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Women as Party Leaders: Are the Barriers Partisan?

Amanda B. Yates
University of Southern Mississippi

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WOMEN AS PARTY LEADERS: ARE THE BARRIERS PARTISAN?

by

Amanda Yates

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Approved by:

Dr. Kathanne Greene, Committee Chair
Dr. Mark Brockway
Dr. Iliyan Iliev

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ABSTRACT

Even though women make up roughly 51% of the population of the United States, they are underrepresented in all branches of American government. Although there has been recent literature on women in politics and women and parties, very little has been done on women in party leadership. Research suggests that there are fewer women in elected office because of a lack of supply, or qualified and willing women, or a lack of demand, an electorate willing to vote for a woman. This study seeks to understand the levels of participation of women as party delegates in state party conventions and whether the barriers that they face are specific to each party Using a survey data set of over 5000 state party convention delegates, I analyze how women participate and the parties' ideals on women's role in politics. While I expected to find more Democratic women in leadership roles, this study has shown that perhaps the barriers are not specific to party as more Republican women delegates have held a party or government office than their Democratic women delegate counterparts. This paper suggests that the political culture of the Republican Party discourages women from joining, but once they join, they are equally as likely as Democratic women to hold leadership positions.

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I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to the brilliant professors on my committee. Thank you, Dr. Greene, for being an excellent critic of literature on women and politics. Thank you, Dr. Iliev, for being an excellent critic of my research methods and challenging me to develop better skills. Thank you, Dr. Brockway, for guiding me through this process for the last two years both in person and virtually. I appreciate your dedication to your former students in Mississippi, and I truly believe that you have inspired me to be the best scholar that I can be. Each of you have provided me with incomparable advice that has pushed me to be a better student, better scholar, but most importantly, a better political scientist. Without your guidance, I would not have been able to confidently say that I have conducted my own research and I am an expert. Again, thank you for all you do.

DEDICATION

To my cohort, Kambre, Shayla, and Sarah. To my therapists, Chad and Jessica. To my cats, Door Himge, Mama Mark, Eevee, and Leify. I appreciate the unique support each of you offered me during this trying time.

Additionally, I dedicate this thesis to the things I've learned and the places I've gone. This thesis has seen cafes, hotels, and airports in New Orleans, Biloxi, Kailua Kona, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, Jackson, Honolulu, and of course, Hattiesburg. All were spent over coffee and discussing women's representation in politics with my wife, whom I figure could have found much better ways to spend her time in all these places, yet she chose to be there for me and with me as I worked toward my goal. So, a special thanks to Aevalynne for pushing me when I needed it but also encouraging rest and adventure in between.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Dem	Democrat
DemMan	Democratic Man
DemWom	Democratic Woman
DV	Dependent Variable
H1	Hypothesis 1
H2	Hypothesis 2
H3	Hypothesis 3
H4	Hypothesis 4
IV	Independent Variable
Rep	Republican
RepMan	Republican Man
RepWom	Republican Woman

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Men are perceived more favorably than women by the electorate, particularly

regarding leadership traits (Alexander and Anderson, 1993; Bligh et al, 2012; Eagly et al,

1992; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan, 2008). Men are rated more competent, able to handle a

crisis, tough, emotionally stable, and more decisive than women (Alexander and

Anderson, 1993; Bligh et al, 2012; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan, 2008; Dolan, 2014).

Masculine traits tended to be looked at as more suitable for leadership and politics (Bligh

et al, 2012; Niven, 1998). Disparities in descriptive representation may contribute to the

association of power and masculinity (Blesdoe and Herring, 1990; Bonneau et al, 2020;

Lee, 1976).

Women are viewed as homemakers meant to nurture under the maternal view of

women (Blesdoe and Herring, 1990; Lee, 1976; Goss and Heaney, 2010). This perception

of stereotypically feminine traits is also transferred into politics. Women were often rated

as more compassionate, more likely to handle family responsibilities while in office,

struggled to get ahead, moral, and more compromising (Alexander and Anderson, 1993;

Dolan, 2010). Women face these kinds of stereotypes especially when running for office

or holding party office (Blesdoe and Herring, 1990; Bos, 2011; Eagly et al, 1992; Lee,

1976; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan, 2008).

Despite these differences in perceptions, a 1972 study found that men and women

in party leadership rate themselves much higher than the general public in terms of self-

scored confidence, dominance, and achievement (Constantini and Craik, 1972). The main

gendered difference this study found was the complexity of men's motivations compared

to the simple motivations of women (Blesdoe and Herring, 1990; Constantini and Craik,

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1972; Margolis, 1979). Women were much more likely to have public-serving motivations, whereas men tended to have self-serving motivations (Margolis, 1979; Schneider et al, 2016). Women are also more likely to work behind the scenes while men are more likely to take higher-profile roles (Jennings and Thomas, 1968; Margolis, 1979). In Margolis's study of women's roles in local political parties in one small town, women did the stereotypically "feminine" work like clerical work or dissemination of information and clocked in twice as many hours as the men (Margolis, 1979). A study from 2011 similarly found that women in political office spend more time on average than their male counterparts on tasks that are geared toward communal goals (Fox and Lawless, 2014). One way to close the gender ambition gap would be to view political careers as fulfilling communal goals instead of fulfilling power-related goals, as women are more interested in the former than the latter (Schneider et al, 2016).

The same sex roles that inhibit women from having adequate representation are ironically the reason women so desperately need descriptive and substantive representation. Seeing women run for office can encourage other women to run as well, as was seen for Democratic women after Hillary Clinton ran for President in 2008 and 2016 (Bonneau et al, 2020). However, this can also have an adverse effect, as they can see the way that the candidates and media portray female candidates and choose to not put themselves in the position to be criticized so harshly (Bonneau et al, 2020). When women do run for political leadership roles, they are able to control the way they are perceived under specific circumstances- speeches, debates, press conferences, essentially anywhere they can control the narrative (Bos, 2011). They can overcompensate with

desired "masculine" traits such as being tougher on foreign policy to mitigate the negative connection between femininity and political leadership (Bos, 2011).

Adequate descriptive representation of women can lead to more substantive representation (Childs and Crook, 2008; Elder, 2014; Lee, 1976). The more women actively in leadership roles, the more impact they can have on women positive coalitions and legislation (Childs and Crook, 2008; Vega and Firestone, 1995). Currently, women are underrepresented as elected officials in both the Democratic and Republican Parties. However, Republican women are underrepresented at much higher rates (Elder, 2014; Thomsen, 2015; Thomsen, 2017). This is likely due in part to the representation cycle mentioned above but can also be partially credited to asymmetric polarization (Thomsen, 2015; Thomsen, 2017; Vega and Firestone, 1995). As the Republican Party moves further right, many moderate Republican women are at risk of being left behind in policy-making decisions (Kitchens and Swers, 2019). Democratic women, on the other hand, are represented across the party (Elder, 2008; Elder, 2014; Thomsen, 2017).

Today, Democrats are more than twice as likely than their Republican counterparts to claim more work is necessary to reach gender equality (Horowitz et al., 2019). This same sentiment is seen with donors. Seventy-four percent of Democratic women's PAC donors and 59% of Democratic Party donors identify gender issues as "very important" to their candidate support. This is opposed to the just 16% and 9% of Republican women's PAC donors and party donors respectively (Crowder-Meyer and Cooperman, 2018).

Women who are equally qualified and connected from both political parties are still less likely to be recruited, including intensely and by multiple sources (Fox and

Lawless, 2010). This could be due to the perceptions of women and what their roles should be (Niven, 1998). Regarding women's roles and the alleged lack of women in the eligibility pool, one study accounted for the differences in education, occupation, and organizational participation and found that even with all things equal, women are still severely underrepresented (Welch, 1978). This lack of enthusiasm from recruiters has led women to be reluctant to run, as they perceive they will get less support both financially and strategically (Butler and Preece, 2016; Carrilho, 2000). It is imperative parties and recruitment express interest and support in women candidates, as parties act as gatekeepers for the party and women need both electorate and party support (Kunovich and Paxton, 2005; Sanbonmatsu, 2006).

While there is ample research on women in politics and women and partisan politics generally, little has been done on women as elites in the party structure. Elites help mobilize resources, frame issues, and select candidates for local, state, and national elections (Sharrow et al, 2016). Delegates to conventions are an important subsection to study because conventions offer a unique setting full of diverse partisan behavior (Heaney et al, 2012). While not all state delegates are party elites, all are party activists with varying ideologies and goals. Many have held political office or will hold political office. Political parties have multiple factions and are decentralized into loosely affiliated components, but partisan conventions gather all these factions and make them more visible (Heaney et al, 2012; Cohen, 2016). These divides within the conventions and between the delegates range from ideology to partisan goals. For example, delegates are becoming more polarized and have been for years on matters like social welfare, race, and culture (Heaney et al, 2012; Barnes and Cassese, 2017). There are also factions

within the parties regarding the levels of importance for goals such as policy-pushing or candidate-pushing (Cohen et al, 2016).

There has not been a study on women in party leadership in nearly fifty years. This paper explores whether the same theories used to explain women's barriers to elected political office are also valid in explaining women's role in formal and organizational structure of political parties and party leadership. The literature suggests that women face unique partisan barriers as elected officials and the parties each have a distinct culture surrounding women and their roles in society. This could affect the representation of women, particularly in the Republican Party, as previous literature points to strong differences in representation and recruitment. Using a unique data set of delegates to state political party conventions, I examine the role of women in party leadership in both parties. I also examine delegate's perceptions of the role of women in politics. Interestingly, this paper cannot confirm that the partisan gender gap exists beyond political office—while there are fewer Republican women state delegates, they hold party and government office at comparable rates as the Democratic women despite the more conservative views of Republicans on gender and suitability for holding office. This could mean that it is harder for women to join as party activists in the Republican Party due to the ideals of the Republican Party, but it is not the Party itself holding the women back from joining. It appears once the women have joined, they have just as much of a chance, if not more, as the Democratic women, who are part of a 'feminist' party, to hold party leadership roles and even political office. Although all the women held office at lower rates than the men, which suggests work is still needed to ensure

gender parity in both parties, it does not seem to be one party restricting women from leadership.

CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

Women are severely underrepresented politically in all branches of American government. Despite the calls for an Equal Division Rule, especially around the time of the 1960s-1970s Modern Women's Movement, it was never heavily enforced (Schnall, 2005; Sharrow et al, 2016). With no official enforcement of a gender equality rule, there was not equal representation. Despite the roles that women have been assigned, they still have the desire to be in political office or political leadership (Lee, 1976). It is not a lack of interest and commitment. Also, despite some people's (Lane, 1969) perceptions that women do not want to be involved in politics because they are "too dirty," that is not the case, according to Lee. However, it is possible that women could be hesitant to run for office because of the negative ways in which other women candidates have been portrayed through the media and opposing candidates (Bonneau et al, 2020; Fox and Lawless, 2011).

Attribution of Leadership Traits

Women have been viewed as more "moralistic" due to their maternal instincts and responsibilities (Barnes and Cassese, 2017; Riesman, 1956). This is adjacent to one of the three frames in which women are called to collective action. The maternal frame, the one that Riesman describes differs from the equality frame, and feminine-expressive frame (Goss and Heaney, 2010). The maternal frame theory coincides with Anderson's (1993) theory of gendered attribution of leadership traits and emphasizes roles such as mothers, nurturers, and caregivers (Goss and Heaney, 2010). The equality frame emphasizes an egalitarian view of 'sameness' with men, particularly in social, political, and professional

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roles while the feminine-expressive frame has 'reclaimed' the stereotypes of femininity and have called women to action as women (Goss and Heaney, 2010).

The maternal frame is the basis for Lane's argument that women think politics are too corrupt, and they would rather not participate. Much has changed since then. The newer literature is just as divided as Lee and Lane, but now scholars have identified a partisan difference between where the blame attribution of women's underrepresentation lies. The Republican Party is more likely to place the blame on the individual by claiming that there is not a large enough "supply" of women who are qualified and ambitious. The Democratic Party is more likely to place the blame on the system by claiming that the system is oppressive and the "demand" for women's representation is not high enough due to a biased recruitment system, biased media, and biased electorate (Crowder-Meyer and Lauderdale, 2014; Dolan and Hansen, 2018).

It is possible that there is no real difference between men and women running normally until a stereotype is 'activated.' This can be done by the media or other candidates (Bauer, 2015; Bligh et al, 2012). The media could be partially to blame for the attribution of specific leadership traits, particularly ones that are 'presidential' or 'political' being viewed as 'masculine' (Bligh et al, 2012). Female candidates have to compensate for the association of leadership and masculinity by being strategic in campaign messages by straying away from 'traditionally feminine stereotypes' (Bauer, 2015).

Just as certain leadership traits are more likely to be assigned to a specific gender, one scholar argues that there is overlap between party and gender (Winter, 2010). Due to the perception of welfare, education, helping the poor, healthcare, and promoting peace

being traditionally feminine issues and also traditionally issues that Democrats have claimed, Winter argues that voters associate femininity more with the Democratic Party and masculinity more with the Republican Party because they take on more 'masculine' issues like foreign policy, the economy, and war (Barnes and Cassese, 2017; Winter, 2010). This can lead to a conflictual relationship between Republican women's gender and partisan identities (Winter, 2010). It can also affect how compassionate or tough voters perceive a candidate to be based off the combination of a candidate's gender and party (Winter, 2010).

Perceptions of Women as Politicians

The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory is a measure of modern sexism and separates sexism in to two categories: Benevolent Sexism, referring to a type of paternalistic protectiveness of women or a belief in traditional roles of women that is not normally directly considered a negative stereotype but rather like a paternalistic protectiveness, and Hostile Sexism, referring to a more explicitly sexist stereotype or view (Bock et al, 2017). An example of Benevolent Sexism is "Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores" and an example of Hostile Sexism is "Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist" (Bock et al, 2017).

Streb, Burrell, Frederick, and Genovese dissect the studies that claim that public opinion has changed over time and the vast majority of people are willing to vote for a woman for President (2008). While this study is not about the Presidential office or its lack of representation thus far, the recent studies that have shown the willingness of the electorate to elect a woman for the country's highest office should dispel a large portion of the argument that women are not represented due to a biased electorate. However,

Streb et al argue that people are more likely to report that they would vote for a woman, even if they would not, because they do not want to go against the societal norm or expectation (2008). The authors argue that when given a survey that could not potentially 'expose' or make them 'feel exposed' for their Benevolent or Hostile Sexist views, the number of people who would not vote for a woman President is actually closer to around 25%. The authors estimate that the number is likely higher for those who identify 'with being angry over the thought of a woman president' (Streb et al, 2008).

Recent literature has not found any significant empirical evidence of overt bias based on sexist stereotypes when it comes to voting patterns (Bauer, 2015; Dolan, 2010; Dolan, 2014; Dolan and Lynch, 2014; Fulton, 2014). In fact, as discussed earlier, it is not a lack of funding or resources, nor is it a lack of quality candidates (Dolan, 2010; Kitchen and Swers, 2016; Thomsen and Swers, 2017; Thomsen, 2019). Dolan argues that political party recruitment and the number of women willing to run for office are two considerable factors that help explain the disparity in representation. Additionally, just because women who are running against a man in a general election are just as likely to win and just as likely to have similar levels of funds raised does not mean that there are not negative attitudes and perceptions that inhibit women from deciding to run to begin with (Kitchen and Swers, 2016; Dolan, 2010; Dolan, 2014; Bucchianeri, 2018; Dolan and Lynch, 2014; Fulton, 2014).

Party Support and Recruitment

Literature focuses heavily on the recruitment of women, or rather the lack thereof (Butler and Preece, 2016; Carilho, 2000; Darcy and Schramm, 1977; Elder, 2012; Fox and Lawless, 2010; Nechemias, 1987; Niven, 1998). Although Darcy and Schramm

found the gender of candidates did not necessarily hurt or help their campaigns, they did observe that recruitment and the nomination process for women candidates did (Darcy and Schramm, 1977). Butler and Preece argue that responses to invitations to seek office vary between women and men. Men and women can generally both agree on the amount of support that a candidate should get from the recruiter, both financial and strategic; however, women tend to believe that they will receive less funding and strategic help from the party chair or recruiter. Men consistently believe that both men and women receive the same amount of financial and strategic support from their recruiters (Butler and Preece, 2016).

At some point, it was potentially a possibility that women were recruited less due to not having comparable education, occupational experience, political experience, social background, or political resources (Jennings and Thomas, 1968; Jennings and Farah, 1981; Nechemias, 1987). Traditionally, women were more involved with the family, and due to this, they could lack education, occupation, and political experience (Conway, 2001). Women were perceived as caretakers, especially of children more than political leaders (Lee, 1976). While this attempts to explain the consistently lower levels of recruitment among women, some scholars argue that even if the differences were not there, women would still be recruited less (Fox and Lawless, 2010). As times have changed, the theories have as well. Now, family structure, marital, and parental status are no longer strong indicators of political ambition among women (Fox and Lawless, 2014).

While there is still a substantial ambition gap according to some scholars, and while family structure and gender roles can inhibit women from entering into the eligibility pool in the first place, for women who are already involved in politics, family

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structure does not affect the motivations and ambitions (Fox and Lawless, 2014). Both Republican and Democratic women potentially face a double bind of struggling to maintain both familial obligations and professional obligations due to the deeply gendered divide of household and familial labor, but there is no empirical evidence that it affects the way a woman is perceived as a candidate or her potential recruitment (Crowder-Meyer, 2020; Fox and Lawless, 2014). However, Republicans do tend to be more content with the gender roles and its effects on men, women, and parenting than the Democrats (Horowitz et al, 2019). This could suggest that Republican women have a harder time entering the pool due to their beliefs on gender roles. In fact, in a study published on the Pew Research Center's website, nearly sixty percent of Democrats believe that altering the gender roles have made it so that women may live more fulfilling and satisfying lives, whereas, the Republicans only garnered about 36% of support for that statement. Nearly half of the Democrats agreed that changing gender roles even made it easier on men to do the same, not just women, compared to a mere 30% of Republicans agreeing (Horowitz et al, 2019).

The availability of female candidates (supply) and voters' subconscious biases (demand) are two competing theories of understanding the gender disparity in American politics (Ahn et al, 2019; Karpowitz et al, 2017; Crowder-Mayer and Lauderdale, 2014; Preece et al, 2016). However, one study suggests that both should be studied together to further understand how to increase representation. This study argues that party leaders have the tools to encourage increasing the number of women involved because "party elites can focus on (1) increasing the supply of female candidates through active

recruitment and (2) stoking demand for female representatives by emphasizing a norm of equality" (Karpowitz et al, 2017, pg 928).

On the supply side, Crowder-Meyer and Lauderdale (2014) claim that within the eligibility pool of potential candidates, there are two to three times more Democrats than Republicans. On the demand side, they reviewed the theory that party elites' ideologies could be hindering women from holding office, particularly a lack of encouragement to run to women from Republican elites (Crowder-Meyer and Lauderdale, 2014). This supply and demand theory in the literature seeks to place blame on the barrier of women's representation. On one side, it can blame the women claiming that there are not enough qualified and ambitious women, and on the other side, it can blame the system by claiming that there is not equal recruitment and there are biases based on sexist stereotypes that work against women (Dolan and Hansen, 2018). Democrats are more likely to blame the system; whereas Republicans are more likely to blame the individual (Dolan and Hansen, 2018).

In one study, women who were as well-connected as men and had equivalent social backgrounds were less likely to be recruited to run for public office. This applies to both Democrat women and Republican women in intensity of recruitment and number of recruiters (Fox and Lawless, 2010). While studies have focused on whether recruitment is gendered and who the recruiters ask, little has been studied regarding how men and women respond (Preece et al, 2016). One study attempted to compare the reactions between Democrats, Republicans, women, and men to determine whether gender-blind recruitment practices are effective and if an equal number of men and women were asked, would that lead to equal levels of representation (Preece et al, 2016). Ultimately,

they found that Republican men self-report higher levels of political ambition than do

Republican women, especially when there was the prospect of recruitment. Similarly,

Republican women and Democratic women were both not as responsive to recruitment as

their male counterparts, but the gender gap was much smaller among the Democrats

(Preece et al, 2016). In fact, the larger gendered difference in the Democratic Party was

ambition, not responsiveness to recruitment. This assumes that if recruitment were to be

equal and just as many viable women candidates were asked as men in the Democratic

Party, it could lead to more even representation (Preece et al, 2016). As explained by

Preece et al,

> "Recruitment generally takes place within existing social networks, which can
> create problems for women's representation in politics. Existing political networks tend
> to be male-dominated, making it more difficult for women to have access to the resources
> they provide. Male dominated party networks can limit women's advancement in
> politics… male party chairs are much less likely than female chairs to think of female
> candidates when asked to name potential candidates for upcoming races" (2016, pg 564).

Research has shown that women and men candidates raise similar amounts of

money in general elections, thus suggesting that funding is not a barrier of a woman who

has been recruited and is currently running for office (Kitchens and Swers, 2016;

Thomsen and Swers, 2017). However, this consensus has been reached from studying

funding of general elections and not primary elections. When studying primary elections,

one study found that when accounting for incumbency, competitiveness, and candidate

quality, all of which correlate with increased money, there is a gendered partisan

difference (Kitchens and Swers, 2016). While Democratic women raise more money than

Democratic men in the primary election, thus having a positive affect between gender and

funds raised, Republican women do not and have a neutral, and sometimes negative

relationship between gender and funds raised (Crespin and Deitz, 2010; Kitchens and Swers, 2016). Within the Democratic Party, Democratic women are more likely to contribute to Democratic women's' campaigns and Democratic men are more likely to contribute to Democratic men's' campaigns, and they also value the election of liberal Democratic women over incumbency (Thomsen and Swers, 2017; Crespin and Deitz, 2010). Republican men and women have no such affinity for a gender and tend to prefer more ideologically conservative candidates (Thomsen and Swers, 2017).

<div align="center">Party Culture and Ambition</div>

As discussed above, parties have two goals: to push candidates and to push policies (Cohen et al, 2016). If it seems like Republican women will not be elected, they will not be viewed as legitimate quality candidates by the parties and recruiters. Because the Democratic Party is generally agreed to be more "women-friendly" and values having women as candidates, recruiters and parties have more of an incentive to push women as candidates (Sharrow et al, 2016; Thomsen and Swers, 2017). This creates a rift between the parties in terms of who is considered an electable candidate. Because of this divide, it is generally agreed upon that it is not sufficient to analyze the underrepresentation of women without including political parties as a variable (Elder, 2008; Elder, 2014; Jennings and Farah, 1981; Sanbonmatsu, 2002; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan, 2008; Thomsen, 2015; Thomsen, 2017).

Parties have distinctive cultures regarding recruiting and supporting women candidates and women elected officials and men candidates and elected officials (Elder, 2012). Gender roles and internal support play major roles in why there is underrepresentation of women. However, it does not answer the question of why there

are significantly more Democratic women running for office and holding office than there are Republican women doing the same (Elder, 2008; Elder, 2014; Thomsen, 2015). The percentage of Democratic women holding legislative office has consistently increased, whereas the percentage of Republican women holding legislative office has barely moved (Thomsen, 2015).

For nearly 40 years, the Republicans supported the Equal Rights Amendment. However, at the 1980 Republican convention, the Equal Rights Amendment was officially denounced. At that same time, the Democratic Party switched from being "ambivalent if not hostile" to the Equal Rights Amendment to fully supporting it and providing financial incentives only to candidates who endorsed the amendment, marking the beginning of the parties' polarization on women's issues (Wolbrecht, 2002). Abortion would be one of the main polarizing issues of the topic of women's equality. The Republican Party took a sharp turn away from pro-choice stances while the Democratic Party firmly supported their pro-choice stance. By 1992, the Democratic Party unified to support women's rights outwardly and completely. The Republican Party convention was described as much more conservative and intolerant, taking antifeminist stances on women's issues (Wolbrecht, 2002). As women reached comparable levels of education and labor force participation as men, their social, political, and economic roles have also changed (Sharrow et al, 2016; Crowder-Meyer and Lauderdale, 2014; Dolan, 2014). This could be because despite the number of women in the workforce, especially in areas such as education, law, and activism, increasing, these women disproportionately tend to be Democrats (Crowder-Meyer and Lauderdale, 2014).

Republican women are still vastly underrepresented (Bucchianeri, 2018; Thomsen, 2019). With nearly one third of Democratic state legislators and members of Congress being women as of 2016, Republican women's representation peaked in the late 1990s (Karpowitz et al, 2017). As Wolbrecht (2002) described in her analysis of the relationship between gender and partisan affiliation, after the 1980s, there has been little change regarding the party's views on gender. The main difference is that the divergence between the Democrats' and Republicans' views of gender issues have only grown, thus, further perpetuating polarization (Sharrow et al, 2016).

While the Republican Party became more conservative and the Democratic Party more liberal (and 'feminist'), the Republican Party has become more likely to take positions associated with traditional gender roles (Sharrow et al, 2016). Both have tried to broadcast their partisan support as the position best "for women" while using women partisans as advocates for their particular positions regarding women's issues and interests in an effort to connect with the women (Sharrow et al, 2016). As of 2016, women comprised of around 53% of Democratic and 36% of Republican pledged delegates, but the larger number of Democratic women delegates could be attributed to the Democratic Party's quota of at leas0% women at the national convention (Sharrow et al, 2016; Masket et al, 2014).

Within the Party, Democrats follow a more bottom-to-top method of representation by using caucuses and councils, often comprised of marginalized members and delegates (Masket et al, 2014). On the contrary, Republicans tend to favor a more top-to-bottom approach placing more value on hierarchy and loyalty than diversity and

inclusion (Masket et al, 2014). While the Democratic Party is split by diverse

demographics, the Republican Party is split by diverse ideologies (Masket et al, 2014).

Polarization still tends to be a reason for explaining why there are fewer

Republican women in legislative positions (Elder, 2008; Thomsen, 2015; Thomsen,

2017). Thomsen explains that it is not necessarily that there are not Republican women

willing to run but rather the distribution of ideological beliefs throughout the Party

disadvantages women candidates. She explains that within the Democratic Party, there

seems to be a relatively even distribution of Democratic women throughout the strong,

moderate, and weak Democrats (Thomsen, 2015). However, we do not see this in the

Republican Party. Many Republican women are more moderate in general. This means

that as the Republicans continue to move away from the center and to the right, the

people (that just so happen to be a large group of women) toward the middle are left

behind. This asymmetric polarization can partially explain why there are more

Democratic women in office than Republican women (Thomsen, 2015).

This level of representation within parties serves as a sort of quasi-cycle

consisting of the following: less descriptive representation leads to less ambition that

leads to less women candidates so less women are being elected, inevitably resulting in

less descriptive representation and restarting the cycle. Laurel Elder, a distinguished

scholar in the field of gender and partisan representation, writes on this cycle, claiming

that there are a few reasons to be credited with the disparity between Democrat and

Republican women politicians (Elder, 2008). First, there is an increasing polarization, the

same polarization that Thomsen writes about. Second, the regional realignment of parties

influences disparities. Lastly, the gains of non-white women have certainly played some

part in the lower number of Republican women politicians (Elder, 2008). In her work, she predicts that the Republican Party will continue to inadequately represent women, along with the South, for decades. Further, the Democratic Party will continue to better its descriptive representation. Due to this, the Democratic Party will be more appealing for potential women candidates, thus, leading to more women candidates (Elder, 2008). Because the Republican Party so clearly has this representative disparity, it could deter Republican women from even trying because it seems unlikely they would succeed. This makes the "eligibility pool," as Elder terms it, uneven with the presence of partisan women candidates. The Republican Party, as stated earlier, has fewer Republican women candidates, leading to a stunted growth of women's representation that is not seen to the same extent in the Democratic Party (Elder, 2014).

CHAPTER III - DATA AND METHODS

Data Set

This paper draws upon a data set of delegates to state political party conventions, both Republican and Democrat. The rules for each convention and for delegates vary by state, but typically, delegates at the conventions help nominate presidential and vice-presidential candidates (What Is A Delegate, n.d.). Chosen for a two-year term, delegates represent their voting precincts each year. In the first year (odd numbered), delegates meet at an Organizing Convention to "conduct party business, such as voting on party officials, rules, and political platform" (What Is A Delegate, n.d.). In the second year (even numbered), the delegates "vote on candidates for their party's primary elections" at the Nominating Convention (What Is A Delegate, n.d.).

The State Convention Delegates Study surveyed delegates in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Texas, Utah, and Washington. While this study only encompasses six states, it represents a variety of geographically, demographically, and politically diverse states that are fairly representative of the United States political culture. The survey consisted of over 5600 participants answering various questions regarding political ideology, political participation, and demographics and measures both political attitudes and political ideology. The focus of the survey is state delegates because they are a unique group of activists and potential public office holders. Much of the literature focuses on the eligibility pool and these are members of the "pool" of potential candidates. If the "pool" is more diverse, that can have direct implications on the diversity of the elected officials that serve as representatives of the diverse electorate. If the party leaders are diverse but not the elected officials, that could point to a potential phenomenon beyond simply

disparity in party recruitment and lack of diversity in eligibility pools and point toward more of a bias coming from the electorate.

Hypothesis 1

H1. Following the national trend of elected officials, state delegates will have similar levels of representation of women with all women delegates being underrepresented but Republican women delegates being the most underrepresented.

Hypothesis 2

H2. Democratic women delegates will be a more diverse group racially, in age, and in levels of participation, partially because of the already existing descriptive and substantive representation in the party, whereas the Republican women delegates will be active but in more homogenous ways such as less racially diverse and concentrated in lower levels of office.

Hypothesis 3

H3. Because of the societal and familial obligations of women as caretakers, women delegates will enter the political activist scene at a later age on average than men delegates with Republican women delegates entering the latest followed by Democratic women delegates.

Hypothesis 4

H4. Partisan affiliation will be the strongest indicator of one's views regarding women's roles in politics, thus implying Democratic men delegates will be more open to women in politics than Republican women delegates.

Dependent Variable

The Dependent Variable is political participation. To measure political participation, respondents answered whether they had held government or party offices (local, state, or national). To measure H1 and H2, I looked at Government National Office, Government State Office, and Government Local Office. All had options of Currently Hold, Never Held, and Once Held. They were recoded to a dichotomous variable where Currently Hold and Once Held were 1 and all else was 0. Then they were combined to create the variable of Has Held or Never Held. The same method was followed for the Party Office variables. For Government Office, there were 4370 Never Held and 892 Has Held. For Party Office, there were 2704 Never Held and 2558 Has Held. In total, there were nine different categories to measure H2: Party Local, Party State, Party National, Any Party Office, Government Local, Government State, Government National, Any Government Office, and Any Office.

Independent Variables

The independent variables in this study were gender and political party. There were 2,062 female respondents (about 39%) and 2,914 male respondents (about 55%). The other 6% chose not to identify with either of these or another gender identity. There were several questions in the data set that asked about ideology. Respondents were able to self-identify, but there were also questions about values and political attitudes. The respondents were composed of 244 Illinois Republicans, 233 Iowa Democrats, 458 Minnesota Democrats, 1578 Texas Democrats, 1427 Texas Republicans, 926 Utah Republicans, 396 Washington Democrats. There were nearly equal Republican (49%) and Democrat (51%) respondents.

To measure H2 and H3, delegates were asked both what their current age is but also what age they first became active in politics. Additionally, they were asked to self-identify their race and for the purpose of this paper, I have categorized race as White or Not White simply to see if racial diversity is present among delegates more than it is among elected officials.

To measure perceptions and stereotypes of women for H4, there were four questions that ask respondents to rate their level of agreement of disagreement with the following statements: (1) Women are underrepresented among political leaders because they have fewer opportunities than men to prepare for leadership positions, (2) It is almost impossible to be a good wife and mother and hold public office too, (3) Most men in the political party organization try to keep women out of leadership roles, (4) Most men are better suited emotionally for politics than are most women. For each of these questions, participants were able to Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, or Strongly Agree. I combined Strongly Disagree, Disagree, and Somewhat Disagree in to one category: Disagree; Strongly Agree, Agree, and Somewhat Agree became Agree.

CHAPTER IV – RESULTS

This paper relies on data from a survey of state delegates to help analyze the relationship between political parties and barriers of women as party activists and party elites. Various demographics were assessed, including gender, age, race, and participation, to determine the differences between the men and women in each party. Next, delegates were asked for their opinions on women's various roles in politics to determine if the parties perceived women's roles differently. This paper sought to compare the theories in the literature regarding barriers to equal women's participation and representation in elected office to see if those theories can be applied to party activists and party elites. A simple bivariate analysis was used to answer the question of whether barriers to women's participation as party activists is inherently partisan or if women face similar barriers throughout both parties. First, to answer this question, it is important to look at the differences between men and women, and next, it is important to look at the differences between the women of each party to see if their experiences are unique to their party and its culture or if they experience the same things across party lines. Determining if the barriers are partisan can help with the dissolution of the barriers that women in politics face.

Gender

As expected, there were more men delegates than women delegates total with 2982 male respondents and 2307 female respondents. Surprisingly, there were more Democratic women delegates than Democratic men delegates with 1396 and 1296, respectively. As for the Republicans, there were nearly double men delegates than

women delegates, 1686 and 911, respectively. This partially confirms and partially rejects H1. In terms of simple participation as a delegate and not an office holder, Democratic women delegates do not seem to be underrepresented as H1 suggests, but Republican women delegates are severely underrepresented as H1 suggests. Figure 1 demonstrates the large gender gap between men and women delegates in the Republican Party with men delegates leading in representation and the opposite for the Democratic Party, thus, suggesting some partisan effect on women's representation for the delegates.
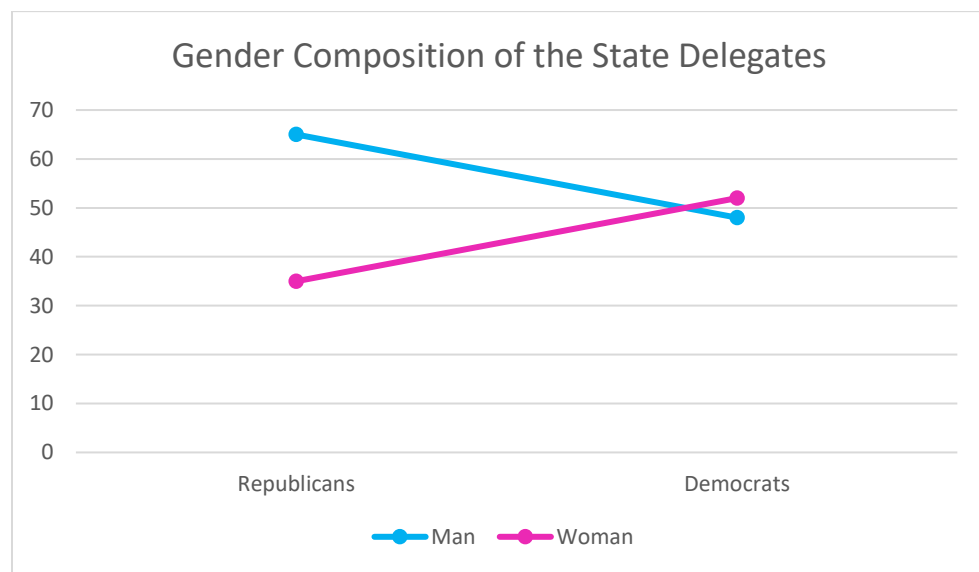
Figure 1. Gender Composition of the State Delegates by Party

While the contrast was noticeable in Figure 1 between the sexes and parties of the delegates, Figure 2 shows that there is a much larger difference in elected officials, Congressional members in particular. Figures 1 and 2 again partially confirm and partially reject H1 by showing that women are severely underrepresented in general, but there are much less Republican women Congressional members (10%) than Democratic women Congressional members (32%). It seems that although women are underrepresented in elected office, they are represented much more as state delegates

(35% for Republican, 52% for Democrat). Thus, it seems less likely that it is not *just* internal partisan dynamics contributing as a barrier and perhaps partially also the electorate. This is not to say that women are given a fair opportunity within the parties; the literature has shown otherwise with deficits when it comes to strategic and financial funding and recruitment for women.
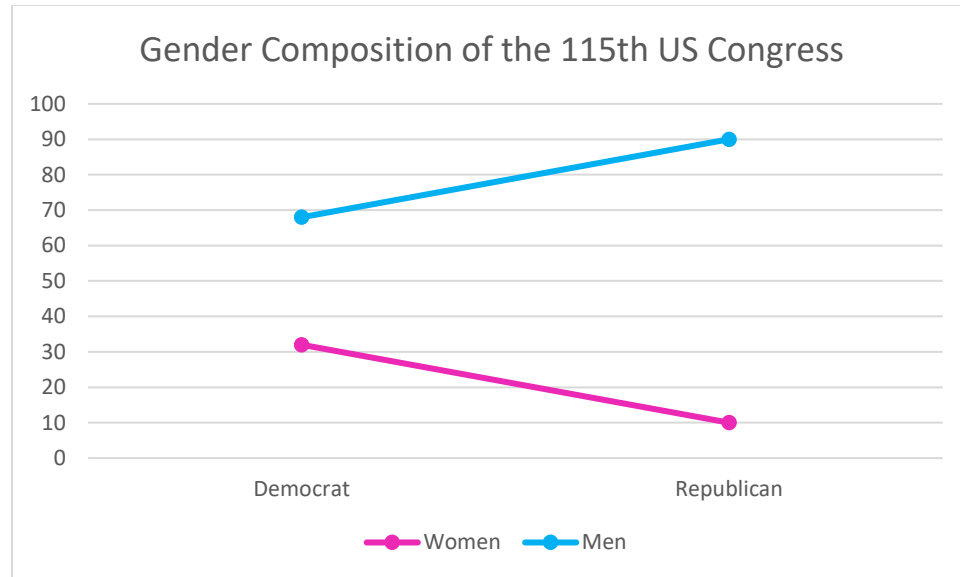

Figure 2. Gender Composition of the 115th US Congress (2015-2016) by Party

Data obtained from [*Membership of the 114th Congress: A Profile (fas.org)](#)

Race

While H1 regards gender diversity, H2 seeks to understand if there is a deeper relationship between diversity and party by assessing race, age, and levels of office held. Following the gender diversity trend, Republicans delegates did tend to be the least racially diverse with less than 20% of Republican men delegates being a racial minority. Republican women delegates were more diverse than the Republican men delegates, though, with 27% being a racial minority. Democratic men delegates were equally

racially diverse as the Republican women delegates, but just over 30% of the Democratic women delegates were a racial minority.
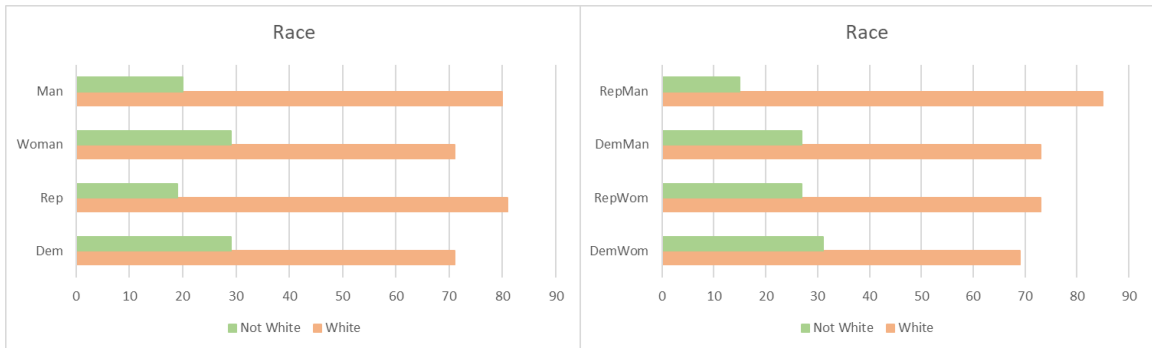

Figure 3. Racial Composition of the State Delegates Surveyed

Because this survey was conducted in 2016, I compared these numbers with that of the 115th Congress (2015-2016). As Figures 3 and 4 demonstrate, Republican delegates and male delegates were more diverse than Republican congressional members and male congressional members with 20% of male delegates and 15% of male congressional members being a racial minority and 19% of Republican delegates and only 6% of Republican congressional members being a racial minority. Democratic congressional members and female congressional members were more diverse than their delegate counterparts with Democratic congressional members having a 34% racial minority as opposed to the 29% found in the Democratic delegates. Additionally, 36% of female congressional members belonged to a racial minority with just 29% of the female delegates belonging to a racial minority.
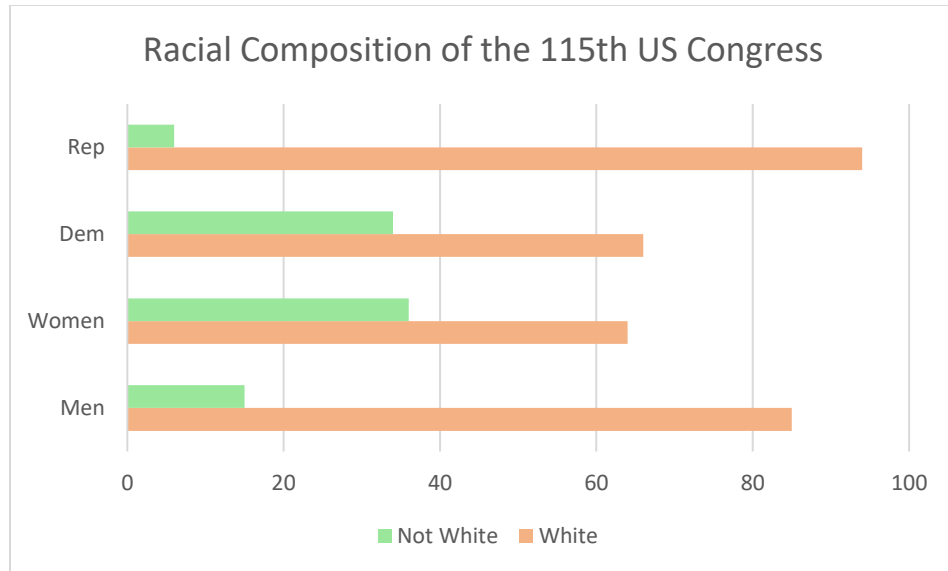
Figure 4. Racial Composition of the 115th (2015-2016) US Congress

Data obtained from *Membership of the 114th Congress: A Profile (fas.org)

As Figures 1 and 3 have shown, Democratic women, and Democrats in general, have tended to be more diverse than their counterparts in representation and race. They have not been fully or equally represented but simply represented more than the Republicans.
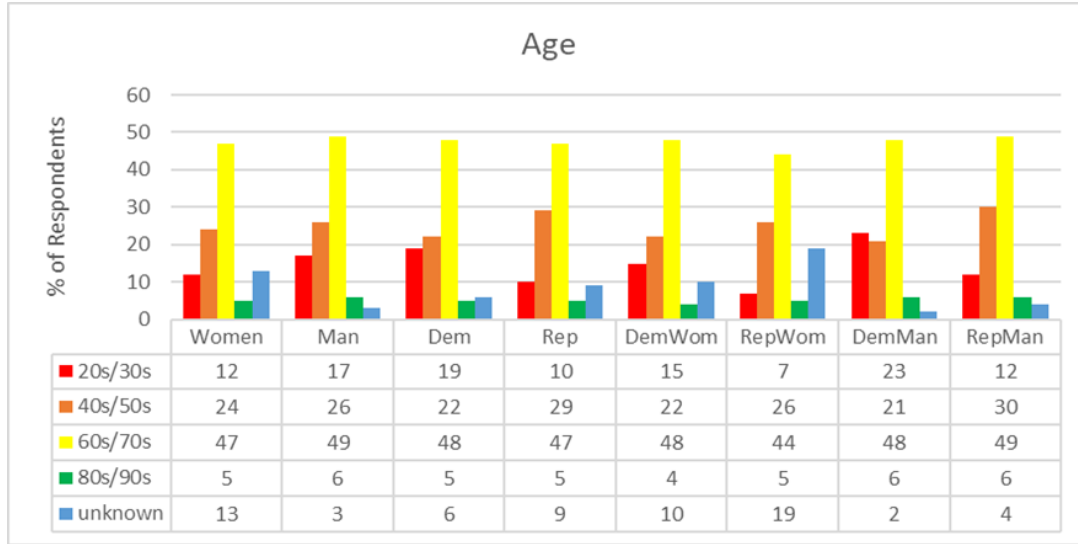
Age	Women	Man	Dem	Rep	DemWom	RepWom	DemMan	RepMan
■ 20s/30s	12	17	19	10	15	7	23	12
■ 40s/50s	24	26	22	29	22	26	21	30
■ 60s/70s	47	49	48	47	48	44	48	49
■ 80s/90s	5	6	5	5	4	5	6	6
■ unknown	13	3	6	9	10	19	2	4

Figure 5. Age Composition

It is impossible to fully answer H2 because of a measurement error. While race and gender can be measured across the parties, I was unable to measure age diversity because a large percentage of respondents refused to disclose their age. 13% of women delegates, as opposed to just 3% of men delegates did not share their age. Of the Republican women delegates, nearly 20% opted out of sharing their age and 10% of Democratic women delegates did the same, thus making it difficult to draw conclusions on the age composition of the women across the parties. One conclusion that can be drawn is that Democratic delegates are on average younger, but not by much, as are the men delegates.
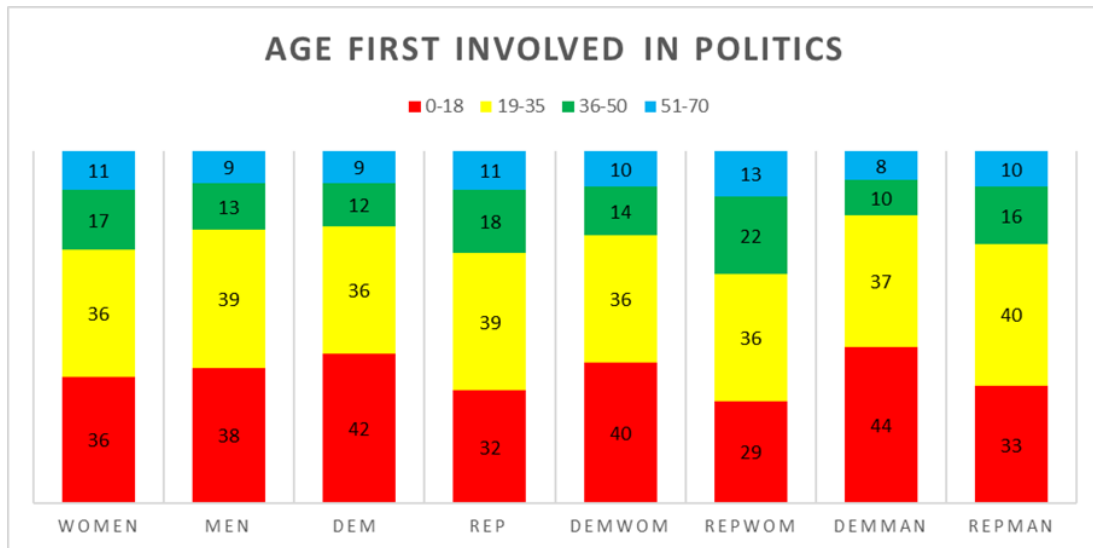
Figure 6. Age of State Delegates' First Involvement in Politics

The literature suggests that women start later in their political careers. H3 seeks to determine whether this trend can be identified in state delegates as it can be Congressional members. Clearly, for the age, many participants were in their 60s and 70s across all demographics. While the differences are not as stark as the literature might suggest for elected officials, there is small evidence that there could be a similar phenomenon happening. For example, there are more younger men delegates than women delegates in this survey, across both parties. Also, for women delegates, both Republican and Democratic, they started in politics on average older than their male delegate counterparts. In fact, a higher percentage of men delegates than women delegates across both parties first became involved in politics between 0-18 and 19-35, but that switches for the older categories of 36-50 and 51-70, each with a higher percentage of women delegates starting in those age groups regardless of party. However, as H3 suggests, it does appear that Republican women delegates start later on average, with higher percentages of individuals entering into politics in the 36-50 and 51-70 range.

On the contrary, 40% of Democratic women state delegates reported becoming involved in politics between 0-18. This could be indicative of the same trend the literature discusses regarding elected officials also applying to party activists and party elites to at least some degree, but it does not seem to be as defined and significant here.
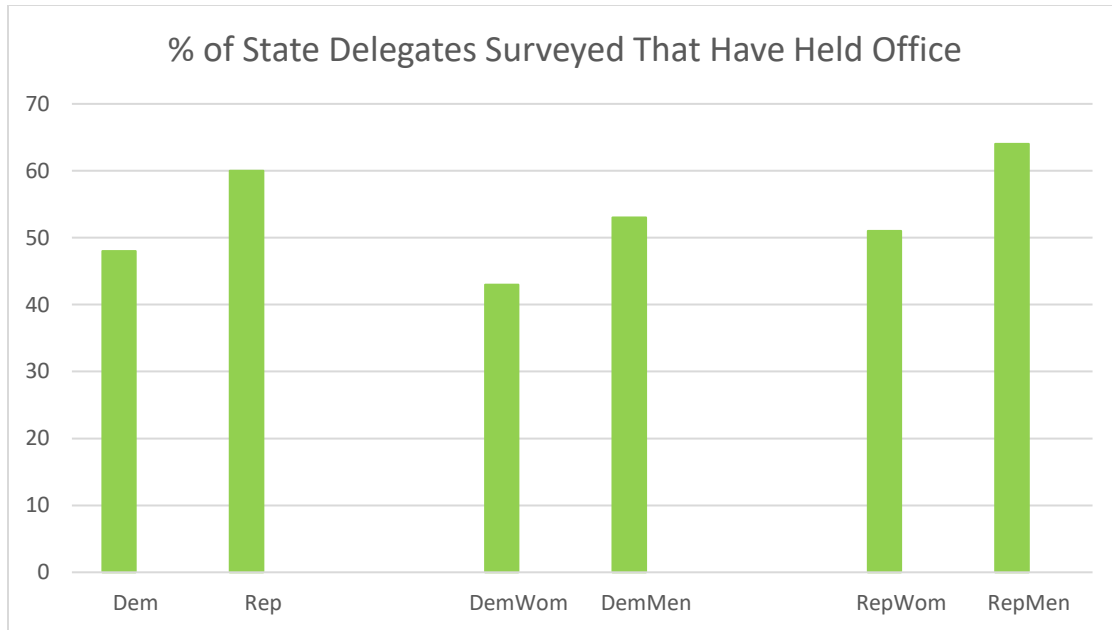
Participation

Figure 7. Percent of Respondents That Have Held Office

As Chapter III explains, each participant was asked whether they Currently Hold, Have Held, or Never Held party office and government office at the local, state, and national level. This is how I tested the remainder of H1. While it was clear that there were many more Democratic women delegates than men, H1 also seeks to identify whether Democratic women delegates hold office at higher levels than Republican
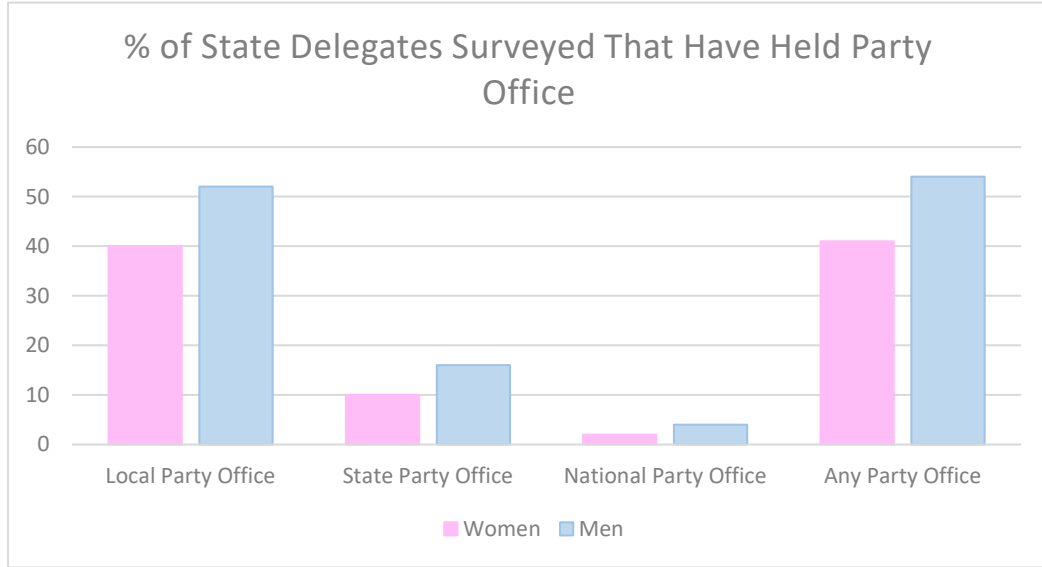
women delegates.

Figure 8. Percent of Respondents That Have Held Party Office by Gender

1,272 Democratic delegates have held some type of office and 1,548 Republican delegates have held some type of office. While the partisan gap is not that large with only a 276 difference between Democratic delegates and Republican delegates, the gender gap is substantial with a 692 difference between women delegates and men delegates. About the same number of Democratic women delegates and Democratic men delegates have held office (600 and 672) while more than twice as many Republican men delegates than Republican women delegates have held office. While this figure does display the disparity between men and women delegates who have held office, it rejects the notion that Republican women delegates hold office at lower levels. It appears that women delegates hold office at lower levels than men delegates, as do Democratic delegates than Republican delegates; however, a higher percentage of Republican women delegates have held some type of office than that of Democratic women delegates.
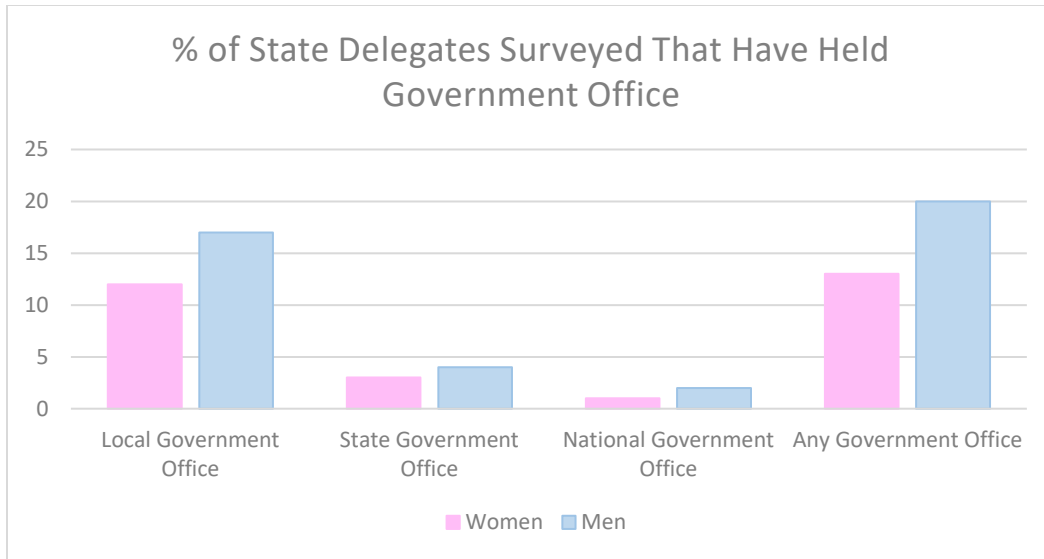
% of State Delegates Surveyed That Have Held Government Office

Figure 9. Percent of Respondents That Have Held Government Office by Gender

As expected, men delegates outnumber women delegates when it comes to holding office no matter the level. This suggests that there is a disparity occurring among men and women delegates and their representation. As stated regarding Figures 8 and 9, it is possible that the women delegates of each party face similar barriers within their parties. Just as the women delegates have greater differences between the local and state office and less between national, the same concept applies between men and women delegates regardless of party.
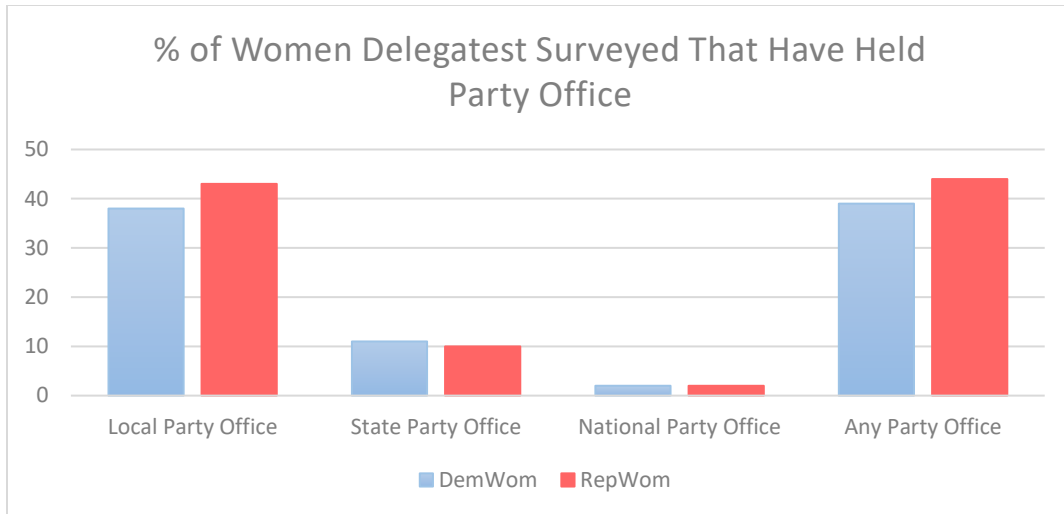
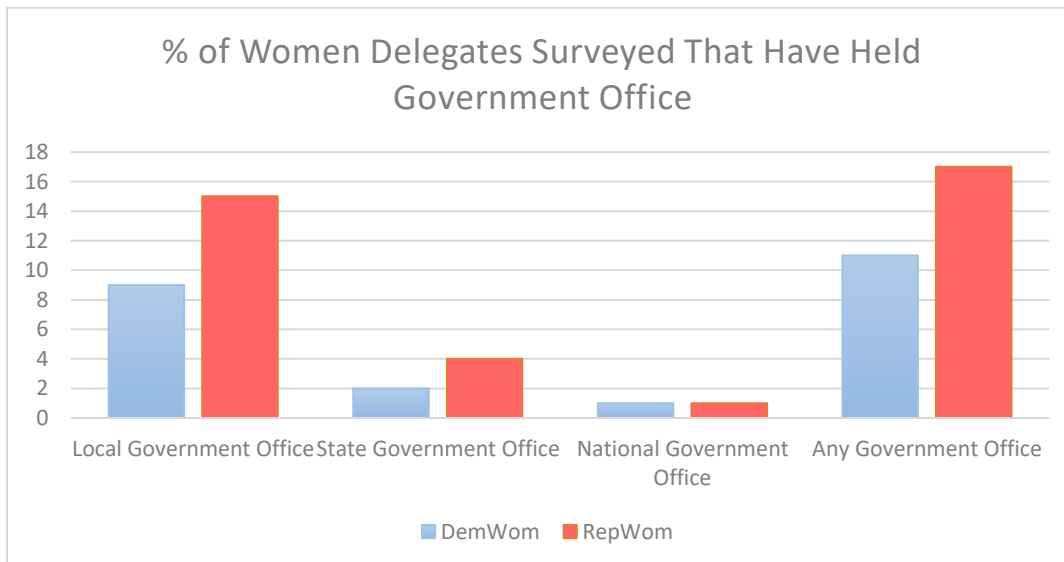*Figure 10. Percent of Women Who Have Held Party Office by Party*

Figure 11. Percent of Women Who Have Held Government Office by Party

Figures 10 and 11 have almost completely rejected the idea that Republican women delegates are represented less among higher offices. In fact, Republican women delegates were more likely to have held party and government offices at the local level as well as in general. Democratic women delegates held more Party State Office barely, and both Democratic and Republican women delegates had similar levels of participation in

National Party Office and National Government Office. While the women delegates of both parties did not differ significantly in terms of levels of participation in Party Office, Republican women delegates vastly outnumber Democratic women delegates in Government Office Local and State with the numbers evening out again around national. While my hypothesis suggested that Republican women delegates would have higher numbers at the lower levels, it did not account for the numbers being around the same for the higher levels. This suggests that it might not be internal partisan dynamics such as recruiting or financial and strategic support that is holding one party back but not another, and it also likely is not a lack of motivation. It appears the parties offer reasonably similar support for the women delegates of both parties, but perhaps not for the women delegates compared to the men delegates.
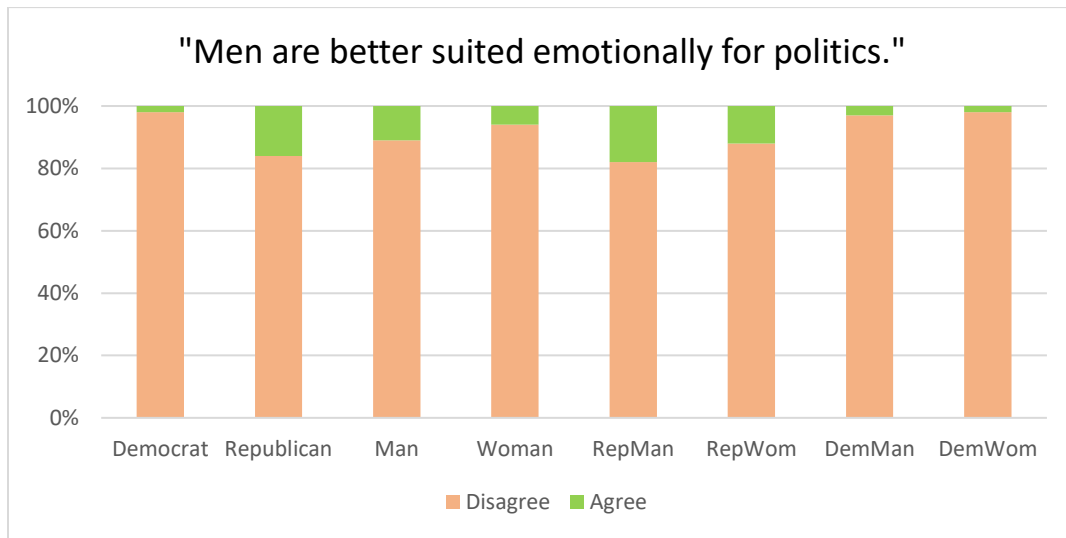
Opinion

Figure 12. Women's Role in Politics Graph 1

       Figures 12-15 measure the perceptions of women's roles in politics. Progress is evident regarding eliminating the negative perceptions of women in politics and the

negative relationship between femininity and leadership. This can be seen in Figure 12. Democratic delegates, both men and women, are more likely to disagree with the statement "Men are better suited emotionally for politics" with less than 5% agreeing with the statement. This same sentiment is not seen among Republican delegates. While there is a significant majority that disagrees with the statement, as the Democratic delegates do, there is a much larger percentage that agree. Around 15% of Republicans surveyed agreed. Among Republican women delegates, it is just over 10% and for the Republican men delegates, it is just under 20%. This means that nearly 20%, or 1 in every 5, of the Republican men questioned still hold the belief that women are not emotionally equipped for politics.
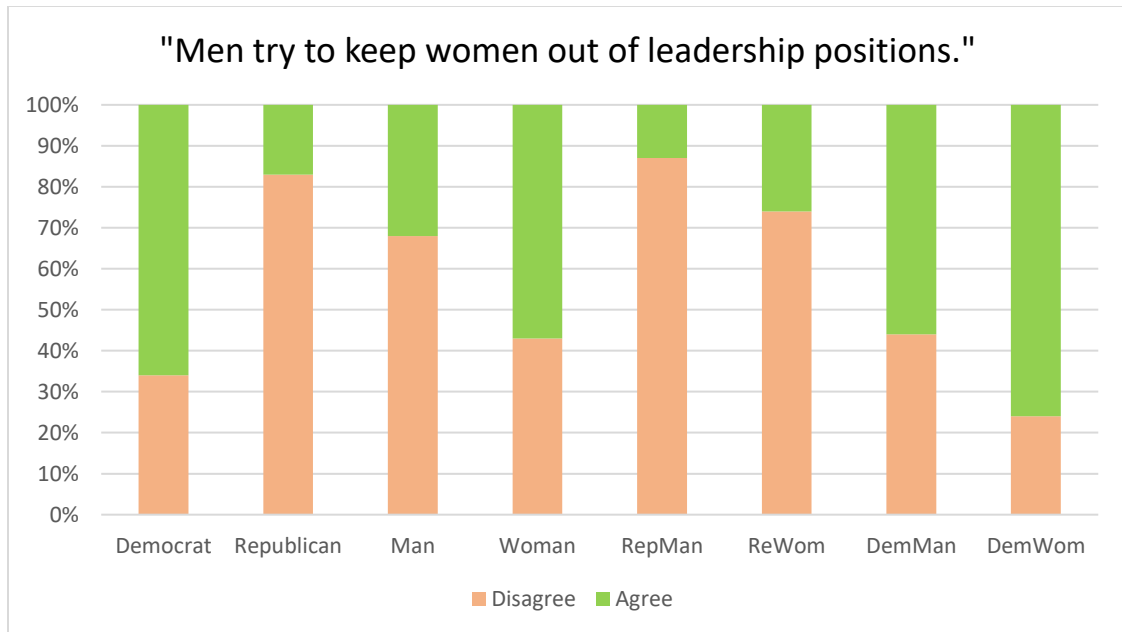

Figure 13. Women's Role in Politics Graph 2

When asked whether they believed men intentionally tried to keep women out of political leadership positions, again, the largest difference was between the parties and not the genders. The same trend continues, with Democratic women delegates agreeing

the most followed by Democratic men delegates. Nearly 75% of Republican women delegates disagreed and nearly 90% of Republican men delegates disagreed.
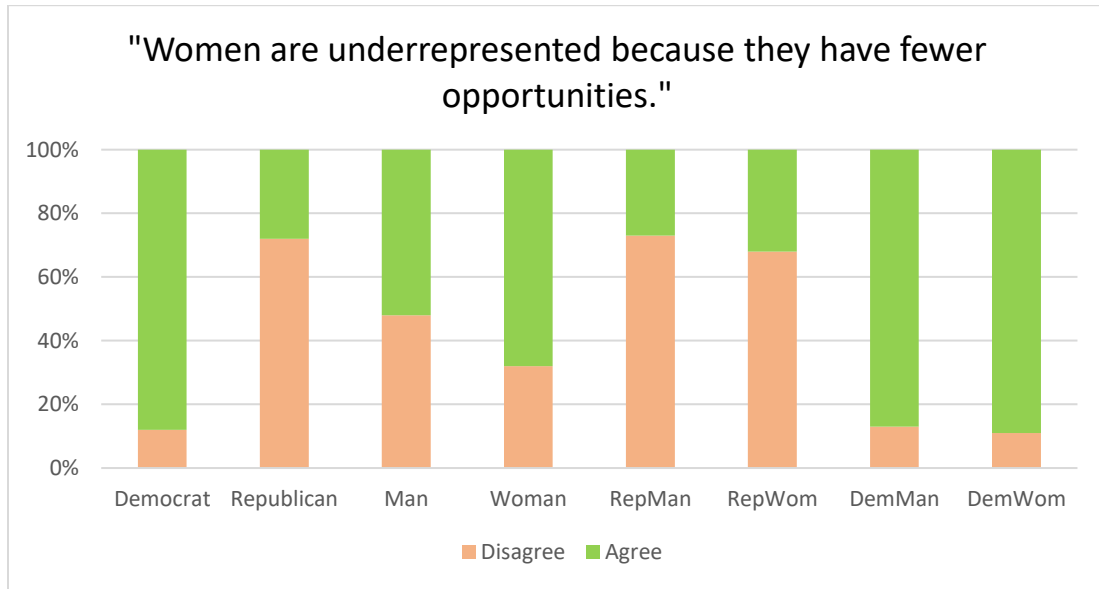

Figure 14. Women's Role in Politics Graph 3

When asked whether women were underrepresented due to fewer opportunities, again, the trend continues with Democratic women delegates agreeing 89% of the time and the Democratic men delegates closely following at 87%. Thirty- two percent of Republican women delegates agreed and 27% of Republican men delegates agreed. This, again, suggests that the differences in perception of women's roles in politics may not be driven by gender, as men and women delegates are more likely to answer closely to each other if they are members of the same party. The differences in perception largely seem to be partisan, which could ultimately suggest that there are uniquely partisan barriers, although when pairing these perceptions with actual participation rates, this paper has no strong evidence of uniquely partisan physical barriers (recruitment, funding, strategic support) beyond perception which would negatively affect both Republican and Democratic women. It is peculiar that Republican elites, both men and women, would

hold stereotyped views, but still have higher rates of women in leadership than their supposedly 'more egalitarian' Democratic counterparts.
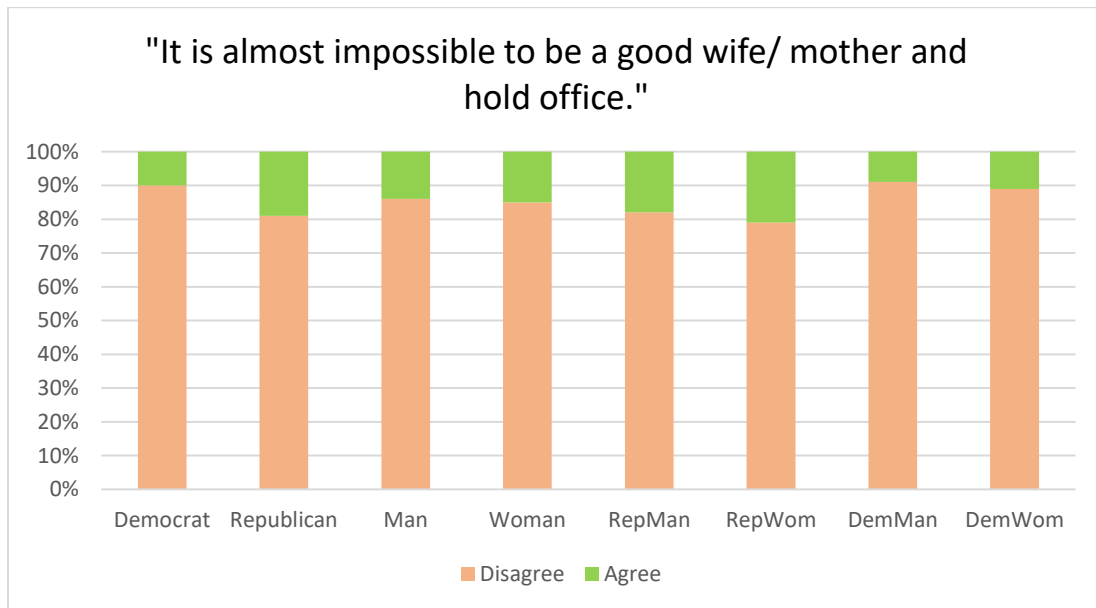

Figure 15. Women's Role in Politics Graph 4

When presented with the statement "It is almost impossible to be a good wife/ mother and hold office," the Democratic men delegates disagreed the most followed by Democratic women delegates. The same trend was seen between Republican men delegates and Republican women delegates. It was interesting that women delegates themselves held this gendered perception more than the men delegates, with slightly more women delegates overall claiming that it is nearly impossible to be a good wife and mother and hold office. As expected, the Republican delegates held this view more than the Democratic Delegates which could allude to a partisan barrier; however, the fact that more women delegates than men delegates agreed across both parties could point toward a lack of motivation. As stated above, women tend to start later due to their familial obligations. It is possible that participation can coexist with this gendered view by

women simply starting later instead of not at all. However, as the literature states, starting later leads to less qualified women when it comes time to running for office. Campaigns are especially important to look at, as this group of state delegates are potential candidates in elections.
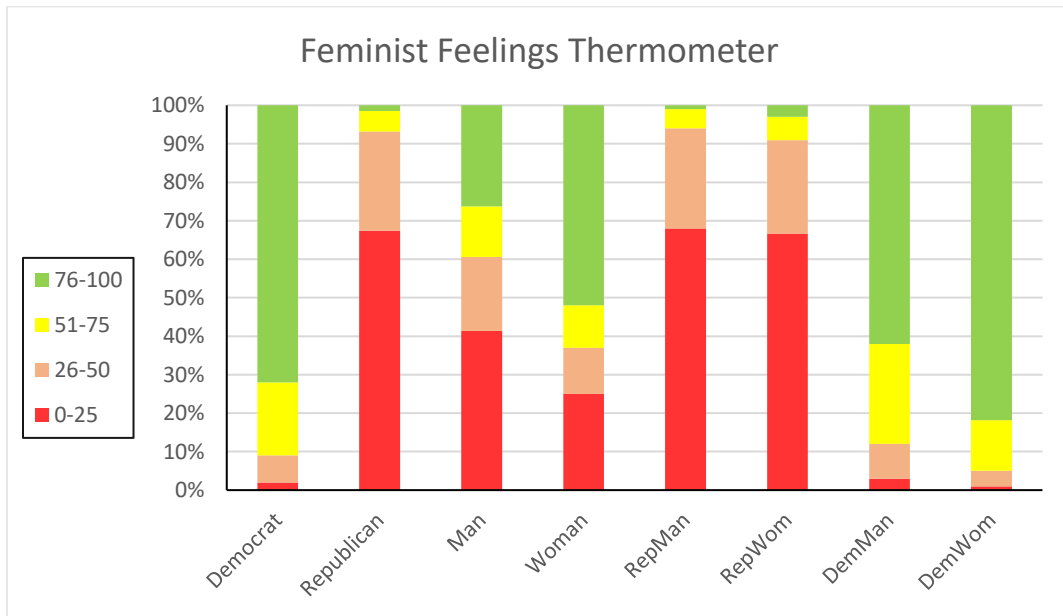
Figure 16. Feminist Feelings Thermometer

Again, as expected and seen through the other opinion questions, Democratic women delegates tend to be the most 'woman friendly' followed by Democratic men delegates. There was a significant difference between men and women delegates in the 0-25 (extreme dislike) and the 76-100 (extreme like) with just over 40% of men delegates expressing an extreme dislike for the term and over 50% of women delegates expressing liking the term. While Republican men delegates had the highest rates of disliking the word "feminism," Republican women delegates very closely followed. The largest difference is not between gender, but again, between parties, therefore confirming H4.

Although the literature suggested that Republican women state delegates would not have held office at levels similar to those of the Democratic women state delegates, this paper rejects that notion. While H1 was confirmed that Republican women are severely underrepresented all around, they are holding party office at about the same rate as Democratic women, thus rejecting part of H2 that hypothesized Republican women would hold office concentrated at the lower levels. However, the other half of H2 was confirmed, as Republican women delegates were not as racially diverse as the Democratic women delegates. H3 was also confirmed that Republican women tend to start their political careers later in life, thus decreasing the number of connections and professional experiences they can gain which, in turn, decreases the political opportunity. Republican women are not concerned with identifying as 'feminists,' as H4 suggested, and their lack of descriptive representation could help explain their lack of substantive support of statements regarding women's roles in politics. H4 was confirmed that gender is not the main divider in public opinion but rather partisan affiliation. This could suggest that there are problems within the party, particularly the Republican Party regarding the role of women in politics. However, due to the small number of women delegates and Congressional members, it is hard to identify whether the main barrier is the internal dynamic and structure of the party or more of the electorate and their refusal to elect a woman.

CHAPTER V – CONCLUSION

Using a data set of over 5600 state delegate survey respondents, I have analyzed women's participation as state delegates and assessed whether the barriers to equal women's participation and representation as party activists and elites is uniquely partisan. While the literature suggests that women's barriers to elected office include lack of party support and recruitment, negative perceptions of women as leaders, attribution of leadership traits as 'masculine,' lower ambition among women, less women in the 'eligibility pool,' and family roles inhibiting the ability to have equal opportunity as men, little has been researched regarding women's roles as party activists and elites.

Following the trends the literature suggested, I hypothesized that Republican women delegates would be the least represented and enter the political scene at a later age, and Democratic women delegates would be the most diverse racially. I also hypothesized the Republican women delegates would be the least represented among state delegates that have held office and their officeholding would be concentrated at lower levels than that of the Democratic women delegates. Lastly, I hypothesized that party would be a stronger cue than gender regarding the belief of women's roles in politics.

This paper suggests that while these trends may be significantly present for elected officials, the trends are less obvious for state delegates, as the representation of women state delegates is much higher than the representation of women elected officials. Additionally, it was found that while Republican women delegates do enter the political scene at a slightly older age, it was not a substantial difference. The notion that

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Republican women delegates would hold office at lower levels was completely rejected, as Republican women delegates held office at a higher percentage than Democratic women delegates at 4 out of 6 levels. Perhaps the most interesting was the finding that party affiliation was a much stronger cue than gender in terms of one's position regarding the role of women in politics.

While the data set included six states and over 5600 respondents, I was unable to compare this sample to the general delegate population due to unavailability of data. There is no reason to believe that the six states in which delegates were surveyed are not generally representative of the delegate population, but it would be impossible to verify that. Furthermore, there is little to nothing presented in the research about the construct of state delegates as each state has their own varying structures and rules regarding party conventions. This has made it particularly challenging to understand the demographic makeup or socioeconomic background of state delegates. Another limitation of this research is the lack of data on age of participants as nearly 20% of Republican women delegates and 10% of Democratic women delegates did not disclose their age.

In future research, socioeconomic status, race, and especially motivations of women state delegates should be explored. It is entirely possible that party activists could be socioeconomically diverse, but in terms of measuring how many party activists are party elites could be due to a socioeconomic advantage of having the money and time to run a campaign. Potentially, the fact that there is a higher percentage of Republican women delegates that have held office might not be indicative of a lack of partisan barriers, but rather indicative of the types of Republican women and conditions in which

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they have broken through the barriers. It could also be a strategic interest of the Republican Party to ensure there are women to deliver the traditionally "anti-feminist" messages as to not alienate the women voters. Without more accessible data and research on state delegates, it is unlikely these questions can be answered. However, one conclusion that can be drawn is that the parties do have distinctive cultures regarding women and politics. Women elected officials and elites face uniquely partisan challenges whether it be through the party structure or the partisan electorate; however, it is likely women party activists face the same barriers regardless of their partisan affiliation.

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