Off and Running
American Women on the Ballot

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

by

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Democracy, in its basic definition, denotes a system of governance whereby the citizens directly participate in the decision-making process as in the ancient Athenian governments or in the early New England town-meetings. Although direct representation in modern societies is by no means impossible—especially with the increased reliance on computers and communication devices—most democratic societies preferably employ another form of government with the emphasis on indirect representation. Under the system of republic democracy, citizens cast their ballots for a candidate who, if victorious, will represent the voters in various branches and levels of government.

Representation in government is two-fold, although at times the two aspects appear to be inseparable. At the very least, representatives are expected to reflect the needs and desires of their constituencies. Frequently, debates arise questioning whether the citizens are better served when their representatives take on the role of trustees rather than perform as mere extensions of the citizens. It is unlikely, however, that, with the precarious state of world affairs and burgeoning bureaucracy, citizens of democratic societies will abdicate their control over government officials. Indeed, the promise to voice the voters' concerns is a prerequisite in any candidate's
The other aspect of representation concerns with reflecting of the make-up of the constituencies. A community or district composed mainly of one ethnic group should, ideally, be represented by a member of that group. Similar arguments could be made with regards to sex, religion, age, profession and special interests. The basis for this view is simple; to reflect the needs and desires--and, more broadly, the attitudes--of the constituencies, an agent of the people must share the basic attributes of the people. Representatives who reflect their constituents on dimensions other than ideology also provide the group with important "symbolic" value and encourage support and participation in the polity. Of course, counter-arguments stress that government officials do attempt to reflect the desires of all voters whether or not they actually share commonalities with specific groups of voters. Hence, there is no need to elect a black representative if a white representative can adequately serve the needs of the black voters. Heretofore under-represented and discriminated groups, however, see this merely as further rationalizations in the attempts to keep them out of the process of governance.

Throughout American history, women have been and still are one such under-represented and discriminated minority group. Whereas blacks were enfranchised following the end of the Civil War, voting privileges for women were not granted until 1920. However, as women soon discovered, the mere right to cast a ballot on election day is insufficient to erase or even to curtail the long list of discriminatory practices against them in public as well as private sectors. Thus, complaints of unfair hiring and admission policies, of sexual harassments, and of inequitable wage and work distribution abound. Concerns over social security for homemakers, divorce laws, protection for
battered wives, lesbian rights and reproductive rights are but a few issues on which women are demanding responses from their representatives.

Consequently, women are more watchful of the general make-up of the governing bodies; they want to know just who will be arguing their cause. This gradually led to the realization that women as a minority group lacks adequate representation in government because women in government are a minority group. At all levels of government, female political actors operate at a numerical disadvantage: women mayors account for a mere 8.7 percent of total mayors in the fifty states; women state legislators make up a minute 13.3 percent; at the county level, female officials constitute a nominal 6 percent; only 13 percent of municipal officials are women. Women have never held more than 4.5 percent of seats in Congress; the largest number of women serving in one congressional session was 24 in 1983. No woman has ever occupied the White House.

The problem of under-representation, then, is real for women. And while the rise of the feminist movement in the early 1970s has sparked interest among women to seek political office, the disparity between the number of male and female office-seekers remains unresolved. At the same time, politically active women understand that it is not enough to want to run for public offices; to provide meaningful input into the decision-making process, women must gain entrance into the circles of decision-making elites—women must win the offices for which they seek. But to do so, women must overcome a series of seemingly indomitable obstacles from within and without. This paper, thus, will focus on those obstacles, weighing their relative impact on the female candidate’s chances of success at the voting booth. Investigations will also be made into the resources available and the changes in recent years which may
act to minimize the detrimental effects of the impediments. Finally, a forecast is made concerning the future outlook for female candidates.

Perhaps one of the most encompassing impediment to a woman's entrance into the political world is the woman herself. Of course, today no woman—or man—would proffer the argument that women are physiologically unfit to withstand the rigorous pace of a political campaign or a political office. That there are successful political women in all areas and levels of government stands as proof that physiology-based arguments are unfounded and out-dated. Rather, one must look to the cultural constraints in order to understand women's reluctance to step into the political arena. Women, for the most part, are socialized to stay in the private sphere. The lessons in womanhood include instructions on being submissive, non-competitive, and non-assertive. It is of little wonder, then, that women see themselves as unfit to govern—women's socialization have impressed on them their deficiency of the necessary attributes needed to wage political battles. Men, on the other hand, are seen as more competitive, more rational, more authoritative; they are regarded as "the natural governors of society."  

Traditional sex-roles also serve to bar women from the public sphere. Whereas the male specie is free to wander from the home in order to "bring home the bacon" or to "make a name" for himself, a young girl learns early on that her place is at home as homemaker, wife and mother. The measure of her success depends whether dinner is on time and whether everyone's socks match. Bent on being the perfect wife and mother, the traditional woman finds no place left on her list of priorities for political concerns. Even if she were politically ambitious—which she cannot be according to her traditional socialization—to act upon that ambition would be to disregard her wifely and
motherly duties and to admit her deviance. Consequently, when she does elect to seek a public office, she usually does so late in her life, after the children are grown. This late entry into politics, unfortunately, diminishes her probability of success as she will find herself lacking in seniority, unable to establish a power base and unable to sustain her political career.8

Not only are women's political participation constrained by their own self-perceptions and by traditional role-constraints, some women do not subscribe to the idea of politics as a means of solving public problems. To them a quid pro quo trading of votes and allegiance in return for political appointments or favors is unethical.9 Men may engage in such sordid affairs but women are above such lowly activities. Other women question the necessity of involving themselves in political affairs when there are good men to do the job.10 Still, others argue that there is adequate representation of women in government.11 Some women reject the idea of social representation of women because they do not agree with the legitimacy of group-representation based on any social category.12 Ultimately, these objections on the part of women to women's involvement in political sparring further aggravate the paucity of women in the political limelight by providing few role models for would-be female political actors. Thus, due to these reasons and the more important ones cited earlier--traditional socialization and sex-roles constraints--women, as a group, tend to dismiss politics as possible careers.

Nothing is ever static in society, however, and women in the 1980s are now adopting a different self-image. Social and technological changes of American after World War II stimulated a revision of women's roles in society. The new technologies of microwave ovens, washers and dryers and the like have emancipated women from the daily drudgeries of housekeeping, allowing them
to pursue personal interests. Moreover, the need for dual incomes in today's trying economy calls on women to assume new occupational challenges. Out of the house, women find that the stereotypes of traditional womanhood no longer apply.

In the process of redefining their roles in society, women have discovered a fountain of strength and ambition once thought reserved only to men. Competitiveness, authoritativeness, and assertiveness are no longer viewed as solely male characteristics. Nor are they perceived as operating in exclusion of traditional feminine traits; no woman need lose her femininity because she chooses to assert control. More involved in the business sector, women continually prove to themselves that femininity does not necessarily fold under the rigors of "a man's world." At the same time, the tremendous benefits and advantages resulting from seeing the world through women's eyes and speaking through women's voices become apparent. Slowly but surely, women are coming to the realization that the public sphere can add much to their lives and that they have much to add to the public sphere.

Moreover, women no longer accept unquestioningly the notion which says "men are inherently better suited to authoritative positions either because they are more rational and/or less emotional and/or more stable and/or better to face forceful challenges." Mismanagements and malfeasance by males in political positions have led women to re-evaluate men's capacity to function for the public's weal.

Equally important as convincing oneself of one's readiness to face the challenges of political jousting and the demands of public service is the ability to convince others of those views. For all politicos, this means gaining the approval and support of established political parties, special interest groups
and, ultimately, voters. And yet, getting the nod of approval from one's spouse and family cannot be overlooked in taking that first step toward a political career. Susan Gluck Mezey concludes,

... marriage [seems to place] a greater restraint upon female politicians; they have a greater need for [spousal] support than male politicians do. The husbands of these female politicos [in her study] appear to be tolerant and understanding; however, if female politicians must be assured of their husbands' support and cooperation before entering politics, females are less likely to be able to commit themselves to political careers. 16

For female candidates, then, encouragement or disapproval from her family and, especially, from her husband can dictate whether or not she will choose to compete for public office.

Familial support also have an impact on the actual campaign for office. No matter how easily winnable an election contest may seem, all candidates for office must expend some time and effort in their campaigns. As a political neophyte, a woman candidate may find the task of campaigning more demanding; it becomes a 24-hour-a-day job, leaving no time left to tend to husband and children. "Clearly," Mezey reports, "if women are to achieve political equality [at the polls], they must be relieved of primary responsibility for childcare and homemaking." 17

Beyond taking on a share of household duties, thereby freeing the female candidate to concentrate on her campaign, family members should also involve themselves in the campaigning process. Campaigning works best with a team-effort among husband and wife and children not only in terms of public image but also in terms of performing the endless chores of campaigning. But,
author Ruth Mandel argues,

... to expect such [support] from a man is viewed as inappropriate both psychologically and pragmatically. From a pragmatic perspective, most men have no time to be political husbands, because their jobs demand their full attention. From a psychological viewpoint, men who participate actively in their wives' campaigns are often perceived as subordinating themselves and playing a secondary role. ... Hence, while "his campaign" is more often perceived as "their campaign" ... "her campaign" [is viewed as] something interesting to observe, something to be tolerated with equanimity, a game without any heavy bets or anyone's future success really riding on it. 18

If they are to be successful on the ballot, then, women candidates will need more than half-hearted support and participation from those who matter most to them.

When it comes to overcoming reluctant support, women candidates face a tougher obstacle in the established political parties, which, in the past, have not seriously considered women as possible political contenders. Party-initiated contacts with women regarding possible candidacies attest to the reluctance of the part of the major parties-- such contacts were considerably less frequent than those initiated with men. 19 In summarizing the recruiting practices of the two major political parties political parties in 1976, Susan Carroll estimates that a maximum of one woman with a reasonable chance of victory is encouraged to run for every seventeen state house seats up for election; similarly, a maximum of one woman with a chance of success is recruited for every twenty-three state senate seats open. 20

Sometimes, the failure to consider women as contestants for open seats is based on the belief held by party elites that women are unqualified to
perform the duties of political servants. It is argued that, because the legalistic nature of modern legislatures has deemed a law degree a sine qua non for careers in public servitude, women, tending to lack legal expertise, are unqualified to hold political office. Jeane Kirkpatrick comments, "...since law has until recently been a male profession reinforced by discriminating law school admission policies, one very simple, clear deterrent to women's running for public office is that tradition and opportunity discouraged all but a few from entering the profession from which most candidates are recruited." Of late, law schools have been more cognizant of their discriminatory admission practices and have enacted positive measures to disentangle those policies. Thus, as more women populate law schools' campuses in the late seventies and early eighties, political parties should have a larger pool of women well-versed in law from which to recruit, and the perceived problem of "unqualified" women should take a back seat to other substantive concerns.

In deeming women "unqualified," party elites tend to equate the absence of a legal background with a lack of work or volunteer experience. Only women, it seems, realize that volunteer activities, for example, can serve as more than mere "Brownie points" on a female candidate's resume. Kirkpatrick observes,

The distance from nonpartisan activity to political candidacy is less than might be supposed; ... volunteer activities provide an opportunity to develop a taste for public life and many of the skills needed for it. A woman active in a civic organisation learns how to run a meeting, how to plan one, how to develop an agenda and recruit support for a position.22

Indeed, some authors argue that too much emphasis have been placed on women's participation in the traditional political avenues (and the lack thereof)
without recognizing women's involvements in less noticeable political activities (such as canvassing voters, operating phone banks, soliciting funds and support). In any case, the consensus is that in the 1980s there is no basis for viewing women as political naivetes and that the "eligibility factors" [educational, legal and work experience] and the claim of deficiency in those areas are not valid explanations for the poor recruitment of women by political parties' elites.

Author Ruth Mandel, then, offers an alternate explanation for the parties' poor recruitment of women, insisting,

...a quota system seems to be operating to protect the traditional political establishment from "too many" women. Women holding local offices report that on a given school board, municipal council, or county legislature the number of female officials remains constant because screening committees, local bosses, and party officials view women as a special category of officeholders and operate on the basis of an unwritten quota system. If a woman does not seek reelection or is defeated another woman can be considered in her place [else there is no attempt to increase the number of female office-holders].

This, of course, may be an extreme view of the way party elites select candidates. Yet, it does illustrate the mindset of party elites in recruiting women for political candidacies.

There are other reasons for the party's reluctance to encourage women to run. Fear of alienating potential male candidates is one. Often, party endorsements go to males candidates over female candidates in the hopes of staving off insurgent campaigns headed by disgruntled men--campaigns which may weaken the party's effectiveness and status. Worries that voters will not cast their ballots for women are more reasons why male candidates are
preferred by party officers over female candidates.\textsuperscript{27}

That party leaders tend to favor male candidates points out women's lack of political clout within the party organization. Though women participate in party activities, often their contributions are peripheral in nature and rarely attract attention from the party officers at the top. When women do occupy high-level party positions, such assignments tend to be purely window-dressing, denying these women of any real opportunities to shine. Susan and Martin Tolchin explain, "... a good example is the practice of relegating women to the post of vice-chairman, a figurehead position viewed as meaningless by most practicing politicians. Nominally second in command, these women are in fact outranked by lower-ranking male functionaries."\textsuperscript{28} In effect, no matter where they are in the party hierarchical structure, women remain low-woman-on-the-totem-pole.

Because women are not seriously considered in the party organization, problems arise for those few party-women who would vie for public office. Students of political parties have long observed that, "...the [party] system operates within a protege context; the party father trains his protege for his seat in Congress, or his seat in the state legislature, or his office in the party hierarchy..."\textsuperscript{29} Women party-loyals, standing at the outer edges of the party machinery, then, are not afforded this luxury. Without a mentor to guide them along the political minefields of garnering support, financial backing, and votes, women are less likely to understand and to take on the grueling challenges of political campaigning. Moreover, should they choose to seek party endorsement, the absence of a party mentor makes it more difficult to win over support from party elites. Susan and Martin Tolchin echo the assessment of many political observers, "...for women, winning elections has proved less difficult than
getting nominated, a process that forces women to choose between breaking down the locker-room door... or finding a route that allows them to circumvent the room altogether. Taking the latter route usually entails a primary fight with the party sometimes resorting to sabotage techniques in order to block the insurgent campaign and "... apparently willing to lose an election rather than win with a woman."31

Because of low support among party elites for women candidate, women who do manage to win the support of their party often find themselves running in "throwaway districts" where they were never meant to win.32 As "sacrificial lambs," these women must compete against unbeatable incumbents (usually male), a strong political machine, or a combination of both.33 Not surprisingly, the Republican party seems to recruit more "sacrificial lambs" than their Democratic counterpart in both single and multi-districts competitions.34

Despite poor prospects of winning, getting into the state legislature or lower-level offices carry important consequences for women candidates because it not only provides exposure to the campaigning process but also highlights these women as potential candidates for higher offices. Wilma Rule, however, contends this is not an accurate picture of women's ascension into the more elite political circle. Instead, Rule paints a pessimistic scenario where women recruited to run for the state legislature or other local offices are destined to remain there. She writes,

States which elect women to Congress are urbanized-higher population states; these states also have many congressional seats. By contrast, women are recruited to [state] legislatures from the low population states, rural or urbanized. These states have few congressional seats. Therefore, whereas many women are elected to
legislatures in low population states, their proportions are not reflected at the congressional level. [Hence] ... election to state legislatures from low population states is a political dead-end for women. On the other hand, in high population states, few women are recruited to the state legislatures, which means that the pool of potential female congressional candidates with legislative experience is small. [Thus, there seems to exist] ... a "Catch-22" of women's congressional recruitment: success at the state legislative level results in few women at the congressional level, and defeat at the state legislative level also leads to few women recruited to Congress. Either way it is a "no win" situation with regard to significant proportions of women being recruited to Congress.35

Ruth Mandel agrees,

...Many female local officeholders have encountered praise for their effective performances as public officials but have discovered that those who praise them may be reluctant to extend support for efforts to move up to higher office, claiming that a move to higher office would be a loss to the community.... the women are urged to remain where they are and keep up the good work.36

While the support of the parties and the enthusiasm of the party leadership for women candidacies have been slow forthcoming, recent years have seen parties awaken to see the value of female candidates on the their ticket. Moreover, the aftermath of Watergate has left a distaste among voters for male politicians while women, still perceived as political novices, are regarded by voters--and thus reflected in party's recruitment--in a more trustworthy light.37 The presence of and the parties' awareness of the gender gap also make women look more promising (to political parties) as candidates for office.38 Furthermore, political parties are beginning to recognize women's serious intention to play the game of politic, willing to organize their own rebellious campaigns if necessary.39
At the same time that political parties are turning to women as potential carriers of the party banners, women no longer perceive the parties as primary sources of political and financial support. This is due in part by the decline in the effectiveness of the parties themselves. Susan Carroll reports that "...in most states, direct primaries have removed much of the control which party leaders exercised when candidates were selected in caucuses and conventions. Prospective candidates in primary states can circumvent party leaders, marshal their own resources, and appeal directly to voters for their support." Public funding of elections also diminish the input and control of parties over candidates and candidacies. Finally, some female candidates may consider attachment to a political party as undesirable, preferring instead to project and above-board, independent image.

Women may also be less likely to over-emphasize party support because other sources of support are available. Female networking, once unheard of, is fast becoming a popular technique among potential female candidates for office. From their affiliations with church groups, school organizations, civic organizations, private clubs and women's businesses, a network of moral as well as financial support has emerged across the country. Concurrently, special interest groups with interstate connections are being looked to as supplements to or replacement of the traditional party. For example, in Santa Clara County, California (the feminist capital of America), women's groups act as campaign fundraisers and workers, political recruiters and endorsers, political educators, informal and ad hoc networkers as well as ward heelers.

Support from women's groups are neither automatic nor unconditional however. According to Ruth Mandel,

Decisions about support from women's groups often are
complicated by situations in which male incumbents with good records on women's issues face female candidates who have not yet had the opportunity to establish public records of accomplishments on women's issues. Endorsement meetings also argue into the night about supporting a male candidate to whom women feel indebted and whose incumbency makes him likely to win versus the desire to endorse a female challenger.43

Sometimes, the priorities of the feminist groups and those of the female candidate differ. The political and feminist ideologies of women's groups such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) may stress adherence to the now-defunct Equal Rights Amendment or to the issues of reproductive rights or lesbian rights.44 Likewise, the National Women's Political Causus (NWPC) maintain certain bottom-line issues that female candidates must agree on prior to receiving endorsements from the group (these issues include reproductive rights, public funding for abortions, child-care funding, and race and sex discriminations).45 Political candidates, men or women, on the other hand, have as their major priority the winning of the election. Hence, the avowal of feminist principles and ideologies is considered a political suicide. Unwilling to assert their positions of controversial issues, female candidates often must forgo the political support of feminist groups.

Deciding not to seek or choosing to turn down support from a political party or an interest group can compound another problem female candidates must face--that of raising campaign money. While difficulties in filling a campaign treasury plague candidacies of both sexes, overcoming them proves to be more troublesome if one happens to be female. It seems that, despite their well-developed expertise in organizing fund-raising events and soliciting donations for community projects, for charitable societies or for other
candidates for office, women candidates recoil when they must raise the money for themselves. The reasons for this again lie in women's traditional socialization. Susan Carroll summarizes,

...In preparation for their roles as breadwinners, men traditionally have been socialized to believe that requesting money in return for functions they perform is a natural part of life.... In contrast, women, in preparation for their roles in the domestic sphere, have been socialized into a different set of expectations. Much, if not all, of their work is to be done without consideration of financial compensation; rewards for their services will come in the form of security, love, and gratitude from husbands and families. As homemakers, women's history has not been one of raising funds on their behalf.

Thus, although the 1980s have seen more women moving into the public sphere and learning the art of self-promotion, today's female candidates, having been socialized at an earlier times, still operate under the cloud of yesterday's upbringing and still not sure enough of themselves to ask for monetary (as well as political) support from others.

When female candidates do muster enough confidence and courage to persuade others to contribute to their campaign chests, they soon discover that the size of the contributions often pale in comparison to that of donations to male candidates. The reasons for the disproportionate munificence vary according to groups of donors. As constituents, says Carroll, women "...are not as accustomed as men to donating money to political causes;" consequently, when they do offer monetary support, their contributions are in small amounts. Remarks Suzanne Paizis, "While 'she' is writing a $5 check for her favorite woman candidate (and considering that a sizeable donation), 'he' is writing a $50 or a $500 check for the candidate of his choice (usually male)."
The National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC) and the Women's Campaign Fund (WCF) cite another reason for the differential funding between female and male candidates. Because they are newcomers to the game of politics, very few women have a "personal network of sizeable contributors." Instead, female candidates--especially those vying for lower-level offices--must resort to door-to-door solicitations or small fund-raising events--both of which rarely yield large contributions. The emergence of feminist-based political action committees (PAC) in recent years, however, has managed to mitigate some of the disparity in campaign funding. The National Organization for Women boast over eighty PACs at the state and local levels and two national PACs (one for federal races and one for nationally targeted local and state races). The NWPC's Republican Women's Task Force is without a PAC but plays an important broker role between the female candidate and available sources of money. On the other side of the aisle, the Democratic Women's Task Force does contribute to women's races but concentrates its efforts more on increasing women's political participation at the national level. Other sources of funding include The Women Campaign Fund (the only national organization to serve women candidates exclusively) and political action committees of prominent organizations such as the National Educational Association (NEA), the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), the International Ladies' Garment Workers (ILGW), the American Nurses Association (ANA) and the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (NFBPW).

Another reason for the difference in campaign funding stems from the unwillingness of major funding sources to take on the risk of backing untested candidates. Even liberal PACs (such as those of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees [AFSCME] and the National Abortion
Rights Action League (NARAL)) give smaller average contributions to women candidates than to men. Although the candidate's failure to espouse a political philosophy required by the funding source may prompt a denial of financial support, more often, it is the female candidate's lack of credibility which prompts an unwillingness by the funding sources to make large donations. In laying down their bets, contributors carefully scrutinize a candidate's odds of winning; and, those candidates with the higher chance of winning (men) will more likely get the bets than those who show higher probability of losing (women). Thus, says Eleanor Smeal, current president of NOW, "women candidates are caught in a vicious circle: They have traditionally had more difficulty raising early money for campaigns; and they are not taken as seriously because they are without sufficient start-up fund.

While difficulties in raising the necessary funds to conduct a campaign may seem insurmountable, a female candidate can compensate for the lack of funding and, at the same time, establish credibility for her campaign. By utilizing connections with church groups, private businesses, social clubs and other community groups, she may be able to secure a strong base of grass-root support while attracting valuable campaign workers. Getting an early start on the campaign trail may also lessen the effect of a half-empty campaign coffer. This holds true especially for female candidates for statehouse seats low in desirability; these races, says Carroll, "are likely to be less media-oriented, and candidates may concentrate more on direct, face-to-face communication with voters [which requires more time]. A candidate running with sufficient lead-time (usually two years for a Congressional seat and one year for a statehouse seat) may be able to reach more voters without spending large amounts of money."
Likewise, the various components of a technically sound campaign can soften the impact of a unhealthy campaign treasury and improve the candidate's credibility. From their own previous experiences as candidates or from experiences of other female candidates and with the help of groups such as the Women's Campaign Fund, today's women candidates know well the pitfalls of a haphazardly improvised campaign. Most would not run for office without a comprehensive campaign strategy, or an itemized projected budget both developed with the aid of a competent campaign manager. Realistic assessment of the candidate's strongpoints and identification and targeting of voters favoring (or undecided) the candidate can also help avoid squandering of scarce financial resource; these steps are now considered by female candidates as "givens" in political campaigning.

Should all the components—a willing and able female candidate, a supportive spouse and family, political and financial support from the political party and other interest groups—come together, the chances of success greatly enhanced but never assured. The voters have yet to pass judgment on the candidate's worth. For female candidates, winning the approval of the voting public can be problematic because neither they nor the voters know exactly what the voters expect of female candidates. Take the issue of physical appearance: Should a woman candidate wear trousers or not? Should she wear feminine colors or stick with the traditional gray and black business suits? Experts advise female candidates "[to] dress in a manner that commands respect, yet does not look characteristically male..." but that look is almost impossible to achieve. Besides, the public also evaluate female candidates on other dimensions such as height, weight, attractiveness (too much can be threatening for women voters) and age—factors over which the
candidate may have little control.62

If the woman is married, the public will want to know how she can juggle her domestic, spousal and maternal duties along with the demands of a campaign and, later on, of office-holding. That male candidates are almost never questioned about their family life points out the double standards by which female candidates are judged.63 Another example of a double standard applies to women candidates who are single (though these candidates are rare birds indeed); these women must answer questions about their sexual life in order to satisfy the voters that they neither are promiscuous nor lesbian.64 Men running for office, on the other hand, encounter these queries on a less frequent basis.

Nowhere is the double standard more discernable than in the voters' assessment of the female candidate's mannerisms. "In this case," Ruth Mandel reports, "the double standard is one which says 'men are acceptably aggressive, women are unacceptably shrill.' 65 This contradiction in the public's evaluation of men and women puts the female candidate in between the proverbial "rock and a hard place." On the one hand, she must present herself as one who will fight for her constituents; she must convince the public that she is knowledgeable and prepared for public leadership. But she must do so in a way that would not deem her "another Bella Abzug" in the voters' eyes (that is, if guilt by association has not already been attached to her because of her desire to join rank with other female politicians).66 She must take care not to cross the boundaries between assertiveness and aggressiveness, between self-confident and domineering.67 Conversely, a female candidate cannot afford to play up her feminine qualities. The expertise she has acquired as a housewife or through volunteer services may actually help her to deal with problems in the political sphere, but she must never infer so for the public are of the opinion
that "the price of cereals and soaps bears no relationship to voting on federal expenditures for the defense budget or [even] social welfare programs." 68 Hence, the conclusion that Ruth Mandel draws from the public's apparently contradictory expectations is a "long string of no-no's" required of the female candidate; she must "... not be too young nor too old; not too voluptuous nor prissy; not too independent nor too complaining about being excluded; not too soft-spoken nor shrill; not too ambitious nor retiring; not too smart nor uninformed." 69

Women candidates are a resilient lot, however. They would have to be in order to withstand the challenges of political life. Most have learned to handle problems of negative image and stereotypes with humor, drawing attention away from their personal identities and toward political issues 70— all the while, knowing that, because they have chosen to do battle with men in an arena previously reserved to men, the qualities they exhibit (though they may be the same exhibited by -- and bring respect to -- men) may never satisfy the public's ideal image of political women.

It may be, however, that female candidates need not fret too much over gender-based stereotypes. Numerous studies of voting habits have failed to prove the existence of voter discrimination against female office-seekers; voters apparently do not cast their ballots against a woman candidate simply because she is a woman. 71 This, of course, does not preclude the presence of anti-feminist votes which are "... tied to specific [sex-related] issues rather than to gender per se." 72 Nor does it mean that the voting public is especially enthusiastic about women candidates. Researchers Laurie Eckstrand and William Eckert agree with other researchers over voters' general indifference to the sex of the candidates but conclude that "... female voters [do exhibit]
...a bias in favor of the liberal leaning candidate when the contestant was identified as a woman.\textsuperscript{73} Alice Rossi concurs with this finding, noting that having one's female first name listed on the ballot can yield higher margins of support.\textsuperscript{74}

Despite the absence of voter hostility against women candidates and the presence of a pro-woman vote (although disputed among researchers), women still are not able to take their place in elected offices. This may be the function of several contextual obstacles beyond the control of the candidate herself. While certain contextual problems such as party dominance, high population size of the district, smaller size of legislature and men’s income (relative to women’s income) may affect the recruitment of women for statehouse and congressional races,\textsuperscript{75} others effectively deny women any real chances of winning those races. The power of incumbency is one such contextual constraints.

Incumbents usually start the race well ahead of all other contestants. Through newsletters and public forum, incumbents can provide the voters with important data and information which other candidates cannot supply. Incumbents have the luxury of a voting record which they can point to as experience and expertise. The public is more apt to know the incumbent candidates and their stands on the issues and is more likely to contribute to the political coffers of incumbents. With all these benefits at their disposals, it is of little wonder that incumbents return to their offices with a predictably high frequency.\textsuperscript{76} For women candidates, then, incumbency spells defeat at the polls since women candidates are more likely to run as challengers than as incumbents. "[Thus] unless much larger proportions of incumbents begin to retire after a single term or unless the staying powers of incumbents is
Women in Politics
Interviewing Date: 7/27-30/84
Survey #239-6

If your party nominated a woman to run for mayor or top official of your city or community, would you vote for her if she were qualified for the job?

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1984 By Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If your party nominated a woman to run for governor of your state, would you vote for her if she were qualified for the job?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1984 By Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If your party nominated a woman to run for Congress from your district, would you vote for her if she were qualified for the job?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1984 By Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If your party nominated a woman for president, would you vote for her if she were qualified for the job?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1984</th>
<th></th>
<th>1975</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1984 By Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you think the country would be governed better or governed worse if more women held political office?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1984</th>
<th></th>
<th>1975</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>Better</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1984 By Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>Better</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

somehow weakened," Carroll predicts, "the numerical representation of women is not likely to increase by leaps and bounds, regardless of the number of women who choose to run." 77 Researchers Kristi Andersen and Stuart Thorson, however, doubt that even a reduced "incumbency effect" can help more women win at the polls; their simulation controlling for the "incumbency effect" predicts only 53 congresswomen (12% of the House) in the year 2024. 78

The mode of districting is another contextual barrier for women candidates. Campaigning in a large district can take a heavy toll on a female candidate’s time and financial resources. A multiseat system likewise can be disadvantageous for female office-seekers. There, "the number of representatives must be proportional to the number of people being represented. Hence the more representatives elected from a multiseat district, the larger the population of the district—-one factor associated with small female representation in the legislatures." 79 On the whole, however, multimember districts do help women candidates because the candidates are not running against someone and, if they are in the majority party, will be carried along when the party wins most or all of the available seats (as they usually do). 80

As the above discussion indicates, there still remains much uncertainty surrounding the notion of women as political beings—-uncertainties which prevents women from recognizing their abilities to govern and from taking their places in the decision-making circles. Yet, the ambiguities permeating the entire issue of women as politicians are indications of changes (for the better) in the making. With each successive generation of women, the question asked will no longer be: What kinds of problems will I encounter if I choose to seek public office? Why shouldn’t I run? Rather, women will ask: What can I
FIGURE 5.3
Women in State Legislatures

The dashed line represents the general trend in female representation over time.

contribute to my community? Why should I run?

And the answers will become increasingly clearer. First, women will want to expand their roles in the political sphere simply because the conditions are more amenable to their entrance into politics. The general public have expressed approval of greater women's involvement in political activities. Secondly, women will want to run for office because they will be better qualified to do so. Demographic changes of more education, later age of marriage, postponements of childbearing, more years of solo living, more economic independence, and better jobs all facilitate a woman's political aspirations.

Recognizing that important social benefits stand to be gained may also encourage women to seek office. At the very least, women in politics provide proof of the basic American principles of equality and participatory democracy. As role models, women who succeed in treading political waters can help guide other women through their struggles to gain entrance into the political world. More importantly, women in politics can provide new insights to problems pertaining to society in general meanwhile shedding light on concerns of women long overlooked by male politicians. And in the process, both women and men can push for changes "... redefining standards for success, advocating flexible work schedules which leave room for private and family life, creating space to acknowledge emotions and express feelings, promoting the concept of service and concern for people's welfare above the demands of the profit motive, using political power to advance issues rather than to further private business or personal status--in general, adhering to values and supporting programs which lay stress on humanizing the society."

Politics is not a game for everyone. Running for office extracts great
sacrifices as does performing the duties of public office. A candidate for office must exhibit confidence, aggressiveness, stamina, skill and intelligence. In the past, both men and women have been misguided in their belief that only men are inherently gifted with the attributes necessary to seek and hold political office. Consequently, many hurdles faced today by women candidates are outgrowth of yesterday's perception of women—that is, women are better suited for work within the home. But with the general trend toward more egalitarian, non-traditional perception of women and their roles in society, those barriers will soon give way, allowing more women to take part in the governing process. At the same time, as the more egalitarian view of women filters back into the socialization of future generation of women, it will in turn encourage women to accept responsibility for their communities by seeking a role in the political ambit. Social changes, however, comes slowly, apparently content to regulate its pulse in terms of decades and generations rather than years. But because the process has already begun, the recent increase in number of women taking the political route will almost certainly continue. And as more women choose to run for public office, one can expect a larger number of women winning the public's confidence at the polls.

They may be a new breed, but female candidates for political office are here to stay.
Endnotes


6Ibid., p. 244.


10Ibid.


12Perkins and Fowlkes, p. 93.

13Mandel, p. 10.

14Kirkpatrick, p. 244.

15Mandel, p. 12.

16Mezey, pp. 494-5.

17Ibid., p. 494; see also Mandel, p. 71.

18Mandel, pp. 73-8.

20. Ibid., p. 44.


22. Ibid., pp. 61-4.


25. Mandel, p. 112.


27. Ibid.


29. Ibid., p. 73.

30. Ibid., p. 62.


33. Tolchin and Tolchin, p. 68; see also Clark et. al., p. 149.


36. Mandel, p. 54.

37. Carroll, p. 25.


40 Ibid., p. 24.


42 Flammang, p. 107.

43 Mandel, p. 225.

44 Ibid., p. 215.

45 Flammang, pp. 104-5.

46 Carroll, p. 50; see also Mandel, p. 181.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.; see also Mandel, p. 199.

49 Suzanne Paizis, Getting Her Elected: A Political Woman's Handbook (Sacramento: Creative Editions, 1977), pp. 22-3; see also Carroll, p. 51.

50 Mandel, p. 192.

51 Smeal, pp. 99-100.


53 Smeal, pp. 99-100.

54 Carroll, p. 51.


57 Flammang, pp. 128-9.

58 Carroll, p. 55.

59 Ibid., p. 81-2.

60 Ibid.; see also Mandel, pp. 128-9.

61 Smeal, p. 133.

62 Mandel, pp. 35-7; see also Carroll, p. 94.

63 Ibid., p. 65.
64 Ibid., p. 67-8.
65 Ibid., p. 42.
66 Ibid., pp. 47-8.
67 Carroll, p. 94.
68 Mandel, p. 56.
69 Ibid., p. 35.
70 Ibid., p. 51.
72 Mandel, p. 235.
73 Ekstrand and Eckert, p. 85.
75 Rule, pp. 60-9.
77 Carroll, p. 120.
79 Clark, et al., p. 153.
80 Gray, Jacob and Vines, p. 141.
82Rossi, pp. 726-9.

83Mandel, p. 252.


85Carroll, p. 20; see also Mandel, p. 252.

86Mandel, p. 255.
Bibliography


Rossi, Alice S. "Beyond the Gender Gap: Women's Bid for Political Power." Social Science Quarterly 64 (December 1983): 718-33.


