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## Candidate Emergence Among Women: Responsibility to Run

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# Candidate Emergence Among Women: Responsibility to Run

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### **Abstract**

Research about why women lag behind as candidates has addressed psychological and societal factors. These factors are largely based on gendered norms that impact perceptions of electability of women and the overall field of politics. The incorporation of women's individual accounts explaining why they ran for office allows the discussion of individual actions. This research is based on 17 interviews with women who ran for office. The findings of the interviews suggest that personal responsibility can make women decide to run for office. The personal responsibility they felt originates from three areas that encompasses the interviewees demographic information as presented in Table 1. The first from the feeling of being responsible for one's community or family, and therefore, her decisions are relationally-embedded. The second originates from a sense of obligation that a woman feels to advocate for specific values. The final one stems from a feeling of urgency and a sense of duty to address a threatening issue.

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## Introduction

Women make up more than half of the U.S. population and yet only about a quarter of representatives are women.<sup>1</sup> To be clear, women only make up 27.1% of the U.S. Congress while local municipalities have about 31.5% of women in office.<sup>2</sup> This data reveals the disparity that is present in our elected offices and suggests that our elected officials are not truly representative of all citizens. Indeed, according to a 2018 Pew Research Center survey, most Americans say that there are too few women in political office today, although many more women than men say that they would like to see more female political leaders (69% vs. 48%).<sup>3</sup> The survey also finds that most Americans believe that men and women both possess key qualities and behaviors that are essential for leadership, even as a majority (57%) say men and women in top positions in business and politics tend to have different leadership styles; among these respondents, 62% say neither men nor women have a better approach, while 22% say women generally have the better approach and 15% say men do.<sup>4</sup>

These views on the desirability and suitability of women for top political office help explain the fact that women are just as likely as to win when they run. Female candidates have been making slow and gradual gains in representation for decades, winning election to school boards, city councils, state legislatures and Congress. In 2018, non-incumbent women candidates running for statewide and national office won both primary and general elections at higher rates than non-incumbent men.<sup>5</sup> Kathleen Dolan found that gender stereotypes do not bias voters against women candidates, who have as much success as male candidates – although women are more likely to face more primary competition, suggesting that women may have to be “better” than their male rivals in order to fare equally well.<sup>6</sup> Kira Sanbonmatsu found that that the

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank, “Population, Female (% of Total Population) - United States,” <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=US>.

<sup>2</sup> Center for American *Women and Politics*, “2022 Women in Municipal Office;” CAWP, “2022 Women in the U.S. Congress,” <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/levels-office/congress/women-us-congress-2022>, <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/2022-women-municipal-office>.

<sup>3</sup> Juliana Menasce Horowitz, Ruth Igielnik, and Kim Parker, “Women and Leadership 2018,” Pew Research Center’s Social & Demographic Trends Project (blog), September 20, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2018/09/20/women-and-leadership-2018/>.

<sup>4</sup> Horowitz, Igielnik and Parker (2018).

<sup>5</sup> Center for American Women in Politics, “By the Numbers” <https://live-ru-womenrun.pantheonsite.io/2018-report/by-the-numbers/>

<sup>6</sup> Kathleen Dolan, “Gender Stereotypes, Candidate Evaluations, and Voting for Women Candidates: What Really Matters?” *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 67, no. 1 (March 2014), 96-107; This qualification comes from Jennifer L. Lawless and Kathleen Pearson, “The Primary Reason for Women’s Underrepresentation? Reevaluating the Conventional Wisdom,” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 70, no. 1 (January 2008), 67-82.

primary reason for the under-representation of women in public office was the scarcity of women candidates, rather than women's failure to win their races.<sup>7</sup>

Since women make competitive candidates, what explains the fact that fewer women run for political office? This paper will discuss a number of scholarly explanations for women's emergence as candidates, including expectations of gender discrimination, women's tendency to underestimate their own abilities, a lack of encouragement and role models, and greater party support and funding for male candidates. Evidence from interviews with women who have run for office shows that these factors have influenced women's decision to run for political office. At the same time, however, these women's personal stories reveal that they were motivated to run by a powerful sense of personal responsibility. In some cases, this was a reflection of deep values, like being a teacher who saw herself as responsible for her students' resources and a personal role model for them. In other cases, the women ran for political office out of a sense of responsibility toward their families and communities. Interviewee 9 told me that she ran for school board because she just "wanted [her kids] to have a good education." Finally, a number of women expressed a sense of urgency triggered by specific events, such as the election of Donald Trump in 2016, "I'll just say I was shocked by the election results in 2016, I was not expecting Donald Trump to win, and I realized that I needed to, I *had* to get [involved], particularly at the local level."<sup>8</sup>

In Chapter 1, I discuss the importance of women's representation and analyze various theories that seek to explain why women continue to lag behind men as candidates. Each of these explanations provides important insights, suggesting that a mix of factors limit women's emergence as candidates. I go on to argue that these theories need to be supplemented by a focus on a personal sense of responsibility and present this thesis in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 provides an overview of my research design, explaining how I tested these theories and my own thesis through a series of semi-structured interviews with women who have run for political office. Chapter 4 presents key findings from these interviews and analyzes the responses, illustrating how responsibility motivates women to run for office. Finally, I close with final thoughts about the implications of this research.

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<sup>7</sup> Kira Sanbonmatsu, *Where Women Run: Gender and Party in the American States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 1-13.

<sup>8</sup> interviewee 10

## Chapter 1. Why Are Women Less Likely to Run for Office? Theories on Candidate Emergence

Representation is necessary for a democratic government since it allows citizens' perspectives, preferences and interests to be considered in the policymaking process. The underrepresentation of women in politics raises questions about the extent to which women's views are adequately represented. For this, it is useful to consider theories of representation, drawing on Hanna Pitkin's classic description of four types of representation. The first type is formal representation, which grants representatives the formal authority to act on their constituents' behalf and, through elections, allows voters to hold representatives accountable for their actions.<sup>9</sup>

The second type is descriptive representation. According to Pitkin, descriptive representation "depends on the representative's characteristics, on what he or she *is* or *is like*, on being something rather than doing something."<sup>10</sup> This emphasizes the importance of similar experiences and demographic backgrounds between representatives and constituents, based on the assumption that constituents are most effectively represented by people with whom they share key characteristics such as sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status.<sup>11</sup> According to Jane Mansbridge, descriptive representation enhances the representation of disadvantaged groups by bringing individuals into the policymaking process who bring new issues to the agenda and advocate more vigorously for the interests of their group.<sup>12</sup> Descriptive representation can even change the discussions that are being held in public office, where the presence of an individual can shift the narrative to one who understands the struggles that many women grapple with. An example of this was given by an elected official whom I interviewed:

I really wish that one other Council woman had been there, I think it would have changed the tone [of the discussion]. One time there was a weird offhand comment about an agency needing to hire a new cleaning service. One cleaning woman's comment was 'Well I don't know that I feel comfortable being in the police station alone at night with only men' and, all the guys cracked up, replying to her, 'You're in the police station, it's the safest place on earth.' And it's like, no you're not getting it! From a girl's point of view that's not okay – that's a reasonable fear that women have. They have no idea that,

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<sup>9</sup> Hanna Pitkin quoted in Julie Dolan, Melissa M. Deckman, and Michele L. Swers, *Women and Politics: Paths to Power and Political Influence* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 15.

<sup>10</sup> Pitkin quoted in Dolan, et al., *Women and Politics*, 15.

<sup>11</sup> Dolan, Deckman, and Swers, *Women and Politics*, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Jane Mansbridge, "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent Yes," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 61, no. 3 (August 1999), 628-657.

and these are all men that are married, they all have a spouse, and they don't even realize the fears that [women] all walk around with or live with. So, I think the more often that more women are in the room in those kinds of conversations, the more eye opening it can be for everybody.<sup>13</sup>

Third, symbolic representation adds an emotional, affective component by demonstrating the importance of how representatives are perceived by their constituents. As Pitkin explains, “To say that something symbolizes something else is to say it calls to mind, and even beyond that evokes emotion or attitudes appropriate to the absent thing.”<sup>14</sup> Symbolic representation can influence how citizens perceive the inclusiveness and legitimacy of the political system, especially for members of a traditionally disadvantaged group. The presence of representatives who look like and stand for marginalized groups allows for a more diverse image of political leadership and creates role models that may encourage members of these groups to run for office and follow politics more closely. As an African American female judge from Texas explained, “When I walk into that court and see all of the pictures of judges, I think there should be someone there who looks like me. And I think for all the people who are visiting the court, there should be judges who look like them.”<sup>15</sup>

The final type is substantive representation. This occurs when representatives act “in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them.”<sup>16</sup> From this perspective, electing more women to political office will be good for women more generally, as female politicians are expected to advocate more vigorously for other women’s interests and policy preferences due to their shared status as women. Arguably men could act on women’s behalf, but female legislators have been found to pay more attention to issues of particular concern to women. Historically, these issues have included childcare, family, leave, and equal pay.<sup>17</sup> One elected official spoke about their experience with what is best described as substantive representation in government. To her, a truly representative government means having an elected official that is a voice for everyone, but specifically noted that conversations about female-related issues like menstruation and maternity-based legislation would not exist without the female elected officials there.<sup>18</sup> She saw firsthand that the discussion of legislation related to women was not treated with

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<sup>13</sup> Interviewee 13 from Table 1.

<sup>14</sup> Pitkin quoted in Dolan, et al., *Women and Politics*, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Dolan, Deckman, and Swers, *Women and Politics*, 15.

<sup>16</sup> Pitkin, quoted in Dolan et. al., *Women and Politics*, 16.

<sup>17</sup> Dolan et. al., *Women and Politics*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Interviewee 6 from Table 1.

importance, if it was discussed at all. Similarly, former U.S. Representative Marge Roukema (R-NJ) explained, “When I got to Washington, I found that some of the ‘women’s issues - the family issues’ - weren’t being addressed by the men in power. Things like child support enforcement and women’s health issues and family safety issues. It wasn’t that the men were opposed to these issues – they just didn’t get it. They were not sufficiently aware of them. So, I realized, in many important areas – if we women in government don’t take action, no one else will.”<sup>19</sup>

Though women gained formal representation through the right to vote in 1920, the underrepresentation of women in politics poses a problem for other types of representation. As Ashley Bennett, an African American health-care worker from New Jersey who ran for local office in 2017, stated, “representation matters, and if you don’t see yourself reflected in your elected officials, maybe you should run to be an elected official.”<sup>20</sup> Though a number of women like Bennett were motivated to run for office in 2017 and 2018, women were still much less likely to put themselves forward as candidates. The widely touted “pink wave” saw a sharp increase in the number of women running for office out of frustration over the 2016 election of Donald Trump and concern about reduced access to health care, growing income inequality, prevalence of sexual harassment and assault; at the same time, however, women still accounted for less than a 25% of all congressional candidates, and experts such as Kelly Dittmar of the Center for American Women and Politics warned that political parties, male incumbencies and higher scrutiny of women’s qualifications could stymie women’s political gains.<sup>21</sup>

The U.S. political system includes institutional features that place women at a disadvantage, including an electoral system that makes it less likely for women to be elected. The U.S. electoral system is a winner-take-all system that emphasizes individual candidates; although candidates run with a political party label, each candidate appeals directly to voters in a specific constituency. This is different than a proportional representation electoral system in which the electorate votes for their favorite party. Parties win seats according to their share of the total vote filling these seats from party lists. PR electoral systems that elect multiple candidates

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<sup>19</sup> Michele L. Swers, *The Difference Women Make: The Policy Impact of Women in Congress* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 21.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Dolan et. al., 96-97

<sup>21</sup> Kelly Dittmar, “Pink Wave: A Note of Caution,” Footnotes, Center for American Women and Politics [blog] (26 January 2018). <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/blog/pink-wave-note-caution>.

in large districts elect more women. Multi-member districts lower thresholds to win and incentivize parties to seek out female candidates to broaden their appeal. As Pippa Norris explains, parties in proportional systems “have an electoral incentive to maximize their collective appeal ... by including candidates representing all the major social cleavages in the electorate ...[and] the exclusion of any major social sector, including women or minorities, could signal discrimination, and could therefore risk an electoral penalty at the ballot box.”<sup>22</sup> In contrast, in first-past-the-post systems, parties do not have a similar incentive to pick candidates who will create a “balanced” ticket at the state or national level. Party leaders focus on their particular district instead and are more likely to prefer the safer strategy of backing “the default option (i.e., a candidate reflecting the traditional characteristics and qualifications of previous parliamentarians).”<sup>23</sup> This is important to note when looking at the lack of women in U.S. Congress. Although a few U.S. cities have adopted a PR system of voting for local elections, most elections will continue to be conducted in single-member races, which provides an advantage to traditional candidates and incumbents, who enjoy advantages in terms of name recognition, media attention, financial and organizational resources.<sup>24</sup>

Given the focus on individual candidates within the U.S. political system, it is important to understand what it takes to motivate women to run for office. Women participate in politics at higher rates than men, voting in greater numbers than their male counterparts, and yet they continue to be underrepresented. This has prompted scholars to analyze the reasons why women lag behind as candidates. Previous research has suggested several different theories to account for the relative scarcity of female candidates. The first theoretical framework that will be discussed is political participation of women. The second is the discussion of gender and socialization influencing the attitudes of individuals surrounding women in politics and leadership. The third theory is about the political ambition of women and delves further into aspirations and how they are gendered. The fourth theory discusses the role model effect, essentially discussing more about symbolic representation. I then transition to talk about political parties and how they can influence a woman’s candidacy. Finally, I shift to the issue of funding and the role of the breadwinner and mother.

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<sup>22</sup> Pippa Norris, “The Impact of Electoral Reform on Women’s Representation,” *Acta Politica*, Vol. 41 (2006), 205.

<sup>23</sup> Norris, “Electoral Reform,” 206.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

Before beginning this overview, it is important to note that political participation may take various forms, and participation in the formal electoral arena is only one form of political participation. Indeed, women have been quite active outside the traditional political arena, playing significant roles in social movements, civic organizations and other forms of collective behavior.<sup>25</sup> The importance of such nontraditional political activity needs to be acknowledged since many women, and especially women of color, participate in these extra-systemic and more social forms of political participation.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, because women and minorities have been excluded from participating in the formal electoral arena for much of the nation's history, they have adopted nontraditional forms of political participation, as with the Suffragettes who rallied to get the right to vote for women or the Women's March in January 2017. These examples show that it is important to focus not only on women running for electoral office but also on local and community-based political activity, social movements and protests.<sup>27</sup>

A broader definition of what is "political" reveals further differences between men's and women's political participation. While women vote in higher numbers than men, men are more active in other political activities and more likely to follow politics closely.<sup>28</sup> Women are more likely to be civically engaged in community service, but men give more money and spend more time when they do engage. In addition, young women are more likely to be civically engaged, but less likely to be leaders; moreover, women with fewer financial means and more family responsibilities as well as women of color are more likely to disengage from politics, concluding that politics is not made for people like them.<sup>28</sup> This reflects the fact that political leadership has been defined through more masculine traits and exemplified by white men.

### Perceptions of Electability

Though research finds that female candidates are just as likely to win elections as men, women – and the public more generally – believe that it is more difficult for women to win

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<sup>25</sup> Martha A. Ackelsberg, 2021. "Broadening the Study of Women's Participation." In *Women and American Politics*, ed. Susan J. Carroll (New York: Oxford University Press), 25.

<sup>26</sup> Cathy J. Cohen, 2003. "A Portrait of Continuing Marginality: The Study of Women of Color in American Politics 1." In *Women and American Politics*, ed. Susan J. Carroll (New York: Oxford University Press), 191.

<sup>27</sup> Cohen, "Study of Women of Color in American Politics," 204.

<sup>28</sup> Rishika Dugyala, "Women Predominate Among the Most Disengaged Voters," *Politico* (February 19, 2020). <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/02/19/women-predominate-among-chronic-nonvoters-111770>.

elections.<sup>29</sup> This reflects the fact that ideas about political leadership are gendered. Marianne Githens notes that even after women won the right to vote, they were not recruited to run for political office and did not see themselves as eligible; the few women who defied these expectations ran symbolic campaigns designed to increase public support for particular reforms rather than realistic hopes of election.<sup>30</sup> As noted above, women have a long history of involvement in political involvement, despite the fact that electoral politics is generally considered the dominant form of political participation and has traditionally associated with white men. Because activities such as breadwinning, ambition, and traditional political participation are associated with men and questioned when engaged in by women, women have faced societal perceptions that they are less suitable candidates.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Lynne Ford writes about the effect of patriarchal culture and how it plays a role in unequal gender proportions in different areas of life, such as professions and education.<sup>30</sup> Ford writes that “in a patriarchal culture, male characteristics are valued more highly than female qualities and femininity is marginalized,” further suggesting that “it is how society interprets differences and values one quality over another that has the greatest impact on women’s lives.”<sup>32</sup>

In addition to gender socialization, prevailing gender role expectations and masculinized attitudes about leadership may discourage women from seeing themselves as viable candidates. Kathleen Dolan cites the way voters view female candidates as a potential disincentive for women candidates, although she finds that there is little evidence to support the belief that stereotypes alter voters’ decision.<sup>33</sup> Voters tend to ascribe stereotyped competencies and personality traits to male and female candidates, judging female candidates to be more compassionate, honest, and responsive to constituents and viewing men as more competent, decisive, and strong.<sup>34</sup> While both men and women expressed a preference for male political

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<sup>29</sup> Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg and Nancy Thomas, *Civic Engagement and Political Leadership among Women – a Call for Solutions* (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, May 2013). [https://circle.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/2019-12/civic\\_engagement\\_political\\_leadership\\_women\\_2013.pdf](https://circle.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/2019-12/civic_engagement_political_leadership_women_2013.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox, “Why Are Women Still Not Running for Office?” *Issues in Governance Studies* no. 14 (May 2008): 1–20.

<sup>31</sup> Marianne Githens, 2003, “Accounting for Women’s Political Involvement: The Perennial Problem of Recruitment.” In *Women and American Politics*, by Susan J. Carroll. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0198293488.001.0001>, 35.

<sup>32</sup> Lynne Ford, 2017, *Women and Politics: The Pursuit of Equality*. 4th ed. Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/Women-and-Politics-The-Pursuit-of-Equality/Ford/p/book/9780813350813>.

<sup>33</sup> Kathleen Dolan, 2014, “Gender Stereotypes, Candidate Evaluations, and Voting for Women Candidates: What Really Matters?” *Political Research Quarterly* 67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912913487949>, 97.

<sup>34</sup> Dolan, “Gender Stereotypes.”

leadership in the past, the reality today is that women candidates are seen as having some comparative advantages and are therefore just as likely to win as men.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, even if female candidates are just as viable as male candidates, the perception of an uneven playing field may discourage women from running in the first place. Lawless and Fox found that women and men perceived electoral contests quite differently, with women judging elections to be more competitive, anticipating that they would have a harder time raising money, believing that it is more difficult for a woman to be elected than for a man, and rating their odds of winning their first race as much less likely than men did.<sup>36</sup> Given expectations that female candidates may be held to higher standards, subject to more biased media coverage, and less likely to win party and voter support, women may be more reluctant to throw themselves into a “man’s game” of competitive politics.<sup>37</sup>

The real complication of this situation is that women have been fighting for over a hundred years to become autonomous individuals and the same women who told me they were feminists and understand the real impact that societal norms have on women would also fall into the habit that society had set for them. It is difficult to describe, but the concerns and fears they face are due to societal reasons. It is hard to say do not be afraid or nervous about x because x is a social construct, it cannot hurt you. Rather, I have found that addressing sexism and the systems that one interviewee talked about, is one of the ways to make it more accessible for them through understanding what they are up against. Once a woman can name the issue and see its effect, she takes personal responsibility and decides to run.

### The Ambition Gap

One of the explanations for the gap in women’s representation focuses on the fact that women are less likely than men to have political ambition to run for office. This is related more generally to a confidence gap that discourages many women from seeking leadership roles. A 2018 Pew Research Center Survey of views on women in politics found that the majority of both women and men said it is easier for a man to get elected.<sup>38</sup> A strong majority also said that a

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<sup>35</sup> Dolan, “Gender Stereotypes.”

<sup>36</sup> Lawless and Fox, “Why Are Women?”

<sup>37</sup> Kelly Dittmar 2015; Kristin Kanthak and Jonathan Woon, 2015, cited by Katie M. Gordon, “Candidate Emergence as Movement Mobilization: An Analysis of Women’s Post-2016 Electoral Engagement,” *Sociology Compass* 15, no. 6 (2021): e12878, <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12878>.

<sup>38</sup> Horowitz et al., “Women and Leadership 2018.”

major reason for fewer women in high political office was because women had to do more to prove themselves worthy of the position.<sup>39</sup> In addition to the mistaken yet pervasive view that women make less viable candidates, scholars have pointed to a so-called confidence gap between women - who are much more likely to underestimate their qualifications - and men, who are more likely to overestimate their qualifications. Katty Kay and Claire Shipman write that overqualified women all too often hold back, while underqualified men are less likely to have such qualms when it comes to professions.<sup>40</sup> This means that women are much less likely to see themselves as qualified to run for political office or put themselves forward for other leadership positions. As Senator Susan Collins (R-Me.) said, “Far too often, smart, capable women simply talk themselves out of running for office. ... [A] woman will think that in order to discuss trade policy, she needs a PhD in economics; a man who sells Hondas considers himself an expert.”<sup>41</sup>

In this regard, the ambition gap can be seen in career paths that women pursue. The ambition to become a CEO of a company or to become a school teacher is different for women than it is for men. This has been discussed and analyzed by researchers like Lawless and Fox who suggest that the careers and overall treatment of young women and their professions are impacted by gender discrimination.<sup>42</sup> As mentioned earlier, leaders are expected to possess masculine traits, so men are seen to be more naturally suited for the position of a CEO than women are.

The ambition gap is also seen in the aspirations of how men and women see the best way to make change is. Lawless and Fox reported that college age women and men have very different views when asked about the most effective way to bring about societal change; women were more likely to put working for a charity than their male counterparts. The men were more likely to put running for elective office as the way to improve society.<sup>43</sup> From a young age, women are more likely than men to exhibit a tendency to diminish and undervalue their skills and achievements, and this is due to the constant message that it is only appropriate for boys to

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<sup>39</sup> Horowitz et al., “Women and Leadership 2018.”

<sup>40</sup> Katty Kay and Claire Shipman, “The Confidence Gap,” *The Atlantic*, April 15, 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/05/the-confidence-gap/359815/>.

<sup>41</sup> Susan Collins quoted in Ford, *Women and Politics*.

<sup>42</sup> Richard L. Fox and Jennifer L. Lawless, “Entering the Arena? Gender and the Decision to Run for Office,” *American Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 2 (2004): 264–80, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1519882>.

<sup>43</sup> Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox, *Girls Just Wanna Not Run: The Gender Gap in Young Americans’ Political Ambition* (Washington, DC, 2013), [https://www.american.edu/spa/wpi/upload/girls-just-wanna-not-run\\_policy-report.pdf](https://www.american.edu/spa/wpi/upload/girls-just-wanna-not-run_policy-report.pdf), 16.

be confident, assertive, and self-promoting.<sup>44</sup> Fox and Lawless note that young women are less likely to believe they have the relevant skills for running for office and are less likely to be socialized to think about politics as a career path.<sup>45</sup> Young boys are more likely to receive encouragement from influential adults (family members, teachers, coaches, etc.) to pursue politics and are more likely to have/be given leadership experiences.<sup>46</sup> The external attitudes, stereotypes, and socialized roles impact the ambition and confidence of a possible female candidate. Morgan Eckwall writes that the socialization of traditional gender roles has influenced people to consider men to be more qualified for political office, which generates a negative self-perception where women feel they are less qualified to run for office.<sup>47</sup>

### Role Model Effect

The role model effect is another popular theory on candidate emergence of women. The theory suggests that when women see other women successfully engaging in politics, women's political engagement and sense of empowerment increases. In addition, women of color who successfully run for office have been found to encourage other women of color to become active in politics and run for office.<sup>48</sup> David Campbell and Christina Wolbrecht focus on the effect of female role models on the actions and attitudes of adolescent girls, finding that the presence of such role models increases girls' desire to discuss and participate in politics; while female role models had an empowering effect on adult women as well, the greatest impact was found among young girls.<sup>49</sup> This is due to the fact that adolescent girls are in a time of their life where they can still be impacted by political socialization.<sup>50</sup> Women who are already established in a profession and have their own customs are not going to be impacted to the same extent as young women and adolescents.

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<sup>44</sup> Lawless and Fox, *Girls Just Wanna Not Run*, 13.

<sup>45</sup> Lawless and Fox, *Girls Just Wanna Not Run*, 15.

<sup>46</sup> Lawless and Fox, *Girls Just Wanna Not Run*, 12.

<sup>47</sup> Lawless and Fox, *Girls Just Wanna Not Run*, 13.

<sup>48</sup> Kira Sanbonmatsu, "Why Not a Woman of Color? The Candidacies of US Women of Color for Statewide Executive Office," Oxford Handbooks Online, September 2015.

<sup>49</sup> David E. Campbell and Christina Wolbrecht, "See Jane Run: Women Politicians as Role Models for Adolescents," *The Journal of Politics* 68, no. 2 (May 2006): 233–47, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00402.x>.

<sup>50</sup> Campbell and Wolbrecht, "See Jane Run," 234.

Continuing their research on the role model effect on adolescent girls, Campbell and Wolbrecht examine the impact of Hillary Clinton's defeat in the 2016 election.<sup>51</sup> The authors found that girls who identified as Democrats became more disillusioned with the American political system. However, instead of making them stray away from politics, their findings suggest that young Democratic girls became more politically involved.<sup>52</sup> Their involvement increased when they had somebody in their life accompany them to protests and/or discussed politics.<sup>53</sup> This means that not only are adolescent girls and young women being impacted by a prominent female candidate like Hillary Clinton, but they are also being inspired and empowered by proximate individuals in their families and communities.

### Political Parties

Yet another explanation for women's underrepresentation focuses on the role of political parties. Since most party leaders are male, studies have investigated whether this produces a bias in favor of male candidates. David Niven (1998) found that party elites encouraged younger, less experienced men to run, while women were only supported if they had extensive experience and usually strong backgrounds.<sup>54</sup> Research on the role of political parties and candidate emergence finds significant variations between Democrats and Republicans. Sarah Fulton and Heather Ondercin write that the sex of a candidate conveys ideological information that permits voters to make swifter judgments especially in the case of Democratic female candidates.<sup>55</sup> Voters associate the personality traits and issue preferences of female candidates with the traits and issue preferences of Democrats more generally. In both cases, voters expect candidates to be more liberal, compassionate and supportive of social welfare issues. Women who run as GOP candidates create mixed expectations, leading to reduced support.<sup>56</sup> Overall, the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) reports that there is a declining number of Republican women, while there is an increase of female Democrats, which is due to how polarized politics

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<sup>51</sup> David E. Campbell and Christina Wolbrecht, "How Donald Trump Helped Turn Teenage Girls into Political Activists," *Washington Post*, March 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/03/01/how-donald-trump-helped-turn-teenage-girls-into-political-activists/>.

<sup>52</sup> Campbell and Wolbrecht, "Teenage Girls into Political Activists."

<sup>53</sup> Campbell and Wolbrecht, "Teenage Girls into Political Activists."

<sup>54</sup> David Niven, "Party Elites and Women Candidates," *Women & Politics* 19, no. 2 (April 21, 1998): 57–80, [https://doi.org/10.1300/J014v19n02\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/J014v19n02_03).

<sup>55</sup> Heather L. Ondercin and Sarah A. Fulton, "Bargain Shopping: How Candidate Sex Lowers the Cost of Voting," *Politics & Gender* 16, no. 3 (September 2020): 711–37, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X19000254>.

<sup>56</sup> Ondercin and Fulton, "Bargain Shopping," 683–684.

has become.<sup>57</sup> The political party has become increasingly polarized which could either hinder or encourage a possible candidate from running in a time when politics are hostile.

### Family Constraints

Other explanations of women's greater reluctance to run for political office focus on the impact that campaigning and office holding would have on their families. Rachel Bernhard, Shauna Shames, and Dawn Langan Teele find that women avoid running for office when they are breadwinners responsible for making money and supporting their family.<sup>58</sup> The authors suggest that resource constraints pose a greater obstacle for working women than working men due to the fact that working women perform a much greater share of household labor. In addition to the demands of this "second shift," female breadwinners are much more likely than male breadwinners to be primary caregivers as well.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, scholars such as Michael Miller suggest that the time that women devote to their campaign is greater than the time that men devote to their campaign.<sup>60</sup> In a survey of state legislative candidates, Miller found that when women decided to run for office, they were more likely to forgo employment.<sup>61</sup> So, the time it takes to run for office is a significant cost as well, which can keep women from their career and from their home and family. Evidently, a woman may not decide to run for office because of the financial costs involved.

Similarly, there is evidence to suggest that once women do decide to commit there are organizations such as Political Action Committees (PACs) that can help raise money for a specific candidate and does so through grassroots campaigning. An example of this is a person donating specifically to a PAC that is for female candidates. Through the organization they distribute funds to each candidate. For this reason, candidates do not have to be overly involved in the fundraising process and the time it occupies. Another realm that was discussed earlier is the role of the party and possible funding it could offer. Parties tend to wait to support a

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<sup>57</sup> Carrie Blazina and Drew Desilver, "A Record Number of Women Are Serving in the 117th Congress," *Pew Research Center* (blog), accessed April 25, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/15/a-record-number-of-women-are-serving-in-the-117th-congress/>.

<sup>58</sup> Rachel Bernhard, Shauna Shames, and Dawn Langan Teele, "To Emerge? Breadwinning, Motherhood, and Women's Decisions to Run for Office," *American Political Science Review* 115, no. 2 (May 2021): 379–94, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000970>.

<sup>59</sup> Bernhard et al., "To Emerge?" 390–391.

<sup>60</sup> Michael G Miller, "Going All-in: Gender and Campaign Commitment," *Research & Politics* 2, no. 3 (July 1, 2015): 2053168015605105, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168015605105>.

<sup>61</sup> Miller, "Going All-in," 6.

candidate until the general election. During the primaries, candidates must raise money on their own or receive financial assistance and campaign training from a sympathetic PAC.

Theories that focus on the confidence gap bring in strong evidence that women tend to underestimate their abilities while men tend to overestimate theirs; this gendered disparity in confidence highlights one of the factors that discourage women from running for political office or seeking leadership positions more generally. The confidence gap not only reflects psychological factors but also stems from social factors, including gender socialization and perceptions of women's electability. Women's decision to run for political office is strongly influenced by others, as demonstrated by the role model effect and by research findings that women are more likely to run for office if someone else suggests that they do. Women's emergence as candidates is also impacted by the decisions of party leaders, who play an important role in recruiting and encouraging candidates. While parties provide critical support for their candidates in general elections, candidates must generally raise their own funds for the primaries. This places many women, especially those who are mothers and breadwinners, at a disadvantage although PACs can provide critical funding and training.

## Chapter 2. The Eye-Opening Moment that Gets Women to Run

The explanations discussed in Chapter 1 all point to the complex interaction of different influences on women's participation in politics, whether as voters, activists, or candidates. Women who may consider running for political office are motivated by multiple factors, and they face different constraints depending on their race, ethnicity and partisan affiliation. Yet in addition to analyzing general factors such as gendered patterns of socialization that discourage young women from expressing leadership qualities and ambition or the traditional dominance of white men as politicians and party leaders, it is important to consider the individual stories of women candidates and their personal reasons for running. While these stories are as varied as the women candidates themselves, there is a common thread through these stories that shows that women are motivated to run for office because of a heightened sense of personal responsibility.

What creates this sense of personal responsibility? Research finds that women are more likely than men to make decisions about candidacy that are relationally-embedded, “influenced by the beliefs and reactions, both real and perceived, of other people and to involve considerations of how candidacy and officeholding would affect the lives of others with whom the potential candidate has close relationships.”<sup>62</sup> As noted in Chapter 1, women's emergence as candidates is strongly impacted by recruitment and encouragement by others, as well as through indirect encouragement in the form of role models. Moreover, when women see political office as a path to solving problems and making positive policy change, they are more likely to run.<sup>63</sup> Thus, women do not necessarily need to have nascent ambition since “ambition and candidacy can arise simultaneously, courtesy of catalyzing forces like encouragement or shifting political contexts that alter their cost-benefit calculations.”<sup>64</sup>

My argument builds on the theories mentioned in chapter 1 but adds an important focus on the catalyzing effect that specific experiences and events can have. While incremental cultural shifts in gendered patterns of socialization and an increase in the number of women as role models may gradually increase women's confidence in running for office, I show that the

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<sup>62</sup> Susan J. Carroll and Kira Sanbonmatsu, *More Women Can Run: Gender and Pathways to the State Legislatures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 45.

<sup>63</sup> Shauna Shames, *Out of the Running: Why Millennials Reject Career Politics and Why It Matters* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).

<sup>64</sup> “Unfinished Business: Women Running in 2018 and Beyond” [report] (Rutgers University, Center for Women and Politics) <https://womenrun.rutgers.edu/2018-report/>.

motivation to run for office often arises out of a sense of personal responsibility to address a particular problem or issue. This stems in part from the fact that women often feel a special sense of responsibility for their families and communities, a reflection in part of gendered norms that associate women with family. In addition, research shows that emotions like anxiety, anger, urgency – often cued by perceptions of threat – can motivate political engagement or action, particularly among groups who see themselves or their interests most at risk.<sup>65</sup> Evidence from 2016 and 2018 shows these emotions mobilized activism and voter turnout among progressives, women, and communities of color.<sup>66</sup> In a study of Black women who participated in the Women’s March on Washington on January 21, 2017, Tehama Lopez Bunyasi and Candis Watts Smith found that the Black women at the Women’s March were motivated by an acute sense of threat to the rights of women and marginalized groups and expressed concern for their families, communities and the nation, as conveyed by a 34-year-old woman from Maryland who wrote, “I am participating because I want the new Administration to see that the American people will not sit by passively while they are in office, and this kicks off my activism + advocacy on behalf of my daughter, my family, my community.”<sup>67</sup> While women have been active in social movements for a very long time, the rapid speed at which this protest was organized suggests a strong response to particular events.

Just as the particular conjuncture of events motivated women to organize and protest, it also motivated a number of women to run for office, many of whom had not thought about running or even about politics/ government previously. In 2018, the number of women running for political office surged. The number of female candidates running for the U.S. House increased by 74%, while the number of male candidates increased by less than 20%. This meant that a record number of women filed for, won nomination, and were elected to the U.S. House and Senate in 2018, although gains were concentrated in the Democratic Party.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Joanne M. Miller and Jon A. Krosnick, “Threat as a Motivator of Political Activism: A Field Experiment,” *Political Psychology* 25, no. 4 (August 2004): 507–23, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2004.00384.x>; Nicholas A. Valentino et al., “Is a Worried Citizen a Good Citizen? Emotions, Political Information Seeking, and Learning via the Internet,” *Political Psychology* 29, no. 2 (April 2008): 247–73, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2008.00625.x>.

<sup>66</sup> Tehama Lopez Bunyasi & Candis Watts Smith, “Get in Formation: Black Women’s Participation in the Women’s March on Washington as an Act of Pragmatic Utopianism,” *The Black Scholar*, 48:3 (2018), 4–16.

<sup>67</sup> Bunyasi and Smith, 2018

<sup>68</sup> “By The Numbers,” Center for American Women and Politics (Rutgers University), accessed April 25, 2022, <https://live-ru-womenrun.pantheonsite.io/2018-report/by-the-numbers/>.

A similar surge of women's participation in politics and activism was triggered by anger over the 1991 confirmation hearings for then Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas. A description of the archived footage of the proceedings states, "Televised images of a committee, composed exclusively of white males, sharply questioning an opposing witness—African American law professor Anita Hill—caused many to wonder where the women senators were."<sup>69</sup> The desire to have a woman as a part of the questioning committee was due to the fact that Professor Hill was there to talk about her allegations of sexual assault against the nominee. The confirmation hearings not only raised questions whether Justice Thomas was fit to serve as Supreme Court justice due to these allegations, but the fact that the committee did not have one person who looked or had any experiences similar to Professor Hill shocked many women even more. "Watching the hearings on the West Coast, Washington State Senate member Patty Murray asked herself, 'Who's saying what I would say if I was there?'" Later, at a neighborhood party, as others expressed similar frustrations, Murray spontaneously announced to the group, "You know what? I'm going to run for the Senate."<sup>70</sup>

Patty Murray's frustration with the confirmation hearings and her subsequent determination to run for higher office reflected a broader sense of anger over the status quo and raised demands for change. The data during this time show a significant increase in the number of women who chose to run for political office out of a sense of responsibility to stand up for other women by increasing the number of women in politics. The CAWP reports the percentages of women officeholders at the congressional and statewide elective executive levels. In 1989 the U.S. Congress had a 5% makeup and then in 1993 10.1%. Similarly, the Statewide Elective shows 14% in 1989 and then in 1993 it was reported to be 22.2%.<sup>71</sup> In both levels more than half of the number of women in office increased within two years. The surge of women in politics is what led to 1992 being titled 'The Year of the Woman.'<sup>72</sup>

There have been comparisons made between 1992 and 2018 with the uptick of women running for office after controversial figures were inducted into positions of power. Such surges not only reflect underlying changes in social norms but also suggest that women are often

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<sup>69</sup> "Year of the Woman," U.S. Senate, [https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/year\\_of\\_the\\_woman.htm](https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/year_of_the_woman.htm).

<sup>70</sup> "Year of the Woman."

<sup>71</sup> "Women in Elective Office 2022," <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/current-numbers/women-elective-office-2022>.

<sup>72</sup> "Year of the Woman."

motivated by anger over specific events and a consequent sense of responsibility to take action. The pink wave was and continues to be an attempt to rectify women's underrepresentation in politics and the problems that can arise with an unbalanced distribution of power. Overall, the women ran because they felt responsible for what was happening around them, at the federal level, local level or both. Small scale moments and issues are just as important as the large-scale moments like the #MeToo movement. They carry real implications, one of them being women either speaking up for themselves or for the people around them. In this regard, women become autonomous and take personal responsibility to make change.

As the interviews presented in the next chapter show, women who did not have a history of participating in politics needed an external catalyst to motivate them into action, for example due to a sudden realization that pressing issues would go unaddressed if women did not take personal responsibility for addressing these issues themselves. As one councilwoman explained, "And I don't think I would have had the motivation to really even bother getting involved without that big motivating factor ... I mean it's [Trump's victory] definitely, for a lot of left leaning people, it was a big eye-opening time."<sup>73</sup> After this realization, the councilwoman created a political action committee that supported women and their candidacy, trying to address an issue that she and others were seeing unfold in front of them. She told me that there are fewer people involved in this group compared to June 2018 when they had up to 50 people show up to their meetings. She told me it was because "there's not that motivating bit like there was during the Trump era, no daily reminder that motivated women to get involved politically."<sup>74</sup>

Women are often not included in discussions about politics or about leadership in general, so it is not surprising that only a few women will think of becoming an elected official on their own. This is one of the effects that societal standards and socialization causes. It is so ingrained in women's lives that even the way they see social change being enacted is through community service rather than legislation and policymaking. It is the culmination of factors like networking, organizing, funding, and other structural processes that help women ease into the idea of running. Yet the initial impetus to run for office is not necessarily because women have become knowledgeable about campaigning or acquire ambitions for political office; for many women, the original motivation to run for office is due to a strong sense of personal

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<sup>73</sup> Interviewee 3 from Table 1.

<sup>74</sup> Interviewee 3 from Table 1.

responsibility to address issues that they see within their communities and country that overrides any fears or anxieties they face from possible obstacles.

### Chapter 3. Interview Setup and the Design of the Research

In order to evaluate different theories on candidate emergence and to see how my theory fit into it, I interviewed female candidates about a range of different topics pertaining to their decision to run for office. This qualitative data builds on the findings of social scientists and led me to develop a new theory about motivation.

I identified women candidates to interview by contacting community members at Ursinus College and seeing if they had any connections. The community response was very helpful and gave me around eight women they knew personally and professionally. I was able to reach out to those eight and these interviews had a snowball effect since I asked if they knew any other women and the list grew each day. Overall, I was able to complete 17 interviews this academic year and then an additional five interviews from previous research from the summer of 2021. The interviews on average were around half an hour, with women who had run for local government positions as well as positions in their state legislatures. The interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions that let the interviewee expand on a question or deviate from it by bringing up a point that they found to be more significant to their experience of running for office. The first question I asked was are you comfortable with this being recorded? I had the option to record the majority of my interviews because they were on Zoom and on the phone. The name and specific positions of the women are not listed due to confidentiality of the candidates. The reason for the anonymity of the interviewees was so that they could speak freely without concern of what they are saying. The interviews consisted of questions about stereotypes, education and involvement in school, history of political participation, political party affiliation and networking, funding, and profession as well motherhood.

The women interviewed had run for office in local government and state legislatures. Table 1 provides a full list of interviews, including some basic details about the interviewee, the date when the interview was held, the candidates' political affiliation, the year they ran, and the positions they ran for. One notable detail that emerged from the interviews was the fact that some of the women came into office under unusual circumstances, such as running in an "off" election year or being appointed to office. For example, Interviewee #1 told me that she was elected during an 'off cycle' year and hinted that running during a general or midterm election, instead of a presidential election, lowered the stakes and made it less daunting to run.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Interviewee 1 from Table 1.

Several other interviewees were initially appointed to their positions, which allowed them to avoid the stress that elections can bring, such as campaigning and having to be in the limelight. Interviewee 8 told me she was appointed, and I was able to deduce that this made becoming a public official more accessible for her. I asked her a question about leadership and what it looked like to her.

I never saw myself running for office. I have anxiety and it took me a long time to even open my mouth and speak at Council meetings. There are even times when I'm like 'did I just say that? That sounds weird...' I'm rambling with this one, because it's real, it's hard for me because I've never seen myself as a leader, and I still don't see myself as a leader but I'm a councilmember, so I kind of am a leader, but I still struggle with that concept of leadership, all I can do is emulate what I know.<sup>76</sup>

This response gives crucial insight into psychological factors and how they truly impact people's decisions. This woman in particular told me that she has a hard time seeing herself as a leader and therefore she never saw herself as a viable candidate. Due to her first term being an appointment she was able to enter office without having to campaign. This meant that in a way it was the community and the Council itself asking her to join them, when it is usually the candidate asking the community if she can join their council. The invitation was not random, she was asked to fill the seat due to her extensive engagement with the Council already. The community knew she was qualified for the position even though she did not. The appointment process was more personal and usually involved a political committee asking the women to take on a position. Interviewee 17 had a similar experience with a special election where the Republican Committee contacted her to fill a vacancy. She told me, "A special election is to fill a vacancy, the Committee meets the Republican Committee, and they pick their candidate."<sup>77</sup> This process, she told me, was pretty easy for her because the committee and head figures in the Republican Committee took care of things like making sure that voters would turnout for the special election because it is usually low attendance, so the members would contact loyal voters and urge them to vote.

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<sup>76</sup> Interviewee 8 from Table 1.

<sup>77</sup> Interviewee 17 from Table 1.

**Table 1. Information on Interviews**

Interviewee Number	Date of Interview	Political Party	Year they Ran	Position	Nature of Election	Profession
1	2/11/2022	Republican	2019	Township Auditor	General Election	Finance
2	2/11/2022	Democrat	2020	State Representative	Presidential Election	Lawyer
3	2/12/2022	Democrat	2017	Councilmember	General Election	Higher Educator
4	2/13/2022	Democrat	2017	Councilmember	General Election	Librarian
5	2/15/2022	Democrat	2022	State Representative	Primary Election	Teacher
6	2/16/2022	Democrat	2018	State Senator	General Election	Lawyer and then Nurse
7	2/18/2022	Democrat	1998	Councilmember	Gubernatorial Election	Communications
8	2/19/2022	Democrat	2018	Councilmember	Appointment	Editor
9	2/19/2022	Republican	2019	School Board Member	General Election	Teacher
10	2/21/2022	Democrat	2018	Councilmember	Gubernatorial Election	CEO and Teacher
11	2/22/2022	Democrat	2019	Councilmember	General Election, one of three on a slate	Veteran and Administrator and CEO of Nonprofit
12	2/22/2022	Democrat	2008	State Representative	Presidential Election through Caucus	Teacher
13	2/25/2022	Democrat	2020	Councilmember	Appointment	Dentist
14	2/28/2022	Democrat	2020	State Senator	Presidential Election	Policy Maker
15	3/1/2022	Democrat	2020	Councilmember	Presidential Election, one of three on a slate	Community Service/ Volunteer
16	3/4/2022	Republican	2008	Councilmember	Appointment	Lawyer
17	3/15/2022	Republican	1980	State Representative	Special Election	Teacher and then Lawyer

If a candidate could not answer a question, then I would move on to another question that could help me get an understanding of their motives for running and how they felt during their first election. More than half of the women I interviewed were new to politics, which offered a very different interview and discussion from the women who have been in elected office for the past 20 years. Interviewee 17 offered an interesting perspective as a woman who entered office at least 30 years before the other interviewees. She was originally a teacher and then switched to law and acquired a job at the District Attorney's office. She was one of eight women who served in her first term and then maybe an additional two women would join within her 13 years of service.

One of the things that I noticed was more women typically ran for office having been involved with their communities and so that was what moved them. I had a traditional male trajectory, lawyer prosecutor which I think kind of helped me to fit in more easily [while in office], because when I joined the District Attorney's office there were 29 men so I was used to a completely dominant male environment.<sup>78</sup>

At her job her colleagues would look around the room for someone to take notes during a meeting and they asked Interviewee 17 if she could take notes, and she told them, "I'm the only woman here, I'm not taking notes" and as she told me this story, she was surprised at her own boldness but attributes it to how her father raised her. This boldness did not stop when she took office, because something as natural as pregnancy shifted the way her colleagues treated her.

Pregnancy is not inherently bold, but it was when she was in office during the 80s. She told me,

It was funny being pregnant there [in office], because all the comfort I had as being one of the guys was not true when I was pregnant. You could just tell the discomfort they had, 'like this pregnant woman is here and then I'll think about the fact that you have a baby.' Because the guys in that era weren't taking care of the babies themselves anyway, they would occasionally ask me well, 'who's changing his diaper' I'm like, 'well, you know men can do that too.'<sup>79</sup>

Her comment "guys in that era" shows how the gendered differences she faced in the 80s is different from what women face today. However, this is not the case because women I spoke to who ran post-2016 reflected about being a mom while in office. Some women would say that since they were not moms, which it made it easier for them to decide to run because it meant they could devote more time into their responsibilities in office.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Interviewee 17 from Table 1.

<sup>79</sup> Interviewee 17 from Table 1.

<sup>80</sup> Interviewee 5; Interviewee 10; both from Table 1.

Finally, the profession column provides information on the professional background that the interviewees had and shows a wide array of occupational backgrounds. While some had the type of professional experience in law and business commonly associated with political office, others had previous experience as a teacher, a volunteer, or a nurse. This brings up an interesting contrast to the notion that politicians have to be lawyers or be in a very skilled position before running. It also confirms findings from an earlier study of female and male state legislators which demonstrated that women were significantly more likely than men to have professional backgrounds in teaching, health care and nonprofit work.<sup>63</sup>

The interviews offered real-life stories and experiences, which helped me understand women's decision to run for office. As the next chapter shows, women may be influenced by events and issues that create a sense of personal responsibility to run for office. In some cases, important community issues arise; in other cases, events stimulate a greater sense of gender consciousness. In either case, the women who ran for office expressed a sense of responsibility, if not urgency, to become active in politics.

## Chapter 4. Interview Responses and Analysis

Academic scholars have researched the particular challenges that female candidates face while campaigning for office and find that – contrary to common expectations – women do not have a tougher time getting elected, there are relatively few gender differences in media coverage, and partisanship rather than gender stereotypes determine voters' choices.<sup>81</sup> Unlike in the past, women are not discouraged from running and are just as successful as men in fundraising. Nonetheless, women generally remain more reluctant to run for office and need greater encouragement to do so. As I heard from the women I spoke to their decision to run was not based solely on a calculation of their chances for success, but stemmed from a strong sense of personal responsibility. Interviewee 7 told me,

In general, women get involved in politics for causes we see something in our community that we want to change. We go and do it where frankly, most men are in it for the power, you know and the glory. And I think as women, I don't feel powerful I just feel like I have a job to do.

The initial decision came from a motivating factor, which was a concern for family or community, a desire to advocate for beliefs and attributes they value, or from a feeling of imperativeness to address an issue or an event.

As noted in Chapter 3, a number of the women interviewed did not consider for running for political office until encouraged to do so and none of the respondents suggested that they had received encouragement to run for office from an early age.<sup>82</sup> This conforms to research that shows that young men are more likely than young women to have been encouraged to run for office. In addition, girls are more likely to be socialized into downplaying and doubting their political skills since confidence, assertiveness and competitiveness are not valued as highly in girls as in boys.<sup>83</sup> Participation in some form of political activism or leadership within the community is the first step to entering politics but women tend to need strong external motivation in order to overcome their reluctance to enter the fray of politics. Accountability and responsibility are something that the majority of interviewees emphasized, noting that they would have felt guilty or ashamed if they did not try to affect political change. It is after this reckoning that the entrance into politics and community leadership happens.

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<sup>81</sup> Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox, *Women, Men and U.S. Politics: Ten Big Questions* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2018), 57-63.

<sup>82</sup> Lawless and Fox, 65-66.

<sup>83</sup> Fox and Lawless, 46-47.

### Reliable and Responsible

When women first enter the political arena, they usually play a secondary role, joining a local political organization, attending local political meetings, following and posting political content on social media, and developing a variety of networks. It is through these groups that they became a part of a larger community that also had the ability to help them campaign. Of course, the local level required significantly less campaigning and funding than a candidate running for the state legislature. Interviewee 8 was always interested in politics, but in a passive form, like viewing debates, the State of the Union address and other political showings. She told me that her most active part in politics before she ran was when she voted. Her decision to run for town council came after she attended a council meeting and saw how something as simple and non-polarizing as deciding to install a recreational element to the town became a debate. She also told me that members of the council would say offensive comments and personal jabs at other councilmembers.<sup>84</sup> Interviewee 8 reflected on the lack of attendance to the council meetings meant that the council members would not change if no one stepped up to took their place. She took on that obligation and was appointed for her first term and then ran unopposed for reelection. The reelection was almost too easy for her and said that she wants it to get to a point where she does have an opponent but the interest in participating in politics is not there for a lot of people in her town. This is something that she wants to work on during her term in office. For Americans to get involved, especially for Americans who have long been the minority in politics and suffer from marginalization to an extent because of certain laws and policies, there has to be an external factor, such as advocating for someone or for an issue or react to an event that can get Americans to reflect on civic duties.

Despite the fact that interviewee 8 became a successful councilwoman, she said that she would probably not run for statewide office because she is a woman who doesn't really like to be at the front and center, she is someone who does not really like tension and likes the aspect of how down to earth the local council is. After saying this she also said to never say never though. What makes conversations like this one so interesting is the realization of societal standards echoing through us, the same words that the women are trying so hard to fight against. The local officials would talk in detail about their history and reiterate the statistics about women needing

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<sup>84</sup> Interviewee 8 from Table 1.

to be asked over six times before they decide to run for office. They could relate to this, saying it was true for them. When asked if they had any ambition to advance to higher office, they would say ‘oh no way’, and then I could see an outward realization that they were guilty of the same ambition gap that they pointed to in others.

Interviewee 6 never would have considered running before, but when the incumbent who was in his position for 40 years and made no changes was up for reelection, she thought this was the perfect opportunity. He ended up retiring and paved the way for his son to take over his seat. Even though the son grew up in politics and thus had a lot of knowledge due to the privileges his upbringing gave, the interviewee recognized that his upbringing and experience was not reflective of hers or the other constituents, so this motivated her to take responsibility for not only her family but also her community. She wanted someone in office who could advocate for her due to the fact that she had a family member with leukemia. As she said, she wanted a representative who would understand the price of keeping loved ones alive and realized that she had to be that person. She is passionate about making sure her family has an advocate because it could literally be life or death for them if they are not able to pay medical bills. This was one of the responsibilities she felt that led her into politics, but the first time she understood that politics was the way to enact this change was from her father. She told me about her dad, and that he lived in Greece during World War II and how he cautioned her about being mindful of what she says in public after Trump was elected. He was scared for his family because he saw similarities of the attitudes present during WWII and during President Trump’s campaign. It was after this she asked herself, “Who is representing me? Are they sharing my voice?” She had a critical self-realization that led her to be responsible for those around her.

Interviewee 12 was another woman who reflected on the importance of representatives as role models. Before she was a state representative, she was an educator for high school students up until she was elected in 2008. She was very involved (and continues to be) in her community, going to church, attending parent-teacher organization meetings, and eventually becoming involved politically when she started campaigning for a candidate she really approved of. As an educator, she told me, the school system was underfunded, and they lacked a lot of necessary resources, and the overall size of her classes were too large for her to keep up with. She saw this candidate as someone who would advocate for her and her students, so after months of helping campaign and canvassing around the town she was approached by the same campaign to also run

for office. She received a call and was asked if she wanted to run for an open position, she said no at first. She told me,

I had several people call me and they said ‘well think about it’ and I slept on it a couple of nights and then I started feeling pretty guilty and because I’ve been teaching teenagers, you know juniors and seniors in high school, teaching government. I was always telling them that they should be involved and that they should step up and do things and I felt a little bit like a hypocrite about saying no. After a few days I was approached again and then I said, ‘Well okay.’<sup>85</sup>

After reflecting on her role as a leader as a teacher and ultimately being a role model to her students she felt responsible for them. After telling me her background as an educator and how she was approached and that she felt responsible for her students she didn’t think she was going to win. “As a schoolteacher, a woman, and a Democrat [running in a majority Republican area], it was very likely that I would lose that election, so I thought ‘well okay I’ll do my part civically, but you know it is not likely that ill actually have to do this.’” What is surprising is that she ended up running for reelection almost six times after this. I asked her why she continued to serve, and she told me that she was maybe one of over 100 representatives who had ever been in a classroom before. The responsibility she felt for students and teachers throughout the state is what kept her running for office despite her harsh attitude toward being a politician, which she saw as having to be in the forefront, something she did not want.

### Obligation to Advocate Values

Most of the women I spoke with did not see running for office as a way to address the issues in their community. The reason behind this is that they never saw it as an option that was afforded to them. This echoes the extensive research Fox and Lawless have done on the topic of ambition. It also brings up the topic of women having to be asked to run for office to even considerate it being an option. An example of this can be seen through interviewee 11. She caught what she calls ‘the bug to run’ after being approached by an old classmate during a college reunion in 2010. Her friend is someone who is already in the political realm, he is well connected to different political figures and departments.

He said, ‘Hey [interviewee 11’s name] when are you running for office?’ I asked him what he meant and he replied, ‘You built a perfect profile. The profile of a politician graduated from a prestigious university, you’re a veteran, you started your own nonprofit. That’s what politicians do that is a making of a politician.’ I had never considered that,

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<sup>85</sup> Interviewee 12 from Table 1.

that wasn't my goal, it wasn't even on my radar, but after [he planted the idea of running] I started looking into it and ended up applying to fill an empty seat on the local school board. I didn't get it, but I kept going to meetings and more meetings.<sup>86</sup>

When she told me this story it was similar to the women I had talked with before, that the thought of running for office was never an option for them. What interviewee 11 was able to do was make the connection that what she is passionate about, making sustainable change, would be best achieved through the position of an elected official. Interviewee 11 has always felt responsible, as the oldest of four kids to a single mother, a veteran, and an active community member. She had not seen herself as an "innate leader" and did not see elected office as a way to continue her responsibilities until her friend planted that idea.

Interviewee 11 has many skills and qualities that make her a great leader and changemaker. Throughout our conversation she repeated how structures and systems were a core way to make the change she wanted to see. Her previous profession as a soldier showed her institutional formations that can structure the way a group of people are impacted. Additionally, through her work in business administration, she understood how to bring about structural change through implementing trainings. Her understanding of how structures and systems can solve a lot of the injustices she was seeing in the work with her nonprofit. Interviewee 11 is a woman who sees problems as challenges, and this eventually led to an aspiration to run for office. While her nonprofit addressed some of the issues more immediately, she wanted to see long term resolutions and that is one of the core reasons why she followed through with the encouragement that her friend gave her over a decade ago.

Outspoken little girls are taught from a young age to be quiet and to not disturb the class. This habit has made it hard for women to find their voice and see it as something that has value and worth. This can lead to young women not wanting to take the lead of things until they develop those skills. An example of this is what interviewee 5 said after I asked her what leadership meant to her.

I feel like as a kid I never saw myself as a leader, I saw myself as a kid who talked too much. I was always the kid who had their hand raised and the teacher would skip over me. I once got an award in high school that said, 'talks the most, says the least', and that really hurt my feelings, I was talking about [what was on my mind]. When I went to college I really tried to learn to listen, not to respond, but to listen *to listen*. It served me really well academically and all of the sudden I started seeing opportunities for leadership, and I think part of that was because of that sort of shift in my way of listening

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<sup>86</sup> Interviewee 11 from Table 1.

to people. I first saw myself as a leader when I joined student organizations where I helped with programming events and thinking about what gets people motivated to participate in events. I got asked to do other things and included in conversations. So that is when I really started to see myself as a leader, rather than just as a kid who talks too much.<sup>87</sup>

When interviewee 5 told me this story of her leadership forming out of how she viewed herself and her skills, I instantly was struck by how the new skills she learned like active listening made her more confident in herself. In her story from a young age to her late teens, she was told she talked too much, indirectly by teachers skipping over her and directly through the demeaning award. Despite the veiled misogyny she faced when she was younger, she had a desire to develop her skills, showing just how much aspiration and accountability matters. As discussed in Chapter 2, women are less likely to see themselves as leaders when society values more masculine traits and encourages these in boys but not in girls. The ‘talks the most, says the least’ award was obviously the result of societal standards about what is appropriate for girls to do. Despite both indirect and very direct socializing the interviewee faced growing up she still wanted to talk and have conversations with her peers and was able to successfully do just that. Throughout our conversation it became clearer to me that through her involvement and experiences she was able to recognize her qualities as a leader. Her confidence in her abilities and skills is what made her follow through with the idea of running for office. When I asked her if it was her experience that made her think about running, she told me, “I was able to think about what mattered to me, and what I valued in the volunteer groups and use that to figure out where I belonged, as far as running for office.”

Interviewee 5’s involvement in groups dedicated to community service helped her identify what exactly was important to her and it turned out that running was a way to act on them. Multiple women spoke to me about values they held that got them to run for office. An example of this is interviewee 2, who was very involved in school throughout the years and when she reached law school the trend did not falter. Her consistent, almost habitual involvement and leadership made it unsurprising to her friends and family when she announced her candidacy to run against an incumbent state representative. However, it took other people’s confirmation that she should act on one of her values, which was true representation through democratic means. She was upset that the Democratic party supported a candidate without seeing the results

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<sup>87</sup> Interviewee 5 from Table 1.

of a primary. The Democratic Party at the state level “circumvent the people and did not let us vote for [who wanted as our] State Representative.”<sup>88</sup> She ran against her state representative and did not win, but her passion for democratic values is what ultimately made her feel responsible that she was the woman who could defend democracy.<sup>89</sup>

### Urgency and a Sense of Duty

The polarization that ensued from the 2016 election has made many Americans worry about their country, believing that only their political party is correct and the other party could take away their rights. There is a sense of fear among many Americans, something that was not the case half a century ago. The fears that many women had about sexual assault, reproductive rights and open expressions of misogyny as Donald Trump was campaigning for the presidency combined to convince a lot of the women that their worst fears were going to come true if Trump was elected. His sexist remarks and openly misogynist comments made them worry that the progress they made could easily be taken away with an executive order. The complacency women had about their lives was being threatened and led many women to think again about the role they play in their communities.

There was a general understanding that democracy and representation mattered to these women but for the majority of my interviewees it was the election of 2016 and the disillusionment they felt from it that awoke them from an almost dreamlike state of government being something that worked for you automatically, that you can glide through your life as an individual and those in office had it in the bag. The shock of the election results made many interviewees reflect and say something along the lines of, ‘when is his babysitter getting here?’ A comment at how President Trump was underqualified for the job.

I didn't even know how some of my friends voted, I had no idea how a lot of them voted, we never talked about politics, until Trump. *Then* we were constantly having venting sessions, and then I learned that a lot of the people I am around are on the same page politically as me. I don't think this is politics, I think it's values, I think that we divide ourselves among our values, like being pro-choice, pro-education, pro-equity, pro-gay marriage and so on.

What got interviewee 15 to show up was the fear and anxiety she faced after the 2016 election. She was already attending council meetings and Democratic committees but did not make that

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<sup>88</sup> Interviewee 5 from Table 1.

<sup>89</sup> Interviewee 5 from Table 1.

decision to run until after she felt she had to take responsibility for what was happening in the country. She started attending council meetings and felt protective of the members who were Democrats that were getting attacked.

Interviewee 15 talked to me about her active role in her community, especially the groups where her kids were involved the most. She was a leader in both the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts because her kids did both. She was also on the boards for PTO, her local library, and volunteered as a caller for a local suicide hotline as well as a hotline for survivors of sexual assault. Her involvement in all of these areas stemmed from feeling responsible for making sure her kids had the best resources possible. She ran for office when her kids were older and she did not play as significant a role in their lives. The night of the 2016 election the councilwoman told me she screamed and cried all night, and that her kids had never seen her that angry before. Her fear and anxieties are what led her to run, and the urgency of the situation is what made her act. I asked interviewee 15 if Trump had run when her kids were still at home and younger whether she would have decided to run. She told me yes, she would, because the anger and fear she felt would have been the same; she said that she would go in a heartbeat. Her motto throughout her life has been “Step up or shut up” meaning try to solve the issue or be quiet about it. It seems that Trump and his presidency were not something she could be quiet about, so she stepped up and took it upon herself to run for office.

The heightened reaction that Interviewee 15 had to Trump’s election was not a solo incident I heard about from the women I interviewed. The confusion and anxiety were the same feelings that Interviewee 10 had, “I remember feeling so scared and frantic right after that election. I was desperately looking for support, answers, hope that it wasn't going to be as horrible as I thought it was going to be, so [I joined several political groups.]”<sup>90</sup> This interviewee notably told me that she was not paying attention to politics or ‘civics’ before the election. She told me, “Prior to 2016 I was pretty much consumed with work” and that her involvement in the community in 2017 was a dramatic shift. She went from zero engagement to being on every board, volunteering for everything, and joining multiple political networks. What Interviewee 10 describes as a ‘dramatic shift’ in her engagement highlights the intense and instantaneous results of urgent personal responsibility.

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<sup>90</sup> Interviewee 10 from Table 1.

What I realized was that I was so sure that Hillary Clinton was going to win that election, I had no doubt whatsoever, I just thought ‘this is how things work’ and then I woke up the next [after the 2016 election] I was like ‘Oh my god, I was wrong about everything.’<sup>91</sup> The feeling of her needing to take responsibility would not have happened if she felt secure and that other people were going to do the work. This is the complacency that many women felt when they saw Hillary Clinton rise to prominence. Yes, she was an obvious role model for women and young girls, but the role model effect offers a more gradual impact than the urgency that women felt when Trump was elected.

Another interviewee told me about how she was prompted into action by Trump’s election. She said, “I wasn’t really involved [politically] before the Access Hollywood tape.”<sup>92</sup> The ‘Access Hollywood Tape’ was released in 2016 a month before the election by the *Washington Post*. Trump is heard having ‘an extremely lewd conversation about women’ with an Access Hollywood reporter behind the scenes of an interview in the tape, originating from 2005.<sup>93</sup> When she heard about the tapes, she thought “There is no way people are going to be okay with this and then for him to win ... it just really shook me to my core.” Then when Trump ended up winning it was hard for her to believe that someone who had said vile words was voted in by millions of Americans. She told me the thoughts she had when she found out, “This was something that many people [are] okay with ... [how can this many people] be all right with this kind of behavior and this hate, really.”<sup>94</sup> It was after the realization that a fair number of Americans were not upset by this that she felt isolated, and then she got very involved and attended the Women’s March. “We didn’t get a female president, but I guess instead we got more women involved in grassroots movements... I don’t know that I would have [run for office] if she had won. So instead of one big success you have like a million others, that’s great, and I think its good.” This comment is interesting because it offers a positive perspective to something that damaged a lot of women’s trust in America’s democracy.

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<sup>91</sup> Interviewee 10 from Table 1.

<sup>92</sup> Interviewee 13 from Table 1.

<sup>93</sup> David A. Fahrenthold, “Trump Recorded Having Extremely Lewd Conversation about Women in 2005,” *Washington Post*, October 8, 2016, sec. Politics, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-recorded-having-extremely-lewd-conversation-about-women-in-2005/2016/10/07/3b9ce776-8cb4-11e6-bf8a-3d26847eed4\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-recorded-having-extremely-lewd-conversation-about-women-in-2005/2016/10/07/3b9ce776-8cb4-11e6-bf8a-3d26847eed4_story.html).

<sup>94</sup> Interviewee 13 from Table 1.

## Chapter 5: Closing Thoughts and Implications

This paper started with an exploration and evaluation of theories about women's emergence as candidates. The theories addressed psychological and social factors that could help explain why fewer women than men decide to run for political office, even though women are competitive candidates. The perception of electability for the women I interviewed was not an explicit concern because they did not even consider entering politics until they felt compelled to do so due to a sense of personal responsibility. Nonetheless, even after successfully running for local office, a number of the women I interviewed indicated that they were not interested in seeking statewide or national office, citing the competitive nature of these races as unappealing.

Women need to know that running for office is an option for them well before they have an “aha moment” that inspires them to run. Many women actively engage in their communities as a reflection of their values and their family and community responsibilities, but fewer women see themselves as actual policymakers. It should not require a sense of anger or urgency to inspire women to run. The surge of women running for office is something that can change how women view politics and increase the number of women who see this as an option. The normalization of having women in office is one of the ways that can make it less of a cultural shock when women are inducted or consider the possibility of running. This role model effect may reduce the ambition and the confidence gap, but changing the societal norms that impact people's perceptions is a very slow, incremental process. These are gradual societal shifts that could get more women to run for office. As Debbie Walsh, director of the Center for American Women and Politics, commented, “If you think that women have had the right to vote for 100 years, and we are still living in a situation where women make up less than 25 percent of members of Congress, [then] this is a process that is painfully slow.”<sup>95</sup> Indeed, according to statistical projections, it will take about 60 years at the current pace to achieve equal representation for women in Congress.<sup>96</sup>

My research and interviews looked at some more immediate results and explored how they can accelerate this gradual process. The reason behind this was the sense of responsibility that the women felt. It was the responsibility to make sure their family or community was being

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<sup>95</sup> Quoted in Sergio Pecanha, “What Will It Take to Achieve Gender Parity in American Politics?” *Washington Post* (August 21, 2020). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/08/21/this-rate-itll-take-60-years-reach-gender-equality-us-politics/>

<sup>96</sup> Pecanha.

taken care of. Not to mention, it could also be the obligation that women felt to uphold their values that made them feel personally responsible. Correspondingly, women also felt an urgency to do something because they felt threatened by particular events. There were times when the three reasons behind a woman taking on personal responsibility was a culmination of things, such as an urgency to be responsible figures in their communities and, in some cases, in their families, or an urgency to defend their values; as Interviewee 15 stated, “I don’t think this is politics, I think it’s values, I think that we divide ourselves among our values, like being pro-choice, pro-education, pro-equity, pro-gay marriage and so on.”<sup>97</sup>

This research shows that something must disturb or enact some kind of reaction in order to convince many women to consider running. For some interviewees, this took the form of anger over the 2016 election, which left them feeling isolated and disempowered. That consideration can be hurried up by encouragement from friends, coworkers, or other figures proximal to the woman. For other interviewees it was the responsibility of being a mom that led them into the role of being responsible not only for their children but for the community they served. The women who spoke to me about the fear they felt after the 2016 election were shaken out of a previous sense of security and it was not until their serenity was disturbed that they felt the need to get involved. Some of these women were already involved in their community, but they needed extra motivation to run for political office. Despite her involvement in working to improve her community, she had not considered doing this as an elected official before the 2016 election.

The fear and anger Interviewee 15 had the night of the election is what led her to run, despite her extensive roles on different boards she never considered it before. The urgency to first act and *then* to think offers the discretion to run for women who would otherwise be too overwhelmed with self-doubt. The interviewees who felt a pressing need to run after the 2016 election seemed to be less concerned about the process of running and other details about campaigning than the women who ran because they felt an obligation from their community or because they wanted to advocate for values. The impulse to run did not stem from political ambition or a general desire to be in office but rather from the circumstances of the moment, and their sense of urgency overruled potential barriers such as perceptions of electability.

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<sup>97</sup> Interviewee 15 from Table 1.

Urgency can counteract psychological barriers, but this urgency originates from a threat. This is not sustainable to addressing the lack of women in office. What I find to be more sustainable is women becoming invested in their communities and using that space to explore their values, like Interviewee 5 was able to do through her community service. Her ultimate decision to run for a state level seat instead of a local level position was due to how she viewed the capabilities that she was able to develop through volunteering. Since women are especially committed to civic engagement, this will hopefully lead more women to take the next step and pursue elected office as a means to defending the values they are passionate about and advocating for people who surround them.

The theory of personal responsibility applies to women in general and not simply to Democratic leaning women who reacted against the election of Donald Trump. While a majority of women have supported Democratic candidates, there is a stark partisan divide along racial lines, with strong majorities of African American and Latina women voting Democratic while a slight majority of White women, especially those without college education, have voted Republican.<sup>98</sup> The polarization in American politics not only convinced some women to run in opposition to Donald Trump, it also convinced a surge of Republican women to run in 2022.<sup>99</sup> Women candidates like Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) show a sense of responsibility, citing her motivation as someone who cares deeply about financial responsibility as well as community involvement.<sup>100</sup> Greene is also outspoken about her religious and pro-life values, demonstrating a clear commitment to defending these in office.<sup>101</sup>

The theory of personal responsibility of women candidates could benefit from further interviews with diverse Americans, such as people of a variety of genders, races, ages, sexuality, and ethnicity. Having responses that reflect a variety of identities can better determine if personal responsibility differs on a number of categories. Especially interviewing men in office could help determine whether urgency, relationally embedded responsibility, and the need to advocate certain values are greater in women than men. Overall, the conversations with the interviewees suggests that men do not run for the same reasons, yet this claim needs to be further explored.

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<sup>98</sup> Horowitz, Igielnik and Parker, "Women and Leadership 2018."

<sup>99</sup> Jack Brewster, "Surge of Republican Women to Run in 2022," *Forbes* (July 2, 2021).  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackbrewster/2021/07/02/surge-of-republican-women-to-run-for-house-in-2022/?sh=1e5aa58261b5>

<sup>100</sup> "About," Representative Marjorie Greene, January 3, 2021, <http://greene.house.gov/about>.

<sup>101</sup> "About" Greene.

Overall, women need to know that they are qualified to be leaders. Interviewee 5 told me that all of the opportunities she was afforded would be meaningless if she did not push herself or challenge herself. Her impression of herself was that she was never really impressive, she just knew how to give smart answers. She reflected on mentors that helped her challenge herself and also reflect on her values. An example of this was when she spoke in depth with a professor from her university about how students are not taking advantage of all of the possibilities they are afforded there. The professor reflected on this and told her, “You’re the kind of student who could get an A on everything you do if you put in the time and the effort.”<sup>102</sup> The professor’s remarks made her realize that what she did was noticed by people in her life and that her development was something that she should focus on. “I definitely have had individuals who reminded me that if they think I’m worth that time, then I better think I am worth that time.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Interviewee 5 from Table 1.

<sup>103</sup> Interviewee 5 from Table 1.

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