

## **OBSTACLES AND LIMITATIONS IN THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PRI<sup>1</sup>**

**ALICIA GIRÓN<sup>2</sup>**

The complexity of discussing the obstacles and limitations in the empowerment of women members of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) implies understanding the structure of a party in government that shaped the Mexican State during seven decades of the 20th century. The participation of women as congressional deputies and senators will proceed together with the necessary transformations toward democratic structures demanded by the party itself and the country. Implicitly, gender participatory democracy will respond to the prevalent culture within the party as well as society and the country. Even though the PRI<sup>3</sup> is a party that was characterized for its defense of the principles of the revolutionary elite as well as in staking a clear distance from the power of the clergy, it did not have the capacity to include its women participants in the social movements as representative leaders in the parliamentary chambers. The PRI represented an androcentric power, corresponding to a nationalist project in which women were not part of the prevailing political banner of the party until the country's democratic life made it necessary to include women and recognize them as political leaders appreciated for their intellectual capacity and leadership within the party.

In this chapter, we are interested in discussing, first of all, the birth of the PRI as the economic, political and social axis of 20th century Mexico; secondly, in analyzing the panorama of women's political participation; thirdly, in considering the oral history that they transmitted in the interviews; fourthly, in discussing what

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter uses the methodology of oral history, the survey undertaken on a national level, and specialized literature on the issue of gender and politics. The interviews were undertaken by members of the research team and were conducted with senators and federal and state congressional deputies. The great majority of the interviews were conducted during the period between 2005 and 2006. The period selected did not only correspond to the time during which the research was conducted, but also coincided with decisive months in women's participation in parliamentary life as well as in the most disputed elections in the history of Mexico. They were coupled with data from the national survey. Therefore, the oral history enriches a large part of the results of the survey. The subject of our research was an active participant present during the process prior to and after the July 2, 2006 elections; other participants in the interviews had held the post of congressional deputies and senators in previous legislative sessions.

<sup>2</sup> The author would such as to thank Roberto Guerra, director of the Mtro. Jesus Silva Herzog Center for Documentation and Information of the Institute of Economic Research, UNAM, for his valuable assistance.

<sup>3</sup> The Party of the Revolution was born as the space for "... resolving political conflicts through the mechanism of internal negotiation and participation, and the inclusion of all the revolutionary groups with local representativeness would be sought" (González Compeán and Lomeli, 2000:22). In March 1929 the National Revolutionary Party was formed. Subsequently, the sectoral organization of the party was born, along with the three organizations that would bring together the three main blocks of society: the Mexican Workers' Confederation (1936), the National Peasant Confederation (1938), and the National Confederation of Popular Organizations (1943). Once the PNR was consolidated, it changed its name to Institutional Revolutionary Party, (PRI).

the characteristics have been of the growth of women's participation; and, fifthly, in contemplating the possible alternatives so that women can be the base of a dynamic and strong party to win with equity in the legislative chambers.

### ***I. Birth and transformation of the PRI***

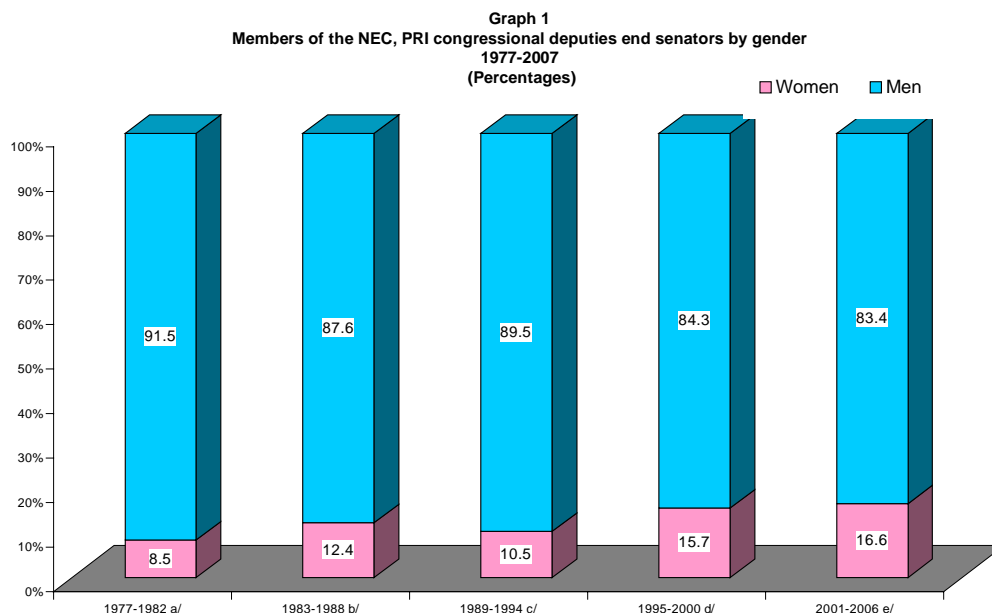
For González Compeán and Lomelí (2000), "... the Party of the Revolution has performed a crucial function. It would not be possible to understand Mexican history after 1928 if we do not keep in mind the central role that this party has played in the organization of national public life, both through building alliances between groups and classes, as well as in the configuration of an inclusive ideology and a political space that allowed social capillarity and the inclusion of new social movements and tendencies. When this capacity of inclusion began to erode, internal crisis and the loss of consensus among some sectors of the society began to emerge. The reform, therefore, became the central element of the institutional survival of the party itself." This is how the current Institutional Revolutionary Party was born in March 1929 under the name of National Revolutionary Party (PNR) as a pact for political stability. The initial stage of the party encompasses the period of 1928-1945 when three sectoral organizations were established, the main pillars of the party that strengthened it as a party of consensus and negotiation among the different organic classes of society. These organizations were the Mexican Workers' Confederation (1936), the National Peasant Confederation (1938), and the National Confederation of Popular Organizations (1943). (The inclusion of the labor, peasant, and popular sectors as part of the State will give rise to what has been called the corporativist State, which brought so many advantages to the nascent bourgeois class that arose from the Mexican revolution). Later would come the stage of consolidation from 1946 to 1964. At the end of Manuel Ávila Camacho's six-year presidential administration, the Mexican Revolutionary Party (PRM) changed its name to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). During this entire period, the party resolved conflicts within the "revolutionary family" –the political elite– and the country achieved political, social and economic stability in an effort to attain democracy. Perhaps the most significant element in the country's internal life was the efforts to democratize Mexico by Carlos A. Madrazo. The final period, which ranges from 1964-1999, is marked by attempts at reform and the last stage of the party in power, as a State party. There is a casual relationship between the economic transformations that demand changes in the internal life of the PRI and the inability to resolve unsatisfied demands that was weakening the party. The student movement of 1968 was the harbinger not only of the economic crisis but also of the future political crisis of Mexico. The period of economic stability ended in 1976 and an economic crisis erupted that transferred the social cost mainly to the middle classes and deepened the impoverishment of the countryside. The economic policy that was an alternative to the crises that emerged between the 1980s and 1990s broke with the national project that emanated from the revolutionary principles under which the national project was born and the political party that headed it, the PRI. But it also gave birth to an opposition party, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD),

which won the presidential elections in 1988 and became the number one political force in the 2006 elections.

## ***II. The participation of PRI women political leaders***

Women members have experienced obstacles and limitations that are reflected in the data on their representation in the parliamentary chambers and in the PRI leadership bodies as well as in their being nominated as candidates in the different elections. The fact that the PRI leading circle adopted gender quotas does not mean they assumed the corresponding commitments. Authors such as Baldez (2004:234) demonstrated that quotas in the political parties most benefit and strengthen the internal groupings even more than the men and women candidates as opposed to the primaries in which the candidates' empowerment is strengthened. During the past decade, the PRI has accepted, albeit with great difficulty, the reforms to Article 175 of the Federal Code on Electoral Institutions and Procedures (COFIPE).

The discrimination against women within the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) as well as the lack of opportunities to enter public elected office and subsequently, to be nominated as leaders of the parliamentary caucuses is a constant comment in the oral history, which is reflected throughout this essay as a result of different interviews conducted with party members. Even though in the past 50 years, the PRI has incorporated women not only into the ranks of party membership, but it has also chosen them as its congressional deputies and senators, nevertheless, such female participation has basically not been growing. If we take into account female participation during the last five legislative sessions according to the data in graph 1, women represented 8.5 percent of the total in 1977-1982; 12.4 percent between 1983 -1989; 10.5 percent between 1989 -1994; 15.7 percent between 1995 – 2000; and 16.9 percent between 2001-2006. Not only that, but women's participation diminished proportionally. Although, the number of women legislators doubled from 59 to 125 between 1977-1982 and 1995-2000, their number declined to 114 for 2001-2006.



Source: Preparation based on Chart 2.10 of the database "Women's Participation"

A large part of the discrimination against women also passes through the prism of social class and ethnicity, in reflecting leaderships whose characteristic implicitly includes the criteria of educational levels. Even though in this study we only limited ourselves to women's participation and empowerment, we did not take into account the discrimination for other types of existing conditions due to the complexity that their consideration would theoretically imply, but that are necessarily related with income levels and the labor market.

During the 50<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> legislative sessions, corresponding to the 1977-1982 period, the total number of women congressional deputies was 46 out of a total of 446. In the case of the 58<sup>th</sup>, 59<sup>th</sup>, and 60<sup>th</sup> legislative sessions, corresponding to the years 2001-2006, we could point out that the number of women congressional deputies doubled, rising from 94 women compared to 429 men with regard to the previously mentioned legislative period. That is, the percentage of women rose from 9.3 percent to 18.0 percent when comparing both periods. Furthermore, we could venture to say that women's participation in the PRI is on the rise. However, in delving further in considering the division between congressional deputies selected by proportional representation and relative majority, in the former case, in the past few legislative sessions, the corresponding figure was 23.2 percent for women and 76.8 percent for men (43 and 142 congressional deputies respectively). For those elected by the relative majority formula, there were 51 women, a significantly smaller number than in the previous legislative sessions. In the 52<sup>nd</sup> and 53<sup>rd</sup> legislative sessions, the corresponding figure was a significant 69 women compared to 517 men. The greater percentage share held by other parties in the elections and the PRI having moved from first to second and then to third place in Congress has made gender participation in the

PRI more difficult, as the party has been losing seats in relation to other political forces such as the National Action Party (PAN) and the PRD, (Chart 1).

**Chart 1**  
**PRI congressional deputies by gender and type of representation. 1977 to 2006**  
**(Number of representatives and percentages)**

Period	Legislative Session	Proportional Representation			Relative Majority			Total		
		Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Number of representatives										
1977-1982	L and LI	0	0	0	46	446	492	46	446	492
1983-1988	LII and LIII	0	0	0	69	517	586	69	517	586
1989-1994 a/	LIV and LV	5	52	57	56	468	524	61	520	581
1995-2000	LVI and LVII	15	83	98	65	372	437	80	455	535
2001-2006	LVIII, LIX and LX	43	142	185	51	287	338	94	429	523
Percentages										
1977-1982	L and LI	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.3	90.7	100.0	9.3	90.7	100
1983-1988	LII and LIII	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.8	88.2	100.0	11.8	88.2	100
1989-1994 a/	LIV and LV	8.8	91.2	100.0	10.7	89.3	100.0	10.5	89.5	100
1995-2000	LVI and LVII	15.3	84.7	100.0	14.9	85.1	100.0	15.0	85.0	100
2001-2006	LVIII, LIX and LX	23.2	76.8	100.0	15.1	84.9	100.0	18.0	82.0	100

Notes:

a/ It was not until the 54th legislative session that the PRI had congressional deputies on the proportional representation lists.

Source: Own elaboration, Library of the Chamber of Deputies. Lists of the 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, and 55th legislative sessions.

When taking into account the survey that this research is based on, women's participation has not been sufficiently representative for a party whose history is bound to the development of the Mexican State. That is, a State that claims to be revolutionary and nationalist. Although, the PRI was the first party that had a woman representative -in the 42<sup>nd</sup> legislative session during the 1952-1955 period- the growth of female participation in Congress has not been sufficient to reach a level of equity in the country's highest decision making political body for 70 years and representative of the 20th century. The democratic participation of women within the party and their representation in Congress is part of the need for an internal reform with gender equity.

In this essay, first of all we are doing to take into account the oral history reflected in the interviews that were undertaken during the period that the research investigation lasted and subsequently, we will attempt to offer a balance sheet of the survey. Finally, we will try to combine and synthesize the two methodologies used in order to contribute some alternative ideas for greater gender equity.

### ***III. Oral history of the PRI through the representative voices of its women***

The voices of its women are perhaps the wealth of this party. It is important, therefore, to include them in the different sections of this study. We will divide this part of the study into the political education and preparation of women and how the macho culture prevents (perhaps it should be said promotes) women from being elected except in periods of crisis.

#### ***3.1 Women and their political development***

Throughout the party's history, the women and men of the PRI have undergone political training in the education and preparation of political cadre for the organization. Today, the PRI's Institute for Political Development Training (ICAP) has developed the political cadre of the party, but it has also educated and

prepared leaders of the CTM, CROM, and CROC, the majority of whom, during the latest periods, were professionals. Among the coordinators of the ICAP and who have received training from this institute are Socorro Díaz, Roberto Madrazo, Victor Manuel Barceló, Beatriz Paredes, and María de los Ángeles Moreno, just to mention a few. Even though it could be said that is interesting to see how the PRI teaches the history and formation of the party, today this training and development is falling apart.

The great debate has been the educational reform within the party, specifically, the PRI's cadre school. One could affirm that it has ceased to exist. In the specific case of women, as one of the woman congressional deputies interviewed would say, learning occurs "based on the blows that we receive." Regrettably, "... there is always a padrino with a woman. We learn based on the hazing we received to walk and to reach greater heights, step by step, there is no training and education to do so. There is anger and we were not supported in the struggle that we are waging, and that is the way it is because there is no training to know where you're going." With these declarations, it is argued that cadre development with a gender focus has not been raised within the party. Furthermore, in recent years, "... the compañeras became part of the town council and they do not know how to guarantee a gender presence." Most of them obtained their post due to the work they developed within the party; that is, "because they fought, because they supported someone, but they do not know why they got there." The result is that in arriving at a decision-making position, there is no clear vision of the why they got there and of the necessity for a greater party participation based on the training and education that they have been given by the PRI. The lessons of the last few elections would show that there is an absence of a code of ethics, the history of the party, and the training and development as women in the country's public life.

According to the survey, the PRI women lawmakers are those with the most years of political participation. Specifically, 63% of the party's women legislators currently have more than 20 years of political participation. Of them, 23 percent began in the community when they were students; 18 percent within the party; 14 percent in trade union struggles, and 5 percent as full timers in the labor movement, in the Municipal Leadership Committee, in promoting women in electoral races, and on the level of youth work, respectively. For many women, 59 percent, their family background affects their political participation, although this is not a factor in 49% of the cases.

It is important to emphasize that 62% of the political participation by PRI women can be attributed to ties with family members, 25% corresponds to civic commitment or responsibility, and 21% to natural family activities.

- The most important reasons that female PRI legislators had for joining the party were: "concern for participating/personal initiative" (46%), "sympathy for the party" (42%), the "possibility to undertake social efforts or resolve social problems through the party" (33%) and the "offer of a political post in the party" (13%).

- In the chart corresponding to activities undertaken on a party level, the fields in which the greatest participation of the women interviewed can be detected are the PRI's "State Councils" (57%) and as "members of the National Executive Committee (CEN)" (30%). Of these activities; 75% of the PRI women lawmakers mentioned the State Councils and 58% the CEN. They also mentioned with more emphasis that their colleagues of other parties "participation in the Municipal Leadership Committees" (38%), "social/civic efforts" (25%), "being a leader of the state women's institution" (17%), "member of the NEC" (13%) and being a "member of the National Commission of Justice" (13%).

It is interesting to note that in the interviews with female PRI lawmakers, they viewed the system of quotas as very important, and indeed, 60 percent of those surveyed indicated that it had benefitted women. In fact, 79% of those interviewed said that the party always or almost always complies with the system of quotas. Not only the system of quotas is important, but also political training and education; 96% of the women PRI members interviewed said that they had a "good political preparation and leadership" to carry out the functions of the position that they currently occupy, while the remaining 4% indicated that their preparation was average. Some 22% of the female PRI legislators rated their political and leadership preparation at the time of assuming their post as "excellent", 35% as "very good", 39% as "good", and 4% as "average". Furthermore, 96% of the total affirmed that their political and leadership preparation "has improved" since they took office. About 86% of those surveyed said that they had received training from the party, consisting in the history of the PRI, legislative activities, political ideology, and electoral preparation and legislation, and district analysis, among others. Two thirds of the PRI female lawmakers indicated that they were "very satisfied / satisfied" with the type of political and leadership preparation that they had received within the party in order to perform their duties.

### *3.2 Women in the face of machista culture, the crisis, and opportunities*

It is interesting to observe how a revolutionary party still maintains a "machista culture" in its formative foundations. It has not been possible to resolve gender inequity. For women of the PRI "there is a triple effort" to enter decision-making positions. "The first is that they have to belong to the winning group in order to enter; second, it is almost impossible to accept the leadership of women in the organization of activists and, third, competition exists among the women themselves."

In politics and in the PRI, opportunities should be taken advantage of. In using this word "opportunities" for women, we would establish it through specific moments in time in which a man losing would never be allowed and therefore it is important to put a woman up to the challenge. This was confirmed when one of the women we interviewed told us the following: "I didn't wake up one day and say I want to be governor or I want to be president of the PRI. Politics keeps opening up

opportunities and it favors them, but the gender condition helps in certain circumstances. It is more difficult to take advantage of the opportunities in times of stability because there are more opportunities in crisis and change.”

Crises and change represent opportunities for women. Experience and opportunity in politics go hand in hand. In politics, opportunities can exist, but experience with willingness is not enough, and experience without taking risks is also insufficient. An example that is worthwhile to recall is 1988. In the PAN there were many women candidates, a clear product of the history that the majority would run women candidates to have congressional deputies through proportional representation. A large number won the elections and they were congressional deputies; those districts that had been won by women in subsequent elections were won by men. To explain this idea it would be interesting to construct an indicator on the level of electoral policy. For example, the running of female candidates for congressional deputies in 1988 and what happened three years later with parties other than the PRI.

The crisis of the PRI in 2000 was displayed when the party, for being a State party, a ruling party, became an opposition party. The leaderships in play at that moment for who would be the president of the PRI were fundamental for giving the opportunity to the party to reconstruct itself. Women’s leadership has a different style; if there are gender differences between women and men they represent an indispensable combination of cultural factors in the public and parliamentary life. Having a woman as PRI leader was unprecedented for this to occur without producing divisions within the party. And, in fact, major decisions for the PRI and its organization were in the pipeline that would lead to Roberto Madrazo and Elba Esther Gordillo occupying the position of presidency of the party. Even though the opportunities were important and despite the fact that we are dealing with very dynamic women, on many occasions, “... women are excluded from the key decisions, perhaps until there is a woman president of the PRI will there be a greater participation of women in the important decisions.” One of the shortcomings of the female gender is that women do not visualize a career in politics as “... a long-term career.” Forming a team within an electoral district is very important and as is forming alliances with others where there are possibilities to vote for women candidates. Young people and women coming forward as mayors and governors would be very helpful for internally changing the party’s role and outlook, and this is also the case in relation to society. Many often voters feel more represented by a woman, because women are committed and work.

In the PRI there is a filtering system to reach legislative decision making positions. For example, “... there are many women neighborhood leaders, many women social leaders, but they do not rise to the second rung as mayors, councilwomen, and congressional deputies, as the possibilities for moving upward are increasingly narrow.” Not only that, on occasions when positions of leadership are reached within the party itself, the discrimination is much stronger. Nevertheless, the bylaws stipulate that the party leader is the same as a secretary, but for the sole reason of being a woman, she is eliminated from the decision making process. When complaining of inequality, the woman is characterized as



rebellious and problematic. The line between decision making and being pushed into a corner is a very complicated road, above all when those who you are dealing with are men.” Even though woman's participation should exist both in the private as well as public domains, woman should be prepared and have the guts to reach and compete with men in equal conditions notwithstanding the fact that “... the best salaries are for men.” However, the time will come when it will be the ranking of skills and knowledge that will define income and power.

Society's demands on and vision of women are very exacting. Even though within the party, women are asked “... to be the best of the best, the men are not questioned, they are not asked to be hard-working, they are good because they are men. Women are rejected because they are women.” An example of this is the discrimination that exists in “consensus round tables on the legal reforms. They are all men because the posts that comprise the roundtable belong to men. The presidents of the parties are men, the president of the court of justice is a man and the coordinators of the parliamentary caucuses are men.” When women protested the “... argument that they gave was that if they wanted women to participate in the consensus roundtable they would have proposed women, such as a congressional deputies, a government minister, a judge. However, thus far the men do not want to do so based on the argument that if they accept (women) then later indigenous representatives, youth, and the disabled will want to enter.”

The PRI women lawmakers have acknowledged that they have faced difficulties. On a general level, 64% of the female legislators interviewed report that they have faced difficulties and obstacles in the development of their political work. Among the main difficulties pointed to by the PRI women legislators in the development of their political activity are reflected in comments such as: “(assignments) depend on the fulfillment of the quota and not on the recognition of their capacities”; “women cannot be part of the groups in control”; “(there is) unfair competition in the party in general”, and a “lack of a spirit of solidarity and camaraderie among women.”

In their relationship with their spouse, 50 percent of the women interviewed said that their occupying elective office has indeed affected them, while the rest of those surveyed indicated the contrary. In the same proportion, a third of those interviewed mentioned that their occupying elective office affects their relations with family members and their spouse “very much/considerably”, 30% said they were affected, and the remaining 40% indicated that are not affected. The women who occupy the position of senators were those who most indicated that their family relations were very much affected.

### *3.3 Participation of women in parliamentary commissions*

According to those interviewed, women participate in all the parliamentary commissions. Of the total sample, the five commissions in which they most tend to personally participate are “Equity and Gender” (52%), “Education” (20%), “Treasury” (16%), “Health” (16%), and “Social Development” (15%). The participation and the activities that they develop in the above mentioned

commissions, in the opinion of the PRI women legislators, involve: “opening up spaces of civic participation” (33%), “being part of the decision making process” (33%), “implementing the initiatives of the party leaderships” (29%), and “more (participation) in the discussion than in the decisions (24%). The question posed would be: What type of spaces of civic participation?. In general, the PRI women legislators, as opposed, for example, to their PRD counterparts, are visualized as direct participants in the decision making process within the party. The PRI women legislators feel that the most important elements that their party takes into account in defining the participation of women in commissions in which laws are discussed are: 1) professional/technical training<sup>4</sup>, 2) knowledge of the issues, 3) capacity; 4) decision-making capacity. In the opinion of the PRI women legislators, the participation of women in the presidency of commissions at the parliamentary level is defined fundamentally by “a decision by the party based on personal qualities” and by their “own decision.” It should be pointed out that the PRI women legislators are those who most tended to mention that the presence of women in the presidency of a parliamentary commission was the result of “friendship with the groups in control” or due to “allocation of quotas.” Of the total number of women legislators in the sample who indicated that they “habitually face difficulties in developing activities” in parliamentary commissions (80%), it was the PRI women lawmakers who most mentioned “pressures on a political level.” Other options that were most mentioned in this category were: “nonattendance” and “pressures on a government level.” To a lesser extent than in the case of the other parties, the PRI women legislators mentioned “lack of debate” and the “lack of preparation. Of them, 86% said that the participation of women on a parliamentary level had produced “good results” for the female population, against 9% who argued that only “some results” have emerged, and 5% who sustained that “no results have been registered”. In relation to other women legislators, it was the women of the PRI parliamentary caucus who most cited the “has produced good results” option. The areas in which the greatest achievements have been obtained for the female population through women’s participation on a parliamentary level in the opinion of the total sample were: “domestic violence” (61%), “health” (58%), “political participation” (46%), “work” (38%), “education” (33%), “gender equity” (25%), “housing (15%).

### *3.4 Degree of having experienced gender discrimination*

Of the total sample, 56% of the respondents said they had experiences with gender discrimination during their political career, while 48% mentioned that they have experienced it on the level of the party organization. A trend can be noted that it was the PRI women legislators who were least likely to mention having had experiences with gender discrimination during their political career, with 45% indicating that they had experienced discrimination compared to 55% saying the contrary. In this same sense, the PRI women legislators pinpointed their experiences with gender discrimination on the level of the party organization in the

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<sup>4</sup> Relate this variable to the weight that the PRI women give to education in the section on “Development of women leaders”.

following fashion: 45% had experienced it and 55% had not (for the contrast with other parties see the Berg Marketing chart p. 71 and 72). The experiences of gender discrimination more referred to by the PRI women legislators were: a) not having their work taken seriously; b) not having their proposals taken seriously, c) their male counterparts being bothered by their presence d) not being invited to participate in the meetings of the groups in control of the party; e) being blocked or facing limitations when they propose legislative reforms, among others. The suggestions or recommendations most advanced by the PRI women lawmakers to prevent gender discrimination on the parliamentary level and within the party were: a) solidarity among women; b) greater political education and preparation; c) participation in the key decisions ; d) evaluation of skills and capacities; e) authentic gender representation on the different levels, among others. It was noted that the PRI women legislators, consistent with their pinpointing the “lack of solidarity among women” as one of the main difficulties that they must face, now suggest to a greater extent than the women legislators of the other parties that solidarity among women should be promoted. In addition, 59% of the PRI women legislators affirmed that sexual harassment exists toward women in public office. 23% of those interviewed in the PRI parliamentary caucus acknowledged having had experiences with sexual harassment at some moment in their political career, and 18% have had such experienced on the level of the party organization.

#### ***IV. Growth of female participation in the PRI***

It is interesting to note the growth of women representatives in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. However, the situation of having been the party in power for seventy years did not integrate into its ideology the need to incorporate women as the main axis of transformation and the reform of its bylaws and gender participation did not reach the level of equity. The following statistical data demonstrates this.

##### ***4.1 Women candidates for the Senate***

According to the data from the 2001-2006 period, women accounted for 35.8 percent of the candidates for congressional deputy positions. Divided by types of representation, women accounted for 41.3 percent of those running on the proportional representation list and 30.2 percent of those elected by relative majority. These percentage data are not so significant when we note that for the 1995-2000 period, there were 429 women candidates on the proportional representation lists compared to 165 for the following legislative session, 2001-2006. In total, there were 663 women candidates for the former period and 283 for the latter legislative session (Chart 2).

**Chart 2**  
**PRI candidates for congressional deputy by gender and type of representation. 1977 to 2006**  
**(Number of candidates and percentages)**

Period	Legislative session	Proportional representation			Relative Majority			Total		
		Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Number of candidates										
1977-1982	L and LI	65	135	200	66	534	600	131	669	800
1983-1988	LII and LIII	53	247	300	72	527	599	125	774	899
1989-1994	LIV and LV	66	334	400	70	530	600	136	864	1,000
1995-2000	LVI and LVII	429	963	1,392	234	588	822	663	1,551	2,214
2001-2006 a/	LVIII and LIX	165	235	400	118	273	391	283	508	791
Percentages										
1977-1982	L and LI	32.5	67.5	100.0	11.0	89.0	100.0	16.4	83.6	100
1983-1988	LII and LIII	17.7	82.3	100.0	12.0	88.0	100.0	13.9	86.1	100
1989-1994	LIV and LV	16.5	83.5	100.0	11.7	88.3	100.0	13.6	86.4	100
1995-2000	LVI and LVII	30.8	69.2	100.0	28.5	71.5	100.0	29.9	70.1	100
2001-2006 a/	LVIII and LIX	41.3	58.8	100.0	30.2	69.8	100.0	35.8	64.2	100

Notes: For the elections held in 2006 the "Alliance for Mexico" coalition was established that included the PRI and the Green Ecologist Party of Mexico (PVEM).  
Source: Own elaboration. Different issues of the Daily Gazette (DOF). Proposed Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) agreements.

The decrease represented a very strong decline. More notable is the fall in women candidates for senator, which in percentage terms declined from 36.4 percent in the 1995-2000 period to 34.4 percent in the 2001-2006 legislative session. In breaking down the statistics between female candidates for senate on the proportional representation list and by relative majority, the former surprisingly increased from 35.7 to 40.6 percent in the previously mentioned legislative sessions, while the latter declined from 37.5 to 31.3 percent (chart 3).

**Chart 3**  
**PRI candidates for Senate by gender and type of representation. 1977-2006**  
**(Number of candidates and percentages)**

Period	Legislative session	Proportional representation			Relative Majority			Total		
		Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Number of candidates										
1977-1982	L and LI	0	0	0	6	58	64	6	58	64
1983-1988	LII and LIII	0	0	0	9	56	65	9	56	65
1989-1994	LIV and LV	0	0	0	11	85	96	11	85	96
1995-2000	LVI and LVII	80	144	224	48	80	128	128	224	352
2001-2006 a/	LVIII and LIX	13	19	32	20	44	64	33	63	96
Percentages										
1977-1982	L and LI	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.4	90.6	100.0	9.4	90.6	100
1983-1988	LII and LIII	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.8	86.2	100.0	13.8	86.2	100
1989-1994	LIV and LV	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.5	88.5	100.0	11.5	88.5	100
1995-2000	LVI and LVII	35.7	64.3	100.0	37.5	62.5	100.0	36.4	63.6	100
2001-2006 a/	LVIII and LIX	40.6	59.4	100.0	31.3	68.8	100.0	34.4	65.6	100

Notes:  
For the elections held in 2006 the "Alliance for Mexico" coalition was established that included the PRI and the Green Ecologist Party of Mexico (PVEM).  
Source: Own elaboration. Different issues of the Daily Gazette (DOF). Proposed Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) agreements.

## 4.2 Women candidates for congressional deputies, senators, and members of the NEC

Women's participation went from one to two digits from 1977-1982 to 1983-1988. It is no accident that during this period, the first woman governor was elected, in the state of Colima. However, if we observe and compare the following periods in the intervening twenty years, four percentage point growth has been registered, that is, from 12.4 percent to 16.9 between 1983-1988 and 2001-2006. As is the case with the previous results, there is a decrease in female participation, with the

number of women declining from 125 to 114 women between the last two legislative sessions (chart 2.10.).

The requirements enabling women to be elected to the chambers of Congress, rules that are unwritten but that nevertheless persist, indicate the candidate has greater weight if she has previous experience on the community level (71 percent of the cases), in the party organization (58 percent) and in terms of education/preparation and capacity (46 percent) as well as prior background on the level of government (42 percent). In the opinion of the PRI women legislators, the most important factor that influences their ability to be elected to political office was “previous experience on the level of party organization”, and “previous experience at the community level”, both in the same proportion (25%). Nevertheless, 87% of the PRI women lawmakers interviewed felt “satisfied / very satisfied” with the support received since being nominated for political office, as opposed to 13% who said they were “somewhat satisfied / not very satisfied.” According to the comparative chart with the other parties, the PRI women legislators have the highest degree of satisfaction in terms of the support received from their party. When women face situations of danger in terms of their physical integrity, 71% receive defense and support. At the same time, 42 percent of the PRI women lawmakers interviewed affirmed that they had indeed faced dangerous situations that placed their physical integrity at risk, while the remaining 58% said that they had not faced these types of cases. Furthermore, 21 percent affirmed that they have had to decline attending events due to their physical integrity being in danger, while 79 percent denied that they have had to face such a situation.

#### ***V. Internal policy alternatives to strengthen gender equity***

Undoubtedly the Institutional Revolutionary Party needs a thoroughgoing reform in relation to women’s participation. In adopting quotas, the PRI more than making gender equity a bulwark as a party with a tremendous political trajectory in the history of the country and recognizing the work of its female political leaders, has used quotas to respond to the interests of internal party groupings. When the end of this chapter was being written, in an internal vote, the PRI had chosen Beatriz Paredes as its president. Paredes’ experience as a party activist for more than thirty years reveals the work of a woman political leader of the peasant movement, a congressional deputy, and governor of her state.

The PRI, which has lost two presidential elections, went from being the second force in parliament in 2000 and six years later, to being the third largest force. The loss of the presidential elections has made the transition from a party of the government and for the State to today being an opposition party. To recover its strength, it needs to strengthen its internal functioning, based on gender balance and in improving the profile of its candidates and its political leaders in the values of democracy. According to the opinion of the PRI women legislators surveyed, the main difficulties that a woman faces to be able to occupy a political post or position inside the party are: a) being able to demonstrate their capacity; b) the lack of women's participation in the party; c) lack of political education and preparation; d)

competition with the men who wish to keep all the positions; e) complicity among the men; f) imposition of men's criteria and opinions; g) women's assimilation into men's groups", among others. It is noteworthy that in comparing the percentages assigned to the response of PRI members with those of the other parties, questions such as "the lack of solidarity among women" as one of the difficulties on the party level, are mentioned exclusively by the PRI women legislators, while this was not the case for female lawmakers from the other parties. Among the above-mentioned difficulties, those that the PRI women legislators considered to be the most difficult to face essentially coincided with the responses to questions 55 and 56, with the "lack of solidarity among women" once again standing out as one of the difficulties on a party level. The PRI women interviewed thought that these difficulties could be resolved with: "greater organizational capacity on the part of women", "solidarity among women", "training in women's leadership", "collaboration among women", and "greater participation by women."

## ***VI. Conclusions***

Even though different studies such as those of Davidson-Schmich (2006) have demonstrated that the low levels of female participation in parliaments through the political parties indicate women's reduced disposition to participate in the public life of the decision making process in democratic governments, in the case of Mexico the trend is especially the contrary. In the case of Mexico, women congressional deputies and senators have been motivated to participate in politics for several reasons. In the first place, 78 percent argued the "... need to seek solutions to the problems of the country / community", while 38% mentioned the "need to improve the system", 25% made reference to "personal advancement on the level of self-determination", 16% referred to their "innate leadership", and 13% to the desire "to serve / to help people." In second place, the PRI women activists showed political ambition to participate when they are presented with the political opportunity to do so. However, throughout this study, discrimination against women within the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) has been shown to mainly be attributable to the party maintaining a patriarchal structure (Gottfried, 1998). It is mainly women who comprise the leadership in the demonstrations and political campaigns not only for their own interests, but also when those of men are involved. This is coupled with the lack of opportunities to occupy elective office and subsequently to be nominated as leaders of the parliamentary causes. This is demonstrated in the statistical data on men and women candidates for congressional deputies and senators as well as for occupying seats on the PRI National Executive Committee (NEC) (charts: 2.7, 2.8 and 2.9).

The PRI had the first woman congressional deputy in Mexican legislative history. Throughout the past fifty years, the PRI has not only incorporated women into the party, but has selected them as its representatives for the posts of congressional deputies and senators. Nevertheless, the growth rates for female participation have basically not been growing even with the adoption of the reforms to Article 175 of the country's electoral legislation, the COFIPE. This is

demonstrated by the data in the statistical charts corresponding to participation by gender among congressional deputies, senators, and the ranks of the NEC.

By going in one decade from being the country's largest political force to an opposition party in third place, it would be worthwhile to ask what changes or reforms the PRI would have to implement in order to achieve at least a greater participation by the party's women in posts of elective office and in the parliamentary chambers. How can the PRI go from being an androcentric party to a party with gender equity? Even though the bulwark of the PRI was a revolutionary, nationalist, anticlerical party, it would be worthwhile to ponder the place of democracy with a gender perspective in the framework of the transformation of a plural and global society.

In practice, in the hegemonic party of the 20th century there was discrimination against women members that have been weakened by the quotas of the internal political groups and not as a result of gender quotas. Politics has succumbed to the economy and prevents a structural transformation of the principles that should govern a party with modernizing progress.

There is a provincial vision that exists in practice in decision making internally within the party without the global and democratic vision encompassed in the Challenges of the Millennium and the 21st century. This exists to such an extent that the PRI as the dominant party in Mexico during the 20th Century and despite its trajectory, has not decided to participate in the processes of democratic governance existing not only in Mexico but in other regions of Latin America as its own. The feminist movements of the "... gender-based organizations and institutions are participants in political and institutional coalitions. They are the ones who made institutional changes". In addition, as Victoria Guzmán said, the PRI has not tried to generate "... new leaderships oriented to the understanding of the short and long-term interests of a broad spectrum of social actors, and to develop a more precise perception of the equilibriums implied in the prevailing institutional arrangements, a greater awareness of the impacts that the trends and forces of current and future change will have on society and its future actors" (Guzmán, 2002). The arrogant position of a party that has not assimilated the loss of power in the country's decision making process has sowed internal disputes, damaging women's leadership. At the same time, the PRI has not been modernized in the sense that the Western democracies have, as indicated by Bergh (2005) in studying the United States. A large part of the success of the victory of the Democratic Party in the United States in 1996 can be attributed to the feminist focus employed in the campaign, which was identified with the challenges and policies perceived by the female electorate. The PRI continues responding to traditional groups that have even undertaken electoral alliances with other parties.

For women of the PRI, there are situations that help them stand out in the life of the party. These include considerations that the family represents support and a refuge for political woman; that the participation of women in elective office enabled some issues in the feminist program to be incorporated into the country's agenda; that training has allowed women to make the most of their performance in elective office; that political woman can open up spaces that a political man cannot;

that women are more whole and less corrupt than men; that it is easier to reach elective office than occupy a post in the NEC because the spaces in the NEC are very limited; that by becoming part of the NEC, its members become part of the decision making circuit of the party, that in the party NEC, women can show their qualities and capacities; that the participation of woman on a political level makes their spouses share the household obligations and children rearing; that women's participation in politics breaks with the schema of the prototype of the Mexican woman.

The expectations in relation to a career in politics in gender terms should contemplate the following points: a) promote the greater participation of women in politics; B) achieve gender equity and not just meeting quotas; C) work from public office to create public policies for women; D) continue in politics from the field that we are presented with; and, F) keep working to transform the social space.

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