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When do women represent women's rights: exploring seniority and political security

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ABSTRACT

A longstanding assumption in the literature on women's representation is that, once elected, descriptive representatives will legislate on behalf of women's substantive interests. While the literature finds support for the notion that women representatives prioritize women's substantive interests in their legislative behavior, considerable variation exists across women within countries. In this paper, I explore one factor that explains why some women focus more on women's rights than others: sense of political security and establishment within the legislature. I argue that women legislators with more security within the legislature, measured as seniority, may be more likely to introduce women's rights policies when compared with more junior women. Seniority provides legislators freedom to deviate from the party platform without fear of backlash from party leadership. I test this using data on bills initiated by legislators in Argentina (1983–2013). I find that more senior women introduce more women's rights legislation.

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In the 2003–2007 session of the Argentine Chamber of Deputies, Adriana Raquel Bortolozzi, a deputy representing the province of Formosa and Margarita Ferra de Bartol, representing San Juan province, were both elected from the *Partido Justicialista (PJ)*, one of the major, left-leaning political parties in Argentina. While Adriana initiated six bills promoting the well-being of women, Margarita initiated none. This anecdote presents an important question: Why do some women act to promote women's interests in office, while others do not? This question is supported by a large body of literature which has demonstrated that while women, on average, are more likely to represent women's substantive policy interests in public office than men (Bratton 2005; Schwindt-Bayer 2006, 2010; Htun, Lacalle, and Micozzi 2013; Barnes 2016), we also know that women elected to positions of power vary greatly in the degree to which they bring women's substantive interests onto the legislative agenda (Swers 2002; Dodson 2006; Beckwith 2007; Reingold 2008; Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo 2012).

Examining this example further, a key difference between these two women emerges: Adriana was serving her fourth two-year congressional term when she introduced six women's rights bills, Margarita was only in her first term of office. In this paper, I explore legislative seniority as a possible explanation for why some women elected to

legislatures may sponsor women's rights bills while others may not. More senior legislators should have a greater sense of security within the legislature and are more established within the party. This position allows them the freedom to pursue legislative actions that may deviate from the party platform without facing backlash from the party leadership. Representing women's rights issues can be one of these activities because they are issues that are generally not a high priority for political parties, are often perceived as targeting one specific subgroup, and can be culturally divisive. Thus, seniority provides women legislators with greater security and insulation to deviate from the party platform and promote women's rights policies in office.

I test this theory empirically by examining legislators serving in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies. While most of the literature on legislative seniority has focused on the U.S. Congress, it is important to explore how the effects of seniority on legislative behavior translate to other institutional settings with differing institutional incentives. Argentina provides an ideal case to test this theory. First, women have been elected to the legislature in large numbers for a significant amount of time, allowing for variation in levels of seniority. Second, the institutional incentives and career paths in Argentina differ from the U.S. which provides an opportunity to examine how seniority affects legislative security and behavior.

Using data on legislation introduced by Argentine Deputies from 1983 to 2013, I measure seniority in the legislature to examine its effect on the number of women's bills that women legislators introduce. I expect that women with more legislative seniority will sponsor more women's rights bills than more junior women. Using negative binomial regressions to predict the number of women's rights bills introduced by women, I find that more senior women in Argentina are more likely to sponsor women's rights bills.

These findings have important implications for the implementation of policies that benefit women in the constituency. In order for women's rights to be realized, it is not simply enough to elect more women to political office. Women elected to office vary in meaningful ways and the positions that these women hold within elected institutions matter for their ability legislate on group interests. More senior women with a greater sense of legislative security have a greater opportunity to introduce legislation on women's rights when compared to women who are less secure in their legislative positions. To secure policies that benefit women in the constituency, it is important to ensure that elected women enjoy a greater sense of security in their legislative positions through the continued support of their long-term legislative careers.

Connections between descriptive and substantive representation

The literature on representation has traditionally linked the descriptive presence of group members to substantive outcomes that represent the interests of that group (Pitkin 1967; Phillips 1995; Mansbridge 1999; Dovi 2002). Specifically, this literature posits that when descriptive representatives make their way into positions of power, like elected office, these group members will advocate on behalf of their group's interests in their policy work. This assumption is based on the idea that group members possess shared historical experiences and identities that inform their interests and behavior in office. Thus, women

elected to legislatures should be expected to advocate for women's interests to a greater degree than their male peers.

First, it is important to define women's substantive policy interests. I define women's substantive interests conceptually as women's rights policy initiatives that disproportionately affect the lives and well-being of women in society. Specifically, these are progressive, pro-feminist policies that seek to improve the equality of women across several dimensions. These bills range from bills that improve women's lives but do not challenge existing gender roles, to more controversial and costly measures that seek to improve the equality of women by upending traditional gender roles (Celis and Childs 2008; Htun and Weldon 2010; Caminotti and Piscopo 2019). On average, women are more likely to prioritize these policies than men across a variety of legislative contexts (Saint-Germain 1989; Bratton 2005; Schwindt-Bayer 2006, 2010, 2018; Htun, Lacalle, and Micozzi 2013). However, considerable variation among women exists with some women representing women's rights while others refrain.

While women in general might have a baseline predisposition to represent women's rights based on their shared identities and experiences as women, I argue that some women in the legislature might be better positioned to act on these policies than others. Variation across women within the legislature should provide varying degrees of opportunity for women to act on women's rights policies and promote these policies in their legislative work. Specifically, I focus on variation in levels of seniority across women in office. I argue that more senior women should have a greater sense of security in their positions in office, meaning that they should be less fearful of political backlash when compared to newly elected women. This should give more senior women the freedom to deviate from the party leadership to represent women's rights policies. While all women may not choose to act on gender-equitable policies under the circumstances of greater legislative freedom, I argue that in general, more senior women should be more likely to support women's rights issues on average when compared to more junior women.

Seniority and political careers: beyond the U.S.

Drawing on literature from the U.S., scholars find that seniority matters for legislators in a variety of ways. For example, senior legislators tend to have greater experience navigating legislative institutions as well as greater access to more prestigious committee assignments and access to influential leadership positions within the legislature (Hibbing 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Jeydel and Taylor 2003). In similarly structured legislative systems, seniority is the basis on which political rewards are distributed and senior members can leverage these advantages to further their political goals (Mayhew 1974). For these reasons, election to Congress is often a highly prized career goal for many politicians and many legislators will continue to seek re-election to the national legislature. This is evidenced by high re-election rates and low turnover. In systems where political careers prize re-election to the legislature and legislative rewards are distributed based on seniority, it is clear that seniority might influence a legislator's sense of career security and behavior within the legislature.

How might seniority influence legislative behavior in systems where re-election to the national legislature is not a primary career goal and where legislative rewards are not

distributed based on seniority? For example, Argentina represents a political system in which the national legislature is often not the primary career goal for most politicians (Jones 2002; Micozzi 2009, 2014). For politicians in Argentina, subnational-level executive positions at the provincial and municipal levels are more highly prized because these positions often have greater access to political resources (Franceschet and Piscopo 2014; Micozzi 2014). Often politicians in Argentina will seek election to the national congress for a brief period, with the ultimate goal of pursuing a subnational position (Micozzi 2014; Lucardi and Micozzi 2016). Additionally, rewards like committee assignments and leadership positions within the Chamber are not distributed based on seniority but based on negotiations amongst the party leadership (Jones 2002; Barnes 2014, 2016). Taken together, this means that in Argentina, turnover in the national legislature is often high and levels of seniority are relatively low when compared with Congress in the U.S.

However, even though career paths in Argentina often progress beyond the national legislature, there are still legislators who return to the national Chamber for re-election and who do not pursue careers at the subnational level. For these legislators, I argue that seniority indicates two things: (1) senior legislators have established a secure relationship with the party leadership over time and (2) these legislators have decided to not pursue a political career beyond the legislature. Together these two features should affect the legislative behavior of more senior deputies.

Explaining variation in women's substantive representation: seniority and legislative security

Argentina employs a closed-list electoral system meaning that politicians are heavily dependent on the party leadership for the success and progression of their political careers (Carey and Shugart 1995; Jones 2002; Crisp et al. 2004; Micozzi 2009, 2014; Caminotti and Piscopo 2019). In these systems, political power is centralized in the hands of the party leaders because the party determines who has access to the ballot in elections and where candidates are placed on the ballot. Specifically in Argentina, it is the provincial party bosses that determine candidate access and placement for nearly all political offices including the national Chamber of Deputies. For legislators who wish to continue their political careers inside or outside of the legislature, they depend on their relationship with the party leadership (Jones 2002; Micozzi 2009, 2014). To emphasize the importance of the party leadership and ballot access for political careers, 76% of national legislators seeking re-election who were placed on a party list between 1989 and 2001 were re-elected to the Chamber (Jones 2002). Thus, having an established relationship with the party leadership and, in turn, ballot access can provide legislators with a sense of security in their legislative positions and political careers.

Senior legislators who continue to pursue re-election to the Chamber of Deputies should have more established relationships with the party leadership than more junior legislators. Although politicians in Argentina often prioritize political positions outside of the national Chamber, senior legislators who have sought re-election to the Chamber have been able to establish their relationship with the party leadership and become more entrenched within the party over time. Their continued political career within the legislature indicates that the party has been willing to continuously extend

ballot access to this legislator for the Chamber of Deputies. More senior legislators also tend to have more extensive professional political networks and have developed greater political skill (Alemán and Calvo 2008; Barnes 2016). Finally, more senior legislators might be more politically valuable to their parties. With an established reputation among the electorate, senior legislators might have greater levels of support and recognition among voters making these legislators more electorally valuable to the party (Micozzi 2014).

In addition to these benefits, senior legislators who have chosen to pursue re-election to the Chamber likely also have a different set of political career goals. These legislators have not pursued the typical career path that most politicians follow in Argentina. However, even though seniority in the Chamber of Deputies is often not a conventional political aspiration, seniority may still indicate a sense of security in one's position within the legislature itself. For legislators who have chosen to pursue a political career within the legislature, seniority still indicates that these legislators have established relationships with and may be more electorally valuable to the party leadership. These factors should provide senior legislators with a greater sense of security in their position within the legislature.

Junior legislators, on the other hand, lack established relationships with the party leadership. Politicians typically are elected to the Chamber of Deputies after holding political office in some capacity at the municipal or provincial level (Micozzi 2014). However, it is common for politicians to use their position within the national legislature to establish their political careers in pursuit of a more highly prized political appointment (Micozzi 2014; Lucardi and Micozzi 2016). This often means that junior legislators entering the national Chamber lack the entrenched and established relationships with the party leadership that more senior members may have. These legislators may also lack the same level of voter recognition and electoral support that makes senior legislators more electorally valuable to the party (Micozzi 2014). Whether these junior legislators seek to pursue a political career beyond the national legislature, as most politicians do, or whether they seek a continued career in the national legislature, junior legislators will still need to depend on strong, favorable relationships with the party leadership (Micozzi 2014). Because junior legislators are less integrated with the party leadership, they are less secure in their future political careers, whether those careers are within or outside of the legislature.

The sense of security that a legislator feels within the legislature should influence their legislative behavior in office (Stein and Bickers 1994; Crisp and Desposato 2004; Heitshusen, Young, and Wood 2005; André, Depauw, and Martin 2015). Junior legislators who are less established within the party, are going to use their legislative resources to build their relationship with the party. In order to advance their political careers, either inside or outside of the national legislature, junior legislators depend on strong ties to the party leadership for their political futures (Jones 2002; Micozzi 2014; Barnes 2016). For junior legislators who pursue the typical career path and endeavor to seek subnational executive positions, these legislators will be additionally incentivized to appeal to their district constituencies (Micozzi 2009, 2014). For this reason, junior legislators who wish to advance their political careers, within or outside of the legislature, will be especially inclined to foster strong relationships with the party leadership and avoid backlash from party leaders and, in some cases, potential voters.

One of the most effective ways for junior legislators to build their relationship with the party leadership is to signal their loyalty to the party by behaving in a party disciplined way. Centralization of power within the hands of the party leadership incentivizes high levels of party unity (Stein and Bickers 1994; Crisp and Desposato 2004; Heitshusen, Young, and Wood 2005; Tavits 2009, 2010; André, Depauw, and Martin 2015). Not only do party leaders have control over the political futures of national legislators, but they will also often work together with the party leadership in the Chamber to enforce strict party unity among national legislators (Jones 2002; Micozzi 2009, 2014; Barnes 2016). In this respect, local party leaders wield significant influence over the behavior of national legislators and junior legislators are incentivized to introduce bill initiatives that promote the policy positions and priorities of the party. In fact, legislators who defect from the party line risk hindering their political career progression (Jones 2002; Micozzi 2014). Additionally, junior legislators who seek political careers outside of the legislature may introduce more locally targeted bills to signal to future constituents (Micozzi 2014). In sum, junior legislators will be incentivized to shore up their political futures and will be especially constrained in their legislative behavior, having little freedom to deviate from promoting party-oriented policies (Beckwith 2007; Barnes 2016).

By focusing on promoting the party platform, junior women will likely avoid legislating on behalf of women's rights. Where legislators are incentivized to promote the positions and interests of the party platform, they are less likely to prioritize women's rights policy issues (Clayton and Zetterberg 2021). Legislators have fewer opportunities to pursue policies that are of personal priority, like women's rights issues, when they are constrained to promoting the party platform (Micozzi 2014). This is because women's rights issues are often not a part of mainstream party platforms and are typically a low priority issue for political parties (Schwindt-Bayer 2006). For example, the Comparative Manifesto Project contains 38 party manifestos for Argentine political parties from 1989 to 2019. Of these 38 manifestos, only five manifestos from four political parties contain a comprehensive platform on gender-related policy issues.¹ Because junior women are more incentivized to promote the party platform and establish themselves within the party, they will avoid legislating on behalf of women's rights, regardless of the legislator's preference (Heitshusen, Young, and Wood 2005). This is because these issues typically do not advance the party agenda (Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo 2012; Balf 2019).

In addition to promoting the party platform, junior women will also be incentivized to broaden their legislative agendas and avoid focusing their legislative efforts on policies that only benefit a specific subgroup. To prove themselves to the party leadership and establish their credibility, junior women are incentivized to focus their efforts on a variety of policy areas to demonstrate that they are capable of working on all types of issues (Balf 2019). Not only are women's rights issues not part of most party platforms, but they are narrow in scope and target a specific subgroup compared to valence policy issues like improving the economy, security, public spending, and national security issues. These valence policy issues are broad in scope and they also tend to be more prestigious policy issues for legislators to pursue because they receive more budgeting, public attention, and resources (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005; Balf 2019).

On the other hand, women's rights are also often viewed by legislators as less prestigious policy issues and may also be potentially controversial and divisive issues. In fact,

qualitative evidence from Argentina reveals that legislators perceive representing women's interests as potentially harmful or politically damaging in the eyes of the party (Balf 2019; Caminotti and Piscopo 2019). Because women's rights policies seek to establish equality between men and women, these policies often challenge traditional gender roles which may be especially divisive among male-dominated party elites. Instead, junior women entering male-dominated institutions will be incentivized to focus on a broad variety of policy issues that are largely popular amongst party elites and potential future voters at the subnational level. They will tend to avoid legislating on behalf of women's rights because these issues may be less beneficial to advancing their political careers.

Senior women with well-established careers have demonstrated their competence across policy areas to the party leadership and, thus, may have more freedom to act on women's rights issues without fear of backlash from the party leadership and without risking their position within the legislature. This is because senior women have already established themselves within the party and have already established their positions within the legislature. With a greater sense of security within the legislature, senior women should be less constrained in their legislative behavior and have the freedom to legislate on subgroup-specific policy areas, like women's interests, even if these policies are perceived as divisive (Beckwith 2007; Barnes 2016). Unlike their more junior peers, senior women will also have the freedom to pursue policy agendas and legislative goals that do not align with the party's platform (Stein and Bickers 1994; Crisp and Desposato 2004; Heitshusen, Young, and Wood 2005; Tavits 2009, 2010; André, Depauw, and Martin 2015). In this respect, senior women may be more willing to defy party norms and may be less responsive to party leadership and the policy agenda of the party (Beckwith 2007; Barnes 2016). Thus, senior women will have greater freedom to pursue other legislative goals, like women's rights policies, that may reflect their preferences even if these interests are not explicitly part of the party platform.

Data and methods

To empirically test these relationships, I use data on all legislative bills introduced by legislators in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies from the beginning of the democratic regime in 1983 through 2013.² The data on legislative bills are collapsed to the level of a legislator serving within a given two-year congressional session which follows the Argentine election cycle.³

The dependent variable is a count of the number of women's rights bills introduced by a legislator in a two-year term. As mentioned, I conceptually define women's rights legislation as any pro-feminist policy initiative that seeks to improve the lives and well-being of women. Following Schwindt-Bayer (2010), I distinguish these more progressive bills from traditional, women's domain issues like education and healthcare policies. Following Htun, Lacalle, and Micozzi (2013), I code women's rights bills using a dictionary of key words that map onto my conceptual definition.⁴ Using a key word search, the dictionary captures bills that contain these key terms in the title or abstracts of the bills. To ensure the accuracy of the key word search, I hand checked each bill captured by the dictionary terms to determine whether it aligned with my conceptual definition of

pro-feminist women's rights legislation.⁵ Any bills that did not meet my conceptual definition were hand coded as non-women's bills. For example, any legislation that seeks to limit women's access to contraception or reproductive health care would not be included in my sample. Instead, my dependent variable measures substantive policies like abortion legalization, domestic violence criminalization, and legislation that promotes access to reproductive healthcare measures.

In the Argentine Chamber, legislators can introduce three different types of bills: *Proyectos de Ley*, *Resoluciones*, and *Declaraciones*. *Proyectos de Ley* bills have the potential to become law if they pass both Chambers and gain presidential approval, whereas *Resoluciones* and *Declaraciones* carry more symbolic weight. Because *Proyectos de Ley* have more substantive policy implications, I focus the measure of the dependent variable on these bills only. Thus, the dependent variable is measured as a count of the number of women's rights *Proyecto de Ley* bills a legislator initiates, excluding *Resoluciones* and *Declaraciones*.

A legislator's seniority is measured as her tenure in office, or the number of two-year congressional sessions that a legislator has served prior to the current term. I expect that more senior women legislators will have a greater sense of job security which should influence the number of women's rights bills they introduce.

I include several control variables in the analyses. First, I control for the total number of bills a legislator introduces during a two-year congressional session. This variable is measured as the total number of *Proyectos de Ley* introduced by a legislator in a session. A potential alternative explanation for the relationship between seniority and women's rights legislation is that more senior women are simply more productive legislators introducing more bills in general. Women who have spent more time in the legislature are potentially more adept at navigating the legislative process as they have been able to develop their legislative skills over time in office. Legislators who introduce more bills have an inherently greater chance of introducing women's rights bills among those other bills. Thus, according to this explanation, seniority provides women with the legislative skill to introduce more women's rights legislation. To account for this alternative explanation, I control for the total number of bills a legislator introduces in office.

Second, I control for party ideology using data from the *Universidad de Salamanca's Parliamentary Elites of Latin America* (PELA) survey. This survey includes elite self-reported party affiliations for legislators as well as self-reported ideological placements of their affiliated party on a 10-point ordinal left-right scale, with lower values indicating parties on the left and higher values indicating parties on the right. To create a measure of ideological position for each political party, I average the ideological self-placement scores of all legislators who affiliate with a particular party to obtain an aggregate ideological score for each political party. The PELA survey data has been validated by more recent measures of elite ideology scores that take into account substantive policy dimensions of the left-right spectrum specific to Latin America and, thus, take into account the specific context of left-right ideology in the Latin American region (Wiesehomeier and Benoit 2009; Wiesehomeier 2010).⁶

Additionally, Argentina possesses a standing committee dedicated to women's issues specifically, the committee on Family, Women, Children, and Adolescents (*Familia, Mujer, Niñez y Adolescencia*). Legislators who sit on certain committees might be more likely to sponsor legislation on issues that the committees on which they sit

typically cover (Schwindt-Bayer 2010; Balf 2019). Additionally, the women and family issues committee is often considered a less prestigious committee assignment by the party leadership and it may be the case that more vulnerable junior women are assigned to this committee (Michelle Heath, Schwindt-Bayer, and Taylor-Robinson 2005; Barnes 2016). If tenure in office is associated with assignment to the women and family issues committee and legislators serving on this committee are more inclined to introduce women's equality bills given their committee membership, this should be accounted for. I code membership on the committee for Family, Women, Children, and Adolescents (*Familia, Mujer, Niñez y Adolescencia*) as a binary indicator where 1 indicates membership on the committee and 0 indicates that the legislator did not sit on this committee.

Finally, I control for aspects of the legislator's district to capture any constituency effects. I include a control for whether the provincial district that a legislator represents is urban or rural, as measured by the population density of the province.⁷ Legislators elected from urban provinces may face more pressure from organized women's groups and urban constituencies to sponsor women's rights bills. Finally, I include fixed effects for each two-year congressional session, as some legislators serve more than one term.

To model the relationships between seniority and the number of women's rights bills introduced by legislators, I use negative binomial regressions given that the dependent variable is a count of the number of women's rights bills introduced by a legislator and to account for the over-dispersion of the data.⁸ I test the effect of seniority in separate models on subsets of women and men legislators. While the theoretical expectations pertain only to women legislators, men legislators serve as a control and I do not expect seniority to significantly affect men legislators' patterns of women's rights bill introduction.

The effect of seniority on women's rights legislation

In this section, I present the effect of legislative seniority on the number of women's rights policy initiatives introduced by women and men legislators in the Argentine Chamber. As the first country to adopt a national gender quota in 1993, Argentina has seen a steady increase in women's representation in the Chamber of Deputies (IPU 2018). Sustained levels of women's representation over a long period of time means that women in the Chamber will have had time to establish seniority, providing variation across the key dimensions I examine. [Figure 1](#) presents the distribution of women and men legislators across the number of two-year congressional terms they have served in office.

[Table 1](#) presents the results for the effect of terms in office on the introduction of women's rights bills. The first model in this table examines the effect of seniority on the introduction of women's rights bills for women and the second model examines this effect for men.

Looking at the first model in [Table 1](#), it is clear that the number of terms in office that a woman has served has a positive and statistically significant effect on the number of women's rights bills women introduce in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies. This is consistent with my theoretical expectations. As women gain seniority in the legislature,

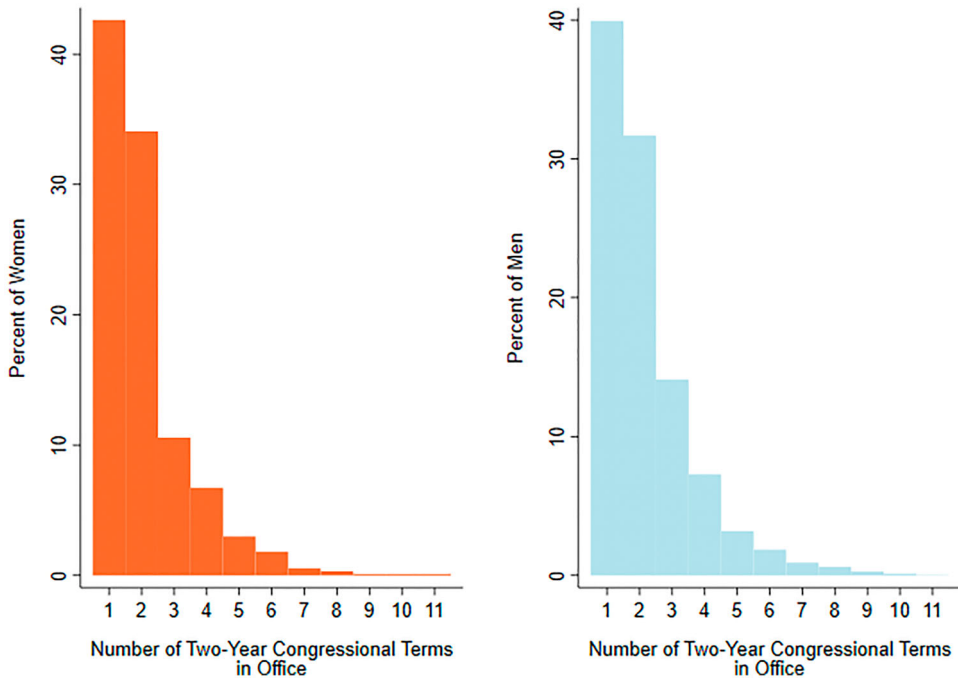


Figure 1. Distribution of women and men across number of two-year congressional terms in office.¹⁰

they gain a greater sense of security in their position within the legislature and are able to deviate from the policy platforms of their parties in their legislative work. While more senior women legislators may not have chosen to pursue a more traditional political career path in Argentina, these women still have established long-term and sustained relationships within the party which indicate security within the legislature. Instead of focusing their legislative efforts on integrating themselves within the party, established senior women can focus their work on more subgroup specific and perhaps divisive issues without fear of facing backlash from the party leadership.

Table 1. The effect of seniority on number of women's rights bills.

	Women (1)	Men (2)
Terms in Office	0.103* (0.050)	-0.0383 (0.046)
Total Proyectos de Ley (introduced by legislator)	0.0420*** (0.003)	0.0473*** (0.005)
Women's Committee	0.708*** (0.130)	0.859* (0.359)
Party Ideology	-0.0739 (0.051)	-0.233** (0.071)
Urban	0.237 (0.131)	0.212 (0.159)
Constant	-1.128** (0.402)	-1.297* (0.521)
N	607	1132

Notes: Congressional fixed effects included. Standard errors in parentheses.

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

Junior women, new to the national legislature, do not have these same freedoms. Because legislators often enter the national Chamber to establish a platform for their political careers, junior women are less established within the party. These junior legislators are especially incentivized to establish their relationship with and prove themselves to the party leadership by supporting the party platform, legislating on a wide variety of policy areas, and focusing their efforts on policies that will be palatable to the party leaders. Thus, if junior women wish to establish themselves within the party and ensure their future political careers, they will tend to eschew representing women's rights policies.

There is no relationship between seniority and the introduction of women's rights bills among men legislators which is consistent with the lack of theoretical expectation for men serving in the legislature. However, similar to women, men who sit on the women and family issues committee tend to be more inclined to initiate bills that promote women's rights when compared to men who are not appointed to this committee position. This indicates that committee assignment does, in fact, have important implications for the types of policies that legislators introduce. When both men and women are assigned to committees designated for women and family issues, they are both more inclined to introduce bills within this policy area. Additionally, men who are elected from parties that are on the ideological left are more likely to introduce women's rights legislation as well. Interestingly, the findings from these control variables highlight key factors that may explain certain variation in women's rights legislation among men.

To illustrate the effect of seniority for men and women, in Figure 2 I plot the predicted number of women's rights bills introduced over the number of two-year congressional terms a legislator has served. This plot demonstrates that women tend to introduce

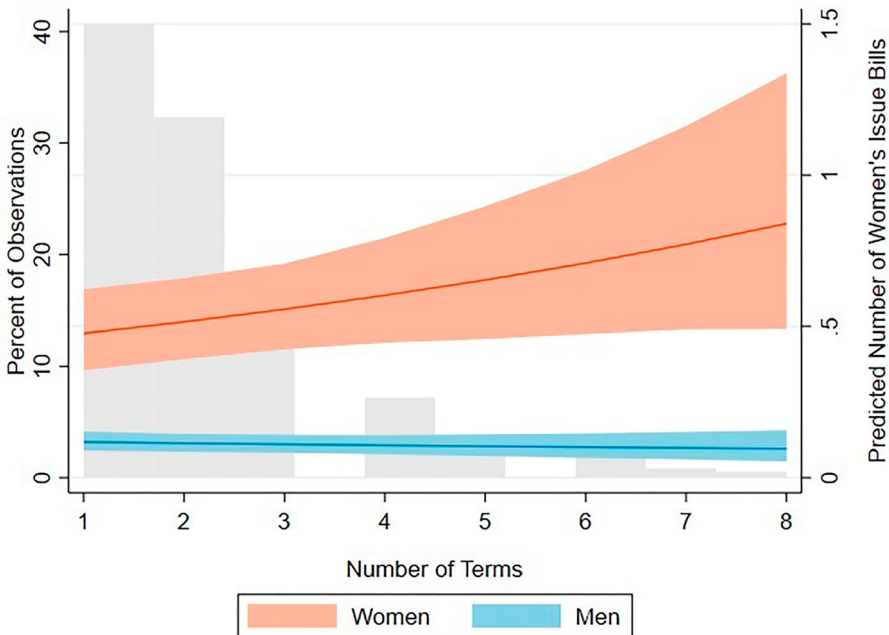


Figure 2. Effect of seniority on the predicted number of women's rights bills.¹¹

more women's rights bills as their number of terms served in office increases, indicating that the sense of security in the legislature may give women more freedom to promote women's rights in their legislative work.

While the predicted number of women's rights bills may seem small, it is important to remember that these predicted values are at the level of an individual legislator. Scaling this up to a congressional session, these predicted values translate to roughly a 12% increase in the number of women's rights bills introduced by women legislators from the 2005–2007 congressional mandates as the number of more senior women legislators increases over time. Both the 2005 and 2007 congressional mandates were chosen because these election cycles resulted in a similar percent of women in office (37% and 40% respectively). By choosing two congressional sessions with similar levels of women's representation, I am able to compare the increase in women's rights bills that are introduced as a result of women's tenure increasing in office over time while holding the proportion of women in the Chamber constant. Thus, the 12% increase in women's rights bills introduced is a product of the increasing tenure of women in office over time and not the result of a substantial increase in the percentage of women in office.

Testing the results across party platforms

By replicating the main analysis from Table 1 for women legislators across party platforms, I am able to test one of the main underlying 'mechanisms of my theoretical argument: that seniority provides women legislators with a sense of security to deviate from the party platform. Specifically, Table 2 replicates the results from Table 1 for women legislators elected from parties where women's rights are not included in the party platform (Model 1) versus women elected from political parties where women's rights are included in the party platform (Model 2). To classify parties as either including or not including women's rights policies as part of their party platform, I use data from the Comparative Manifesto Project.⁹

Table 2. The effect of seniority on number of women's rights bills (among women, split by party platform).

	Do not include women's rights (1)	Include women's rights (2)
Terms in Office	0.103* (0.045)	0.240 (0.193)
Total Proyectos de Ley (introduced by legislator)	0.0405*** (0.004)	0.0459*** (0.009)
Women's Committee	0.708*** (0.136)	0.878* (0.412)
Party Ideology	-0.0910 (0.057)	-0.0264 (0.278)
Urban	0.306* (0.136)	-0.293 (0.472)
Constant	-1.034* (0.426)	-1.584* (1.571)
N	560	53

Notes: Congressional fixed effects included. Standard errors in parentheses.

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

According to the theoretical argument, seniority should provide women with the freedom to deviate from promoting the policies outlined in the party platform, allowing them to work on other policy issues like women's rights. Given this argument, I expect that seniority should have a greater effect on the introduction of women's rights bills for women elected to parties that do not include women's rights as part of their party platform. For these women, seniority should provide them with the freedom to deviate from the party platform to promote women's rights legislation. The effect of seniority should be diminished for women elected from parties that do include these issues as part of their party platforms because women elected from these parties can still promote women's rights issues without the need to deviate from the party platform.

The results lend further support for the theoretical expectations of this paper. For women elected from parties that do not include women's rights in their party platforms, the effect of terms in office on the introduction of women's rights bills is positive and significant. This indicates that seniority provides these women with the freedom they need to deviate from the party platform and legislate on these issues. On the other hand, seniority does not have a significant effect on the introduction of women's rights bills for women elected from parties that do include these issues as part of their party platforms. These findings indicate that seniority does provide women with a sense of freedom to deviate from the party platform to work on women's rights and that this freedom matters more for women elected from parties that do not include these issues as part of the party platform.

Conclusion

As women have increased their numbers in office over time, the groups of women elected to office are becoming more diverse. With greater individual variation among elected women, it is important to explore how variation among women may condition their behavior in office across a wide variety of legislative outcomes. I propose that individual-level variation among women might explain variation in the degree to which women represent women's interests in their legislative work, a question that remains a largely unanswered puzzle in the literature on women's representation. Using individual-level variation in legislative seniority, I offer an explanation for why some women will advocate on behalf of women's rights while others are more constrained in their ability to do so. Specifically, I theorize that seniority will lead to variation in legislative behavior by providing women legislators a sense of security within the legislature that allows them to deviate from appeasing the party leadership. This should lead to a greater introduction of women's rights bills among senior women.

While most of the literature on seniority and legislative behavior focuses on the U.S. Congress, I examine this relationship in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies where institutional incentives do not prioritize seniority. I find evidence to support my theoretical expectations for the effect of seniority on women's legislative behavior. Specifically, women who have served more terms in office and who have established themselves within the party feel a greater sense of security are able to deviate from the party platform. This allows them to introduce more targeted policies like women's rights policies without fear of backlash from the party leadership.

These findings imply that seniority does matter for legislative behavior in legislative contexts beyond the U.S. Congress. Even though political career paths in Argentina do not prioritize re-election to the national legislature, seniority might matter in differing ways. Specifically, the progression of a political career in Argentina is dependent on a favorable relationship with the party leadership. Junior legislators who lack established relationships with the party are incentivized to prove themselves to and appease the party leadership in the hopes of advancing their future careers. Senior women who have established themselves within the party and are less concerned with advancing their careers will have the freedom to introduce bills that focus on a particular subgroup of constituents to improve the well-being of women. These findings indicate that seniority may matter for women's legislative behavior even in contexts with differing institutional incentives.

Additionally, these findings have important implications for the literature on representation. Although women share a sense of historical marginalization and shared experiences that may prompt them to advocate for women's interests, I find that individual variation in their ability to put these interests on the legislative agenda is the result of individual variation in seniority. This project provides an important foundation for understanding not only the variation in women's rights legislation but it potentially provides a basis for exploring variation along other identity-related issues that are salient to other subgroups of constituents. Future research should explore the ways in which individual variation among legislators from other underrepresented groups affects their ability to legislate on group interests.

Finally, these findings have important implications for policy implementation. In order to achieve substantive policy outcomes that benefit the well-being of women, women legislators must not only enter legislative office, but they must persist in these positions and establish their careers over time. Given these findings, future research should explore how legislative policy agendas change over time for women. Specifically, scholars should investigate whether women tend to focus on different policy issues at different points in their political careers to provide a fuller understanding of how tenure in office affects the policymaking process.

Notes

1. Party manifestos that included a section on gender issues include: *Unión Cívica Radical* (1989, 1995), *Alianza para el Trabajo, la Justicia y la Educación* (1999), *Afirmación para una República Igualitaria* (2003), *Coalición Cívica* (2007), and (Burst et al. 2020).
2. These data build on legislative bill data collected by Calvo and Sagarzazu (2014) for Argentina from 1983 to 2007. I have expanded this data collection effort to include legislation introduced from 2007 to 2013.
3. Legislators serve in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies for four-year congressional terms. However, elections are held every two years, meaning that half of the 257 seats are elected every two years, renewing the chamber by half. I examine bill sponsorship within the two-year congressional sessions.
4. A detailed description of the dictionary terms and coding method used is included in Appendix 1.
5. In addition to checking whether bills captured by the key word search meet my definition of women's rights legislation, I also check the effectiveness of the dictionary coding method. To

do this, I took a random sample of 100 bills from the pool of all legislation introduced in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies. I then hand-checked these bills to determine how many women's rights bills were not captured by the dictionary search. Out of 100 bills, the dictionary only missed 1 woman's rights bill. This ensures that the automated dictionary word search is effective in capturing legislation that maps onto my conceptual definition.

6. The overall discrepancies between the two measures are minimal (Weishomeier and Benoit's measure explains 82% of the variance of PELA measures).
7. This measure compares the population density in a given province to the average population density for the country overall. Provinces with a population density greater than the mean are considered urban (Buenos Aires, Capital Federal, Cordoba, Misiones, Santa Fe, and Tucuman) while those with a population density less than the mean are considered rural. Based on population density, Entre Ríos exceeded the national average during the 2010 and is coded as urban only for the 2011–2013 congressional period.
8. The dependent variable, number of women's interest bills introduced by a legislator, has a greater variance than the mean.
9. I read through the manifesto documents and classified parties as including women's rights in the party platform if these parties had a designated section of the manifesto document for women's rights issues.
10. Given the distribution of women and men across the number of two-year congressional terms served in office, I run the main analysis from [Table 1](#) on a sample of legislators excluding extreme values of "terms" with five or fewer observations. The effect of seniority holds in this restricted sample indicating that the effect of seniority is not a result of outliers. The full analysis including outliers is included in Appendix 2.
11. For [Figure 1](#), the following controls are held at their means: total number of *Proyectos de Ley* introduced. The following controls are held at their modes: women's committee = 0 and urban = 1. Ideology is held at its mean.

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Appendix 1

Table A1. Total number of bills and women's bills per congressional session*.

Overall	Total number of PLs 44,062	Women's rights PLs 1677 (.04%)
1983–1985	1638	39 (.02%)
1985–1987	1949	42 (.02%)
1987–1989	2121	63 (.03%)
1989–1991	2142	52 (.02%)
1991–1993	2461	56 (.02%)
1993–1995	2237	61 (.03%)
1995–1997	2739	70 (.03%)
1997–1999	3213	102 (.03%)
1999–2001	3404	111 (.03%)
2001–2003	3612	126 (.03%)
2003–2005	3430	189 (.06%)
2005–2007	3729	219 (.06%)
2007–2009	3582	156 (.04%)
2009–2011	3779	183 (.05%)
2011–2013	4026	208 (.05%)

*Women's rights *Proyecto de Ley* bills were coded from the entire universe of bills introduced in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies from 1983 to 2011. A total of 44,062 bills were introduced during this time period and of those, 1677 (.04%) were coded as women's rights bills (Table A1 shows these trends across congressional sessions). To code women's rights bills, I used a dictionary of terms created by Htun, Lacalle, and Micozzi (2013) to code women's rights legislation in Argentina. I use these terms to capture legislation that aligns with my conceptual definition of women's rights legislation. First, I coded these bills using a key word search of the bill title and bill abstracts using the dictionary terms. Bills that contained any of these key words in their titles or abstracts were coded as women's rights bills. Second, I examined each of women's rights bills captured by the automated process and hand-checked their content by reading their titles, abstracts, and bill contents where necessary. If any of the bills captured by the automated coding process did not meet my conceptual definition of women's rights legislation, I hand coded these bills back to non-women's rights bills. For example, if the term "aborto" captured legislation that was designed to limit women's access to reproductive health care, this bill was recoded as a non-women's rights bill.

List of key words used to code women's rights legislation (Htun, Lacalle, and Micozzi 2013).

Keyword	Translation
ABORTIVA	Abortion inducing
ABORTO	Abortion
ABUSO SEXUAL	Sexual abuse
ACCESO IGUALITARIO	Equal access
ACIDO FOLICO	Folic Acid
ACOSO SEXUAL	Sexual harassment
ALIMENTARIOS MOROSOS	Maintenance debtors
AMA DE CASA	Housewife
ANENCEFALIA	Anencephaly
ANTIABORTO	Anti-abortion
ANTICONCEPCION	Contraception
ANTICONCEPCION DE EMERGENCIA	Emergency contraception
ANTICONCEPCION QUIRURGICA	Surgical contraception
ANTICONCEPTIVO	Contraceptive
APELLIDO DE SOLTERA	Maiden name
ATAQUE SEXUAL	Sexual abuse
BENEFICIO DE PENSION	Pension benefit
CANCER DE MAMA	Breast cancer
CANCER DE UTERO	Uterus cancer
COLPOSCOPIA	Vaginal examination
COMISARIA DE LA MUJER	Women police station
COMISION INTERAMERICANA DE MUJERES	Inter-American Commission of Women
CONCUBINA	Concubine

(Continued)

Continued.

Keyword	Translation
CONSEJO NACIONAL DE LA MUJER	National Woman Council
CONTRA LA MUJER	Against woman
CONTRACEPCION QUIRURGICA	Surgical contraception
CONTRACONCEPTIVOS	Contraceptive
CONTRALOR DE NACIMIENTOS	Birth control
CONYUGE SUPERSTITE	Conjoint successible
CUELLO UTERINO	Cervix
CUIDADO DE LOS NINOS	Childcare
CUOTA ALIMENTARIA	Maintenance
CUPO FEMENINO	Gender quota
CUPO SINDICAL FEMENINO	Gender quota in labor unions
D.I.U.	UID
DERECHOS DE LAS MUJERES	Women's rights
DERECHOS REPRODUCTIVOS	Reproductive rights
DERECHOS SEXUALES	Sexual rights
DESIGUALDADES DE GENERO	Gender disparities
DEUDORES ALIMENTARIOS	Maintenance debtors
DIA DESPUES	Day-after
DIA INTERNACIONAL DE LA MUJER	Women's International Day
DISCRIMINACION CONTRA LA MUJER	Discrimination against women
DISCRIMINACION SALARIAL	Pay discrimination
DIVISION SEXUAL DEL TRABAJO	Sexual division of labor
DIVORCIADA	Divorced
DIVORCIO VINCULAR	Absolute divorce
ECOGRAFIA	Sonogram
EDUCACION SEXUAL	Sexual education
EMBARAZADA	Pregnant
EMBARAZO	Pregnancy
EMPLEADA DOMESTICA	Slavy (maid)
EMPLEO DE MUJERES	Women's employment
EQUIDAD DE GENERO	Gender equality
FALOPIO	Oviduct
FECUNDIDAD NO DESEADA	Unexpected fertility
FEMINICIDIO	Femicide
FEMINISMO	Feminism
FEMINISTA	Feminist
FETAL	Fetal
FETO	Fetus
FILIACION	Filiation
FORO DE MUJERES	Women forum
GESTACION	Gestation
GRAVIDEZ	Pregnancy
GUARDERIA	Nursery
GUARDERIA INFANTIL	Children's nursery
HOSTIGAMIENTO SEXUAL	Sexual harassment
IDENTIDAD DE GENERO	Gender identity
IGUAL PAGO POR TRABAJO DE IGUAL VALOR	Equal pay for equal work
IGUALDAD DE GENERO	Gender equality
IGUALDAD DE TRATO	Equal treatment
IGUALDAD REAL DE OPORTUNIDADES	Equal opportunities
INEQUIDAD DE GENERO	No gender equality
INTEGRIDAD SEXUAL	Sexual integrity
INTERSEXUALIDAD	Intersexuality
JARDINES MATERNALES	Nursery school
JUBILACION DE LA MUJER	Women retirement
LACTANCIA	Breastfeeding
LACTANTES	Unweaned baby
LECHE MATERNA	Breast milk
LEY DE CUPO	Gender quota
LICENCIA POR MATERNIDAD	Maternity leave
LICENCIA POR PATERNIDAD	Paternity leave

(Continued)

Continued.

Keyword	Translation
MACHISMO	Male chauvinism
MACHISTA	Male chauvinist
MADRE NINA	Young mother
MADRE TRABAJADORA	Working mother
MAMOGRAFÍA	Mammography
MATERNIDAD	Maternity
MATERNIDAD SUBROGADA	Subrogate maternity
MATERNO INFANTIL	Mother and Child
MENOPAUSIA	Menopause
METODOS ANTICONCEPTIVOS	Methods of contraception
MISOPROSTOL	Misoprostol
MORTALIDAD MATERNA	Maternal mortality
MUJER	Woman
MUJER ARGENTINA	Argentine woman
MUJER TRABAJADORA	Worker woman
MUJER VIOLADA	Raped woman
MUJERES ARGENTINAS	Argentine women
MUJERES EN LA CIENCIA	Women in science
MUJERES EN LAS LISTAS	Women in electoral lists
MUJERES TRABAJADORAS	Working women
ORIENTACION SEXUAL	Sexual orientation
PAPANICOLAU	Smear test
PAPILOMA	Papilloma
PARIDAD DE GENERO	Gender parity
PARTICIPACION IGUALITARIA	Equal participation
PARTO	Childbirth
PARTO HUMANIZADO	Humanized childbirth
PATRIA POTESTAD	Parental custody
PERSPECTIVA DE GENERO	Gender perspective
PLANIFICACION FAMILIAR	Family planning
POTESTAD COMPARTIDA	Shared legal authority
PROCREACION RESPONSABLE	Responsible parenthood
PROSTITUCION	Prostitution
RAZON DE RAZA	Race issue
RAZON DE SEXO	Gender issue
REASIGNACION SEXUAL	Sexual reallocation
REPRESENTACION FEMENINA	Female representation
RESPONSABILIDADES FAMILIARES COMPARTIDAS	Shared family responsibilities
SALUD REPRODUCTIVA	Reproductive health
SALUD SEXUAL	Sexual Health
SEGREGACION LABORAL	Labor segregation
SERVICIO DOMESTICO	Housework
SEXISTA	Sexist
SEXO BIOLÓGICO	Biological gender
SEXO FEMENINO	Female
SEXO SUBREPRESENTADO	Underrepresented gender
TECNOLOGIAS REPRODUCTIVAS	Reproductive technologies
TRABAJADOR DOMESTICO	Household worker
TRABAJO DOMESTICO	Housework
TRANSEXUALIDAD	Transsexuality
TRANSGENERIDAD	Gender reassignment
TRANSMISION SEXUAL	Sexual transmission
UTERO	Uterus
UTERINO	Uterine
VIOLADA	Raped
VIOLENCIA CONTRA LAS MUJERES	Violence against women
VIOLENCIA DE GENERO	Gender violence
VIOLENCIA DOMESTICA	Domestic violence
VIOLENCIA FAMILIAR	Family violence
VIOLENCIA HACIA LA MUJER	Violence against woman
VITRO	In vitro

Appendix 2**Table A2.** The effect of seniority on number of women's rights bills (results for all legislators).

	Women (1)	Men (2)
Terms in Office	0.0970* (0.041)	-0.0444 (0.046)
Total Proyectos de Ley (introduced by legislator)	0.0417*** (0.003)	0.0475*** (0.005)
Women's Committee	0.720*** (0.128)	0.860* (0.359)
Party Ideology	-0.0704 (0.050)	-0.233** (0.071)
Urban	0.242 (0.130)	0.209 (0.159)
Constant	-1.141** (0.392)	-1.276* (0.520)
N	616	1135

Notes: Models 1 and 2 in [Table A2](#) replicate the main results from [Table 1](#) for women and men legislators respectively. These models include all legislators in the dataset. Specifically, analysis in [Table 1](#) excludes values of the independent variable, terms in office, that represent five or fewer legislators (ie: for women legislators ≤ 6 two-year terms in office, for men ≤ 9 two-year terms in office). Thus, [Table 1](#) excludes outliers from the analysis. [Table A2](#) models the effect of seniority on the introduction of women's rights legislation including these outliers. The results are robust to the inclusion and exclusion of outliers indicating that the relationship between seniority and the introduction of women's rights legislation represents is not driven by a limited number of observations.