

***"Primary Attraction: Does the Romance Continue? Strategic Women
Candidates in State Legislative House Elections***

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Introduction

Earlier in our current research agenda on the election of women to legislative office (Anderson, Wrzenski and Vaal, 2011) we posed two major hypotheses from the wider Congressional literature: first, that “the primary rate of victory for female candidates (in state legislative primaries) will be ... below that experienced by their male counterparts” and, secondly, that “female candidates will face a greater number of primary opponents and will also attract more female opposition than will be the case for their male counterparts”. Neither of these hypotheses – tested successfully, if only partially, at the Congressional level – was borne out in state legislative elections in our study. The reason for the current investigation is to further investigate the fate of female candidates in state house elections, using the same array employed for the earlier paper, but to move to the next iteration of conflict, the general election.

As very little has been done in this area, some of what follows is frankly exploratory: an attempt to place in the light the contours of the dynamics of general election campaigns by women in state house elections; but we come to the table this time with another of the hypotheses posed and supported at the congressional level for many candidates for office, that of the “quality of candidate” *resume*: that the “opportunity” costs for office may be theoretically the same across all venues (i.e., such items as a competitive campaign war chest, endorsement by local party activists, and the like) but that strategic considerations (such as the opportunity offered any challenger by open seats) and, most importantly, the ability for challengers to hold a quality resume (in particular, holding elective office) will vary quite widely across states.

It seems to us that the order of deployment for all successful candidates starts with contestation for the seat: if you do not run, you cannot win. If you do win, in the primary election, there are a host of factors which may contribute to your chances of victory in the general election. These include such institutional factors as the presence of an open seat (all challengers are most advantaged when there is no incumbent), the “safety” of the seat for the political party banner under which you are running (as a product of districting, many state legislative seats are sorted by party in the same way that congressional seats are sorted), and *ceteris paribus*, the quality of the candidate herself. One of the simplest predicates for “candidate quality” is that the candidate has experience – that they have held elective office in the past. However, the opportunity for

candidates to *have* held office depends largely on the political culture and traditions of the state – reflected in its election history – and this varies widely across the states in our array. We would expect to see a correlation between the percentage of women candidates successful at the state level to be partly related to the percentage of women candidates who have held elective office (school boards, county commissions, city councils, and the like) in the past. For the purposes of this study, it proved to be nearly impossible to gather such data for each candidate for state office within the confines of a simple pilot study to explore the possibility. We have therefore turned to another, less reliable measure: we take the incidence of positive general election outcomes for women in state legislative elections as an indicator of the probability that women will be successful at the congressional level.

The national decline of women in Congress is matched by a similar decline in state legislative seats held by women. Our theory is that this is not a random statistic: the fewer women that are serving in state legislatures, the fewer women are enabled, through building an elective office-holding resume, to run successfully for the Congress. If this is the case, we should see two items in analysis: first, that women are less likely in some states than others to translate primary victory into general election success, and, second, that this general lack of success in some states will at least partly explain why these states are less likely to have women representing congressional districts.

Review of the literature:

Although the reason for women's underrepresentation is a point of contention in our field, there is general agreement that women are underrepresented at all levels of government. Despite being touted as the "New Year of the Woman" or the "Year of the Conservative Woman" 2010 posed disappointing results for women officeholders at both the federal and sub-national level (Parker 2010; McManus 2010; Hornick 2010). For the first time since 1979, the total number of women in the U.S. House and Senate declined ("Women in the U.S. Congress" 2011). At the state legislative level, the percentage of total female legislators also declined. Women now make up just 23.5% of all state house and senate seats; a number that puts women at the same rate of representation as that posted in 2007 ("Women in State Legislatures 2011" 2011). Perhaps even

more sobering, when comparing the rate of female representation in our country to others, Siobham “Sam” Bennett, the president of the Women’s Campaign Forum states, “We’re ranked 90th in the world in the number of women in elected office. We trail behind Cuba and Afghanistan” (Keck 2010).

These downward trends in female representation are most likely the result of the bleak electoral fortunes of Democratic candidates in 2010 and the fact that female incumbents were more likely to be affiliated with the Democratic Party. In addition, despite record filings, a large number of Republican women were unsuccessful in their Congressional primary bids, which reduced the total number of female contenders in the general election (Feldmann 2010; Parker 2010). The loss of incumbents, coupled with a lack of successful challengers who were female, conspired to produce these lower numbers overall.

Although these losses represent a rather minor step backwards for women and should not be taken to mean women can’t be successful, they are important both symbolically and fundamentally. First, the change in partisan control of the U.S. House and multiple state legislatures poses leadership consequences for women as committee chairs and party leaders are restructured (Clift 2010). In Congress, Nancy Pelosi shifted from being the Speaker of the House to the House Democratic leader and female representatives lost two congressional chairmanships (Manning, Shogan and Smelcer 2011). This reduction of women in positions of power within the legislature matters, as it can impact candidate recruitment, fundraising, and policy outcomes. Additionally, with Republicans making large gains in many state legislatures, it is quite likely that the redistricting process will ultimately favor the party in power. If the electoral environment becomes more secure for Republican incumbents and more favorable for Republican challengers post-redistricting, this could negatively impact the candidacy decisions of female Democrats at the state legislative level for years to come.

Most of the scholarly literature in political science since the 1980s concludes that when women run they win and that women can be successful fundraisers (Newman, 1994; Burrell 1985, 1990, 1994; Gaddie and Bullock 1995, 1997; Uhlander and Schlozman 1986; Wilhite and Theilmann 1986; Darcy et al. 1984, 1994; Thompson, Moncrief and Hamm 1998; Werner 1997; Seltzer,

Newman and Leighton 1997; Fox 2000). However, there are theoretical reasons to believe that women face differential opportunity costs, and that these cost factors can impact a woman's decision to run – they may also have an impact on the electoral process itself (Lawless and Fox, 2012). The empirical observation that women *can* raise the necessary funds, *can* compete and *can* win rather begs the question as to why more do not. The answer may lie in the reason for the truncation of the population of women from those who *can* run to those who *do* run.

First, when weighing the decision to run some women must consider how their candidacy will impact their family. Although, this is certainly the case for male candidates with children as well, cultural stereotypes and social norms may put more pressure on women to avoid a bid if they have children at home. In a national survey of potential male and female candidates conducted by Fox and Lawless (2004b) the authors find, “Women who live with a spouse or partner are nine times more likely than men to be responsible for more of the household tasks; the numbers are similar for childcare arrangements” (p. 6; see also, Lawless and Fox, 2012; 13-14). They conclude that women who are primarily responsible for household tasks are 15% less likely to consider a bid than those who rely on their partner to do the majority of the household workload (Fox and Lawless 2004b). These demands, coupled with the demands of the workplace, may make it far more difficult for women to run and to receive the support of their families when they are pondering a bid for office. It may also make it more difficult for women with children to receive support from voters and the media because the general impression is that these candidates should make their family their main concern. As a result, women with children may postpone a bid for office at least until they are older (Moncrief, Squire and Jewell 2001; Darcy, Welch and Clark 1994).

Second, women may also shy away from running for office because they are concerned with the type of media coverage they will receive. They may also worry that running for office will expose their family to intense media scrutiny. Studies indicate that women tend to receive less coverage and more unflattering coverage of their campaign when compared to male candidates. Kahn (1994) conducts a content analysis of newspaper coverage in 48 states over a six-year period in the 1980s. She finds that women receive less total coverage, less issue coverage and more unflattering coverage about their chances of victory (Kahn, 1994). In part, this may be due

to the fact that these candidates are less recognized, as they are not currently holding office at some lower level, but instead decide to run for office from a position of less public profile: from business or the corporate world, or from law firms rather than as sitting elected officials with natural media recognition.

The recent electoral experiences of Hilary Clinton and Sarah Palin (and now Michele Bachmann¹) seem to have further reinforced the perception by women of bias in the media (Lawless and Fox, 2012: 7-8). While these are the most prominent, the experiences of other women candidates (perhaps closer to home) in recent years may have also influenced this perception.

In addition, viewers and readers are offered more personal coverage of women candidates. Everything from clothing and hairstyle choices to personality traits are more likely to be discussed for women than men (Bystrom, Banwart, Kaid and Robertson 2004). Since many individuals have never met their representative and are even less familiar with their challenger, they are more likely to base their candidate presumptions on the information they receive from the print and broadcast media (Kahn, 1994). Consequently, if a candidate receives unfavorable coverage or not enough coverage to appear viable, voters may be unwilling to cast a ballot for them.

Besides facing the possibility of differential treatment from the media, women may also receive less encouragement from political elites like party leaders, elected officials and political activists (Lawless and Fox, 2012; Fox and Lawless 2004a, 2004b, 2010; Sanbonmatsu 2006; Werner 1968; Rule 1981). This may result in decreased candidate diversity if, as some scholars have found, women lack political ambition and confidence to begin with (Elder 2004; Fox and Lawless 2004a, 2004b, 2010; Lawless and Fox, 2012). Surveys have also demonstrated that women are less confident in their ability to successfully raise funds and may feel they will have to invest more time and energy to acquire the same results (Jenkins 2007; Sanbonmatsu, Carroll and Walsh 2009; LeMieux 2009; Sanbonmatsu 2006).

Women may also be more susceptible to voter stereotypes. If voters perceive personality, ideological and policy differences between male and female candidates, then these may serve as cues that ultimately impact their final vote choice. For instance, voters may believe women are more competent to handle matters relating to education, health care, welfare, and women and family matters while men should excel in areas of corporate, crime, defense and foreign policy (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Sanbonmatsu 2002). In addition, Koch (2000) finds that women are viewed by voters as more liberal than they actually are and McDermott (1997) concludes that, “women Democratic candidates fare better than men Democratic candidates among more liberal voters and worse among conservative voters, especially those with minimal knowledge of the candidates” (p. 270).

All of these factors can have important implications for women weighing the decision to run, and may contribute to the apparent scarcity of female candidates. Additionally, these factors could shape the perceptions that voters and political gatekeepers have of women, leading them to conclude that female candidates are more vulnerable than male candidates (Palmer and Simon 2005). These perceptions may then be reinforced by a campaign environment that also poses challenges for female candidates; certainly it is worth noting that women “are substantially more likely than men to perceive the electoral environment as ... biased against female candidates” (Lawless and Fox, 2012; 7) and women seem to react more negatively than do men; according to Lawless and Fox (2012; 11), 38% of women viewed “loss of privacy” as a major deterrent to running for office, while only 29% of men so reported; 28% of women viewed “potentially having to engage in a negative campaign” as such a deterrent; 16% of men viewed this aspect in this light.

There are institutional hurdles to leap as well: women are more likely to run as a challenger or open seat candidate and this may pose additional barriers as they lack the name recognition, political connections, seniority, etc. that are a perk of incumbency (Welch, Ambrosius, Clark, and Darcy 1985). For women who have not held public office at all, the lack of these items is ever-more acute.

Given what we know about some of the underlying propositions for women running for office from the Lawless and Fox studies, we turned our attention to probabilities for the type of candidate and type of race most likely to be observed. Canon (1993) points out that there are a multiplicity of reasons why candidates challenge incumbents in House races, including ignorance (“like lambs to the slaughter”: Canon, 1993: 1120; after Leuthold, 1968), to serve the party (Canon: 1120; after Fowler, 1977), to advertise their business (Canon: 1120; after O’Neill, 1987; and Huckshorn and Spencer, 1971) or “simply for the joy of running for office” (Canon: 1220; after Kazee, 1980; and Maisel, 1986). Canon points out that “[b]ased on the insights of ambition theory, assumptions can be made about the differences between the calculations of candidates who are current office-holders, and those of amateurs” (Canon, 1993: 1120).

Further, Canon notes that:

... the greater the risks of running, the higher the probability of winning must be before the experienced candidate will decide to run. Office holders have certain advantages in seeking higher office (e.g., shared constituencies, previous campaign experience), but they also have more to lose if they are not elected. A defeat may not merely interrupt a career but end it. Therefore, only amateurs are expected to run when the chances for success are remote.

Canon, 1993: 1120

We hypothesize that Canon is correct: but that it is even less likely that women will run, *ceteris paribus*, “when chances for success are remote” (1120). While Canon referred to “amateurs” as those without political experience, we prefer a much wider and perhaps murkier definition: amateurs are those who are drawn by incentives which may cause them to ignore or to be less invested in the lack of such attributes as adequate experience, funding, and so on. “When the chances of success are remote”, candidates may be running for reasons other than ultimate than victory. Given the disincentives that women candidates must overcome (as noted by Lawless and Fox, 2012, and others), we posit that women are far less likely to fall into the “amateur” description, regardless of the type of race (versus incumbents, male or female; open seat, or otherwise). Further, there are other, clearly obvious reasons which would tend to dissuade candidates from running for office: when the district in question is heavily packed with partisans of the opposite party, the likelihood that any potential candidate will view the potential matchup against a “district majority party” candidate is slim. We have reasoned below that women,

already bearing the burden of other disincentives to run, would be even less likely to challenge in such a district. The empirical artifact we examine here is the vote margin: the distance between winners and losers in state legislative elections; we do not suggest that women always win, or even that they are always competitive, but that they will be more likely to run in elections in districts with conditions that will be more conducive for competitiveness, and against candidates against whom they feel they have at least the possibility of winning. “Sacrificial lambs” there may be, but we hypothesize that they are, given the countervailing disincentives, less likely to be women.

For this iteration of the study, we sought to explore two basic propositions: that though candidates must first win the primary in order to gain entry to the general election, this by no means assures that they will be competitive in that final matchup. Candidates running for office have a number of cues on which to rely to give them a rough notion of their chances for victory in a given contest. Election histories are probably the best: if this is a “safe” Republican district, for example, we assume that the candidates will know this. The election years we have chosen are late in the redistricting cycle, and therefore have a more reliable immediate election history than do newly-formed districts. It is difficult to imagine that a candidate would not be aware of the general election history and partisan political culture of the district in which they live. We assert that we can assume a general knowledge of the chances for victory for a given candidate, at least within these rough parameters. Further, we assume that most candidates will be aware of the level of vulnerability of a given incumbent; in other words, most candidates will be able to project at least rough probabilities for success in a given district at a given time against a given candidate. This does not mean that they will always be correct: we expect there to be plenty of miscalculation in play. However, we will generally hypothesize that women (due to their risk aversion spelled out in the Lawless and Fox propositions) will be more competitive as collectively, their selection of races is more strategic than their male counterparts.

In some of these races, candidates will go into the election knowing that they have no chance of winning: we would describe such contests as more likely to attract candidates who are “lambs led to slaughter”, in Canon’s phrase (1993) or, simply put, they are risk-acceptant or even uncaring, as they are running for reasons other than victory. The candidates who go knowingly

into such contests are more likely to be running for reasons such as “serv[ing] the party (Canon: 1120; after Fowler, 1977), to advertis[ing] their business (Canon: 1120; after O’Neill, 1987; and Huckshorn and Spencer, 1971) or “simply for the joy of running for office” (Canon: 1220). We argue that women are far more strategic, at the mean, than are men, who may be prey to the “amateur” lures of serving the party (women are less likely to be recruited by the party in any event), advertising their businesses or for the “joy of running for office” (if we are to take Lawless and Fox seriously, there is little “joy” for women in doing so).

Thus, our first hypothesis:

H1: That *ceteris paribus*, in all races in these data, women will tend to run more competitively than men, as a function of the strategic considerations they will likely consider, and thus, the type of election they enter into from the start. Conversely, men will tend to share a much larger percentage of the non-competitive races.

Specifically: the distance vote margin for women will be smaller, overall, than for men. We expect this to vary, due to local political culture and history, across the states in this study.

We also reasoned that there should be a state variance across this measure. As states in which women hold few elective offices offer little in the way of symbolic or “iconographic” representation – there are few “role models or mentors within the system itself – even fewer women will run for office, given this additional disincentive or cultural condition. While this is technically tautological (i.e., that where there are fewer women running for office, there will be fewer *in* office, thus leading to fewer women running for office) the embedded theory leads us to believe that there is a chronology to this dimension (unfortunately not possible to measure with our short timeframe): after all, before the passage of the 19th amendment, no women held office, anywhere, and Alabama, the state with fewest women in office in our data, has had the same length of time (since 1920) to develop, recruit and elect them as the other states in the array. We believe that some states are more conducive to women’s candidacies than others, and that the best available measure for us is the percentage of women office holders in the legislature.

H2: That the likelihood of women running for office will be higher in states where the percentage of women office-holders is higher.

Specifically: in state where the percentage of women officeholders is low, the percentage of women candidates seeking office will be low. Naturally, as we stated above, there is a certain tautology to this, but the presence of women running for office (we suspect, but cannot offer direct evidence), may not be simply due to the fact that they already hold office.

H3: Further, women challengers will be more competitive against male incumbents than are male challengers to male incumbents.

Specifically: when we examine male and female challenges to male incumbents, we will expect to find that female challengers in these elections will produce a more competitive margin than will men. Similarly, men running against men will reflect, at the mean, the presence of more “amateur” candidates than are present in the women’s cohort.

If women are, indeed, more risk-averse than their male counterparts, this should also be reflected in their contestation versus incumbents. Though incumbency advantage will be present, women will tend to be in races that are more competitive than average. They should be more selective, more strategic, and/or run better campaigns (or simply raise the stakes in other ways) – they will be more likely to be more competitive than male challengers.

Data

To examine these hypotheses, we used the foundational data from the earlier study to produce general election match-ups. We used the general election results from the 2006, 2008, and 2010 state legislative House races in Ohio, Texas, Florida, North Carolina, and Californiaⁱⁱ. This array of states is a reasonable “pilot” sample; but also clearly, this sample is limited and must be expanded for more definite claims.

We also included a comparative set of variables in order to bring to light the correlations, including the percentage of state house and senate seats held by women of both parties and the percentage of women holding Congressional House seats by state delegation averaged across the years.

We reasoned that for the most complete view of these dynamics in a limited sample, we must select state elections from states and institutions that varied widely. Our sample of states varies regionally and geographically: three are Southern states; two are from the Non-South (California, the West; and Ohio from the Midwest; Florida, North Carolina and Texas are from the South).

Institutionally, the states under investigation here also vary somewhat by level of professionalism: California and Ohio are both in the “professional” category; Florida, North Carolina, and Texas are “hybrids”, and scattered across the measure (Kurtz 1990; Squire 2003). Finally, the states in our sample also vary by level of female representation in the state legislature. Using data from the Women’s Legislative Network of NCSL (National Conference of State Legislatures) our sample ranges from a low of approximately 17% to a high of about 33%.

The elections data were gathered from the archives of the Secretary of State’s office or other competent governmental authority, for each state. For this analysis, we have pooled the data across years, reasoning that few factors will have changed dramatically across this short timeframe.

Operational definitions

Vote distance margin: the product of the losing vote share subtracted from the winning vote share. This measure is a mean value in the pooled series and includes multiple elections across the variable. The lower the number, the higher the level of competition.

Incumbents: incumbent candidates are candidates who currently hold the office for which they are competing. Three measures were used: all incumbents, male incumbents, and female incumbents.

Women in Race: races in which one of the candidates was female.

Woman Incumbent in Race: races in which an incumbent candidate was female.

Male Incumbent in Race: races in which an incumbent candidate was male.

Women’s Office-holding (by State): the concept is that women holding office in the state may have an effect on the likelihood that women will run for office, but also that they will receive support – either symbolic (“other women have won, and perhaps I can, too”) or substantive (through legislative campaign committees, for example). It may also be that the party may be more likely to recruit women as candidates where their numbers are larger. In more abstract terms, women who contemplate running in a state where the percentage of women in office is high may more positive cues than in a state where this percentage is lower: the presence of women in office may also indicate a political culture in the state which may influence a woman’s decision to run for office. The measure here is the mean of the percentage of women in the state house and state senate, plus the percentage of women in the state’s congressional delegation.

Methods:

Given the largely exploratory nature of this analysis, we have used descriptive statistics, and simple OLS regression.

Analysis

Our first hypothesis stated that:

“... *ceteris paribus*, women will tend to run more competitively than men, as a function of the strategic considerations they will likely consider, and thus, the type of election they enter into from the start. Conversely, men will tend to share a much larger percentage of the non-competitive races”.

The descriptive data presented in Table 1 suggest that across these observations, this appears to be the case. When races have women running, they are more competitive races than when they do not. Across the states, this also holds. In most states, the vote margin distance is quite different between races in which women have a candidate and those where women do not run. The outlier is in California – where state-level conditions (the cost of campaigning, the need for visibility, the scarce number of seats in the Assembly, and so on) would tend, we believe, to discourage “amateur” runs for office to begin with, or it may be that all “amateur” candidates may be washed out in the primaries.

Table 1 About Here

Races with women running tend to have lower vote margins (and are thus more competitive) than races that do not.

Our second hypothesis was:

H2: That the likelihood of women running for office will be higher in states where the percentage of women office-holders is higher.

Specifically: in state where the percentage of women officeholders is low, the percentage of women candidates seeking office will be low. Naturally, as we stated above, there is a certain tautology to this, but the presence of women running for office (we suspect, but cannot offer direct evidence), may not be simply due to the fact that they already hold office.

Table 2 About Here

Here, we can see that at least as far as these few states are concerned, the likelihood of a women being in the race in the general election is higher when the percentage of women in legislative office (in these cases). We would do well to take this result with a large grain of salt, due to the small number of observations available in these data, of course.

Further, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that not only would more women run, but that they might (due, perhaps, to greater party support, legislative campaign committee recognition and so on) that where more women are the chambers of the legislature, women are more likely to be competitive in elections. Again, as far as it goes, the data seems to support this contention.

Table 3 About Here

The combined model is also significant, and both variables have leverage on the vote distance margin, but we must keep in mind the correlation between the two independent variables in the model.

The lower the vote margin, the more competitive the race. The higher the percentage of women in the chamber, the lower the vote distance margin. The higher the percentage of women in these races, the lower the vote margin. The probable chain of cause is that greater numbers of women in the legislature and the congressional delegation lead to more “professional” (more prepared, better funded, and better socialized) candidates, which in turn leads to more competitive races by women.

Leverage of Incumbents in Race

We reasoned that if women are, indeed, more risk-averse than their male counterparts, this should also be reflected in their contestation versus incumbents. They should be more selective, more strategic, and/or run better campaigns (or simply raise the stakes in other ways) – they will be more likely to be more competitive than male challengers.

H3: Further, women challengers will be more competitive against male incumbents than are male challengers to male incumbents.

Specifically: when we examine male and female challenges to male incumbents, we will expect to find that female challengers in these elections will produce a more competitive margin than will men. Similarly, men running against men will reflect, at the mean, the presence of more “amateur” candidates than are present in the women’s cohort.

Table 4 About Here

The higher the percentage of incumbents, the higher the vote margin. As expected, incumbency advantage is a major factor in driving down the competitiveness of elections. Women incumbents fit this profile nicely:

Table 5 About Here

Women incumbents also have advantage: A woman incumbent in the race drives the vote margin up, while a woman in the race, undifferentiated, drives the margin down, significantly. But how do women challengers fare against male incumbents? As we can see in Table 6, they are more competitive than their male counterparts:

Table 6 About here

Female challengers versus male incumbents are significantly more competitive than male challengers to male incumbents: it is suggested that women are more strategic in their selection of election entry, or wage better campaigns, than do men versus male incumbents. This finding also holds in the state by state analysis. Below, we have used the variables “female challenger versus male incumbent” and “male challenger versus male incumbent” in an OLS regression, and the results are shown below:

Table 7 About Here

Here, we can see that the direction holds in all cases for the female and male challengers: all things being equal, female challengers find themselves in more competitive races than do their male counterparts. However, the findings are not statistically significant (for either variable) in California or (for female incumbents) in Ohio. It may be suggestive that the more professional

the campaign environment, the less likely it will be to find “amateur” candidates of either gender.

How efficient have women been in capturing house seats over this time frame? We reasoned that women would enter primaries more warily, and more strategically, so they can be expected to win in the primary through to the general election more “efficiently” than do men, all things being equal. Further, the women that do win through to the general election can be expected to win through to competitive status in these races more so than do men (we have demonstrated this above), even when they face off against incumbents (see above). The final question is, does this overall strategic behavior result in women winning out, overall, through the winnowing process of elections – weathering the storm of campaigning, as it were – with the result that more of the women that started as primary candidates will eventually be seated as final election winners in the lower chamber than do men? The answer is yes, but with the problem that we started out with: though they are more efficient, the end result is that they are no more proportionally represented than they were at the start of the decade (even less so) as they become more strategic in their entry.

Table 8 About Here

Table 8 gives us a thumbnail view of the efficiency of candidates across all states, pooled, and across all states. As each iteration of the election cycle “resets” to zero in these statehouses, each seat “gained”, by either male or female candidates, is gained anew each time. While we do need to keep in mind that some seats are more “sustainable”, once won, than others, all are subject to conditions which may or may not include incumbency, party dominance, and the like. There is a good bit of variation here, but general “survivability” of women candidates is slightly above that of men, overall. 724 female candidates in the primaries 2006-2010 (three election cycles) resulted in 146 seats in the statehouses under study; 2450 male candidates winnowed down to 423 seats.

Conclusion:

The conventional wisdom seems to be that “if more women ran, more women could win”, this is true, as far as it goes, but trivially so: the statement too often seems to become “ if more women ran, than more women *would* win”, and there is little support for this, except as a general speculative item. The women who are running are running strategically, or they are very, very, lucky indeed.

Certainly the empirical data presented here suggests that women are running more strategically than are men. Fewer women, by our estimates, are running as “amateur” candidates: far more men are doing so, though the reason why this is so is not explored except by suggestion in this paper. We have worked from the general assumptions first explicated in the early “ambition” literature, extended by Canon, and suggested by Lawless and Fox in their exceptional work. This is that some people, in making the decision to run for office, are doing so for reasons other than winning: they run to serve the party, to build name recognition for a future race or for their own personal reasons, or, perhaps, simply because they like the complex battleground and the push and shove of campaigning. Women are less likely to do this, since they are disinclined to run for a host of reasons, including perceptions that they would receive negative or trivializing media attention, that it will be more difficult to raise money, and aversion to negative campaigning, and an aversion to campaign environments generally.

In the end, this paper requires expansion – both in theory and in quantifiable data. It requires better measures, and a better, more unified methodology to eke out the subtleties of the phenomena under study. However, we believe we have substantively added to the most general of supports for the notion that women are motivated differently, and that they are more loathe to spend their energy on clearly losing electoral propositions than are men.

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A Note on the Data:

Our collection includes all general election contests across these states and years in every district in which an election was held. We used a general decision rule for coding the names of the candidates in the primary elections in the earlier study in order to determine gender (where the name was in question, accessed internet data,(ranging from campaign websites to newspaper articles and social networking

sources, to definitively determine their status). In these data for the general election, we simply used the determinations from the primary data to designate the candidates as male or female. In these data, we included only Democratic and Republican candidates.

***"Primary Attraction: Does the Romance Continue? Strategic Women
Candidates in State Legislative House Elections***

TABLES

By

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Table 1: Mean Values of the Presence of a Female Candidate and Vote Distance Margin, By State

| State (Pooled Election Years) | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|------|-------|----------------|
| Ohio | | | |
| No Woman in Race | 196 | .4407 | .34156 |
| Woman in Race | 101 | .3047 | .25047 |
| Florida | | | |
| No Woman in Race | 239 | .6854 | .39753 |
| Woman in Race | 120 | .5178 | .41272 |
| N. Carolina | | | |
| No Woman in Race | 225 | .6384 | .40635 |
| Woman in Race | 135 | .4991 | .38032 |
| Texas | | | |
| No Woman in Race | 304 | .7289 | .37898 |
| Woman in Race | 142 | .5146 | .39469 |
| California | | | |
| No Woman in Race | 129 | .3833 | .25160 |
| Woman in Race | 111 | .3674 | .24159 |
| All States (Pooled Election Years) | | | |
| | 1093 | .6083 | .39113 |
| No Woman in Race | 609 | .4502 | .35971 |
| Woman in Race | | | |

Table 2: OLS Regression of *Woman in Race* by “Mean of Women’s Office-holding”

| Model Summary | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1 | .069 ^a | .005 | .004 | .47849 |

^aPredictors: (Constant), Mean of Women’s Officeholding (By State)

| Coefficients^a | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1 | (Constant) | .248 | .040 | | 6.183 | .000 |
| | Mean of Women’s Officeholding (By State) | .473 | .165 | .069 | 2.862 | .004 |

^aDependent Variable: *Woman in Race*. N = 1701

Table 3: OLS Regression of *Vote Distance Margin* by “Woman in Race” and “Mean of Women’s Office-holding”

| Model Summary | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1 | .251 ^a | .063 | .062 | .37535 |

^aPredictors: (Constant), Mean of Women’s Officeholding (By State), Woman in Race

| Coefficients^a | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1 | (Constant) | .808 | .032 | | 25.395 | .000 |
| | Woman in Race | -.149 | .019 | -.185 | -7.845 | .000 |
| | Mean of Women’s Officeholding (By State) | -.873 | .130 | -.158 | -6.713 | .000 |

^aDependent Variable: Vote Distance Margin. N = 1701

Table 4: OLS Regression of *Vote Distance Margin* by “Incumbent in Race”

| Model Summary | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1 | .164 ^a | .027 | .026 | .38240 |

^aPredictors: (Constant), Incumbent in Race

| Coefficients^a | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1 | (Constant) | .437 | .019 | | 22.880 | .000 |
| | Incumbent in Race | .150 | .022 | .164 | 6.876 | .000 |

^aDependent Variable: Vote Distance Margin. N = 1701

Table 5: OLS Regression of *Vote Distance Margin* by “Woman in Race” and “Woman Incumbent in Race”

| Model Summary | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1 | .280 ^a | .078 | .077 | .37228 |

^aPredictors: (Constant), Woman in Race, Woman Incumbent in Race

| Coefficients^a | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|---------|------|
| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1 | (Constant) | .608 | .011 | | 54.019 | .000 |
| | Woman Incumbent in Race | .262 | .030 | .270 | 8.602 | .000 |
| | Woman in Race | -.305 | .025 | -.377 | -12.000 | .000 |

^aDependent Variable: Vote Distance Margin. N = 1701

Table 6: OLS Regression of *Vote Distance Margin* by “Male Incumbent, Female Challenger” and “Male Incumbent, Male Challenger”

| Model Summary | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1 | .291 ^a | .085 | .083 | .37104 |

^aPredictors: (Constant), Male Incumbent Male Challenger, Male Incumbent Female Challenger

| Coefficients^a | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1 | (Constant) | .496 | .014 | | 36.423 | .000 |
| | Male Incumbent Female Challenger | -.272 | .038 | -.174 | -7.230 | .000 |
| | Male Incumbent Male Challenger | .148 | .019 | .191 | 7.952 | .000 |

^aDependent Variable: *Vote Distance Margin*. N = 1701

**Table 7: OLS Regression of *Vote Distance Margin* by “Male Incumbent, Female Challenger” and “Male Incumbent, Male Challenger” by State
Model Summary**

| State | Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------------|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Ohio | 1 | .235 ^a | .055 | .049 | .31183 |
| Florida | 1 | .341 ^a | .117 | .112 | .38626 |
| N. Carolina | 1 | .276 ^a | .076 | .071 | .38743 |
| Texas | 1 | .357 ^a | .127 | .123 | .37113 |
| California | 1 | .076 ^a | .006 | .003 | .24695 |

^aPredictors: (Constant), Male Incumbent Male Challenger, Male Incumbent Female Challenger

| | | Coefficients ^a | | | | | |
|-------------|-------|----------------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|--------|------|
| | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | | |
| State | Model | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. | |
| Ohio | 1 | (Constant) | .342 | .027 | | 12.777 | .000 |
| | | Male Incumbent Female Challenger | -.103 | .073 | -.082 | -1.404 | .161 |
| | | Male Incumbent Male Challenger | .127 | .038 | .199 | 3.392 | .001 |
| Florida | 1 | (Constant) | .559 | .030 | | 18.875 | .000 |
| | | Male Incumbent Female Challenger | -.373 | .093 | -.204 | -3.993 | .000 |
| | | Male Incumbent Male Challenger | .190 | .042 | .232 | 4.535 | .000 |
| N. Carolina | 1 | (Constant) | .551 | .031 | | 17.595 | .000 |
| | | Male Incumbent Female Challenger | -.347 | .088 | -.207 | -3.925 | .000 |
| | | Male Incumbent Male Challenger | .109 | .042 | .136 | 2.585 | .000 |
| Texas | 1 | (Constant) | .622 | .030 | | 20.525 | .000 |
| | | Male Incumbent Female Challenger | -.439 | .073 | -.282 | -5.998 | .000 |
| | | Male Incumbent Male Challenger | .117 | .038 | .145 | 3.074 | .002 |

Continued on next page

| | | | | | | | |
|------------|---|-------------------------------------|-------|------|-------|--------|------|
| California | 1 | (Constant) | .367 | .021 | | 17.226 | .000 |
| | | Male Incumbent Female Challenger | -.033 | .061 | -.036 | -.541 | .589 |
| | | Male Incumbent Male Challenger | .031 | .034 | .060 | .899 | .369 |

^aDependent Variable: Vote Distance Margin. N = 1701

**Table 8: The Efficiency of Candidates in State Legislative Elections (OH, CA, NC, FL, TX)
2006-2010**

| State | | Primary | | General | | Winner | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------|
| | | N (Total, 2006- 2010) | % of Primary Candidates | N (Total, 2006-2010) | % of General Election Candidates | N (Total, 2006-2010) | % of Winners |
| All/Total | Male Candidates | 2450 | 77.2% | 1627 | 76.1% | 1267 | 74.3% |
| | Female Candidates | 724 | 22.8% | 512 | 23.9% | 435 | 25.7% |
| Ohio | Male Candidates | 600 | 81.1% | 441 | 79.6% | 234 | 78.8% |
| | Female Candidates | 140 | 18.9% | 113 | 20.4% | 63 | 21.2% |
| Florida | Male Candidates | 467 | 77.7% | 279 | 75.4% | 276 | 76.1% |
| | Female Candidates | 134 | 22.3% | 91 | 24.6% | 83 | 23.9% |
| California | Male Candidates | 505 | 69.9% | 325 | 70.2% | 170 | 70.8% |
| | Female Candidates | 217 | 30.1% | 138 | 29.8% | 70 | 29.2% |
| North Carolina | Male Candidates | 196 | 77.2% | 81 | 71.1% | 251 | 69.7% |
| | Female Candidates | 58 | 22.8% | 33 | 28.9% | 109 | 30.3% |
| Texas | Male Candidates | 682 | 79.6% | 501 | 78.5% | 336 | 75.3% |
| | Female Candidates | 175 | 20.4% | 137 | 21.5% | 110 | 24.7% |

ⁱ Bachmann, appearing at the CPAC convention in February, 2012, noted that of the things learned in her Presidential run, the most important was that it entails a "series of humiliations." (Leigh Ann Caldwell, New York Times, "Political Hotseat" Blog, February 10, 2012.

ⁱⁱ Arizona, used in the first treatment, was dropped from this examination. The multimember districts set up a dynamic which does not easily map onto the other states in the array.