Significant differences are only found for political family (more common for women p=.003), prior elected post at any level of government (more common for men p=.03), political insider (more common for men p=.08), and links to business (also more common for men (p=.000). Where we see the highest incidences of statistically significant effect is in academic disciplines,\(^\text{19}\) and these conform to long-standing gender norms. Women are less likely than men to have studied engineering (p.004), economics (p=.008), or law (p=.006), but more women than men have degrees in political science/policy (p=.003). In addition, women less commonly than men come from business careers (p=.007), but more women than men had consulting careers (p=.014).

\(^{19}\) Education background is where we had the most difficulty with missing data. That is why we do not report the percentages of ministers that have a graduate degree or studied abroad. While there are fewer cases of missing data for the ministers’ field of study, we still urge caution when drawing conclusions from these numbers, as on average they are measured for 421 of our 447 ministers.
Some other aspects of minister backgrounds stand out in these figures, though they are not gendered differences. Less than a third of ministers (31.8%) are organizational partisans. Only a quarter of our ministers (24.9%) have held an elected post at the national level, indicating clearly that the national electoral route to building a political career is not required. In fact, a greater percentage (40.7%) has held prior posts as a minister or vice-minister than have held a national-level elected office. Finally, it is notable that only 30.2% of the ministers in our dataset meet the criterion to be coded “specialist + liaison” while almost 70% of ministers met the extensive experience criterion required to be coded as having policy expertise related to their portfolio. Apparently combining connections to ministry clients with policy background is not commonly a trait that presidents are looking for when selecting the members of their cabinet.

Before continuing on to the second benchmark in our analysis, it is worth noting how few ministers have connections to women’s or labor groups. Only 16 ministers in our dataset have connections to women’s groups. All are female, and they are found in all five countries, but this is only 14.5% of the 110 women in our dataset. Only four of the nine heads of Women’s Ministries have connections to women’s groups (see Baldez 2002 about Chile). The low incidence of female ministers with connections to women’s groups supports the expectation of social control theory that when women are appointed to the top ranks of the executive branch that they will be very like the typical male minister except for their gender. In other words, they should not be expected to be representatives of women.

20 We did not code membership in the women’s section of their party as a link to women’s groups. We considered such a post to be a political connection and coded it as being an organizational partisan. We also followed this coding rule for parties that have a labor section, so that holding a post in a party’s labor section, but no connections to labor groups outside of the party, meant that the minister would be coded as an organizational partisan, but not as linked to labor.

21 A connection to women’s groups is not the only reason why a minister may be able to represent women, or want to champion women’s interests. In her study of the US, Borrelli (2002: 6) expected that being educated at a woman’s college, active in women’s issue networks, or work experience administering government programs for women would all make a cabinet secretary able to represent women.
that connections to women’s groups decreases a woman’s chances of reaching the highest ranks in government as no ministers of Finance/Treasury, Defense, Justice & Security, Presidency & Communications or Foreign Relations have links to women’s groups. Ministers with links to women’s groups are found in Women’s Affairs (4 ministers), Health (3), Planning (3), and one each in Commerce & Industry, Culture, Education, Housing & Urban Development, Labor & Social Security, and Public Works & Transportation.

Just 12 ministers in our dataset (2.7%) have links to labor organizations. They are found in all five countries, yet only 9 of the 26 heads of Labor Ministries have connections to organized labor. Thus, as with connections to women’s groups, we speculate that connections to labor groups decrease chances of reaching the highest ranks in government as no ministers of Finance/Treasury, Defense, Justice & Security or Foreign Relations have links to labor groups, although 1 minister of Presidency & Communication did have links to labor. Along with Labor & Social Security (9), links to labor are found in Culture (1), and Education (1).

**Partitioning the cabinet**

Cabinet portfolios are not all the same. They vary in prestige, the type of policies they handle, and quite probably they vary in the types of background, experience, and connections that are common for their ministers. Our next step is to explore if men and women differ if we partition the cabinet.

The question is; how to divide the cabinet? An obvious method would be to examine ministries individually, utilizing the 16 portfolios presented in the Appendix. However, there are practical difficulties with that option as the number of ministers in individual portfolio categories is sometimes small (23 in Agriculture, 13 in Culture, 22 in Foreign Affairs, 19 in Housing & Urban Development, 6 in Planning, 9 in Women’s Affairs) and in some portfolios there are only
2 or 3 women (Agriculture 2 of 23, Commerce & Industry 2 of 32, Finance 3 of 40). We opt to divide the ministries into three broad groups to preserve large enough numbers, and in particular women to permit systematic analysis. We build on Keman (1991) to create these groupings. In his study of Western European cabinets, Keman divided ministries into 3 sectors: economic management (economic affairs, finance, budget, trade, commerce, industry), social welfare (labor, social affairs, education, health), and external and security (foreign affairs, defense, prime ministers). His justification for creating these categories of ministries was that party differences in ideology and policy preferences would influence the category of posts that parties would want to obtain, and he expected that minister backgrounds would vary across categories. Keman’s first two categories transfer well to our presidential systems. We slightly revise his third category for what we call “Central” ministries. Portfolios in each category are:

- **Economic ministries** – Agriculture, Commerce & Industry, Environment/Mining/Energy, Finance/Treasury, Planning, Transportation & Public Works (140 men, 32 women)
- **Social Welfare ministries** – Education, Health, Housing & Urbanization, Labor & Social Security, Women’s Issues (77 men, 47 women)
- **Central ministries** – Defense, Foreign Relations, Justice & Security, Presidency & Communications (115 men, 23 women)

Table 1 indicates the percentage of ministers in the overall dataset and for each of the three broad categories that have each of the background, experience and connection traits, using binomial tests for proportions to determine when a trait is over- or under-represented in a ministry category compared to the percentage of ministers found in that category. The large number of traits that are not proportionally represented in each of the three broad categories is evidence that qualifications for these portfolio categories differ.

< insert Table 1 about here >

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22 The Culture portfolio does not fit well into any of these three categories, so those ministers are not included in the following analysis, which drops 13 ministers (5 men, 8 women).
First, the binomial tests indicate that the incidence of political experience and connections varies across these three broad categories of ministries. People appointed to Central Ministries have political credentials, while people appointed to Economics Ministries typically do not. Ministers in the Central category are over-represented with respect to being connected to the president (p=.025) and friends of the president (p=.053). They are also over-represented compared to their percentage of the entire dataset for having political experience: holding any type of elected post (p=.000), a national elected post (p=.005), a high level appointed post (p=.000), prior appointment as a minister/vice-minister (p=.011), as political insiders (p=.000), or as organizational partisans (p=.001). It is clear that people appointed to Central Ministries are politicians. People appointed to Economic Ministries are quite the opposite. They are under-represented for all types of government or party experience. Ministers in the Social Welfare category resemble the overall dataset in their political credentials.

We also see in Table 1 that the group links of ministers vary across these three broad categories. Having group links appears to be an important qualification for people appointed to Economics Ministries, while people appointed to Central Ministries stand out for their lack of group links. People appointed to Economics Ministries are over-represented compared to their percentage of the entire dataset for having connections to business (p=.000), connections to any type of group (p=.054), and links to clients of their ministry (p=.035). In contrast, people appointed to Central ministries are under-represented for connections to any type of group (p=.040). This may underscore that political connections are what is needed for these appointments. In the Social Welfare Ministries category many ministers have links to clients, but they are not significantly over-represented (p=.142). Given the well known organization of clients for these ministries it is frankly surprising that we do not find more consistent client links,
and it may indicate that there is some buffering going on. Echoing Borrelli’s (2002) conclusion for women appointed to the cabinet in the U.S., a significant number of these ministers may be intended to protect the president from organized groups whose policy preferences clash with the administration’s policy agenda.

Finally, we see in table 1 that education and occupation backgrounds differ across the three broad categories of ministries. The differences are largely what would be expected given the policy areas handled by these ministries. People appointed to Economics Ministries are over-represented for having economics and business degrees (p=.001 for both), and for coming out of a business career (p=.000). In the Social Welfare Ministries category, appointees are over-represented in degrees in medicine (p=.000) and under-represented in law or business degrees (p=.015 and p=.017 respectively), and they are over-represented for medical careers (p=.000). People appointed to portfolios in the Central Ministries category are over-represented for degrees in law (p=.000). Careers in the public sector are over-represented in the Central Ministries category (p=.000) and under-represented for people appointed to Economics Ministries (p=.000).

In sum, it appears most ministers have educational and occupational backgrounds that are logical for the portfolios they receive, so it is not surprising that “policy expertise” is represented proportionally in all three ministry categories.

**Assessing gendered differences within broad ministry categories**

As our second benchmark we examine if there are significant differences in background traits of men and women within each of the three broad ministry categories (again, see Figures 1 and 2). Unlike with the aggregate analysis in which there were not many differences in the backgrounds of men and women, within the three broad ministry categories we not only see
statistically significant differences in the percentages of men and women displaying many traits, but they are often differences that may affect the capacity of women to do their job.

Appointees to Economics Ministries are often presented as technocrats instead of politicians, yet our background data show that people appointed to Economics Ministries resemble the entire dataset in the percentage with political connections (see Table 1). Yet men appointed in the Economics Ministry category are more likely than women to be friends of the president (p=.04), and men are also more likely to have held any type of elected post (p=.07) or a national-level elected post (p=.07). This is even more noteworthy because political experience traits do not differ significantly by gender within the other two broad categories of ministries. We also find gender differences for people appointed to Economics Ministries with regard to group links: the men more commonly than the women have links to business (p=.04), to international groups (p=.05), and to ministry clients (p=.02). The men are also more commonly (though marginally) qualified in the sense of having “policy expertise” (p=.11), and they are more likely than women to be “specialist + liaisons” (p=.07). These men are also more likely than women to hold degrees in engineering (p=.021) and to come from business careers (p=.07), while significantly more women have political science/policy degrees (p=.027). In summary, the men appointed to posts in the Economics Ministries category have numerous traits that may make them better prepared or able to do their job – in essence, more credible as minister. They are more likely to have the background traits expected of a technocrat, and they are also more likely to have a connection to the president.

Gender differences also are apparent in the Social Welfare Ministries category, but they are on different traits. While this category of ministers as a whole resembled the overall dataset (see Table 1) women within the Social Welfare Ministries category are more likely than men to
be connected to the president (p=.001), friends of the president (p=.003) or to come from a political family (p=.006). However, we observe no significant gender differences in political experience. With respect to group connections, men are more likely than women to have links to business (p=.007), but business links even for men are uncommon in this ministry category as less than 20% of men have business links. The lack of gender differences in the Social Welfare Ministries category is interesting to note for policy expertise (p=.668), and for specialist + liaison (p=.817). Men are more likely to come from a law career (p=.01) and the educational backgrounds of men and women often differ. In summary, women appear to be playing on a more level playing field in the Social Welfare Ministries category. Though these women are more likely than their male colleagues to have political connections, we do not know if those connections helped them get the post, or if they are an asset when pursuing their policy agenda or lobbying for the concerns of a client group.

Within the category of Central Ministries, we noted above that people appointed to these portfolios are politicians. When we compare men and women within this category we see that men are more often friends of the president (p=.013), but that there are no other significant differences between men and women in their political connections or experience. There are, however, gender differences with regard to group connections. The men are marginally more likely to have links to business (p=.12). The women are more likely to have links to clients of their ministry (p=.008) and they are more likely than the men to be “specialist + liaison” (p=.007). It is noteworthy, however, that there is no gender difference in the incidence of “policy expertise” in the Central Ministries. Women are more likely than men to have “revolving door” style careers (p=.09), careers in medicine (p=.03, though medical careers are rare overall in this category of ministries), and consulting careers (p=.009), and to have a degree
in political science/policy \((p=0.095)\). Men in this category are more likely than the women to have national government careers \((p=0.02)\). Overall, both men and women appointed to Central Ministries are politicos, but the women have some different credentials, and possibly differing capacity to do their job, particularly bringing group interests to the attention of government.

In summary, in the aggregate it appears that an increase in women in the cabinet is not bringing much change in experience to this highest level of the executive branch. Thus, the negative interpretation can be made that these women are unlikely to bring new perspectives to the cabinet and to policymaking. The more positive spin is that, in the aggregate, our dataset indicates that there are few differences between male and female ministers in their backgrounds, political experience and group connections. The women in general have very similar political credentials and backgrounds to the men, which should indicate they are playing on a fairly level playing field. However, when we divide the cabinet into categories, recognizing that not all portfolios are the same, we see more gendered differences. For example, women are less likely than men in the Economics Ministries category to have links to ministry clients, there is no gender difference in client links in the Social Welfare Ministries category, and women are more likely than men to have client links in the Central Ministries. These findings have potentially important implications for representation in the policy making and implementation process. We had also noted that in the aggregate men and women showed almost no differences in political experience or connections. Yet when we partition portfolios we find that more men than women are friends of the president in the Economics Ministries and the Central Ministries, but that in the Social Welfare Ministries category women more often than men are connected to the president, friends of the president, and come from political families. It is interesting that the category of portfolios where women have been present for the longest time is where we find that women are
more likely than men to have political connections. The findings so far support our H1 when the cabinet is studied at the aggregate level, but there is more evidence contrary to H1 when we partition the cabinet. H2b, that predicted women will be marginalized by a lack of connections to ministry clients, is refuted in the aggregate analysis, but when we partition the cabinet we find possible support for H2b in the Economics Ministries category.

**Do traits that predict portfolio assignments differ by gender?**

The previous section showed that there are gendered differences in individual traits associated with Economics, Social Welfare and Central categories of ministries. Our next benchmark is to explore if gender is still a significant predictor of the category of ministry to which a person is appointed after we control for background, experience and connection traits, and if certain traits correlate with appointment to different categories of posts, but the predictive traits differ for men and women. The number of women appointed to posts in the Economics Ministries category is small, but an explanation for the small number of women could be the “package of traits” that is commonly found in ministers holding those posts. Gender may not be the reason, or not the only reason, why women are still rare in those portfolios. Potential appointees may be expected to have a package of traits in order to be considered qualified for a particular post, and when women have those traits they are not excluded.

Multinomial logistic regression allows us to model the appointment process as a choice of assigning the minister to one of three types of ministries. First we present a model including all the ministers appointed to our three broad categories (model 1 in Table 2), and then we conduct separate analyses for men (model 2) and for women (model 3). The base category for all three models is Social Welfare Ministries because this is the category of portfolios where
women have been incorporated for the longest time and in the greatest number (see Escobar-
Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005, 2009).23 We do not include all the traits presented in
Figures 1 and 2 due to the constraint on how many variables can be included in this type of
model with our limited number of cases. Prior minister/vice-minister, political insider, and links
to any group are not included in the multivariate models because of their high correlations with
prior appointed post and client links which could create problems of multicollinearity.24 We also
do not include educational background traits in these models due to missing data that would drop
approximately 25 ministers from the analysis.

< insert Table 2 about here >

In model 1, containing all ministers, we see gender clearly matters. All else being equal,
the odds that a woman is appointed to a post in the Economics Ministries category rather than a
Social Welfare type of ministry decrease by 56% and the odds of a woman being appointed to a
Central category ministry rather than a Social Welfare type of ministry decrease by 64%. Model
1 also shows that different background traits seem to predict appointment to different ministries,
which provides support for our notion that there are different “types” of people who are
appointed to head different kinds of ministries. However, models 2 and 3 show that there is little
overlap in the traits that predict appointments for men and for women.

For appointment to a post in the Economics Ministries category compared to the Social
Welfare Ministries category we observe several differences between men and women. In the
women only analysis (model 3) the odds that a woman gets appointed to a post in the Economics

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23 Models are run with clustering on the minister (using vce (cluster)) since some ministers enter our dataset more
than once over time because they are reappointed to a post or switch posts.
24 Likelihood-ratio tests also indicated that prior minister/vice-minister (prob > chi2 = .76) and political insider (.65)
do not significantly predict type of appointment if prior appointed post is included in the model, and links to any
type of group do not significantly predict type of appointment if business links and client links are included in the
model (prob > chi2 = .19). We do, however, include both connected to the president and president’s friend as
variables in the model because, despite their similarity, they both make significant contributions to predicting
appointment type (prob > chi2 = .05 for connected, and .1 for president’s friend).
Ministries category, rather than in the Social Welfare Ministries category, are 12.24 times greater if she has links to business, controlling for other background traits, but one must remember that women are significantly less likely than men to have business links. This is the only significant and positive background factor. Interestingly, men do not appear to derive any benefit (or to incur any disadvantage) from business links, as the effect for men of links to business was statistically indistinguishable from zero. Meanwhile, the odds that a woman would be appointed to a post in the Economics Ministries category, rather than a Social Welfare Ministries post, decrease to about 0 if the woman is known as a friend of the president; and her odds are multiplied by 0.21 (a decrease of about 79%) if she has links to ministry clients. In addition, the odds that a woman would be appointed to an Economics Ministry post, rather than to a post in the Social Welfare Ministries category, are multiplied by 0.21 (a decrease of about 79%) if she comes from a career in the public sector (as opposed to private sector or revolving door), and her odds decrease to about 0 if she has a medical career. Only medical career has a similar statistical significance for men. By contrast, the men-only analysis (model 2) shows that for a man the odds of getting appointed to a post in the Economics Ministries category are only positively impacted (multiplied by 4.5) if he has a business career, and the impact is large, moving from a predicted probability of 0.22 with another type of occupational background to a predicted probability of 0.56 for men with a business/banking occupation. A business career does not affect a woman’s chances of obtaining this type of appointment.

We also observe that different traits predict appoint for men and women to Central Ministries in comparison to posts in the Social Welfare Ministries category. The odds that a woman will be appointed to a Central Ministry, rather than a post in the Social Welfare Ministries category, are 5.19 times greater if she has experience holding any type of elected
office, but recall that women are significantly less likely than men to have prior elected experience. Men, however, do not appear to derive any benefit or disadvantage from having experience in elected office, as the effect for men was statistically indistinguishable from zero. A woman’s odds of a Central, rather than a Social Welfare category post, decrease to near 0 if she is known to be a friend of the president. In contrast, model 2 shows that the relative risk of being appointed to a Central Ministry post, rather than a post in the Social Welfare Ministries category, increase by 2.66 for men who are connected to the president (an increase of about 166%). Having held a prior appointed post increases the odds by about 98% of a man being appointed to a Central Ministry, instead of a Social Welfare Category Ministry. But links to ministry clients decrease the odds by about 71% that a man will be appointed to a Central Ministry rather than a post in the Social Welfare Ministries category. In addition, for men a medical career decreases to near 0 the odds of appointment to a Central Ministry.

This analysis indicates that gender plays a role in the category of portfolios to which ministers are appointed, even after controlling for other background traits. The split sample analysis indicates that links to business or experience in elected office may help women be considered for non-traditional posts (i.e., outside the Social Welfare Ministries category).

Are men and women equally likely to have policy expertise?

Our final benchmark for assessing if cabinets are gendered institutions examines policy expertise for the post. This is important because if women have impressive credentials, but they are more likely than men to be appointed to portfolios unrelated to those credentials, they have less capacity to be effective policymakers, public managers, or group representatives.
For our dataset as a whole, 69.9% of ministers have extensive portfolio-relevant background (policy expertise). Slightly more men than women have policy expertise (70% compared to 69%), but the difference is not statistically significant (p=.773). Within the Social Welfare Ministries and Central Ministries categories there is no gender difference in portfolio-relevant experience. However, in the Economics Ministries category, the difference in men (76%) compared to women (63%) who have policy expertise meets a permissive standard of statistical significance (p=.11).

Another way to examine this benchmark is if ministers who could be called political appointees – those known to be connected to the president, friends of the president, from political families – have policy expertise related to their portfolio. This is a particularly important question because more women than men in our dataset come from political families, and in the Social Welfare Ministries category more women than men have all three types of political connections. For this check we combine the three types of political connections into a composite “political appointee” group (34.8% of ministers are coded 1 for political appointee, 43.6% of women, 31.8% of men).\(^{25}\) In the dataset overall more women than men are political appointees (p=.02), but a significant gender difference in political appointees exists only in the Social Welfare Ministries category, where 48.9% of women but only 17.3% of men are political appointees (p=.000). But does being a political appointee mean the minister does not have policy expertise for their post? In general it does not as only 48 of the 154 political appointees were not coded as having policy expertise. Women appear to be over-represented in the group of “unqualified political appointees” as 41.2% of women who could be thought of as political appointees do not have policy expertise, while 34.3% of male political appointees were not

\(^{25}\) Of the 154 ministers coded 1 for “political appointee” 6 had all three types of political connections, and 56 had two types of political connections.
coded as having policy expertise, but this difference is not significant (p=.478). In addition, there is no evidence of a gender difference in political appointees who lack policy expertise within any of the three categories of ministries (p=.535 for Economics Ministries, p=.515 for Social Welfare Ministries, and p=.852 for Central Ministries).

In sum, for the dataset as a whole, and when it is partitioned into categories of ministries, we observe almost no evidence of gender distinction or discrimination when it comes to appointment of ministers who apparently lack policy expertise for their portfolio. Some ministers (30.1%) do not have extensive policy expertise, but women are not over-represented in that group. Even when we single out ministers who could be viewed as political appointees, women and men are equally likely to have policy expertise for their post. This finding is interesting in light of Borrelli’s assessment of women in US presidents’ cabinets, which covered a much longer time period than our study. Borrelli (2002: 54) found that women are less likely to be liaisons or specialists than male cabinet appointees. She considers the fact that more women than men are generalists to be evidence of women being “showcased for their sex” more than “respected for their abilities.” We conclude that in a multi-country study of cabinets in recent years, most of the evidence refutes our H2a, which predicted that women would be less likely than men to have policy expertise in the field of their portfolio.

**Conclusion**

We presented four benchmarks for assessing if there is a gendered nature to appointments in presidential cabinets. First, we examined backgrounds and credentials of men and women in the cabinet as a whole. Second, we partitioned the cabinet into categories of Economics Ministries, Social Welfare Ministries, and Central Ministries, and explored whether there are
gender differences in minister backgrounds and credentials within any of the categories. Third, we conducted a multivariate analysis to determine if gender is still a significant predictor of type of cabinet appointment after controlling for background traits and credentials. In addition, we split the dataset to investigate if different backgrounds, types of political experience, group links and political connections predict the type of appointments received by men and women. Fourth, we looked at whether men and women are equally likely to have policy expertise for their portfolio, and in particular if women who could be viewed as “political appointees” are more likely than male political appointees to lack policy expertise for their post.

For the first and last benchmarks – analysis of minister traits for the cabinet in the aggregate, and assessment of whether women are as likely as men to have policy expertise for their portfolio – our findings indicate that the women in these cabinets look like their male colleagues. However, on the second and third benchmarks – when we partition the cabinet – more gender differences are visible, and more importantly, the ways in which the women differ from the men could impact their capacity to do their job. Women appointed to posts in the Economics Ministries category are less likely than the men to have links to ministry clients, or to be coded specialist + liaison. Their lack of links to ministry constituencies may decrease the credibility of these women who already face the challenge that women are still uncommon in the very top leadership position in Economics Ministries. However, that women are still rare in a category of ministries cannot be the only explanation for why women in Economics Ministries often lack client connections. In Central Ministries, where the percentage of women is even smaller than in the Economics Ministries, women more often than men have client links and more women than men are coded as specialist + liaison. In the Social Welfare category of ministries we do not find gender differences in client links or in the frequency of specialist +
liaison coding. The analysis of the partitioned cabinet also shows differences in men’s and women’s political connections. More men than women are friends of the president in the Economics Ministries and in the Central Ministries. However, in the Social Welfare Ministries category women more often than men are friends of the president, connected to the president, and from political families. The multivariate analysis showed that gender is a determining factor in predicting the category of portfolio a minister receives even when we control for other background traits. The split sample analyses showed that the background and experience traits that increase a man’s chances of appointment to an Economics Ministry post rather than to a Social Welfare Ministry post, or to a Central Ministry post instead of a Social Welfare Ministry post are almost entirely different from the traits that increase the chances for a woman. In sum, two of four benchmarks indicate the means by which women and men are appointed to cabinets differ in ways that produce potentially important differences between men and women ministers, so we conclude that there is a gendered nature to cabinet appointments.

To draw broader conclusions from this analysis, we apply MaryAnne Borrelli’s concepts of “gender desegregation” versus “gender integration” to the status of women in the cabinets of these five presidential democracies. Borrelli studied the U.S. cabinet from 1933-2010, and concluded that the Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama cabinets show evidence of ongoing and increasing gender integration, though the process is not yet complete. This also appears to describe what is occurring in the cabinets in our five-country study. Borrelli (2010: 737) provides 9 criteria for evaluating if gender integration is occurring:

(1) *More women at full cabinet rank.* In our Latin American cases the percentage of women/administration ranges from 8.3% in the de la Rua government in Argentina to 46.8% in Michelle Bachelet’s government in Chile, with an average of 25.2% women. For the Clinton and
Bush cabinets in the U.S. the average is 18.3% women. There are not just one or two token women in these cabinets. There were only 3 or 4 women in each of the Clinton and Bush cabinets, but in our Latin American cases the number of women ranges from 2 (de la Rua) to 22 (Bachelet), with an average of 8 women over the course of the administrations.

(2) Women appointed to both the inner and outer cabinet. “Inner cabinet” is a concept from U.S. politics referring to secretaries of State, Defense, Treasury and the Attorney General. Resolving debate about which portfolios are the most important across space and time is beyond the scope of this paper, but the Central Ministries category contains similarly powerful ministries, with the exception that Finance/Treasury is in the Economics Ministries category. Women are still a minority in the Central Ministries category, but it is becoming increasingly common for women to hold the Foreign Relations and Defense posts, and for many years women have been appointed ministers of Justice (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2009). Finance and Presidency, however, still are very rare appointments for women in these Latin American countries, and no woman has yet been appointed secretary of Defense or Treasury in the US. Overall there is movement toward gender integration on this dimension, though the process is not yet complete.

(3) Women appointed to “men’s issue” departments along with “women’s issue” departments. Our data show that women are being appointed to diverse types of cabinet posts, including stereotypically masculine posts such as Public Works and Transport (6 women), Mining, Energy & Environment (14 women), and Defense (5 women). Women are still most represented in the Social Welfare Ministries category, but they are definitely no longer being limited to posts in that more stereotypically feminine policy domain. Yet severe under-representation of women in the Economics Ministry category indicates that masculine policy
domain still presents a barrier for women. Again, there is evidence of movement toward, but not yet complete, gender integration.

(4) *Women appointed to posts that are relevant to the presidential initiatives.* We lack data to systematically evaluate this aspect of gender desegregation or integration.

(5) *Women are political “insiders.”* In our dataset overall, significantly more men than women are political insiders (p=.08). However, in the analysis of the partitioned cabinet, there are no significant gender differences for political insider status. The lack of a huge disparity between men and women on this dimension of political credentials is most likely a sign of greater integration – a willingness to appoint women ministers who have similar political background to the men at the apex of national politics.

(6) *Women have extensive political credentials.* In the analysis of our dataset overall, and in the partitioned analysis, we found that men and women were equally represented in almost all political credentials measured: prior election to a national-level post, prior high-level appointed post, prior minister or vice-minister. The only political credential on which we observe significant under-representation of women in our aggregate analysis is prior election to a post at any level of government (p=.03). For the Economics Ministries category we observe that significantly fewer women than men have been elected to a post at any level of government (p=.07) and that women are also under-represented for prior election to a national-level post (p=.07). Women in these cabinets generally have political experience credentials that resemble the men, again signaling that presidents are willing to appoint women who are politically experienced; a sign of gender integration.

(7) *Women are liaisons, not generalists who lack policy expertise and are dependent on the president.* While the majority of the ministers in these five presidential systems have policy
expertise (69.9%), the analysis showed that women and men are equally likely to have policy expertise (though in the Economics Ministries category women are marginally less likely than men to have policy expertise). Possibly of even greater importance, women who could be viewed as political appointees are no more likely than male political appointees to lack policy expertise. In addition, women are significantly more likely than men to be liaisons (specialist + liaison) in the Central Ministries category. But women are significantly less likely than men to be liaisons in the Economics Ministries category. In the aggregate there is no evidence of women being appointed to posts for which they lack policy credentials or relevant group connections. However, in Economics Ministries women are not only rare, they are less likely than men to have policy expertise or group connection credentials. In sum, overall there is evidence of gender integration, but it is not clear that gender integration is occurring with respect to Economics Ministries.

(8) Women have strong ties to women’s organizations. This is the only dimension on which we find strong evidence of gender desegregation. Only 16 of the 110 women in our dataset have known links to women’s groups. In addition, none of the women who hold high prestige posts such as Foreign Affairs or Justice have links to women’s organizations.

This study of cabinets in five presidential democracies provides an overall quite positive report about integration of women at the highest level of the executive branch of government. Women are no longer tokens, and they are found in more and more diverse posts. We find notable similarity in the backgrounds and credentials of male and female ministers in our dataset overall, and women are appointed to posts where they can use their policy expertise indicating that presidents are appointing women who are typically no more likely than their male colleagues to be dependent on the president. The differences in background, experience and connections...
that we do find to be distinguishing traits, however, appear to exert an important influence on appointment to Economics and Central Ministries, and may impact the capacity of women to do their jobs. At this point in time there appears to be a gendered nature to some cabinet appointments, but there are also strong signs that genuine gender integration is occurring.

References


Figure 1: Political experience and group connections of ministers

Type of Minister Experience

Entire Data Set

Economic Ministries

Social Welfare Ministries

Central Ministries

Percentage of Total Women or Men

* p = .1 ** p = .05 *** p = .01 **** p = .001
Figure 2: Education and occupation background traits of ministers

Type of Minister Background

Percentage of Total Women or Men

* p ≤ .1 ** p ≤ .05 *** p ≤ .01 **** p ≤ .001