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## Buying Their Way in: Redistribution of Campaign Resources as a Path to State Legislative Leadership for Women

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# Buying Their Way in: Redistribution of Campaign Resources as a Path to State Legislative Leadership for Women

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## Abstract

Women continue to be underrepresented in legislative leadership. This is concerning in U.S. legislatures, where leaders have substantial control over resources and policymaking. As an outgroup, women face additional barriers to power in politics, making it difficult to become a legislative leader. How can women gain influence within their political party? I argue one potential path for overcoming these barriers is the redistribution of campaign resources to other party actors, which helps facilitate connections in the party. These relationships help candidates gain influence, and they can draw on them for support in the legislature. Do women candidates redistribute funds to other actors? If they do, is it an effective path to leadership positions in their state parties? I address these questions using social network analysis and campaign contributions from the 2012 elections in six states. I find that by establishing connections to other party actors through the redistribution of their campaign resources, women candidates can increase their influence in the party and their likelihood of becoming a legislative leader. Moreover, traditional paths to power like seniority help men but not women obtain leadership positions. Even though constraints on power still exist for women in politics, this research highlights an alternative path to influence for women in state legislatures.

**Keywords:** women candidates; state legislatures; legislative leadership; campaign contributions; party networks; social network analysis

## Introduction

While the number of women in state legislatures is increasing, they remain underrepresented in leadership. Women hold a record-setting number of state legislative seats after the 2018 election but made minimal gains in leadership – continuing to hold less than 18% of leadership positions (Lieb, 2019). Indeed, women did not hold any chamber leadership positions in 12 states during the 2019 legislative sessions (Center for American Women and Politics, 2019). Since leadership has control over the policymaking process and access to key resources (Anzia & Jackman, 2013; Osborn, 2014; Rosenthal, 2008), this is a significant limit on women’s legislative power. How can women gain access to more positions of influence? One path may be through fundraising.

After her election to the California Assembly in 2004, Karen Bass worked to be the best fundraiser in her freshman class. Bass raised over \$1 million in her first four years in office and contributed a substantial amount of money to the state party and other Democratic candidates (National Institute on Money in Politics, 2017). She quickly rose through party and chamber leadership positions, becoming Assembly Speaker in 2008 (Viebeck, 2016). Now a U.S. Representative, Bass’s path to leadership reflects that of fellow U.S. Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz. Like Bass, Wasserman Schultz excelled at fundraising, allowing her to redistribute hundreds of thousands of dollars to other Democratic candidates and party committees (Currinder, 2009). She also climbed quickly through the party ranks - joining the Democratic whip leadership as a sophomore member of Congress (an unusual feat for someone so junior) and becoming chair of the Democratic National Committee in 2011. Do these two congresswomen stand out in terms of their redistribution of funds? Did their impressive fundraising ability and their decision to redistribute those funds contribute to their quick rise in party leadership? Is this as a successful strategy women can employ to overcome barriers to gain influence and leadership in their party and in the legislature?

These important questions are in need of further study. Women have increased their numbers in legislatures over the years but sheer numbers may not indicate true representation. How can women increase their influence within the party and attain more leadership positions? As an outgroup working against in-group favoritism (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971; Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979), women candidates may need to develop more relationships throughout the party to grow their influence. I argue that redistributing funds to other party actors, like Representatives Bass and Wasserman Schultz, is one path to do so.

By transferring campaign resources to other party actors, candidates establish relationships with them. These relationships help candidates gain influence, and they can draw on them for support when seeking leadership positions. There is evidence that this happens in the U.S. Congress. Members in Congress contributing more money to the party are more likely to become leaders than those less active in fundraising (Cann, 2008; Currinder, 2009; Heberlig & Larson, 2012; Kanthak, 2007). This avenue to influence could be particularly important for women, who must overcome additional barriers to power. However, while we know the examples of Representatives Bass and Wasserman Schultz, we lack systematic evidence that women state legislative candidates engage in this activity.

Do women candidates redistribute funds to other actors? If so, is it an effective path for women candidates to gain influence and leadership positions in their state parties? I address these questions using social network analysis and campaign finance data from 2012 state legislative elections to evaluate the connections formed by the transfer of donations among state legislative candidates. This unique approach with an original dataset fills a gap in the current research. After first demonstrating that some state legislative candidates are active in redistributing campaign funds to other party actors, I find this is indeed an effective strategy for increasing their influence and helping them become leaders in the subsequent legislative session. This is especially important for women candidates since I also find that a traditional path, seniority, only helps men attain leadership positions. Even though constraints on power still exist for women, these findings establish an important, alternative path to power for women in state legislatures.

### **Influence in Political Parties and Legislatures**

Despite advances in the number of women in U.S. legislatures, women face barriers to influencing decision-making and policymaking once in legislative office. Influence within an organization is the capacity or power to shape policy or ensure favorable treatment, usually through status or contacts. Being influential secures prominence in the organization, access to resources, and cooperation from other actors (Kanter, 1979); factors that are important for passing legislation (Rosenthal, 2008). It is especially important for candidates and legislators to have influence in their political party to achieve their policy goals since parties organize and structure the legislative process (Osborn, 2012). Influence in an organization or group is also often essential for upward mobility (Brass, 1984; Kanter, 1979). As a result, influence in the party can also help candidates become legislative leaders.

As an outgroup, however, women are sometimes excluded from party decisions and activities (Niven, 1998). In-group biases or favoritism often restrict access to power and rewards to those in the in-group (Tajfel et al., 1971; Turner et al., 1979). In state politics, men continue to comprise the majority group, and it can be difficult for women to “break into the good old boy network” (Crowder-Meyer, 2013, p. 398). This hinders the recruitment of women and their advancement once in office. Relatedly, women’s participation is sometimes obstructed in office (Kathlene, 1994). Therefore, as an outgroup, women can struggle to be influential in decision-making, especially since they continue to be underrepresented in legislative leadership.

Legislative leadership positions are desirable because they bring fundraising advantages and control over valuable resources, including policymaking powers (Anzia & Jackman, 2013; Osborn, 2014; Richman, 2010; Rosenthal, 2008). Being a leader also helps secure the attention and support of other actors necessary for attaining legislative goals (Dodson, 2006; Hall, 1996; Swers, 2013). Consequently, because women are underrepresented in party and legislative leadership, they may struggle to substantively represent women. This makes it critical for women to overcome barriers to leadership, and raises an important question – how do candidates establish connections with other party actors? And can women candidates guarantee they are influential by increasing their connections in the party?

## **Redistribution of Campaign Funds to Gain Influence**

Candidates and legislators can advance their position in the party and legislature through various paths, including established networks (e.g., old boy networks), experience (e.g., seniority), and loyalty (Heberlig & Larson, 2012). These are common ways for people to gain influence in their party, but these paths typically favor men, restricting the advancement of women. I argue that an alternative path to influence in the party for women is through the financial support of other candidates and party committees.

We know that members of Congress regularly donate to party committees and other candidates (e.g., Cann, 2008), but we do not yet know much about candidate contributions at the state level. How active are state legislative candidates in redistributing funds? Due to increases in the fundraising and spending of state legislative candidates, it is likely that they are also active in transferring resources to other candidates. Therefore, I expect state legislative candidates engage in the redistribution of campaign funds to other party actors (Hypothesis 1). While I expect men and women candidates to contribute to other candidates, women may give more donations in an attempt to make meaningful connections in the party outside of the traditional networks.

Members of Congress more active in redistributing funds to party committees and other members are more likely to become leaders (Cann, 2008; Currinder, 2009; Heberlig & Larson, 2012; Kanthak, 2007). By transferring campaign funds to other party actors, members help the party achieve its goal of winning races. The parties incentivize this redistribution by rewarding members who financially contribute to the party with leadership positions (Cann, 2008). Redistributing funds to other party actors is also a key strategy for developing connections and influence within the party. By sharing valuable and limited campaign resources with other party actors (Gierzynski, 1992; Heberlig & Larson, 2012), legislators or candidates form strategic and meaningful connections with the recipients. Moreover, the transfer of campaign funds has an “expressive benefit” that demonstrates a valuing of the relationship, developing or reinforcing a social connection (Kanthak & Krause, 2012). These connections (i.e., donations) help candidates gain influence among other party actors by developing friendly relationships with them.

Any candidate can increase their connections, and potentially their influence, in the party by donating to other candidates. However, as members of an outgroup, establishing connections to other party actors through the redistribution of resources may present an especially important path to influence for women candidates. The contribution represents more than the financial support of another candidate; the connection itself matters. By giving donations to diverse or key party actors, candidates create important relationships within the party in a manner not bound to seniority or insular networks usually comprised of men (Crowder-Meyer, 2013). While we know differences in congressional candidate giving exist across gender and partisanship (Kanthak & Krause, 2012), we do not know how women candidates’ contributions, and the connections they provide, affect their influence within the party. Some women candidates may work especially hard to fundraise and donate to other candidates, diversifying their connections and providing a path to influence in the party outside the traditional networks that favor men.<sup>1</sup> As a result, I propose women candidates redistributing campaign funds to other party actors will be as influential as men (Hypothesis 2).

By transferring resources to other party actors, women candidates may also increase their likelihood of becoming a legislative leader. These relationships help candidates gain influence, and they can draw on them for support when seeking leadership positions. Previous research demonstrates that candidates are increasingly expected to financially contribute to other party actors to gain leadership positions (Cann, 2008; Heberlig & Larson, 2012). Additionally, having influence in an organization helps individuals move upward in the organization’s hierarchy (Brass, 1984; Kanter, 1979). Therefore, by using the redistribution of funds to increase their connections and influence in the party organization, women may be able to overcome the barriers to their advancement and become leaders in the legislature. Consequently, women candidates with more influence in the party will be more likely to become legislative leaders (Hypothesis 3). Previous findings for Congress suggest this should be true for men as well, but since men have access to power through other established avenues, this is potentially a more important path to legislative leadership for women.

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<sup>1</sup> Although incumbents usually have more resources, any candidate can make donations to other candidates to gain connections and influence. There are examples of non-incumbent candidates contributing to other candidates, and even launching leadership PACs, before winning office. Therefore, throughout the paper, my expectations and analysis focus on candidates – not only incumbents – since this behavior is available to them.



## Data and Research Design

Most social science frameworks focus on individual observations, not relationships. However, to test my expectations that the redistribution of campaign funds is a path to influence and leadership for women candidates, I need a framework and methodology like social network analysis (SNA) to measure and evaluate the relationships created through campaign transfers. SNA is a relational frame of reference for understanding interactions between actors and the context within which these interactions occur (McClurg & Young, 2011), making it the most appropriate framework for this study.

Scholars increasingly conceptualize parties as coalitions or networks of actors cooperating to achieve related goals (Desmarais, La Raja, & Kowal, 2014; Herrnson, 2009; Schwartz, 1990). Party coalitions include formal party committees (national, state, and local parties), officeholders, candidates, and closely aligned groups (Grossmann & Dominguez, 2009; Herrnson, 2009; Koger, Masket, & Noel, 2009; Skinner, Masket, & Dulio, 2012). SNA allows us to formally characterize and study these party relationships (Koger et al., 2009; Skinner et al., 2012). Like other recent research, I use the transfer of campaign donations to identify and measure relationships among party actors with an emphasis on candidates' positions within the party network. With this framework and measurement, I can evaluate whether women can use campaign fundraising and donations to grow their influence in the party network.

### Campaign Contributions and Measuring Party Networks

I use direct and in-kind donations to measure the transfer of campaign resources. Direct donations are monetary contributions given to a candidate, party committee, or political group during a campaign. In-kind donations are non-monetary resources given to a candidate or party committee to aid in their campaign efforts, such as campaign services (e.g., consulting, polling), advertising, campaign mailers, and office supplies.<sup>2</sup>

I concentrate on state-level elections to capitalize on variations in the diversity of candidates, political parties, and political contexts across states. The amount and quality of data necessary to create party networks using campaign finance transactions limits the number of states it is feasible to include. For this reason, I focus on campaign transfers in six states that vary according to several key factors, including chamber competition and the percentage of state legislative seats held by women. Variation in the number of women in the party network is important for evaluating the influence of women candidates across states. To select the six states to include in the sample, I organized states into categories based on the percentage of state legislative seats held by women in 2011 (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2011)<sup>3</sup> and the level of two-party legislative competition (Hamm & Moncrief, 2013).<sup>4</sup> This allowed me to select a stratified sample of six diverse states from these categories: Colorado, Iowa, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania.<sup>5</sup> While this is a limited sample and may not be representative of all states, these six states also vary in terms of the amount of money in their elections, legislative professionalism, population, region, and term limits. Thus, there is no reason to expect the sample to skew the results. The diversity of these states helps provides more confidence in the research. In some of the statistical analysis, I include fixed effects to control for state differences and omitted variables by making within-state comparisons.

I use direct and in-kind donations in 2012 statewide and state legislative races to measure Democratic and Republican Party networks in these six states. The campaign finance data is from the National Institute on Money in Politics' (NIMP) website *Follow the Money* and the Colorado Secretary of State.<sup>6</sup> Biographical information for candidates is from state legislative websites and election transparency websites (e.g., Ballotpedia).

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<sup>2</sup> One limitation of this approach is the exclusion of independent expenditures. However, differences in reporting and data availability issues make it difficult to include independent spending. Additionally, independent expenditures are usually spent against a candidate, making it a different type of connection.

<sup>3</sup> Categories for the percentage of state legislative seats held by women: 30-40% women (high), 16-29% women (moderate), and 0-15% women (low)

<sup>4</sup> Categories for the percentage of races with two-party legislative competition (races in which the losing candidate received at least 40% of the vote): 33-56% of races (high), 24-32% of races (moderate), and 0-23% of races (low)

<sup>5</sup> Categories represented: High competition and high percentage of women (Colorado), high competition with moderate percentage of women (Iowa), moderate competition and moderate percentage of women (North Carolina), moderate competition with low percentage of women (Oklahoma), low competition with high percentage of women (New Mexico), low competition and low percentage of women (Pennsylvania).

<sup>6</sup> Unlike NIMP, the Colorado Secretary of State data includes donations to political action committees. While not relevant to this project, a previous study utilized this data. In this analysis, I impose restrictions on the Colorado data by removing donations to interest groups. This ensures the NIMP and Colorado Secretary of State data include the same relationships.

To create the party networks, I identify all party organizations (including state and local party committees) and candidates affiliated with either the Democratic or Republican parties. I use the transfer of campaign resources (direct and in-kind donations) to and between these actors to measure connections and create the network. I then reduce the entire campaign network to party sub-networks that include candidates, party committees, and individuals and interest groups giving multiple, large donations totaling over \$250 to actors in one party. This restriction removes groups and individuals that contribute to both parties. Therefore, we can assume the goals of the actors in the networks correspond to that of the party. Most of the following analysis, however, focuses on candidates and their contributions to other party actors, making that restriction less meaningful in this study.

### Candidates' Redistribution of Campaign Resources

Although less studied than donations by members of Congress (e.g., Heberlig & Larson, 2012), I find candidate contributions are common in state elections. In Iowa and North Carolina, over 80% of candidates donated to other candidates and party committees in the 2012 election. While the proportion was slightly lower in the other four states (Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania), over 60% of candidates transferred resources to fellow party actors in these states. This verifies that candidate giving is commonplace in state elections.

To further evaluate my expectation that state legislative candidates are active in giving donations to other party actors (Hypothesis 1), I calculate the average degree, in-degree, and out-degree for candidates. Degree is the total number of connections an actor has in the network. In-degree is the number of incoming connections (i.e., the number of actors donating to the candidate). Out-degree is the number of outgoing connections, measuring the number of actors the candidate is donating to. If women candidates are donating to other actors to grow their connections in the party, we should see women candidates have a higher average out-degree. Table 1 reports the average degree by party and candidate gender. I used two-tailed two-sample t-tests to evaluate whether the gender differences in degree are statistically significant.

**Table 1: Average Connections by Party Networks and Gender**

	<i>Mean Degree</i>	<i>Mean In-degree</i>	<i>Mean Out-degree</i>
<i>Democratic Party Networks</i>			
Men Candidates	42.2	38.4	3.8
Women Candidates	47.9	43.3	4.6*
<i>Republican Party Networks</i>			
Men Candidates	44.2	41.1	3.1
Women Candidates	49	44.9	4.1*

\*Two-tailed two-sample t-tests confirm statistically significant differences in the men and women candidates' average out-degree at the  $p < 0.001$  level

Both men and women candidates are active in making donations to other party actors, providing additional support for Hypothesis 1. Women candidates have a slightly larger average degree than men candidates, but this difference is not statistically significant for either party. The average in-degree is higher for men than women in both party networks. This indicates that men receive, on average, donations from more actors than women candidates. However, this difference is also not statistically significant. The most interesting result is for the mean out-degree. On average, women candidates give contributions to about one more party actor than men candidates in state elections, perhaps in an attempt to make meaningful connections in the party outside of the traditional networks.<sup>7</sup> From this analysis, we know that state legislative candidates make donations to other party actors, with women being slightly more active in redistributing funds. How does this impact their position in the party?

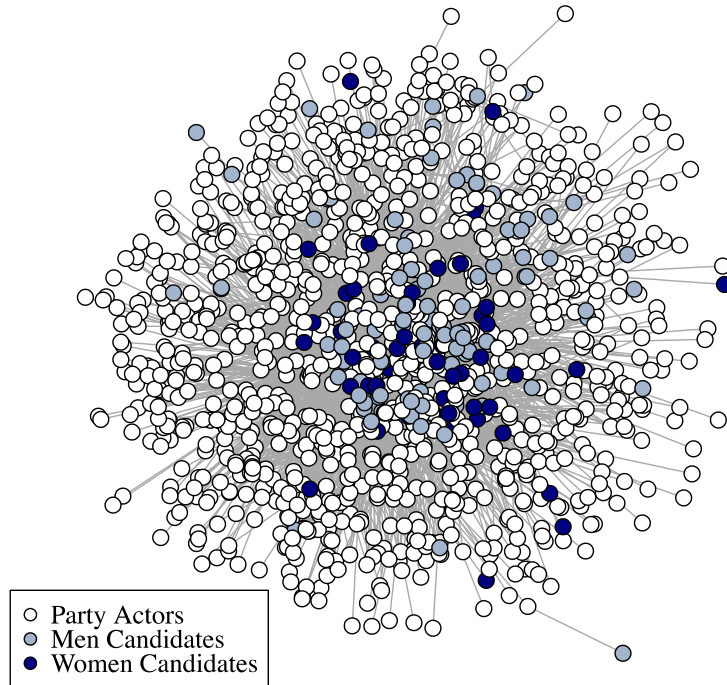
<sup>7</sup> When examined by state, this finding holds in most state parties in the sample. However, men do have higher average out-degree in three of the twelve state parties: the Iowa Democratic Party, Pennsylvania Democratic Party, and the Oklahoma Republican Party networks.

### **Position of Women Candidates in Political Party Networks**

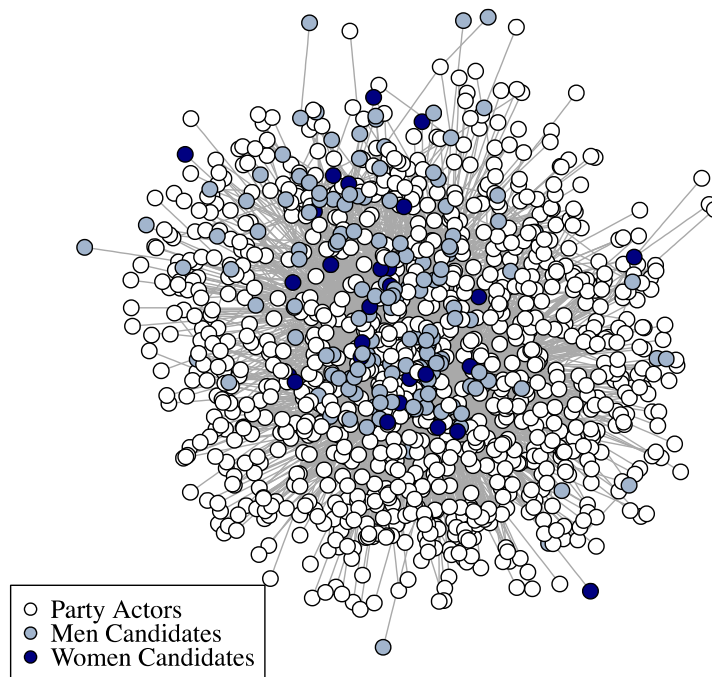
As an initial evaluation of women candidates' positions in party networks, I plot the network graphs for the Iowa Democratic and Republican Parties in Figure 1. The Online Appendix includes the party network graphs for the other five states. In these graphs, candidates are spread throughout the network with some clustering near the center. Candidates near the center of the network are very active in redistributing donations to other party actors or are competitive candidates receiving resources from others. The results in Table 1 suggest some candidates are securing central positions by donating extensively to others. Other candidates are running in uncontested or uncompetitive races, resulting in fewer donations and peripheral positions in the network.

**Figure 1: 2012 Iowa Party Networks**

*Democratic Party Network*



*Republican Party Network*



There are no striking differences between the positions of women and men candidates in these party networks. There are some men and women in the center of the party network. This also suggests they are active in making donations, helping them be a central actor in the network. Although there are some outliers (particularly women in the Oklahoma Democratic Party network), this is generally true in the other party networks as well (see the Online Appendix). These graphs provide preliminary evidence that women candidates can be central actors in parties' campaign finance networks. But is the redistribution of funds a path to influence?

### **Measuring Influence in Political Parties**

Measuring influence in social networks, including political parties, is important for understanding an actor's access to other actors and resources, and prominence in the organization. Position in networks determines influence (Brass, 1984; Kanter, 1977), which allows us to use a candidate's position and connections in the party network to measure their influence in the organization.

As argued earlier, one way candidates can gain an influential position in the party is by strategically forming connections with diverse actors through campaign donations. Through this action, candidates may serve as a broker in the network. Brokers are actors that lie between other actors in a network, connecting them. This provides brokers with influence because their connections are dependent on them to reach or access other actors in the network (Freeman, 1979; Scott, 2000). Brokers also have a competitive advantage due to their better access to resources through their more numerous and/or diverse connections (Burt, 2005). Consequently, brokers are more likely to receive new opportunities when they arise, like promotions (Burt, 1992, 2000). By using a network brokerage measure, I can examine whether candidates, particularly women candidates, have diverse connections in the party through the redistribution of campaign donations and whether this increases their influence in the party.

I use Ronald S. Burt's constraint score to identify whether a candidate's connections in a state party network make them a broker and, consequently, influential in the network (Burt, 1992, 2000, 2005). This measure is a summary index that calculates an actor's access to non-redundant contacts (i.e., diverse relationships). It spans from 0 to 1, with scores near 0 indicating the actor is a broker and a score of 1 signifying that the actor has few or redundant contacts (i.e., is not influential in the network).

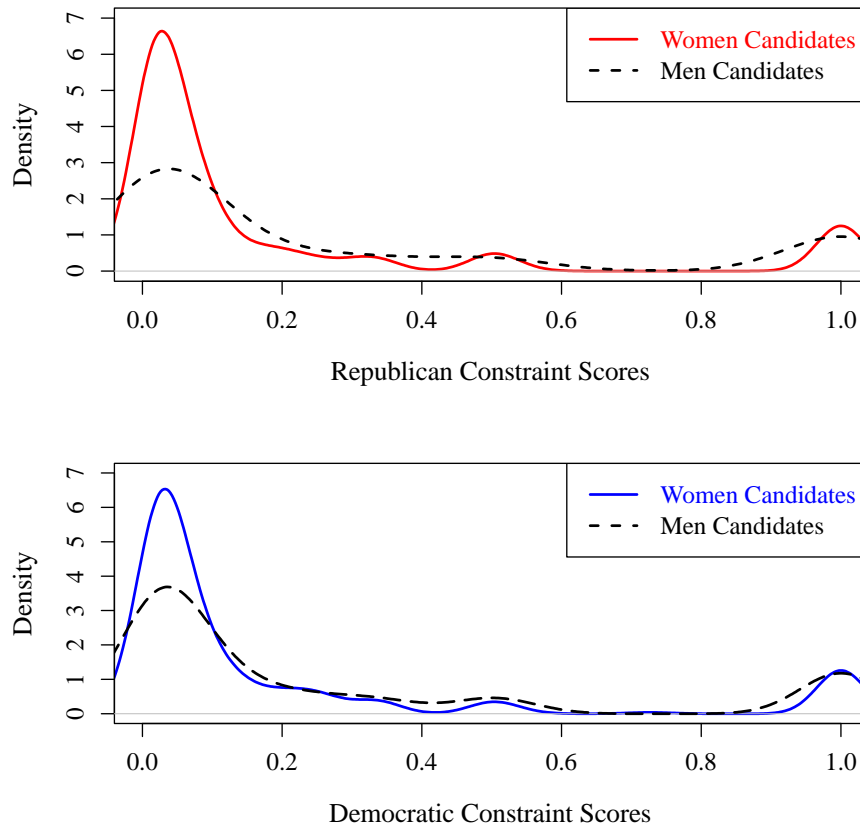
An actor with mostly redundant contacts and few connections to the broad network will have a high constraint score (e.g., 0.5 to 1), making it unlikely they are a broker connecting other actors (Burt, 2005). Consequently, the actor is unlikely to have much influence in the network. Low constraint scores (e.g., 0 to 0.3) indicate that an actor is serving as a broker by connecting otherwise unconnected actors. Brokers have diverse connections and more access to actors throughout the network, increasing their influence and opportunities for advancement (Burt, 2005). When using Burt's constraint score to evaluate the diversity of candidates' connections through their campaign contributions, candidates more active in redistributing funds should lower their constraint score, ensuring an influential position in the party network.

### **Redistribution of Funds and the Influence of Women in Political Parties**

By transferring funds to other party members, members of Congress can improve their status (Cann, 2008). I expect that state legislative candidates are also able to improve their influence in the party by redistributing their funds. This may be a key alternative path to influence for women since they face additional barriers to their advancement in politics, including less access to traditional sources of political power. The earlier analysis demonstrated that women candidates redistribute campaign funds to more party actors on average than men. Some women candidates may diversify their party connections through these donations, ensuring they are as influential as men (Hypothesis 2). I evaluate this possibility in the following analysis.

As an initial comparison of men and women candidates' influence in party networks, I plot the density distributions of candidates' constraint scores by gender in Figure 2. Density plots graph the underlying probability distribution of the data using the observed constraint scores. In the density functions plotted in Figure 2, the area under the curve represents the probability of constraint scores in that range. The total area under the curve equals one. Therefore, a higher curve indicates a higher cumulative probability of scores in that range of values.

**Figure 2: 2012 Constraint Score Distribution by Gender in State Party Networks\***



\* Two-tailed two-sample t-tests confirm statistically significant differences in men and women candidates' average constraint score at the  $p < 0.001$  level

In Figure 2, the density distributions of women and men candidates' constraint scores are similar overall. These bimodal distributions have peaks around low constraint scores (i.e., brokers) and high constraint scores. In general, candidates often have more connections in the party network than other types of actors, so it makes sense that candidates are more likely to have lower constraint scores. While the general distributions are similar for women and men candidates, there is a key difference. The peak around low constraint scores (0.0-0.2) is higher for women candidates than men candidates. Moreover, two-tailed t-tests confirm that the mean constraint score for women candidates is lower than for men. Therefore, women candidates have a higher probability of having a lower constraint score than men candidates. Like the party network graphs, this provides some initial evidence that women are generally as influential (and likely more influential) in the party network as men candidates.

To more systematically test Hypothesis 2, I use a fractional logistic model to examine the relationship between candidate gender and constraint scores. This quasi-parametric model examines how the independent variables relate to the mean score (Moeller, 2013).<sup>8</sup> In addition to candidate gender, I include several other independent variables that may affect a candidate's constraint score. The party models include a binary variable indicating whether the candidate is an incumbent. Incumbents receive more campaign donations (Krasno, Green, & Cowden, 1994; Powell, 2012), so it is likely they will have more connections in the party network and lower constraint scores. The models also contain a measure of candidates' seniority. Candidates serving in office longer may raise more money due to better donor connections, allowing them to donate to more candidates, thereby lowering their constraint scores. This variable is the number of years a candidate has been in office, equaling zero for non-incumbent candidates.

<sup>8</sup> When calculated in igraph, constraint scores are bound between zero and one. This makes some statistical models inappropriate because we need a model that can analyze proportions. The constraint scores can equal one, making a fractional logit a more appropriate model for this dependent variable (Baum, 2008; Papke & Wooldridge, 1996).

Candidates in competitive races also usually receive more donations, making it important to include race competitiveness in the models. I use a folded race competition variable for a linear measure of candidate competition. This calculation ensures that uncompetitive candidates, whether losing or winning, are on the same end of the measure (.5-.6), while competitive candidates have high values (.9-1). Finally, in the Democratic Party model, I include candidates' total campaign receipts.<sup>9</sup> If candidates raise more money, they have the ability to redistribute resources to more party actors. Table 2 includes the results for both Democratic and Republican networks.

**Table 2: Fractional Logistic Model of 2012 State Legislative Candidate Constraint Scores**

Variables	<i>Democratic Constraint Scores</i>	<i>Republican Constraint Scores</i>
Woman	-0.435** (0.216)	-0.620** (0.286)
Incumbent	-0.696** (0.278)	-1.628*** (0.285)
Seniority	-0.00273 (0.0182)	0.0352 (0.0233)
Folded Race Competition	-0.328 (0.592)	-0.623 (0.571)
Total Receipts <sup>1</sup>	1.68e-07 (7.61e-07)	
Constant	-0.769 (0.513)	-0.332 (0.493)
Observations	775	809

<sup>1</sup> The Republican network model does not converge when the total raised is included.

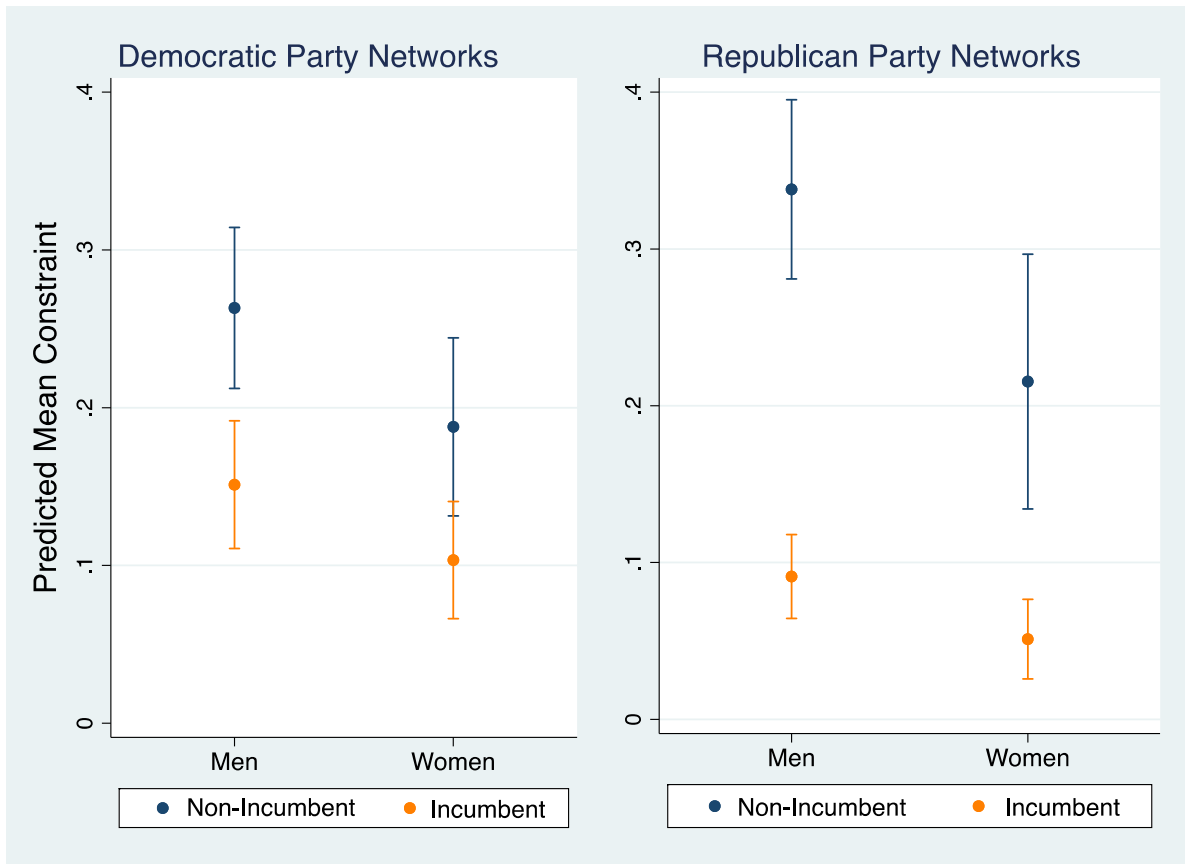
Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

In both party models, women candidates have significantly lower constraint scores than men. The coefficient for incumbents is also statistically significant, indicating that incumbents have lower constraint scores than non-incumbents. The other variables are not statistically significant. In Figure 3, I plot the substantive effects for each party to make interpretation of the results easier. These graphs also show that women candidates have lower constraint scores (i.e., more influence) than men, especially for non-incumbents.

<sup>9</sup> The model does not converge when the Republican Party model includes candidates' total campaign receipts, so I can only include it in the Democratic Party model.

**Figure 3: Predicted Candidate Constraint Scores in State Democratic and Republican Party Networks by Gender and Incumbency Status**



From Table 1, we know that women candidates donate to more actors on average than men candidates. Together, these findings provide evidence that some women candidates are successfully creating diverse connections through the transfer of funds to other party actors, ensuring they have an influential position in the party network. How does this influence in the party network translate to the legislative arena?

### **Redistribution of Funds as a Path to Legislative Leadership for Women**

Candidates with lower constraint scores have more diverse connections in the party network, perhaps helping those candidates be influential in the legislative arena. Due to their valuable connections to other party actors, I expect that candidates with lower constraint scores (i.e., more influence in the party network) will be more likely to become legislative leaders (Hypothesis 3). Of particular interest is whether women candidates can use this as an alternative path to leadership since other sources of power (e.g., seniority, business organizations) seemingly favor men.

Using logistic regression models, I test whether candidates with lower constraint scores are more likely to become a legislative leader after the 2012 election. The dependent variable is a binary variable indicating whether a candidate held a formal legislative leadership position in the 2013 legislative session. Legislative leadership includes both chamber leadership positions (e.g., majority leader, minority leader) and committee chair positions (chair, vice chair, ranking member).<sup>10</sup> The key independent variable of interest is the candidate's constraint score. The models also include other independent variables that may affect a candidate's likelihood of becoming a leader. It is likely that a legislative leader will remain a leader, so the model includes a control variable for whether the candidate held a

<sup>10</sup> Legislative leadership positions vary across chambers and states. I included all formal chamber or committee leadership positions identified for each chamber in their state legislative records.



leadership position in the previous session. I also include control variables for the candidates' incumbency status, seniority, their total donations, and their level of competitiveness in the 2012 election. Seniority is particularly important to include since it affects leadership selection in some legislative chambers.

As a candidate's constraint score increases, their probability of becoming a leader in the following session decreases. Table 3 reports these results from the logistic regression models for candidates by party and gender with state fixed effects. Men and women candidates' constraint scores have a significant impact on their likelihood of becoming a leader for both Democrats and Republicans. Women with lower constraint scores (i.e., brokers in the network) are more likely to become leaders. This is also true for men, but the effect is smaller than for women. Moreover, seniority is statistically significant for men but not for women. This suggests that traditional paths to power, like seniority, are more useful for men than women, making the redistribution of campaign funds an alternative path to leadership for women candidates. Existing leaders and incumbents (for Democratic candidates) are also more likely to become leaders. However, candidates' influence in their party independently affects their likelihood of becoming a leader, supporting Hypothesis 3.

**Table 3: Likelihood of Becoming a Legislative Leader in the 2013 Legislative Session with State Fixed Effects**

Variables	<i>Democratic Men Candidates</i>	<i>Democratic Women Candidates</i>	<i>Republican Men Candidates</i>	<i>Republican Women Candidates</i>
Constraint Score	-0.906* (0.501)	-4.126** (1.690)	-1.577*** (0.395)	-3.178* (1.746)
Existing Leader	2.264*** (0.357)	3.032*** (0.771)	1.576*** (0.292)	3.197*** (0.970)
Folded Race Competition	-1.452* (0.790)	-0.377 (1.712)	-0.672 (0.606)	-2.172 (1.903)
Incumbent	1.382*** (0.387)	3.854*** (0.917)	1.112*** (0.308)	0.371 (0.962)
Seniority	0.0485** (0.0202)	-0.0350 (0.0452)	0.0611** (0.0257)	0.0365 (0.0921)
Total Receipts	1.74e-07 (1.01e-06)	-3.47e-08 (2.64e-06)	-7.59e-08 (1.69e-07)	-2.03e-06 (2.74e-06)
Observations	543	232	671	93
Number of States	6	6	6	4

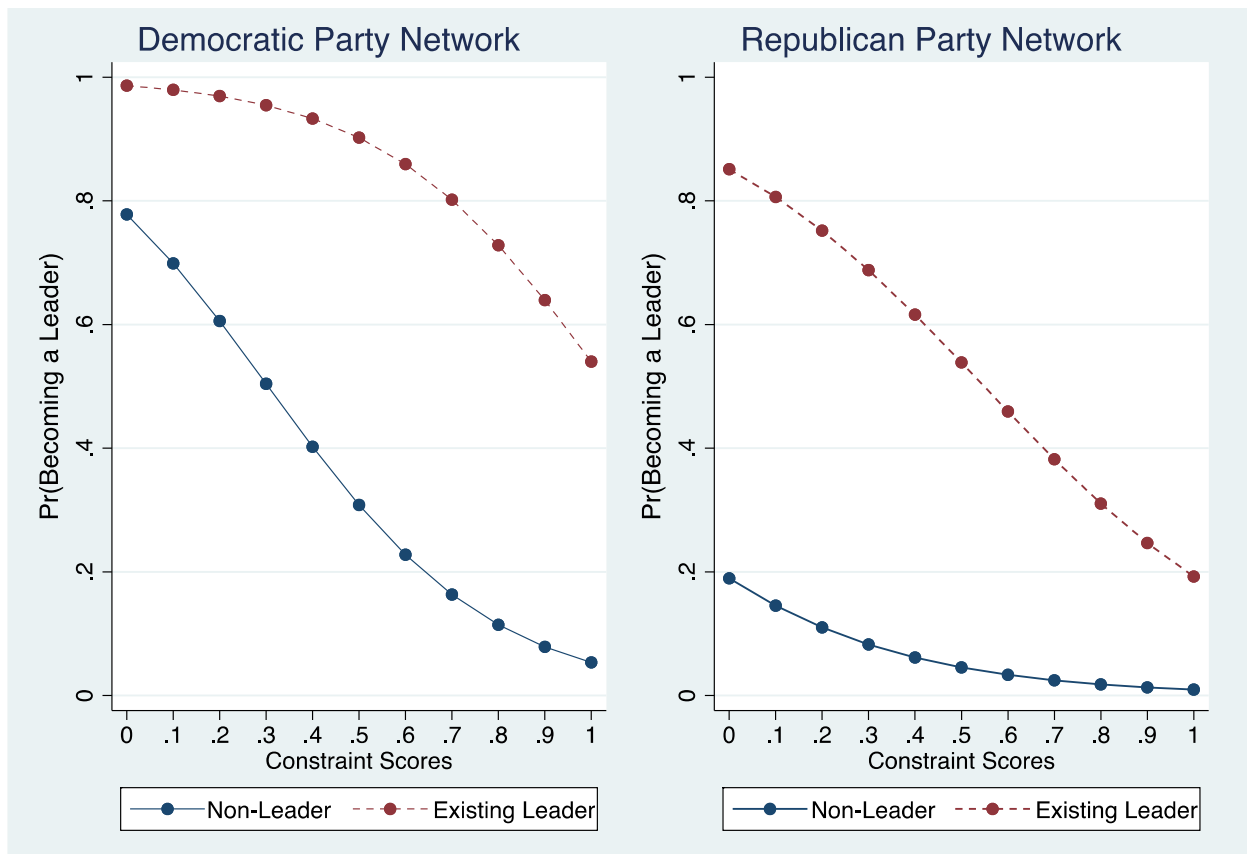
Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

It is possible that the number of donations or the total amount donated drives candidates' influence instead of the connections formed through donations. The insignificance of the total receipts variable suggests this is not the case, but I also estimated these models with the total amount candidates donated to other party actors and their out-degree to further evaluate the relationship. Online Appendix Tables A2 and A3 report the results for these alternative models. The total amount given does not have a significant effect on becoming a leader. The coefficient for out-degree is only statistically significant for Republicans. From these results, we can conclude that it matters who candidates donate to, especially for Democrats. The constraint score best captures this since it incorporates information on the recipients of candidates' donations, measuring the diversity of their connections in the party network.

Figure 4 plots the substantive results for the effect of women candidates' constraint scores on the probability of becoming a legislative leader. This shows that the probability of becoming a leader decreases as candidates' constraint scores increase, especially for non-leaders. Unsurprisingly, existing leaders have a higher probability of becoming a leader. However, existing leaders with lower constraint scores are more likely to retain their position than those with high constraint scores (lower influence in the party). Therefore, network connections and influence matter, even for those already serving as leaders. Democratic women without a previous leadership position and with low constraint scores have a high probability of becoming a leader (almost 80%). Republican women, on the other hand, are unlikely to become a leader if not already one, suggesting Republican women may face additional barriers to their advancement in leadership.

**Figure 4: Predicted Probability of Women Candidates Becoming a Legislative Leaders by Constraint Score and Existing Leadership Status**



This analysis provides evidence that women candidates can translate their influence in state electoral party networks to legislative leadership positions. By redistributing funds to other party actors, women candidates can create diverse connections to become leaders. Men can also increase their likelihood of becoming a leader by donating to other party actors, but it is a more important source of influence for women candidates since they benefit less from traditional paths to power like seniority.

### Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, I examine whether state legislative candidates redistribute funds to other party actors and if it is an effective path for women candidates to gain influence and leadership positions. Drawing on previous research on Congress, I propose candidates can diversify their connections by donating to other actors and increase their influence. I find men and women candidates are active in transferring campaign resources to other party actors, with women donating to more actors on average. This ensures women candidates are as influential (and often more so) as men candidates in state party networks. While women may face additional barriers or hurdles in politics, they can gain influence in the party by being active in fundraising and redistributing campaign resources to other party actors.

These connections also translate into influence in the legislature. Candidates with lower constraint scores, or more influence in the party network, are more likely to become leaders in the next legislative session. Interestingly, the effect is larger for women candidates, while a traditional source of power – seniority – only helps men obtain leadership positions. As a result, the redistribution of campaign resources is an alternative path for women candidates to gain influence and leadership positions in their state parties. Not all candidates engage in this behavior, but some women are effectively using the connections formed through the transfer of campaign resources to gain influence and become legislative leaders. In addition to confirming previous findings from Congress at the state-level, this study also contributes a more nuanced understanding by uncovering differences in this path to leadership for men and women.

Influence in the party is important for achieving electoral and legislative goals, making this research relevant for understanding women legislators' policymaking. In many U.S. legislatures, men legislators enjoy more privileged positions, including leadership positions, than women legislators (Dodson, 2006; Kathlene, 1994; Kitchens & Swers, 2016). This research is promising in that it suggests a path for women candidates to develop connections and advance their position in the party. Women candidates and legislators seeking to increase their party influence should redistribute funds to other party actors, even if the donation is small.

Even after the impressive gains for women in state legislatures after the 2018 election, the percentage of leadership positions held by women is low. Why do we not see more women redistributing campaign funds to increase their influence and become leaders? Candidates need to raise a substantial amount of money for a competitive campaign (Powell, 2012). Plus, since women tend to face more challengers (Lawless & Pearson, 2008), even women incumbents must fundraise extensively. This increased fundraising burden on women candidates makes this path to leadership difficult for some to pursue.

In the six state elections examined here, women did not raise more money than men on average, but they redistributed funds to more actors than men. As in congressional elections (Crespin & Deitz, 2010; Kitchens & Swers, 2016), Democratic women candidates fundraised similar amounts as Democratic men in these six state elections.<sup>11</sup> However, Republican women raised much less money than Republican men running for office.<sup>12</sup> The higher rate of redistribution by women is especially impressive for Republican women who had fewer funds to redistribute. This establishes the importance that some women candidates placed on sharing resources with their fellow party actors, increasing their influence within the party as a result.

This research identifies a key path to influence and leadership for women in state legislatures, but some elements need further examination. Although they are diverse, the sample of six states in this study is limited, raising questions about the generalizability of the results. While efforts were taken to avoid biasing the results, this path to leadership may not be present in every state. Unfortunately, this is something this project cannot evaluate due to a small number of women candidates at the state level. Expanding the analysis to more states and elections in future research will help us better understand this connection between candidate donations and influence. This study also does not examine whether the contribution amount matters. Do candidates need to simply donate any amount to another actor for a meaningful connection, as suggested by this research? Or do larger contributions result in more influence? Finally, are some connections in the party network more important than others? Addressing these questions in future research will help us fully understand this path to leadership.

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<sup>11</sup> Democratic men raised an average of \$386 more than Democratic women candidates.

<sup>12</sup> Republican men raised an average of \$35,853 more than Republican women candidates.

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Online Appendix

**Table A1: Network Statistics**

<i>State</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Actors</i>	<i>Connections</i>	<i>Avg. Degree</i>	<i>Density</i>
Colorado	Democratic	3640	11718	6.44	0.0018
Colorado	Republican	2347	7985	6.8	0.0029
Iowa	Democratic	1281	6461	10.09	0.0079
Iowa	Republican	1271	6639	10.45	0.0082
New Mexico	Democratic	978	6742	13.79	0.0141
New Mexico	Republican	683	4526	13.25	0.0194
North Carolina	Democratic	2633	8476	6.44	0.0024
North Carolina	Republican	2823	12451	8.82	0.0031
Oklahoma	Democratic	720	3328	9.24	0.0129
Oklahoma	Republican	1042	7663	14.71	0.0141
Pennsylvania	Democratic	1833	10405	11.35	0.0062
Pennsylvania	Republican	1925	12872	13.37	0.007

**Table A2: Likelihood of Becoming a Legislative Leader in the 2013 Legislative Session with State Fixed Effects and Total Given**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Democratic Men Candidates</i>	<i>Democratic Women Candidates</i>	<i>Republican Men Candidates</i>	<i>Republican Women Candidates</i>
Total Given	2.11e-06 (2.57e-06)	4.21e-06 (5.76e-06)	5.29e-06 (3.38e-06)	7.78e-06 (1.36e-05)
Existing Leader	2.130*** (0.362)	2.635*** (0.712)	1.949*** (0.307)	2.738*** (0.909)
Folded Race Competition	-1.405* (0.797)	-0.00983 (1.601)	-0.663 (0.626)	-2.241 (1.859)
Incumbent	1.631*** (0.394)	3.875*** (0.891)	1.273*** (0.307)	0.458 (0.953)
Seniority	0.0426** (0.0210)	-0.0233 (0.0448)	0.0269 (0.0240)	0.0715 (0.0899)
Total Receipts	-8.38e-07 (1.51e-06)	-1.58e-06 (2.82e-06)	-9.86e-08 (2.25e-07)	-1.45e-06 (2.81e-06)
Observations	508	221	633	89
Number of States	6	6	6	4

Standard errors in parentheses  
 \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table A3: Likelihood of Becoming a Legislative Leader in the 2013 Legislative Session with State Fixed Effects and Out-Degree**

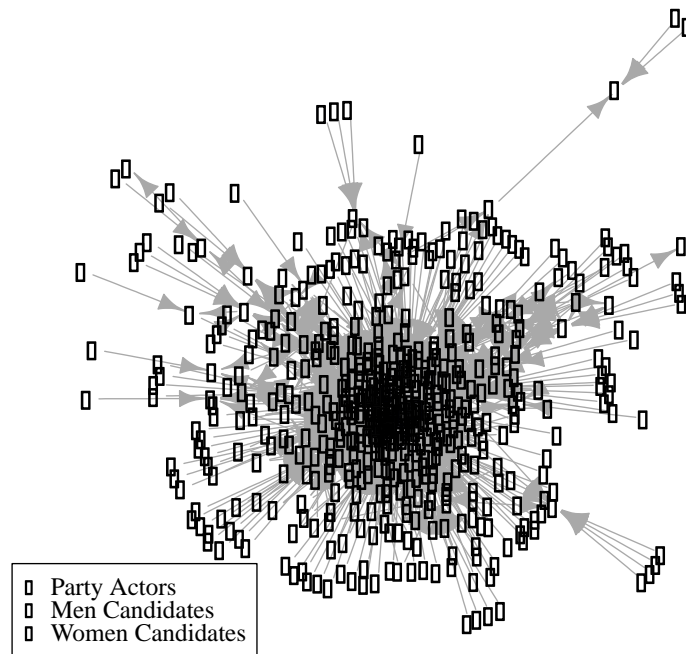
Variables	<i>Democratic Men Candidates</i>	<i>Democratic Women Candidates</i>	<i>Republican Men Candidates</i>	<i>Republican Women Candidates</i>
Out-Degree	0.0278 (0.0237)	0.0488 (0.0416)	0.0707** (0.0303)	0.203* (0.120)
Existing Leader	2.269*** (0.356)	2.831*** (0.711)	1.835*** (0.286)	3.166*** (0.999)
Folded Race Competition	-1.317* (0.799)	0.139 (1.585)	-0.558 (0.606)	-1.924 (1.895)
Incumbent	1.426*** (0.385)	3.684*** (0.897)	1.214*** (0.303)	0.217 (1.000)
Seniority	0.0440** (0.0199)	-0.0288 (0.0445)	0.0365 (0.0242)	0.0139 (0.100)
Total Receipts	-1.64e-09 (9.88e-07)	-9.31e-07 (2.46e-06)	-3.05e-08 (1.78e-07)	-1.02e-06 (2.29e-06)
Observations	543	232	670	93
Number of States	6	6	6	4

Standard errors in parentheses

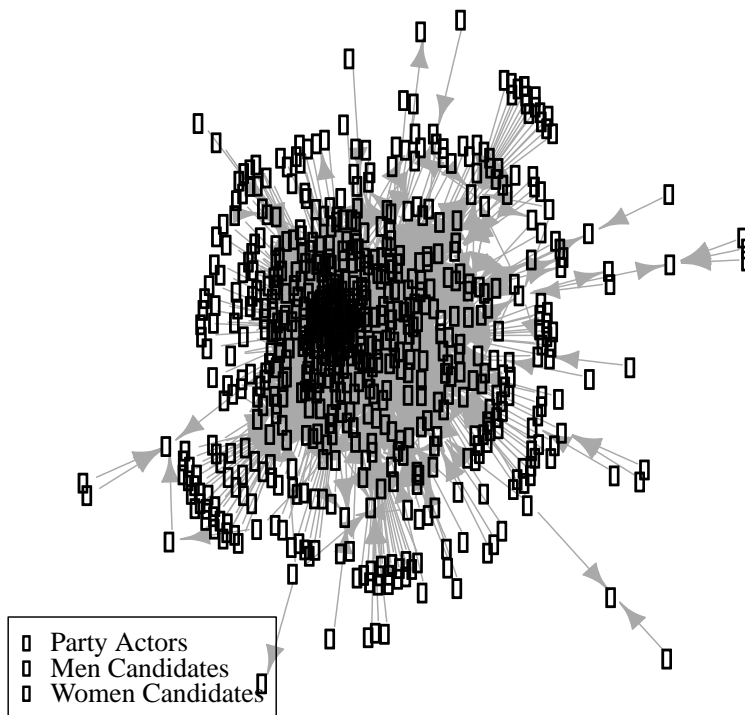
\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Figure A1: 2012 Colorado Party Networks**

*Democratic Party Network*



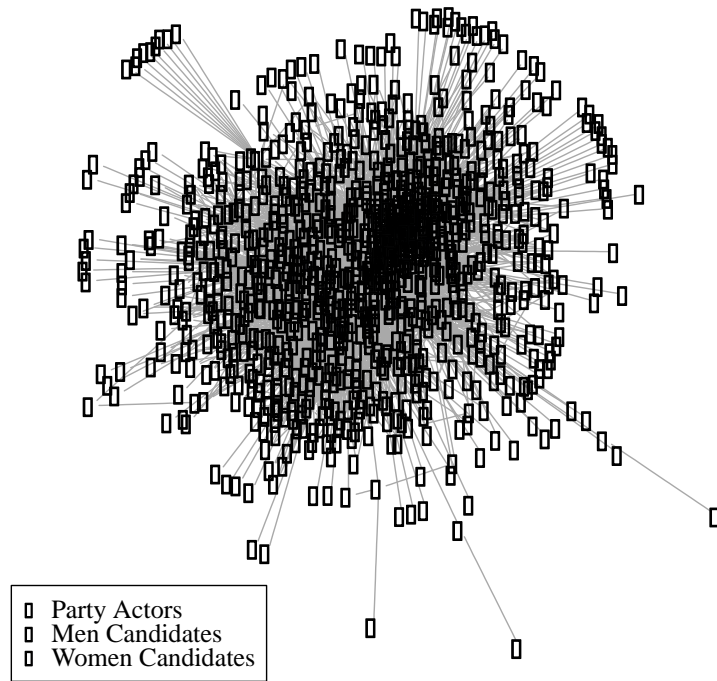
*Republican Party Network*



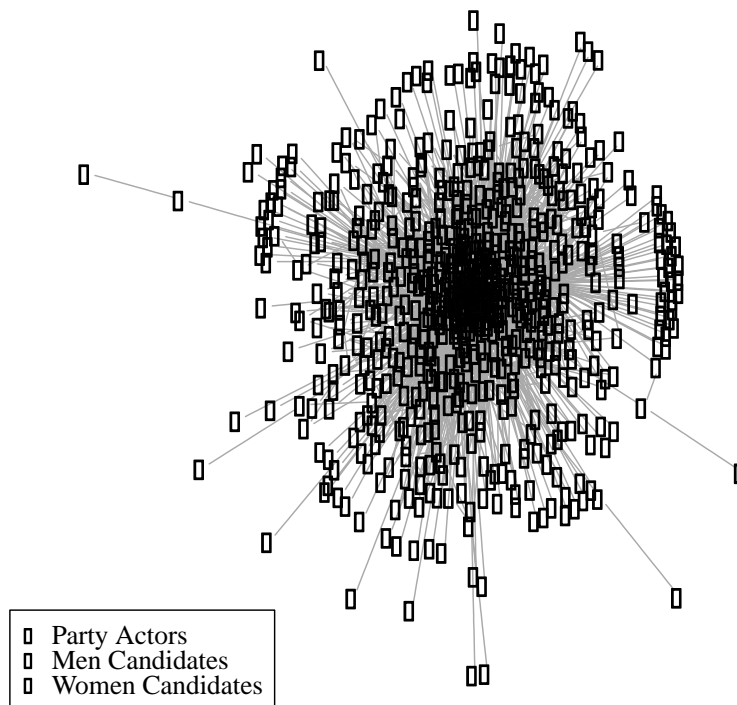


**Figure A2: 2012 New Mexico Party Networks**

*Democratic Party Network*

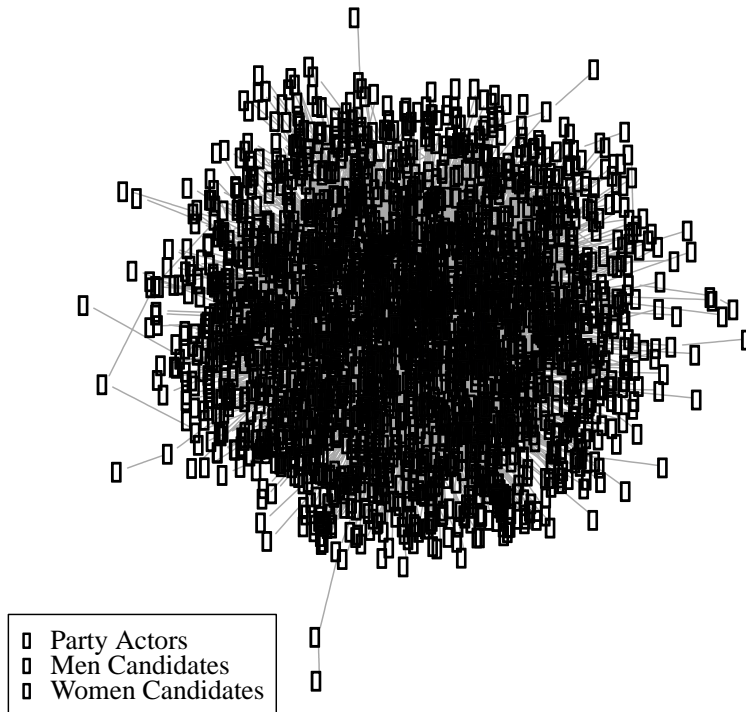


*Republican Party Network*

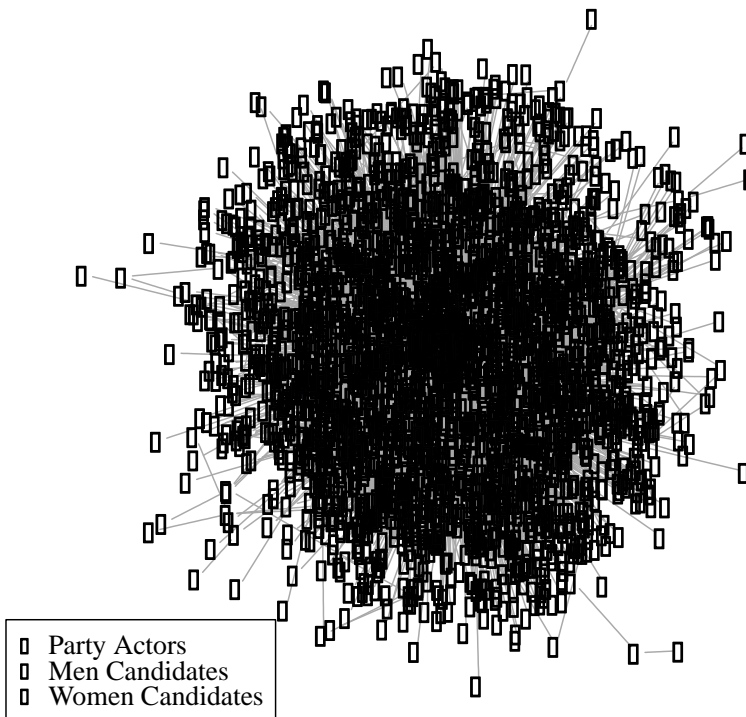


**Figure A3: 2012 North Carolina Party Networks**

*Democratic Party Network*

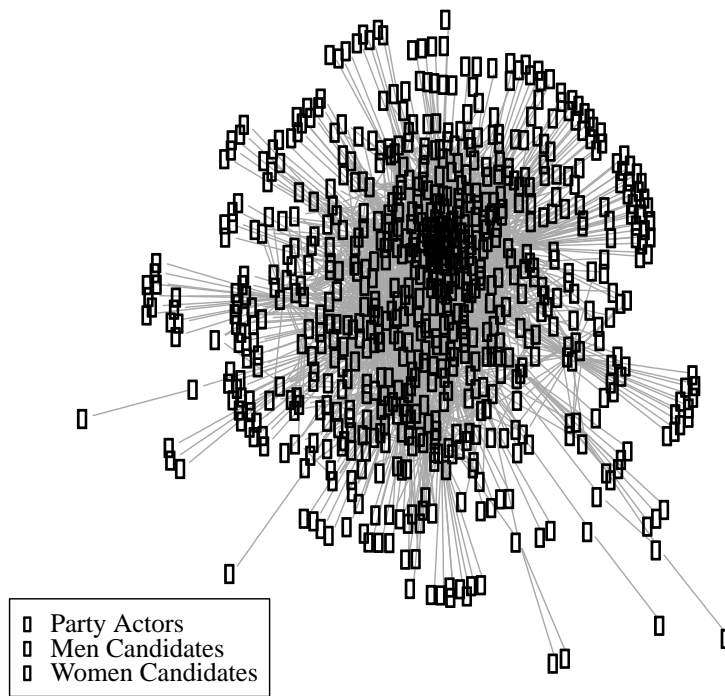


*Republican Party Network*

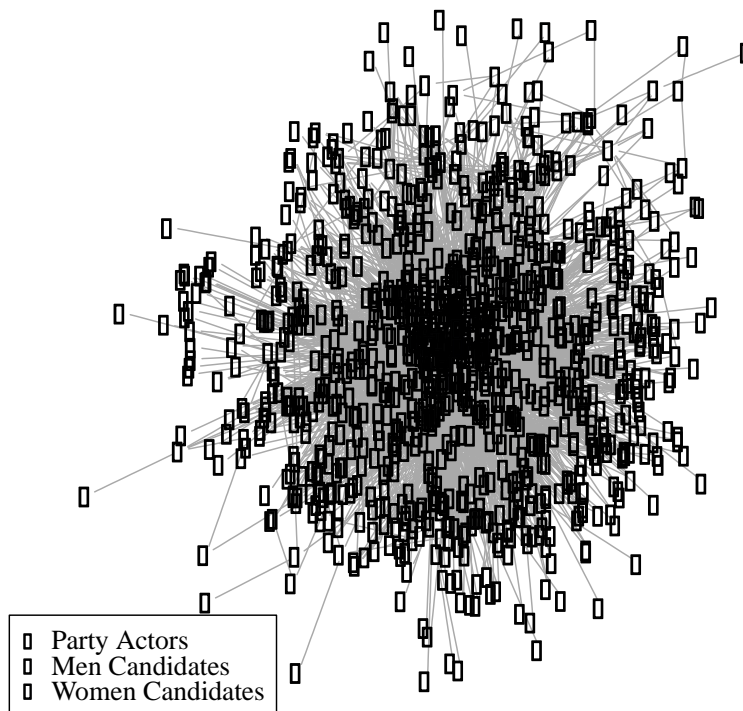


**Figure A4: 2012 Oklahoma Party Networks**

*Democratic Party Network*

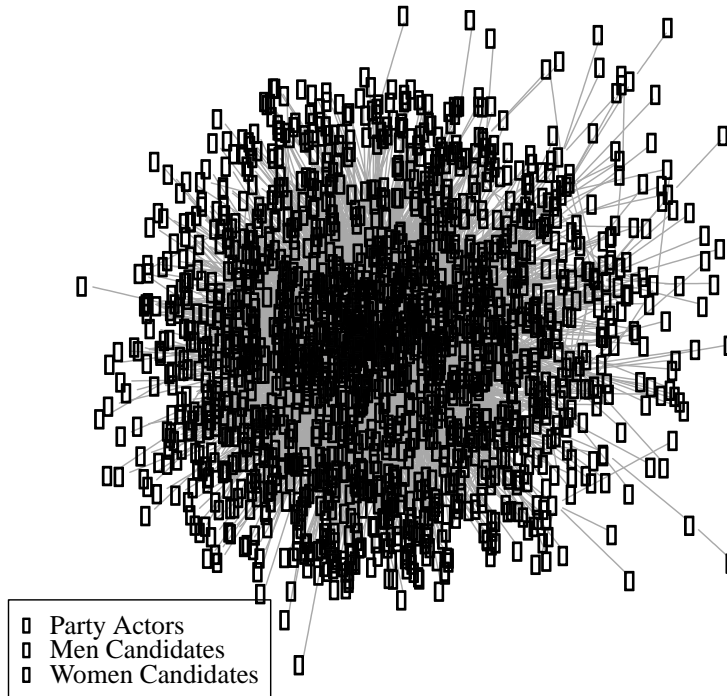


*Republican Party Network*



**Figure A5: 2012 Pennsylvania Party Networks**

*Democratic Party Network*



*Republican Party Network*

