Women Candidates in American Politics: What We Know, What We Want to Know

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Taking the long view of women candidates in the United States, the contemporary time is one of unbelievable success and promise. Gone are the days of public rejection of the idea of a political life for women, of political parties only supporting women in hopeless situations, when campaign money was reserved for serious (read: men) candidates with a chance of winning. Instead we routinely see thousands of women running for, and winning, office at every level all over the country. Each election year (generally) brings more women candidates than the year before. Today there are 81 women in Congress, 1696 women state legislators, 79 women statewide elected officials and hundreds, if not thousands, of women in local elected office (Center for the American Woman and Politics 2006). However, at the same time, we know that the people we still refer to as "women candidates" make up a much smaller percentage of the candidate population than they do of the general population, that these women are viewed by the public through the lens of stereotypes, and that sex and gender considerations, while not necessarily disabling, are ever-present on the campaign trail. For all of the success of women candidates, women in office only represent between 15 and 25 percent of the offices at any level of government. So, in 2006, we are presented with the classic "half empty/half full" scenario. Women candidates have made enormous strides, but still have a long way to go on the road to parity.

Taking the long view of scholarship on women candidates in the United States, the contemporary time is also one of significant achievement and promise. Over the past thirty years or so, political science has produced a voluminous literature on all aspects of the situations facing women candidates. We know more today about the challenges and opportunities facing women candidates than ever before. But there are still many

unanswered questions about the role that sex and gender considerations play in shaping these challenges and opportunities.

The fundamental issue in understanding the present state of women's candidacies is this: a significant body of work demonstrates that women candidates are just as successful as similarly situated men – they raise the same amounts of money (Burrell 2005; Fox 2006), get the same share of the vote (Seltzer, Newman, Leighton 1997) and face a public largely free of bias toward them on account of their sex (Dolan 2004). This work, summarized best by the phrase "when women run, women win," led many scholars of gender and politics to conclude that sex and gender are much less a factor in contemporary elections than in the past. Yet, at the same time, the marginal rate of growth in the number of women in office, the slow growth or stagnation in the number of women candidates, and the uneven geographical pattern of women's success all signal that sex and gender still matter in very real ways. So the question for scholars today is not whether sex and gender still matter, but instead when and how they matter. How do sex and gender considerations continue to shape the opportunities for women candidates?

The goal of this paper is to take stock of what we know about women candidates and think about directions for future research. In doing so, I first want to identify some broad theme questions motivated by the current literature. These questions do not propose explicit research directions (that will come later), but instead seek to provide a framework in which to consider the specific inquiries we still need to make.

- Are sex and gender considerations "universal," a permanent part of all women's candidacies in the United States? We know, of course, that sex and gender are always present in elections involving women candidates, but we know less about the "mechanism" that can trigger their role in the campaign. Are women candidates seen through the lens of sex and gender from the moment they emerge as candidates (or maybe even earlier) or is there a point in a campaign when these

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issues come into play? Is it even possible to a woman to contest for office in a campaign that is not significantly shaped by sex and gender?

- What is the impact of the context of an individual election on sex and gender considerations? Every election is fought out in a particular context – the unique mix of candidates, resources, issues, local and national political influences at play in that specific race. Any of these elements can contribute to whether sex and gender considerations assume a major or more minor role in the election. For example, in the political world since September 11th, are women's candidacies shaped by stereotypes about their abilities to handle the war on terror? Or, since partisan stereotypes affect Democratic and Republican women differently, do sex and gender considerations play a different role depending on the party of the woman candidate? Does the amount of media attention given to the woman candidate shape whether sex and gender concerns are "activated" in the minds of voters? Is sex and gender important the first time a woman candidate seeks a particular office or runs in a particular district or state? How do gendered concerns take shape in a race with two women candidates? All of these questions serve to remind us that sex and gender are not necessarily constant forces that influence all elections in the same way.

- How much of what we know about women candidates is a function of the data we have, which tends to focus on congressional elections and state legislatures? To some (unknown) degree, what we know about the situations facing women candidates is shaped by the offices they seek. So we probably should take care in assuming that our understanding of how sex and gender shapes elections involving women candidates for Congress or statewide office translates to those seeking office of other types and at other levels.

- How much of what we know is a function of the current party imbalance among women candidates? If more than 2/3 of women candidates run as Democrats, what we know about how sex/gender considerations operate in elections has been accumulated in a particular framework. Since several recent works find evidence that party matters to women candidates, we need to examine whether this imbalance is likely to be ongoing or whether it is a reflection of the contemporary time. Also, we need to recognize that our understanding of how sex and gender shapes elections may change if the party imbalance among women candidates changes.

- What are the experiences of minority women? The small number of women candidates of color has limited our ability to understand whether race and sex interact to shape the reality of these women candidates. This is exacerbated by the fact that our data on women who run for local offices, where there may be more women candidates of color, is the most limited. As we examine the present situations of women candidates, we have to consider whether what we have learned from studying mostly white women candidates be applied to the situations

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of women of color.

- How do we account for the interconnectedness of sex and gender effects? There are several considerations in determining whether and when women candidates are successful – women's presence in the eligibility pool, the uneven burden of family responsibilities, party recruitment patterns, public evaluations. Each can contribute to the context in which women candidates exist. And yet, each is itself gendered. This leads to situations in which gendered institutions and processes combine or overlap to shape the situations of women candidates. For example, structural elements of elections such as incumbency or the types of offices women candidates are most likely to seek, both of which are gendered processes, can shape the (gendered) media frames employed to report on women and men candidates. This can, in turn, influence the responses of a public that is more likely than not to evaluate women candidates through a gendered lens. Disentangling all of the gendered elements of an electoral situation is a complex exercise that we have not yet perfected.

While the literature on women candidates in the United States deals with a wide range of topics, this essay will focus on reviewing the state of our knowledge in seven specific areas: 1) ambition and candidate emergence, 2) public stereotypes, 3) campaigning, 4) media coverage, 5) structural aspects of the electoral system, 6) vote choice, 7) the impact of women candidates on the public. After reviewing current knowledge regarding each area, I will attempt to identify some paths for future researchers to consider.

Ambition and Candidate Emergence

After the National Women's Political Caucus' groundbreaking report on patterns of success among women candidates demonstrated that women do as well as similarly situated men (Newman 1994), the phrase "when women run, women win" came into popular usage. And the evidence accumulated since has borne this out. Yet, "when women win" implicitly points us to another part of the process that, until recently, had not received adequate attention from scholars of women candidates – the process of candidate emergence. Once it was clear that women candidates suffer few party,

financial, or vote share disadvantages, it became obvious that candidate pool issues helped explain the relatively small number of women in elected office. Fortunately, recent works have considered several questions significant to ambition and candidate emergence as they relate to women.

Whether sex is related to ambition is a question that has motivated research for quite a while, although the findings of this work are somewhat ambiguous. For example, work dating back to the 1970s indicated that women tended to be less ambitious than men, particularly among those active in the parties (Kirkpatrick 1974; Fowlkes, Perkins, and Tolleson-Rinehart 1979; Sapiro 1982; Constantini 1990). However, other research that focused on women officeholders found no real differences in political ambition among women and men (Diamond 1977; Johnson and Carroll 1978; Carroll 1985; Palmer and Simon 2003). Palmer and Simon (2003) suggest that the inconsistent findings of past work are explained, in part, by the lack of a common concept of political ambition among gender scholars. However, it also makes sense that there would be little difference in ambition among those who already hold office, but larger differences among women and men who have not sought office. Indeed, it is the specific step to candidacy that is most crucial for understanding whether and when women will emerge as candidates.

In more recent years, the focus of research has shifted to candidate emergence – the conditions under which candidates for elected office come forward. Here, the evidence suggests that there are highly gendered patterns in American cultural and political life that shape the opportunities for candidacy for women. One of the most significant contributions to this knowledge is the work done by Lawless and Fox (2005). They conceive of candidate emergence as a two-stage process: first, people must consider

a candidacy, and second, they must make a decision to enter a specific race. Their work focuses on the first stage, on how and whether the consideration of political candidacy is shaped by sex and gender. Drawing on an innovative sample of potential political candidates, they gathered data from over 3500 men and women in education, business, political activism, and law. From these data, they describe the realities of the "eligibility pool" for women. Their three major findings are that 1) women are less likely than men to consider running for office, 2) women are less likely than men to run for elective office, and 3) women are less likely than men to be interested in running for office in the future. The explanations for this reality are varied and help us identify gendered elements of political socialization, individual psychology, and institutional settings that can inhibit women's ability to run for office. Lawless and Fox point to the obvious burdens of family role socialization on women: women are less likely than men to be socialized to think about politics as a vocation, women bear greater responsibility for family and children than men, and women are less likely to be encouraged to think about running for office by those in their immediate personal and professional lives. But this work also identifies other individual and institutional roadblocks: both women and men perceive electoral bias against women, women are less likely to be recruited to run by parties and interest groups, and women possess several psychological attitudes that lead them away from running for office. For example, the women in this sample were less likely than equally credentialed men to believe they were qualified to run for office, more likely to doubt their qualifications, and less likely to think they would win if they ran. Lawless and Fox conclude that increasing the number of women candidates will require significant social and systemic changes.

Another approach taken to the study of women candidates' emergence is that of Burrell and Frederick (2006). They focus on the "recruitment pool," which they see as an intermediate stage between the eligibility stage and actual candidacy. As they define it, the recruitment pool consists of "people in positions likely to be considered viable candidates or named as potential candidates when election opportunities arise" (p. 4). Their work examines whether women in positions that would make them viable congressional candidates are more or less likely than men to be mentioned as potential candidates and whether, once mentioned, they are more likely or less likely than men to actually run. This formulation of the emergence process attempts to account for reputational evaluations, actions of party and group leaders, and individual attributes that can shape the recruitment process. Relying on positional and reputational data, Burrell and Frederick find that women are no less likely than men to be mentioned as potential candidates for open House seats in 2004 and no less likely to become candidates than men. While this is clearly a different part of the process of candidate emergence than that examined by Lawless and Fox, it does provide support for the notion that there is relatively little bias against who have entered the political process.

Related to candidate emergence, although not dealing directly with ambition, is the role of political parties in recruiting candidates to office. Political parties have long been important gatekeepers to elected office in the U.S., controlling the nominations, money, and organizational support important to candidates. Current research on the degree to which party organizations serve as a help or a hindrance to women candidates is somewhat mixed. Some work suggests that party organizations are less supportive of women candidates (Lawless and Fox 2005; Niven 1998; Sanbonmatsu 2002a), whether

through sins of omission or commission. For example, Lawless and Fox find that potential women candidates report being significantly less likely to have been encouraged to run for office by party leaders than did similarly situated men. Sanbonmatsu's (2002b) examination of women's representation in state legislatures found that women were less likely to be represented in state legislature where parties had more control over nominations. In surveying potential women candidates, Niven (1998) finds that two-thirds of his sample reported being actively discouraged from running for office by party leaders. Finally, Sanbonmatsu (2005) finds intriguing evidence that party leaders may misperceive women's electability, which could serve to limit their activities to recruit women candidates.

Other work, which tends to have the national parties as its focus, suggests that parties may sometimes act to bring more women into the process. Burrell (2006) suggests that there is fairly consistent evidence over the last twenty years or so of national parties recruiting and funding women candidates for Congress. Her findings are supported by other research that demonstrates that parties, at the least, do not disadvantage women in the candidate recruitment process (Maestas, Maisel, and Stone 2005), and, at best, actively seek them out (Biersack and Herrnson 1994; Burrell 1994; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994).

This work is important on its own, but is particularly important in light of Lawless and Fox's findings about women's' psychological attitudes about political candidacies. Several aspects of the "gendered psyche" they discuss point to women's' tendency to devalue their own qualifications for office. If women are less likely than men to see themselves as qualified to run for office and are more likely to hold themselves to a

higher standard in determining their qualifications, it may be the case that potential women candidates would receive a greater benefit from direct recruiting by political parties. If women are less likely to receive encouragement to run from both personal and professional networks, this may feed into the already lower self-evaluations they make. External recognition of their credentials and experience may well be worth more to women. Further examination of the benefits of active recruitment and encouragement to run as a way of mediating women's gendered psyche could prove valuable.

The body of work on ambition and candidate emergence raises as many interesting questions as it helps to answer. For example, Lawless and Fox do a fine job of demonstrating why women in the pool of potential candidates are less likely to emerge as candidates than are men. But what would also be valuable is a greater understanding of what moves those women who do seek office forward. Clearly, it is not mere presence in the "correct" occupational pool that does it. If there are still family, cultural, and professional forces that make running for office more challenging for women, what provides the motivation for those women who do overcome the barriers and run? Are there characteristics, experiences or psychological attitudes that set these women apart from the women who don't become candidates? This question is related, in part, to the larger issue of the quality of women candidates. It may well be (although there is relatively little evidence at this point) that the women who do emerge as candidates are, on average, far more qualified than the typical male candidate that emerges. We need to know more about the women who do step forward to run for office, both in how they differ from the women who don't emerge and in how they differ from the average man candidate. Presently, we know that "when women run, women win." But if women win

because they are much stronger candidates than men, their parity in election results may actually be less than they "should" achieve based on candidate quality indicators.

The clear evidence that Lawless and Fox have provided about the persistence of gendered family and political socialization patterns points us to another underdeveloped research area. The study of political socialization, which saw its heyday in the 1960s and 1970s, still has much to contribute to our understanding of differences in the political lives of women and men. For example, recent work by Fridkin and Kenney (2004) traces the roots of the partisan gender gap back to a gender gap in political positions among 8th grade boys and girls. This would suggest that, despite the advancement of women in society, patterns of political socialization may still conform to traditional mores with regard to the roles of the sexes. More work on whether this is the case and what sorts of experiences and influences shape how boys and girls think and feel about the world of government and politics would be important.

Finally, as Lawless and Fox suggest, we have to examine more closely how family responsibilities shapes women and men's decisions about entering political life. Their analysis does not find marital and family status to be significantly related to whether women will become candidates. However, many of the women they interviewed (members of their original sample) mentioned having children and taking care of them as one of the major barriers to women's running for office. This is certainly an assumption the conventional wisdom makes about the factors that hold women back. More work on how family issues shape the political decisions of women and men, particularly at the local and state levels, would help identify whether and how traditional family patterns continue to influence politics.

<u>**Stereotypes**</u>

In developing an extensive literature on women candidates for elective office, political scientists have demonstrated that the public looks at women and men in politics in predictably stereotypic ways. These stereotyped assessments of political leaders and candidates focus on three major areas: ideology, personality characteristics, and issue specialization.

One of the more enduring stereotypes of women politicians and candidates is that they are more liberal than men. Several recent research studies have confirmed this finding. Research that has utilized student populations, as well as more representative groups, finds that voters see women candidates, regardless of party, as more liberal than men (Alexander and Anderson 1993; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a; King and Matland 1999; McDermott 1998). This last finding, that even Republican women candidates are seen as more liberal than Republican men, points to the way that sex stereotypes can interact with, and perhaps moderate, partisan stereotypes. One interesting aspect of voters' tendency to see women candidates as more liberal than men is the fairly significant evidence that they *are* often more liberal than men (Dodson 2002; Frankovic 1977; Welch 1985). Voters may be stereotyping women candidates based on more general sex stereotypes about women's nature, but in this instance, there is some correspondence between the stereotype and reality. However, recent research by Koch (2002, 2000) demonstrates that not only are women candidates of both parties seen as more liberal than their male counterparts, but that they are perceived as more liberal than they actually are. Koch makes the argument that these inaccurate assessments of women candidates' ideology can have consequences at the polls. Given that most voters consider

themselves to be ideologically moderate, the perceived liberalism of Democratic women candidates moves them farther away from the average voter, reducing the chances that they would receive votes. However, the exaggerated liberalism of Republican women candidates actually moves them closer to the average voter, who might then be more likely to choose that woman candidate.

Another way in which voters stereotype women candidates is by ascribing to them certain character traits. Here again, the findings are clear. The public sees women candidates as warm, compassionate, kind, passive, while men are perceived as strong, knowledgeable, tough, direct, and assertive (Brown, Heighberger, Shocket 1993; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a; Kahn 1992; Leeper 1991). These ideas reflect the more general stereotypes about women that people tend to hold (Williams and Best 1990). The importance of stereotypes is demonstrated by research that suggests that women candidates are evaluated as warm and tender even when the messages they are sending to the public are more tough and "masculine" (Leeper 1991; Sapiro 1981/2). Concern about these trait stereotypes of women candidates is raised because of the assumed gulf between character traits seen as "feminine" and the skills and abilities generally considered to be important in public office. Indeed, several experimental studies indicate that people often value traits considered to be masculine more highly when considering what the "good politician" should be like. They also consider these masculine qualities to be more important as the level of office they are considering rises from local to national (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993b; Rosenwasser and Dean 198x). However, since these findings all come from experimental settings with hypothetical candidates, we need to exercise caution in assuming that things work the same way in actual elections.

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The final major stereotype that voters connect with women candidates is a set of beliefs about their policy interest and expertise. Flowing from the ideology and personality stereotypes people hold, voters most commonly associate women candidates and officeholders with what are often called the "compassion" issues - poverty, health care, the elderly, education, children and family issues, the environment. Men, not surprisingly, are seen as more concerned with economics, defense, business, crime, and agriculture (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a; Kahn 1992; Koch 1999; Lawless 2004; Leeper 1991). As with trait stereotypes, some express concern that voters may actively use these judgments about women and men's perceived policy differences against women candidates. For example, if women are not perceived to be as competent to handle crime or economic issues, voters who are primarily concerned about these issues may reject women candidates as inappropriate for office. This concern, while potentially valid, raises the question of whether the opposite might also be true. If stereotypes about ideology or traits or issue competency can work against women candidates, are there not also times when they might work in their favor? For example, women candidates are perceived as more honest and more competent than men and are often seen as "outsiders" to politics (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Kahn 1996; Koch 1999). This can be a valuable asset for women candidates in times when voter dissatisfaction with government and incumbent leaders is high. For example, in 1992, women candidates for Congress attracted votes from those who were most dissatisfied with sitting incumbents (Dolan 1998). Women candidates are also perceived to be much better than men at addressing issues of special concern to women. On issues like sexual harassment, abortion, and women's rights, women are judged to be more competent

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(Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a; Kahn 1996). When women's issues are particularly salient, such as in 1992, this focus on candidate sex and gender issues can brighten the election prospects of women candidates, particularly among women voters (Dolan 1998; Paolino 1995; Plutzer and Zipp 1996).

An additional thing to consider when discussing voter stereotypes of women candidates is the role of political party. People hold partisan stereotypes in the same way that they hold sex stereotypes (Rahn 1993). Given the primacy of partisanship, our understanding of stereotypes should consider more carefully how and when candidate sex is relevant once we have considered political party. It may be that candidate sex, while an important influence on political decisions in isolation, loses some of its impact when it is measured against other important political variables. A recent experimental study designed to focus on this potential interaction concludes that, in most instances, partisan cues overwhelmed all other sources of information about candidate beliefs and positions. In only one case, on handling of women's issues, did candidate sex exhibit any impact on people's evaluations of candidates (Huddy and Capelos 2002).

Too, we need to consider whether the possible interaction of sex and party stereotypes causes people to evaluate women differently based on their political party. This is plausible given that people's stereotypes of the Democratic and Republican parties correspond in many ways to thinking about women and men - Democrats and women are assumed to be better able to address social issues and poverty, while Republicans and men see as more well-suited for economic and military policies. This could create situations in which sex and party stereotypes can work to reinforce (as in the case of a woman Democrat) or offset each other (as with a woman Republican). For

example, analysis of NES data from 1990-2000 indicates that candidate sex is significantly related to people's evaluation of Democratic House candidates, with women Democratic candidates being perceived as more liberal than men. However, candidate sex was not related to people's evaluations of Republican candidates, as Republican women were seen as no more or less conservative than men Republicans were. The same is true for an analysis that examined whether people mention stereotypically masculine or feminine issues when evaluating these candidates Respondents evaluating Democratic House candidates were significantly more likely to mention stereotypical feminine issues when the candidate was a woman then when the candidate was a man. Yet, there was no difference in the pattern of mentioning feminine issues when evaluating Republican candidates, regardless of their sex (Dolan 2004). This is counter to what the general stereotypes literature would suggest and does support the notion that partisan stereotypes may attenuate the influence of sex stereotypes. Too, it may be that the overlap between stereotypes of women and Democrats makes the evaluation task "easier" for respondents than when they are faced with the more contradictory nature of stereotypes of women and Republicans. This suggestion is supported by recent work that found that people with higher levels of political knowledge were more likely to see Republican women as more liberal than Republican men, but political knowledge played no role in evaluations of Democratic candidates (Koch, 2002).

Another consideration regarding stereotypes is whether they are employed equally by the public in evaluating women and men candidates. For example, Koch (2000) demonstrates that people use candidate sex as a cue in evaluating candidate ideology when they are faced with a woman candidate, but not when faced with a man. He

suggests that people draw on category-based evaluations in the presence of a woman candidate because women candidates are still more unusual. However, a reliance on stereotypes when evaluating women, but not men, might lead to more distorted impressions of women candidates, such as when Koch (2002) finds that women candidates are perceived as more liberal than men and even more liberal than they actually are. Koch hypothesizes that this could hurt women candidates at the polls, since their exaggerated liberalism puts them, in the minds of many voters, a fair distance from the average person. This work could be extended to consider public stereotypes about women's policy issues and expertise to see if similar distortions are evident.

Finally, it might be fruitful for us to shift our focus on stereotypes away from a comparison of women to men and instead look more closely at public stereotypes across women candidates. Just as we know that people evaluate women candidates differently based on their parties, it may be that some women are more easily stereotyped than others, beyond party. It would not be unreasonable to assume that sex and gender stereotypes could be shaped by a woman's image, name, marital and family status, or age, but we have relatively little empirical evidence that examines stereotypes among women candidates. We should also more closely examine the ways in which minority women candidates are subject to race and sex stereotyping. Just as party and sex stereotypes can interact, I would suspect that racial stereotypes can act to shape the ways in which people evaluate women candidates. Comparing minority women and men would also be fruitful in helping us understand this potential interaction.

Campaigning/"Presenting"

Campaign decisions are crucial ones for any political candidate. Most members of the general public must be introduced to candidates for elected office through a well-formulated, clear, and consistent campaign of television and radio advertisements, printed literature, and, increasingly, candidate websites. Campaign advertising and information is the primary vehicle candidates use to present a particular image to the public and to send a particular message about their experiences, strengths, and interests.

Women candidates, in making decisions about how to present themselves to the public, certainly have to consider the impact of sex and gender-related concerns. Women candidates, who will always (or at least for the foreseeable future) be referred to as "women candidates," have to decide whether they will embrace or avoid the "woman" label. While former Representative Pat Schroeder once famously asked "What choice do I have?" when asked if she was running for Congress as a woman, women candidates do indeed have choices to make with regard to how they present themselves. For women candidates, these choices are complex and involve a number of considerations, from hair and dress, to how to present their spouses and children (if relevant), from the issues they showcase to their personal speaking and presentation style. Generally, the major consideration is whether to consciously reinforce public stereotypes about women or work to challenge them by presenting an image that counters these stereotypes. This can take the form of campaigning "as a woman" and making women's and more feminine issues a centerpiece in the campaign. Alternatively, women candidates can consciously choose to burnish their more "masculine" credentials by emphasizing their expertise on more male issues and their leadership style. For most women candidates, these are not "either/or" decisions, but instead require a fair bit of balancing and efforts that take into

account the fact that stereotypes can potentially both help and hurt women. Campaign presentation is also an important issue for women candidates because it is a mechanism over which they have control, allowing them to shape the message they most want voters to receive.

Research on how women candidates' campaign considers a wide range of choices that women candidates have to make. Generally, these choices involve the issues on which the candidate campaigns and the personal attributes or characteristics the candidate wants to project. For much of the recent past, women and men candidates behaved in ways that largely conformed to gender stereotypes, with women focusing more time and attention on "feminine" issues and qualities and men playing up their expertise on more "masculine" issues (Bystrom 2006; Dabelko and Herrnson 1997; Iyengar, et al. 1997; Kahn 1992, 1993; Kahn and Gordon 1997; Larson 2001; Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1994). However, even since the 1990s, there seems to be a change in the trend, with recent research finding relatively few differences in how women and men campaign. For example, Bystrom (2006) demonstrates that, since the 1990s, there are many fewer sex differences in advertising. Women's campaigns appear to be similar to those of men. Women's campaigns tend to be largely positive in tone, presenting a balance of masculine and feminine issues, and emphasizing traditionally masculine traits like "toughness" and "strength." Indeed, Bystrom finds that women candidates are more successful when they include a range of issues, both masculine and feminine, in their advertising and demonstrate their leadership abilities by showing themselves to be "tough enough" for the job. Employing a new and expansive data set on television advertising in congressional races all across the country, Sapiro and Walsh (2002) present evidence that

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largely supports this trend of few sex differences. Their work finds that women and men tend to campaign on the same issues (with a few limited exceptions), emphasize the same character traits (with women showing a bit more interest in demonstrating their "toughness"), and appear in similar campaign settings and with their families at similar rates. Another recent study examined how women and men present their issue priorities to the public on their campaign websites (Dolan 2005). This examination of candidates for Congress in 2000 and 2002 found that there were very few significant differences in the issues on which women and men campaign and that most of the few differences could be explained by party, not sex. This approach and the findings are echoed by work examining the official websites of a sample of members of Congress, which found little sex difference in the issues presented by women and men (Niven and Zilber 2001), with majorities of both, interestingly, focusing on "women's issues." So, in most venues over which candidates have control, women candidates do not appear to be playing to stereotypes, but instead are attempting to present themselves as candidates concerned about a wide range of issues important to the voters. And there seems to be more evidence of women attempting to counter stereotypes by focusing on more "male" personality attributes. Having said that, it is important to note that other recent research has uncovered more stereotypical issue and trait differences in the self-presentation of women and men members of Congress (J. Dolan and Kropf 2004; Fridkin and Woodall 2005; Gulati 2004).

Ideas about how women candidates should present themselves to the public have followed the same implicit thinking as that which considers the impact of stereotypes – that, depending on the circumstances, women can be helped or hurt by their sex. And

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while general similarity of approach to campaigning among women and men may be the order of the day, there is some evidence to suggest that women can accrue an electoral benefit from embracing their identities "as women." Relying on an extensive survey of candidates running for office from the congressional level down to the local and including a range of offices, Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes (2003) find that women candidates who campaign on women's issues and target women's groups received an electoral bonus over other candidates. This finding echoes that of Plutzer and Zipp (1996) who found that women candidates in 1992 who ran as feminists drew more votes from women than those who did not highlight women's concerns in their campaigns. Also, communications research has shown that voter reaction to candidate ads can depend on who is watching. For example, when women evaluated women and men candidates' ads side by side and preferred the man candidate, it was in cases when that man used feminine character traits like honest, caring, and positive in his ads (Bystrom 2006). So, it may be the case that, in some circumstances, women candidates could lose an advantage by failing to capitalize on their distinctiveness, personality attributes, or perceived strengths (Iyengar, et al. 1997).

One interesting aspect of the literature on women candidates' campaigns involves negative campaigning. In the past, the assumption has been that women candidates would pay a heavy price in public evaluation from employing negative campaign techniques since these techniques violate public stereotypes of how women should behave. However, the empirical findings largely suggest that women candidates do engage in negative campaigning as often as their male opponents and that they are not hurt by it. Bystrom (2006) finds that women candidates are more likely to use negative

campaigning since the 1990s than in earlier times. Too, party can shape the use of these ads, with Democratic women candidates being more likely to "go negative" than Republican women (Bystrom 2006; Sapiro and Walsh 2002). Herrnson and Lucas (2006) found that women candidates were more likely to disapprove of negative campaign techniques than were men. But, at the same time, women candidates were more likely than men to say that they would use a gender-based issue against their opponents (for example, a sexual harassment allegation or a DUI charge), as long as that issue didn't involve the opponent's family. Finally, there is evidence that the use of these negative techniques doesn't hurt women and, in some cases, can even help them (Gordon, Shafie, and Crigler 2003). Experimental data indicates that support for a woman candidate was not hurt because of attacks on her opponent. Also, while women are largely seen as weaker on masculine issues than men, employing a male issue in an attack on an opponent actually drove up subject evaluations of the woman candidate's competence on that issue. The authors suggest that the use of negative ads by women candidates can be a useful tool in counterbalancing public stereotypes.

The evidence from research on women's campaign styles would suggest that women candidates are free to shape personal and policy images that are more free of excess sex and gender baggage than in the past. However, we still know relatively little about how women candidates make decisions about the image they will cultivate. The campaign ads, literature, and websites are the end results of a process, but we don't have much information on the process itself. How much consideration of sex and gender issues goes into the decisions about campaign personas? Do women candidates consciously choose to "play to" stereotypes or work against them? Do women candidates

attempt to burnish their "male" credentials (ala Hillary Clinton and her seeking a seat on

the Senate Armed Services Committee) to provide balance to the presumed feminine

issues? Do minority women have special considerations in shaping their public images?

Sapiro and Walsh (2002) make the important point that sex and gender considerations

don't play out in one way for all women candidates and that the level of office being

sought and the context of the individual race can work to shape the decisions a candidate

makes about her public image. So we should ask whether sex and gender matter more or

less in cultivating public images for candidates at different levels (local, state, national)

or for different offices (executive, legislative, judicial). Finally, we should also consider

the ways in men candidates create their images when faced with a woman opponent.

There is evidence that the increasing number of women candidates has an impact on

men's behavior (Fox 1997). Because of this, we should examine whether men adjust

their images or the issues on which they campaign to counter the gendered aspects of

running against a woman.

Another area that might warrant some attention from researchers could be to

investigate what appears to be an inconsistency in the findings on self-presentation of

women and men candidates versus that of officeholders. A review of the recent work on

women candidates seems to suggest that women are not significantly more likely than

men to focus on women's issues or play up more "feminine" attributes (Bystrom 2006;

Panagopoulos 2004; Dolan 2005; Sapiro and Walsh 2002) in their campaign advertising.

Yet, work on women officeholders presents a portrait of women in office advertising

their credentials on "women's" issues more often than men and being less likely to try to

"claim credit" for their work (J. Dolan and Kropf 2004; Fridkin and Woodall 2005;

Gulati 2004). Is this apparent disconnect a function of the specific officeholders

examined or the timeframe under review, or is there something about the transition from

candidate to officeholder that causes women to return to a more stereotyped image? Is

there a security in being in office that can allow preferences to emerge? Alternatively, is

there a pressure for officeholders to act on certain issues?

Finally, more work that examines whether women candidates gain an electoral

benefit from campaigning on a certain set of issues would be important. The evidence

that women candidates benefit from campaigning "as women," is limited (Herrnson, Lay,

and Stokes 2003). But that is, in part, because of a lack of research. Of course, the

effectiveness of a strategy to run a gendered campaign will be shaped by the context of a

particular election – the party of the candidate, the issues at play in the election, level of

office sought – but there may be patterns that can help us determine whether gendered

campaign appeals help or hurt women candidates.

Media Coverage

The literature on media coverage of women candidates, like that on women

candidates' campaign styles, is one that finds evidence of an evolution in the ways that

women candidates are framed, from a time when the influence of stereotypes was strong

to a present day when women are beginning to be presented in a more balanced light. A

significant body of research has illustrated the typical pattern of media coverage of

women candidates. First, several studies find evidence that women candidates for

statewide such as governor or U.S. Senator receive less media coverage than do men

candidates (Bystrom 2006; Kahn 1996). The coverage that women candidates receive

tends to focus on their viability, usually framing that viability in a negative light, and also

tends to distort the message that women candidates seek to send (Bystrom 2006; Gidengil and Everitt 2003; Kahn 2006). Too, the media tend to focus on casting women candidates in gender stereotypical frames, talking about their interest and abilities on "feminine issues" and focusing on their looks, dress, and hair (Banwart, Bystrom, Robertson 2003; Bystrom 2006; Devitt 1999; Jamieson 1995; Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1995). Besides being worrisome because of the perpetuation of gendered stereotypes, this pattern of media coverage is problematic for women candidates if it negatively effects public perceptions of them (Gidengil and Everitt 2003; Kropf and Boiney 2001).

More recent research, much of it from the field of communications, paints a slightly more positive picture. Bystrom, et al. (2004) suggest that, since the late 1990s, the quantity of media coverage of women and men is evening out and the tone of that coverage is equally positive for women and men. They also find that the media are less likely to focus on the viability of women candidates than they used to be. This trend is visible both in television and newspaper coverage. Other work finds that in some races, such as U.S. Senator or governor, women candidates receive more media attention than men do, that the general tone of articles on both women and men is neutral and that there is no real viability bias against women (Bystrom, Robertson, Banwart 2001; Smith 1994). In both of these studies, the evidence of a change in the coverage of physical, family, and personality issues of women candidates, however, is more of a mixed bag. In examining print and television coverage of women candidates, Bystrom, Robertson, and Banwart they find less of an emphasis on personal and appearance issues since 2000. At the same time, there is still more of this kind of coverage of women than there is of men. Also,

they found evidence that the media still rely on a "novelty" frame in discussing women candidates, focusing on their sex and the relative uniqueness of their candidacies. So, while things may be headed in a more position direction for women candidates on this score, the media still use personal coverage as a frame for women in a way they don't for men.

One place where there still seems to be stereotyped coverage of women candidates is at the level of the presidency. Several recent studies of Elizabeth Dole's run for the 2000 Republican nomination for president find consistent patterns of her receiving less coverage than some of her male opponents and more gendered coverage (Aday and Devitt 2001; Bystrom 2006; Heldman, Carroll, Olson 2005). Both television and print media coverage focused on her appearance, sex, and viability more often than it did the men in the race. Tellingly, she even received less coverage and less positive coverage than those men who were consistently behind her in the polls. So the viability frame that persisted in coverage of Dole was, to some degree, a distortion of her place in the process (Bystrom 2006).

Another difficulty in the area of media coverage of women candidates is the perception that the media are still biased against women. Fox's (1997) study of women congressional candidates and their campaign managers in the early 1990s finds clear evidence that these actors believe that the media treat women candidates in a more gender stereotyped way. This perception is also common among women officeholders. A study of the press secretaries of women members of Congress found the same perception that women are treated more stereotypically by the media (Niven and Zilber 2001). Interestingly, a simultaneous examination of the public statements and websites of these

women found no evidence that they were presenting themselves in a gendered manner, providing support for the notion that women's messages are more often distorted by the media than are men's. Or, as Carroll and Schreiber (1997) suggest, the media accurately portray women officeholders' activities on "feminine" issues, but ignore their efforts on issues that don't fit with the expected stereotypes.

The most recent research on media coverage of women candidates offers evidence that the past practices of negative and stereotyped coverage of women candidates may be changing. But, since these new data are somewhat at odds with previous findings, the first thing that researchers need to do is to continue to examine this trend. The period since 2000 may be the beginnings of a new era of more balanced coverage of women, or it may be an artifact of one or two elections. Clearly, more work is needed to continue the examination into this trend. At the same time, Kahn (2003) argues for more research into the coverage of women officeholders, since this media coverage can have an important impact into their success in office and future mobility. Perhaps it would be fruitful for researchers to tie these streams together, treating the transition from candidate to officeholder more fully, with an eye toward determining whether and how media treatment changes as a woman's status changes. This could be accomplished in comparison to men, but could also be done to make comparisons among women, perhaps by party or area of issue specialization chosen for attention (masculine or feminine) or region of the country represented. It might also be interesting to continue to examine the messages that women candidates put out through their various controlled media and the degree to which those messages are accurately reflected in the media. As the discussion on campaigning outlined above suggested, women candidates are increasingly likely to

present themselves in a balanced, or more gender neutral, light. It may be the case that the media now need to catch up and refine their framing of these women. This connection (or disconnect) between message and coverage is a crucial one, as it can, at the individual level, influence future viability, and, at the societal level, contribute to the continuation of the gendered patterns of perception of women and men.

Structural/Electoral

Regardless of their level of ambition, support from the public, or the media attention they receive, women candidates, like men, have to function in an electoral system whose rules and realities can significantly shape important aspects of candidacy. These structural mechanisms are gendered, making them an important consideration when evaluating the status of women candidates in American politics.

Of all of the elements of the electoral system that can influence the prospects for and success of candidates, candidate, or seat, status may be primary. The power of incumbency in American politics is such that it has created an electoral system that is dramatically weighted in favor of those already in office. And, since those already in office are largely male, women tend to have to compete for access to the system through open seat races for office. It is important to point out that incumbency does benefit women in the same general ways that it benefits men (Dolan 2004; Fox 2006), although there is some evidence to suggest that women incumbent members of Congress attract stronger and more well-financed opponents than do male incumbents (Berch 2004). Women candidates, then, are most likely to be successful (as are non-incumbent men) when they run for open seats. And, indeed, there is evidence that women are strategic enough to focus on open seats and are about as likely as men to win those seats (Fiber

2004; Fox 2006; Palmer and Simon 2001). However, there is a bit of a disparity between women and men's success, which is attributed, in part to political party. Some research finds that women's success in open seat races has declined a bit since the mid to late 1990s, which observes assume relates to the fact that women tend to run as Democrats and Republicans have won more congressional races during that period. (Hoffman, Palmer, and Gaddie 2001; King and Matland 2002). However, another possible explanation is offered by Fiber and Fox (2005), who find that men who run against women candidates for open seats in Congress raise more money than their women opponents. They suggest that this may signal that women run in the most competitive races, which could explain the sex disparity in success in open seats.

Primaries are another important point of access to candidacy, but this is an area in which there is not a lot of research. We do know that, at least in the last twenty years or so, Democrats have had more women candidates running in primaries than the Republicans have and that Democratic women tend to be more successful in their primaries than are Republican women (Gaddie and Bullock 1995; Palmer and Simon 2001). Bratton (2004) examined all major party primary candidates for Congress from 1996-2000. Her research confirmed the general trends noted above and also demonstrates that Republican women candidates, even incumbents, are more likely to face opposition in their primaries than Democratic women are. Interestingly, she also finds that, regardless of party, as the number of women candidates in a primary increases, the vote share for each woman goes down. This is not just a function of increased candidates driving down the vote share for all candidates, as the reduction in vote share is greater for women candidates in the primary than for the men candidates. However, we

need much more research on when and how women candidates run in primaries to determine if this access point has additional gendered elements.

Focusing on the structure of elections raises the issue of political parties. Parties are a significant influence on elections involving women candidates in a couple of different ways. First, we need to recognize the current imbalance in the party identification of women candidates for office, which runs strongly in the direction of the Democrats. Generally, about 60 percent of women candidates run as Democrats (CAWP 2006), which may be a reflection of patterns of women's personal identification, or of the relative openness of the two parties to women's candidacies, or of the formal attempts by party leaders to recruit more women candidates to office, or of each of these things simultaneously. But regardless of reason, the pattern is clear – there are more Democratic women than Republican women seeking office, Democratic women are more successful than Republican women in primaries and general elections, and Democratic women make up a greater proportion of the Democratic members of Congress than Republican women make up of their party's total (Bratton 2004; Fox 2006; Matland and King 2002; Ondercin and Welch 2005).

As was discussed in the earlier section on candidate emergence, the literature on political party recruitment activities does not provide a definitive answer on whether parties are a help or an obstacle to women candidates. Work that has focused on state parties and state legislative leaders suggests that women candidates may have a harder time receiving nominations or being recruited by party leaders than are men (Niven 1998; Sanbonmatsu 2002b, 2005). At the same time, other work shows the national parties to be more supportive of women candidates, both in recruitment and campaign funding

(Burrell 1994, 2006; Biersack and Herrnson 1994; Maestas, Maisel, and Stone 2005).

Future research on the role of parties in recruiting women candidates might focus on the

structural frameworks in which party leaders work and the motivations of these leaders

when recruiting nominees to see if these sorts of considerations shape their openness to

women candidates.

Alongside party support, financial backing is key to the success of any political

candidate. With regard to women, the historical concern was that influential campaign

contributors and political parties would be unlikely to "throw away" their money on

candidates with little chance of winning. Data from the last 20 years or so have

demonstrated that this concern is a thing of the past. Indeed, since the 1970s, women

candidates have reached parity with men in terms of campaign financing and have, in

some situations, shown a clear advantage in fundraising. Of course, as with most of our

information on women candidates, we know more about campaign finance regarding

women who have run for Congress and the state legislatures. But the evidence is clear.

Women candidates for Congress raise and spend equivalent amounts of money as men

(Burrell 2005; Fox 1997; Werner 1998). Women candidates also have access to as wide

a range of PAC money as do men and are not disadvantaged with regard to attracting

large donations (Burrell 1994, 2005). With the advent of women-centered PACs like

Emily's List, women are also able to tap into a network of early money, one that is

funded largely by women donors. However, some researchers would warn that this

seeming financial parity does not mean that all is equal for women and men candidates.

For instance Green (2003) finds that the impact of campaign expenditures on vote share

for women incumbents for Congress is less than it is for the men who challenge them.

She suggests that this could mean that, in some situations, women candidates need more campaign resources to achieve the same level of impact that those resources have for men candidates. There are still several unanswered questions regarding campaign finance. For example, an important aspect of campaign finance is the perception of whether there is parity between women and men. For a long time, the conventional wisdom suggested that women had a harder time raising money than did men. If this perception still lingers, it could contribute to the reticence of women to brooch candidacies. Also, we need to know more about the funding of women candidates below the congressional and statewide level and about the impact of public financing systems on the emergence and success of women candidates.

Besides a party imbalance in the representation of women candidates, it is also clear that there are geographical patterns of women's candidacies and election in the U.S. As any map of women officeholders will demonstrate, successful women candidates are not equally distributed across the country. More research has focused on explaining the patterns of women's election, as opposed to their emergence as candidates, but this work can be instructive on determining where women will emerge nonetheless. For example, previous research suggests that women are more likely to be elected from more urban and wealthier areas that are more Democratic and located outside of the South (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Fox 2000; Norrander and Wilcox 1998; Sanbonmatsu 2002a). Palmer and Simon (2006) recently introduced the concept of the "woman friendly" district, from which women are more likely to be elected to Congress. These districts are more urban, more ethnically and racial diverse, and have income and education levels above the national average. Oxley and Fox (2004) find that women candidates for statewide office

are more likely to emerge in states with higher percentages of women lawyers and are less likely to emerge in states with traditional political cultures. The power of political culture is often strong enough to shape the types of offices for which women run, as evidenced by work that demonstrates that women in the South are less likely to seek and win election to more "masculine" offices (Lublin and Brewer 2003). Another important aspect of explaining where women will emerge is the past history of openness of a district or state to women candidates. Ondercin and Welch (2005) find that states and congressional districts in which women have had electoral success in the last decade significantly predicts whether new women candidates will emerge in the 1990s and 2000. This might signal that once a pattern of women's presence is established, the district or state will remain more open to women candidates in the future. Their work also finds support for the notion that women candidates are more likely to emerge for open seat races in more urban areas outside of the South.

Another structural aspect of determining where women run involves the type of offices they seek. Recent work suggests that gendered considerations shape the choices women make when deciding which office to pursue. For example, Oxley and Fox (2003, 2004) demonstrate that women are more likely to run for statewide office in states that have more executive offices that specialize in "feminine" policy areas or correspond to women's stereotypical strengths, yet show that there is no difference in the likelihood of women winning either "masculine" or "feminine" offices. Other research indicates that women in the South are more likely to run for and hold less "desirable" process-oriented offices with little discretion and when there are fewer high quality men candidates running (Lublin and Brewer 2003). Taken together, these findings suggest that women

are either, by choice or circumstance, more likely to pursue stereotypical "female" posts and those with less independent authority. Not only does this conform to traditional stereotypes about the issues and activities for which women are best suited, but it also speaks to a process of women shaping candidacies to fit public expectations. This serves, at best to perpetuate stereotypes and, at worst, as a de facto limit on the present and future opportunities women can pursue.

The uneven distribution of women's candidacies should indicate that the playing field is not completely level for women. Clearly, there are individual and structural/cultural differences across the country that can make it easier or harder for women candidates to run and win election. And these structural forces appear to be significantly shaping women's candidacies. From the research reviewed here, we get a picture of a Democratic woman from a more wealthy urban area outside of the South scanning the electoral horizon for an open legislative seat or "feminized" executive office for which to run. Clearly, this points us to a fruitful area of research. For example, we need to look past the number of women holding office at the state and local levels to a closer examination of the offices being held. Lublin and Brewer (2003) state that the eligibility pool for higher office will not grow as quickly as expected if women, at least in the South, are concentrated into low-discretion, undesirable offices. So we need to more closely examine patterns of candidacy and officeholding below the congressional and statewide levels and to trace the career paths of women from these local levels on up the pipeline. Or, alternatively, we need to be able to see if there is a point in the process where women's advancement is blocked, whether there is a group of offices that don't serve as successful stepping stones to higher office. Too, we need to know more about

the full range of districts and states in which women run, not simply to identify the characteristics of the places from which they win. We know that women are elected to Congress or state legislatures from a particular type of district (what Palmer and Simon call the "woman-friendly" district). But what we don't understand as clearly is the full range of districts and states from which women run and whether there are elements other than the structural that explain patterns of women's success or failure from this wider range of districts. Do women who lose tend to run in districts in which they are the partisan minority? Do they run in states with less supportive political parties? Does incumbency have the same power for women across the country? As Sanbonmatsu (2005) suggests, women and men are equally likely to win their races. But if largely women run where they are most likely to win, then the playing field of candidacies is not yet level. The structural aspects of the electoral playing field will not be truly level until women of every type can contest for a full range of offices everywhere around the country.

Vote Choice

For much of our history, public unwillingness to support women candidates at the polls was a significant stumbling block to their success. Traditional ideas about inappropriateness of a public role for women led many voters, male and female, to reject women candidates on principle alone (Dolan 2004). However, since the 1970s, the evidence has demonstrated the increasing electoral viability of women. In 1994, the National Women's Political Caucus produced a report demonstrating that similarly situated women and men are equally likely to win elections at both the state and national levels (Newman 1994). These findings have been confirmed by other studies that

examine the vote share won by women candidates in both primary and general election contests (Burrell 1994; Fox 1997; Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes 2003; Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997). Based on these findings, the question regarding women candidates has shifted from whether people will vote for them to which voters are most likely to do so. While widespread, systematic bias against women candidates is no longer the case, it may be that some people are more likely to support women than others. For example, it may be that younger people or those with more education or a more liberal political ideology would be more likely to vote for women candidates than older, more conservative people with less education. (Smith and Fox 2001)

Analysis of data from the National Election Study for candidates for Congress from 1990-2000 indicates that there are relatively few consistent gendered patterns of voter support for women candidates (Dolan 2004). The major determinants of vote choice for people faced with a woman candidate are the same as the determinants of the vote in all elections – incumbency and a shared party identification between candidate and voter. Voters faced with women candidates for the House or Senate overwhelmingly support the incumbent and the candidate of their party. This is an important finding because it lets us know that the "typical" election dynamics are not thrown out the window when a woman candidate appears on the scene. Women incumbents earn the same advantage that men incumbents do and women candidates are embraced by the members of their own party, just as men are. If these factors weren't important to voting for a woman, this would signal that candidate sex trumped traditional electoral influences. However, there is no evidence that voters consider candidate sex as primary concern.

Beyond the influence of incumbency and shared party identification, there are few consistent patterns in voter support for women candidates since 1990. There is no evidence that the voters of one political party are more or less likely to support women candidates. Political ideology is important, but only in Senate races, where more liberal voters were more likely to vote for women candidates. Counter to expectations, age, religiosity, and education did not distinguish the voters who chose women candidates from those who did not. Race, however, did serve to influence vote choice, with minority voters being more likely to support women candidates than white voters. Interestingly, even the variables that predict support for women candidates were not significantly related to vote choice in each of the six elections examined. In some years, minority voters or those with a more liberal ideology would be more likely to choose women candidates, but not in every election. In one or two elections, older voters or men would favor women candidates, but not consistently. This signals the potentially important role for the context of a particular election – the mix of candidates, issues, voter interests – that could work to shape vote choice when a woman candidate is present. For example, in the NES analysis, there were some election years in which voters motivated by certain policy issues, namely education and abortion, who were more likely to vote for women candidates than other people. But, as with the demographic characteristics, issues did not play a strong or consistent role in influencing who votes for women candidates.

Of course, the most obvious demographic characteristic related to vote choice for women candidates is the sex of the voter. The notion that women voters should be an automatic base of support for women candidates has been an implicit, and sometimes explicit, assumption of much of the work done on women candidates. This work

suggests that there are several reasons we should expect an "affinity effect" emerge.

First, women may vote for women candidates because they seek descriptive representation. Indeed, there is evidence to support the assumption that women have a stronger preference for same-sex representation than do men (Rosenthal 1995; Sanbonmatsu 2002c). Other research suggests that a sense of shared gender identity or common concern about issues may motivate women voters to select women candidates (Tolleson-Rinehart 1992). Issues like sexual harassment, abortion, or child care tend to be of greater importance to women voters and they may see women candidates as uniquely suited to dealing with these issues (Paolino 1995). As was discussed in the section on campaigning, women candidates can sometimes enjoy a boost in support when they run "as women" on gendered issues (Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes 2003; Plutzer and Zipp 1996). Clearly then, it would seem that issues can help make the link between women voters and women candidates that a shared sex itself might not provide. Finally, any greater likelihood that women voters will chose women candidates may be based not so much on a shared gender identity, but instead on a set of ideological or partisan sympathies. In the contemporary period, women in the U.S. are more likely to identify with the Democratic Party than the Republican Party and more women candidates run for office as Democrats than as Republicans. It may be the case then that women voters are simply choosing candidates of their party, many of whom happen to be women (Cook 1994). Finally, we should acknowledge that women are not a monolithic voting bloc, slavishly being drive by sex and gender considerations. Instead, women may be more likely to choose women candidates than men voters would be, but this dynamic is probably shaped by the same political forces that shape other vote choice decisions –

incumbency, political party, race, and the level of office being sought. For example, some studies have demonstrated that certain sub-groups of women - African Americans, liberal, feminist, and well-educated women - are more likely to choose women candidates than are other women (Eckstrand and Eckert 1981; Lewis 1999; Sigelman and Welch 1984; Smith and Fox 2001). Other work has shown that women voters may be more likely to choose women candidates in some circumstances, say when they are incumbents or when running for a particular office, than others (Cook 1994; Dolan 1998, 2004).

Analyzing the NES data for congressional races from 1990-2000 indicates that there are some circumstances in which women voters more likely to choose women candidates than men voters do, but the relationship is not overwhelming. Here the effect seems to be conditioned by the office being sought – women voters were significantly more likely to choose women candidates for House races than were men, but there was no sex difference in voting for women candidates in Senate races (Dolan 2004). Too, the effect in House races was not overwhelming. Women's probability of voting for a woman candidate in these elections was .59, while for men the probability was .50. Clearly, this doesn't signal a wholesale embracing or rejection of women candidates by either sex. So, while women may be more likely to vote for women than are men in some cases, this relationship does not hold in all circumstances. Nor does it hold true all of the time. When each election from 1990 to 2004 is analyzed separately, women were more likely to choose women candidates in House elections in only one year, 1992, the so-called "year of the woman." And, interestingly, in 1994, men voters were more likely to choose women candidates in Senate races than were women voters. These findings would cause us to conclude that the potential for women voters to favor women

candidates is there, but may not be strong enough to determine a person's vote in specific electoral situations and is rarely strong enough to overwhelm traditional influences like party identification and incumbency.

Despite what we know about how voters react to women candidates, there are still several questions that can guide future research. First, the assumption that women voters are the group most likely to vote for women candidates, and the somewhat conflicting evidence of an affinity effect, point us to what could be a fruitful area of study. Specifically, I mean that we need to look more closely at places where evidence from hypothetical elections or experimental designs conflicts with the data from real-world elections. Experiments and hypotheticals are important for helping us isolate the impact of sex and gender considerations. Yet, we know that the real world of politics does not hold all influences constant and that candidate sex doesn't exist in a vacuum. When actual election results offer us something different than experiments might suggest, learning more about why and how that takes place could be important to help us understand all of the complexities of sex and gender considerations. For example, that women should be more likely to support women makes sense from the perspectives of representation, gender identity, policy position, and partisan similarities. It is also supported by recent work that indicates that women are more likely to desire same-sex representation than men (Rosenthal 1995; Sanbonmatsu 2002c). Posing questions about a hypothetical election race between a woman and a man, Sanbonmatsu demonstrates that women were more likely to prefer candidates of a particular sex than were men and were more likely to prefer women, while men had less of an identifiable sense of gender affinity at work when choosing candidates. While not every woman preferred the

hypothetical woman candidate, it does offer a sense of what Sanbonmatsu calls the "baseline" gender preference. But, as my work on vote choice indicates, party identification and incumbency drive voting for women. At the same time, some scholars suggest that some women will cross party lines to support women (Brians 2005; King and Matland 2003). So, it would be interesting to know more about what factors pull people away from their baseline preference and what it takes for that to happen. If many women begin predisposed to vote for women candidates, what occurs to cause them to vote counter to that preference? Is political party the key? Is party enough? Is it some combination of party and position on issues? What explains women (or men, for that matter) who cross party lines to vote for a woman? Are Republican or Democratic women equally like to cross? Are minority women pulled more by race or sex in their voting decision in the presence of a woman candidate?

Another area on which we need more information has to do with the impact of voter stereotypes on vote choice. As the earlier section indicates, voter stereotypes are alive and well and well-formed. We have very clear evidence that people evaluate women and men candidates through gendered lenses. But we have less information about how those stereotypes shape people's attitudes and behaviors toward women candidates. This is particularly important with regard to vote choice. The stereotypes literature speaks extensively about the degree to which women candidates can be helped or hurt by the stereotypes people hold. For example, Lawless (2004) finds that people who see men as being better able to manage the "war on terror" are the least likely to say that they would support a woman candidate. But these attitudes only become significant if they really do shape people's vote choice and to this point, we don't really know if this is the

case. Work like that done by Lawless (2004) and Sanbonmatsu (2002c) deals with

hypothetical candidates and electoral situations, which may or may not offer us guidance

for how things play out in the real world. The stereotypes that people hold may or may

not be closely related to their evaluations of an individual candidate. A person can see

women as weaker on defense issues, but still choose the woman candidate presented in an

election for reasons other than these general stereotypes – perhaps party, incumbency, or

other issues. We know very little about the degree to which people employ sex

stereotypes in their voting decision and where stereotypes might rank among the host of

other influences. Understanding whether general sex stereotypes are applied in vote

choice regarding a specific candidate could give us a better sense of whether particular

electoral or issue climates should be more or less hospitable to women candidates. Also,

as with so many other things, we should consider the party of the woman candidate here.

It may be the case that sex stereotypes interact with party stereotypes in a way that might

make them more or less important to vote choice in different situations. This sort of

information would also give us a better sense of whether Democratic and Republican

women face the same sorts of evaluations from the public. As discussed earlier, some of

the findings in the stereotypes literature would suggest that they don't (Dolan 2004).

Impact of women candidates on the public

One final area to consider looks not at how the political system affects women

candidates, but instead at how the presence of women candidates affects the political

system. The increase in the number of women who run for and are elected to office in

the United States has been accompanied by an expanding literature that examines the

impact these women have on our political system. This literature often focuses on

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questions of representation and the "benefits" that an increasing number of women

candidates can bring to the political system, particularly to women citizens. Much has

been written about the impact of women on *substantive* representation, resulting in our

understanding that having more women in office tends to lead to different policy

outcomes and different procedural pathways (Burrell 1998; Dodson 1998; Kathlene 1995;

Norton 2002; Rosenthal 1998; Saint-Germain 1989; Swers 2002; Thomas 1994; but see

Reingold 2000).

However, a second aspect of representation, one that is more relevant at the

candidacy stage, is that of *symbolic* representation. While the direct benefits of symbolic

representation may not be as easily quantified as those of substantive representation, from

the perspective of the political community and its citizens, they are no less important.

The presence of women candidates can signal a greater openness in the system and more

widely dispersed access to political opportunities for all (Burns, Scholzman, Verba 2001;

Reingold 2000; Thomas 1998; Carroll 1994). Women candidates can also serve as role

models or symbolic mentors to women in the public, sending the signal that politics is no

longer an exclusive man's world and that female participation is an important and valued

act (Burrell 1998; Tolleson Rinehart 1992; Sapiro 1981). Mansbridge (1999) suggests

that the increased representation of marginalized identity groups also affirms that

members of these groups are capable of governing and can serve to more strongly

connect group members to the polity. Finally, women candidates are more likely to

campaign on issues of interest to women, which may catch the attention of women voters

(Dabelko and Herrnson 1997; Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes 2001; Larson 2001).

The signals of openness, legitimacy, and identity sent by the presence of women candidates can, in turn, stimulate activity and engagement on the part of those members of the public heartened by an increasingly democratic and representative candidate pool. Indeed, much of the work on the symbolic impact of women candidates finds some, if limited, support for the notion that their presence stimulates great attentiveness to politics, particularly among women. Sapiro and Conover (1997) find higher levels of interest and attentiveness among women who lived in areas with a woman candidate for governor or U.S. Congress than among women who lived in areas with male-only races. Other work also identified 1992 as a year in which women candidates increased the interest and activity of women, particularly in contrast to other election years when the presence of women candidates had no relationship to public attitudes and activities (Hansen 1997; Koch 1997). Atkeson (2003) examines gubernatorial and U.S. Senate races from the 1990s and finds that women who lived in states with women candidates were more likely to discuss politics and had higher levels of efficacy and knowledge that people who experienced male-only races, although this effect was conditioned by competition. Atkeson also found that the impact of women candidates was only present when the woman was engaged in a competitive election. This would suggest that the mere presence of women candidates is not necessarily enough to provide symbolic representation, but that the context of the race must allow them to be known to the public.

While previous research suggests a symbolic benefit to mobilization from the presence of women candidates, there are some limitations with findings. Several focus on one or two elections and on a small number of political variables (with the exception of Atkeson 2003) and none address whether the presence of women candidates mobilizes

the public to turn out to vote in higher numbers. Attempting to more fully explore the question of whether the presence of women candidates mobilizes the public, I undertook a project that compares the political interest, efficacy, proselytizing, general participation, and voter turnout of people who lived in congressional districts or states with a woman candidate and those who did not from 1990-2004. In all, there is little evidence to support a symbolic mobilization hypothesis. In a few limited circumstances, people who lived in the presence of women candidates experienced increases in some attitudes or activities over those who experienced male-only races. But there was no consistent pattern to this effect and no strong evidence that the presence of women candidates causes people to sit up, take notice, and engage in politics in a real or different way (Dolan 2006).

While this latest project offers compelling evidence that runs counter to previous work, it is by no means definitive. Understanding the connection, or lack thereof, of women candidates with the public will allow us to more rigorously examine our assumptions about the importance of symbolic representation. For example, Jennifer Lawless (2004) suggests that a woman does not have to be directly represented by Hillary Clinton or Mary Landrieu to experience the symbolic benefits of an increase in the number of women in elected office. The same may be true for people observing women candidates. Media attention to women candidates nationally or in other specific races may alert people to the presence of those women candidates, even if they don't have first-hand experience with them. Figuring out a way to measure this more general symbolic representation may help us better identify how the presence of women candidates works. Too, we should strive for more and better data that might allow us to capture the

characteristics of women candidates and the contexts of the races in which they do have an impact on the public. Women candidates who stimulate public attitudes and behaviors may take certain positions or highlight certain issues, or run in certain areas of the country or particular election years, or even experience certain kinds of opponents. Without knowing more about these sorts of circumstances, our understanding of the dynamic of when and how women candidates can influence political attitudes and behaviors will remain limited. Too, we would benefit from knowing more about the people whose attitudes or behaviors were mobilized by women candidates. If a certain type of person is susceptible to the presence of women candidates, this information could help candidates craft their appeals. And since the evidence of a directly symbolic form of representation is weak, we should work to more fully examine the impact that women candidates have on men. Men in my study increased their involvement in influencing others and general participation in the presence of women candidates, a result consistent with Lawless' (2004) finding that men represented by women members of Congress have higher levels of trust and efficacy than men represented by men. We would do well to understand the context in which the responses of men, as well as women, can be shaped by an increase in women's political candidacies.

Conclusion

The field of political science has produced a large and important body of research on the situations facing women candidates in the last forty years. But, in many ways, we are still at the beginnings of a research agenda that seeks to more fully examine the role that sex and gender play in American elections. There is clear evidence that these issues play a less formal and decisive role today than they did in the past. But it is also clear

that there are still many avenues to pursue. These avenues involve questions raised in the

beginning of the paper, questions that will require us to seek new and better data on a

wider range of offices and elections than has been utilized to date, questions that require

us to think about the experiences of a more diverse group of women candidates, questions

that ask us to untangle the interconnected elements of sex and gender in our social,

cultural, and political life. These questions for the future require us to continue to

examine the gendered nature of family and professional life, stereotypes, electoral

systems, political parties, and the media so that we can more clearly determine whether

we are indeed moving toward a time when women candidates are thought of as

candidates who happen to be women.

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