

Introduction to the American Political Process

Class 21: Gender Politics

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Overview

1. Readings

Fox and Lawless, “Gendered Perceptions and Political Candidates”

Anzia and Berry, “The Jackie (and Jill) Robinson Effect”

Dolan, “When Does Gender Matter?”

Women in U.S. Government in 2020

- **Congress:** 127 women of 535 (23.7)
 - 105 Democrats, 22 Republicans
 - House: 101 women of 435
 - Senate: 26 women of 100
- **Governors:** 9 women of 50 states
 - 6 Democrats, 3 Republicans
- **Statewide elective executive office:** 90 women of 311 total positions (28.9)
 - 48 Democrats, 40 Republicans, 2 nonpartisan
 - 16 of these 90 women (17.8%) are women of color

Source: CAWP Rutgers

What is the “right” number of women in office?

- Population parity? (51%)
- Recall Mansbridge: descriptive representation
 - Different policy preferences: education, welfare, health care
 - Ability to advocate for own unique needs (abortion, reproductive health, sexual harassment, pregnancy & workplace issues)
 - Symbolic function: presence in office signals “ability to rule”
- Different representational concerns imply different optimal numbers of women in office

Why the gender gap?

1. Fewer women run

- Pipeline: fewer women in law, business, advocacy (no longer true)
- Party leaders recruit fewer women to run
- Women prefer not to run

2. Women who run are unlikely to win

- Incumbency advantage
- Women face more primary challengers and are less likely to run unopposed
- Women need to exert more effort in fundraising

Readings

Readings

Fox and Lawless, “Gendered Perceptions and Political Candidates”

Why might fewer women choose to run for office than men?

- Rational calculations about lower probability of winning, due to:
 - Objective differences in qualifications
 - Lower (subjective) self-assessments
 - Voter and elite bias
- Different socialization, leading to:
 - Different self-conception as a successful leader, relationship to power
 - Interest in politics
- The electoral process, including:
 - Different experiences
 - Different tolerances

The Citizen Political Ambition Panel Study

- A national survey of more than 2,000 potential candidates, interviewed in 2002 and 2008
- Drawn from upper echelons of the professions that yield highest rates of political candidacy: law, business, education, political activism
- Sample constructed to have equal numbers of women and men, with similar objective qualifications

TABLE [1] Gender and Self-Efficacy in the Candidate Eligibility Pool

	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
How qualified are you to run for public office?		
Very Qualified	21%	33%
Qualified	35	40
Somewhat Qualified	32	21
Not at All Qualified	12	6
How qualified are you to hold public office?*		
Very Qualified	27%	40%
Qualified	36	40
Somewhat Qualified	27	17
Not at All Qualified	9	4
N	862	1,003

NOTE: Chi-square tests comparing women and men are significant at least at $p < .05$ for all comparisons.

*Numbers may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

Findings

1. Women choose not to run due to **differences in self-efficacy**
 - Given the same qualifications, women view themselves as less qualified for office than men
2. This is for two reasons:
 - Women genuinely see themselves as less qualified to govern
 - Women think they're qualified but know they must overcome voter bias

Readings

Anzia and Berry, “The Jackie (and Jill) Robinson Effect”

Anzia and Berry

Does it follow that women who do run for office exceed a higher “quality threshold”?

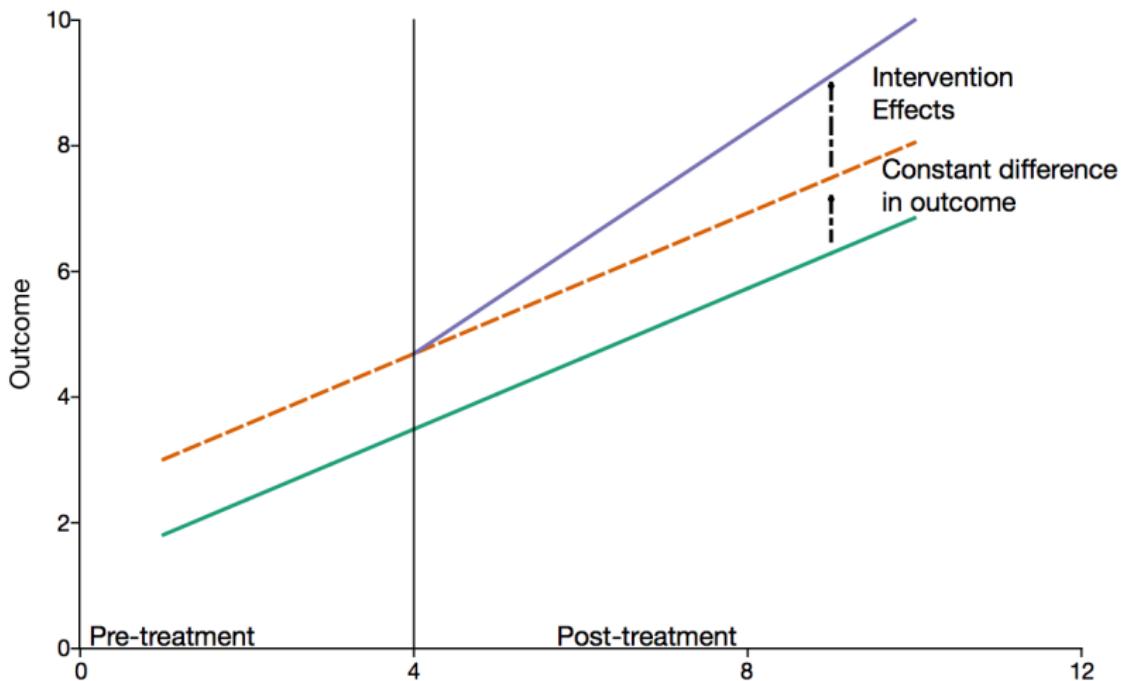
What can we conclude from the empirical observation that men and women generally win elections at the same rate?

- There is no bias against women?
- There is bias against women?

The “Jackie Robinson Effect”:

- Workers who face discrimination in the labor market have to outperform other workers to earn the same wage

Difference-In-Differences Estimation



Findings

Empirical evidence: performance in office

- Legislative performance: bringing resources back to your district (*federal outlays*)
- When a woman represents a district, 9% increase in federal spending compared to when a man represents the same district
- No pre-treatment trends in federal spending

Readings

Dolan, “When Does Gender Matter?”

There is no dispute that women face discrimination when seeking office. But how *determinative* is it?

- Shifts focus away from the presidency: less unusual, more data
- Analyzes survey data on people who actually experienced either single-sex (man vs. man) or mixed-sex (woman vs. man) election
 - vs. surveys that rely on hypotheticals
- Concludes that gender stereotypes play less of a role than traditional political variables: partisanship, money

Discussion

1. What are the limitations of learning about voter bias through survey data? What are the limitations of observational data, e.g. Anzia and Berry? Are there other alternatives?
2. Based on our prior discussions about descriptive and substantive representation, how problematic from a democratic perspective is women's current level of representation in government? What empirical facts might the answer depend on?
3. What policy prescriptions are possible/desirable?