

**Closing the Gender Gap in Women's Representation in Public Office: Examining Methods
to Recruit Female Candidates**

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Abstract

Leading into the 2014 midterm elections, women formed close to one fifth of the officials representing the nation in Congress. In statewide positions and lower levels, women are still noticeably underrepresented in both parties. These statistics are particularly troubling because research shows that when women run for office they are just as likely as men to win their races. It is clear that part of reason why women are underrepresented is because they are not efficiently recruited. This study draws on qualitative data, including interviews with officeholders, candidates, and potential candidates as well as party and organizational recruiters and gatekeepers, to explore the approaches towards the recruitment and support of female candidates. In addition, this project also examines in depth current national level recruitment strategies targeted towards women by the Democratic and Republican parties. This thesis seeks to answer the following questions: How does political recruitment work for women? What strategies are being utilized by the two major parties as well as outside organizations, and how effective are these efforts? Ultimately, this study explores how female candidates are being recruited and whether these methods are effective in helping address the underrepresentation of women in office.

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Chapter One: The Gender Gap in Women's Representation

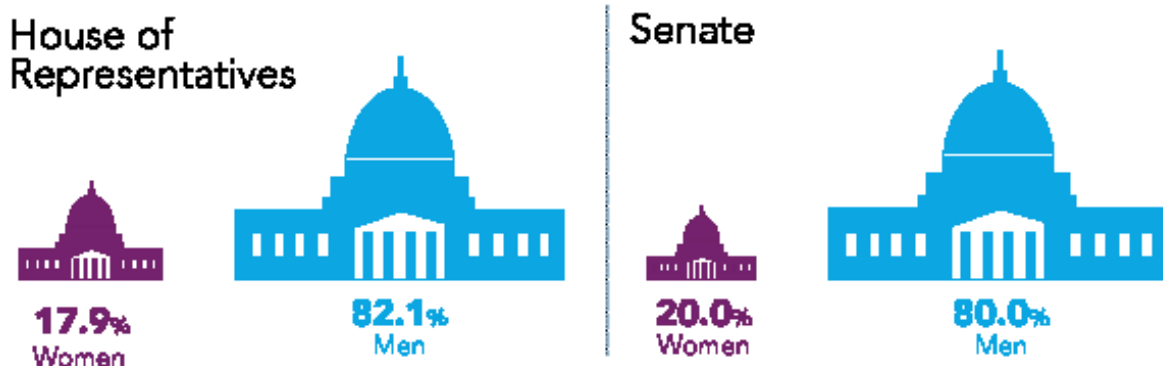
Introduction

Women have made remarkable gains in local, state, and national politics. With the media speculation leading to Fmr. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton's announcement of candidacy for president as well as the recent election of Iowa's first female senator Republican Joni Ernst, there seems to be no shortage of competitive female candidates or female officeholders. Even in a relatively conservative state like Texas, Democratic State Senators Wendy Davis and Leticia Van Putte made names for themselves throughout the state, which led to their selection as candidates for Governor and Lieutenant Governor. Additionally, in the 114th Congress, the count of women in Congress will surpass 100 for the first time (Center for American Women and Politics 2014). While these examples display notable milestones for female politicians, the reality is that women hold very few positions of political power.

In 2013, women accounted for only 20% of the U.S. Senate (despite having the largest number female senators in history) and about 18% of the House of Representatives (Refer to Figure 1.1 on page 6). Women don't fare much better when it comes to holding office in statewide positions and state legislature. For instance, only 10% of all U.S. governors are women (Lawless and Fox 2014). These are troubling statistics. If women make up about 50% of the U.S. population, then women are not being represented in office in proportion to their population. It has been argued that when women run for office they are just as likely as men to win their races (Lawless 2014). So, then why is there such a visible underrepresentation of women in office? While researchers point to a variety of factors, this essay will highlight how the ineffective political recruitment of potential female candidates actually adds to the gender gap in women's representation in public office. In essence, my research seeks to describe how political

recruitment works for women currently. Additionally, this thesis will explore various methods of recruitment utilized by two major political parties as well as political entities outside traditional structures.

The purpose of my research is to answer the question – How does recruitment work for women? In order to answer this question, this study employs multiple qualitative methods. First, I examine a range of literature from the national parties as well as affiliated organizations that are committed to increasing the number of women in elected office. This literature provides insights into the tactics the parties utilize to recruit candidates, as well as their motivation for working to get more women into office. Additionally, my research also draws on media coverage of recruitment efforts by the parties and various other political organizations; I look at media coverage detailing the experience of female candidates, particularly interviews with high-level people involved in recruiting candidates whom I was not able to interview myself. Finally, I conduct interviews with officeholders, candidates, and potential candidates as well as party and organizational recruiters and gatekeepers from both parties.



SOURCE

Center for American Women and Politics, "Women in the US Congress 2018." Center for American Women and Politics (2018).

Figure 1.1: Percent of Women in U.S. House of Representatives and Senate

Source: Center for American Women and Politics, “Women in the US Congress 2013.” Center for American Women and Politics (2013) via Catalyst.org “Women in Government: Quick Take.” Catalyst Inc.

Literature Review: Context

To begin, this thesis provides an overview of related areas of research. First, the literature review provides a contextual summary of research that proves the existence of gender gap, includes a history of women in U.S. politics, and highlights the benefits of female representation in office. In addition, the second part reviews relevant literature that explores the various factors that contribute to gender disparities in elected office.

Existence of Gender Gap in U.S. Government

Despite the increasing number of female officeholders on national, state, and local levels, women are far from reaching equal representation in government, particularly in the United States. According to the 2014 Inter-Parliamentary Union “Women in National Parliaments” report, the United States ranks eighty-fifth out of 189 nations in the world for percentage of women in its national legislature (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2014). Unquestionably, there are political and cultural factors that influence the total number of women who hold seats in any country’s legislature, but more than 40 democracies and 60 non-democracies still rank higher than the United States in women’s representation. In addition, the percentage of women in U.S. Congress overall is lower than the world average according to data collected by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (Refer to Figure 1.2 below). In the 2014 legislative session, the percent of women holding state legislative offices at 24.2% isn’t much more encouraging (National Conference of State Legislatures 2014).

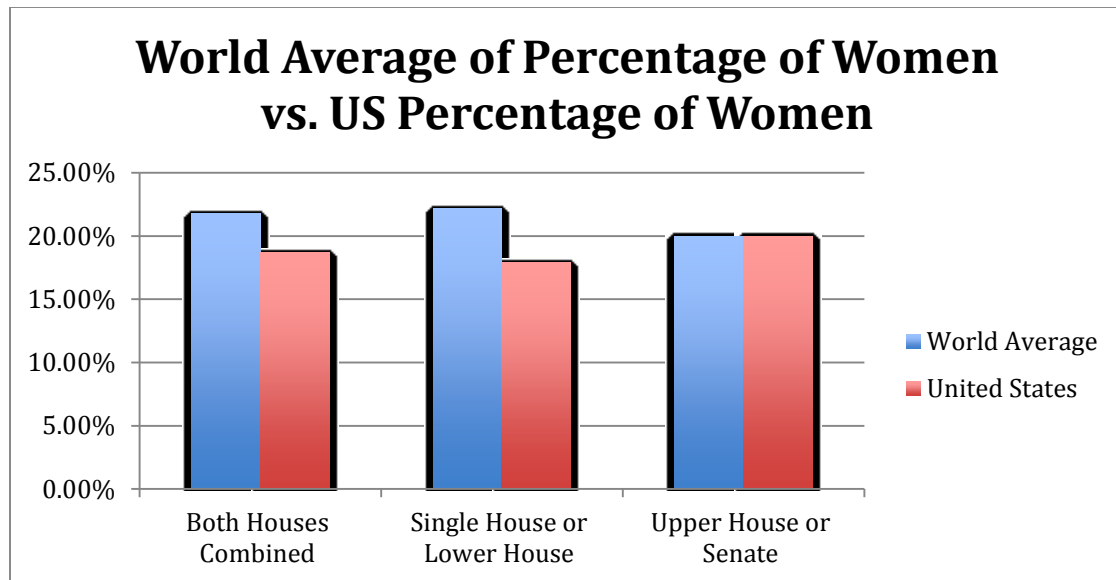


Figure 1.2: World Average Number of Women in National Parliament vs. Number of Women in U.S. Congress, Situation as of 1st October 2014

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union “Women in National Parliaments 2014” World Averages

A Brief History of Women in American Politics

In order to provide a better context for the current state of politics for women, it is important to trace the history of female civic participation. Before Hilary Clinton, Sarah Palin, and other well-known female politicians, female participation in politics wasn't always a possibility. In fact, being a female politician was considered a violation of what it meant to be traditional woman. In Emily J. Arendt's article “ ‘Ladies Going about for Money’: Female Voluntary Associations and Civic Consciousness in the American Revolution,” Arendt shares the history of the Ladies Association of Philadelphia – “The first female voluntary association” in America – which was formed in 1780 to help Continental soldiers. Many observers were surprised by the association's desire to assist in the cause, highlighting the low expectations for women's participation in civic life. Members of this association were wives of wealthy, elite men who departed from social propriety by walking door-to-door in Philadelphia to solicit funds for

the Continental army. These women were seen as pioneers of their time by collecting funds and “appropriat[ing] this conventionally masculine form of community building and carved out a space for the display of feminine public virtue” (Arendt 2014).

In 1840’s Virginia, the Whigs became the first party to explicitly mobilize women (despite the fact that women couldn’t vote yet) by urging them to give speeches, attend rallies, and write pamphlets (Varon 1995). Prior to the 1840’s, electoral campaigns were usually seen as a world only for men while women were given the tasks of nurturing peace and harmony in the home. What emerged out the Harrison campaign was Whig womanhood, “with its equation of female patriotism with partisanship and its assumption that women had the duty to bring their moral beneficence into the public sphere. Whig rhetoric held that women were partisans, who shared with men an intense interest and stake in electoral contests” (Varon 1995). Although Democrats at first derided the Whigs’ mobilization of women, they soon began to compete for women’s indirect “vote.”

Fortunately, progress was made in that women had won the right to vote and some women even held office, women like Jeannette Rankin, a Republican from Montana, entered the U.S. House of Representatives, the first woman ever elected to Congress (“Firsts for Women”) in 1916 (she was elected before women gained the right to vote). In the decades leading into the 1960’s, women’s participation in politics was characterized by a domestic tone. Robyn Muncy in her 2004 paper entitled “Cooperative Motherhood and Democratic Civic Culture in Postwar Suburbia, 1940-1965,” describes the politics of postwar suburbia, highlighting how many women moved into local politics by their involvement in the cooperative nursery school movement.

The 1960’s became a watershed moment when women became active participants in electoral politics instead of relegated to representatives of the domestic sphere. The feminist

movement of the sixties produced a new group of congresswomen, including Bella Abzug, one of the first to advocate gay rights and Shirley Chisholm, the first African-American woman elected (The Week Staff). Until the elections of 1992, often referred to as the Year of the Woman, women didn't make up more than 3 percent of Congress (The Week Staff). In the breakthrough year of 1992, 100 members of Congress were women.

As a result of the 2014 midterm elections, the total count of women in both houses of Congress will be more than 100 for the first time. While this is notable milestone, the road to parity for woman in political representation is still marked with considerable obstacles. One illuminating fact is that since 1789 only 2% of members of Congress have been women (Refer to Figure 1.3). According to Debbie Walsh, director of the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers University, "This [the results of the 2014 midterm elections] show very slow growth. If the goal is political parity for women — for women to be represented in Congress in proportion to their population — we're still not close." In order for progress to be made for women's representation in politics, then the obvious gender disparity in American elections must be addressed.

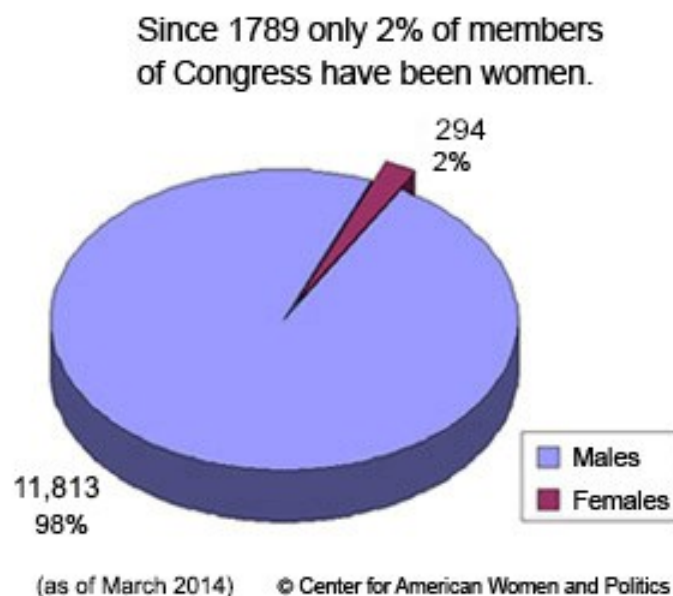


Figure 1.3: Historical Information about Women in Congress

Source: Center for American Women and Politics (2014).

Arguments for Increased Female Representation

For political scientists and scholars such as Walsh that support the descriptive representation theory – a belief that constituents are most effectively represented by legislators who are similar to them in such key demographic characteristics as race, ethnicity, religion, or gender – the need for equal female representation is necessary for legitimacy and in order to uphold democratic values of representative government and fairness. This argument contends that it is unfair for male politicians to be overrepresented according to descriptive representation theory, particularly in countries that profess to be modern and democratic.¹ However, more importantly, electing more women to public office increases the probability that policy debates will include women’s experience and perspective (Beeson 2014). Numerous studies (Bratton 2005; Gerrity, Osborn, Mendez 2007; Saint-Germ 1989) have also shown that the presence of more women in legislatures makes a significant difference in the policy that gets passed.

A 1991 study by Sue Thomas and Susan Welch, “The Impact of Gender on Activities and Priorities of State Legislators,” concluded that female state legislators are more likely than male legislators to offer bills relating to families, children, or women’s issues at the top of their legislative agendas (Thomas and Welch 1991). In addition, a study conducted by researchers at Vanderbilt University has found that female legislators in both parties introduce more bills that pertain to the areas of child-care, education, family healthcare, civil rights and liberties, and labor (Volden and Wiseman 2010). Former American Political Science Association president Arend Lijphart in his acclaimed book – *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance*

¹ More on discussion on descriptive representation theory and other representation theories can be found Chapter 2 of this thesis.

in Thirty-Six Countries – finds strong correlation between more progressive policy on issues such as the environment, increased support for families and individuals, and violence prevention and the presence of more female legislators (Lijphart 1999, 2012). Simply put, female politicians will likely have a different approach than male politicians.

Political theorists often attribute symbolic or role model benefits to a more diverse body of elected officials. As a result, increasing the number of female officeholders and candidates has been shown to add substantial and symbolic benefits to the political sphere (Anzia and Berry 2011; Thomas 1992; Gerrity, Osborn, & Mendez 2007). For example, in a 2003 study titled “Not All Cues are Created Equal: The Conditional Impact of Female Candidates on Political Engagement,” the author found that women who live in states with visible and competitive female candidates have higher levels of political engagement among women (Atkeson 2003).

Other more pragmatic arguments emphasize the electoral advantage of having more women representatives, specifically because political parties might be seen as more supportive of “women’s rights and issues,” which in turn might result more of the women vote.² With the exception of the argument based on the descriptive representation theory, all other arguments I have presented imply that a women’s presence in politics will improve their substantive representation – a theory of representation in which the representative seeks to advance a group’s policy preferences and interests.

Literature Review: Factors Adding to Gender Gap

According to the UN Women Deputy Executive Director John Hendra, “Every election is a critical opportunity to make progress towards the increased participation of women as voters and as candidates” (United Nations Women 2014). In order to make this progress, gender parity

² However, these types of arguments tend to see women as homogenous group that can be courted in just one way.

must be addressed. Various theories have been developed to explain the underrepresentation of women in politics.

Role Conflict

In “Getting There: Women in Political Office,” author Janet Clark examines theories that stress “sex-role socialization” as the basis of women’s underrepresentation in public office. While Clark simply accepts the traditional notion that women and men are socialized to accept different kinds of roles in life, she does provide more compelling evidence that women’s family responsibilities tend to hinder their political participation. In addition, Clark also provides anecdotal evidence of women who have managed to avoid the role conflicts between being homemakers and politicians.

In contrast, recent studies seem to dismiss this theory that women’s family responsibilities affect their decisions to run. Associate Professor Jennifer Lawless of American University in her article entitled, “It’s the Family, Stupid? Not Quite...How Traditional Gender Roles Do Not Affect Women’s Political Ambition,” finds the myth that traditional family structures and roles contribute to women’s lower political ambition is far from true. Lawless asserts, “Surprisingly, women’s disproportionate familiar responsibilities do not dramatically affect whether they have considered running for office or express interest in running for office in the future...The struggle to balance family roles with professional responsibilities has simply become part of the bargain for contemporary women.” Lawless concludes that the struggle to balance family responsibilities with professional responsibility is what is expected for women running for office (Lawless 2014).

Gender Stereotypes

Finally, Clark examines the claim that female candidates face discrimination from

political elites and voters. After much consideration, Clark concludes that evidence of discrimination is inconclusive. While she does agree that past voter discrimination against female candidates has existed, Clark states that explicit voter discrimination has vanished according to general public opinion polls (Welch and Sigelman 1992). In a study by Paul S. Herson, Celeste Jay, and Atiya Kai Strokes, the authors acknowledge that while voters do not explicitly vote against women, voters do vote with specific gender stereotypes in mind. They assert that even “female candidates, regardless of their position on compassion issues, are often seen as more sympathetic to these causes [compassion issues such as welfare, healthcare, childcare, elderly care, or disability rights]” (Herson, Jay, and Strokes 2003: 246). As a result, unless women run “as women,” by playing into the voters’ perception of women and emphasizing stereotypical female strengths in their campaign messages as the authors state, then women candidates are at a significant disadvantage compared to their male counterparts who are less limited by gender stereotypes.

Media Coverage of Female Candidates

In Pippa Norris’ book *Women, Media, and Politics*, the author examines whether media coverage of women candidates in America reinforce gender stereotypes. Additionally, Norris presents the question of whether the media is partially to blame for women’s underrepresentation. While early studies (Khan 1994; Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1994) found that male candidates tend to have better and more total coverage than female candidates, recent studies (Devitt 2002; Bystorm et al. 2005) have found that coverage of women have improved, but gender stereotypes continues to plague the campaigns of female candidates.

In the second edition of *Women for President: Media Bias in Nine Campaigns*, author Erika Falk utilizes nine paired comparisons of female and male presidential candidates from the

1800s to the 2008 election, ending with Hilary Clinton's historic candidacy for president. Falk's analysis paints a picture of women consistently facing a considerable uphill battle to overcome pervasive gender stereotypes in the media. These stereotypes include the common themes that women are not competent enough or even viable candidates to be president. While Falk concludes that media coverage of Clinton's campaign has shown notable improvement in the coverage of female candidates, Falk still highlights many of stereotypical coverage patterns that still persist.

Falk argues that the office of the President of the United States is seen as inherently "masculine," so media coverage of female presidential candidates has usually reflected cultural idea that the president must be a man. She asserts that "the press portrays women as losers and novelties and not serious candidates," and this biased media coverage discourages women from running (145). For instance, in the Clinton's 2008 candidacy, media tended to dwell on when and whether Clinton would exit the Democratic race more than her prospects of winning according to Falk.

Incumbency Advantage

While women candidates generally do as well as their male competitors in elections for open seats, when incumbency plays a role, then women are disadvantaged because the incumbents are usually male. Women are less likely than men to be incumbents, who generally benefit from name recognition and well-established relationships with constituents (Anderson and Thorson 1984). The incumbency advantage also includes increased political resources that only officeholders have access to, and the fact that a previous victory (or victories) demonstrates an ability to appeal to voters and win. Therefore, if the common advantages of incumbency continue, more female candidates must overcome the incumbency advantage than male

candidates. However, it is important to note that reelection rates for Congresswomen are actually higher than rates of their male counterparts (Refer to Figure 1.4). While this is encouraging news for female incumbents, it is clear that an increase female representation will still require considerably more women candidates.

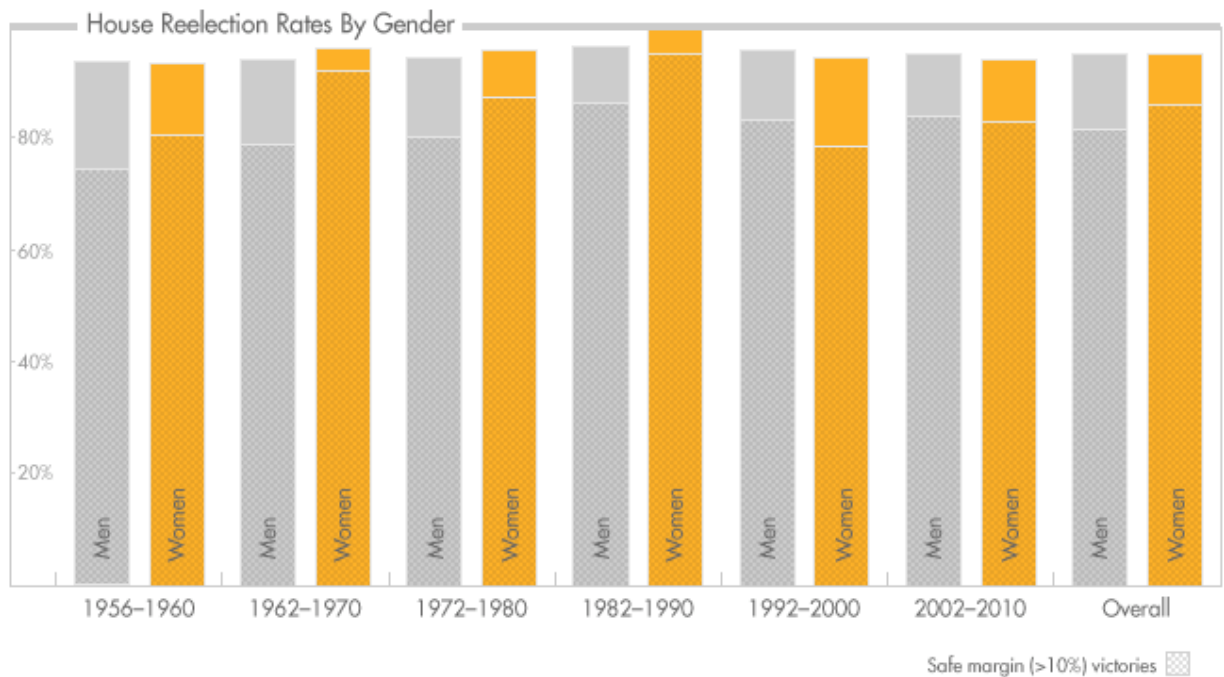


Figure 1.4: House Reelection Rates By Gender

Source: “Women & Congressional Elections: A Century of Change.” Barbara Palmer and Dennis Simon (2012) 146-154.

Single-Member Districts

Today, the majority of state legislatures and the U.S. House of Representatives use single-member districts, a winner-take-all system. In this system, candidates compete to be the single legislator for the district; it is the candidate with the most votes in the district that wins the seat. In their 2014 report on the state of representation of women, Representation 2020, a task force committed to achieving gender parity in public office, points out that the American political structure itself, particularly single-member districts, forms barriers to the election of

women. According to a number of scholarly articles, women are better represented (according to the descriptive representative theory) in multi-member districts than single-member districts in the United States and foreign nations as well (Clark 1991; Morgenstern and Cox 1995; Matland and Brown 1992).

As of January 2014, six of the top ten states in terms of having the highest percentage of women in state legislatures used multi-member districts. State legislative chambers that utilize multi-member districts are composed of 31% women while chambers that use single-member districts only are 22.8% women (Schaller 2013). In addition, multi-member districts provide voters with the opportunity to vote for female candidates even if their “preferred political party” doesn’t nominate them. Multi-members districts also increase the proportion of a state’s voters represented by a female officeholder (Representation 2020 2013:34). Finally, in campaigns in multi-member districts, candidates tend to focus on accomplishment rather than attacking opponents; therefore, more women might be willing to run for election in such an environment (Representation 2020 2013:34).

Political Ambition

A recent study by Jennifer Lawless and Richard Fox measured the gender gap in political ambition, which they defined as the willingness to run for elected office. In both 2001 and 2011, Lawless and Fox conducted a “Citizen Political Ambition Panel Study” with a national sample of nearly 4,000 random equally credentialed men and women in occupations such as business, law, education, and political activism that most commonly lead to political candidacy. The results reveal that women are less likely to run for office because they don’t consider running for elected office, they don’t receive encouragement to run for office, and they don’t believe they are

qualified to seek elective office. Alarming, prospective female candidates were 16% less likely than male candidates to even consider running (Refer to Figure 1.5).

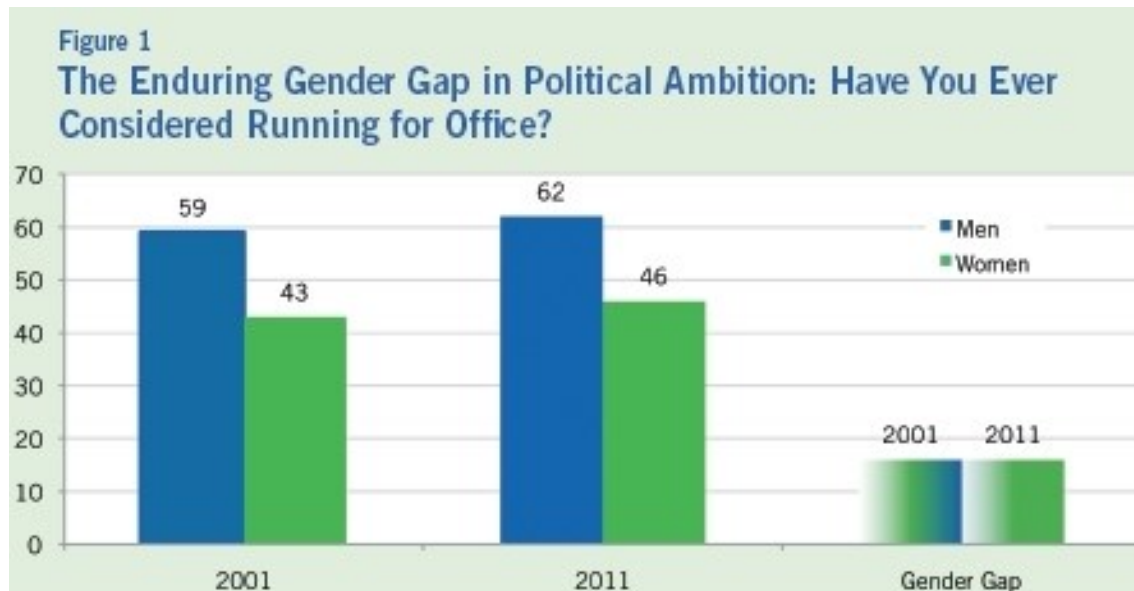


Figure 1.5: The Enduring Gender Gap in Political Ambition: Have You Ever Considered Running for Office

Source: “Men Rule: The Continued Under-Representation of Women in U.S. Politics. Rep. Washington D.C.”; American U and Loyola Marymount U, 2012. Print.³

In the report, Lawless and Fox list the significant impediments women face in running for office. These factors include women’s attitudes about campaigning, the levels of encouragement and recruitment for female candidates, female’s self-perceptions of electoral viability, and perception of political environment. While women certainly have noteworthy hindrances to face in order to run for office, researchers conclude that the most effective way to close the gender gap is to get women to run for public office.

³ Notes: Bars represent the percentage of women and men who responded that they had “seriously considered” or “considered” running for office (this includes respondents who actually ran for office). The gender gap is significant at $p < .05$ in both the 2001 and 2011 comparisons

Evaluation of Literature

Overall, there are several credible factors that lead to the current gender gap in women's representation in public office. These factors include societal elements, such as political culture, gender roles, gender stereotypes and biases, which affect voter perception of female candidates as well as media coverage of female candidates. Political realities such as single-member districts and the incumbency advantage, and political ambition all have an influence on the gender disparity in women's representation. Only with significant cultural and societal changes will women be able to overcome many of these barriers in order to close the gap. For instance, voters' gender bias toward female candidates requires a change in the way women are perceived. These biases towards women are based on deeply rooted stereotypes that will take a long time to address at least on a societal level. However, the power of these factors and overcoming the barriers they pose to women is fundamentally linked to the sustained and effective recruitment of potential female candidates (Sanbonmatsu 2006). For instance, if women are actively recruited to fill open seats, then power of the incumbency factor is no longer a barrier that female candidates would have to overcome in those races.

The reality is that women are less likely than men to be encouraged to run for office. In the 2014 Lawless and Fox study, women, when encouraged, were just as likely as men to respond favorably. Ultimately, research has shown that outside encouragement is central to a woman's decision to run. According to research by the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University (CAWP), 53% of women acknowledged that they had not considered running before someone else suggested it in comparison to the 28% of male respondents that had not already considered running (Carroll, Sanbonmatsu, and Walsh 2009). Therefore, it is important that women are specifically recruited because they are essentially half as likely as men

to seek elected office without encouragement.

Limitations of Relevant Literature

While relevant literature can address a variety of factors that have possibly led to the deficiency of women's representation in government, there are still many questions left unanswered or adequately addressed by the studies and journal articles currently available. For instance, here are some questions that still remain after my analysis of relevant literature:

- 1) Is the gender gap partially institutional? (In essence, do institutional selection rules make harder or easier for women to be elected?)
- 2) Are there some additional economic or cultural factors that lead to the gender gap in politics? Are certain types of women excluded where similarly situated men are not?
- 3) Why does it seem that women are encouraged less to run for office or participate in the political arena in other ways?

These questions, while important, are beyond the scope of my project. Addressing these fundamental questions is not my main objective of this project although some of the results of this project might provide insights in answering these larger questions. Put simply, answering these questions will require study on a greater amount of female candidates in political science. However, one significant limitation of some past studies is that only a small number of female candidates could be examined. Ultimately, my main objective of reviewing this literature is to provide ample justification for increasing recruitment efforts for potential female candidates.

Purpose of this Thesis

Ultimately, the purpose of this research project is to provide a clear description and assessment of recruitment methods utilized by the major parties, PACs, and other political

organizations to recruit and support women candidates. It is my hope that by evaluating these current recruitment tactics, this research will also determine effective methods to recruit female candidates.

It is my belief that recruitment methods specifically targeted towards women are more successful than general recruiting methods. In short, I assume that recruiting female candidates requires a different approach than recruiting male candidates. In a Politico article, “Money Gap: Why Don’t Women Give,” addressing the low amount of political contributions from female donors in comparison to male donors, journalists Anna Palmer and Tarini Parti attempt pinpoint specific, effective tactics that numerous fundraisers and political consultants utilize in order to attract female political donors. Similarly, it was my initial hypothesis that recruiting women will require some specific tactics that might not as directly apply to male candidates.

However, my research design is not set up to test this assumption; in order to test that hypothesis, I would need to examine both targeted and general recruitment methods. Ultimately, this is beyond the scope of my thesis. The focus of this project is on assessing current recruiting methods and gathering knowledge from current political actors on how to ensure more women run for office and sharing specific recruitment tactics for potential female candidates rather than proving or disproving my initial hypothesis.

I believe that recruiting female candidates will require much more of a personal touch from the recruiter as well as great sense of trust between the recruiter and the potential candidate. Given that women are less likely to run for office on their own and that women are less likely to receive encouragement to run for office, then this relationship between recruiter and potential candidate is crucial. Additionally, I also believe that an effective approach in recruiting female candidates will specifically consider the time the potential candidate has to dedicate to a

campaign. While Lawless has stated that women's familiar role conflict doesn't actually lower a woman's political ambition, it is still important to keep these family responsibilities in mind when persuading women to devote significant amount of their free time to campaign.

Again, it is important to note that the main purpose is to examine recruitment methods utilized by the two major political parties and other group and assess their effectiveness. Yet, it is my hope that more research will be done to determine if targeted recruitment methods for female candidates are actually more effective in getting women to run than general recruitment methods.

The Plan of This Thesis

In the next chapter (Chapter 2), I begin with a discussion about the concept of political representation, and then I highlight four main views of political representation. Later on, I examine research on political recruitment in general as well as an analysis of theories on political recruitment. In Chapter 3, I use the national parties as case examples and assess the effectiveness of their recruitment methods. Throughout this chapter, I also present the responses from my interviews subjects (potential candidates, current officeholders, and official candidates) about their opinions on the effectiveness of current recruitment effort for female candidates by the major political parties and other groups. Finally, I summarize the findings of all of my interviews and offer some general conclusions about recruitment methods for female candidates.

Chapter Two: Theories of Political Representation and Models of Recruitment

Introduction

To understand why and how political representation is crucial to the assessment of political recruitment of women candidates, it is necessary to first understand what political representation is and discuss theories of representation. Additionally, it is also equally as important to discuss models of political recruitment in order to gain an understanding of how the process of recruitment happens generally from various perspectives.

Understanding Political Representation

While the concept of political representation seems relatively easy to understand, it has been the center of much scholarly debate because there little consensus on a particular definition of the concept in scholarly research. Political theorist, Hanna Pitkin, offers this frequently cited definition of political representation in *The Concept of Representation*: “to represent is simply to make present again” (8). Based on this definition, the concept of representation tells us that those who are represented are not present (Childs and Lovenduski 2012). Therefore, political representation occurs when political actors, such as activists, politicians, or campaign volunteers, advocate or speak on behalf of other citizens.⁴ By most accounts, political representation must exhibit all of the following four components

(Dovi 2006):

1. There must be a party that is representing (ex: elected officials)
2. There must be a party that is being represented (ex: constituents)
3. There must be something that is being represented (ex: public opinion)

⁴ For the sake of our discussion, I will limit the types of representatives to formal representatives that hold elected offices for the rest of the chapter.

4. There must be a setting in which the act of representation is taking place (ex: a political context, such as the hyper-partisan environment of U.S. politics)

Theories of Political Representation

Pitkin provides a comprehensive discussion of the political representation in *The Concept of Representation*. In this work, Pitkin acknowledges the complexities of understanding the concept of representation; she compares it to “a rather complicated, convoluted, three-dimensional structure in the middle of a dark enclosure” (10). Later on, she describes four views or theories of representation.

The first type, authorized representation, is when institutional arrangements legally empower the representation to act for another. This view of political representation doesn't have standards for evaluating how well a representative acts. Others can only assess whether a representative legitimately holds his or her position. In symbolic representation, the representative essentially stands for the represented. For example, an elected president would stand for national ideals. In this theory of representation, representatives are assessed “by the degree of acceptance that representatives have among the represented” (Devin 2012).

The next two representative theories, substantive and descriptive, are of particular importance in our discussion of increased women's representation. In descriptive representation theory, as I've previously stated, the representative stands for a group by virtue of sharing similar demographic characteristics like ethnicity, race, or sex. In this view, the representative is assessed by how accurate the resemblance between those being represented and the representative. Finally, in substantive representation, the representative is basically an agent of the represented, acting on behalf of the group's preferences. The substantive representative

would be evaluated based on the extent to which policy outcomes advanced by the representative reflect the “best interests” of his or her constituents.

Implications for Discussions about Women’s Representation

After Pitkin’s work was released in 1967, many scholars dismissed descriptive representation as unimportant. However, the publication of Anne Phillip’s *The Politics of Presence* in 1995 occurred during a time when political scholars addressed issues of women’s representation explicitly. As a result, descriptive representation no longer was dismissed. In fact, literature began to develop out of Phillip’s idea of a politics of presence (Young 2000; Mansbridge 1999), stating that political deliberation requires the participation of key groups in order to make sure democratically representative decisions will be made.

Currently, the research agenda of many feminist scholars in this area has shifted from a strong focus on descriptive representation (simply counting the number of women elected to legislative offices) to “considerations of substantive representation and the relationship between the two” (Child and Lovenduski 2012). This has occurred because the number of women in elected legislatures has grown, allowing researchers to examine more than just the number of women in office, but also what female representatives have done once they are elected.

Interestingly, many feminist political scientists highlight the potential for descriptive representation to result in substantive representation. For example, Phillip reasons that women can only benefit in the course of decision-making and legislative deliberation when women are present during the discussion. This underlying logic is why I heavily stress the importance of increasing the number of female candidates through effective recruitment. Following this argument, when there is an increased number of female officeholders (a goal based on descriptive representation theory), then female voters can benefit from the realization of their

interests in decision making (a goal based on substantive representation theory). In short, my overall rationale for wanting to increase the number of female candidates through effective recruitment stems from an underlying link between descriptive and substantive representation. However, it is important to note that Laura Weldon points out that the presence of individual women representatives is insufficient to guarantee substantive representation (Weldon 2002). I would argue that while Weldon's statement is true, if these individual representatives work to gain a comprehensive understanding of the needs of the constituents, then they can accurately advocate for their group interests.

My research is not simply focused on recruitment efforts that increase the number of women, but it also implicitly examines how these efforts can increase the potential of substantive representation of women by female candidates. Since my research focuses only on the recruitment process of female candidates, I will have to rely more on the descriptive representation perspective when assessing the effectiveness of current recruitment methods because my research does not examine the actual actions of elected female officeholders once in office, so from a substantive representation perspective, I can only assess the potential for female candidates to reflect the interests of women through their claims during the campaign.

A Definition of Political Recruitment

In democracies like the United States government, there are a large variety of channels for political participation. People can join interest groups, become political activists in their communities, lobby for a specific issue, become campaign donors, and be active party members. In a sense, recruitment occurs at every level and on various platforms such as “formulation, advocacy and, at the highest level, in law making process” (Nergiz 43). However, running for office is a rather uncommon act of political participation for both men and women. Still, some

choose to run for office. For certain individuals, a career in politics seems inevitable, and they need no encouragement to run. Yet for others, the path to elected office is not as clear. These individuals are transformed from regular, everyday citizens to potential candidates due to the prompting of another outside actor.

When I use the term “political recruitment” in this project, I’m referring specifically to the process where individuals move from lower level involvement such as voting to running for an elected office position. While there are various definitions for the term “political recruitment,” my definition encompasses the core of what most accepted definitions of term state. In one of the earlier writings about political recruitment, respected political scientist Dwaine Marvick defines political recruitment as the “institutional processes by which political jobs beyond the citizenship level are filled” (277). Brady, Scholzman, and Verb put forth a similar view in their article, “Prospecting for Participants: Rational Expectations and the Recruitment of Political Activists,” describing “political recruitment” as a process by which “individuals are selected for inclusion among political elites [elected office holders]” (153). Finally, authors Philip Althoff and Michael Rush in their book, *An Introduction to Political Sociology*, define “political recruitment” as “the process by which individuals secure, or are enlisted in the roles of the office-holders in a formal or informal manner (14). In essence, for the purposes this project “political recruitment” refers to the specific recruitment of candidates for elected, political office.

In general, political recruitment can occur in two ways. In numerous cases, individuals may themselves seek the opportunity to hold office and the assistance of those that will help them achieve this political goal. According to 2011 Lawless and Fox Political study, for male candidates “self-recruitment” is the norm. On the hand, political recruitment also occurs when

recruiters (such as party leaders or current officeholders) reach out to encourage certain individuals to run for office. For women, this process appears to be is utilized more for recruiting female candidates as women are 16% less likely than men to have thought about running for office on their own. One issue in political recruitment is being able to anticipate whether most candidates come forward on their own, self-recruitment, or whether this process requires others actors to play a major role. Maisel et. al summarize these two means of political recruitment (140):

At one extreme is the traditional group-based concept of candidate recruitment. In this case, some external force, normally a political party tries to influence a potential candidate to run office. The party, other external force, attempts to influence the potential candidate's decision-making. At the other extreme is candidate self-selection. In this case a potential candidate "emerges" on his or her own and then considers a run for office, assesses chances, and makes decisions independent of political party opinion or other external forces.

It's clear from studies such as Brookson's "Mobilizing Candidates: A Field Experiment And A Review" that both narratives – one in which the candidate's political ambition leads them to run and one in which other actors can and do "strategically mobilize candidates" to run for office – do occur in the current political environment.

Devices of Political Recruitment

According to Marvick, political institutions (political parties in most cases) utilize several strategies in order to fill political offices. The first method is cooptation, a strategy in which existing members of a party, committee, or board agree to appoint someone to a position. As Marvick points out, through cooptation, members can either choose to add to their members or

simply sustain their numbers. Another strategy for political recruitment is mobilization, a process in which supporters are rallied together in an organized effort such as coordinating an act of civil disobedience or building an active volunteer force for a campaign is another. Although mobilization mostly focuses on recruiting people to participation in low-level political activities, this is where recruiters (party leaders and other gatekeepers) can identify strong potential candidates for office.

Similar to cooptation, appointment is another device of political recruitment that Marvick names. While recruits are simply appointed to specific position by a key political figure, this allows a potential candidate for elected office to gain the necessary experience and skills that will make them a stronger candidate for an elected position later. Another institutional strategy Marvick points to is apprenticeship and examinations, this strategy essentially build on the notion of a meritocracy. Those who have proven themselves and demonstrated their skills are likely to be approached by the political recruiters. Marvick also stresses that institutions utilize, lot and rotation, arbitrary methods for securing [potential candidates] for specialized roles from among a group of presumed peers” (277).

One important observation about political recruitment that can be made from Marvick’s work is the distinction between formal recruitment processes such as appointment and informal processes such as apprenticeship. It is the formal processes in politics that secure manpower from outside from the institution and the public. While formal recruitment does also draw from those within in the political institutional, informal recruitment mechanisms are also utilized to recruit potential candidates from within in the institution.

Models of Political Recruitment

Pippa Norris’ and Lovenduski’s “Supply and Demand” Model of Recruitment

In their book, *Political Recruitment: Gender, Race, and Class in the British Parliament*, authors Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski provide an analytical framework to understand the factors that influencing the political recruitment process by parties. They develop this “supply and demand” model of analyzing political recruitment, which combines a micro-level analysis of potential candidate and recruiter attitudes with a macro-level analysis of the larger political and institutional context. In their model, Norris and Lovenduski adopt an institutionalist approach, focusing largely on how the political parties in Great Britain play a role in selection of potential candidates. In their analysis, the political system, comprised of the legal system, electoral system, and party system, sets the formalized rules of political recruitment.

Demand Side Explanation of Recruitment

One clear assumption on demand side is that recruiters (political parties) recruit candidates based on their own perception of that individual’s political experience, credentials, and abilities. Norris and Lovenduski aptly emphasize that potential candidates are often not well known by those recruiting, so these perceptions may be influenced by “direct and imputed discrimination towards certain types of applicant” (14). Notably, the term “discrimination” is used in neutral sense in this model not just the negative sense. In essence, “discrimination” is the treatment or consideration of a potential candidates based on the group they belong to.

In instances of direct discrimination, the potential candidates are judged, positively or negatively, based on the characteristics perceived as common to their identity group rather than individuals by party leaders. In contrast, imputed discrimination is when a party leader favors a certain group or category of candidate but is unwilling to choose that potential candidate, fearing that he or she will not be a competitive candidate. Therefore, Norris and Lovenduski argue that demand side explanations suggest social bias in legislature or parliament is reflected by the

discrimination of party leaders. This line of argument comes mostly from a strongly, quantitative approach, so personal perspectives in support of this argument are usually not explored as extensively.

One possible pitfall in this approach is that if one overestimates the influence of accumulation of factors (levels of education, occupation, minority identity, gender, etc.), such an approach assumes that these factors will have been leveled by the time potential candidates succeed gaining the support of the recruiters. As a result, the question how and whether these factors still matter during the practice of politics after the recruitment will remain. Ultimately, this is beyond the scope of this discussion to examine this question, but I thought it was important to highlight a possible implication of this variable-oriented approach.

Supply Side Explanation of Recruitment

While discrimination by recruiters are certainly significant, many party leaders often state they would like to have more candidates that are typically underrepresented such as women, working-class individuals, and ethnic workers. Despite the fact, there are plenty of citizens, many of whom are part of underrepresented groups, eligible to run for office, few do so. Norris and Lovenduski suggest that the current lack of diversity in officeholders reflects the supply of people willing to pursue a political career. Specifically, their evidence suggests that the outcome reflects the resources (time, money, and relevant experience) and motivational factors (such as political ambition and interest) of potential candidates.

Concerning resources in particular, every advantage a potential candidate can bring into politics and to the party specifically is examined. These resources often include high financial status, professional skills, political connections, career flexibility, and educational qualifications, just to name a few. According to Norris and Lovenduski, the other major factor, political

motivation, refers to the drive, the ambition and the political engagement that make potential candidates willing to run for office.

Insights from “Supply and Demand” Model and Implications for Female Candidates

When a potential candidate is going through decision of whether to run or not, supply-side and demand-side factors actually interact. Some may be discouraged from running office because they fear failure or believe they will experience prejudice by party leadership (demand-side explanation). In addition to that, these potential candidates may also be discouraged from pursuing elected office because they believe they lack the resources or experience to run for office (supply-side explanation).

Norris’ and Lovenduski’s model works relatively well in describing the thought process many women go through during the recruitment phase. For potential female candidates, the influence of gender on political recruitment can be as both a product of demand and supply. Looking from the demand-side perspective, recruiters such as party leaders and other recruiters might employ imputed or direct discrimination. Alternatively, from the demand-side perspective, women may see themselves as having fewer resources in terms of relevant political experience, and women tend to have lower levels of political ambition.

Other Models of Political Recruitment (rational choice, meritocracy, and patronage)

Another model for political recruitment in America is based on rational choice theories of office seeking (Black 1972; Rohde 1979; Fowler and McClure 1989; Fowler 1993). This approach is derived from Joseph Schlesinger’s works, *Ambition and Politics: Political Career in the United States* and *Politics Parties and the Winning of Office*, which insinuate that potential political ambition only becomes realized within a particular opportunity structure. In short, potential candidates will only choose to run after evaluating available opportunities. This rational

choice approach explains a potential candidate's decision to run in terms of simple cost benefit analysis. The assumption is that potential candidates are all rational goal seekers who desire to run for office. Therefore, if the probability of winning is high, then the potential candidate will decide to run for office. One limitation of this approach is that it doesn't provide an explanation of why people have the desire or ambition to run for office. In addition, the rational choice approach assumes that potential candidates are self-recruited and don't require the encouragement of other actors to run.

Another model of political recruitment is based on patronage through family ties, personal connections, social networks, or financial influence. In this model, political opportunities are heavily influenced by personal contacts, illustrating the well-known phrase "it is not who but what you know." As a result, patronage based recruitment is focused on whether the potential candidate will be a good fit into the political party or organization. The key question recruiters ask and potential candidates must answer: "Are you one of us?" In short, this approach also emphasizes the importance of party loyalty to recruiters of potential candidates. However, this model of political recruitment is only really applicable if the recruiter is part of political entity where the influence of patronage is high.

There is also the meritocratic model of political recruitment. In this model, potential candidates are given very specific and formalized requirements by recruiters for a particular elected position. The supposed advantage to this model of recruitment is that it will reduce the role of socially biased judgments because the model spells out the criteria of selection of a candidate. However, some of underlying assumptions of this model are open to criticism, in that this form of recruitment often results in minimal increases in the recruitment of underrepresented groups.

Evaluation of Other Models of Recruitment for Female Candidates

With the rational choice model of recruitment, there is an underlying assumption that potential candidates will recruit themselves and run when success is most likely, so this model is focusing primarily on the potential candidates' perspective in recruitment. Given that women are more likely to be encouraged to run rather than self-recruit, this model of recruitment might not serve well when thinking about recruitment of female candidates because they have less political ambition. However, it is important to note that women spend more time contemplating that decision to run, often engaging the cost-benefit analysis that is central to the rational choice model.

The patronage model is also applicable to female candidates in that they have to prove to recruiters that they fit the party or the constituency they are planning to represent. While it seems patronage is not currently the strongest influence in determining a potential candidate's political viability, for female candidates, especially, having a great network of potential supporters, fundraisers, and political allies is important.

Finally, the meritocratic model of recruitment does not appear particularly relevant in the recruitment of female candidates in this political environment. Honestly, it is rare that recruiters and potential candidates will base their decisions during this recruitment process solely upon the stated requirements of the position.

Overall, each model of recruitment helps provide a framework in understanding how political recruitment works for the potential candidates as well the recruiters. Out of all of the models I have covered, Norris' and Lovenduski's model does the most work in providing an understanding of the thought processes and motivations that drive political candidates and recruiters during the recruitment process. Therefore, this model will be underlying framework

that for my analysis of political recruitment efforts for female candidates by the two major parties and other political organizations.

Conclusion: Why Political Recruitment?

As I mentioned in the first chapter, the primary reason for the scarcity of female officeholders in the United States is not a failure of women to win their races, but it is rather a lack of women candidates. While there is no simple solution to women's underrepresentation, I claim effective political recruitment of female candidates can help in chapter one. Because my analysis of recruitment method effectiveness is informed primarily by descriptive and substantive representation, understanding theories of representation are crucial.

After reviewing the works of various scholars and examining models of political recruitment in general, we know how political recruitment works theoretically. For women, it is important to remember that they are less likely than men to self-recruit and to decide to run on their own. In addition, women generally take longer to make that decision to finally run as highlighted by political consultant Cathy Allen in a *New York Times* interview: "Men decide to run in two hours after someone in the law firm, 'You've got to run'... The average woman takes two years to decide. She'll wait until she has the perfect campaign manager, the right 17 endorsements, until she's gotten down to a perfect size 10 and the kids are out of school" (Collins 1998).

Given that women take longer to decide to run and tend not recruit themselves to run for office, encouragement appears essential in order for the number of female officeholders to increase. In the next chapter, I will examine methods of political recruitment for female candidates by the two major parties and evaluate their effectiveness.

Chapter Three: Assessment of Recruitment Efforts by Major Parties

Introduction: Why is There More Democratic than Republican Women in Office?

Before getting into my analysis of the parties' recruitment efforts, it is necessary to highlight the factors that result in fewer Republican women in office. In 2013, Republican women won fewer elections than Democratic women in congressional primary elections (Center for American Women and Politics 2014). Additionally, recent research (Swers and Kitchen 2014) shows that Democratic women tend to outpace their male candidates in primaries; however, this is not true for Republican women. Therefore, Democratic women's strength in fundraising could help explain their higher levels of success for Democratic women in winning races than Republican races.

In addition to that, there are also supply side factors that may account for the fact that there are fewer Republican women than Democratic women in office. Overall, there are just more women who identify as Democrats than Republicans. According to recent research done by Melody Crowder-Meyer and Benjamin Lauderdale, Democratic women are represented in more numbers than their Republican counterparts in the professional and educational pipelines that usually lead political careers in Congress, so the Democratic party already has an advantage, in that it has a strong pipeline of female candidates.

Notably, the increasingly conservative perception of the Republican Party has made some women, who identify as more moderate Republicans less interested in seeking office. For instance, former Senator Olympia Snowe, in an interview with *The New York Times*, said that "The Republican party's brand has veered so far right, it's not enticing for many potential candidates to run as Republicans" (Hunt 2014).

Despite all of these factors that hinder the Republican Party, the partisan gap in women's

representation is unlikely due to solely these factors alone. In fact, according to Carroll and Sanbonmatsu in their book *More Women Can Run: Gender and Pathways to State Legislatures*, there are several thousand of well-qualified, Republican conservative women that could run for office. Additionally, in research done by scholar Karen Kaufmann, it appears that women's partisanship has shifted as women are becoming less Democratic. As a result, factors beyond the one that I have highlighted may also play a role in the underrepresentation of women and the partisan gap among female officeholders. My analysis will focus solely on national party organizations in the recruitment of female candidates.

Why Look at Major Parties at All?

Even though American political parties don't have the explicit power to choose their nominees (the voters choose in the primaries), they do play an increasingly crucial role in recruiting candidates and providing them with campaign support (Burrell 2014). The historic view of party leaders towards female candidates is reflected in this quote by a former Democratic party leader: "The only time to run a woman is when things look so bad that your only chance is to do something dramatic" (Political Parity).

Fortunately, prospects for female candidates have improved since then. However, there are still few women in party leadership positions in either party, which reduces the likelihood that these parties will recruit women to run for office (Burrell 2014). In *Where Women Run: Gender and Party in the American States*, political scientist Kira Sanbonmatsu conducted case studies of candidate emergence in six states, which revealed women's underrepresentation in legislatures was partly a failure of party leaders to recruit women. Although both parties claim that increasing the number of female candidates is a priority, the reality is that both parties are utilizing only a few resources to meet this goal. In this chapter, I will describe the reality of both

parties' efforts to recruit female candidates for office and provide a statement on the methodology of the interviews I conducted with candidates and recruiters from both parties.

Current State of Targeted Political Recruitment

Though the Democratic Party generally has been more involved directly targeting and recruiting female candidates, National Republican Congressional Committee recently introduced a new effort called Project GROW (which stands for Growing Opportunities for Women) to increase the recruitment of Republican women candidates ("Project GROW"). However, it is important to note that the both parties have benefitted immensely from affiliated organizations that work to support female candidates. Currently, the majority of recruitment and support of female candidates has come from women's organizations and political action committees like Feminist Majority, National Women's Political Caucus, and the WISH List (Close the Gap 2014). To an extent, these cumulative endeavors have paid off by increasing the number of elected women in office (Carroll, Sanbonmatsu, and Walsh 2009).

Arguably, the most influential and powerful of these organizations is EMILY's List, a political action committee that has been recruiting pro-choice female candidates since 1984 (Burrell 2014). Although there is no group on the Republican side that is comparable to EMILY's List in terms of credibility, longevity, and influence, there are a number of Republican groups that have sought to play a similar role to support Republican women candidates such as VIEW PAC, which stands for Value in Electing Women and was established in 1997 (Burrell 2014; Cooperman 2013). Given that EMILY's List plays such a prominent role in recruitment of female candidates and is often used as a model for effective political recruitment, in the subsection below, I will provide a more detailed examination of EMILY's List current political recruitment efforts for female candidates.

EMILY's List – A National Model of Target Female Recruitment

For Democratic female candidates, arguably the biggest resource in the country is EMILY's List. Founded by Ellen Malcolm in 1985, Emily's List aims to get pro-choice Democratic female candidates into office. With more than 3 million members, it is one of the largest PACs in the country (EMILY's List). During the 2013-2014 election cycle, EMILY's List through its "Political Opportunity Program" has trained over a thousand female candidates. These trainings provide strategic advice for running a successful campaign overall by helping candidates craft effective fundraising, communication, political, and digital strategies (Emily's List). Although EMILY List's initial goals were to only provide funding for women candidates, it has developed into a comprehensive campaign support for Democratic female candidates; it is heavily involved in pinpointing potential women candidates and convincing them that they are credible candidates.

For instance, in a 2014 *New York Times* Interview, Stephanie Schriock, President of EMILY's List, that "our job is to make at least seven asks" of potential candidate (Hunt 2014). After female candidates make the decision to run, EMILY's List usually is able to provide these candidates with early funding as well as beneficial campaign support and advice. In a sense, EMILY's List operates much like the major parties' congressional campaign organizations.

While EMILY 's List along with other national organizations and political parties provide significant resources for female candidates who desire to run, political recruitment for these large, national organizations and initiatives is largely focused on gubernatorial and congressional candidates. Often times, these female candidates have already run for public office before or have even served in elected office. As a result, local and state level recruitment for potential candidates is crucial in order to encourage women desiring to run for the first time in lower level

elections, such mayoral races or city council elections.

State Recruitment Efforts (Texas) – Annie’s List

Due the success of EMILY’s List recruitment efforts, several organizations at the national and local level also work to emulate the EMILY’s List model. In Texas, a strong example is Annie’s List, a notable state PAC dedicated to getting women elected. Like EMILY’s List, it is an organization dedicated to electing pro-choice Democratic women in Texas. Most recently, Annie’s List partnered closely with the Wendy Davis campaign in hopes putting a woman in the governor’s mansion. For Davis, the governors’ race was an uphill battle, as Democrats have not won statewide office in Texas for almost 20 years. However, with the assistance of Annie’s List donors, Davis was able to run an engaging election that garnered national attention.

Although a significant portion of Annie’s List effort is focused on supporting Democratic female campaigns for statewide elected office, the organization offers numerous training for potential candidates seeking to run for local school board or city councils. Additionally, Annie’s List, through its network of donors and supporters, also proactively seeks to encourage community leaders to come to its training and eventually run for office. The PAC also provides training for people interested in running campaigns for Democratic, pro-choice female candidates (Annie’s List).

While there are several groups focused on supporting conservative female candidates, most of these groups have a narrower focus than EMILY’s List, in that focus purely on providing financial contributions to women candidates, but they do not provide anything like the full service campaign recruitment and support that EMILY’s List is able to provide women candidates.

Methodology

In order to supplement my analysis of this literature and media, I also conducted interviews with past and present female candidates on the state and local levels as well as recruiters from PACs, political parties, and other political organizations. I gathered a wide variety of perspectives for this thesis, resulting in six interviews total: two with people seeking to elect Democratic women (two state party recruiters), one with a person seeking to elect Republican women (one former recruiter from a Republican PAC), two Democratic candidates (one potential candidates and one current officeholders), and finally one Republican candidate (current officeholder).

After examining different categories of qualitative interview design, I decided to utilize an open-ended interview approach, in which the same open-ended questions are asked to all respondents. This is an ideal approach because it gave respondents ample flexibility to answer questions in their own language. Additionally, this format of qualitative interviewing is helpful in reducing bias when it is important to able to compare the responses of different respondents, which is crucial to my project. Notably, this approach is limiting, in that interviewers must adhere to a strict script; as result, there is no flexibility in the wording or order of questions. The only drawback of this method is that had little flexibility to respond to the specific concerns of each respondent during the interview.

Interview Protocol

I interviewed two groups of people in order have a standard of comparison. One group was composed of recruiters, people responsible for getting potential candidates, from various local and state political action groups and party organizations such as Annie's List, Texas Federation of Republican Women and Battleground Texas. The other major group was

composed of potential candidates, candidates, and current female officeholders; in essence, the group includes women who have been approached to run; I include women who went on to become candidates as well as women who decided against running for office. My plan of action in building this list of potential candidates would be to first reach out to the recruiters.

Sample Questions

As I mentioned earlier, the primary question I seek to answer is – How does recruitment work for women? Additionally, I hope to get answers for these five broad questions at the end of the interview process (See Appendix A for full questionnaire and Appendix B for consent form).

1. How do women reach elected office?
2. Where did elected female officeholders get their start?
3. How does recruitment play a role in the candidacy decision?
4. Is there a difference between methods for recruiting men and methods for recruiting women?
5. Does party identification play a role in a potential candidate's decision to run?

In developing my questionnaire, I looked at questionnaires used by Lawless and Fox in their studies of political ambition of women in 2001 and 2011 to provide a framework.

Republican Party's Recruitment Efforts for Women Candidates

After the 2012 election season, Republican Party leaders have been remarkably vocal about the party's need to ensure voters that recruiting women candidates is a priority. In addition, party leaders have also said that more needs to be done to make women's voices and perspectives are heard within the party (Republican National Committee 2013). For instance, Liesl Hickey, the executive director of the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), affirmed in 2013 interview that "...the party hasn't focused on it [the recruitment of

female candidates] like they should have in the past” (Mimms 2013). Additionally, in an interview with *The Washington Post*, Sharon Day, the co-chair of the Republican National Committee (RNC), gave her party a “C” in their past efforts to recruit women candidates. The Republican women I interviewed also provided a similar assessment of the national party’s past efforts. However, both women I spoke to felt that the party was now placing more of an emphasis on recruiting and encouraging strong, viable potential female candidates to run; they also cited Project GROW, the NRCC’s initiative to recruit more female Congressional candidates.

Other than Project GROW, they have been other notable efforts by the Republican Party to outreach to more Republican women and engage them as possible candidates and voters. For example in the summer 2013, the NRCC and the RNC along with some other campaign committees created a joint project to promote the recruitment of Republican women candidates entitled “Women on the Right UNITE” (Republican National Committee 2013). At the Women on the Right UNITE press conference, Sharon Day also highlight the RNC’s “Ready to Run” program, which is an initiative designed to help potential women candidates with their decision to run as well as to provide advice for women candidates on how to navigate the complexities of running a campaign.

There has also been a growth in the number of outside groups, such as Super PACs, also focused on attracting more conservative women voters as well as garnering support for Republican women candidates that support their interests. One newer group is Maggie’s List, a federal PAC established in 2010, which provides candidate training as well provide financial support for female candidates for the House of Representation and Senate that “endorses those whose policy views and legislative behavior promote fiscal conservatism, less government, more

personal responsibility and strong national security” (Maggie’s List 2013). In addition to Maggie’s List, there are new PACs and Super-PACs with similar missions such as She-PAC, Women Lead, and RightNOW Women, a PAC established in 2014 with the goal of encouraging more young Republican women to think about running for office (Henderson and Kucinich 2014). Notably, during the 2014 election cycle, Burning Glass Consulting firm was founded, which is one the first Republican firms focused on helping Republican candidates connect with female voters (Burning Glass Consulting 2013).

While there has been emergence of new initiatives and efforts to recruit women candidates and garner the “women’s vote,” some are still unsure of how deeply invested these new groups and Republican Party are reaching out to women. One of the people I interviewed said this about the new focus on recruiting Republican women: “It’s obvious that the party needs to combat this message of the ‘Republican War against Women.’ My concern is these new efforts might not have staying power. Once the media no longer focuses on this image of the party, the question is whether these new efforts will last. I am cautiously hopeful though.” There is also concern by some that these new efforts are “more efforts to gain positive press for the party rather than earnest attempts to recruit potential female candidates and provide campaigns support for women candidates” (Henderson and Kucinich 2014).

For many in the Republican Party, the main reason behind increased recruitment of Republican women candidates are to change the perception of the Republican Party as a party full of white, old rich men and to attract female voters. On their website, Burning Glass Consulting highlights the importance of the “women’s vote”: “Women are the majority of voters and very often decide elections, yet Republican run campaigns largely directed at men and from a male perspective and treat women like a coalition group...Burning Glass Consulting

understands that women are not a coalition group and that successfully connecting with the diverse views of the majority of the electorate requires a sophisticated approach” (Burning Glass Consulting 2013).

However, the Republican Party’s focus on recruiting women in order to attract more female voters, which ultimately is crucial to win elections, is an imperfect strategy. An underlying rationale for the Republican Party’s effort to recruit female candidates is that it will encourage more women to become Republican and vote for Republican candidates. It is unclear if Republican female candidates even agree with this strategy. When I asked my Republican interviewees to explain why it is important for the party to recruit more female candidates, neither of them mentioned this rationale. Instead both stated that electing more Republican women would provide different perspectives in the legislature and help create policy that better reflects the interests of their constituents.⁵ Additionally, the idea that recruitment of female candidates will lead to more of the “women’s vote” is not supported in relevant literature (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu 2013).

There are also differing ideas within the party about how recruitment of female candidates should occur. While there is consensus that there’s a need for more explicit recruitment efforts for women candidates, the culture within the Republican Party is not very comfortable with group-based outreach efforts for underrepresented groups in comparison to the Democratic Party (Freeman 1986, 1993, 1997). For some within the party, explicit outreach efforts for women candidates seem more of an “affirmative-action” policy based solely on descriptive representation theory. Party leaders don’t simply want female candidates, but they “want to elect qualified people, and if they happen to be women, that’s a bonus. It shouldn’t be

⁵ This rationale implicitly is based on substantive representation theory.

the primary qualification” (Railey 2014). Therefore, there are mixed feelings within the party about whether targeted recruitment for female candidates is necessary. Furthermore, it seems that the underrepresentation of women is not a large issue for Republican voters. In a 2013 poll by ABC News, 60 percent of Democrats believed that “it would be a good thing if more women were elected to Congress” in contrast only 23 percent of Republican respondents (ABC News 2013).

Case Example: Project GROW

Both of my Republican interviewees mentioned Project GROW in particular since it the first institutional effort to recruit female candidates by the NRCC (Burrell 2014). During a July 2013 press conference, the Chair of the NRCC, Representative Greg Walden, announced the creation of Project GROW, stating, “Women are the majority, and we need to do a better job, and that’s what this is all about” (“Project GROW”). Project GROW’s strategy is broadly summarized on their website. The first step is to contact local party chairs, and other community leaders and ask them if they know a qualified woman who might a viable candidate for a particular seat. If women who are interested in running were found, then the NRCC would get them in contact with current and past Republican Congresswomen.

Although this effort has been applauded for being the first formal effort by the NRCC to recruit female candidates, Project GROW has some notable weaknesses. As stated by one my interviewees, there really is no long-term strategy for recruitment and outreach to potential women candidate in the Project GROW project. Instead, efforts by Project GROW are motivated by each two-year election cycle. Also, as some reporters have highlighted, the Republican Party actually recruited fewer female House candidates in 2014 than 2012 even with efforts by Project GROW (Center for American Women and Politics 2014). The biggest obstacle that Project

GROW faces; however, is the RNCC's (and by extension Project GROW's) policy to stay out of primaries. Generally, primaries are major hindrance to getting more women in Congress because Republican male candidates usually have an easier time raising money, giving them an advantage in the primary stage.

Democratic Party's Recruitment Efforts for Women Candidates

As mentioned previously, the Democratic Party has a significant advantage in terms of having more female voters and having more female officeholders in Congress. Therefore, before I began my research and interviews, I was under the impression that the Democratic Party's efforts to recruitment would be robust and receive significant support and commitment. Unfortunately, I did not get that sense from my interviews. My interviewees painted a picture of a party that was rather complacent in terms of recruiting women.

This environment of complacency is due to the significant advantage the Democratic Party has in attracting potential women candidates. For example, Representative Steve Israel in a 2013 CNN interview said this: "The difference between Republicans and Democrats is that they have to work hard to recruit women to run for Congress. All I have to do is answer my phone" (Johnson 2013). While the party does have this advantage, it is important to note this expectation that qualified, Democratic women candidates will flock to the party is unrealistic. As the research has shown, women often need encouragement from other political actors to run for office.

Another reason for this environment of complacency could a result of the significant impact EMILY's List has in the training and recruitment of potential female candidates. Because EMILY's List does so much work in targeted recruitment of pro-choice, Democratic female candidates, one could suggest that the party is almost dependent on the efforts of

EMILY's List in order to identify viable women candidates.

Women Lead and Women's Senate Network

In 1999, Democratic Party created institutionalized programs with the goal of recruiting women. In the House, the program is called Women Lead, and for the Senate, it is the Women's Senate Network (Burrell 2014). The strategy is similar to that of Project GROW after viable female candidates are identified, Democratic Congresswomen are then connected to candidates in order provide formal mentorship and campaign support. However, one major difference is that these Democratic programs have a much larger pool of Congresswomen available to act as mentors for candidates in comparison to Project GROW. Because Democrats have this advantage, Republican efforts to recruit women will often require more work – they simple do not have the same strength of womanpower as the Democratic Party.

Even with these advantages, both Democratic programs have some limitations. Overall, these programs are not as seen having a major influence in the recruitment of women candidates as two of my Democratic interviewees pointed out. Most candidates would look to an outside group, most likely EMILY's List, for support. Additionally, one of my interviewees also highlighted the fact that from what she has gathered neither the Women Lead program nor the Women's Senate Network are adequately staffed or funded.

Despite the limitation of its formalized programs, the Democratic Party can always rely on the informal network of Democratic Congresswomen dedicated to recruiting more female candidates. As Sanbonmatsu states in her book *Where Women Run: Gender and Party in the American States*, since women usually have more women in their personal network, it makes the political recruitment of potential female candidates easier. Although this statement rings true for women in both parties, women, several of whom are personally dedicated to recruiting more

women candidates, in the Democratic Party have more leadership positions. As a result, there have been more opportunities for those women to really prioritize the recruitment of female candidates.

For example, Senior Senator Patty Murray, the only woman who has led the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee twice, used her position to implement her commitment to recruit more qualified female candidates. Notable senators such as Elizabeth Warren have credited Murray for her efforts to reach out to them and encourage them to run (Sarasohn 2013). In addition, there are also women who are committed to encouraging other women run and do so outside of the traditional party structure.

Conclusions

When I began this project, I was led by my own personal belief that targeted recruitment will help in closing the gender gap in representation of officeholders. While this is beyond the scope of my thesis, ultimately, it is necessary to evaluate current recruitment methods by the major parties as well as influential, non-party political entities in order to see whether the current state of recruitment of woman candidates is effective. Overall, this thesis represents a preliminary assessment of efforts to recruit women candidates by the major parties as well as other non-party groups.

Although each party realizes the necessity of increasing the number of women for a variety of factors such as political expediency, it's clear that both parties want to recruit, qualified women candidates not just recruiting women for the sake of recruiting women, which is informed by the substantive representation theory. Currently, in this hyper-partisan political environment, each party wants to win seats, so most recruitment is gender neutral rather than targeted towards women specifically. Due to this reality, efforts of major party organizations to recruit women do not appear very robust. Even with Joni Ernst's historic win in Iowa, this was the result of gender neutral strategies focused on name recognition and smart campaigning rather than targeted recruitment effort by the Republican to get more female candidates. While both parties' recruitment efforts have significant limitations, Democrats have significant advantages, in that the party has a larger pool of Congresswomen with a personal commitment to recruit more women candidates as well as the fact that the Democratic Party has had more experience in formalized recruitment of women.

From my interviews and research, it seems targeted recruitment has been taken over by political action committees, interest groups, and other entities. National party committees could

invest more funding to hiring staff for their formal recruitment efforts such as Project GROW, Women Lead, and Women's Senate Network. However, there doesn't seem too much motivation for the parties to make significant improvement in their recruitment efforts if there are already other non-party groups active in recruiting female candidates. The major problem with a reliance on these non-party groups is that there appears to be no communication, let alone collaboration, between the parties' efforts. As potential women candidates are encouraged or make the decision themselves to run, it is much more likely that she will look to groups outside of the traditional party structure, such as women's organizations, PACs, and interest groups. These groups, more than the major parties, seem equipped to effectively recruit viable female candidates. Right now, it is unclear if the growing influence of these groups in the recruitment of female candidates will motivate the parties to improve their own formal recruitment initiatives or simply encourage them to stick to the status quo.

Appendix A: Interview Questionnaire

For Group A Respondents (Recruiters):

- What kind of candidate are you looking for?
- What level of government do you typically recruit for?
- Are there policies potential candidates have to support? If so, which policies?
- Are their specific experiences potential candidates should have?
- Do potential candidates come to you looking to be supported/endorsed? Or do potential candidates more motivated look for established/new faces?
- Do you look specifically for women to be candidates? If so, for any particular positions?
- Are women harder to recruit than men in your opinion? Why do you think so?
- Do you utilize different methods to recruit women than you would to recruit male candidates?
- What role do you think party affiliation or support plays in the candidacy decision for potential candidates?

For Group B Respondents (Potential Candidates, Candidates, and Current Officeholders)

- Did you always want to run for office? When do you decide you wanted to run?
- What are the potential downsides or costs of being a candidate?
- Has someone asked you to be a candidate for a particular position? If so, who and when were you asked?
- Have you been asked by different groups? (Who? When?)
- Have you turned down the opportunity to run for office? Why?
- When you decided to run for office, influenced you to make that decision?
- What issues motivated you to run for office?
- What uncertainties did you face in running for office?
- Did your family play a role in your decision to run or not run?
- In the past, if you have had the opportunity to run and did not, but would you run today if asked?
- Do you believe one party or the other is more sympathetic to women as candidates and/or women's issues? If so, please explain why?
- Do women have a better shot at local races rather than statewide races? Why?
- What resources do think women have if they do decide they want to run for office?

Appendix B: Consent Form

Informed consent:

I'm asking you to participate in a research study. This form is designed to give you information about this study.

Project Title:

Closing the Gender Gap in Women's Representation in Public Office: Examining Methods to Recruit Female Candidates

Principal Investigator:

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512-232-7276

What the study is about:

The purpose of this research is to gather information about political candidate recruitment methods specifically for women by learning from you what methods you have used to recruit female candidates and/or what methods have been used to recruit you for political office. In addition, we are seeking to gain a consensus about what are common methods and effective approaches to recruiting women. Ultimately, the goal of this study is to equip political actors to better target potential female candidates, which will hopefully increase the number of women in office.

What we will ask you to do:

We will ask you to participate in 20 to 30 minute interview, in which we will ask several open-ended questions. Additionally, we will also ask you to suggest any other potential subjects for this study that I might have overlooked. You can choose level your level of participation; you can choose to skip some questions.

Risks and discomforts:

I don't predict any significant risk in your participation in this study. If answering these questions makes you uncomfortable, you can either choose not to respond to the question or you can choose not to complete the rest of the interview.

Payment for participation:

There is no compensation for participation.

Audio/Video Recording:

We will not be recording interviews, but we will be taking notes and will provide with a copy of these notes upon your request.

Taking part is voluntary:

Your participation is voluntary, you may refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time, or skip any questions/procedures that may make you feel uncomfortable, with no consequence to your academic records or relationship with the university. We will send follow up emails up to 4 times to try to secure broad participation in the survey.

Contacts for questions:

If you have questions about the study, either now or later, you may contact the principal investigator for this study, Bethany Albertson at balberts@austin.utexas.edu.

You may also contact the UT Office of Research Support at 512-232-2044, email them at coi@austin.utexas.edu or access their website <http://www.utexas.edu/irb>.

You may print a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Printed name of person obtaining consent:

Adaku Andrea Onuigbo

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