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# The Purple Wave: Gender and Electoral Outcomes in the 2018 Midterms

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**The Purple Wave:  
Gender and Electoral Outcomes in the  
2018 Midterms**

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SEMILLA STRIPP

Advisor:  
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Macalester College  
Department of Political Science  
Honors Thesis  
May 1, 2019

*"Who runs the world? Girls."*

Beyonce

**The Purple Wave:  
Gender and Electoral Outcomes in the 2018 Midterms**

*This thesis offers an analysis of the relationship between gender and electoral outcomes in the 2018 midterm elections. What role did gender play in the success of candidates for the House of Representatives? In answering this question, I quantify women's success by analyzing the extent to which female candidates' vote shares can be attributed to their gender. I find that, while controlling for various electoral and biographical factors, female challengers and open seat candidates performed better than their male counterparts, while female incumbents had no advantage over male incumbents. These outcomes also divided along party lines, with Democratic women performing better than Republican women. Based on the relevant literature and drawing upon similarities between 2018 and the 1992 "Year of the Woman" elections, I argue that three main factors lead to women's success in Congressional elections: issues in the presidential administration, highly publicized sexism scandals, and unusual changes to the Congressional landscape.*

## *Acknowledgements*

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction

"Women like me aren't supposed to run for office" observed Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in an early campaign video (Ocasio-Cortez 2018). And she was right. At just 28 years old, Ocasio-Cortez had never held, or even ran for, political office when she entered the Democratic primary for New York's 14th House seat. She was a woman of color, outspoken about her working-class background, and ran on a Democratic-Socialist platform that included calling for the abolition of ICE, Medicare for All, and a federal jobs guarantee. Her grassroots campaign, which she ran while working as a bartender, rejected corporate PAC money and instead relied largely on individual donations of less than \$200 (Mueller 2018).

Her primary opponent, on the other hand, was the quintessential candidate who was "supposed" to run for office. Joseph Crowley was 58 years old, white, and a 10-term incumbent in the district who hadn't faced a primary challenger in 14 years. As the chair of the House Democratic Caucus, he was deeply steeped in a Democratic party that contributed to his campaign outspending Ocasio-Cortez nearly 18-1 in their primary match-up (Hajela 2018).

So no, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez wasn't "supposed" to run for office. And she certainly wasn't supposed to win. But on June 26, 2018 she defeated Crowley by 15 percentage points in the primary, and went on to win the general election with 78% of the vote to become the youngest-ever woman elected to Congress. By the time of her swearing-in to the House in January of 2019, she had evolved from a long-shot grassroots campaigner to the second-most talked about politician in America (Alter 2018).

Although Ocasio-Cortez's story is perhaps the most well known, it is one of just many in which female candidates in 2018 broke well-established political norms and expectations. At the state level, Nevada became the first state to elect a state legislature in which women held the majority of the seats, and Maine and South Dakota elected their first female governors. In Congress, two states elected their first female Senators, including Kyrsten Sinema (TN), the first openly bisexual Senator. For the first time, there were over 100 women elected to the House of Representatives; joining Ocasio-Cortez were the first Native American women, the first Muslim women, and the first women of color from a number of states. In total, these stories, amongst countless others, constituted the largest ever jump in female representation in elected office in the United States.

What was it about the 2018 midterm elections that led to the emergence of this "pink wave"? Although the news media had, of course, closely followed the election cycle and its outcomes, these stories tended to focus more on individual anecdotes rather than analyzing big picture themes. At the same time, other organizations such as the Center for American Women and Politics, dutifully collected and

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reported macro-level statistics on the candidates who were contesting and winning elections, without focusing on more the micro-level scope of inquiry. There were few, if any, attempts to combine these two levels of analysis. While this is not surprising due to the contemporary nature of the topic, it represents a significant gap in the ability to understand and explain what was different about the 2018 midterms.

It is in the context of these observations that this project emerged. I aims to examine the relationship between gender and vote share in the 2018 midterm elections, and provide an academic dimension to the already-existing analyses. Specifically, what role did gender play in the success of candidates for the House of Representatives?

In addressing this question, I look to a variety of sources and methods. On one hand, this project borrows from and builds on the long tradition of academia examining how and why women have interacted with the American political system. In addition to this qualitative study, I also use quantitative research in order to understand the specific impact that a candidate's gender had in the 2018 midterms. By employing this mixed-method approach, I hope to offer more nuanced and complete insights that add to our understandings of the election cycle.

Chapter 2 is the foundation of my qualitative analysis and provides a theoretical framework of women in politics and, specifically, women in elected office. It begins with an operational definition of political participation and an examination of the evolution of women's involvement in participatory democracy in the United States. I show that, although women equal and surpass men in most aspects of

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political participation, they fall short in holding elected office. I identify the challenges that female candidates must face in not only contesting elections, but entering them in the first place, and argue that the lack of women in the candidate pool is the most significant barrier to increasing female representation.

Chapter 3 extends the qualitative aspect of my research by analyzing the historical context and precedent to 2018; namely, the 1992 "Year of the Woman" elections. This election cycle represented the only other significant increase in female representation, and has therefore often been compared to the 2018 midterms. In addition to their outcomes, however, these elections also have striking parallels in their political context. This chapter therefore examines the lead-up to the 1992 elections and argues that administrative issues, sexism scandals and a changing Congress were key factors to female candidates' electoral success.

Chapter 4 builds on the framework identified in the previous chapter, and applies the same model to the 2018 midterms. Once again, I show that administrative issues, sexism scandals and congressional changes were highly salient precursors to the elections, and gave a disproportionate advantage to female candidates. This chapter goes on to explore the makeup of the initial candidate pool, as well as the electoral outcomes in greater detail.

Chapter 5 constructs the framework for the quantitative side of my research by providing an overview of the methods used in my empirical analysis. As this project entailed extensive original data, this chapter details how these data were identified, collected, and validated. I also identify my specific hypotheses relating gender and political performance for different subsets of candidates, and discuss

how I analyzed these hypotheses.

Chapter 6 reports on the results of my statistical analysis. It begins with a brief overview of the descriptive statistics of my data, as well as a report on the findings for each of my specific hypotheses. It moves on to a more extensive discussion and explanation of my findings in the context of my qualitative framework.

Finally, Chapter 7 concludes with a summary of my findings, and discusses some of their tangible and theoretical implications. It also identifies some areas for future and more detailed research.

## Chapter 2

# Literature Review

In order to understand women's success in the 2018 midterm elections, it is first necessary to orient these candidates' individual outcomes in the broader context of the study of women in politics, and particularly of women in elective office. In short, what can the literature and previous research tell us about how women have historically participated in the political system, and what explains these observations? A vital aspect of analyzing women's political participation is analyzing their *lack* of participation in some arenas of political activity: namely, the striking gap between men and women in elected office. This chapter will therefore begin with a brief operational definition of political participation, before identifying and describing women's participation in a variety of political processes and moving to focus particularly on elected offices and the prevalence of the gender gap amongst elected officials. It will then turn to the subsequent literature that attempts to understand and explain this phenomenon.

## 2.1 Women's political participation

In order to define women's historical and current participation in the U.S. political system, it is first imperative to define *political participation*, both as a concept and as a set of concrete actions. Political scientists and theorists have long struggled to agree on a singular, comprehensive definition of political participation. In his (albeit, non-comprehensive) review of different, and often contradictory, definitions, Patrick Conge (1988, 241) identifies the main issues over which the field disagrees as: active vs passive forms of participation; aggressive vs nonaggressive (i.e. conventional) behaviors; structural vs nonstructural objects; governmental vs nongovernmental aims; mobilized vs voluntary actions; and intended vs unintended outcomes.

For the purpose of this paper and its discussion on women in politics, I choose to base my definition of political participation on Sidney Verba and Norman H. Nie's formative work on the subject. They define political participation as "those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take" (1972, 2), and go on to further differentiate this concept into 4 categories of concrete actions: voting, cooperative activity, contacting, and campaign activity.

While this definition includes a substantial range of different activities, it is important to note its limitations as well. In reference to the previously acknowledged controversies in the field, this definition is narrow in the sense that its original construct does not include passive forms of participation, aggressive behaviors, nonstructural objects, nongovernmental aims, mobilized actions or unintended

outcomes. While some of these behaviors are aptly excluded, such as passive participation (e.g. general feelings of patriotism) and actions with nongovernmental and antistructural aims, as they are not directly aimed at influencing government personal or actions, I argue that Verba and Nie's definition *does* actually include some of these behaviors. Aggressive behaviors were originally understood to include all actions of civil disobedience, but I believe this understanding must be rationalized to include only acts of political violence rather than any aggressive or "unconventional" actions, such as strikes, and protests, that should be defined as participation via cooperative activity. Finally, I explicitly include running for and holding electoral office as a part of campaign activity, as it is an activity occurring during the campaign timeframe; the "private citizens" aspect of the original definition therefore becomes, simply, "citizens."

In short, then, my working definition of political participation encompasses Verba and Nie's definition of "activities by ... citizens ... aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take" via voting, cooperative activity (*including* unconventional, non-violent actions), contacting, and campaign activity (*including* running for and holding elected office). The remainder of the section will analyze how women have historically participated in these political behaviors, and how they participate today.

### **Cooperative activity**

Cooperative activities involve "group or organizational activity by citizens to deal with social and political problems" (Verba and Nie 1972, 47). Women have participated with the political system via social and political movements before they even



had the ability to vote. The abolitionist movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for example, included many female participants, and leaders, that worked to end slavery in the United States. During the same time frame, the Seneca Falls convention launched the women's suffrage movement that would, 72 years later, successfully lobby Congress to pass the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. At its height, suffrage organizations had millions of members nationwide, organized into state and local factions (McCammon 2003)

Women continued to participate in and lead movements throughout US history, both in general social movements (e.g. the civil rights movements in the 1950s and 60s) and women-specific movements (e.g. the birth control movement in the 1920s and 30s). More recently, in what was "likely the largest single-day demonstration in recorded U.S. history," between three and five million women participated in Women's Marches in more than 500 cities across the United States calling for protection and enactment of various "women's" issues, such as reproductive health-care, as well as general rights and progressive policies (Chenoweth and Pressman 2017).

### **Contacting**

Contacting includes "instances in which individuals with particular concerns initiate contacts with government officials" (Verba and Nie 1972, 46). The Bill of Rights guarantees the right to "petition the Government for a redress of grievances" in the First Amendment; methods have included literal written petitions, petitioning Congressional Representatives and other elected officials in person, and various

forms of new technology as it emerged. Women's suffrage movements and abolitionist movements, for example, utilized large-scale petitions and letter-writing campaigns in their efforts (Higginson, 1986). In 1941, the first female Congresswoman Jeannette Rankin (MT) urged Americans opposed to World War II to "call your congressman by telephone every day and tell him how you feel" (Schulz 2017).

Following the 2016 election, there was an influx of calls to Representatives (Costa, DeBonis, Rucker 2017; Werft 2017). Planned Parenthood was one of many organizations who released scripts for contacting representatives to express support for their group. The Indivisible movement organized letter-writing and calling campaigns responding to Cabinet appointments, immigration and healthcare policies, and various other issues. Magazines and newspapers published articles on how best to contact your representative, both online and in print. While it is difficult to quantify how women and men have engaged in this participatory activity differently, it is clear that women have utilized this method of political participation both historically and in today's political climate.

### **Voting**

Voting is perhaps the most straightforward participatory activity, and includes voting in presidential, non-presidential, and local elections. Women won the right to vote at various levels in individual states throughout the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and won universal suffrage with the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1920. Although there was no comprehensive tracking of national voter turnout, anecdotal reporting indicates that women were initially slow to take to the polls

for various reasons, especially in comparison to their male counterparts, many of whom had been enfranchised for more than 100 years (Allen, 2009).

By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, women began exercising their right to vote more so than men. Since the Census Bureau began tracking voter turnout in 1964, there have been more female voters than male voters in every presidential election (Center for American Woman and Politics 2017). Since 1980, the proportion of eligible women who voted in a presidential election has been higher than the proportion of eligible men and, following a similar trajectory, a higher proportion of women have turned out to vote in every non-presidential election since 1986 (Center for American Women and Politics 2017).

### **Campaign Activity**

Finally, campaign activity encompasses any activity that takes place during the election time frame, including working for a party or candidate, attending meetings, donating money to a candidate and, per my own definition, running for and holding political office (Verba and Nie 1972, 46). Women began running for office, albeit in mostly symbolic statements, before they had the right to vote (Palmer and Simon 2012, 2). Various women won elected office at the local and state levels in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the first woman was elected to Congress in 1917 when Jeannette Rankin successfully ran for the House of Representatives from Montana (Center for American Women in Politics 2017).

Although women have been participating in this arena for a similar time frame as the other activities that make up political participation, they still lag far behind

their male counterparts when it comes to campaign activity. Women contest and hold elected office at a much lower rate than men, donate at a much lower percent and level than male donors, and consult on federal and gubernatorial campaigns at only a third of the rate as male consultants (Bryner and Weber 2018; Dittmar 2010). While many factors could, potentially, influence these observations (such as the wage gap, for example), the fact remains that although women participate at an equal or greater rate than men in many concrete political activities, there is another story to be told with campaign activity and elected office.

## **2.2 Women in elected office**

Although women are active participants in many sectors of the political system, such as those discussed in the previous section, they are still significantly under-represented in a vital aspect of our political system; elected office. This under-representation is evident within every subset of office, from local and municipal offices to statewide and federal positions, and is strikingly consistent across these different levels. According to the Center for American Women and Politics (2018), although women make up more than 50% of the United States' population, they only make up 20.0% of Congress and 19.3% of the House of Representatives. At the state level, only 23.4% of all statewide executive office holders and 25.5% of state legislators are women. Although these numbers vary across the country, no state legislature had reached even 40% female representation until 2018, when Nevada elected 50.3% women into its legislature. Finally, at the local level, 20.7% of major U.S. cities with populations over 100,000 and 21.8% of cities with populations over

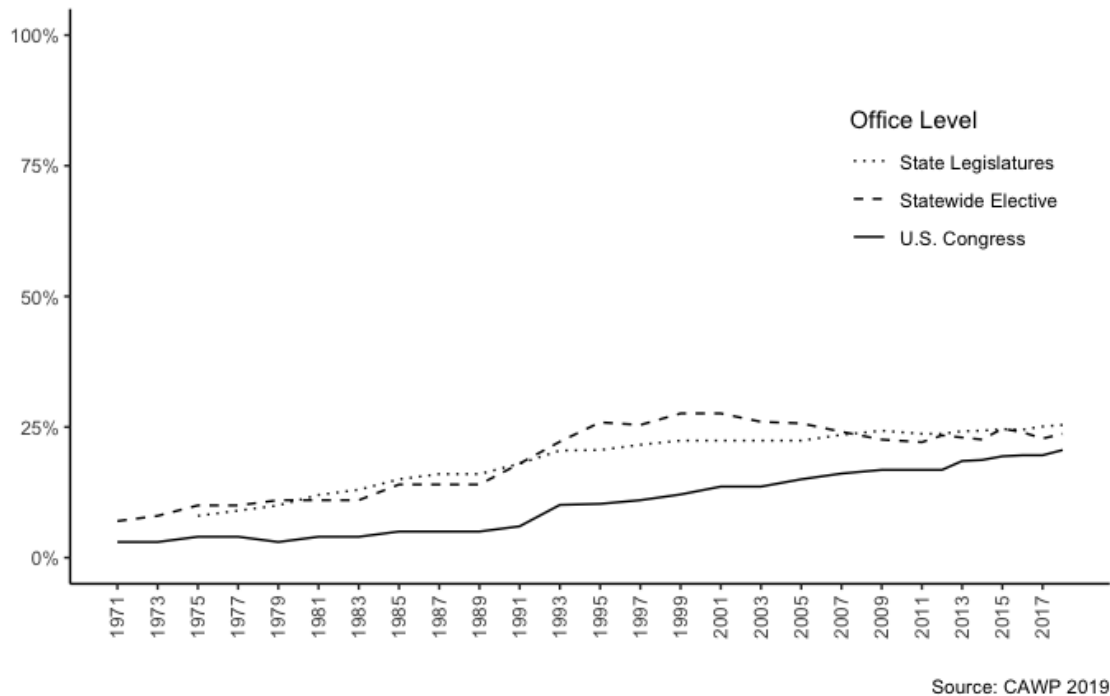


FIGURE 2.1: Percent of women in elected offices (1971-2018).

30,000 have female mayors. If women make up more than half of the population, why do they only hold about a quarter of elected offices in the United States?

This gender gap is striking not only in its scope, but in its persistence. It has been over 100 years since the first women entered local, state and federal offices in the United States, yet they continue to lag far behind men in political representation and seemingly will continue to do so for years to come. As seen in Figure 6.3, and with the notable exception of 1991-1993 during which the “Year of the Woman” greatly increased the number of female officeholders,<sup>1</sup> female representation has

<sup>1</sup>As discussed at further length in Chapter 3, 1992: The Year of the Woman

only increased incrementally in U.S. Congress and state legislatures, and seemingly stalled in statewide elective offices. If these historical trends endure, women will not achieve equal representation in Congress until 2117 (Institute for Women's Policy Research 2018).

The lack of progress in closing the gender gap in elected office is also noteworthy because it is not recurrent in other measures of political participation discussed in the previous section. Women have been voting and running for elected office for approximately the same time frame, yet the gains women have made in the polls are not replicated in elected offices. While these two observations on women's interaction with the political system are not, of course, a perfect comparison, they do demonstrate that the lack of women in elected office is not a derivative of lack of overall political participation. Women make up well over 50% of registered and active voters (Center for America Women and Politics 2017), yet barely a quarter of elected officials. Why are women matching and surpassing men in some aspects of political participation, but still falling so short in elected office?

### **"When women run, women win"**

The simplest potential explanation for why women are not equally represented in elected office is that women simply do not win elections at the same rate as their male counterparts. It is certainly feasible that there exist some set of systematic obstacles that women encounter that would prevent them from winning office that men simply do not face. Whether an outcome of voter perception (e.g. overt or implicit voter biases against women) or objective differences in candidate quality (e.g. education or political experience, which could be determined by these systematic

obstacles), perhaps male candidates simply perform better than female candidates, thus explaining the gender gap in elected office.

It has long been established, however, that when women run for office, they win elections at a similar rate to male candidates (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1987). Decades of research has shown when similar races are compared, women and men raise a similar amount of money, win a similar number of overall votes, and ultimately win a similar number of elections (Darcy, Welch and Clark 1987; Dolan 2014; Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997). These findings hold true not just for white female candidates, but for female candidates of color across different ethnicities as well. In short, gender is not the determinate factor in successful versus unsuccessful candidacies; rather, traditional indicators like incumbency and party seemingly play a much more significant role.

These observations hold true for studies at local, state and federal levels, and have been specifically replicated in the elections directly relating to the scope of this project; analysis of elections between 1982 and 2012 found no evidence of disadvantages for female candidates for the House of Representatives in terms of vote share, campaign funding, or probability of victory (Anastasopoulos 2016). In fact, Eric Smith and Richard Fox (2001) found that female House candidates actually have some advantages over male candidates within certain demographics of voters. Women running for open seats in the House of Representatives have strong support from female voters; this gender preference is not seen in Senate races, nor with male voters for male candidates (Smith and Fox 2001).

Although these studies offer convincing testimony to the idea that “when women

run, women win," it is important to note that there have been some disputes over this principle within the literature as well. One such dispute is the idea of gender stereotypes that influence the way voters, as well as other politicians and even female politicians themselves, view women in political positions. Kathleen Dolan (2004; 2014) argues that evaluations on women's political performances and political positions are viewed through a gendered lens; women are viewed as more honest, compassionate and expressive, while men are viewed as more competent, decisive and stronger in leadership roles. Similarly, women are "assumed to be more interested in, and more effective in dealing with, issues such as child care, poverty, education, health care, women's issues and the environment," while men are associated with "economic development, the military, trade, taxes and agriculture" (Dolan 2014, 8). These associations lead voters to make evaluations on candidates based on gendered stereotypes that may or may not be true of the actual candidate, and certainly seem to complicate the "when women run, women win" narrative.

Related to gendered stereotypes regarding female political performance and policy preferences is the concept of the "double bind" that faces women when they enter political or other leadership roles. Because society holds inherent perceptions of leadership and politics that is often contradictory to its stereotypical perceptions of femininity, women must overcome this catch-22, at once proving both their femininity and their ability to perform in a "masculine" world of politics (Jamieson 1995; Dolan, Deckman, and Swers 2018). While this gendered double bind certainly creates serious obstacles for women entering or already in the political field,



such as gendered bias in media coverage of candidates or politicians,<sup>2</sup> these perceptions might also be a benefit in some cases. Because women are viewed as “other than” or “outsiders” to the political system, when voters are unhappy with the status-quo of the political insiders, “being ‘different’ is no longer a bane but a blessing” (Jamieson 1995, 115).

Another important aspect of this discussion is the interaction between gendered stereotypes and a candidate’s party identification. A robust literature has found that female candidates are perceived as more liberal than male candidates from the same party, regardless of their actual ideologies (McDermott 1997; Koch 2000; King and Matland 2003; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009; Dolan and Lynch 2014). These obstacles are especially salient in low information elections when voters are more likely to use demographic cues, such as gender, to determine who to vote for (McDermott 1997). While this perception can be advantageous for some candidates, such as women in liberal districts, it presents unique challenges to Republican women. Although all female candidates must play to the “double bind,” Republican women are additionally tasked with proving themselves to be conservative enough to voters. This task can often prove insurmountable, as it is more difficult for Republican women to earn votes than their male counterparts (King and Matland 2003). Furthermore, because these stereotypes are especially damaging to Republican candidates in primary elections, as voters who participate in primaries tend to be more ideologically extreme than those who participate in

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<sup>2</sup>See, for example, “Gender, Media, and the White House: An Examination of Gender in the Media Coverage of Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, and Ted Cruz in the 2016 Elections” (2016) by Rose Allen

general elections, they can deter Republican women from entering races in the first place (Dolan, Deckman, and Swers 2018).

Finally, it is important to note another significant limitation of the idea “when women run, women win.” Many of these observations are based, of course, on analyzing similar races: male vs. female candidates in open seats, male vs. female challengers, male vs. female incumbents. As discussed in previous sections, men hugely outnumber women in every level of elected office. In other words, there are vastly more male incumbents than female incumbents in any given election. Incumbency advantage is one of the most well-studied aspects of the election cycle, and although the causal mechanisms researchers identify may vary, it is widely recognized that incumbents win elections much more often than their challengers (Cox and Katz 1996; Levitt and Wolfram 1997). In 2016, for example, incumbents running for reelection in the House of Representatives won 98% of their races (John 2016). So, while women may win comparable elections as often as men, the number of male incumbents combined with the high reelection rate for these incumbents continue to make it difficult for women to enter into elected office.

### **Where are the female candidates?**

If women and men win elections at a similar rate, albeit with certain caveats and different experiences that scholars have identified, what can explain the disparity in office holders described in the first section? It turns out a significant driving factor behind women’s extreme underrepresentation in government is not due to lack of winning elections, but due to lack of even contesting them. A growing body of

research has emerged over the last 20 years that attempts to identify the systematic challenges that women face before they even reach political office, focusing on their decisions to run for office in the first place.

One of the most prevalent discussions in this field is that women choose not to run due a lack of confidence in their own qualifications. Richard Fox and Jennifer Lawless (2011) established that women who have similar professional and educational backgrounds, among other objective qualifiers, to their male counterparts are much less likely to consider themselves qualified to run for office even when they rely on the same evaluation methods. They attribute the lack of female candidates, at least partially, to the fact that “women, even in the top tier of professional accomplishment, tend not to consider themselves qualified to run for political office” (Fox and Lawless 2004, 275). These findings have been replicated and expanded on in various studies and articles. Katty Kay and Claire Shipman (2014) speak to the tendency of men to overestimate their abilities and credentials while women underestimate both, even when the abilities are, in fact, equal. Women strive for perfection, while men are content at reaching half of the perceived qualifications necessary for a job (Kay and Shipman 2014). Women are less likely to consider themselves qualified to run for office both abstractly and when considering specific political expertise, and this “gender gap in self-perceived qualifications serves as the most potent explanation for the gender gap in political ambition” (Fox and Lawless 2010).

Reinforcing this crisis of confidence, women also suffer from a lack of active recruitment from parties and official party mechanisms that are not only key to securing candidacy, but to overcoming their self-perceived lack of qualifications.

In her analysis of state legislative elections, Kira Sanbonmatsu (2006) reveals “a gap between elite perceptions and objective measures of women’s status as candidates” that depresses the likelihood of women being recruited by political parties. In other words, the gendered stereotypes identified by Dolan play a significant role in women’s experiences not only during their time in the political world, but before they have even had the chance to enter into it as well. Furthermore, party leaders both actively and unconsciously recruit candidates in their own image; this phenomenon, known as “outgroup bias,” is detrimental to potential female candidates due to the male dominated history of political party leadership that has led to men holding the vast majority of party chair and leadership positions (Niven 1998). For these reasons, potential female candidates, regardless of party, profession, education, or other qualifications, are less likely than men to receive official party encouragement to run for office (Fox and Lawless 2004, 97).

In addition to these two dominating explanations, there exist secondary explanations for the lack of female candidates. Traditional gender roles and familial responsibilities seem to play a much larger role in women’s decisions to run for public office than men, because women are still disproportionately tasked with household responsibilities and raising children when compared with men (Carroll and Strimling 1983; Fox 2001). Because of this unequal household dynamic, women entering the political field (and, of course, many other professional fields) feel obligated to consider “family responsibilities more carefully than do their male counterparts” (Fox and Lawless 2004). It is not surprising, therefore, that female elected officials are less likely to be married or have children, especially young children still living at home, than their male counterparts (Fox 2001; Fox and Lawless

2004).

Still other scholars point to the lack of women in “pipeline” or “feeder” careers that lead to a future in politics such as business, law, education and political activism (Boschma 2017). If women do not enter the professions that precede political careers at the same rate as men due to systematic obstacles and different gender socialization (amongst other reasons), they will make up a smaller percentage of “eligible” candidates and, subsequently, a smaller percentage of elected officials (Fox and Lawless 2012, 2013). Although more women in these pipeline careers would ideally lead to more women entering and emerging from the candidate pool, it is important to note that this is not necessarily the case. The various other obstacles women face in entering the candidate pool still play a large role, even for women in these feeder careers, so simply increasing the number of businesswomen and female lawyers, for example, will not automatically increase the number of female candidates or elected officials if these other obstacles are not addressed.

Although women equal or surpass men in many aspects of political participation, they still fall far behind in both contesting and holding elected office. The literature on women in politics has attempted to explain this phenomena through a number of different avenues, focusing on the difficulties women face in combating gendered voter-held stereotypes, the gender gap in confidence and political ambition, and the lack of active party recruitment, amongst other reasons. While these explanations are vital in helping to explain women’s overall interaction with the American political system, it is also important to understand the mechanisms behind observations that are contrary to the status-quo, such as the 2018 midterms. In order to better understand this atypical election cycle, the next chapter turns to

a literature that analyzes the only similar year on record: 1992, or the Year of the Woman.

## Chapter 3

# 1992: The Year of the Woman

In 1992, more women were elected to Congress than ever before and constituted the first and, until 2018, only significant jump in female representation in history. Prior to 1992, there were only four women in the Senate and twenty-eight women in the House; during the "Year of the Woman," as the 1992 elections came to be known, four total women were elected to the Senate and forty-seven women entered the House (Center for American Women and Politics 2017). While these numbers still amounted to only 10% of Congress, they also denoted the first, and only, significant jump in female representation. Previous and successive gains by women have been due to painstakingly incremental increases from year to year rather than an abrupt increase such as in 1992. How can the 1992 "Year of the Woman" inform a more nuanced understanding of the 2018 midterm elections?

In addition to the theoretical insights offered by the various scholars of women in politics discussed in the previous chapter, the historical context and precedent is also a key foundation to understanding the current midterm elections. The 1992

elections, much like those in 2018, have been noted for the unique and dramatic increase in the number of women elected to Congress. There are, however, additional similarities in the lead-up and the outcomes of the two elections that are striking and worth additional analysis. In that vein, this chapter offers a succinct summary of the background of the 1992 elections, and argues that the impact of presidential policies, sexism scandals, and a changing Congress were the key factors driving the unprecedented election outcomes and their ensuing understandings.

### **3.1 The perfect storm**

#### **Presidential policies**

One of the key factors in the lead up to the so-called “Year of the Woman” was the political and economic realities of the George H.W. Bush administration (1989-1993). After years of intense international conflicts in the Cold War and the Gulf War demanding Americans’ focus, the “nation’s attention [turned] inward to domestic problems” (Carpini and Fuchs 1993, 32). An economic downturn was rapidly turning into a full-blown post-war recession, leading to increased rates of unemployment, and homelessness nationwide (Carpini and Fuchs 1993; United States House of Representatives 2019). Health care costs were rapidly increasing, up more than 32% over the course of the Bush administration, but still leaving more than 35 million Americans without any health insurance (Pear, 1992). The state of education was also cause for concern for many Americans, in part due to the publication of “A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform” in 1983



and its assessment of the “failing” American education system. On this front, and although he had promised voters to be “the education President” on the campaign trail in 1988, President Bush had big ideas but little tangible progress.

While these domestic issues drew a renewed consideration from all Americans, they were of special concern for American women, in part because women often felt their effects more so than their male counterparts. Overall, women in the work force in 1991 earned only 69.9% of men’s annual earnings, and this ratio was considerably worse for black and Hispanic women (Institute for Women’s Policy Research 2012). An economic downturn, therefore, affected women disproportionately. Furthermore, because women were often the primary caregiver in the home, they felt firsthand the effects of a stretched budget and deficient health care and educational systems (Carpini and Fuchs 1993, 32). Finally, in addition to the more general health care inadequacies, women’s reproductive healthcare was under specific attack. Supreme Court cases *Webster v. Reproductive Health Service*, *Rust v. Sullivan*, and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* chipped away at key aspects of a woman’s constitutional right to an abortion defined in *Roe v. Wade* twenty years earlier.

The increased focus on these domestic issues during the second half of the Bush administration was not only of particular concern to women, but of particular benefit to potential female political candidates. A robust literature has found that voters intrinsically depend on gendered stereotypes to define political candidates; male candidates are deemed more competent at “masculine issues,” such as foreign policy and the military, while “feminine issues” include domestic issues like health care, the environment and education (Alexander and Anderson 1993; Dolan and

Lynch 2017; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993). In addition to these voter stereotypes, studies have found that men and women value policies and issue areas differently as voters, candidates and elected officials, and that female candidates are actually more likely to support these “feminine issues” (Fox and Lawless 2010; Poggione 2004).

The ensuing outcome of the political and economic conditions during the second two years of the Bush administration, therefore, set the stage for a 1992 election that was focused primarily on domestic policies. The focus on these issues, as compared to the foreign policy and quasi-wartime politics that had dominated throughout the Cold War era, in turn contributed to an environment that was particularly friendly to female candidates due to both the perceived and actual policy differences between men and women.

### **Sexism scandals**

Another key factor preceding the Year of the Woman was Anita Hill’s public testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee during the nomination, and eventual appointment, of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. When Thurgood Marshall resigned in 1991, Clarence Thomas quickly topped President Bush’s shortlist of potential replacements. This selection was highly controversial from the outset; although Thomas was African-American and would conserve the racial makeup of the Court, he was deeply conservative and his opposition to many hot-button issues like legal abortion and affirmative action were considered by many groups, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Bar Association, and the National Organization for Women, too extreme

to get through the nomination process (Mayer and Abramson 1994). In addition to his polarizing political views, he had served as a federal judge for less than two years at the time of his nomination. Despite these concerns, the nomination went forward to confirmation hearings with the Senate Judiciary Committee, where it faced another challenge (Mayer and Abramson 1994).

During Thomas' confirmation hearings, Anita Hill, a former aide, came forward and announced that she was willing to testify before Congress that Clarence Thomas had repeatedly sexually harassed her while they both worked for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission a decade earlier. While her initial written statement had not convinced the Senate Judiciary Committee to delay the confirmation vote (in part, due to her request for confidentiality throughout the investigation), the allegations were anonymously leaked to the press. The subsequent media storm, and perhaps the efforts of liberal special interest groups, persuaded Hill to testify publicly. The accusations themselves were troublesome and often graphic. According to Hill's testimony, Thomas has continually asked her out despite her repeated denials, had frequently discussed "sexual matters" including vivid descriptions of pornographic films, commented on what she was wearing, and on several occasions told her "graphically of his own sexual prowess" (United States Congress Senate Committee on the Judiciary 1993). Throughout her testimony, Hill also frequently referenced her concern of jeopardizing her working relationship with a man in supervisory position.

More striking than these accusations, however, was the way in which Hill was treated during the three days of televised hearings. The spectacle of the 14 white

men who made up the Senate Judiciary Committee sharply, at times with transparent hostility, questioning a young African-American woman “reinforced the perception that women’s perspectives received short shrift on Capitol Hill” (Office of the Historian, 2007). Women around the country watched as committee members repeatedly asked Hill to recount the crude behavior and vulgar language, repeatedly asked dismissive questions in response to her testimony including “are you a scorned woman?” and “do you have a martyr complex,” and suggested that Hill was perhaps delusional or unstable (United States Congress Senate Committee on the Judiciary 1993). Thomas angrily rebutted all the charges, referring to Hill’s testimony as part of a smear campaign and, famously, as part of a “high-tech lynching for uppity blacks who in any way deign to think for themselves” (United States Congress Senate Committee on the Judiciary 1993). Thomas was confirmed to the Supreme Court a few days after the hearings by a vote of 52 to 48.

Many American women were appalled by both the process and the outcome of the Senate hearings. The disrespectful and arrogant attitudes, as well as the dismissiveness and general misunderstanding of sexual harassment displayed by the all-male committee showed how out of touch Congress was with the American people. Additionally, the televised hearings displayed just how few women held seats in Congress at the time, and how much of a “boys club” it truly was. Only two women were in the Senate in 1991, and none served on the Judiciary Committee. Furthermore, a photo had captured seven Democratic women who marched from the House to Senate building to offer their advice and perspectives to the men who served on the Committee prior to the hearings; these women were turned away at the door by their colleagues.

It has been well established in the literature that, although all candidates typically cite a number of reasons for making the decision to run for office, “women are much more likely to run out of concern for a particular issue” (Dolan, Deckman, and Swers 2007, 143). In other words, female candidates are more likely to decide to run due to a specific event or a specific policy issue than male candidates. The media storm and public outrage surrounding the Hill hearings, in addition to increasing the political salience of women, also created a tangible issue that was a key aspect in pushing women into political action and political campaigns. Many women directly referenced these hearings both on the campaign trail and in later reflections on their decisions to run (United States Senate)

### **Congressional Changes**

In addition to the political climate surrounding the Bush administration and the Hill hearings, Congress itself underwent significant changes preceding the 1992 election. The principal driver of this change was the number of open seats in the House; there were over 90 House seats that did not have an incumbent running for reelection, which helped to level the playing field for female candidates. While every election cycle includes a number of open seats, usually due to members retiring or running for higher office, this year had a considerably higher number than any other previous or subsequent election due to two significant causes.

The more conventional reason for the high number of open seats is that it was the first election following the 1990 Census and ensuing redistricting process. This redistricting process was controlled by Democratic legislatures in many key states,

and 26 new districts were redrawn on the congressional map. The impact of redistricting not only changed the makeup of these new congressional districts, but the make-up of Congress as well. The number of districts with African-American and Hispanic majorities, for example, nearly doubled (Pear, 1992). While these districts do not universally elect minority candidates, many do when compared to majority-white districts (Pear, 1992). And, while some members chose to run in new districts, many members of Congress chose to retire rather than to run in a district that they no longer represented, in part because they did not enjoy incumbency advantage to the same extent as if they were running in their original districts. While they still benefit from direct officeholder advantages such as fundraising ability, name recognition, and party support, they are less able to deter strong challengers when they run in a new district (Levitt and Wolfram 1997). This is a vital distinction, as “a large fraction of the incumbency advantage is the result of incumbents’ apparent ability to deter high-quality challengers” (Levitt and Wolfram 1997, 56).

In addition to the effects of redistricting, the House banking scandal also helped to produce the conditions that led to the highest turnover in nearly 40 years of congressional elections. In September of 1991, the General Accounting Office published a report that over the course a one-year period more than 200 House members had written checks with insufficient funds, more than half of which were for more than \$1000, and that the House bank had covered the bad checks without any charges or consequences (Congressional Quarterly 1992). This was not technically illegal; the members-only bank had been honoring personal checks even if they did not have adequate funds since at least 1831, and it had never received

significant public attention (Congressional Quarterly 1992). When a Capitol Hill reporter picked up the story in early 1991, however, it quickly spread to other media sources and became a public scandal. The perception that Representatives had special privileges and protections that were not afforded to average Americans led to a political crisis. In the end, following intense public pressure and an official ethics investigation, the House bank closed and the House ethics committee released the names of more than 300 current and former members of Congress who overdrew their checking accounts at least once. There were significant political consequences to this decision. Researchers have found that “overdrafts had a substantial influence on both voluntary and involuntary departures from the House in 1992 [and] overdrafts had their strongest effect on retirements and primary election defeat” (Dimock and Jacobson 1995, 1144).

In short, due to both the effects of redistricting and the House banking scandal, 65 members of the House chose not to run for reelection and 27 newly created districts did not have true incumbents. This opened more than 90 seats for potential candidates to run for Congress without having to face an incumbent and the inherent advantage they hold in elections,<sup>1</sup> significantly higher than in any other election cycle. Because overcoming incumbency is one of the most significant electoral obstacles for both male and female candidates, and the vast number of incumbents are male, these “open seats are the most expedient avenue to increasing female representation” (Gaddie and Bullock 1995, 750).

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<sup>1</sup>As discussed at length in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

**Other Factors**

While the Bush administration, Hill hearings, and high number of congressional retirements were essential to creating the political climate preceding the 1992 elections, there were other factors that are also worth mentioning. In the years leading up to the election cycle, women had made significant gains in lower levels of government such as state legislatures (Center for American Women and Politics, 2019). This increase in women with elective experience also led to an increase in the potential candidate pool for higher office, as state legislative office is often a precursor to running a congressional campaign.

Additionally, a number of prominent women's political organizations were highly active and highly funded during the 1992 election cycle, responding in part to the same issues that female candidates were. EMILY's List, a political action committee (PAC) that helps elect pro-choice Democratic women, tripled the amount of money raised compared to the previous election, and their donor base increased from 3,500 to over 22,000 donors (Gertzog and Mandel, 1992). Likewise, the Women's Campaign Fund, the oldest PAC dedicated to electing women, doubled its number of donors and fundraising totals (Gertzog and Mandel, 1992). Driven largely by these and similar organizations, 1992 saw an unprecedented increase in the amount of money raised for female candidates.

Finally, the fact that Congress was especially unpopular positively impacted female candidates. Due in part to issues like the House banking scandal and lack of action on important policy issues, congressional approval was polled under 20% in the months leading up to the November election (Gallup). The literature has



established that women are often viewed as “other than” or “outsiders” to the political system; this was especially salient as millions of voters watched a committee of 14 white men question Anita Hill (Jamieson 1995). When voters are unhappy with political insiders, it benefits women to be considered outside the status quo. Elizabeth Furse, a Representative from Oregon, noted of her successful 1992 campaign: “People see women as agents of change. Women are seen as outsiders, outside good old boy network which people are perceiving has caused so many of the economic problems we see today” (United States House of Representatives).

## 3.2 The elections

Due largely to these identified political themes, as well as numerous other micro-level factors, a record number of women ran for public office in 1992, including a record number of women at the Congressional level. A total of 29 women filed to run for the Senate and 222 women ran for the House, far surpassing previous numbers, especially in House races.<sup>2</sup> A record number of these women also went on to win their primaries and appear on the general ballot: eleven in the Senate and 106 in the House. The vast majority of these candidates were running as Democrats, and many were running either as challengers or for open seats. Additionally, there were more general election races that featured two women than in any other election cycle.

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<sup>2</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all statistics and numbers in this section come from the Center for American Woman and Politics, “Past Candidate and Election Information” (2018).

**Short-term outcomes**

The immediate outcomes of the 1992 elections were, as anticipated from the filing and primary victories, groundbreaking. On the state level, a record number of women won state legislative offices and increased the total number of women in state-wide elective offices to over 20% for the first time. Women in the Senate increased their standing from two members to six with the election of four new Democratic members; also significant was the first African-American woman to serve in the Senate with the election of Carol Moseley Braun (IL), and the first state in which both Senators were women with the elections of Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein in California.

In addition to the state level and the Senate, and of more concern to the specific focus of this thesis, women in the House of Representatives also saw record-breaking victories. Of the 106 women who advanced past the primaries, 47 won their general elections; twenty-four of these women were non-incumbents. Thirty-five of the women elected were Democrats, including all but three of the new members. This spoke to the connection that just beginning to be established between party and gender; there are many more women officeholders who identify as Democratic than Republican, and women are significantly more likely than “men to hold progressive policy preferences and self-identify as ‘liberal’” (Lawless and Fox 2005, 79). For this reason, 1992 can be more properly described not as the “Year of the Woman,” but rather as the “Year of the Democratic Woman.”

### **Long-term outcomes**

In total, the percentage of women in Congress grew from 6% to 10.1%, and similarly from 6.9% to 10.8% in the House of Representatives. While this is only a minor bump in overall representation, and although women were still significantly underrepresented in both chambers of Congress, it was significant in that it was the only dramatic increase after years of extremely gradual gains. Women had only been increasing their membership by a few seats each election cycle since the first woman was elected to the 65<sup>th</sup> Congress in 1917, and in some years throughout the 1960s, the number of women had actually declined. Then the Year of the Woman broke this pattern; there was a larger percent increase in the number of female Congresswomen in the 1992 election than in the prior forty years combined.

The Year of the Woman did not set a new standard for how women participated and performed in Congress; instead, women have returned to the consistently small increases they experienced throughout the 1970s. However, although there have been no comparable dramatic increases, “the rate at which women have been integrated into Congress has actually been higher” than the previous rate (Palmer and Simon 2006, 35). It only took about twenty years, for example, to match the overall increase seen in 1992 as opposed to the 40 years it took beforehand.

The 1992 “Year of the Woman” elections offer a crucial historical lens in understanding the 2018 midterms by offering a quasi-case study that parallels many of the important features of this past election cycle. The unprecedented increase in women elected to political office was outside the scope of our usual understanding of how women participate in the political system, just as it was in 2018. A unique

convergence of political events prior to the 1992 elections led to women's decisions to run and, ultimately, to their success: these same driving forces (presidential policies, sexism scandals, and a changing Congress) also materialized prior to the 2018 elections and led to similar and remarkable outcomes as in 1992.

## Chapter 4

# 2018: The Year of the Woman Revisited?

On Election Day in 2018, Americans elected more women to Congress than ever before and, for the first time since 1992, did so in an extraordinary surge. In total, 25 women were elected to serve in the Senate and 102 women were elected to the House of Representatives (Center for American Women in Politics 2018). These numbers represent a significant breakthrough; although women still do not make up even 25% of Congress as a whole, it is the first time women have made up a quarter of the Senate and over 100 members of the House. The breakthrough in the number of women elected to office was made even more pronounced with the historic diversity of these women; the first Muslim women, first Native American women and the youngest women in Congressional history were elected, as well as the first women of color from a number of different states. Based on these outcomes, parallels to 1992 were inevitable, with political commentators, politicians and newspapers explicitly referring to the 2018 elections as another "Year of the

Woman."

But how exactly did the 2018 elections reflect what we saw and understood from the first "Year of the Woman"? In this chapter, I argue that the same factors leading up to 1992, namely administrative issues, sexism scandals, and congressional changes were indisputably evident and highly salient in the years and months leading up to the 2018 midterms. This chapter will therefore again discuss the background and outcomes of the 2018 midterm elections, emphasizing how these same three factors were again vital precursors to the elections and their outcomes.

## **4.1 Another perfect storm**

### **Presidential policies**

The political climate and priorities of the Trump administration were a key factor leading up to 2018 midterm elections, in much the same way that the Bush administration was leading up to 1992. While the 1990s experienced policy shifts from international conflicts towards a focus on the domestic agenda, the first two years of the Trump administration has been defined by a major reversal in many policies that were set during the Obama era, including in many key domestic issues. One of Trump's major campaign promises was to repeal the Affordable Care Act ("Obamacare"). After a series of unsuccessful attempts, the individual mandate was repealed in December of 2017, leading to a significant increase in both the number of people uninsured and the cost of premiums (Congressional Budget Office 2018; Fielder 2018). The Department of Education underwent significant

changes, revoking protections from student loan defaults and for-profit universities, and scrapping guidelines on how to deal with sexual assault and Title IX issues on college campuses (Saul and Taylor 2017; Cowley and Silver-Greenberg 2017). Similarly, the Environmental Protection Agency attempted to eliminate almost 80 regulations in 2017 alone, including significant changes to efforts fighting climate change (Popovich, Albeck-Ripka and Pierre-Louis 2018). A variety of protections for the LGBTQ community, including workplace reporting and transgender military service, were also targets for the Trump administration deregulation process. Finally, Trump's concentrated focus on reducing legal and illegal immigration were a sharp departure from the Obama era doctrine and lead to threats to end protections for recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, as well as a "zero tolerance" border policy during which nearly 3,000 children were separated from their families while trying to enter the country illegally (Jordan 2019).

Many of these issues were of particular concern to women. Healthcare and education issues, for example, are felt particularly strongly by women as they often remain in positions of primary caregivers for their families. Reduced guidelines on student loan regulation and forgiveness are also particularly detrimental to women; although women represent slightly more than half of college and university enrollees, they hold two-thirds of outstanding student debt as they, on average, "take on larger student loans than do men [and] because of the gender pay gap, they have less disposable income with which to repay their loans after graduation" (American Association of University Women 2018). Furthermore, women's healthcare again came under specific attack as Trump advocated for overturning

Roe v. Wade, ending funding for Planned Parenthood, and became the first sitting president to address the anti-abortion “March for Life” group (McCammon and Kelly 2018).

As discussed in reference to the 1992 elections, the country’s focus on these issues was beneficial to female candidates seeking political office. Women are seen as more apt to deal with “feminine” identified policy areas, such as the environment, healthcare and education, as well as LGBTQ rights, due to both voter-held gendered stereotypes and established voting trends of female legislators (Alexander and Anderson 1993; Dolan and Lynch 2017; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Fox and Lawless 2010; Poggione 2004). Women are also viewed by voters to be more compassionate, and “more interested in issues that affect women and children,” such as the issues with DACA and family separation at the border (Dolan 2005, 31). Women running on platforms involving these issues are not only more likely to be trusted to address them by voters, but are actually more likely to actually do so if elected (Fox and Lawless 2010; Poggione 2004). The shifting policies during the first two years of the Trump Administration therefore lead to an intense focus on the policy issues most associated with and entrusted to women.

In addition to the policies enacted by the Trump administration, responses to the President himself has been identified as a major aspect of the 2018 midterms. This narrative focused largely on the public response to and perceptions of Trump and, in particular, his degrading remarks directed towards women during both his candidacy and presidency. On the campaign trail, divisive comments, like “there was blood coming out of her ... wherever,” and “Look at that face! Would anyone vote for that?” drew immediate condemnation from both sides of the aisle, as did



a leaked video in which then-candidate Trump could be heard bragging about groping women and making non-consensual sexual advances. These controversies continued into his presidency; President Trump has publicly commented on a number of women's physical appearances, from members of the press to the French first lady, all of which drew significant criticism.

Political commentators, activist groups, and women across the country identified Trump's sexist attitudes as a large motivator for women choosing to participate in politics, both as candidates and as voters. In the weeks and months following the 2016 presidential election, for example, a prominent aspect of the media cycle was that the election of Donald Trump essentially served as a catalyst for an unprecedented "pink wave" of female candidates in the midterms. Prominent newspapers and online magazines published articles such as "Hopes for a female president dashed, women take running for office into their own hands," "Women marching against Trump plan next step: public office" and "How do you inspire women to run for office? Elect Trump" (Stanley-Becker 2016; Kearney 2017; Cauterucci 2017). While some women have pushed back on this narrative, many female candidates have referenced the role of President Trump in their decision to run and on the campaign trail (Dolan, Shah and Stripp 2019).

### **Sexism scandels**

Another crucial element preceding the 2018 midterm elections was the public testimony against Brett Kavanaugh at the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings following his nomination to the Supreme Court. Anthony Kennedy announced his retirement in July of 2017, giving Trump the opportunity to not only appoint his second

Supreme Court Justice in his first year in office, but to replace a swing vote in many important decisions with a solidly conservative Justice. Trump quickly announced Brett Kavanaugh as his nominee, a controversial decision from the outset, due to the partisan gridlock that was a defining characteristic of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress. Democratic opposition argued that he was too partisan and too conservative to be considered, as he had deep connections with the Ken Starr investigation and George W. Bush administration, and had expressed beliefs that sitting presidents should be protected from the “burden” of lawsuits and criminal investigations (Montarno 2018). Additionally, the Democratic Party in Congress was still unhappy with the outcome of then-President Obama’s Supreme Court nomination of Merrick Garland following Antonin Scalia’s death in 2016. Republican Congressional leaders had announced that it was not Obama’s prerogative to fill the vacancy, but rather that of the next president of the United States, and refused to approve of or hold proceedings on Garland’s nomination until Trump was elected in November (Elving 2018). Despite this Democratic opposition, Kavanaugh’s nomination went forward to hearings with the Senate Judiciary Committee.

A week into the proceedings, Dr. Christine Blasey Ford came forward and publicly accused Kavanaugh of sexually assaulting her when they were teenagers. Ford first brought the allegations to her Representative, who passed them along to the ranking Democrat on the Judiciary Committee. Like Hill, Ford had originally intended her allegations to be confidential, but when aspects of her story were anonymously leaked to the press, she agreed to attach her name to the claims and publicly testify in front of Congress. Her testimony was emotional and compelling, recounting how Kavanaugh had locked her in a bedroom, groped her, tried to remove her

clothes, and held his hand over her mouth to quiet her screams to the point that she thought she might suffocate (Politico 2018). She was explicit in her accusation, saying “I believed he was going to rape me ... I thought that Brett was accidentally going to kill me,” and spoke at great length of the lasting effect and trauma that the attack caused her and her family (Politico 2018). In his own testimony, Kavanaugh unequivocally denied the charge, and was soon confirmed to the Supreme Court by a vote of 50 to 48.

As in the Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill hearings a generation prior, the accusations themselves were just one dimension of a complicated narrative. One of the most prominent themes was the contrast between the temperament of Ford and Kavanaugh during their testimonies. Ford, although visibly emotional at various times throughout the hearing, was composed and restrained in both her opening statement and in her responses to questions. When asked about her memories of the event and subsequent traumas, for example, she described how the “neurotransmitter encodes memories into the hippocampus” and locks in traumatic incidents (Bloomberg Government 2018). She was exceedingly polite to Senators during their questioning; when asked if she needed a break following her opening statement, she responded “does that work for you? Does that work for you, as well?”, telling the Republican Chairman that she was “used to being collegial” (Bloomberg Government 2018).

Kavanaugh, on the other hand, was combative and aggressive from the outset. In his opening statement, for example, he referred to the hearings as a “calculated and orchestrated political hit” and as a “[r]evenge on behalf of the Clintons and millions of dollars in money from outside left-wing opposition groups” (Bloomberg

Government 2018). He also interrupted and shouted over questions numerous times, including refusing to answer Democratic Senator Amy Klobuchar's questions about his drinking habits, and instead asking if she had a drinking problem (Bloomberg Government 2018).

Another glaring contrast was the differences across political party lines. Although the Senate Judiciary Committee now included four women and three people of color, all 11 Republican members were white men; three of these members had also served on the committee during the Hill hearings. Cognizant of the optics and potential criticisms, the Republican committee members "hired a female assistant to go on staff and ask [their] questions in a respectful and professional way" (Golshen, 2018). The Republicans relied heavily on the prosecutor they hired, with every Senator giving up his allotted time to allow the hired female prosecutor to ask their questions in order "to avoid the visual of old and white Republican senators interrogating a woman who says she was sexually assaulted" (Scott, 2018). Even with their effort, Republican Senator Orrin G. Hatch still caused controversy when, speaking about Ford, he told a reporter "I think she's an attractive, good witness ... In other words, she's pleasing" (Stolberg and Fandos 2018). The Democrats, on the other hand, spoke directly with Dr. Ford without any go-between and both Republicans and Democrats directly questioned Kavanaugh.

These hearings mirrored those of Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas from 1991 in a number of significant ways; an already-controversial Supreme Court nominee was accused of sexual misconduct, his accuser publicly testified against him at his Senate hearings and both nominees were eventually confirmed by razor-thin margins. Unlike in 1991, however, the hearings came in the context of the "MeToo"

movement, therefore joining an already established and prominent national conversation on sexual violence. This changing cultural landscape regarding sexual harassment and assault can be seen in the reaction to the testimony; in 1991, just 24% of Americans believed Hill was telling the truth following the hearings, while 58% believed Thomas (Montanaro 2018). In 2018, on the other hand, 45% of Americans believed Ford's version and only 33% believed Kavanaugh's (Montanaro 2018). While there are critically different aspects at play in these two scenarios, including the importance of race and the intersection of race and gender in the 1991 hearings, the context of the MeToo movement had an important effect on the viewers and participants of the 2018 hearings.

The public spectacle of the Ford and Kavanaugh hearings, therefore, not only increased the political salience of women due to its own incidence, but was buoyed by the social and political framework of the MeToo movement and an already existing focus on sexual violence. Following their broadcast of the hearings, for example, C-SPAN fielded calls from viewers who, inspired by Dr. Ford, spoke of their own experiences with sexual assault (Naylor 2018). There was also a surge in calls to the National Sexual Assault Hotline, including many women who wanted to talk about their experiences from years previously (Naylor 2018). Although the hearings occurred too late in the electoral cycle to have an impact on women's initial decision to run, such as with the Hill and Thomas hearings 27 years earlier, they became a tangible issues and a common point of reference for female Congressional candidates already on the campaign trail.

**Congressional changes**

The 2018 midterms were also noted for the uncommonly high number of open seats that emerged preceding the elections, and the subsequent influx of new congressional candidates, including women. In total there were over 100 House seats that did not have an incumbent running for reelection, by far the highest ever number of open seats in an election, and only approached by those in the 1992 elections (Roll Call 2018). Like in the 1992 congressional landscape, these open seats were largely due to two factors: a major redistricting project that took effect for the first time in 2018 and a mass exodus of Congressmen.

Although there was no census mandated redistricting prior to the 2018 midterms, there was a significant redistricting campaign in Pennsylvania that had a large effect on the elections. In early 2018, the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court ruled that congressional districts had been unfairly drawn in order to benefit Republicans, and issued a new map with redrawn districts intended to mitigate the effects of partisan gerrymandering. The outcomes of this redistricting case were substantial in that “a half-dozen competitive Republican-held congressional districts move[d] to the left, endangering several incumbent Republicans” (Cohn, Bloch, Quealy 2018). Some of these incumbents chose to run in their newly drawn districts or to run in a different district that better reflected their previous constituents but, as discussed previously, did not enjoy the same advantages or the same ability to deter challengers as a true incumbent would have (Levitt and Wolfram 1997).

This particular redistricting case had a particularly strong effect on electoral outcomes because of Pennsylvania's status as a swing state; although statewide popular vote had historically been fairly split between Republican and Democratic candidates, the gerrymandered districting had ensured a 13-5 Republican advantage in the House (Cohn, Bloch, Quealy 2018). With a redrawn map that seemed to not only consider nonpartisanship (i.e. compact districts that maintain "communities of interest") but also partisan balance (i.e. a balanced relationship between popular vote and seats won), the overall scenario of the Pennsylvania elections changed dramatically following the redistricting (Levitt and Wolfram 1997). Recognizing this loss of status, five of the 18 incumbent Pennsylvania Representatives chose to retire rather than run in the 2018 elections, joining a further two incumbents who resigned before their term was complete and one who chose to run for the Senate rather than the House (Ballotpedia 2018).

In addition to the effects of redistricting, the majority of open seats were caused by the unusually high rate of congressional retirements in the months leading up to the election. Twenty-four Democratic incumbents and 84 Republican incumbents chose not to run for office. While there was no all-encompassing crisis at the level of the House Banking Scandal preceding 1992, there were a number of identifiable patterns that helped explain the retirements and resignations. On one hand, at least a handful of incumbents from both parties (as well as other candidates) were involved in the wave of allegations of sexual harassment or other inappropriate behavior following the emergence of the MeToo movement. Many of these members either retired early or chose not to run for reelection (Berman 2018). Additionally, a roughly equal number of Republican and Democratic members left the House to

run for higher offices, and a number of Republicans were appointed to positions in the Trump administration.

These trends were not unusual and affected both parties to essentially the same extent. What explains the extreme outlier of 2018, and the extreme partisan divide? Analysts and political commentators hypothesized that many Republicans chose to retire due to the unpopularity of the Trump administration; Republicans who were so called “pure” retirements, in which the retiring member was not running for higher office or leaving due to scandal, were significantly more likely to be moderate, and included a number of prominent anti-Trump voices in the Republican party (Berman 2018; Rakich 2018). Retiring Republicans were also more likely to be from a district that was significantly more competitive than the average district, which holds true to literature that has found, with some qualifications, that House members choose to retire rather than face likely defeat (Rakich 2018; Swain, Stephen A Borrelli, and Brian C Reed).

Like in 1992, redistricting and retirements preceding the 2018 midterms lead to a large number of open seats, in which there were no incumbents present and, therefore, no incumbency advantage for potential candidates to overcome. This trend, in turn, again set the stage for successful female candidacies, as it removed the most significant electoral challenge a potential candidate can face, and allowed for female candidates to enter races on the same standing as male candidates.



**Other factors**

In addition to policies and issues in the Trump administration, the Kavanaugh hearings, and the high rate of open seats in the elections, several other factors also had a significant impact on the political climate of the 2018 midterms. The number of women in lower levels of elected office had continued to increase steadily over the last generation; women made up over a quarter of the seats in state legislatures for the first time in 2017 (Center for American Woman and Politics 2019). A number of the women elected to these seats would go on to run and, in some cases, win their first congressional races in the 2018 midterms.

Like in 1992, there was also an unprecedented influx in interest towards and funding for prominent women's political organizations. Emily's List reported that the number of women expressing interest in running for office increased more than 2100% in the months following the 2016 election (Tognotti). Running Start, a nonpartisan non-profit that trains women to run for office, similarly reported a doubled staff and number of supporters in a similar time frame, along with "the biggest outpouring of young women coming to us saying they wanted to get involved" (Franke-Ruta 2017). Importantly, these efforts were not isolated responses to the election of Trump, but were sustained throughout the 2018 election cycle during which female donors accounted for a record 36% of the money raised by House candidates, including a record breaking \$159 million to Democratic women (Haley 2018).

Finally, a deeply unpopular Congress and presidential administration also contributed to female candidates' electoral efforts. Due to extreme partisanship and

controversial policy agendas, Congressional approval ratings remained below 20% in the months leading up to the 2018 midterms, while Trump's approval hovered in the low 40s (Gallup). In response to this unhappiness with the political status-quo, many candidates ran campaigns in which they explicitly cast themselves as "Washington outsiders" who did not conform to the current establishment (Trish 2018). This electoral environment likely particularly benefited women due to voter-held stereotypes of their "otherness" to the political system. In short, "women have also long been viewed as 'outsiders' in politics, [...] a perception that could be advantageous in a year when people are fed up with 'politics as usual'" (Zhou 2018).

## 4.2 The elections

As predicted by the major factors and themes discussed previously, 2018 was a record year for women by essentially any standard of measurement. A record number of women filed for candidacy at every level of public office, from state legislatures to Congress, including a record 481 in the House and 54 in the Senate.<sup>1</sup> A record number of these women also went on to win their primary races at every level, with 23 women advancing to general ballots in the Senate, and 235 in the House. Unsurprisingly given the makeup of previous Congress, the majority of female candidates were challengers or competing for open seats rather than

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all statistics and numbers in this section come from the Center for American Woman and Politics, "Past Candidate and Election Information" (2018).

incumbents. Finally, nearly 75% of women candidates ran as Democrats.

In the context of the unprecedented numbers of female candidates, however, it is important to note that the number of male candidates also increased dramatically. Overall, more candidates ran for Congress in 2018 than in any previous election so, although more women filed for candidacy than ever before, they still represented less than a quarter of the total candidates (Kurtzleben 2018). The number of Democratic women, however, increased more than 100% compared to 2016, and far outweighed increases in Democratic men, Republican women, and Republican men (Dittmar 2018).

### **Short-term outcomes**

With record breaking filings and primary wins, it stands to reason that the trend continued in November. On the state level, a record number of women won seats in state legislatures as well as in statewide elective executive offices, with both levels approaching 30% and increasing more dramatically than the incremental gains seen in previous election cycles. In Congress, an all-time high of twenty-five women were elected to serve in the Senate, including the first openly gay woman (Kyrsten Sinema, AZ). The majority of these women were Democratic; however, both parties saw an overall increase in their numbers of female Senators.

Following these trends, the House of Representatives also saw a significant increase in female representation. Of the 235 women who advanced past their primaries and appeared on general ballots, 102 were elected to serve in Congress, including 36 non-incumbent women; this was the first Congress in which women

represented more than 100 seats. There were a number of notable firsts within this group as well, including the first Native American women (Deb Haaland, NM-1 and Sharice Davids, KS-3), the first Muslim women (Rashida Tlaib, MI-13 and Ilhan Omar, MN-5), the youngest woman elected to Congress (Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, NY-14), as well as a number of states who sent their first female representative or female representative of color to Congress. Nancy Pelosi (CA-12) also returned to her role as the first, and only, female Speaker of the House.

Once again, however, it is important to note that this “pink wave” of female candidates had a decidedly partisan tilt: of the 102 women elected to the House, 89 were Democrats and only 13 were Republicans. In fact, the Republican party actually lost representation, from 23 women in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, to only 13 following the 2018 election. Just one of the 36 newly elected non-incumbent women was a Republican, and of the 43 women of color elected, all but one were Democrats. Much like 1992, therefore, 2018 was not so much another “Year of the Woman,” but another “Year of the Democratic Woman.”

### **Long-term outcomes**

Following the 2018 midterms, the overall percentage of women in Congress grew from 20.6% to 23.7% and, similarly, from 20% in the to 23.4% in the House of Representatives. While these numbers are significant in that they demonstrate that women are still enormously underrepresented in Congress when compared to men, they also demonstrate another dramatic increase in representation. Women have entered Congress at an extremely gradual rate, increasing their numbers only slightly each year. Before this year’s elections, the “Year of the Woman” in 1992 was

the only election that broke this pattern, with female representation jumping from 6% to 10.1% in Congress and from 6.9% to 10.8% in the House of Representatives. The 2018 elections once again broke this pattern with the sudden influx of women into Congress.

It remains to be seen if 2018 midterms will change the pattern of female congressional success, or if it will return to the slow-and-steady status quo. Because there are now more incumbents in Congress, women should continue to increase their standing in Congress in the coming years; following the 1992 elections, for example, women started to enter Congress at a higher rate than in the previous years. Do the results of the 2018 elections signify a change at the speed with which women enter Congress or, like 1992, is it simply a temporary break in the status-quo?

The 2018 midterm elections shattered multiple glass ceilings, with unprecedented numbers of women winning elected office across the country and across numerous levels of government. This influx, although unprecedented, mirrored the 1992 elections in a number of important ways. Both elections were disruptions to the status-quo, and were responses to a "perfect storm" of pre-election factors including presidential policies, sexism scandals, and a changing Congress. Based on this qualitative model and its analyses and conclusions, 2018 was truly a reincarnation of the Year of the Woman decades prior. But how do these insights translate to an empirical model? The remainder of this thesis will focus on a quantitative framework of analyzing women's political participation and success in 2018.

## Chapter 5

# Methods

Women were incredibly successful in the 2018 midterms, with 36 newly elected women joining the 66 female incumbents who were re-elected to form the largest increase in female representation in the history of the U.S. House of Representatives. But what role did their gender play in this unprecedented success and how did female candidates fare compared to male candidates? In order to address these questions, I specifically analyze the gain in vote-share that women received due to their gender using a quantitative analysis on the US House of Representatives 2018 midterm elections. These quantitative methods are supported by both original and collected data, and are explained in some detail in this chapter. The first section will explicitly describe the hypotheses and expected relationships between gender and candidate performance. I will then give a brief overview of the methods I used to identify and collect the variables included in my dataset, and the remainder of the chapter gives an outline of the statistical methods used to both validate and analyze the data.

## 5.1 Hypotheses

The data analysis I conducted, and their subsequent conclusions seek to understand and quantify the relationship between gender and political performance in the 2018 midterms: were candidates more or less successful in these elections if they were female? My primary dependent variable, therefore, was election results. I conducted analysis on both the results of primary elections (i.e. all candidates who filed) and general elections (i.e. all candidates who advanced past their primary) in order to offer a more nuanced discussion. Gender remains the primary independent variable of interest throughout all levels of analysis.

Taking into account the existing body of literature and the factors identified in previous chapters, I have established the following hypothesis that I expect to observe in my analysis of the relationship between gender and candidate success.

*Hypothesis 1: Female challengers will be more successful than male challengers.* Due to the factors that increased both the standing and salience of female candidates in 2018, I would expect female challengers to be more successful than their male counterparts. These factors include policy issues that prioritized “women’s issues,” increased attention towards female candidates following highly publicized sexism scandals, and their perception as a “outsiders” to a deeply unpopular Congress.

*Hypothesis 2: Female open seat candidates will be more successful than male open seat candidates.* Due to the same factors that affected female challengers, I would expect open seat candidates to be more successful than their male counterparts.

*Hypothesis 3: Female incumbents will be as successful as male incumbents.* Incumbency advantage is one of the most powerful and prevalent phenomena in the study of American politics, particularly in the House of Representatives. Furthermore, the high rate of strategic retirements in 2018 suggests that those likely to lose re-election opted out of running in the first place.

*Hypothesis 4: Being a woman is more advantageous for Democratic candidates than Republican candidates.* Many of the factors that positively affected female candidates also positively affected Democratic candidates, including significantly more Republican retirements, backlash to the Republican administration, perceived and actual partisanship in the Kavanaugh hearings, and record-breaking fundraising from interest groups directed towards Democratic women.

## 5.2 Variable identification and collection

### Identifier data

The first category of variables is simply identifier variables that are used to classify and differentiate each individual candidate included in the dataset. These variables include candidate name, and the state and congressional district in which they ran. I include both male and female candidates, as an explicit comparison between these two groups is central to my research question. Any candidate that appeared in the regular (i.e. non-special election) primary election for the House of Representatives is included in the dataset, excluding write-in and third party candidates.



I have not included write-in candidates, partially because each state has vastly different filing, general-ballot appearance and vote-counting laws regarding write-ins, and partially because these candidates very rarely receive a significant portion of the vote. Similarly, third party candidates are excluded, for the same reasons, with three notable exceptions. California and Washington use a “top-two” primary system in which the top two candidates, regardless of party, advance to appear on the general ballot. Louisiana includes all candidates on the general ballot in November; if a candidate receives the majority of the vote, they are elected outright and, if not, a runoff election between the top two candidates occurs in December. Because third party candidates either appear outright on the general ballot (LA), or have the same eligibility for inclusion as major party candidates (CA and WA), they are included for these three states only.<sup>1</sup>

Because my research occurred essentially simultaneously with the actual midterm election cycle, there were few preexisting data sources to draw from. Additionally, because US state law rather than federal law largely dictates the organization of primary elections, there is no official nationwide data on primary or general elections. In order to identify individual candidates, therefore, I gathered data state-by-state from each individual state’s elections websites. Because the primary systems are organized differently in each state, these websites vary greatly; some states publish filing records for each candidate, while some states publish official

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<sup>1</sup>Write-in candidates were not also included based on this logic because they are not included on general ballots in CA and LA, and votes are not required to be counted for write-in candidates in WA.

party certifications. The names of candidates reflect how they appear on the official state elections website, whether that is based on filing information or ballot appearance.

Additionally, district identifiers reflect the congressional districting lines that are in place for the 2018 elections; while the vast majority of these are the same districts that were in use during the last election cycle, it is important to note that Pennsylvania underwent significant redistricting early in 2018 to address partisan gerrymandering. The PA districts used in the data reflect the redrawn districts established by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in February of 2018.

### **Biographical data**

The second category of variables is a set of predictor and control variables on biographical data of the identified candidates. I included gender in these variables as it is of central importance to my research question. In addition, I have identified candidate race and political experience as control variables to be used in models describing the electoral outcomes. The race variable is categorized according to the following designations: Asian and Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, Native American, and White. Because the vast majority of candidates are white, and there are so few candidates of certain racial designations (e.g. Native American), these categories were simplified to “White” and “Non-white” in the final analysis to avoid skewing the data for smaller racial categories.

Racial data were based on a combination of self-identified race and pre-existing records and data. Data collection for these variables fell into two different groups:

incumbents and challengers or open seat candidates. Gender and race data for incumbents were simply collected from the official House of Representatives roster and archives, which included information on the same racial designations defined in my data. Challengers and open seat candidates were further separated into two groups: women and men. Race data for female candidates were collected from preexisting data created by the Center for American Women and Politics.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, data for Democrats running in open seats or against Republican incumbents were collected from pre-existing data from FiveThirtyEight. I then extrapolated the methods used in these data sets to collect data for the remaining candidates; I searched each candidate's campaign website for self-identified race and then, if I could not find it, searched local news sources for interviews referencing candidate race. If I found no sources or data referencing the candidate's race, I left this variable blank.

Data on electoral experience was again collected from a combination of pre-existing and original data. Electoral experience was defined as a candidate having held elected office previously to their campaign, at any level. All incumbents were automatically coded as "Yes." Data for Democratic challengers and open seat candidates were collected from a publicly available FiveThirtyEight dataset, and these same methods (i.e. using Ballotpedia, VoteSmart and news reports) were extrapolated to collect data on the rest of the candidates. Again, if I found no sources or data referencing the candidate's electoral experience, I left this variable blank.

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<sup>2</sup>This data was provided by the Center for American Women and Politics following my request, and therefore is not openly available on their website.

It is important to recognize that many other meaningful biographical variables have been excluded from this dataset. Media narratives that have emerged in both pre-election and post-election reporting have focused on a number of these story lines; veterans, members of immigrant communities, and record-breaking numbers of LGBTQ candidates are some of the diverse candidates who ran, and won, during the 2018 midterms. While these stories are both essential and fascinating aspects of the election cycle, and certainly deserve a systematic exploration, they fall outside the scope of this thesis, and I have therefore not included them in the dataset or ensuing analysis.

### **District data**

The next set of variables include predictor variables on the 435 U.S. congressional districts in which candidates are running. The first set of these variables attempt to describe the political lean of each congressional district in two ways: first, the 2016 presidential election results for each district and, second, the Partisan Voter Index (PVI) for each district. The PVI is a measurement that quantifies how each congressional district voted in the prior two presidential elections, compared to the nation as a whole. A PVI score of D+5 means that, in the 2012 and 2016 presidential elections, that district voted an average of five points more Democratic than the national average; a score of R+5 means the district voted five points more Republican than the national average. Even indicates that the district voted within a half-point of the national average. These rankings have been transformed into simple numerical rankings with +5 representing D+5, -5 representing R+5, and 0 representing an even district for my analysis.

Once identified, variables describing congressional districts were collected from a variety of sources and inputted directly into my own dataset. I used original data from Daily Kos to identify the 2016 presidential election outcomes at the congressional district level; their data set uses 2018 congressional districts, including the updated Pennsylvania districts.

The PVI is calculated and released by the Cook Political Report after every presidential election and every round of redistricting; I used the most recent data, that incorporates the results of the 2016 presidential election. Because this report is based on congressional districts from the 2012 redistricting process, it does not take into account the changes in PA caused by the recent redistricting.<sup>3</sup>

### **Election data**

Finally, election data includes information on specific campaigns, candidacies and races. Variables include: party of the candidate, either Republican or Democrat, and including third parties in CA, LA and WA; whether they are running as an incumbent, a challenger, or in an open race (i.e. no incumbent present in the race); and campaign finance data indicating the amount of money raised and spent over the course of the campaign cycle.

Additionally, the election data subset includes the main set of response variables that I am interested in analyzing: the vote share and electoral outcomes for each

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<sup>3</sup>It does, however, use the new congressional boundaries established by 2016 court-ordered redistricting in Florida, North Carolina and Virginia.

candidate. I have included results at both the primary and general election levels. Additionally, several states require a runoff election between the top two finishers if no candidate reaches a certain threshold (e.g. simple majority) of votes during the primary.<sup>4</sup> In these cases, I have included the results of the runoff election as well.

Predictors on election data, such as party identification and incumbent vs. challenger vs. open race status, were often indicated alongside the collected identifier data and, in the cases in which it was not, incumbents were easily identified by various other sources (e.g. official House roster). Fundraising data were collected from Open Secrets, and included money raised and money spent; they were collected over a specified timeframe in order to ensure that only post-general filings were reported, rather than earlier filings that did not include the most up-to-date and accurate information. Candidates who do not exceed \$5,000 in either contributions made or expenditures made are not required to file with the Federal Election Commission, and therefore do not appear in the records. When a candidate did not appear on the FEC record but appeared on my list of candidates, I inferred that they did not meet the filing threshold, and inputted a value of \$2,500 in both money raised and money spent in order to account for the range of possible unreported values.

As in the case of identifier data, variables on primary, runoff, and general elections outcomes are not collected into one official national dataset. I again gathered data

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<sup>4</sup>Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas and Vermont (only in the event of a tie)

state-by-state from each individual state's elections websites. The formatting of election result publications varied greatly from state to state; some states publish the overall vote percentages for each candidate, while others only publish vote tallies for each county. Where available, I used the percentages published by the official state election resources. When these percentages were not published, I used the final percentage published by the New York Times in their national election coverage.<sup>5</sup>

### 5.3 Data validation

Because the majority of my variables were collected and inputted manually, it is feasible that this method included some level of human error. Therefore, it was vital to ensure that the data was accurate and of high quality so that its analysis and resulting conclusions could be reported on confidently. To this end I validated my data in two distinct ways: organically within the actual data collection process, and systematically once the data collection had been completed.

#### Organic validation

Some data validation occurred naturally throughout the process of collection. Candidate name and their corresponding district, party and incumbency status, originally collected from candidacy filings, were all cross-referenced from the primary

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<sup>5</sup>Appendix B includes a breakdown of which source was used to collect election results for each state.

ballot. Primary status (i.e. “Advanced” or “Lost”) was validated against a candidate’s appearance on the general election ballot. I also completed simple logical tests throughout the data collection phase in order to ensure that the data was producing the expected responses. These tests included ensuring that there were no more than two candidates advancing from each primary, that there was no more than one incumbent in any district,<sup>6</sup> and that there were 435 candidates who won the general election.<sup>7</sup>

### **Systemic validation**

In addition to these methods, I also systematically validated my data in order to ensure its quality. To do so, I randomly selected 5% of the candidates included in the data set, for a final sample of 102 candidates. I then went through and verified each of the 22 variables associated with each candidate to determine how many were accurately reported during the data collection process, and how many were inaccurately reported. I found that, of the 2,244 variables in my sample, 2,240 were accurately reported and 4 were inaccurately reported for a total accuracy percentage of over 99.8%. Because I validated a random sample of my data in which each candidate had an equal chance of being selected for validation, this sample offers an unbiased representation of the candidate population, and therefore indicates that the overall error in the dataset is very low.

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<sup>6</sup>Excluding certain Pennsylvania districts in which there were more than one incumbent running for the same seat due to the effects of the redistricting process.

<sup>7</sup>There were 434 candidates who won the general election. North Carolina’s 9<sup>th</sup> Congressional District’s results were not certified due to findings of voter fraud on behalf of Republican candidate Mark Harris.



## 5.4 Data analysis

### Method of analysis

I built and estimated models responding to the above hypotheses in the open-source statistical package, RStudio. For each hypothesis, I included four models of analysis in order to examine the effects of different control variables. These included a bivariate baseline model, in which only gender is used to explain the variability in a candidate's vote share; a biographical model, in which gender and the biographical control variables are included; a district model, in which gender, biographical and district controls are included; and an election model in which all control variables are introduced.

Prior to conducting this analysis, I conducted correlation tests in order to determine which controls to include in my final models. As expected, many of the variables were highly correlated so could be eliminated to simplify the models. The 2016 election results for Trump and those for Clinton were highly correlated, as were the 2016 election results and the PVI ranking for a district. In fact, there is almost a perfectly positive correlation between a district's PVI ranking and the 2016 Clinton vote (e.g. a district that is ranked more Democratic is also a district in which Clinton got the larger share of the vote). Similarly, the amount of money a candidate raised and the amount of money a candidate spent are also highly positively correlated. I therefore only included the 2016 Clinton vote as a measurement for the political lean of a district, and money spent as a measurement for fundraising.

In examining some relationships, I split my population into smaller sub-populations to determine the presence of intergroup differences, including separately analyzing Democrats and Republicans and challenger, open seat and incumbent candidates. I used linear regression on the results of the elections (i.e. quantitative variable reporting the percentage of vote received by candidate). For all of these regression models, I utilized one-tailed hypothesis testing. This method is justified when testing a specific and directional hypothesis; due to my qualitative research, all my aforementioned hypotheses meet this criterion.

These methods for data identification and collection, and statistical analysis form the framework of the quantitative aspects of my research, and allow me to examine the role gender played in the 2018 midterms. The next chapter will give an explicit overview of the findings and conclusions I established based on these methods and models of analysis.

## Chapter 6

# Analysis and Results

Using the methods and models discussed at length in the previous chapter, I completed a thorough quantitative analysis of the results of the 2018 midterms in order to determine what role, if any, gender had in electoral outcomes of candidates and to better understand how the 2018 midterms fit into the broader trends of women in politics and in elected office. This chapter gives a brief overview of the descriptive statistics of my data, and then reports on the results of the analyses by detailing the findings of each of my initial hypotheses at both the primary and the general level.

### 6.1 Descriptive statistics

At the primary level, my data included the 2,020 candidates who filed for 2018 Midterm House of Representative primary races. Of these candidates, 1,091 ran as challengers (54.0%), 554 ran in open seats (27.4%), and 375 were incumbents (18.6%). More Democrats ran than Republicans, with 1,086 (53.8%) and 872 (43.2%)

registering for each party, respectively. There were also 62 third-party candidates from California, Louisiana, and Washington (3.0%). Finally, 481 women (23.8%) ran in primary races compared to 1,539 men (76.2%); although more women ran than ever before in history, they still only made up less than a quarter of all candidates. Of these women, 266 were challengers (55.3%), 144 were in open races (30.0%), and 71 were incumbents (14.7%). There were 353 Democratic women (73.4%) and 118 (24.5%) Republican women in the primary races.

Of this original pool of candidates, 829 advanced from the primary level to run in general races. These candidates included 343 challengers (41.3%), 121 open-seat candidates (14.6%), and 365 incumbents (44%). Unlike the primary, there was an approximately even party distribution, with 430 Democrats (51.9%) and 393 Republicans (47.4%), as well as six third-party candidates (0.7%). There were 233 women (28.1%) and 596 men (71.9%) who advanced to the general election. All 71 female incumbents (30.5%) advanced to the general election (four male incumbents were defeated at the primary level), along with 118 challengers (50.6%) and 44 open seat candidates (18.9%). There were 181 Democratic women (77.7%) who advanced to the general election, compared to 51 Republican women (21.9%).

Finally, 434 candidates were elected to serve in the House of Representatives, including 341 incumbents (78.6%), 31 challengers (7.1%), and 62 open-seat candidates (14.3%). These winning candidates were made up of 235 Democrats (54.1%) and 199 Republicans (45.9%), and 332 men (76.5%) and 102 women (23.5%). Of these female Representatives, 66 were incumbents (64.7%), 16 ran as challengers (15.7%), and 20 ran for open seats (19.6%). Eighty-nine women were Democrats (87.3%) and only 13 were Republicans (54.1%).

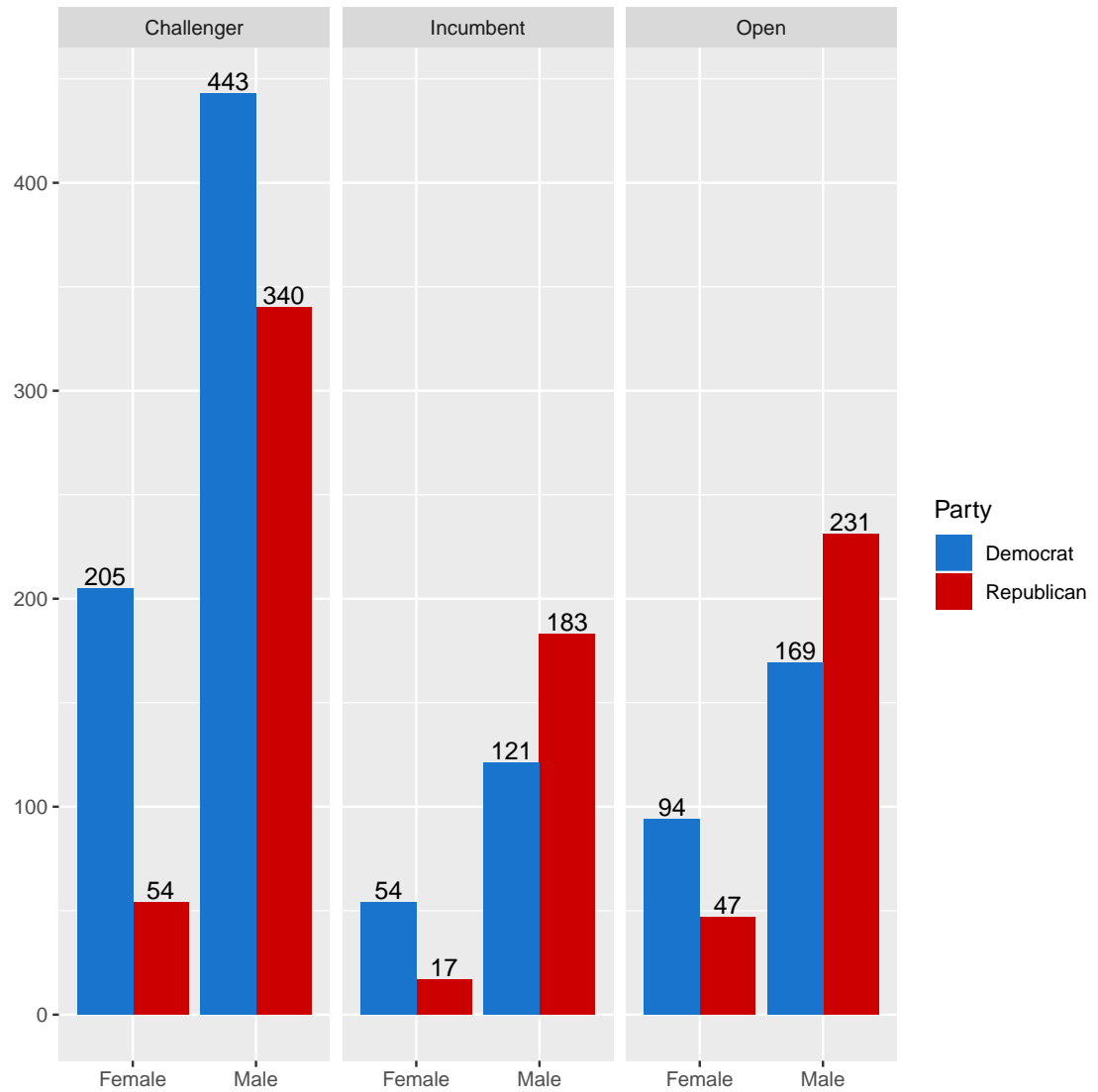


FIGURE 6.1: Primary election candidates

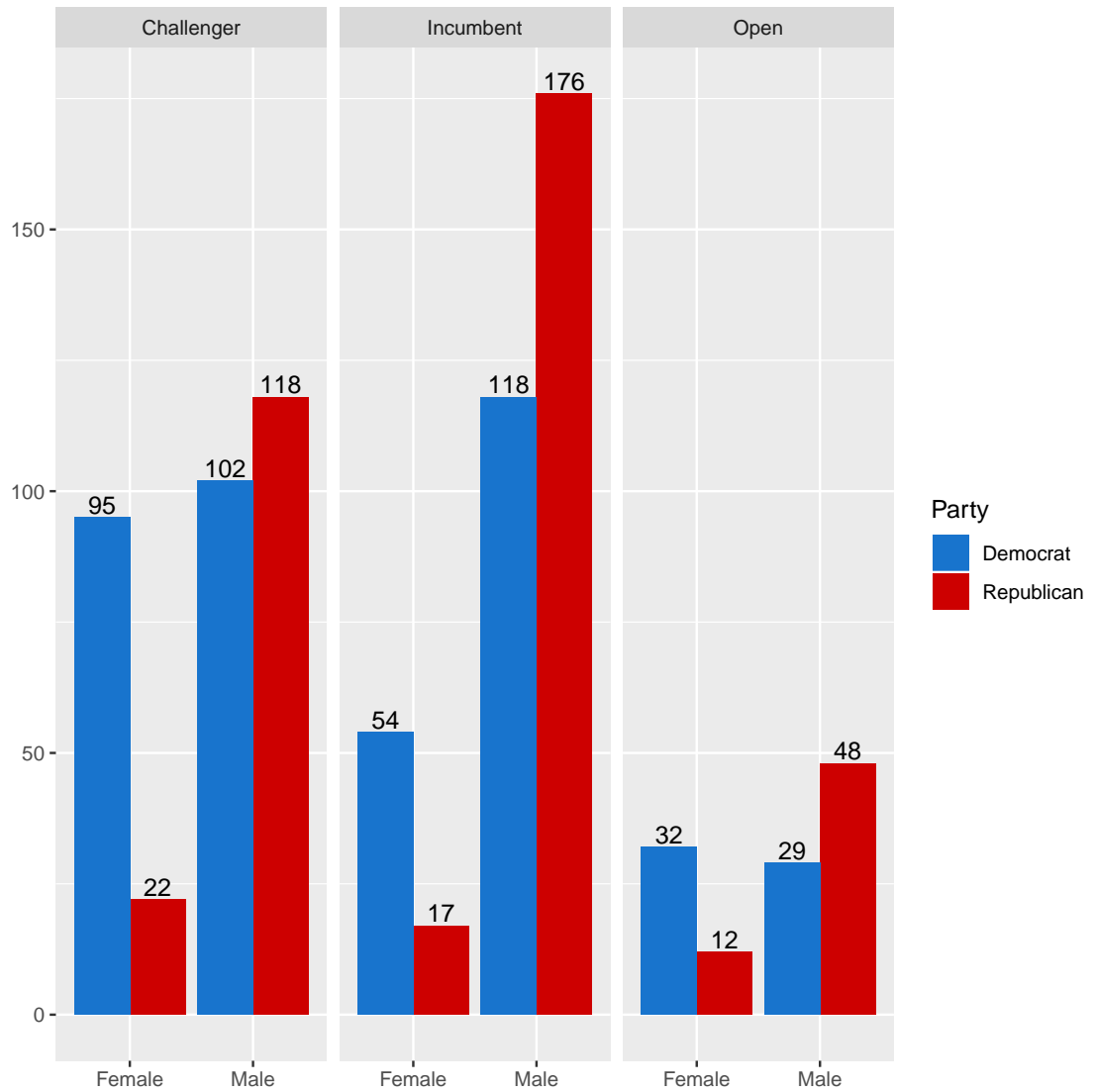


FIGURE 6.2: General election candidates

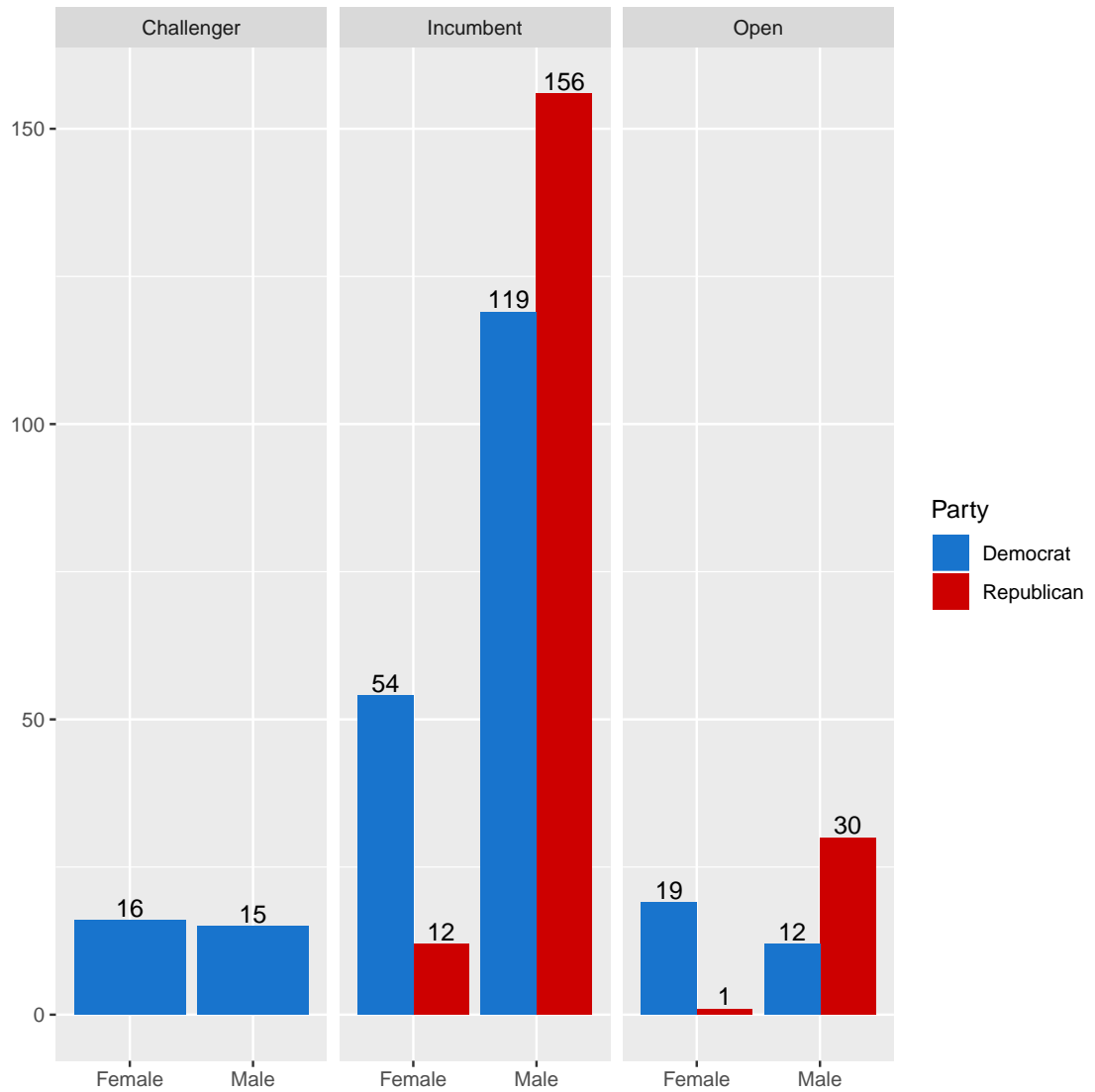


FIGURE 6.3: 116th Congress

Throughout all these levels of elections, it is obvious that the so-called "pink wave" was extremely partisan; that is, a much higher percent of women ran as and saw success as Democrats than as Republicans. Moreover, not only did more women run as Democrats than as Republicans, but the split was much more inflated than it was in the overall candidate pool. At the primary level, Democrats accounted for 73.4% of the female candidates compared to 53.8% of all candidates. This number was more exaggerated at the general level, with 77.7% of women running as Democrats compared to only 51% of the overall candidate pool. Finally, 87.3% of the women elected to office were Democrats compared to 54.1% of the House in total.

## 6.2 Multivariate results

**H1: Female challengers will be more successful than male challengers.**

I hypothesized that female challengers would be more successful than male challengers in the 2018 midterms due to the political salience and advantages drawn from the various identified factors, such as the cultural context and political priorities leading up to the midterm elections.

The results presented in and Table 6.1 and Table 6.2 provide strong evidence that female challengers were more successful than male challengers in 2018, and that their gender played a significant role in their success. Gender was a highly significant indicator of a candidate's success at all levels of analysis. At the primary



level, a female candidate received 5.546 more percentage points than male candidates while holding constant biographical, district and electoral factors (table 6.1). Similar findings are also replicated for challengers competing in general elections, albeit to a lesser degree. Gender was again a significant indicator across all models; female candidates received 2.238 percentage points more in general elections than male candidates while holding constant all other factors (table 6.2).

TABLE 6.1: Challengers: Primary Level

	Primary Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	36.162*** (1.766)	34.954*** (2.321)	38.459*** (3.990)	35.716*** (3.936)
Male Candidate	-6.840*** (2.031)	-6.371*** (2.072)	-6.221*** (2.077)	-5.546*** (2.041)
White Candidate		1.157(2.088)	0.422(2.196)	-0.902(2.129)
Electoral Experience		10.382*** (3.500)	10.182*** (3.505)	6.253** (3.381)
2016 Clinton Vote			-0.065(0.060)	-0.079* (0.062)
Republican Candidate				8.057*** (1.981)
Third Party Candidate				-21.369*** (4.564)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				0.480*** (0.070)
Observations	1,091	1,044	1,044	1,035
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.009	0.016	0.016	0.096

Note:

\*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01

TABLE 6.2: Challengers: General Level

	General Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	39.854*** (1.002)	37.834*** (1.380)	48.225*** (2.160)	40.840*** (2.197)
Male Candidate	-5.678*** (1.238)	-5.366*** (1.206)	-4.136*** (1.164)	-2.238** (1.016)
White Candidate		1.544(1.335)	-0.183(1.301)	-0.356(1.093)
Electoral Experience		7.651*** (1.910)	7.078*** (1.818)	4.958*** (1.516)
2016 Clinton Vote			-0.203*** (0.034)	-0.114*** (0.045)
Republican Candidate				-1.836(1.649)
Third Party Candidate				-8.541** (3.922)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				0.270*** (0.026)
Observations	343	339	339	337
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.055	0.095	0.182	0.440

Note:

\*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01

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**H2: Female open seat candidates will be more successful than male open seat candidates.**

Similar to the previous hypothesis, I hypothesized that female open seat candidates would be more successful than male open seat candidates in the 2018 midterms due to the same factors that affected challengers.

Reflecting the results from H1, my findings provide statistically significant evidence that female open seat candidates performed better than male challengers in the 2018 midterms at the primary level. While controlling for biographical, district, and election factors, female candidates earned 6.520% more of the vote than similar male candidates (table 6.3)

Interestingly, however, these trends do not continue at the general level. Within all general election models, there is only about a half-percentage point difference between male and female candidates and none of these results are statistically significant (table 6.4). These results therefore show that there was no observable difference between how male and female open seat candidates performed at the general level.

TABLE 6.3: Open Seat: Primary Level

	Primary Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	26.719*** (1.922)	20.807*** (2.436)	23.797*** (5.247)	20.643*** (5.117)
Male Candidate	-7.528*** (2.234)	-8.057*** (2.265)	-8.232*** (2.283)	-6.520*** (2.188)
White Candidate		4.513** (2.365)	3.934* (2.531)	3.607* (2.395)
Electoral Experience		12.046*** (2.196)	12.101*** (2.199)	10.794*** (2.098)
2016 Clinton Vote			-0.054(0.084)	-0.064(0.081)
Republican Candidate				0.167(1.972)
Third Party Candidate				-14.804*** (6.289)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				0.504*** (0.064)
Observations	554	534	534	531
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.018	0.071	0.070	0.177

Note:

\*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01

TABLE 6.4: Open Seat: General Level

	General Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	49.025*** (1.933)	47.417*** (2.605)	45.531*** (5.166)	43.355*** (5.089)
Male Candidate	0.597*** (2.423)	-0.564(2.433)	-0.359(2.489)	-0.472(2.544)
White Candidate		-0.975(2.732)	-0.834(2.763)	-0.620(2.702)
Electoral Experience		8.171*** (2.342)	8.067*** (2.363)	9.079*** (2.319)
2016 Clinton Vote			0.038(0.089)	0.019(0.087)
Republican Candidate				-0.321(2.427)
Third Party Candidate				0.135*** (0.047)
Observations	121	120	120	120
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-0.008	0.073	0.066	0.120

Note:

\*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01

**H3: Female incumbents will be as successful as male incumbents.**

Due to the strong power of incumbency and high rate of reelection, I hypothesized that female incumbents will be equally successful to male incumbents. The political phenomena of incumbent advantage is amongst the most well-established trend in the literature, and has not been shown to affect men and women to different degrees.

There is, again, strong support for this hypothesis from my data and its ensuing analysis. There were only minimal differences between the percent of votes received by male and female candidates in both primary and general elections and when holding other important factors constant (tables 6.5 and 6.6). Furthermore, there were no statistical significance to any of the findings within any of the models, so we have no reason to believe that incumbent's vote share had any relationship with their gender.

TABLE 6.5: Incumbents: Primary Level

	Primary Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	83.406*** (2.079)	82.090*** (2.418)	86.139*** (5.210)	95.925*** (7.407)
Male Candidate	1.164(2.309)	0.583(2.373)	0.075(2.443)	0.220(2.441)
White Candidate		2.334(2.193)	1.205(2.544)	1.291(2.547)
2016 Clinton Vote			-0.056(0.064)	-0.185** (0.098)
Republican Candidate				-5.436** (3.283)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				-0.035(0.061)
Observations	375	375	375	375
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002	0.003

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

TABLE 6.6: Incumbents: General Level

	General Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	70.507*** (1.540)	75.989*** (1.708)	51.282*** (3.453)	65.474*** (4.419)
Male Candidate	-6.254*** (1.716)	-3.859** (1.677)	-0.723(1.595)	-1.011(1.439)
White Candidate		-9.730*** (1.558)	-2.867** (1.671)	-1.979* (1.511)
2016 Clinton Vote			0.340*** (0.042)	0.203*** (0.059)
Republican Candidate				-4.703*** (1.949)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				-0.299*** (0.038)
Observations	365	365	365	365
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.033	0.124	0.255	0.396

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

#### H4: Being a woman is more advantageous for Democratic candidates than Republican candidates. <sup>1</sup>

Finally, I hypothesized that Democratic women would benefit more from their gender than Republican women. Many of the factors that preceded the 2018 elections were heavily in favor of Democratic candidates, such as an unpopular Republican president, the highly partisan Ford and Kavanaugh hearing, and the number of Republican Congressional retirees.

At the primary level, and when holding constant all biographical, district, and electoral variables, Democratic women as a whole received 6.919% more percentage points than Democratic men (see table 6.7). This finding, and those in other models with fewer controls, was significant to the .001 level, so we can confidently determine that being female had a positive effect on the vote shares of Democratic

<sup>1</sup>Extended regression results for Hypotheses 4 in Appendix C.

candidates in primary races. When analyzing different race types, different nuances appear, although the Democratic party reflects the findings of the overall results; female Democratic challengers and open seat candidates performed far better than male Democratic challengers and open seat candidates, and female Democratic incumbents performed equally to male Democratic incumbents (see table 6.7).

As hypothesized, these findings do not translate to Republican candidates. Overall, Republican men actually performed better than Republican women in primary elections, although these findings were not significant (see table 6.8). This held true when analyzing different race types as well. Republican male incumbents actually received about 7 percentage points more than republican female incumbents, which was statistically significant, although the small number of Republican women in the House might partially explain this. At the primary level, therefore, Democratic candidates benefited from being female, while there was no relationship between Republican candidates' vote shares and their gender, and female Republican incumbents actually did worse than males.

Within general elections, however, these party differences disappeared. When controlling for other factors, there was essentially no significant relationship between gender and vote share for either Democrats or Republicans (see tables 6.8 and 6.9). Female Democratic challengers received about 1.5 more percentage points than male Democratic challengers, but this was a much smaller amount than at the primary level.

TABLE 6.7: Democrats by Race Type

Race Type	Primary Level "Bump"	General Level "Bump"
Overall	6.919***	0.724
Female Challengers	5.893***	1.570**
Female Open Seat Candidates	9.534***	-0.087
Female Incumbents	2.682	0.199

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

TABLE 6.8: Republicans by Race Type

Race Type	Primary Level "Bump"	General Level "Bump"
Overall	-3.220	-.809
Female Challengers	-4.054	-0.134
Female Open Seat Candidates	-1.927	-1.754
Female Incumbents	-7.428**	-1.679

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

### 6.3 Discussion

My analysis shows that female candidates in certain races received a significant "bump" in their vote shares that can be attributed to their gender. Specifically, women running in primary races as challengers, for open seats, or as Democrats performed better than their male counterparts when controlling for biographical, district and electoral variables. Female incumbents and Republican women, on the other hand, did not perform better than similar male candidates. These outcomes all give support to hypothesized relationships that were determined based on qualitative analysis of the political landscape leading up to the 2018 midterms.

Women running in general elections did not see a similar advantage due to their gender. As expected, female incumbents and Republican women did not receive a

gendered "bump" in general elections. Unlike the primary races, however, female open seat candidates and female Democrats performed no better than male candidates. Finally, while female challengers enjoyed a slight advantage over male challengers, it was only at half the extent of in primary races.

TABLE 6.9

Hypothesis	Primary Level "Bump"	General Level "Bump"
H1: Female Challengers	5.546***	2.238**
H2: Female Open Seat Candidates	6.520***	.472
H3: Female Incumbents	-.220	-1.011
H4a: Female Democrats (overall)	6.919***	.724
H4b: Female Republicans (overall)	-3.220	-.809

Note:

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

What can explain the marked difference between how gender affected women's performance at the primary level and the general level? While this question certainly demands more focused and nuanced attention than the scope of this thesis can offer, there is a particularly relevant potential explanation that is worth mentioning, albeit briefly; namely, what Richard Fox refers to as "a combination of gender response and gender-socialized voting" (1997, 155). Primaries are notoriously low-information elections, particularly in the House of Representatives; in other words, voters in primary elections often know little about the candidates and cannot identify their policy differences, if there are any (Fox 1997). This is especially true in crowded primaries, such as those in the 2018 midterms during which more candidates ran than ever before. This lack of information on candidates leads voters to depend on other cues when deciding for whom to cast their vote. These



other cues, in turn, often depend on voter stereotypes.

As discussed at length in this thesis, voters hold many intrinsic stereotypes about female candidates. Women are perceived to be more liberal than men, and are associated with "women-friendly" policy issues such as education, healthcare, and the environment. These issues were particularly salient leading up to the 2018 midterms. Furthermore, women themselves were particularly salient due to the MeToo movement and responses to the Ford and Kavanaugh hearings. Because women's names are often easily identifiable on ballots, as they are often distinguishable from male names, it was easy for voters to select female candidates based on these supposed qualifications.

This theory of gendered-voting perhaps explains why open seat candidates and Democrats got gendered "bumps" at the primary level and not the general level. In low-information environments such as the primary, voters selected candidates that, at least stereotypically, fit their desired politics: liberal and responding to salient policies. At the general election level, in which voters have more information and women's gender is less salient due to the smaller candidate pool, this "bump" disappears. Challengers still enjoyed a slight gendered "bump" at the general level due to the unpopularity of Congress and the perception of female candidates as outsiders.

Interestingly, many of these same outcomes were observed in the 1992 elections and its subsequent analyses. In his study of gender dynamics in the 1992 and 1994 elections, Richard Fox discusses a number of similar trends that this thesis has identified. At the primary level, women running for an open seat in 1992

were much more successful than men, and female challengers were almost three times as successful than male challengers; in the general elections, however, these differences all but disappeared (1997, 151). The parallels between the 1992 "Year of the Woman" elections and its 2018 iteration, therefore, are not limited to the political context of the elections but extend to the outcomes as well.

In addition to this theory of gendered voting, it is also important to note that unusual voter turnout trends perhaps contributed to women's primary success. Midterm voter turnout is infamously low in the United States, often seeing less than 20% of eligible voters participate, and this is especially true at the primary stage. The 2018 midterms, however, saw an uptick in voter turnout as compared to previous election cycles, in both general and primary competitions ((Fortier et al. 2018). Additionally, Democratic voter turnout surpassed that of Republican turnout in the primaries for the first time in the last decade ((Fortier et al. 2018). Because voters who participate in the primaries are more likely to be more ideologically extreme than the general population, and women are seen to be more liberal than men, this movement towards Democratic primary voters could have enhanced female candidate's vote shares. Although this thesis focused on candidates themselves rather than the responses of voters, this presents an exciting avenue for future research as well.

Finally, and although it is outside the focus of this thesis, it is also worth noting that my analysis revealed many other factors played a significant, if expected, role in candidates' success. Electoral experience, including but not limited to incumbency, had one of the most consistently significant relationships with a candidate's vote share throughout all levels of analysis; candidates who had elected experience

received a higher percentage of the vote than candidates without. Party also was a significant predictor, with third-party candidates performing much worse than Republican or Democratic candidates across all levels, and Republican incumbents performing much worse than Democratic incumbents. Finally, the more money spent on a campaign generally was correlated with better performance, except for incumbents (perhaps indicating a highly competitive race).

Building off the insights from my qualitative research and adopting the quantitative methods described in the previous chapter, my analysis clearly shows that the 2018 midterm elections were not only a "pink wave" election in their lead-up and conception, but in their eventual outcomes as well. Although these insights are valuable, there still are numerous avenues for further and more sophisticated research not only on women's political participation in general, but specifically on their experiences in 2018 as well.

## Chapter 7

# Conclusion

The 2018 midterm elections were indeed a "pink wave," with female candidates contesting more elections, donating and raising more money, and winning more elections than ever before. What this thesis has shown, however, is that many of these successes were not by chance or in spite of their gender. On the contrary, the unprecedented levels of success of many of these female candidates can be directly tied to their gender.

At the theoretical level, I have established key aspects that preceded not only the 2018 "Year of the Woman" elections, but its 1992 iteration as well. First, presidential policies directly benefited female candidates due to their focus on "feminine" policy concerns. Second, sexism scandals and cultural contexts increased the salience of female candidates while drawing negative attention to a male-dominated government. Finally, a changing Congress driven by strategic retirements and redistricting efforts somewhat evened the playing field for female newcomers. These factors were further strengthened by a growing infrastructure to support female candidates, such as increased numbers of women serving in state legislatures and

influx in funding for women's political organizations, and a growing discontent for Congress and the status-quo.

In addition to these theoretical insights, my thesis has clearly shown the tangible impact that they had in the 2018 midterms. Key members of the 2018 candidate pool directly benefited from their gender, including women running as challengers, as open seat candidates and as Democrats. Each of these groups saw a "bump" of approximately 6% that was attributed to their gender; however, this gendered advantage that female candidates had over male candidates did not extend past the primary elections. Finally, women running as Republicans and as incumbents did not see these benefits.

TABLE 7.1: Did candidates receive a "bump" due to their gender?

	Primary Level	General Level
Female Open Seat Candidates	✓	✗
Female Challengers	✓	✓
Female Incumbents	✗	✗
Female Democrats	✓	✗
Female Republicans	✗	✗

While these findings largely fit into my initial hypotheses, the contrast between the primary and the general elections is both striking and unexpected. Upon further analysis, this gap can perhaps be partially attributed to gender-socialized voting

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patterns in which voters depend on gendered stereotypes and identification in order to select a candidate, especially in low-information elections. Although this explanation certainly fits into the literature, this outcome certainly deserves more focused and nuanced research. Looking more closely into heuristics literature, and analyzing how exactly voters respond to female candidates in low vs. high information settings would likely help identify some of the causal mechanisms by which women lost their "edge" in the general elections. This avenue of research is exciting not only because of the vast resources from different fields of study, but also due to the prospect of using both statistical and experimental methods.

In addition to further identifying the specific processes that change between the primary and general elections, there are many other opportunities that this thesis presents for future research in the field. While I have established a persuasive argument for my findings, the next step of the process would be to continue the quantitative analysis for both 1992 and for "non-event" years in order to determine if my findings hold true. While we know that many of the general outcomes of 1992 were similar to 2018, examining these results with the same methodological approach would lead to the ability to draw more robust conclusions.

The opposite also holds true; if the identified factors lead to "bump" for female candidates, we would expect that the absence of these factors would lead to the absence of this "bump." Looking into election years in which women and the political issues associated with them were not particularly salient, and how this status-quo impacted their vote share would greatly increase the generalizability of the arguments made in this thesis.

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In addition to broadening the scope of the research, it would also be beneficial to deepen the level of analysis; that is, continue studying the 2018 midterms and their outcomes. The most applicable and necessary way to do so would be to utilize more sophisticated methodological approaches in my quantitative analysis. Examining the interaction between gender and party, for example, would give additional insight into how candidates perform within the constraints of their party. If the data were accessible, it would also be of value to look not only at each election cycle as separate populations, but at the candidate pool over time as a whole. Another benefit of experimenting with different statistical methods would be to work towards a prediction model that could help identify the optimal scenarios and backgrounds for female candidates. My research is valid only in that it can describe what happened in 2018. By accessing more data and sampling across an entire population of candidates, it would be possible to build a model that identifies variables to accurately predict outcomes rather than accurately describe them. Finally, although my findings contribute to the larger conversation surrounding the 2018 midterm elections, it is also important to note that there are significant limitations. As my research stands, it is not applicable to elections outside of the 2018 cycle. While I attempted to offer some common framework within my qualitative analysis and comparison to 1992, further research is required before these results are truly generalizable.

Women in the 2018 midterm elections benefited from a unique political context in which their gender helped to increase their vote-shares at the primary level and, in the case of challengers, in the general level as well. While these results have a

significant impact on the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, they also have the potential for further-reaching effects. As more women enter lower levels of elected office and obtain the advantage of incumbency in higher offices, the infrastructure for increasing women's representation continues to grow and strengthen. This 2018-version of the "Year of the Woman," and the effect that a candidate's gender had on their outcomes, therefore, will remain remarkable not only for this generation, but for generations of female leaders to come.



## Appendix A

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## Appendix B

# Data Collection

### Identifier Data

TABLE B.1: Identifier Data

Variable	"A" Source	"B" Source	"C" Source
Candidate name	State filing records	State primary ballot	"Ballotpedia"

### Biographical Data

TABLE B.2: Biographical Data (Non-incumbent\*)

Variable	"A" Source	"B" Source	"C" Source
Gender	CAWP	Campaign site	
Race	CAWP / FiveThirtyEight	Campaign site	News sources
Electoral experience	FiveThirtyEight	Campaign site	"Ballotpedia"

\*Incumbent biographical data collected from House of Representatives roster.

**District Data**

TABLE B.3: District Data

Variable	Source
PVI	"Cook 2018 Political Report PVI District Ranking"
Presidential election results	"Daily Kos elections' presidential results by congressional district"
WFI	Center for Women and Politics of Ohio, "Women-Friendly Districts"

**Election Data**

TABLE B.4: Election Data (Controls)

Variable	"A" Source	"B" Source	"C" Source
Party	State filing records	State primary ballot	"Ballotpedia"
Incumbency	State filing records	State primary ballot	"Ballotpedia"
Campaign finance	OpenSecrets.org	FEC	

TABLE B.5: Election Outcomes

State	Source	State	Source
AL	State election board	MT	State election board
AK	State election board	NE	State election board
AZ	State election board	NV	State election board
AR	New York Times	NH	New York Times
CA	State election board	NJ	New York Times
CO	State election board	NM	State election board
CT	State election board	NY	New York Times
DE	State election board	NC	State election board
FL	State election board	ND	State election board
GA	State election board	OH	State election board
HI	State election board	OK	State election board
ID	State election board	OR	State election board
IL	State election board	PA	State election board
IN	State election board	RI	State election board
IA	New York Times	SC	State election board
KS	State election board	SD	State election board
KY	State election board	TN	New York Times
LA	State election board	TX	State election board
ME	New York Times	UT	State election board
MD	State election board	VT	New York Times
MA	State election board	VA	New York Times
MI	New York Times	WA	State election board
MN	State election board	WV	State election board
MS	State election board	WI	State election board
MO	State election board	WY	New York Times

## Appendix C

# Extended Regression Results (H4)

### C.1 Democrats

TABLE C.1: Democrats (all races): Primary Level

	Primary Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	42.588*** (1.711)	28.958*** (2.004)	49.714*** (3.851)	65.215*** (3.227)
Male Candidate	-7.672*** (2.082)	-6.534*** (1.791)	-6.284*** (1.760)	-6.919*** (1.436)
White Candidate		4.431*** (1.851)	-0.114(1.958)	-3.784*** (1.597)
Electoral Experience		38.952*** (1.918)	44.700*** (2.095)	13.968*** (2.326)
2016 Clinton Vote			-0.404*** (0.064)	-0.697*** (0.055)
Incumbent				51.746*** (2.965)
Open Seat Candidate				-8.919*** (1.672)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				0.409*** (0.043)
Observations	1,086	1,065	1,065	1,060
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.011	0.286	0.311	0.549

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

TABLE C.2: Democrats (all races): General Level

	General Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	53.953*** (1.415)	46.645*** (1.462)	7.360*** (1.730)	10.751*** (1.776)
Male Candidate	1.564(1.860)	-2.797** (1.281)	-0.030(0.793)	-0.724(0.769)
White Candidate		-5.501*** (1.356)	1.767** (0.876)	1.206* (0.848)
Electoral Experience		27.012*** (1.283)	8.255*** (1.058)	3.859*** (1.317)
2016 Clinton Vote			0.851*** (0.032)	0.738*** (0.035)
Incumbent				9.438*** (1.596)
Open Seat Candidate				2.531** (1.170)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				0.00000*** (0.00000)
Observations	430	430	430	430
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-0.001	0.542	0.827	0.842

Note:

\*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01

TABLE C.3: Democratic Challengers: Primary Level

	Primary Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	37.588*** (1.873)	32.760*** (2.589)	72.788*** (4.539)	70.934*** (4.341)
Male Candidate	-9.837*** (2.265)	-9.343*** (2.270)	-8.159*** (2.102)	-5.893*** (2.025)
White Candidate		5.324** (2.412)	-3.567* (2.389)	-4.955** (2.289)
Electoral Experience		15.051*** (4.077)	14.792*** (3.770)	10.813*** (3.631)
2016 Clinton Vote			-0.797*** (0.077)	-0.832*** (0.073)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				0.00000*** (0.00000)
Observations	648	633	633	629
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.027	0.050	0.188	0.262

Note:

\*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01



TABLE C.4: Democratic Challengers: General Level

	General Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	42.493*** (1.018)	42.761*** (1.642)	14.191*** (2.436)	18.052*** (2.259)
Male Candidate	-3.661*** (1.414)	-3.496*** (1.391)	-1.198(1.016)	-1.570** (0.915)
White Candidate		-1.389(1.669)	1.850* (1.226)	0.841(1.111)
Electoral Experience		6.215*** (2.163)	4.279*** (1.565)	3.374*** (1.412)
2016 Clinton Vote			0.668*** (0.050)	0.525*** (0.049)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				0.00000*** (0.00000)
Observations	197	197	197	197
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.028	0.062	0.514	0.608

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

TABLE C.5: Democrats in Open Seats: Primary Level

	Primary Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	28.908*** (2.279)	22.662*** (3.017)	52.163*** (6.637)	51.133*** (6.185)
Male Candidate	-10.209*** (2.843)	-10.325*** (2.879)	-10.793*** (2.757)	-9.534*** (2.575)
White Candidate		6.034** (2.999)	0.249(3.100)	-0.992(2.892)
Electoral Experience		10.282*** (3.214)	15.307*** (3.239)	15.549*** (3.016)
2016 Clinton Vote			-0.552*** (0.112)	-0.602*** (0.104)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				0.00000*** (0.00000)
Observations	263	257	257	256
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.043	0.079	0.156	0.272

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

TABLE C.6: Democrats in Open Seats: General Level

	General Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	51.746*** (2.300)	50.630*** (3.032)	8.073*** (2.033)	8.138*** (2.072)
Male Candidate	-3.252(3.336)	-6.524** (3.117)	0.143(0.994)	0.087(1.035)
White Candidate		-2.659(3.232)	0.574(0.998)	0.550(1.013)
Electoral Experience		13.078*** (3.270)	1.778* (1.109)	1.868* (1.191)
2016 Clinton Vote			0.905*** (0.038)	0.902*** (0.041)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				0.00000(0.00000)
Observations	61	61	61	61
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-0.001	0.197	0.925	0.924

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

TABLE C.7: Democratic Incumbents: Primary Level

	Primary Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	85.385*** (2.307)	84.516*** (2.608)	104.653*** (9.178)	107.377*** (9.529)
Male Candidate	-1.585(2.775)	-1.864(2.806)	-2.794(2.802)	-2.682(2.803)
White Candidate		1.877(2.615)	-0.836(2.843)	-0.297(2.887)
2016 Clinton Vote			-0.276(0.121)	-0.294(0.122)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				-0.00000(0.00000)
Observations	175	175	175	175
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-0.004	-0.007	0.017	0.018

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

TABLE C.8: Democratic Incumbents: General Level

	General Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	75.422*** (1.744)	78.321*** (1.919)	19.113*** (5.173)	20.575*** (5.462)
Male Candidate	-3.757** (2.105)	-2.835* (2.069)	0.181(1.549)	0.199(1.551)
White Candidate		-6.261*** (1.936)	1.960(1.588)	2.151* (1.606)
2016 Clinton Vote			0.811*** (0.068)	0.800*** (0.069)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				-0.00000(0.00000)
Observations	172	172	172	172
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.013	0.065	0.489	0.489

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

## C.2 Republicans

TABLE C.9: Republicans (all races): Primary Level

	Primary Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	36.632*** (3.302)	27.977*** (3.586)	-15.059*** (5.937)	-5.790(5.357)
Male Candidate	5.815* (3.551)	4.590* (3.221)	6.885** (3.091)	3.220(2.617)
White Candidate		-3.386(3.075)	4.019* (3.056)	2.772(2.559)
Electoral Experience		37.081*** (2.269)	44.518*** (2.326)	12.201*** (2.823)
2016 Clinton Vote			0.712*** (0.080)	0.670*** (0.071)
Incumbent				44.625*** (3.821)
Open Seat Candidate				-10.177*** (2.226)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				0.156** (0.084)
Observations	872	834	834	827
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.002	0.245	0.309	0.518

Note:

\*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01

TABLE C.10: Republicans (all races): General Level

	General Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	40.956*** (2.276)	27.377*** (1.931)	88.248*** (1.766)	84.714*** (1.949)
Male Candidate	7.169*** (2.439)	3.373** (1.723)	1.014* (0.769)	0.809(0.753)
White Candidate		4.427*** (1.688)	-1.994*** (0.769)	-2.022*** (0.748)
Electoral Experience		22.583*** (1.206)	3.928*** (0.715)	0.494(0.993)
2016 Clinton Vote			-0.903*** (0.023)	-0.848*** (0.025)
Incumbent				6.724*** (1.234)
Open Seat Candidate				3.073*** (0.960)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				-0.00000** (0.00000)
Observations	393	388	388	386
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.019	0.524	0.906	0.911

Note:

\*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01

TABLE C.11: Republican Challengers: Primary Level

	Primary Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	34.867*** (4.313)	41.031*** (5.116)	-11.530* (7.998)	-12.877* (8.092)
Male Candidate	-0.361(4.643)	1.207(4.870)	3.859(4.498)	4.045(4.513)
White Candidate		-8.402** (4.124)	1.147(3.976)	0.671(3.952)
Electoral Experience		0.490(6.367)	5.802(5.902)	4.371(5.900)
2016 Clinton Vote			0.812*** (0.100)	0.813*** (0.100)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				0.00001** (0.00000)
Observations	394	369	369	364
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-0.003	0.003	0.154	0.160

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

TABLE C.12: Republican Challengers: General Level

	General Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	29.741*** (2.084)	27.310*** (2.214)	80.184*** (2.184)	75.679*** (2.294)
Male Candidate	0.852(2.270)	0.453(2.195)	-0.570(0.876)	-0.134(0.828)
White Candidate		3.253** (1.830)	-2.039*** (0.756)	-1.903*** (0.713)
Electoral Experience		7.224*** (2.938)	1.663* (1.189)	1.573* (1.117)
2016 Clinton Vote			-0.760*** (0.029)	-0.707*** (0.030)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				0.00000*** (0.00000)
Observations	140	136	136	134
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-0.006	0.054	0.850	0.868

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

TABLE C.13: Republicans in Open Seats: Primary Level

	Primary Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	24.016*** (3.507)	18.994*** (4.436)	-14.580** (8.312)	-25.712*** (7.662)
Male Candidate	-3.654(3.848)	-3.975(3.928)	-1.012(3.830)	1.927(3.479)
White Candidate		2.143(4.124)	6.786** (4.088)	8.432** (3.696)
Electoral Experience		12.850*** (3.107)	15.918*** (3.059)	12.881*** (2.799)
2016 Clinton Vote			0.631*** (0.134)	0.691*** (0.122)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				0.00001*** (0.00000)
Observations	278	265	265	263
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-0.0004	0.056	0.126	0.290

Note:

\*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01

TABLE C.14: Republicans in Open Seats: General Level

	General Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	41.767*** (3.525)	39.505*** (4.572)	91.592*** (2.762)	89.248*** (3.566)
Male Candidate	8.536** (3.941)	8.650** (4.211)	1.747(1.373)	1.754(1.372)
White Candidate		0.056(4.733)	-2.950** (1.509)	-2.487* (1.572)
Electoral Experience		5.350** (3.184)	-0.385(1.043)	-0.237(1.052)
2016 Clinton Vote			-0.938*** (0.042)	-0.914*** (0.048)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				0.00000(0.00000)
Observations	60	59	59	59
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.059	0.079	0.907	0.907

Note:

\*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01

TABLE C.15: Republican Incumbents: Primary Level

	Primary Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	77.117*** (4.352)	70.551*** (6.410)	75.200*** (9.321)	75.092*** (9.357)
Male Candidate	7.961** (4.550)	7.492** (4.551)	7.263** (4.570)	7.428** (4.645)
White Candidate		7.442(5.345)	6.930(5.403)	7.095(5.471)
2016 Clinton Vote			-0.109(0.158)	-0.124(0.174)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				0.00000(0.00000)
Observations	200	200	200	200
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.010	0.015	0.012	0.007

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

TABLE C.16: Republican Incumbents: General Level

	General Results			
	Baseline	Biographical	District	Election
Intercept	54.896*** (2.284)	50.853*** (3.359)	90.318*** (2.921)	90.476*** (2.900)
Male Candidate	4.389** (2.392)	4.110** (2.387)	2.212* (1.428)	1.679(1.443)
White Candidate		4.581* (2.802)	0.278(1.688)	-0.243(1.696)
2016 Clinton Vote			-0.924*** (0.050)	-0.870*** (0.057)
Money Spent (\$100,000)				-0.00000** (0.00000)
Observations	193	193	193	193
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.012	0.021	0.651	0.657

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01