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Is it Harder to Run for Office As a Republican Woman? Attitudes Among Republican Voters Towards Women Candidates

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Abstract

The 2018 and 2020 elections saw large gains in women running for political office and winning. In general, there is an upward trend of more women being elected to political office, regardless of party. Yet, there still seem to be disparities between Democratic and Republican women. This raises an important question: Are women in the GOP disadvantaged when they run for office, and does this disadvantage come from Republican attitudes? More specifically, are there differences between Republican men and women in how they view female GOP candidates? I analyzed a unique survey of 500 registered Republicans before and after the 2018 election. Overall, attitudes are positive across the two election waves, but with interesting variation between men and women in acknowledging whether women face unique challenges when they run for office. The findings suggest that there is an obvious mismatch between what Republican voters express and what their voting behavior is, which may be due to the limited number of women running as Republicans, at least compared to Democrats.

Introduction

Do gender and partisanship impact how women candidates are recruited to run for office

and their chances of success? And if so, do they disproportionately affect Republican women in a

negative manner? In the United States, there seem to exist distinct differences in how voters view

candidates depending on their gender. Due to disparities in female representation, especially at

the national level, many organizations are invested in recruiting women for office, yet

partisanship appears to condition what type of female candidate will be recruited. For instance,

EMILY'S List actively targets pro-choice women to run for office. In 2018, the organization

endorsed eight Democratic women for gubernatorial elections, 12 candidates for U.S. Senate,

and a record of 64 women for U.S. House of Representatives.[1] Partisanship may benefit female

candidates at different rates, suggesting that electoral success may be more likely when women

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[1] Emily's List. "By the Numbers: Emily's List + The 2018 Midterms." September 24, 2018: https://emilyslist.org/news/entry/by-the-numbers-emilys-list-the-2018-midterms.

run as Democrats. That is the case of Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Hillary Clinton, a Democrat, who was the first woman to win the presidential nomination in 2016 and won the popular vote in 2016 but lost the presidency. Overall, each year, more and more women are elected to political office. Both the 1992 and 2018 elections were known as the "Year of the Woman." In 1992, 4 women were elected to the Senate (including the first Black women) and 28 served in the House[2]. The number of women in both the Senate and House continued to increase, the 2008 election saw a jump too 17 women serving in the Senate and 73 serving in the House[3]. Finally, with the 2018 election 25 women were in the Senate and 101 in the House[4].

Researchers find that politics are gendered, from how the public evaluates women candidates and how the media portrays women politicians compared to men (Dolan and Hansen 2018, pg. 400). Women face a harder time getting elected due to gender biases in public opinion, the media, and when it comes to the public people still feel negatively towards women candidates, even if they are not willing to admit it. For instance, women are often referred to by their first name, while men are more likely to be acknowledged by their profession and last name (Uscincki and Goren 2008). Essentially, sexism still plays a role, even if it is expressed in a less overt manner. Indicatively, after her election in the Florida state legislature in 2018, Ms. Anna Eskamani was asked if she is sleeping with a successful male lawyer, suggesting that her alleged relationship with a successful man contributed to her electoral success.[5] The implication is that women cannot get far in politics unless they have help from a man.

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[2] Center for American Women and Politics, "History of Women in the U.S. Congress," Source: https://cawp.rutgers.edu/history-women-us-congress
[3] lbd
[4] lbd
[5] Caitlin Moscatello When You're Not The "Pick of the Establishment" August 27, 2019. Source: https://www.thecut.com/2019/08/8-women-on-what-its-really-like-to-run-for-office.html.

Electoral politics, as well as policy-making, are shaped by gender, which has affected how women are seen as candidates, as well as policy-makers. Between the two major political parties in the U.S., the Republican party is often criticized for waging "A War on Women," based on the disproportionate emphasis on adopting laws that regulate women's reproductive rights, such as abortion.[6] In the last years, the Republican party has been labeled as anti-abortion, sexist, and dismissive of sexual assault victims. Interestingly, when it comes to adopting policies to restrict women's access to abortion, the common critique is that they are led by male Republican legislators.[7]

When women legislate, they often take strong positions against such policies, especially when they represent the Democratic party. Female legislators are more likely to support legislation that pertains to "women's issues" than male legislators (Volden, Weisman and Wittmer 2018, pg. 330), and they are also more likely to support policies that tend to reduce inequalities in welfare, such as supporting social welfare reforms (Pratto, Stallworth, and Sidanius 1997, pg. 115), suggesting that they not only just take positions on "women's issues" (Barnes and Cassesse 2017). At the same time, there are fewer female legislators elected as Republicans than Democrats in the House and the Senate. This raises a serious question about the ability of women to run and win depending on the party they support, especially the Republican party. Given that women seem to be more successful in politics when they run as

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[6] Jack Moore. "The Republicans' War on Women Is a Clear and Present Danger." October 9, 2017. Source: https://www.gq.com/story/the-republicans-war-on-women-is-a-clear-and-present-danger.

[7] Erin Durkin, Max Benwell, "These 25 Republicans-all white men-just voted to ban abortion in Alabama" May 14, 2019
Source: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/may/14/alabama-abortion-ban-white-men-republicans

Democrats, it appears that Republican women candidates may face a harder time getting elected than Republican men. Is that because Republicans are less supportive of women running for office in comparison to Republican men candidates?

In this study, I ask: Why are women less successful than men in running for office? Are there distinct characteristics in how Republicans view women candidates, and do men and women Republicans have different attitudes towards female candidates? I use the Democracy Fund's Republican Voter Study to explore attitudes towards female Republican candidates among registered Republicans. This study was conducted prior to, and after the 2018 midterm elections. The 2018 election is important, as women ran and won seats in Congress at high rates, albeit with notable gaps between the two parties – 126 Democrats and 20 Republicans.[8] Given the dramatic increase in female candidates seeking the Republican ticket in 2020, it is important to interrogate whether differences in female candidate support among Republicans are engrained in traditional gender roles or may be more prone to shift in favor of gender equality in politics.[9] I take a close look at opinions about challenges women face to run as Republicans and attitudes about gender equality and assess how they vary based on the respondents' gender. I find that women and men express overall support for women candidates, although women seem less prone to recognize that women are disadvantaged in the Republican party compared to men. This may

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[8] Author: Unknown, "Results: Women Candidates in the 2018 Election. "November 29. 2018. Source: https://cawp.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/resources/results_release_5bletterhead5d_1.pdf.

[9] Susan Davis, "More Republican Women Than Ever Are Running for Congress: Here's Why" June 17, 2020 Source: https://www.npr.org/2020/06/17/878226784/more-republican-women-than-ever-are-running-for-congress-heres-why.

be indicative of persistent traditional gender roles among Republican voters, with women more likely to express traditional views than men.

Women as Candidates

Researchers find that the public often holds views about women that are discriminatory. Discrimination can take two forms, namely systematic and women-specific discrimination. Systematic discrimination are external reasons why women don't run for office. They are aspects "of our political system that inhibit their opportunities or what some scholars refer to as "supply" and "demand" explanations (Dolan, Hansen, 2018, pg. 668)." Essentially, systematic discrimination refers to the discriminatory views of society as a whole. These views are expressed through statements like "people are less likely to vote for a woman, men receive more positive coverage in the media, and it is harder for women to raise money to run for office" (Dolan and Hansen 2018). Women-specific discrimination, "focus on aspects of women and women's lives, such as their family status or career choices, that make them less likely to run for office (Dolan and Hansen, 2018, pg. 668)." Essentially, this refers to ideas that women take on that lead them to believe that they cannot run for political office. It is shown in statements like, "men are more interested in politics than are women" and "women don't have the right experience for politics" (Dolan and Hansen, 2018). These thoughts are discriminatory because they suggest that, as a whole, women are not qualified enough to run for office. However, this simply is not true. Some potential women candidates do not run because they believe they aren't as qualified as men. Another gender-specific reason is the idea that women have to stay home to take care of their children. However, research conducted by Fox and Lawless (2014, pg. 200) shows that traditional family roles do not hold women back from running for office. Instead,

women are expected to balance housework with a demanding career. Fox and Lawless (2014, pg. 230) found that, "women reported spending 2.1 hours on household tasks, whereas men reported only spending 1.6 hours a day on household tasks." Both lenses affect public opinion and can explain why people might not support women candidates.

Even though some women ran for Democratic Presidential nominee in 2019, the competition was ultimately between two older white men, namely Bernie Sanders and Joe Biden. Evidence from public opinion data from the early 2000s suggest that a quarter of Americans perceive women as less emotionally qualified to be in politics (Paxton, Kunovich, and Hughes, 2005, pg. 108). Streb, Burrell, Frederick, and Genovese (2008) found that 26% of survey respondents expressed anger over having a woman president. The researchers asked respondents how many of the 4 statements made them angry or upset. These statements included the rising price of gas, professional athletes getting million-dollar salaries, requiring seat belts, and corporations' pollution. Then, the authors asked a different group of people the same question but added the statement, a woman running for president.

Since more women run now than they did a decade ago, it is possible that expressions of anger towards women candidates, or the argument about their emotional fitness for office, are less socially acceptable. In effect, the successes of female candidates (from both parties) in achieving local and national electoral success in the early-to-mid 2000s, and survey data suggest that both parties have become more supportive of women running for office. Because of the rise of the #METOO movement and Hillary Clinton running for president, it is now even less socially acceptable to not support a woman running for president. That said, even if most people claim that they would vote for a woman for president, these findings are worrisome in that women still are evaluated on different terms compared to men.

The candidacy of Hillary Clinton offers a unique view on how discriminatory views can affect a female candidate's success. In the 2008 primary election, newscasters would address her by her first name, but would address Obama by his last name (Uscinski and Goren 2011, pg.281). While this seems like a subtle difference, researchers note that "naming constitutes an important form of sociolinguistics etiquette, indicating deference, politeness, legitimization, and social distance" (Uscinski and Goren 2011, pg. 280). Referring to a candidate by his or her first name shows a lack of formality and takes away from the seriousness of the candidate. Uscinski and Goren (2011) found that Clinton was referred to by her first name 8% of the time, whereas Obama was referred to by his first name only 2%. This is a significant difference that strongly suggests that the media, perhaps unconsciously, undermined Clinton's run for office. This unequal treatment has a negative effect on qualified women who choose not to run. When compared to their male counterparts, "women are 45% more likely than men never to have thought about running for office" (Fox and Lawless 2014, pg.245).

Numerous polls saw Hillary Clinton winning but on election night Donald Trump received enough electoral votes to become the 45 President of the United States. Although the election result was surprising for many, and pre-election polls were heavily criticized for not predicting the electoral college vote outcome accurately, there is evidence to suggest that pre-election surveys underestimate support for female candidates (Stout and Kline 2011; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Sapiro 1983). In conservative states, where traditional gender roles are widely accepted, female candidates may be perceived as too liberal, weak on national security and crime, and biased toward women's issues (Stout, Kline, 2011, pg. 483). In 70 percent of the cases, support for the woman candidate was underestimated (Stout and Kline 2011, pg. 492).

Women and men have different experiences when it comes to the media, recruitment, and reception from the public. In a campaign world where attack ads are the norm, it appears that campaign strategy changes when a male candidate faces a female opponent. Men, for example, are less likely to use attack ads against female candidates, because they may not want to seem aggressive towards a woman (Kahn 1993, pg. 22). Research suggests that these campaign dynamics also affect campaign strategy on behalf of female candidates. Because they see themselves as underdogs, they use negative ads to get an advantage over their male opponents. Females may also feel pressured to push the gender stereotype that they handle education and social issues better than their male counterpart (Kahn 1993, pg. 30). They do this because either a-they think they can handle these issues well, b-they believe that they can handle them better than their male counterpart, or c-they believe voters think they can handle these issues better than a male. Either way, women candidates use these stereotypes to win elections (Kahn 1993; Ashmore and Del Boca 1979; Boles and Durio 1981; Gallup 1984; National Women's Political Caucus 1987).

Women are not recruited at the same rate as men, despite their qualifications or political connections (Fox and Lawless 2010; Moncrief, Squire, and Jewell 2001). The targeted efforts of organizations who explicitly aim to narrow gender gaps among candidates are found to have a positive impact on getting women recruited for public office. In fact, researchers find that "all else equal, a potential candidate who has contact with a women's organization is at least 35 percentage points more likely than a potential candidate with no such contact to be recruited to run for office by an electoral gatekeeper" (Fox and Lawless 2010, pg. 260). Electoral gatekeepers are individuals who work on spotting potential political candidates and ask them to run for office. They usually are connected to a faction of a political party. For example,

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was asked to run by the Justice Democrats[10]. This political action committee (PAC) works on getting progressive candidates to run on the Democratic ticket. Organizations like Emily's List, The White House Project, and She Should Run work on serving as electoral gatekeepers for women. Fox and Lawless (2010) find that these organizations can make a notable difference in increasing the number of women running for office. Indicatively, She Should Run, a nonpartisan group whose mission is to "dramatically increase the number of women considering a run for public office," has an online recruitment tool where women can be recommended to run for office and are contacted by the group with free resources and training.[11]

Women Running on The Republican Ticket

Women face an uphill battle when they run for office compared to men, but there are also differences in how likely women are to run and win elections, depending on which party they support. "According to the Center for American Women and Politics, 32% of primary candidates for the Democratic party in the Senate were women and 42.9% of them were the nominees." (Dittmar, 2018, pg. 77) In comparison, "only 14% of primary candidates for the Republican party in the Senate were women and 21.9% were the nominees" (Dittmar, 2018, pg. 77). How can we explain these differences? Are fewer women running as Republicans than Democrats? Or are they less likely to win a primary and a general election? Certainly, women support the Republican party, but perhaps not as strongly as they support the Democratic party. Yet, when it comes to voting for women, Americans still seem to be hesitant to vote for a woman, and more

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[10] Charlotte Alter, 'Change is Closer Than We Think.' Inside Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Unlikely Rise, March 21st, 2019 Source: https://time.com/longform/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-profile/

[11] She Should Run "Ask a Woman to Run"
Source: https://www.sheshouldrun.org/ask-a-woman-in-your-life-to-run/.

so if they are identifying as Republicans, suggesting that gender discrimination is still a hurdle in American politics.[12]

In general, women face more discrimination than men when it comes to running for office. Compared to a decade ago, there are certainly more women running for office, however, this could be due to supportive organizations, such as She Should Run, which recruit and train women candidates regardless of partisan affiliation. There are also clear disparities between Democratic and Republican women in office. At the moment, there are 1,283 Democratic women in office, compared to 799 Republican women in public office.[13]

Researchers find donors do not invest in women candidates as much as they invest in men. And when it comes to Republican candidates, Republican men are 30% more likely to be asked to run by a "gatekeeper" than Republican women, whereas among Democrats, the gender gap is still substantively important, but only about half that size (Fox and Lawless 2010, pg. 270). These discrepancies could be explained by a number of factors. Perhaps Republican women are less invested in their local political organization or maybe there are less organizations focused on getting Republican women to run. America is falling behind when it comes to women's representation. For example, in 43 out of 50 states men serve as governors. "And since

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[12] Amelia Thomson-DeVeaux "Americans Say They Would Vote For A Woman, But..."
 July 15, 2020
Source: https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/americans-say-they-would-vote-for-a-woman-but/.

[13] Center for American Women and Politics. "Women Elected Officials by Party."
Source:https://cawpdata.rutgers.edu/women-elected-officials/party?current=2&years%5B%5D=2018&yearend_filter=All&items_per_page=50.

potential candidates are more likely to consider running for office when they receive

encouragement from political actors, recruitment is also a vital ingredient for closing the gender

gap in political ambition." (Lawless and Fox 2005, pg. 700).

Republican women candidates face challenges when it comes to getting elected due to

biased gender attitudes. Bucchianeri (2017, pg. 445) found that, "Republican women who win

close House primaries lose at higher rates in the general election than Republican men." If

gender was not a factor then there should be no differences in primary election success rates.

Additionally, potential female candidates lack fundraising because party elites show a clear

preference towards male candidates. It could be because political operatives do not believe

women can win elections. Scholars have documented that many party leaders—the large

majority of which are men—believe that women often have trouble winning office in certain

areas (Sanbonmatsu, Dolan 2009). However, this disparity is even worse for Republican women

candidates. As Sanbonmatsu and Dolan (2009, pg. 45) find, "35 percent of Republicans believe

that Republican men would be better able to handle crime than Republican women, whereas only

14 percent of Democrats believe that Democratic men would be better able to handle crime than

Democratic women." Donors do not believe in Republican women's electoral success, so they

don't donate the money that is necessary for them to get elected.

Partisan differences in support for women candidates are also reflected through the

uneven fundraising power of Susan B. Anthony's List, which traditionally supports Republican

women candidates, compared to the large fundraising power of Emily's List, which traditionally

supports Democratic women candidates. Specifically, forty-two percent of donors to Democratic

House and Senate congressional campaign committees reported also donating to Emily's List

(Crowder-Meyer, Cooperman, 2015). However, only 7 % of donors to Republican congressional

campaigns contributed to Susan B. Anthony's List. In 2018, Susan B Anthony's List got 22 women elected and 14 lost. [14] This hurts women candidates because one of the signs of a successful primary candidate is lots of fundraising money. Party elites and politicians endorse primary candidates they believe are most likely to win in the general election. The lack of funding for Republican women candidates hurts their chances of being elected.

Another reason why Republican women may be disadvantaged as candidates, relative to Democratic women candidates, is polarization. As Bucchianeri (2017) explains, women are seen as more liberal, which hurts if they run as a Republican. Republican women may be perceived as non-assertive and non-confident, and lose a primary election, and essentially miss their chance of getting into office (Lawless, Pearson 2008). This leads the male-dominated political elites to see Republican women candidates as less electable.

In order to mitigate these challenges all women candidates are prompted to focus on women and women's issues. This desire comes both from the media and the public. Women issues can be divided into two categories, manifest and latent. Manifest issues contain "clear consequences for women as a group" (Trucotte, Paul 2015, pg. 345). An example would be sexual harassment. Latent issues, such as social services, education, and healthcare "focus more on women's traditional concerns as a caregiver" (Turcotte, Paul 2015, pg. 330). Researchers find that women voters are 2.14 more times likely to ask candidates latent questions than male voters (Turcotte and Paul 2015).

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[14] OpenSecrets.org. "Outside Spending Summary of 2018." December 18, 2020 Source:https://www.opensecrets.org/outsidespending/detail.php?cycle=2018&cmte=Susan+B+Anthony+List.

Research shows that women voters, in general, are more liberal, regardless of political party. Barnes and Cassese found that Republican women are "more supportive of spending on childcare, education, and health care" (Barnes and Cassese 2017). So, it benefits women candidates, regardless of political party, to focus on latent issues. In addition, women journalists are more likely to ask women candidates more questions on manifest issues. According to Turcotte and Paul's research, women journalists are 2.62 times more likely to focus on manifest women's issues than those asked by male journalists. A potential reason for this is because manifest issues are more polarizing, such as abortion, so they make for more entertaining content. Turcotte and Paul's (2015) analysis of presidential debates strongly suggest that women candidates are handicapped both by their felt obligation to evade the appearance of only advancing a gender-specific policy agenda as well as the propensity of journalists to ask questions that latently appeal to women's socially constructed roles as caregivers.

Women candidates are hit from both sides of "women's issues." Since voters and the media tend to ask women candidates more questions on women's issues it makes sense that they would benefit from having a strong foundation on these subjects. This seems to be supported by empirical evidence. Women who focus on women's issues and connect with women groups have an 11% higher probability of winning than do other candidates (Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes 2003). However, focusing on women's issues did not work for men, which just goes to show that voters perceive women as better able to handle women's issues. This might be why women benefit from focusing on these issues.

Republican women may face challenges as candidates, as "women's issues" are usually framed to represent Democratic party values. When they run for office, Republican women have to overcome these challenges to attract donors. At minimum, one would expect, for instance,

that women would be more likely to donate to female candidates, assuming that they care about "women's issues," regardless of partisan affiliation. Yet, evidence from research indicated this may only benefit Democratic female candidates. According to Thomsen and Swers (2017, pg. 23) "the estimated difference in donations from female donors between male and female Democratic candidates is 0.43, which translates into a 54 percent increase in money raised from female donors" (Thomas, Swers, 2017, pg. 25). Both Republican women candidates and Democratic women candidates face issues when it comes to getting funding from men donors. This is an issue because men are the most prominent donors, but it seems that fundraising is more challenging for Republican women.

Do Republican Party Values Hurt Women Candidates?

Republicans and Democrats stand on the opposite end of almost every issue. This also seeps into views of the family and the role of women in society. Jo Freeman (1993)'s article found that Republicans stand for traditional family values, and while not all Democrats are in agreement, the major party leaders support more feministic agendas. "While their platform does not define this slogan, both the document and the speeches indicate that it stands for programs and policies that strengthen the traditional two-parent, patriarchal family in which the husband is the breadwinner, the wife is the caretaker, and children are completely subject to parental authority (Freeman, pg. 23)." However, according to Freeman, the Democratic National Convention supported feminist organizations, even though not all their members were pro-choice. But, because Republicans were taking such a hard stance against abortion, many people identified Democrats as being pro-choice. The pro-life Republican stance is due to the rise in the Christian right. Freeman goes on to say that "for the Christian Right, family values is not merely

a slogan with which to win elections; it summarizes why they got into partisan politics in the first place" (Freeman, pg. 27, 1993).

Researchers find that Republican party elites tend to "value men's political leadership more than women" (Palmer and Simon, 2012). Given that there are more Republican men in leadership positions that Republican women, such findings indicate that party values intersect with gender in shaping attitudes towards female candidates. It is not clear, however, how party values and partisanship are expressed among Republican voters. There are reasons to expect differences between men and women in their support of women running for office as Republicans. In general, women are more likely to support women candidates and use "gender-related issue positions in determining their vote choice than are men" (Dolan, 1998, pg. 46).

Adding the party values dimension, however, may complicate how these attitudes are expressed, especially among Republican women. Dolan (1998, pg. 45) argues that "voting for a woman is an ideological issue for many voters with liberals being more likely to vote for the woman candidate than conservatives" (Dolan, 1998). More recent research indicates that party is far more important in vote choice than gender (Dolan, Lynch 2014). So far, research has shown that when voters hold stereotypical views of women candidates' policy strengths (childcare, poverty, education, health care, etc.) they are more likely to vote for Democratic women candidates (Dolan, Lynch pg. 669, 2014). The authors explain that this could be due to party stereotypes, and that traditional views about gender may benefit women, as long as they run highlighting female traits, such as honesty and compassion (Dolan, Lynch 2014).

If that is true, then it clearly shows discrepancies in how party elites and voters view female candidates, yet it does not explain differences in how female candidates are viewed by men and women Republican voters. Conservative women may be more prone to hold traditional

family values, namely the expectation that women should stay at home to take care of their children. Even if female candidates run on female traits, women may still not be supportive of them. This might indicate that there are not differences in attitudes between Republican men and women. On the other hand, the increased exposure of women as candidates may reinforce feminist attitudes among Republican women, and thus increase their support toward female candidates.

Research Design, Data and Methods

There are competing theoretical expectations regarding the existence, or not, of differences in support for female Republican candidates between Republican men and women, which creates an opportunity for exploratory research. To evaluate whether there are distinct differences in how Republicans view female candidates depending on their gender, therefore, I analyzed public opinion data from a unique survey conducted by the Democracy Fund on 500 registered Republicans before and after the 2018 midterm elections. This survey asked questions gauging attitudes towards women candidates, and their leadership and overall gender representation in the Republican party.

My key variable of interest is perceptions about women facing unique challenges when they run for political office. This question, I argue, appropriately captures the traditional values dimension, since "unique challenges" can be interpreted as challenges stemming from a woman's role as a mother and a wife. At the same time, "unique" may also reflect electoral challenges, such as fundraising, or media exposure. This is why I also explore how Republican men and women justify why women Republicans may not be as successful in running and winning for office as men.

The Republican Voter Study survey is designed to only include individuals registered as Republicans. Respondents are asked a series of questions that assess their feelings towards the Republican Party in general, and gender, race and political representation specifically. Respondents were asked whether women face unique challenges when it comes to running for office. Another question was whether the Republican Party does a good job of having women and minorities in leadership positions. Finally, one question breaks down the factors that women face when running for office. These included having a harder time raising campaign funds, dealing with unfair treatment from the media, having responsibilities in the home caring for family, dealing with sexism from voters, not wanting to run for office, not feeling prepared to run for office, worries about being associated with the Republican party, and finally all questions also included "unsure" as an option.

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents, such as gender, race, age, and education. It is clear that this sample is not representative of the U.S. population, yet it might be more representative of the Republican electorate, especially in terms of race. The respondents are predominantly white, with the Other section including Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or the "prefer not to say" category. This is not a representative sample of the United States because 13.4% of the US population is African American, 5.9% is Asian, 1.3% is American Indian, and 76.3% is white.[15]

Table 1. Demographics of GOP Registered Voters	
Gender	Percentage
Men	49.4
Women	50.6
Race	
White	87.4

[15] U.S. Census. "Quick Facts, United States" July 1, 2019
Source:https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219.

Black	1.6
Other	11
Age	
18-24	3.2
25-29	5.4
30-34	6.8
35-39	7
40-49	10.2
50-64	32
65+	35
Education	
High school/Associates	34.2
BA	51.4
Grad degree	14.4
Total	**500**

The sample also seems older than the general population. According to the US Census Bureau, in 2010 36.5% of the population was between the ages of 18 to 44, with 9.9% of the population being between the ages of 18 to 24.[16] In this survey, only 3.2% of respondents were between the ages of 18-24. The percentage of people in the United States who are 65 years or older is 13%. In this survey, the percentage is 35%. The educational percentages match closely with the national average. In 2015, 88% of Americans adults had at least a high school diploma or GED and 33% had a bachelor's. Finally, 12% of the adults had a higher degree than bachelor's. Overall, the respondents in this survey are whiter and older than the general US population.

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[16] U.S. Census. "Age and Sex Composition: 2010" May 2011 https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-03.pdf.

Findings

The purpose of this survey was to highlight gender differences between men and women Republicans, which explains why it is almost equally split between men and women. This is why this survey offers a unique opportunity to explore any intersectionality between gender and party values among Republican voters, and how they may shape attitudes towards Republican women candidates.

On Table 2, I present the breakdown of responses to the statement, "Women face unique challenges when they run for political office," before and after the 2018 midterm elections. Respondents can select agree, disagree, or unsure. I specifically look to see if there is a difference between male and female responses.

As Table 2 shows, in both the pre- and post-survey no women agreed that women candidates have unique challenges when running for office. This may indicate that Republican women think that women are treated equally compared to men. However, women respondents are the only ones who did not volunteer an answer to this question, and instead opted for the "unsure" category. Research suggests that "unsure" responses may reflect non-attitudes, or lack of willingness to express one's true opinion (Asher, 2016). The fact that only women chose to say they were not sure about women facing unique challenges, and that no women agreed with the question suggest that men and women Republicans indeed differ in how they view women candidates, although the expectation was that women would be more prone to recognize that challenges exist than men.

Table 2. Gender Based Challenges		
Agree	**Pre-Election**	**Post-Election**
Men	132 (26.4%)	74 (14.8%)
Women	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Disagree		
Men	115 (23%)	173 (34.6%)
Women	226 (45.2%)	231 (46.2%)
Unsure		
Men	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Women	27 (5.4%)	22 (4.4%)

Question: "Women face unique challenges when they run for political office".

In the post-election round, there seems to be a shift in how men responded to this question, with a decrease in the number of men that disagreed with the statement. It is possible that the election of more women in Congress in 2018 was perceived as a testament that women can win elections, despite the fact that that they still made up of only a quarter of all U.S. legislative positions in Congress. The shift is greater for men than women. Considering that there is no change in the agree category among women in the post-election survey, it is reasonable to infer that some women in the "unsure" category responded that they disagree with the statement in the post-election survey.[17]

Because gender disparities in the Republican Party are greater when considering partisan elites, who are found to favor males over females (Palmer and Simon 2012), I am exploring how men and women Republicans evaluate how their party is performing in seating women in leadership positions. As Table 3 shows, no women either in the pre- or post-election survey said that the GOP does a bad job of having women in leadership positions.

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[17] The only statistically significant relationship between men and women comes from the pre-election unique challenges survey question. The *t*-test result is $t = -2.5982$. This indicates that Republican women are more likely to recognize the unique challenges women face when it comes to running for office.

Table 3. GOP Women in Leadership

Position	Pre	Post
Bad		
Men	53 (10.6%)	48 (9.6%)
Women	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Neither		
Men	71 (14.2)	72 (14.4%)
Women	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Good		
Men	123 (24.6%)	120 (24%)
Women	227 (45.4%)	244 (48.8%)
Unsure		
Men	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Women	26 (5.2%)	16 (3.2%)

Question: "You will now hear a few different areas where a political party might be doing a good job or a bad job. For each, please tell me if you think the REPUBLICAN PARTY is doing a good job or bad job".

This could be due to the fact that Republican women do not want to feel like their party is not representing them, even though the numbers show that the Republican party has less women in office than Democrats. Even though more Republican women were elected to Congress in 2020 than in any other year, it is still a lot smaller than the Democratic party total. According to the Center for American Women and Politics, 32 GOP women will join the next Congress.[18] 211 Democratic women and 91 Republican women have been elected to the House of Representatives, and 25 Democrat women and 16 Republican women have been elected to the Senate.[19] Therefore, Republican voters should say that the GOP does not do a good job of having

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[18]Sarah Ewall-Wice, Aaron Navaro "Year of the Republican women: GOP adds record number of women to Congress" November 10, 2020.
Source: https://www.cbsnews.com/news/republican-women-congress-record-number/.

[19]Congressional Research Service. "Women in Congress: Statistic and Brief Overview" December 4, 2020

women in office. If a respondent is willing to say that women actually face unique challenges when running for office, then they should also be able to admit that the GOP does not do a good job of representing women. Also, no women respondents choose the option of "neither", but a decent number of men did. Some men said that the GOP does a bad job of having women in leadership positions, but the most popular response was "good job". The responses also did not change much from pre and post.

Responses to these two items paint a positive picture among women and men Republicans towards female candidates. The reality is, however, that compared to Democratic women, Republican women are not elected at the same rates. On Table 4, I present a breakdown of the reasons respondents volunteered to explain why there are few Republican women candidates. As the Table shows, having a hard time raising campaign funds goes up significantly for men and drops tremendously for women between the two surveys. This means that men felt like raising funds was more of a problem for women after the 2018 midterm. However, for women they felt like raising funds was less of an issue for women candidates after the midterms. For both genders unsure responses decreased after the election.

Table 4. Reasons Why they are Few GOP Women Candidates	Pre	Post
Having a harder time raising campaign funds		
Men	20 (4%)	96 (19.2%)
Women	30 (6%)	0 (0%)
Unsure		
Men	42 (8.4%)	0 (0%)
Women	43 (8.6%)	0 (0%)
Dealing with unfair treatment from the media		
Men	42 (8.4%)	144 (28.8%)

Women	39 (7.8%)	175 (35%)
Having responsibilities in the home caring for family		
Men	49 (9.8%)	0 (0%)
Women	42 (8.4%)	85 (17%)
Dealing with sexism from voters		
Men	22 (4.4%)	0 (0%)
Women	29 (5.8%)	0 (0%)
Not wanting to run for office		
Men	39 (7.8%)	0 (0%)
Women	41 (8.2%)	0 (0%)
Not feeling prepared to run for office		
Men	20 (4%)	0 (0%)
Women	12 (2.4%)	0 (0%)
Worries about being associated with the Republican Party		
Men	13 (2.6%)	0 (0%)
Women	17 (3.4%)	0 (0%)

When it comes to dealing with unfair treatment from the media, both genders' responses went up, but women even more so. This means that both genders felt like unfair treatment was a bigger issue after the election. Having responsibilities in the home decreased for men but increased for women. This means that men felt like caring for a family was less of a reason for not running after the election. For women, it was the opposite effect of having a family being more of a barrier. Dealing with sexism from voters decreased for both, meaning that sexism from voters was less of an issue after the election. Not wanting to run for office saw a decrease from both men and women. Not feeling prepared to run for office saw a decrease for both. Finally, when it comes to worries about being associated with the Republican Party, both genders saw a decrease.

Discussion

      This paper aims to assess registered Republicans' attitudes towards women candidates, and more specifically, their attitudes towards what reasons keep women from running for public office. I specifically assess whether there are differences between registered Republican men and women to see if there is a gender difference.

      My findings show high overall support for women candidates among the Republican Party. While this appears promising, there is a clear disconnect between what these voters express and what electoral outcomes show, namely that women in the GOP are far fewer than men. If both men and women Republicans agree that the GOP does a good job of having women in leadership positions, then we should expect to see more women represented in the party. It is possible that the 2018 election, when a record number of women ran and won, albeit mostly from the Democratic party, had some spillover effects on Republican attitudes towards women. The shift in these attitudes between the pre and the post survey, among men and women, suggests that gains among female candidates, regardless of party, may give the perception that women overall are doing better in elections than they used to. However, it is still not clear whether these voters, who showed strong support for female GOP candidates, would actually vote for a woman if they had a choice.

      The broader implication of my research is that registered Republicans might say on surveys that they support more liberal issues but that is not reflected in their voting patterns. For example, a Pew Research Center study[20] asked both registered Democrats and Republicans their views on federal policies that reduce the negative effects of climate change. A survey was given

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[20] Alec Tyson, Brian Kennedy, "Two-Thirds of Americans Think Government Should do More on Climate" June 23rd, 2020, Source: https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2020/06/23/two-thirds-of-americans-think-government-should-do-more-on-climate/

from April 29th-May 5th of 2020 and calculated overall US adult support, Democratic/Democratic leaning support, and Republican/Republican leaning support. 88% of Republicans are in favor of planting about a trillion trees to absorb carbon emissions, 78% are in favor of providing a tax credit to businesses for developing carbon capture/storage, and 64% are in favor of tougher restrictions on power plant carbon emissions. This is in contrast with many GOP candidates and elected officials, which are very anti-climate change. Donald Trump took America out of the Paris Climate accord and has staffed his cabinet with officials who either deny climate change or at least question it. This shows a discrepancy between what Republicans believe and who they vote for. A limitation to my work is that I did not have enough data.

Future research should look into the 2020 election, political psychology, and intersectionality. The number of Republican women representatives in 2020 went from 13 to 28, and of the 13 seats that Republicans took from Democrats, 10 of them were won by Republican women.[21] This is due to the work of Representative Susan Brooks, who is the National Republican Congressional Committee's recruitment chair. She worked to identify and support Republican women candidates. In addition, Representative Elise Stefanik launched a leadership PAC to focus media and party attention on electing more Republican women. It seems like these women's' efforts succeeded. These examples strongly suggest that recruiting women to run was not a priority among the Republican Party previously, with some evidence to suggest that attitudes towards the ability of women to run and win differ greatly when comparing partisan elites, who do the recruiting, and voters, who make their choices at the ballot box.

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[21] Michele L. Swers "Analysis: More Republican women than before will serve in this Congress. Here's why" January 5, 2021
https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/01/05/more-republican-women-than-before-will-serve-this-congress-heres-why/?s=09#click=https://t.co/C61u9w36ka.

It is important for future research to address how Political psychology and a candidate's gender intersect, particularly when it comes to voters who identify as conservative. Ideology may be a stronger predictor than gender, as recent research suggests (Mason 2018). If a voter cares more about voting pro-life than pro-choice, for instance, then they are going to vote for the pro-life candidate, regardless of if the candidate is a woman or not (Mason 2018).

Intersectionality involves the interconnected nature of one's social identities (such as race, gender, and class). I was not able to explore intersectionality fully in my research because the respondents were mostly white. However, there is a growing field of research in this area, which is reflected by Catherine Wineinger's (2014) work. Considering that the Republican party demonstrably lacks diversity both in terms of race and gender, future research should focus on Republican voters' attitudes towards women of color who run for political office.

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