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**Effects of Primary Competitiveness on the Emergence and
Success of Female Candidates in U.S. House Primary Elections
with No Incumbent**

Grace Gillespie

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Effects of Primary Competitiveness on the Emergence and Success of Female Candidates in U.S
House Primary Elections with No Incumbent

Grace Gillespie

Master of Women's Leadership

Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Mississippi University for Women

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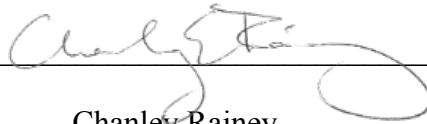
The thesis committee for Grace Gillespie

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Effects of Primary Competitiveness on the Emergence and Success of Female Candidates in U.S
House Primary Elections with No Incumbent

Approved by the Committee:

Director:



Chanley Rainey



Shahara'Tova Dente

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The United States operates as a representative democracy, ultimately giving the people the power to choose who they would like to represent them in all elected offices. In turn, competition between political parties is expected. Throughout the process of elections, candidates are able to debate each other on issues and find ways to appeal to voters across the political spectrum. This competition is the sign of a healthy democracy; one that values diversity. However, this competitiveness has changed drastically over the last decade in the U.S. According to FairVote, a nonpartisan organization advocating for voting reform, in 2022 only 35 of the 435 U.S. House seats were considered “competitive” meaning they had a margin between 5-10%. This number was 45 just four years before in the 2018 midterm elections (FairVote). They also note that the number of landslides and completely uncontested races has jumped from 265 to 291, over 66% of the total U.S House seats (FairVote). One of the central components that affects how competitive a district is the redistricting process.

Redistricting is the legislative process that happens every ten years after the results of the census are released to maintain equal representation across the country through districts. These districts consist of a certain number of voters that are responsible for electing local, state, and federal public officials each election day. The purpose of redistricting is to assure that each person’s vote counts equally, and no one has more or less representative power. However, during the redistricting process, state legislatures sometimes participate in a practice called gerrymandering. The Brennan Center for Justice defines gerrymandering as the “intentional manipulation of district boundaries to discriminate against a group of voters on the basis of their political views or race.” Partisan gerrymandering gives one political party an advantage in the process, ultimately making it harder for the opposing party to win particular seats in the state. The practice of gerrymandering has the potential to create “safe” districts for one political party,

usually the one that controls the legislature at the time of the census and redistricting process. The results of redistricting, whether the legislature participates in gerrymandering or not, can have lasting effects on the local, state, and federal level.

While this paints a stark picture for competitiveness in general elections, the story may not be the same for primary elections. Primaries are preliminary elections prior to the general election, creating an opportunity for differing ideas within the same political party to be heard by voters. Primary elections have the potential to foster more competitiveness than general elections, especially when there are so few competitive U.S. House seats due to the fact that the winner of the primary in a “safe” district is poised to win the general election. If primaries are becoming increasingly more competitive while general elections are becoming increasingly more predictable, this raises the question of how this might be affecting women who are interested in running for office.

This research could help determine how party identification and district competitiveness can affect the emergence and success of female candidates. The goal of this research is to explore what stereotypes already affect women running for office, competitive primaries, and assess the potential effects that primary competitiveness has on how women participate in the U.S. political system.

Historical Context

The past century has proven to be monumental for women’s rights, starting with the first woman to serve in Congress in 1917 and the ratification of the 19th amendment in 1920, continuing with the passage of Title IX in 1972 and the first female Supreme Court Justice sworn in in 1981, and more recently with the election of the first female vice president in 2020. While

these gains have garnered more representative power for women, we are far from gender parity in our elected offices. According to Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics, women account for 51% of the population but just 24% of the U.S. Senate, 28.3% of the U.S. House of Representatives, 31% of state legislative seats, 26% of mayors in cities with populations over 30,000, and 0% of U.S. presidents. These numbers are even lower for minorities. Asian American women account for 3.7% of the population but only 1.9% of the voting members of Congress, 1.3% of statewide elective executives (governor, attorney general, etc.), and 1% of state legislators (Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics). Similarly, Black women makeup 7.1% of the population but only 5% of the voting members of Congress, 3.2% of statewide elective executives, and 5% of state legislators (Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics). This lack of descriptive representation can be attributed to various factors including gender and racial discrimination, societal standards, or lack of opportunity. However, the political system in the United States was designed without regard to the inclusion of all people. Even after the 19th amendment gave women the constitutional right to vote, minority groups continued to be excluded from the political process through Jim Crow laws and widespread voter suppression efforts across the country.

Literature Review and Theory

In this research, there are several important factors in relation to primary competitiveness and women's emergence and success in running for open seats. Redistricting and gerrymandering have created a massive lack of competitive congressional districts which contribute to more competitive primaries. Additionally, it is important to examine a woman's path to office and this literature will assist in understanding the obstacles that exist for women during this process. For

the purposes of this research, I have divided the literature review and theory into four sections: redistricting and gerrymandering, candidate emergence, fundraising, and the outcome of an election.

Redistricting and Gerrymandering

Redistricting has been the subject of contentious debate for decades, particularly in the court system. The Supreme Court has handed down various decisions that have affected the redistricting process and the constitutionality of partisan and racial gerrymandering. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), in the 1960's there were several monumental cases that influenced how redistricting is litigated, including *Baker v. Carr* (1962), *Wesberry v. Sanders* (1964), and *Reynolds v. Simms* (1964). All three of these decisions upheld the idea that districts must be drawn equally by population, not by physical territory. Due to the rapid growth of urban areas across the country, votes in rural districts were ultimately worth more than votes in urban districts due to state legislatures failing to complete the redistricting process in accordance with the constitution.

The constitutionality of partisan gerrymandering has been argued in the Supreme Court for over 50 years, including cases like *Gaffney v. Cummings* (1973), *Davis v. Bandemer* (1986), *Vieth v. Jubelirer* (2004), and *Rucho v. Common Cause* (2019) (NCSL). While *Davis v. Bandemer* offered a “standard for measuring partisan gerrymandering,” it was ultimately not used in the lower courts and the majority of the justices ruled in *Vieth v. Jubelirer* with the lower courts, dismissing the case (NCSL). While Justice Anthony Kennedy was in the majority, he did not agree that partisan gerrymandering cases are nonjusticiable, citing the First Amendment. However, the Supreme Court’s decision in the 2019 case, *Rucho v. Common Cause*, reaffirmed that partisan gerrymandering claims are nonjusticiable in federal courts but are justiciable in the

lower courts. This decision allowed state legislatures to continue to draw lines that benefit their own political parties.

In addition to partisan gerrymandering, there are also several cases that focus on racial gerrymandering. While racial gerrymandering is not the direct subject of my research, it is important to acknowledge these cases because any act of gerrymandering, regardless of the purpose, could ultimately affect potential female candidates, especially women of color. The notable cases on racial gerrymandering include *Thornburg v. Gingles* (1986), *Shaw v. Reno* (1993), *Miller v. Johnson* (1995), *Bush v. Vera* (1996), *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013), *Alabama Legislative Black Caucus v. Alabama* (2015), and *Cooper v. Harris* (2017) (NCSL). The legislative branch has also contributed to the redistricting discourse. Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, an act that aimed to protect the right to vote for all, “is a nationwide prohibition against voting practices and procedures, (including redistricting plans) that discriminate on the basis of race, color or membership in a language minority group” (U.S. Department of Justice). In October of 2022, the Supreme Court heard *Allen v. Milligan*, an Alabama case focused on determining if the Alabama legislature used discriminatory practices, including gerrymandering, while redrawing the district lines (NAACP Legal Defense Fund). This decision, which was decided in June 2023, upheld the lower court's ruling that “Alabama’s maps violate Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, ruling that the map discriminates against Alabama voters” (NAACP Legal Defense Fund). These cases are important to this research because they shape the future guidelines on how voters are divided by increasingly partisan state legislatures.

As redistricting has evolved over the years, the literature on partisan gerrymandering has expanded. According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), packing, cracking, and

stacking are the three main ways that gerrymandering is accomplished. “Cracking” refers to fragmenting concentrations of minority populations and dispersing them among other districts to ensure that all districts are majority white (ACLU Redistricting Manual). “Stacking” refers to combining concentrations of minority populations with greater concentrations of white populations, again to ensure that districts are majority white (ACLU Redistricting Manual). “Packing” refers to concentrating as many minorities as possible in as few districts as possible to minimize the number of majority-minority districts” (ACLU Redistricting Manual). While these gerrymandering tactics appear to mostly be based on race, there are other implications when reviewing the demographic makeup of the two major political parties. According to the *New York Times* exit polls for the 2020 presidential elections, 58% of white voters cast their vote for the Republican candidate, Donald Trump, while 87% of black voters, 65% of Hispanic voters, and 61% of Asian voters cast their vote for the Democratic candidate, Joe Biden. This is only a snapshot of a much larger picture, but it can serve as an example of how legislators target specific populations through gerrymandering. When a majority of voters from a particular race historically votes for a certain political party, efforts by state legislatures to gerrymander based on party and race often occur simultaneously. If a political party is more representative of a diverse group of people, it may also be friendlier to women candidates.

Candidate Emergence

The stage where a candidate emerges can start the moment that a person is asked or considers for the first time that they might want to run for office. This stage can start years before they actually enter a race, and some prospective candidates will never become a candidate. It can also include the more formal recruitment process that political parties or interest groups partake in prior to the filing deadline.

Since primaries generally occur within each party so that party labels cannot help voters distinguish among candidates, the candidates themselves will be much more scrutinized which may deter women from running. Women are more cautious about making the decision to run for office and are more likely to feel like they are not qualified enough to run against a male candidate that they perceive as a more viable candidate (Fox and Lawless, 2012). An empirical study by Lawless and Fox has shown that women are both less likely to consider running for office and less likely to enter a race (2012). They claim that “despite similarities in levels of political participation, proximity, and interest, eligible women candidates are less politically ambitious than men (2012, p. 45). The lack of ambition compared to a higher level of interest may suggest that women have a more difficult time picturing themselves as a candidate and therefore, lack the strong desire to enter the race.

Lawless and Fox discuss how gender affects political ambition and the candidate emergence process in *It Still Takes A Candidate* (2012). They define the rational choice framework which “conceptualizes political ambition as primarily a strategic response to a political opportunity structure” (2012, p. 33). However, this framework does not account for gender and how likely someone is to possess or recognize political ambition. The authors paraphrase political scientist Harold Lasswell saying “patterns of traditional gender socialization...provide ample reason to suspect that women and men’s attitudinal dispositions and personal experiences differ such that they are not equally likely to consider a candidacy and ultimately face the political opportunity structure” (2012, p. 34). This discourse is unsurprising in that men and women, from a young age are traditionally socialized in different ways. In a traditional upbringing, men are expected to be strong, capable, and the blueprint for leadership. Conversely, women are traditionally seen as caretakers who are expected to not be interested in

positions of power, within and outside of the home. With this type of conditioning, it is unsurprising that women are less likely to consider getting involved in politics or other leadership roles.

While research shows that women need to be encouraged more to run for office, it is important to analyze how recruitment differs between the two major political parties. If the major political parties in safe red or blue districts are not recruiting as much as they are in more competitive districts, this could hurt women's chances of running for office and ultimately winning. Where there is less recruitment effort, there are likely fewer female candidates. Sanbonmatsu's research claims that in "interviews with Republican leaders in several states reveal that the party sees no need to make explicit efforts to recruit women (2006). This lack of investment from a major political party hurts women's chances of getting involved two-fold. Since less women are being asked to participate, there are less women participating and there is less descriptive representation in the Republican party, further adding to the traditional set of values that do not condone women being in leadership positions.

For recruitment to occur, there must be a supply of candidates. Crowder-Meyer and Lauderdale's research found that there is a major partisan gap in the supply of potential female candidates with the Democrats having twice as many as the Republicans in 1990 and the expectation that this disparity would continue to grow (2014, p.3). By their estimates, in 2012 "women composed 56% of the Democratic pool and 26% of the Republican pool" (2014, p.3). These numbers show an alarming imbalance between the two parties that might suggest that Republican women are not only less likely to see themselves as candidates, but they are less likely to be recruited by their party to represent their communities. They conclude by saying that "to the extent that this gap is driven by differing gender norms among Republicans and

Democrats...the supply of women candidates from within the Republican electorate may expand only following extensive changes in the ideology of the Republican party more broadly” (2014, 5). Similarly, Barnes and Cassese state that “one in four women identify with the Republican party” and that “women in the United States are more likely to identify with the Democratic party, vote for the Democratic Party candidates, and hold liberal positions on social issues” (2017, p. 127). This divide between the Democratic and Republican parties suggests that people are more likely to vote and identify with what they believe is their best interest. I assert that many women hold more liberal views because they are historically caretakers of the family and view social issues as more personal than men might. Additionally, it would be reasonable to assert that men tend to hold more conservative views because they view issues like gun control and the economy as more personal than women might. Lastly, Elder (2014) claims that “the parties have undergone what some have characterized as a realignment concerning the appropriate role of women and mothers (Elder & Green, 2012, Chapter 3; Wolbrecht, 2000), changes driven by the increased influence of religious conservatives within the Republican party and the increased influence of feminists with the Democratic party” (Baer, 1999; Conger, 2009; Freeman, 1993, 1997, 1999). Women traditionally have had to put in enormous amounts of effort to work outside the home. The Republican party upholds a conservative religious view where women are more often in the home and the husband works outside the home. This shift may further divide the parties ideologically but it also has the potential to create a population of women who are more conservative by association with organized religion and the more conservative bloc within the Republican party.

Fundraising

Fundraising is a key piece of any political campaign. Thomsen and Swers' acknowledge that "women candidates do not [appear to] suffer from a fundraising disadvantage because those who run raise as much money as their male counterparts in similar races" (2017, p. 460). However, they also describe the current campaign finance system as more candidate-centered and more inviting to "liberal female Democrats who demonstrate a commitment to women's issues and conservative Republicans" (2017, p. 460). The Republican party does not recruit women at the same rate as the Democratic party and Republican women who are considering a run for office do not have a fundraising advantage against their male counterparts as Democratic women do (Thomsen & Swers, 2017). This may be because Democratic women automatically have an advantage over men in their party because of the stereotype that women are more liberal. This serves as an advantage for more liberal women whereas it is a hindrance for Republican women who are seen as more moderate. Since the more conservative candidate usually receives more funding and Republican women don't already have a funding advantage over men in their party like Democratic women do, this further alienates them from the political arena.

While it is not central to my research on the impacts gerrymandering has on the emergence and success of women candidates, it is important to note the influence female donors have on candidates from each party. Democratic women candidates receive more support from women than men while Republican women do not (Thomsen and Swers, 2017). Thomsen and Swers' research finds that the gender affinity theory is confirmed with women running in the Democratic party (2017). These women are more likely to receive "more donations from women and fewer donations from men than male candidates in similar races" (Thomsen & Swers, p. 460). Democratic women donors are more likely to support their party's female candidates

regardless of their ideology and are more likely to give to more liberal candidates (Thomsen and Swers, 2017). However, Republican women do not receive the same support from Republican voters. Thomsen and Swers find that “neither Republican male nor female donors appear to prioritize the election of female candidates” (p. 460). Their research shows that while there is no gender preference for Republican women donors, they are more likely to donate if the candidate is more conservative (Thomsen and Swers, 2017). Republican women are disadvantaged because the existing stereotypes claim that women are more moderate and that assumption hurts their chances at getting funding if only more conservative candidates receive donations.

There is a gap in research on fundraising in regards to gender and party, but Thomsen and Swers cite Barbara Burrell’s research concluding that “women who ran in open seat primaries between 1994 and 2010 raised as much or more money than male open seat candidates” (2017, p. 450). In regard to party, Kitchens and Swers find that Democratic women are better at fundraising than Democratic men and Republican women have more difficulty fundraising against their male opponents (2016). They attribute this to a variety of reasons, saying that “the districts that are most likely to elect female candidates are districts that are more urban, liberal, higher income, and more racially diverse” and that the more Republican districts are less interested in electing a woman (Elder, 2008, 2012; Kitchen and Swers; 2016, p. 651, Palmer and Simon 2012). These gaps in fundraising further suggest that Republican women are not supported by their voting base or party in the same way that Democratic women are, making them less likely to be interested in the investment of time and money a campaign requires.

Outside of individual donations directly from supporters, there are donor networks of support dedicated to electing women to public office. Many of these networks support Democratic women because the Democratic platform is more likely to support the expansion of

women's rights and more descriptive representation in the U.S. political system. According to Thomsen and Swers, "the Republican coalition rejects identity-based appeals for the expansion of women in office" (2017, p. 452). This lack of interest in descriptive representation from the Republican party could explain why the donor set is almost the same for male and female Republican candidates. Additionally, Kitchens and Swers (2016) cite other scholars saying, "the civil rights and feminist movements shifted the traditional party coalitions and fueled a network of organizations, activists, and donors who prioritize diversity and may be more open to giving money to elect female candidates and expand the representation of women in office" (Burrell, 2014; Kitchens and Swers, 2016; Sanbonmatsu, 2002; Wolbrecht, 2000). This feminist movement and coalition of activists does not fit in with the traditional values that the Republican party often subscribes to. Republican women largely miss out on this type of funding from feminist organizations because their ideologies do not line up. As noted above, the Republican party voting bloc was less diverse than the Democratic voting bloc in the 2020 presidential election, according to the *New York Times* exit polls. This further suggests that Republican women are hurt by their party's lack of interest in adopting more inclusive attitudes towards policy.

If there is less investment in a woman's successful campaign from women's groups and women voters in safe red districts, that paints a bleak picture for the emergence and success of Republican women. Overall, Democratic women have historically had more financial support from individual donors and coalitions than their Republican counterparts (Kitchens and Swers, 2016, p. 649). It is important to emphasize that this can also depend on outside factors unrelated to gender including incumbency status, recent redistricting, or region of the country or state. Fundraising is an imperative part of a campaign and could serve as the deciding factor not only

for a woman already running, but also for a woman considering a run who decides it is too intimidating. While this research is not directly concerned with fundraising, it is an important aspect in campaigns and could have a direct or indirect impact on the data that I will be collecting for this research.

Outcome of Election

A candidate's campaign consists of various measures of success including endorsements, fundraising, and the amount of support they can garner in the primary election. Since the purpose of gerrymandering is to create safe districts that a certain political party can count on winning, the candidate that wins the primary will likely win the general election as well. This creates a more candidate-centered race since voters will likely be forced to choose between two or more candidates who represent very similar platforms. It should be noted that just because a race is more candidate-centered, it may not necessarily be more competitive. All primaries will inherently be more candidate-centered because the political party's platform will be so similar as opposed to general elections where party identification usually matters more than the candidate. While a candidate's platform is vital for any campaign, it may not serve the purpose of differentiating two candidates from the same political party as the general election might. This means that voters will be assessing more closely how they perceive each candidate, regardless of their platform or policy commitments. Due to concerns many women have about being qualified enough to enter a race, a more candidate-centered race may further deter women from running. Since public opinion is a critical piece of political campaigns, I expect that gender stereotypes affect the likelihood of electing women in gerrymandered districts.

Women are more likely to be more liberal on a range of issues, including healthcare, education, gun control, and immigration (Barnes and Cassese, 2017). Dolan acknowledges that

stereotypes may exist in vote choice for candidates running for U.S. House, Senate, and governor (2014). She finds that in the U.S. House elections, voters believed that Democratic and Republican women were more likely to be better at stereotypically female policy areas such as education and healthcare but that the most significant influence on vote choice was a “shared party identity” (Dolan, 2014). Additionally, Dolan cites Simmons (2001) saying that 60% of respondents agreed that “our country would be ‘governed better’ if there were more women in elected office” and that these respondents saw women as “more honest, conscientious, reliable, and fiscally responsible than men” (2014). These stereotypes have varying effects depending on which political party a woman candidate identifies with, further demonstrating how partisanship can shape a female candidate’s success or failure in a campaign. Barnes and Cassese cite Freeman (1986) saying that “the Democratic party is known as a coalition party with many diverse internal constituencies, whereas Republicans are governed by a culture that values singular identification with the party and conformity with the party platform, and eschews special-interest claims” (2017). These cultural differences between parties creates a wide gap that is hard to bridge for female candidates in the Republican party. A candidate that is more liberal on issues would align more closely with the Democratic party while a candidate that held a more moderate or conservative view on these issues would appeal more to Republican voters. Trends on issue positions of each political party show that women in general are “more likely to represent women’s policy preferences than are their male counterparts (Barnes and Cassese, 2017; Gerrity, Osborn, and Mendez, 2007; Osborn and Mendez, 2010; Swers, 2013). Additionally, women are more likely to be presumed more moderate by voters (King and Matland, 2003; Kitchens and Swers, 2016), whereas men are more likely to fall on the more conservative side of issues like immigration, education spending, and gun control (Barnes and

Cassese, 2017). Men are also more likely presumed more conservative by voters (Barnes and Cassese, 2017).

While this may help Democratic women at the polls, it hurts Republican women in the primaries. According to Barnes and Cassese, “Republican primary voters tend to be more conservative than Republican nonvoters” (2017, p. 131). If Republican women candidates are perceived by voters as being more moderate and primary voters are more conservative than other Republicans, this would mean that Republican women would be at a disadvantage when running against a man in the primaries.

This data bolsters the theory that women are more well-suited to run and win as Democrats and less well-suited to run and win as Republicans. The polarization of the two major political parties has created a scenario in which Democratic women are more closely aligned with the majority of their voting base, increasing their chances to win primaries and general elections in districts that favor their party when facing male opponents. By the same logic, Republican women are at a disadvantage in their party, especially in gerrymandered districts where the electorate favors the candidate viewed as more conservative, and voter stereotypes make women candidates appear less conservative.

Due to the dominance of the Republican party in the American South and the influence of Republican legislatures largely controlling the redistricting process, the Republican primary elections in this region tend to be more competitive than the general elections. Since a conservative district is almost certainly going to elect the winner of the Republican primary election, the primary race becomes the real seat of competition, and one where it is more difficult for a woman to prove that she is the most viable candidate when she is running against a man. This is especially difficult for a Republican woman because she is likely to be seen as the more

moderate candidate and will have to compensate for that in her platform to appear more conservative than the male candidate. Republican women are at a disadvantage because they have to overcome stereotypes to show voters that they are more conservative while raising less money than their Democratic counterparts. Since campaigns depend on fundraising to promote a candidate's platform and they typically raise less funds than Democratic women candidates, this hurts Republican women's chances of winning a primary election. As for Democratic women in open Democratic primaries, the perception that they are more liberal than men works to their advantage as they are more likely to be more liberal than their male opponent.

Based on the current literature of these subjects, it is reasonable to assert that it is much more difficult for women from either major political party to both get involved and succeed in the United States political system. However, the literature shows a clear difference in the relationship between party and outcome of the election which almost always disadvantages Republican women candidates. For my research, I will analyze the open seat party primaries for the 2014 and 2018 U.S. House of Representative races. I expect to see a trend in how the gendered dynamics in each party affect the emergence and success of female candidates.

I theorize that Republican women are less likely to run and that when they do run, they will receive a lesser share of the total votes and will be less likely to win the nomination of their party, particularly in districts that lean Republican. Conversely, Democratic women are more likely to run, will receive a higher portion of the total vote share, and are more likely to become the nominee for the Democratic party in districts that lean Democratic. Due to current redistricting practices and gerrymandering, districts are incredibly less competitive in the general election, making the primaries the more important race during an election year. This research

will attempt to explain if this primary competitiveness helps or hurts women from the two major political parties.

Research Design

For my research, I gathered data on open and vacant seat primary elections for the U.S. House of Representatives in 2014 and 2018. There is a large amount of data in relation to elections due to the various factors that have the potential to affect the outcome of these races. To assess the impact of gerrymandering and competitiveness, it was important to collect data that could show how competitive districts were both historically and directly prior to the election. To evaluate the role of gender, it was important to collect data on how many female candidates ran, the percentage of the vote they got, and if they got the party nomination. In the following section, I will provide important definitions for the main terms used in my research question, a breakdown of each data set I collected, and why the data was important for my research.

Definitions

An **open seat** can be defined as any seat in a district that lacks an incumbent on the ballot. Usually, this refers to general elections where there is no incumbent. For the purposes of my research, the only open seats that I include are primary elections with no incumbent running. For example, there were several races that Ballotpedia listed as “open seats” because the incumbent was defeated in the primary election, ultimately leaving the general election classified as “open.” However, since my research is centered around women’s decision to run in a primary, I only included races where the primary election lacked an incumbent on the ballot. When an incumbent candidate is defeated in the primary election, there is no longer a chance for a woman to enter the race even though the race might seem less intimidating at that point.

Open seats are especially important to analyze because I am interested in candidate emergence and assume open seats introduce more competition within party primaries. These races have the capacity to be more competitive in nature because there is no incumbent advantage at play. Incumbency is an important factor to consider when looking at any election because there is a long history of a high incumbency success rate in American politics. According to Friedman and Holden (2009), the incumbency rate for the U.S. House of Representatives was 95% in 2009. Additionally, according to Palmer and Simon “in a typical election cycle, more than 70% of incumbents have no opposition in their own party’s primary” and “since 1956, only 1.2% of incumbents have ever lost a primary” (2008, p. 35). They go on to say that this presents an intimidating situation for anyone wanting to get involved in the political process but it could particularly affect women, who are less likely to run for office anyway.

Primary elections are preliminary elections prior to the general election. They serve to narrow down the candidate pool for major parties to have a more succinct ballot in the general election that will ultimately elect the candidate to the open seat. States have different types of primaries which affect the way that candidates are chosen and how the public votes. I will include a breakdown of the different types of primaries in the next section. I chose to include only primary elections in my research because this is where competition within each party lives. Since the purpose of my research is to compare how the Democratic and Republican parties elect candidates, the primary election is more beneficial and more likely to show party attitudes than the general election.

I chose to examine **U.S. House races** because they are the only national races in districts that have been drawn by state legislators. U.S. Senators represent the entire state and therefore do not represent districts and are unaffected by gerrymandering, so they do not fall within the scope

of this research. Since state legislatures are responsible for drawing district lines, the outcomes of House races are likely to be impacted by the party in control directly after a census year.

Since the political landscape is ever-changing, it was important to use the most recent data for my research. I chose to examine the 2014 & 2018 **midterm elections** because midterm elections typically have a lower voter turnout rate than presidential elections. It would be reasonable to expect that voters who participate in these elections are more passionate and more aligned with the base of the major parties than those who participate in presidential election years. If there is an effect on elections to be found, these are the best races to look at. Voter behavior in these races could also be less affected by other factors related to the presidential elections. This should give a more accurate representation of the different attitudes toward female candidates from the two major parties than a presidential election where there are many more moderate voters that have weaker ties to the parties.

The seats that I include in my research were identified using the Cook Political Report (CPR) and were open or vacant either because the incumbent retired from public office, ran for another office, resigned before their term was over, or died.

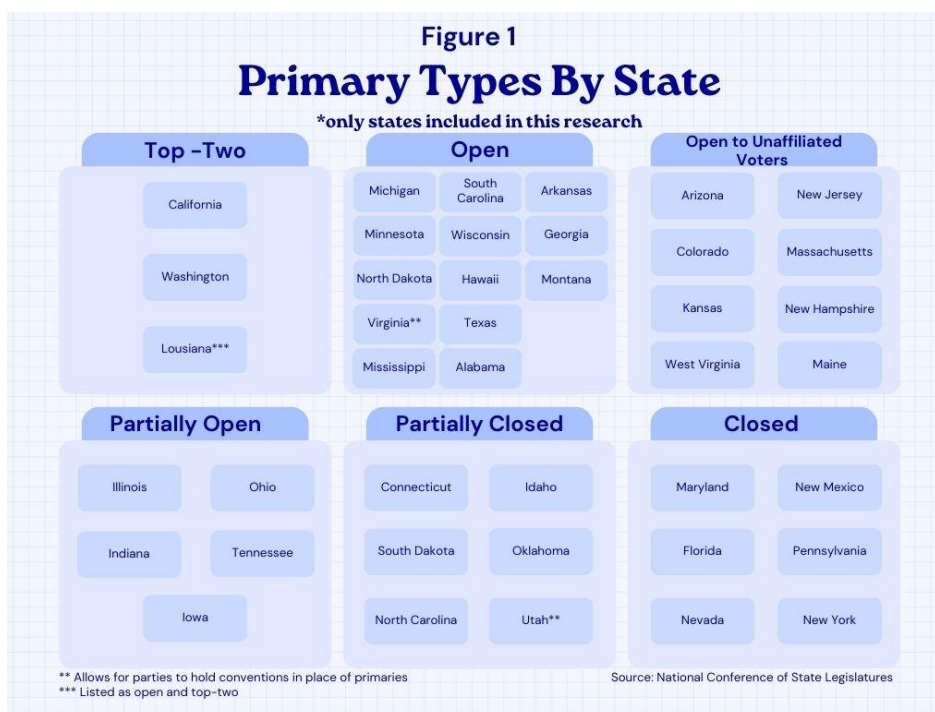
Data Collection

Since I am interested in the party dynamics at play in the emergence and success of women candidates, I collected data for both Republican and Democratic primaries in each open seat U.S. House district for 2014 and 2018. For this research, I collected data on a variety of factors in the races so that I could run as many tests as possible to look for potential relationships or trends. After selecting the districts, I collected the type of primary that state has, if the district flipped parties or not as a result, the Cook competitiveness classification, the Cook Partisan Voting Index (PVI), the total number of women candidates in each primary, the total percentage

of the vote that all of the female candidates received in the primary (number of votes received by women candidates/total number of votes cast), and if a woman won the party nomination. I collected this data for each of the 112 open seats, separated by primary, ultimately creating 224 units of observation for this research before exclusions.

Primary Types

Since each state has its own election laws that determine how their primaries are conducted, it was important to choose a data set that included states from each type of primary. Primary types are separated into six categories: closed, partially closed, partially open, open to



unaffiliated voters, open, or top-two (NCSL). Each of these categories is represented in this research and can be found in Figure 1. States exist on a spectrum of open to closed primaries.

Open primaries refer to a primary election where voters are allowed to cast their ballot in whichever primary they choose regardless of political party. They do not have to be registered with a state political party and can privately decide which party primary they vote in each election. The top-two primary is the most open on the spectrum and puts all candidates on the same ballot with their party

affiliation or preference beside their name. Only two states have this classification - California and Washington. Louisiana is also a special case in that the Secretary of State classifies the state as an open primary state since all candidates run on the same ticket and every eligible voter can participate. However, if one candidate wins a majority, they win the election, essentially making the primary more likely a general election. The only situation that would classify this election as a primary is if there was a need for a runoff election. This is commonly known as a “jungle primary” or a majority vote primary with a plurality vote general election. For the purposes of this research, I will be classifying Louisiana as a Top-Two primary.

Primaries open to unaffiliated voters allow voters not registered with a state political party to choose which primary to vote in on election day but does not allow voters officially affiliated with a state political party to choose. Partially open primaries allow voters to publicly choose which primary they would like to vote in and in some states may be registered with a political party following their choice.

Closed primaries require voters to register with a political party and excludes anyone not registered with either major political party from participating in the primary. Partially closed primaries leave the power up to the political parties to decide if unaffiliated voters are allowed to participate in their party’s primary. This decision is made each year prior to the primaries.

Since states vary greatly on this spectrum of primaries, it could affect the results of this research. Due to the wide range of primary laws and the potential effects on the research, there will be some exclusions in this research that will be addressed in a later section.

Flipped Status

This refers to if the seat flipped parties in that election year. This data is used for demographic purposes and it is briefly mentioned in the statistical analysis section.

Cook Political Report

The Cook Report started in 1984 as a nonpartisan newsletter written by a former Capitol Hill staffer, Charlie Cook. According to the company website, it continues to be an “independent, non-partisan newsletter that analyzes elections and campaigns for the US House of Representatives, US Senate, Governors and President as well as American political trends” (Cook Political Report). It has been used by innumerable political science researchers and cited by major publications including the *National Journal*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *American Political Science Association*, and more. In this research, I used the Cook Political Report House Race Ratings (HRR) and the Partisan Voting Index (PVI).

House Race Ratings - Competitiveness Classification

The Cook Political Report (CPR) gives each U.S. House district a competitiveness classification ranging from solid Democrat, likely Democrat, lean Democrat, toss up Democrat, toss up Republican, lean Republican, likely Republican, and solid Republican. This is also called the House Race Rating (HRR) (Cook Political Report). The terms *HRR* and *Cook Competitiveness* will be used interchangeably in this research to refer to this district classification, which reflects Cook’s prediction for the upcoming election and is based on several factors. According to their website, “competitiveness is determined by several factors, including the district's political makeup, the candidates' strengths and weaknesses, the political environment in the state and nationally, and interviews with candidates and campaign professionals.” This data is more subjective than the Partisan Voting Index (PVI) which is based on numerical data from previous elections and which is discussed further below.

Cook Partisan Voter Index + Linear Score

The Cook Partisan Voter Index (PVI) “measures how partisan a district is compared to the nation as a whole” (Cook Political Report). The score reflects the degree to which the district’s vote differed from the country’s overall vote in the previous two presidential elections, creating a uniform and continuous measure of each district’s partisan lean.

Total Female Candidates in Party Primary

The total female candidates in the party primary refers to the number of women who qualified for either major party’s primary and were listed on the ballot on election day. This data is important because it provides some insight on party recruitment and gives a numerical value to how many women overcome the barriers of formally starting a campaign. This category is one of the three dependent variables used in the final research.

% of Vote Won by All Female Candidates

The percentage of the vote won by female candidates is the collective percentage of the total vote share that all female candidates received in the primary election. I collected the total percentage of the vote share won by women to be able to directly compare this to the vote share male candidates received. Using the percentage of the vote rather than the absolute number of votes won by women ensures that the measure is comparable across districts of varying population and levels of voter turnout. This category is one of the three dependent variables used in the final research.

Female Nominee

This value shows if a woman received the party nomination or not. In my research, 0 means that a woman did not receive the party nomination and 1 means that a woman did receive the party nomination. This data is imperative for distinguishing the data surrounding partisan

attitudes toward women candidates. This category is one of the three dependent variables used in the final research.

Exclusions

Complete Exclusions

There are several primaries that are completely excluded from this research for a few main reasons. Some races were excluded due to the defeat of the incumbent in the primary election. In the original data collection, the Cook Report defined open seats as general elections that lacked an incumbent instead of primary elections. For this research, these races were filtered out to only include primary elections that lacked an incumbent running. As explained in a previous section, these races were excluded from this research because they did not fit the criteria for my research. There were four districts in 2014 (Texas 4, Virginia 7, Michigan 11, and Massachusetts 6) and six districts in 2018 (South Carolina 1, Massachusetts 7, New York 14, Michigan 13, Colorado 4, and North Carolina 9) that were excluded for this reason.

Districts that held nominating conventions over primaries are also completely excluded from this research. Political parties in these states have authority to nominate candidates in place of holding a primary election. This process can exclude the general public from participating in the election depending on the rules of the convention and has the potential to create an outlier effect on the research. Since linear regressions require an equal amount of data points to run correctly, I omitted entire districts even if just one party in the district held a nominating convention and the other held a primary. Some states allow this regardless of which primary system they belong to. There were three districts in 2014 (Utah 4, Virginia 8, and Virginia 10) and two districts in 2018 (Virginia 5 and Virginia 6) that were omitted for this reason. In 2018, in Virginia district 6, the 6th Congressional District Republican Committee nominated Ben Cline

via convention with 52% of the vote while the Democratic party chose to hold a primary election to determine the nominee. Both primaries from this district were excluded. Also in 2018, in Virginia district 5, both the 5th Congressional District Democratic Committee and the 5th Congressional District Republican Committee held nominating conventions in place of primaries to determine the party nominee they would send to the general election.

The last exclusion for this research was due to a statewide redistricting in Pennsylvania that affected the 2018 midterms. According to the Public Interest Law Center, the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania filed a lawsuit alleging that “in 2011 Pennsylvania elected officials manipulated the congressional district boundaries to entrench a majority Republican delegation in Congress and minimize the ability of Democratic voters to elect U.S. House representatives” (Public Interest Law Center). The Pennsylvania Supreme Court adopted a new map ahead of the 2018 midterm elections which drastically changed the competitiveness of the districts, and the incumbency advantage could not adequately be accounted for. There were 7 districts included in this total omission including Pennsylvania districts 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 13, and 14. The 2018 primaries held in these districts were omitted out of an abundance of caution to not potentially misrepresent HRR and incumbency advantage.

Partial Exclusions

While some primaries were omitted completely from the final research, some primaries were included only in the descriptive statistics section to see if different primary types had a major effect on the research results. Any states that use a top-two primary system were included in this category of exclusions. These states are Washington, California, and Louisiana. As noted in a prior section, top-two primaries allow for all candidates to be listed on one ballot with their political affiliation next to their name. For the purposes of this research, I separated the

candidates in these states out by party, totaled their votes, and used the percentage for the top Democratic and Republican candidates. There were eight districts in 2014 (California 11, 25, 31, 33, 35, 45, Louisiana 6, and Washington 4) and three districts in 2018 (California 39 & 49 and Washing 8) that were affected by this partial exclusion.

Lastly, there was a partial exclusion for primaries where the Cook Report did not include a PVI, meaning that I could not adequately measure how the districts compared to the nation as a whole or how partisan they were. These races were excluded from the linear regressions where the PVI served as the independent variable, but they were included in the linear regressions where the Cook House Race Rating was the independent variable. They were also included in the descriptive statistics. In 2014 there was one district lacking a PVI (Michigan 14) and in 2018 there were two districts lacking a PVI (Ohio 16 and West Virginia 3).

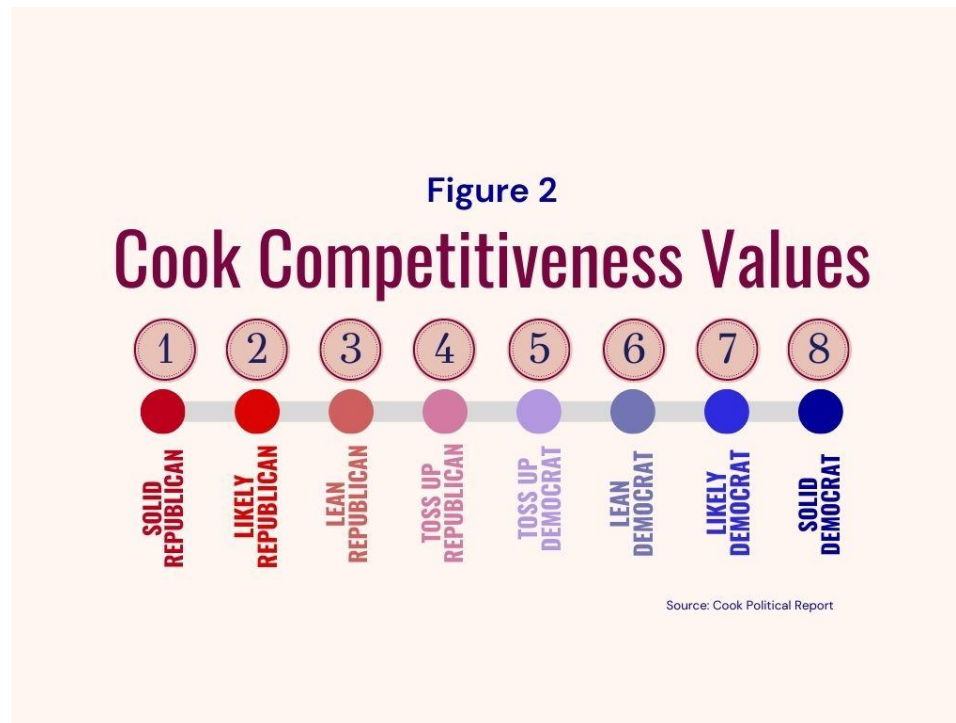
Research Methodology

This section will address the methodology I used to categorize the data after collecting it for it. Some of the variables focused on qualitative data so I created a coding system to convert the qualitative data into quantitative data that I could use for descriptive statistics and linear regressions.

Cook Political Report

I assigned each House Race Rating (HRR) classification a numerical value so the data could be analyzed using descriptive statistics and linear regression models. In figure 2, a classification of '1' means that the district is favored heavily for the Republican party to win. A classification of '8' means that the district is favored heavily for the Democratic party to win. For example, U.S. District 3 in Mississippi got a classification of 'solid Republican' ahead of the

2018 midterms because of the general political makeup of the district and state. It's numerical score for the linear scale for my research is 1.



I coded the PVI scores on a linear scale where higher negative values represent a higher Republican PVI and higher positive values represent higher Democratic PVI. This range represents a scale from solid Republican (negative values) to solid Democrat (positive values). These numbers match the Cook competitiveness numerical scale in that lower numbers represent Republican leaning districts whereas higher numbers represent Democratic leaning districts.

For example, U.S. District 3 in Mississippi got a PVI score of R +15 ahead of the 2018 midterms because it voted much more heavily Republican in both the 2012 and 2016 presidential elections than did the average U.S. district. It's numerical PVI for the linear scale for my

research is -15. Conversely, U.S. District 12 in New Jersey got a PVI score of D +12 ahead of the 2014 midterms so it received a numerical PVI score of 12.

The coding process was necessary because the Cook Political Report is the basis of my two independent variables and the numerical equivalent of the qualitative data made comparing the primaries possible. After converting this data, I began generating the descriptive statistics and setting up the linear regressions.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to determine if some of the basic tenets of this research question were met prior to the linear regressions. This method relied on comparing the total number of women who entered primaries as candidates from either party, comparing the average percentage of the vote total women candidates received from either party, and comparing the total number of women who received the party nomination. This method can provide some support for the theory that Republican women do worse in open primaries, but it is not robust enough to determine if there was a relationship between the two variables. However, they were helpful in the beginning stages of research in confirming that these variables were worth doing more research on. The data set I chose to research was very complex with many variables to consider. To adequately understand the trends in the linear regressions, I needed the descriptive statistics to show some of the core features of the research. A few of these included using HRR to see where the data set as a whole fell, getting a gauge of the competitiveness of the districts and setting up a breakdown of the demographic data.

Linear Regressions

Since the purpose of partisan gerrymandering is to make districts more predictable and less competitive, I wanted to see if this act affects the likelihood of women succeeding in running

for office and winning the party nominee. To get a broad range of results, I chose to look at Democratic and Republican primaries for U.S. House races with no incumbent running. These races were assigned both a House Race rating/Competitiveness Score (HRR) to assess the competitiveness of the district and a Partisan Voting Index (PVI) score to measure how partisan a district was compared to the rest of the country by the Cook Political Report. These two scores were used as the independent variables for this research.

I then chose three dependent variables to measure any possible correlations between the partisan competitiveness of the district and women's emergence and success as candidates. These dependent variables included the number of women who ran for office, what percentage of the total vote those women received, and if those women ultimately became the nominee for the party. The bipartisan primaries are the Republican and Democratic data included in one data set to see if the full range of competitiveness had a different effect than when the parties were analyzed separately. Table 1 displays 18 combinations of primary types, independent variables, and dependent variables that were used for my final research. I completed these linear regressions for 2014 and 2018, creating 36 linear regressions in total.

Table 1: *Linear Regressions for 2014 and 2018*

	Primary Type	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
1	Bipartisan	House Race Rating (HRR)	# of female candidates
2	Bipartisan	House Race Rating (HRR)	% of total vote
3	Bipartisan	House Race Rating (HRR)	Party nominee
4	Bipartisan	Partisan Voting Index (PVI)	# of female candidates
5	Bipartisan	Partisan Voting Index (PVI)	% of total vote
6	Bipartisan	Partisan Voting Index (PVI)	Party nominee

7	Democratic	House Race Rating (HRR)	# of female candidates
8	Democratic	House Race Rating (HRR)	% of total vote
9	Democratic	House Race Rating (HRR)	Party nominee
10	Democratic	Partisan Voting Index (PVI)	# of female candidates
11	Democratic	Partisan Voting Index (PVI)	% of total vote
12	Democratic	Partisan Voting Index (PVI)	Party nominee
13	Republican	House Race Rating (HRR)	# of female candidates
14	Republican	House Race Rating (HRR)	% of total vote
15	Republican	House Race Rating (HRR)	Party nominee
16	Republican	Partisan Voting Index (PVI)	# of female candidates
17	Republican	Partisan Voting Index (PVI)	% of total vote
18	Republican	Partisan Voting Index (PVI)	Party nominee

Hypotheses

Since the literature shows that Republican women are historically underrepresented in elected offices at all levels and Democratic women are increasingly getting elected to more offices, my hypotheses center around the idea that increased competition in Republican primaries hurts Republican women and increased competition in Democratic primaries helps Democratic women. I hypothesize that female candidates will have a lower chance of winning the Republican nomination in districts that lean Republican in comparison to Democratic women in their respective primaries. Additionally, they will receive a lower percentage of the vote and fewer party nominations than Democratic women in their primaries. When Republicans are running in a Republican leaning district, Republican voters are more likely to choose a candidate in the primary that appeals to the majority of the Republican base because they do not have to

vote strategically with an eye toward beating a Democrat in the general election. As mentioned in the literature review, Republican voters in primaries are more likely to be more conservative than nonvoters (Barnes and Cassese, 2017), women in general are more likely to be perceived as more moderate than men (King and Matland, 2003; Kitchens and Swers, 2016), and women are more likely to hold more liberal views than men on many issues (Barnes and Cassese, 2017). These findings support my hypotheses by providing a basis on which Republican women are less likely to enter the race, receive less of the total vote share, and less likely to get the party nomination when running against a man due to voter stereotypes. When primaries are more competitive than the general election, meaning that the candidate that wins the primary is likely to win the general election, there is less pressure to offer a moderate candidate in the general election and more advantage for more partisan candidates in the primary.

These hypotheses will be tested by descriptive statistics and linear regressions with data from the individual races. As mentioned in the previous section, this data primarily includes the Cook Competitiveness score/House Race Ratings, the Partisan Voting Index score, the number of women who ran in the primary elections, the percentage of the total vote women won in the primaries, and the number of women who were chosen as the party nominee in the primaries. I expect both the descriptive statistics and the linear regressions to reflect the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: *Less Republican women emerge as candidates in Republican leaning district primaries in relation to Democratic women in Democratic leaning districts.*

This hypothesis will be proven or disproven by descriptive statistics and linear regressions. The descriptive statistics for this hypothesis will be used to compare the sum of the total number of candidates in the Republican primaries to the sum of the total number of

candidates in the Democratic primaries. If there are fewer women candidates in Republican primaries for 2014 and 2018 than Democratic women candidates, the basic portion of my hypothesis would be supported - that there are less Republican women emerging as candidates in Republican leaning districts and more Democratic women emerging as candidates in Democratic leaning districts. The linear regressions for this hypothesis will determine if there is a correlation between the PVI and the number of female candidates and the HRR and the number of female candidates. Since the PVI measures how partisan a district is compared to the nation as a whole, a significant relationship between the PVI and the number of female candidates could show that the partisan lean of a district does affect the number of female candidates. Similarly, since the HRR assesses the competitiveness of a district, a significant relationship between the HRR and the number of female candidates could show that the number of women who file for candidacy is affected by the competitiveness of the district.

Hypothesis 2: *Republican women receive a lower percentage of total primary vote in Republican leaning districts in relation to Democratic women in Democratic leaning districts.*

This hypothesis will be proven or disproven by descriptive statistics and linear regressions. The descriptive statistics for this hypothesis could be found by comparing the average percentage of the total vote won by female candidates in the Republican primaries to the average percentage of the total vote won by female candidates in the Democratic primaries. If the average percentage Republican women won for primaries for 2014 and 2018 is less than the average percentage for Democratic women won, my hypothesis would be correct. The linear regressions for this hypothesis will determine if there is a correlation between the PVI and the percentage of the total vote women receive and the house race ratings and the percentage of the total vote women receive. Since the PVI measures how partisan a district is compared to the

nation as a whole, a significant relationship between the PVI and the percentage of the total vote won could show that the partisan lean of a district does affect the amount of the total vote percentage women receive. Since the House Race Ratings assess the competitiveness of a district, a significant relationship between the HRR and the percentage of the total vote won could show that the number of votes female candidates receive is affected by the competitiveness of the district.

Hypothesis 3: *Less republican women win the nomination in Republican leaning districts in relation to Democratic women in Democratic leaning districts.*

This hypothesis will be proven or disproven by descriptive statistics and linear regressions. The descriptive statistics for this hypothesis could be found by comparing the amount of party nominations Republican women received versus the amount of party nominations Democratic women received. If the amount of party nominations Republican women received for primaries for 2014 and 2018 is less than the amount of party nominations Democratic women received, my hypothesis would be correct. The linear regressions for this hypothesis will determine if there is a correlation between the PVI and number of party nominations women receive and the house race ratings and the number of party nominations women receive. Since the PVI measures how partisan a district is compared to the nation as a whole, a significant relationship between the PVI and amount of party nominations women won could show that the partisan lean of a district does affect the amount of the party nominations women receive. Since the House Race Ratings assess the competitiveness of a district, a significant relationship between the HRR and the number of party nominations won could show that the amount of party nominations received by women is affected by the competitiveness of the district.

The independent variables for this research are the PVI score and the Cook Competitiveness Score/House Race Rating for each district. The dependent variable for hypothesis #1 is the number of women candidates participating in the primary election. The dependent variable for hypothesis #2 is the vote percentage the women who participated in the primary election received. The dependent variable for hypothesis #3 is the number of women who won the party nomination in the primary. The control is the party of each district. The units of analysis are the 2014 and the 2018 open seat primary contests for the U.S. House.

Results

For my final research results, I will discuss both an analysis of the descriptive statistics of the data as well as a more in-depth discussion of the linear regressions. The descriptive statistics for this research supported my hypotheses and the linear regressions contained mixed results and made way for many options for future research that would help provide more context on the way that partisan competitiveness creates unique outcomes for women in the Republican and Democratic political parties in the United States.

Descriptive Statistics

The purpose of gerrymandering is to make districts more predictable and general elections less competitive. As I analyzed the data from this research, it became increasingly clear that open seat primaries are incredibly competitive in comparison to the general elections. While this could be due to a variety of other factors, gerrymandering was the main one I considered for this research. Of the 64 primaries, Democratic and Republican, in 2014, none of them had a House Race Rating (HRR) of 4 or 5, which would be classified as a toss-up. Since the HRR refers to the district as a whole and is a prediction for which party will win the general election,

not the primary, the primaries could still be competitive in nature. Fifty percent of the races were classified as solid Republican and 31% of the races were classified as solid Democrat. In total, 81% of the open U.S. House primaries in 2014 were more competitive than the general election, giving one party the upper hand in a majority of races. Of the 94 primaries, Democratic and Republican, in 2018, there were only 6 primaries with a toss-up classification. There were 50 solid Republican primaries and 26 solid Democratic primaries, amounting to 81% of all of the primaries, the same figure as 2014. It should be noted that just because a district receives a solid Democrat or solid Republican classification, it does not mean that that district will always elect that party, but it is very unlikely for a solid district to flip. In this research, one district that held the solid classification flipped to the other party in 2014 and there were two flips among districts in the solid classification in 2018. Even though open seats are only a small percentage of the 435 total seats in the U.S. House of Representatives each election year, 81% of 2014 and 2018 open seat primaries holding a solid HRR classification are striking percentages. This data confirms the idea that districts are becoming inherently less competitive between parties in the general election and more competitive between candidates of the same political party in the primaries.

For the linear regressions in this research, I chose three different dependent variables: number of female candidates, percentage of vote total women received in the primary, and if a woman won the party nomination. I compared these variables directly for this section as well to have cohesive results among my main research methods.

Number of Female Candidates

The first category clearly shows a stark difference between the number of female candidates that ran for office in 2014 and in 2018. Additionally, 50% of the races in 2014 were classified as being in a solid Republican district. This supports my hypothesis that Republican

women are less likely to enter a race in a Republican leaning district. When I add in the numbers for the Top Two primaries that were excluded from the general research, the numbers for 2014 and 2018 rise in every category at an expected, but steady rate. The chart below shows this subtle change between the numbers.

Table 2

Number of Female Candidates

Number of Female Candidates			Number of Female Candidates *Including Top Two Primaries		
	2014	2018		2014	2018
Republicans	14	40	Republicans	19	43
Democrats	22	67	Democrats	29	72

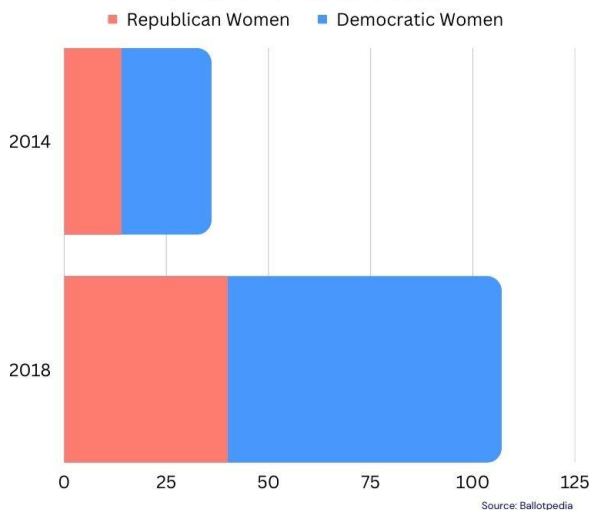
Source: Ballotpedia

In 2014, Democratic women outperformed Republican women by 22% and in 2018 this

figure rose to 26%. When the Top Two primaries are included, Democratic women still outperformed Republican women by about 20% in 2014 and 25% in 2018. When considering that there are about 20% more solid Republican districts than solid Democratic districts in 2014,

Figure 3

Number of Female Candidates



Source: Ballotpedia

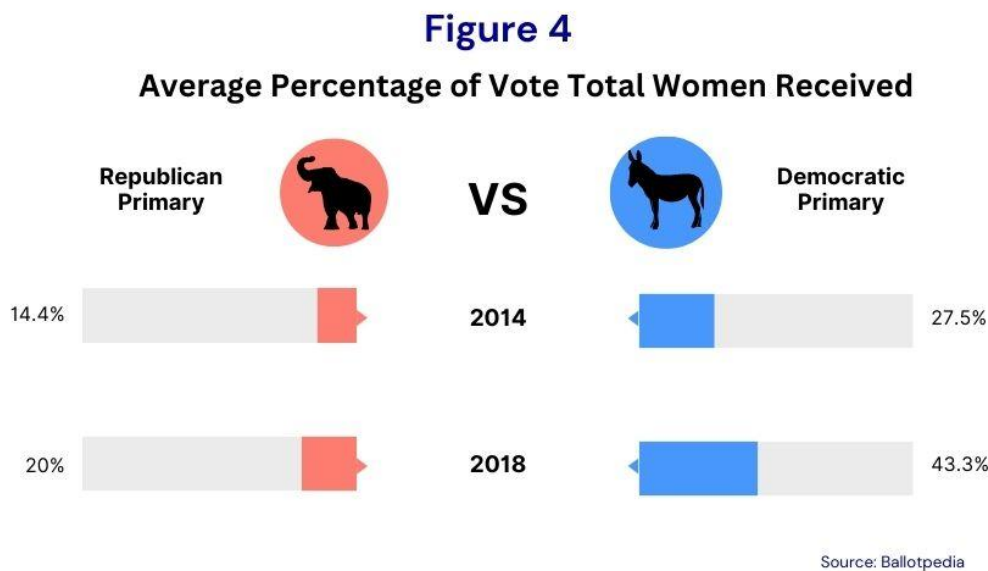
these numbers clearly show that Republican women are not entering primaries as candidates nearly as often as Democratic women are, even when they have a statistical advantage over Democrats.

While these statistics cannot measure if there is a significant relationship between the two variables, it is important to consider this discrepancy when analyzing the research as a

whole. This data supports the first and fourth hypotheses which predict that Republican women will do poorly when compared to the number of Democratic women running in Democratic leaning districts. The linear regression should help expand on this and confirm or deny a significance between the two variables.

Average Percentage of Vote Total Women Received

This data is another indicator that Republican women are having difficulty not only before they enter a race, but in the primary itself. In both 2014 and 2018, Democratic women outperformed Republican women with the average percentage of the total vote women received by more than double each time. When the Top Two primary states are included in this data, it does not change the average percentage significantly and the Democratic women are still earning about double the percentages that Republican women are earning. Figure 4 shows the distinct



difference in the average percentage of vote share that Republicans and Democratic women

received.

Regarding hypotheses #2, this measure confirms the expectation that Republican women underperform during the primary, ultimately receiving about half of the average vote share that

Democratic women are receiving. The linear regression should help expand on this and confirm or deny a significance between the two variables.

Number of Party Nominations Women Received

This measure is another one that shows the stark difference between Democratic women and Republican women in regard to the primary election itself. Table 3 exhibits how the number

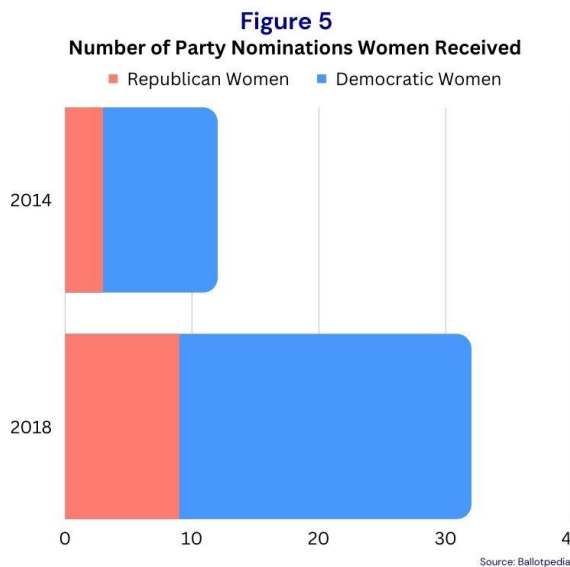
Table 3

Number of Party Nominations Women Received

Number of Party Nominations Women Received			Number of Party Nominations Women Received *Including Top Two Primaries		
	2014	2018		2014	2018
Republicans	3	9	Republicans	4	11
Democrats	9	23	Democrats	10	24

Source: Ballotpedia

of party nominations women receive varies greatly by party. Figure 5 shows the vast difference



in the number of party nominations Republican and Democratic women received in 2014 and 2018.

Hypotheses #3 are supported by the finding that Republican women received three times less party nominations than their Democratic counterparts in 2014 and less than half as many party nominations in 2018. When the data from Top Two primaries are added, these

numbers rise at about the same rate. For women running in Republican primaries in Republican leaning districts, I theorized that they would be seen as more moderate than a male candidate which would make it harder to appeal to the larger base of Republican voters, resulting in fewer primary victories. The linear regression should help expand on this and confirm or deny a significance between the two variables.

While these figures are not surprising after reading the existing literature from these topics, they were necessary to find before completing the linear regressions. Regardless of the potential relationships and significance of the linear regressions, these descriptive statistics can at least show the major discrepancies between Republican and Democratic women in primary elections. There is room for more research on this topic as most of the existing research focuses on general elections.

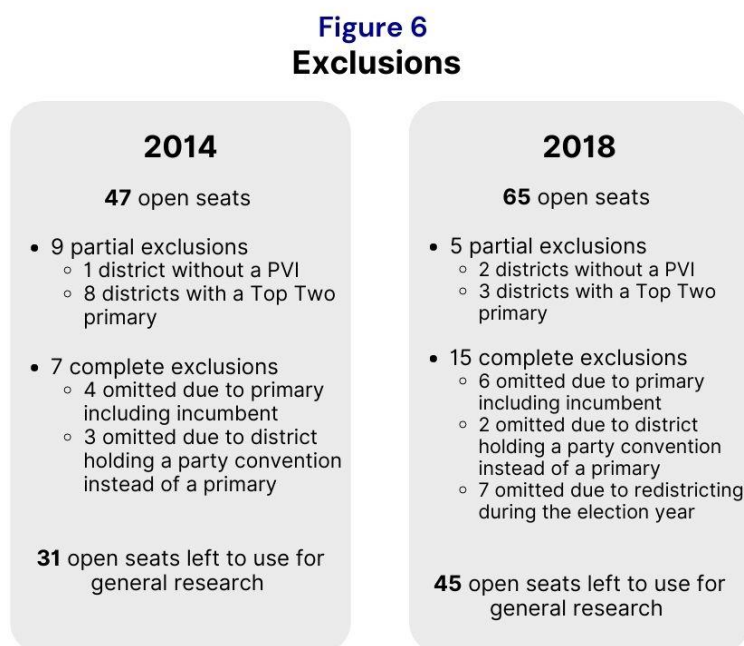
Linear Regression Models

According to the Cook Report, there were 47 open seats in 2014 and 65 open seats in 2018 for the U.S. House races. Since there are usually two primaries held to fill the open seat (Republican and Democratic), this created 94 primaries in 2014 and 130 primaries in 2018 to

analyze, ultimately creating 224 primaries from both election years.

After partial and complete exclusions, I had 31 open seats, or 62 primaries, for 2014 and 45 open seats, or 90 primaries, for 2018 to include in the linear regressions.

Figure 6 is a breakdown of how I



got these numbers through the exclusions.

This research is a sample of all open primaries for the U.S. House of Representatives for the years 2014 and 2018. For the regressions, I primarily looked at the three results in the summary output table: Significance f, confidence interval, and Multiple R. Significance f is a test for statistical significance that shows how sure we can be that there is a relationship between the independent and dependent variables in the general population. To get the confidence interval, I converted the significant f value to a percentage and subtracted this value from 100 to get the percentage. The standard for the confidence interval is 95% or higher. This is the percentage chance that we can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that we would see this relationship in the general population. Multiple R shows how big this relationship is and if it is positive or negative. Since the standard for the confidence interval is 95%, I was looking for any regressions with a significance f of 0.05 or smaller. I was also looking for the multiple R value to be closer to 1 than 0 which would mean there was a positive relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. Table 4 shows each regression along with its significance f value and the Multiple R value sorted by independent and dependent variables, year, and party.

Table 4: Linear Regression Results

Year	Primary Type	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Multiple R	Significance F	Independent	Multiple R	Significance F
2014	Bipartisan	Cook Competiveness Score	Number of Female Candidates	0.290942642	0.020*	Cook PVI	0.03236591	0.803
2014	Republican	Cook Competiveness Score	Number of Female Candidates	0.054821617	0.766	Cook PVI	0.39679135	0.027*
2014	Democratic	Cook Competiveness Score	Number of Female Candidates	0.534307052	0.002**	Cook PVI	0.30684972	0.093
2014	Bipartisan	Cook Competiveness Score	% of Vote Won by Female Candidates	0.35437192	0.004**	Cook PVI	0.20812608	0.105
2014	Republican	Cook Competiveness Score	% of Vote Won by Female Candidates	0.321412243	0.073	Cook PVI	0.06663562	0.722
2014	Democratic	Cook Competiveness Score	% of Vote Won by Female Candidates	0.402912697	0.022*	Cook PVI	0.42225829	0.018*
2014	Bipartisan	Cook Competiveness Score	Female Nominee	0.357675573	0.004**	Cook PVI	0.35166023	0.005**
2014	Republican	Cook Competiveness Score	Female Nominee	0.380466167	0.032*	Cook PVI	0.12034817	0.519
2014	Democratic	Cook Competiveness Score	Female Nominee	0.374351543	0.035*	Cook PVI	0.52360639	0.003**
2018	Bipartisan	Cook Competiveness Score	Number of Female Candidates	0.102105391	0.327	Cook PVI	0.1922166	0.070
2018	Republican	Cook Competiveness Score	Number of Female Candidates	0.078058425	0.602	Cook PVI	0.05349099	0.727
2018	Democratic	Cook Competiveness Score	Number of Female Candidates	0.29318509	0.045*	Cook PVI	0.45598848	0.002**
2018	Bipartisan	Cook Competiveness Score	% of Vote Won by Female Candidates	0.176758038	0.088	Cook PVI	0.20204266	0.056
2018	Republican	Cook Competiveness Score	% of Vote Won by Female Candidates	0.320901583	0.028*	Cook PVI	0.17966474	0.238
2018	Democratic	Cook Competiveness Score	% of Vote Won by Female Candidates	0.08137664	0.587	Cook PVI	0.25601319	0.090
2018	Bipartisan	Cook Competiveness Score	Female Nominee	0.009750021	0.926	Cook PVI	0.16843452	0.113
2018	Republican	Cook Competiveness Score	Female Nominee	0.150592785	0.312	Cook PVI	0.24850156	0.100
2018	Democratic	Cook Competiveness Score	Female Nominee	0.100050829	0.503	Cook PVI	0.12761769	0.403

Table 5: Linear regression results with a confidence level over 95%

From the 36 linear regressions I completed in this research, 14 of them, about 39% of the total, had a confidence interval of 95% or higher. These regression results can be seen in figure 5.

Year	Primary Type	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Significance f	Confidence Interval	Multiple R
2014	Democratic	Cook Competitiveness Score	Number of Female Candidates	0.002	99.80%	0.534307052
2018	Democratic	Cook PVI	Number of Female Candidates	0.002	99.80%	0.455988477
2014	Democratic	Cook PVI	Female Nominee	0.003	99.70%	0.52360639
2014	Bipartisan	Cook Competitiveness Score	% of Vote Won by Female Candidates	0.004	99.60%	0.35437192
2014	Bipartisan	Cook Competitiveness Score	Female Nominee	0.004	99.60%	0.357675573
2014	Bipartisan	Cook PVI	Female Nominee	0.005	99.50%	0.351660227
2014	Democratic	Cook PVI	% of Vote Won by Female Candidates	0.018	98.20%	0.422258294
2014	Bipartisan	Cook Competitiveness Score	Number of Female Candidates	0.02	98%	0.290942642
2014	Democratic	Cook Competitiveness Score	% of Vote Won by Female Candidates	0.022	97.80%	0.402912697
2014	Republican	Cook PVI	Number of Female Candidates	0.027	97.30%	0.396791348
2018	Republican	Cook Competitiveness Score	% of Vote Won by Female Candidates	0.028	97.20%	0.320901583
2014	Republican	Cook Competitiveness Score	Female Nominee	0.032	96.80%	0.380466167
2014	Democratic	Cook Competitiveness Score	Female Nominee	0.035	96.50%	0.374351543
2018	Democratic	Cook Competitiveness Score	Number of Female Candidates	0.045	95.50%	0.29318509

11 of the 14 regressions that were significant were from 2014 and 3 were from 2018, meaning that 2014 had more instances where there was a significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Of these 14 regressions, 6 of the regressions had a confidence interval of over 99%. This value means that we can predict a relationship with much confidence.

This chart clearly shows that in 2014 and 2018, there is a highly significant, positive relationship between both the Cook Competitiveness Score and PVI measures and the number of female candidates in the Democratic primaries. This relationship would suggest that as districts become increasingly favorable to Democrats, more women emerge as candidates. There is a 99.8% chance that this is true in the general population for both 2014 and 2018. Additionally, the relationship between the PVI score and the number of female nominees in the Republican primaries in 2014 is positive and highly significant, meaning that increases in Republican advantage are associated with decreases in the number of women running.

The most significant result was between the Cook Competitiveness Score and the number of female candidates in the 2014 Democratic primaries. There was a 99.8% chance that there is a positive relationship between the PVI and the number of female candidates in the general population. The multiple R was also closer to 1 than any of the other regressions at 0.5, meaning that the relationship was positive and substantial. Based on this research, it could be concluded that there is a 99.8% chance that the Cook Competitiveness Score, otherwise known as the HRR, and the number of female candidates have a strong correlation in the general population of primaries. As previously mentioned, the HRR assesses the competitiveness of each district based on a more subjective set of trends than the PVI. Since I coded the HRR scores from 1-8, 1 being solid Republican and 8 being solid Democratic, this data suggests that as a district becomes more Democratic, we can predict with some confidence that more women enter the race. This relationship supports my hypotheses #1 in relation to the competitiveness of the district (HRR).

The second most significant relationship from the results was from the 2018 Democratic primary. The PVI and the number of female candidates had a strong correlation, 99.8%, with a slightly lower multiple R value than the most significant relationship, 0.46. This concludes that there is a significant, positive relationship between the PVI and the number of women candidates in the general population of primaries. The PVI measures how partisan a district is in a more objective way than HRR, leaning on data from the past two presidential elections. Similar to the HRR, I also coded the PVI on a linear scale where a lower negative number was more Republican leaning and a higher positive number was more Democratic leaning. We can conclude from this regression that there is a 99.8% chance that as a district leans more towards Democratic, more women run for office. The multiple R is 0.45 which suggests a positive

relationship between the two variables. This supports my hypotheses #1 in relation to the partisan swing a district has based on the previous two presidential elections (PVI).

The Cook PVI appears to be a good indicator of the likelihood of a woman winning the party nomination in more Democratic leaning districts, at least in 2014. The third most significant relationship is between the PVI and the number of female nominees in Democratic primaries in 2014. This number would also be expected in 2018, especially since both 2014 and 2018 showed an increase in women entering a race in more Democratic leaning districts. However, 2018 seemed to fall flat across all measures except three, and in two of these the significance was slight, and the multiple R was not strong either. All four of the bipartisan races in the 14 significant regressions were from 2014, which is also unexpected and surprising. The bipartisan regressions were just a combination of the Republican and Democratic primaries, so I would have expected that these races would have been significant for 2014 and 2018 across all measures due to the wider range of results included. However, the 2014 primaries show more significant results than 2018, outnumbering the latter year by claiming 11 of the 14 significant regressions. This is also unexpected because the sample size for 2018 was much larger than 2014, totaling 45 open seats compared to 2014's 31 open seats. When the number of women running rose from 2014 to 2018, the gap between Republican women and Democratic women widened further.

Of the two independent variables, Cook Competitiveness/HRR and PVI, the Cook Competitiveness Score appears to be the better predictor of significance in this realm of research. It was the primary independent variable that showed significance, appearing in 9 of the 14 regressions that had at least a 95% confidence interval. As discussed earlier, this measure uses

more subjective means to garner a rating including “district's political makeup, the candidates' strengths and weaknesses, the political environment in the state and nationally, and interviews with candidates and campaign professionals,” per the Cook Report website (Cook Political Report). This could mean that the more subjective measurement of competitiveness is more useful as opposed to the more objective measure, in this type of research at least.

The 2014 results showed that districts that had a Democratic lean invited more female candidates to run for office, these women got a higher portion of the vote share, and received more party nominations than districts than had a Republican lean. These results largely support my hypotheses. However, the results from 2018 show much less significant results over all measures except for the number of female candidates and the PVI in the Democratic primaries. The main predictors in this research, PVI and HRR, are much less useful in 2018. While these regressions did not produce perfect results in line with my hypotheses, they provided a basis for more research to be done, perhaps with different ways to test the significance of these relationships or with alternative variables outside of the ones that I chose. These results are strong enough to conclude that women have better outcomes when running as a Democrat in Democratic leaning districts and that opens many other avenues for research to build on.

Conclusion & Further Research

This research was an experiment focused on the effects that primary competitiveness had on women's involvement in each stage of the campaign process. Existing literature focused on redistricting, gerrymandering, and women's involvement in the political system as a whole or the lack of representation of Republican women in elected office. I wanted to use this research to

determine how significant a difference in political parties has on women's emergence and success in U.S. politics. I found that there were numerous significant relationships between how competitive a primary would be and how women running for office would fare depending on which political party they belonged to. It was important to consider a variety of factors due to the intricate nature of elections in the U.S.

The descriptive statistics were largely in agreement with my hypotheses and nearly 40% of the linear regressions showed significance over 95%. While it would be ideal to have a higher percentage of the linear regressions to support my hypotheses, the results nonetheless add to the discourse on this topic. The linear regressions largely showed significance in 2014 but not in 2018. There were significantly more open seats in 2018 and we should expect the larger sample size to produce more significant results. However, this was not true for 2018. While this could be explained by a number of factors, an interesting explanation could be the 2018 "pink wave", a term journalists used to describe the exceptionally high number of women running for office (Kamarck, Podkul, Zeppos, 2018). The 2016 presidential election of Donald Trump, the #MeToo movement, and the Women's March are very likely to have had an impact on the increase in women running for office and getting involved in politics in general (Vuleta, 2018). The Democratic party platform is more cohesive with these movements that were created to call attention to women's rights which could explain the increased gap between Republican and Democratic women despite the overall increase of women candidates. The cultural events surrounding the 2018 midterm elections could have interfered with the progression of women entering politics. While this idea may misrepresent the overall trends based on the unique circumstances in 2018, it could provide some foresight for where the U.S. political system is headed.

Further research is needed to understand the divide between parties when it comes to women being involved in the U.S. political system. While this research confirms the existing literature by finding a gap between women's involvement in the Republican and Democratic political parties, more research is needed on how to better support women who want to get involved in the political sphere, specifically Republican women. Additionally, it is necessary to understand how women are treated by the two major political parties and potential ways to improve female representation in elected offices locally, statewide, and federally. Gender parity in elected offices will not be attainable until we confront all the circumstances that inhibit women from running for office and winning. Further research is needed in the areas of gerrymandering and how prevalent it is among local, state, and federal races. This research paired with women's involvement in each political party would be beneficial in understanding the nuanced attitudes that potential candidates and voters have towards women running for office. This research made it evident that primary competition does have an influence on women and further research could help combat those obstacles that women face.

This notion that women cannot be separated from the stereotypes that have been placed on them in the political space should be eliminated from the discourse on women's involvement in politics. These stereotypes are dangerous and create yet another barrier between the current, deeply flawed political system and the potential impact that more women in power could have on our government. When women have access to the same resources as men, there is room for much improvement in the way that this country's government operates. Rebecca Latimer Felton was the first woman to serve in the United States Senate and gave one speech on the Senate floor saying, "When the women of the country come in and sit with you, though there may be but very few in the next few years, you will get ability, you will get integrity of purpose, you will get

exalted patriotism, and you will get unstifled usefulness” (Palmer and Simon, 2008). With more women involved in politics, regardless of political party, we are sure to become a more inclusive country with a government that better represents the makeup of our citizens, and we must do everything in our power to reach gender parity in our highest offices.

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