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2015, Vol. 68(4) 716–731

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See Hillary Clinton, Nancy Pelosi, and Sarah Palin Run? Party, Ideology, and the Influence of Female Role Models on Young Women

Mack Mariani[1], Bryan W. Marshall[2], and A. Lanethea Mathews-Schultz[3]

Abstract

Previous research suggests that women's descriptive representation may have a role-model effect on young women, encouraging them to greater levels of political participation. Using data from the *Monitoring the Future Survey* and the *National Survey of Political and Civic Engagement of Young People*, we examine whether highly visible female role models like Hillary Clinton, Nancy Pelosi, and Sarah Palin, and viable female candidates for governor and senator had a role-model effect on young women. At the national level, we find some evidence of a role-model effect resulting from the election of Speaker Pelosi and the presidential candidacy of Hillary Clinton, but the effects are largely concentrated among young women who are Democratic and liberal. We find little evidence that Sarah Palin's vice-presidential run had a role-model effect on young women, regardless of party or ideology. Our state-level analysis of viable female gubernatorial and senatorial candidates finds that role-model effects on young women and men are mediated in different ways by ideology and, to a lesser extent, party.

Keywords

U.S. politics, women in politics, role models, role-model effect, political socialization, political psychology, partisanship, ideology, Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin, Nancy Pelosi, political participation, female governors, female senators, descriptive representation, symbolic representation

Building on Pitkin's (1967) seminal work on representation, researchers have found descriptive representation has both substantive and symbolic effects, especially with regard to politically relevant characteristics such as race and gender (Dovi 2002; Lawless 2004; Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005). Women's descriptive representation is linked to the advancement of policies that reflect women's interests (Alexander 2012; Swers 2002). Moreover, the underrepresentation of women in American politics conveys important messages about the role women play in politics (Sapiro 1981) and raises significant concerns about the responsiveness and legitimacy of the political system.

Role-model theories suggest the presence of female politicians can encourage women to be more active citizens. Political activists and politicians have cited role-model theories in support of institutional and electoral reforms designed to achieve greater gender equity in legislatures (see Krook and Zetterberg 2014). Similarly, researchers working in the fields of political theory and gender and politics have argued that the absence of female role models explains women's relatively low levels of political knowledge, interest, and ambition (Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2010; Mansbridge 1999).

Numerous studies suggest the presence of female political role models leads women to participate in politics and see themselves as political actors (Atkeson and Carrillo 2007; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006; Lawless and Fox 2013, 2014; Reingold and Harrell 2010). Researchers argue that young women are especially likely to be influenced by female political role models because their beliefs about gender roles in politics have not yet fully developed (Andolina et al. 2003; Hooghe and Stolle 2004; O'Connor and Yanus 2009). Despite these findings, other studies have found no clear link between female role models and

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women's political participation (Gilardi 2015; Lawless 2004; Wangnerud 2009; Zetterberg 2009). In addition, it remains unclear whether female role models have broader symbolic effects on men as well as women, whether the role-model effect changes over time, or the extent that the role-model effect is influenced by other variables such as partisanship and ideology.

We take another look at the potential links between descriptive and symbolic representation, the presence of female political role models, and young women's political engagement in an increasingly polarized political environment. Building on previous research, we first examine young women's anticipated political involvement in relation to recent high-profile national role-model events, including Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign in 2007 to 2008, Nancy Pelosi's election as House Speaker in 2007, and Sarah Palin's vice-presidential candidacy in 2008. Second, we consider female role models at the state level, using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to assess whether the presence of viable female Senate and gubernatorial candidates in the 2006 elections affected young women's anticipated political involvement.

At the national level, we find young women expressed higher levels of anticipated political involvement relative to men during the period corresponding with the election of Speaker Pelosi and Hillary Clinton's candidacy for the Democratic nomination. Unlike previous role-model events, however, the difference between men and women is not statistically significant. We find no evidence of symbolic effects coinciding with Sarah Palin's vice-presidential run. Further analysis suggests that in recent years, partisanship and ideology have mediated the symbolic effects of national female political role models on young women's anticipated political involvement. There is evidence of a clear and statistically significant role-model effect subsequent to Pelosi's speakership and Clinton's candidacy, but the effect is limited to *liberal* women and *Democratic* women; there is no evidence Republican or conservative women reacted similarly to these role-model events. There is also a sharp increase in anticipated political involvement among conservative women in response to Palin's vice-presidential run, but the difference between men and women on this measure is not statistically significant. There is no evidence of a Palin role-model effect on other groups of young women (be they Republican, Democrat, or liberal).

At the state level, we find strong evidence the presence of viable female candidates for senator or governor has a positive impact on the anticipated political involvement of both young women *and* young men. However, the effects of party and ideology are different for men and women. The anticipated political involvement of young men increases in response to the presence of female role models with whom they share ideology and, to a lesser extent, party. This is not the case for young women; in some contexts, young women's political involvement increases in response to the presence of female candidates, even when they do not share the same party or ideology.

Our analysis indicates that high-profile women politicians at the national and state levels have the potential to foster greater political participation among young women and, at times, young men. We find the conditions that facilitate symbolic representation hinge on political context and on the interactions between gender, partisanship, and ideology among female political role models and constituents. At the national level, simple gender congruence was not sufficient; role-model effects were limited to conditions of ideological and partisan congruence with Democratic role models. By contrast, at the state level, young women responded to female role models across partisan and ideological boundaries.

Do Female Role Models Matter?

Political scientists consistently find women have lower levels of political participation and interest than men (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Kenski and Jamieson 2000; Lizotte and Sidman 2009; Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997). Although women are more likely than men to vote, they are less likely to discuss politics, contact elected officials, consume news, or run for public office (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Fox and Lawless 2003; Lawless and Fox, 2008, 2013; Jenkins 2005). Modest gender gaps in political interest and involvement persist even when controlling for race, age, income, and education (Mondak and Anderson 2004), and some evidence suggests these differences form relatively early in life (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Lawless and Fox 2013). Lawless and Fox's (2013) survey, for instance, found college-age women were less likely than their male counterparts to have considered a career in elected office or see elective office as a desirable profession.

Researchers offer a number of explanations for gender differences in political participation and ambition. One possibility is that the factors leading individuals to participate in politics are not equally distributed among men and women (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001). Gendered family roles limit the time and resources available to women (Lawless and Fox 2008), while structural differences in the economy have made women less likely to serve in occupations that facilitate political advancement (Mariani 2008). At the elite level, women are less likely than men to receive encouragement from political elites to run for office (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu 2013; Fox and Lawless 2004).

Patterns of socialization may also help explain how and why differences in political ambition are found among school-age boys and girls (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001). Andolina et al. (2003) find parents are more likely to discuss politics with boys than girls (also Lawless and Fox 2013). Other studies point to the impact of teachers and education, emphasizing the disparate impact of educational attainment on boys' and girls' future political involvement (Dow 2009; O'Connor and Yanus 2009; Sadker and Sadker 1995). Lawless and Fox (2013) find young women are less likely than young men to receive encouragement to run for future office from anyone—parents, teachers, mentors, peers—or to be involved in competitive sports in adolescence through young adulthood, a potential precursor to political ambition.

According to role-model theories, the underrepresentation of women as candidates and officeholders contributes to gender gaps in political participation. Role-model theories assert that the presence of women in politics affects the attitudes and behavior of women citizens (Lawless 2004), shaping women's perceptions about what forms of political activity are appropriate for women (see Alexander 2012; also Burrell 1998; Sapiro 1981) and encouraging women to view the political system as responsive to their interests (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006). Simply stated, role-model theories predict that female politicians will have a role-model effect on other women, encouraging women to view themselves as political actors who can—and should—participate actively in political life.

Although it is common for journalists, politicians, and political activists to draw on role-model theories (see Hernandez 2011; Kanani 2011; Pereira 2012), research on the subject has generated mixed results. Some studies find compelling evidence in support of role-model effects. For example, Burns, Schlozman, and Verba's (2001, 343) examination of pooled American National Election Studies data finds that "for women, but not for men, living in a state with a female Senate candidate or incumbent is associated [in 1990] with a significant increase in the ability to name a senator." They conclude that visible women in politics send "messages to women citizens that politics is an inclusive domain, open to them" (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001, 351). Sapiro and Conover (1997) suggest that during the 1992 congressional elections—when gender issues were particularly salient and female candidates were exceptionally competitive—women in areas with female candidates were more politically active than those in areas without female candidates (see also Koch 1997). Similarly, Fridkin and Kenney's (2014) analysis of 2006 survey data finds female senators had a positive impact on the political empowerment of women constituents.

Other research raises questions about whether role-model effects exist at all. Lawless' (2004) analysis of pooled American National Election Studies data from 1980 to 1998 found that women constituents expressed more positive evaluations of female Members of Congress, but this did not translate into differences in political attitudes or behavior. Similarly, Dolan's (2006) analysis of pooled American National Election Studies data from 1990 to 2004 found no significant differences in political interest, efficacy, engagement, or participation when comparing women living in districts or states with female candidates with women living in districts or states without female candidates.

Contradictory findings on the role-model effect may be an indication that the relationship between female role models and women's political participation is not always a matter of simple gender congruence between politicians and citizens. For example, Koch (1997) finds a role-model effect in 1992, but not 1990; he concludes role models mattered in 1992 due to the salience of women's substantive concerns in that election rather than the simple presence of women candidates (see also Hansen 1997; Sapiro and Conover 1997). Atkeson (2003) finds that competitiveness is the key defining contextual cue—noncompetitive female candidates in Senate and gubernatorial elections had no effect on female citizens' engagement. Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006) find girls' interest in politics rose sharply during periods in which female role models received high levels of national media attention (i.e., Ferraro's vice-presidential bid in 1984, the 1992 "Year of the Woman" elections and the Hill–Thomas hearings). Their analysis of ninth graders in the 1999 Civic Education Study finds "girls are more likely to envision themselves as politically active when and where they see women run viable campaigns for high-profile political offices" (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006, 242).

In some cases, female politicians appear to serve as role models for men as well, undermining the notion that structural and socialization mechanisms differentiating men's and women's levels of political participation are key to explaining role-model reactions. Atkeson and Carrillo (2007) find that the presence of female state legislators and governors increases external efficacy for men as well as women. They suggest this reflects women's propensity to govern differently by emphasizing inclusiveness and egalitarianism (Atkeson and Carrillo 2007, 90). Similarly, Wolbrecht and Campbell's (2007) cross-national study found young girls *and* young boys were more likely to express an intention to be active in politics as the percentage of women in office increased. They suggest that political systems with greater female involvement "are perceived as more open and accepting for all—males as well as females" (Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007, 933). The fact that the presence of women in politics has varied

impacts on women *and* men suggests role-model effects are not simply a result of descriptive representation along gender lines, but rather more subtle effects of symbolic representation conditioned by the political environment, the nature of campaigns and representative institutions, and constituent characteristics (Atkeson 2003; Reingold and Harrell 2010). Pitkin's (1967) formulation of symbolic representation as a "standing for" based on the meaning that a representative has in the minds of the represented generates the possibility that explanations for role-model reactions have less to do with shared gender and more to do with shared substantive concerns and the messages that female politicians convey.

Studies also show that the role-model effect, and the conditions that shape it, can change over time in response to changes in the political environment. Fridkin and Kenney (2014), for instance, suggest the numbers of visible women in elite political office have only recently reached the point at which a role-model effect, understood as a gender-based effect of descriptive representation, might be empirically supported. In addition, research on municipal elections in Switzerland by Fabrizio Gilardi (2015) finds that the role-model effects of female role models on nearby political jurisdictions ("spillover effects") diminish over time as female incumbents and executives become more commonplace.

In recent decades, party and ideology have become dominant prisms through which constituents evaluate candidates and think about politics (Abramowitz 2012). Several studies suggest that what looks like a role-model effect might actually be party congruence (Dolan 2006; Lawless 2004). In their analysis of American National Election Studies data from 1984 to 2004, Reingold and Harrell (2010) argue that party mediates role-model effects. They conclude "gender and party interact, such that the mobilizing effect of female politicians depends on both gender congruence and party congruence with constituents" (Reingold and Harrell 2010, 281). Given the growing importance of polarization in American politics, we believe that partisanship and ideology are key to understanding contemporary role-model effects.

In our view, electoral context can provide vital variation for understanding the extent polarization may shape role-model effects. National and state contexts differentially influence the degree to which party and ideology shape candidates' engagement with constituents (e.g., campaigns) as well as how constituents (especially young women) react to female candidates and role models.

Recent role-model events present an opportunity to address lingering questions about the role-model effect in today's polarized political climate. The emergence of female politicians at the highest levels of American politics such as Hillary Clinton, Nancy Pelosi, and Sarah Palin, as well as viable campaigns by women seeking high-profile statewide offices offer the best case to date for analyzing the role-model effect in the polarized political environment of contemporary American politics.

Research Design and Hypotheses

Campbell and Wolbrecht's (2006) study makes several important contributions to the study of the role-model effect. First, they test for role-model effects at both the national and state levels, an approach that takes into consideration the federal nature of American political institutions while also facilitating assessments of the role-model effect across time and different institutional, cultural, and demographic contexts (see Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006, 236). Second, they utilize measures of female role models that are closely linked to the visibility of women candidates. National-level role-model effects are driven by media coverage of women politicians that "draws *national* attention to state and local female candidates to a degree distinct from their actual numbers" (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006, 237; emphasis in original).[1] By comparison, state-level role-model effects are rooted in the number of viable female candidates seeking "high-profile elective offices" for Senate, House, and Governor (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006, 240). Finally, Campbell and Wolbrecht employ measures of *anticipated political involvement* as dependent variables in their study; these measures enable them to "capture the essential idea behind the hypothesized role-model effect: Do young people envision themselves as active participants in the political process as they move into adulthood?" (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006, 236).

In this study, we update and extend Campbell and Wolbrecht's (2006) research by examining recent high-profile national- and state-level role-model events and taking a closer look at the extent that role-model effects have been shaped by ideology and partisanship. For our national-level analysis, we adopt Campbell and Wolbrecht's approach, utilizing the Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey of twelfth-grade students. The MTF study allows us to examine potential role-model effects on a large, representative, nationwide sample of young people over time. Specifically, we examine whether there was a role-model effect associated with three recent events: the election of Nancy Pelosi as the first female Speaker (2007), Hillary Clinton's presidential run (2007–2008), and Sarah Palin's nomination as the Republican vice-presidential candidate (2008). According to the role-model theory, these events should be associated with higher levels of anticipated political involvement among young women (Hypothesis 1 [H1]). Indeed, given the name recognition enjoyed by Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin, and Nancy Pelosi, the high levels of media coverage of these role-model events, and the fact that all three

women were participating at the highest levels of national politics, these cases represent the best opportunity (thus far) for the emergence of a national-level role-model effect. If Hillary Clinton, Nancy Pelosi, and Sarah Palin did not have a role-model effect on young women, it would deal a significant blow to role-model theory and whether its effects exist at all.

Next, we assess whether the role-model effect is mediated by party identification and ideology. Previous research suggests party is a crucial variable linking women's descriptive representation and women's increased political participation (Reingold and Harrell 2010). Moreover, the political environment has become more partisan, with record high levels of party voting among lawmakers and increased partisanship among the engaged public (Abramowitz 2012). Media coverage of national elections sharpens partisan cues and candidate campaigns orient their messages and issue agendas to reinforce partisanship. In turn, the impact of partisanship on the public's evaluation of national candidates has grown to its highest level in decades (Jacobson 2006). Accordingly, we expect recent national-level role-model events to have a strong partisan dimension, with young women expressing higher levels of anticipated political involvement when the female candidate or officeholder shares their party (Hypothesis 2 [H2]). Similarly, we expect young women to express higher levels of anticipated political involvement when the female candidate or officeholder shares their political ideology (Hypothesis 3 [H3]).

The second part of our study is a cross-sectional analysis that examines whether there is a state-level role-model effect associated with the presence of female candidates for senator and governor. Campbell and Wolbrecht's (2006) analysis was based on survey data of ninth-grade students from the Civic Education Study. Our approach differs in that we rely instead on survey data of young people ages eighteen to twenty-four taken from the *National Survey of Political and Civic Engagement of Young People*, made available by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts University (Portney 2006, 2007). Young people in this age group are better positioned to understand what political participation entails and to accurately predict their future involvement than students who just entered high school.

We include governors and senators but exclude House districts from our analysis. At the state level, competitive races for governor and senator are highly visible as a result of extensive media exposure through both paid and earned media (Atkeson 2003). It is in these races that female candidates are likely to be the most visible and the role-model effect most likely to be seen. By comparison, House campaigns spend far less, on average, on advertising, and generate comparatively little media coverage—particularly in media markets where newspaper and television audiences are distributed across multiple House districts (Hayes and Lawless 2015). Although competitive races generate more coverage than noncompetitive races, in most years, fewer than 20 percent of House races are competitive.[2] Moreover, many media markets cover multiple House districts, making it possible for survey respondents in those areas to be affected by campaign news, advertisements, and discussions about candidates from adjacent districts. This is particularly a concern because our focus is on young people, a highly mobile group that includes many non- and first-time voters who cannot draw on previous voting experiences to distinguish candidates in their House district from others in nearby districts.[3]

Atkeson (2003, 1045) finds that candidate viability is critical to the symbolic effects of female candidates. Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006, 240) define a viable female candidate as one who wins or comes within ten points of winning. Accordingly, we expect that young women in states with viable female candidates will express higher levels of anticipated political involvement than young women in states without similarly viable female role models (Hypothesis 4 [H4]).

Research suggests that voter evaluations of senate and gubernatorial candidates are less partisan than voter evaluations of incumbent presidents or presidential candidates. Moreover, the importance of partisanship varies from state to state (Jacobson 2006). Nonetheless, there is growing evidence of increased partisan and ideological polarization at the state level, albeit to a lesser degree than seen at the national level (Abramowitz 2012; Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Shor and McCarty 2011). Previous research suggests that the public views senators and, to a lesser extent, governors, at least partly through a partisan lens, with female senators in particular receiving less support from opposing party identifiers (Jacobson 2006). Accordingly, we expect state-level role-model effects will be mediated by party (Hypothesis 5 [H5]) and ideology (Hypothesis 6 [H6]), having its greatest effect when the party and ideology of the candidate and the respondent are, respectively, congruent.

Is There a National-Level Role-Model Effect?

Our national analysis accounts for several important developments relative to women's representation in the United States: the election of Nancy Pelosi as House Speaker, Hillary Clinton's first presidential run, and Sarah Palin's vice-presidential nomination. These role-model events occurred in rapid succession, making it difficult to separate them temporally. To distinguish between them, we assessed the timing of the events in relation to

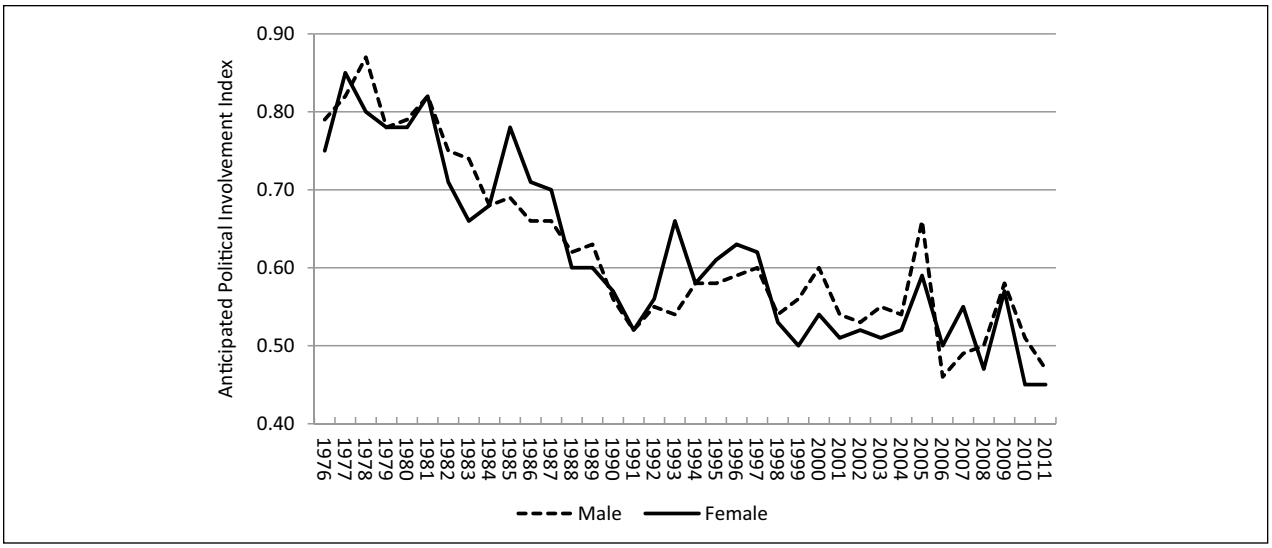

Figure 1. Mean anticipated political involvement among adolescents, by sex, 1976 to 2011.
Source. Monitoring the Future Survey Research Center, Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). Analysis by authors. For original analysis (1976–2001), see Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006, 237).

the MTF survey, which is administered annually in the spring.[4] Pelosi's election as Speaker on January 4, 2007 (and the first year of her speakership), and Clinton's presidential campaign (January 20, 2007–June 7, 2008) are treated as a single role-model event potentially affecting respondents in the 2007 and 2008 MTF studies.[5] Palin's vice-presidential run (August 29–November 4, 2008) is treated as a single role-model event potentially influencing respondents in the 2009 MTF study.

We assess national role-model events by comparing male and female respondents' levels of anticipated political involvement over time (1976–2011). Developed by Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006), the anticipated political involvement measure is an index comprised of responses to three questions from the MTF study, gauging whether respondents are likely to write to public officials, work in political campaigns, or give money to political candidates or causes. The index ranges from 0 to 3, with 0 indicating the respondent has not and probably will not participate in any of the activities and 3 indicating the respondent will probably (or has already) engaged in all three activities.[6]

Anticipated political involvement fell sharply for men and women between 1976 and 2011 (Figure 1). Although anticipated political involvement is typically higher for men than women, both tend to rise and fall together, and in most years, the differences are not statistically significant.[7] At two points in the series, women had significantly higher levels of anticipated political involvement than men: 1985 and 1993 ($p < .01$ and $p < .001$). These instances coincide with the nomination of Geraldine Ferraro as the Democratic vice-presidential candidate in 1984 and the "Year of the Woman" elections in 1992. Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006, 237) cite these events, which correspond to heightened media coverage of female elected officials, as evidence of a national role-model effect.

Did young women respond similarly to the Pelosi/Clinton role-model events and Palin's vice-presidential nomination? Although 2007 stands out as one of the few times anticipated political involvement is higher for young women than men (see Figure 2), the difference is not significant and the shift is smaller and shorter in duration than the shifts in 1985 and 1993. Furthermore, young women's anticipated political involvement fell sharply in 2008 and returned to the norm (below but not significantly different from men) in 2009, suggesting Palin's vice-presidential nomination was not a role-model event.

What explains the apparent disappearance of the role-model effect? One possibility is the media covered role-model events differently than in the past, placing less emphasis on the significance of women candidates *as women*. Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006, 237) note that "the visibility of female politicians is crucial; the role-model effect "is at least partly a function of the degree to which attention is drawn to the uniqueness of female politicians."

Similar to Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006, 237), we utilize the Vanderbilt Television News Archive to measure the number of stories on major network evening news programs that "drew attention to women politicians *as women*." The number of news stories emphasizing women politicians as women jumped sharply in 2007 and 2008, confirming heightened media interest in the Pelosi speakership, Clinton candidacy, and Palin nomination (Figure 3). In contrast to earlier patterns, increased media attention to women in 2007 and 2008 was not followed

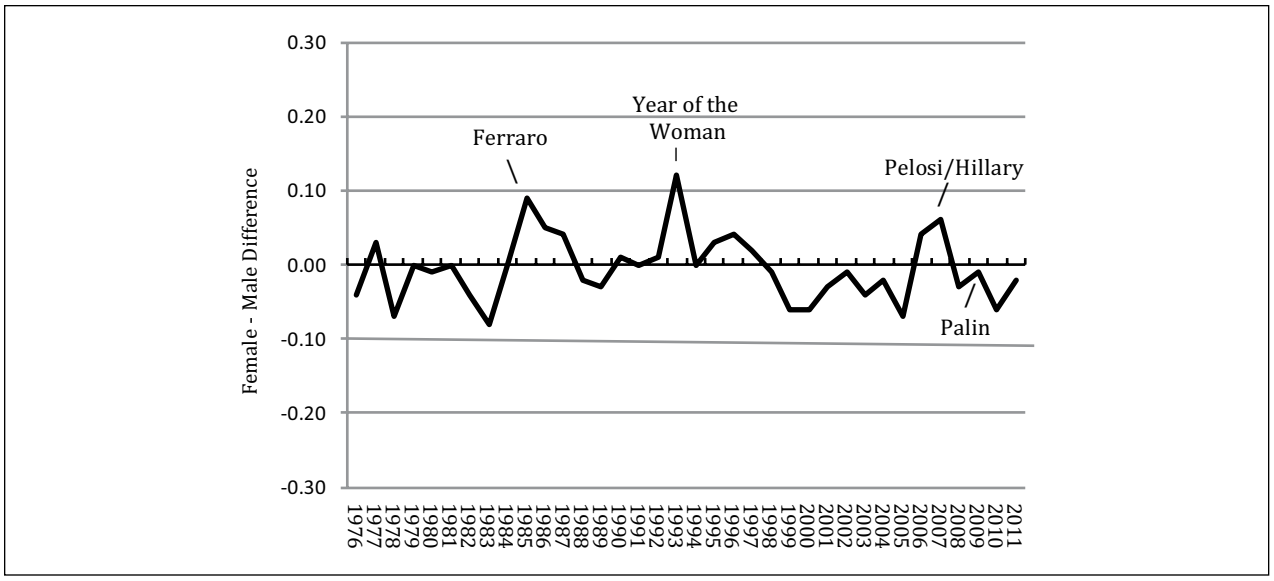

Figure 2. Female–male differences in anticipated political involvement among adolescents, 1976 to 2011.
Source. Monitoring the Future Survey Research Center, ICPSR. Analysis by authors.

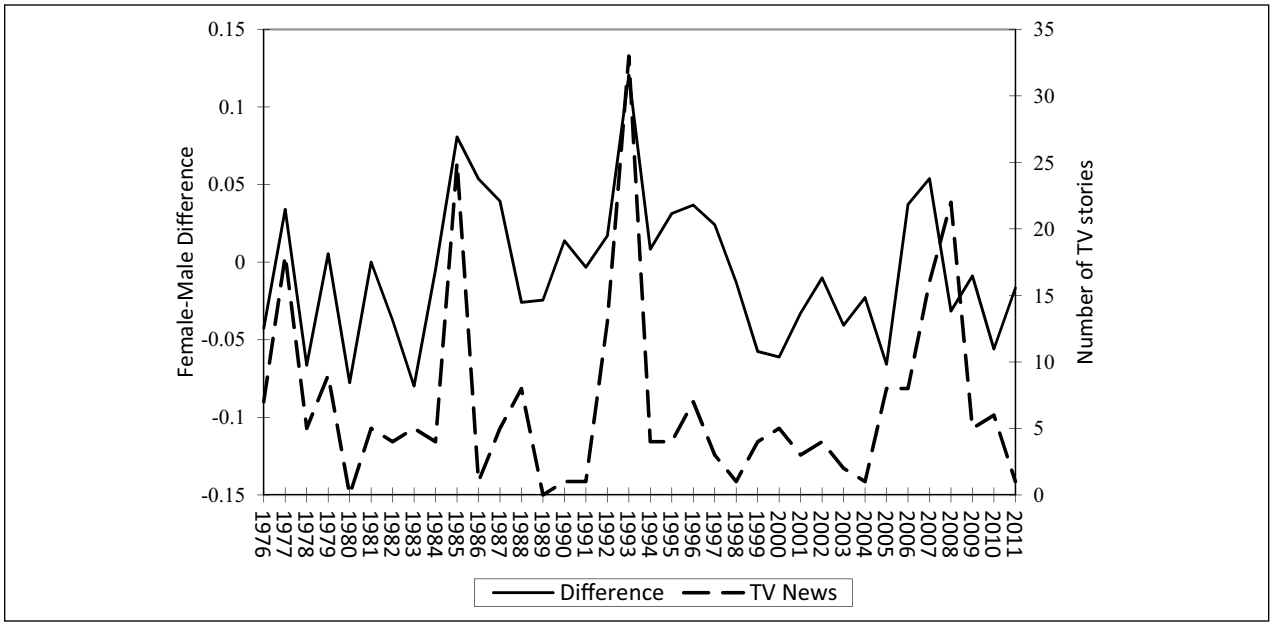

Figure 3. Female–male differences in anticipated political involvement and TV news coverage of women in politics.
Source. Data from 1976 to 2001 provided by Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006, 239). Data from 2002 to 2011 compiled by authors using data from Vanderbilt Television News Archive and Monitoring the Future Study.

by a statistically significant jump in young women's anticipated involvement relative to men in the following year. Although gender differences in anticipated political involvement moved slightly in women's favor in 2006, the shift was driven by a sharp drop for men, rather than an increase for women. Anticipated involvement fell sharply for men and women between 2005 and 2006, but the drop for men was nearly twice as large as the drop for women—and more than twice as large as any other year-to-year drop for men in the series.[8]

Another explanation for the absence of a role-model effect is role-model events have been recast by growing ideological and partisan polarization. In a divisive environment, young women may not react positively to

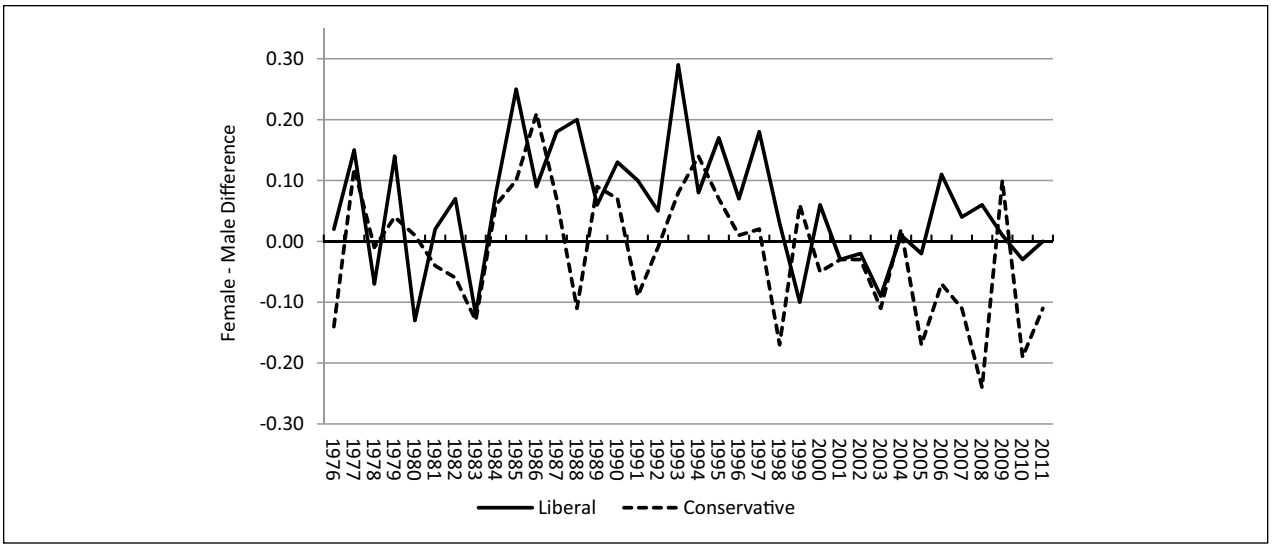

Figure 4. Female–male differences in anticipated political involvement for liberal and conservative adolescents, 1976 to 2011.
Source. Monitoring the Future Survey Research Center, ICPSR. Analysis by authors.

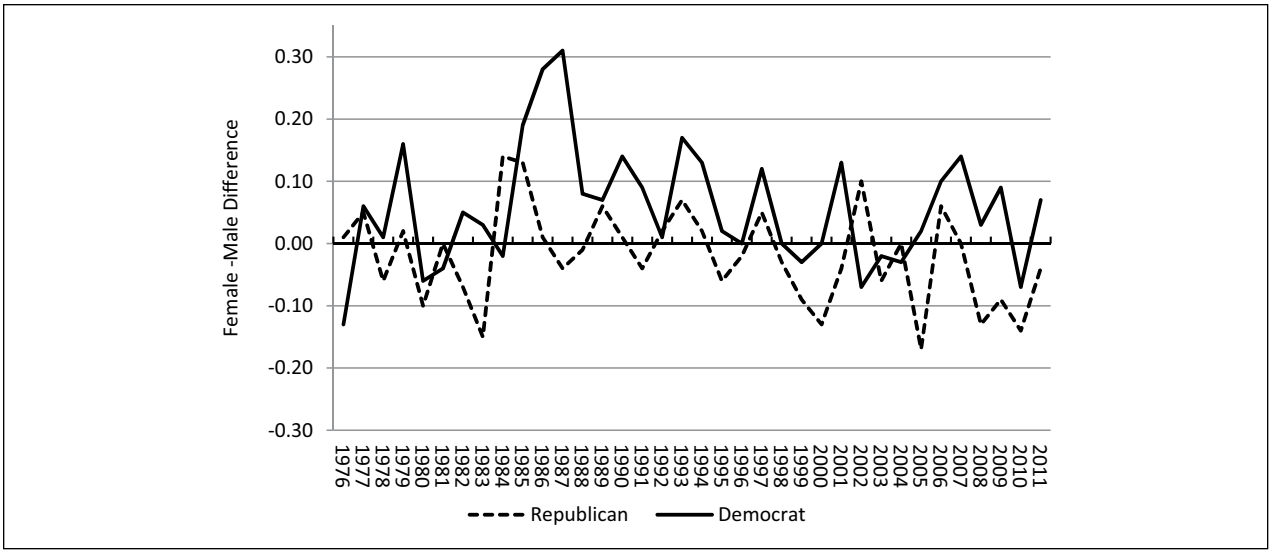

Figure 5. Female–male differences in anticipated political involvement, by party, 1976 to 2011.
Source. Monitoring the Future Survey Research Center, ICPSR. Analysis by authors.

female politicians whom they perceive to hold different political beliefs. The role-model effect may be limited to instances in which female candidates and officeholders share young women's ideological or partisan positions. Accordingly, we examined patterns of anticipated political involvement controlling for ideology (Figure 4).[9] The years following Ferraro's vice-presidential candidacy and the Year of the Woman are characterized by jumps in the relative political involvement of liberal and conservative women. In both years, however, the difference between men and women is statistically significant for liberals ($p < .001$), but not conservatives. During 2006 to 2008, there is a jump in relative anticipated political involvement for liberal women, but the advantage is less substantial than previous role-model events and the differences are not significant. Similarly, there is a jump in the relative anticipated political involvement of conservative women in the year following Palin's vice-presidential run, but the difference is not significant.

Next, we compared anticipated political involvement of young men and women controlling for party (see Figure 5).[10] Among Democrats, there is a dramatic and sustained three-year jump in young women's anticipated political involvement relative to men following Ferraro's

vice-presidential run ($p < .01$; $p < .001$ and $p < .001$, respectively). The jump in 1993 is smaller, but notable given it is the second largest advantage for women in the series and statistically significant ($p < .01$). There is also some evidence of a role-model effect among Democratic women in 2007. That year, Democratic women had significantly higher anticipated political involvement than Democratic men ($p < .05$), an advantage coinciding with Pelosi's ascension to the speakership and Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. Among Republicans, there is little evidence of a role-model effect, with the exception of a relatively small jump in relative anticipated political involvement of Republican women in 1984 and 1985 ($p < .05$ for both years). There is no evidence of a positive shift among Republican women during the Year of the Woman or the Pelosi/Clinton role-model events. Furthermore, there is no evidence of a role-model effect among Republican women subsequent to Palin's vice-presidential run.

In sum, liberal and conservative women, and Republican and Democratic women, did not react similarly to the presence of national-level female role models. The Ferraro vice-presidential candidacy comes closest to a "unifying" role-model event, resulting in statistically significant advantages in anticipated political involvement for young women among Republicans, Democrats, and liberals. To the extent the Year of the Woman had a role-model effect, it was limited to Democrats and liberals (and independents). Likewise, the Pelosi/Clinton effect in 2007 was limited to Democrats (and moderates). Following Palin's vice-presidential campaign, conservative women expressed somewhat greater levels of anticipated political involvement relative to men (and a fairly significant increase relative to the previous year), but the difference between men and women is not statistically significant. There is no evidence of a Palin effect among other groups either, including, most notably, Republicans.

Role-model effects appear strongest when candidate party and respondents' partisanship and ideology are congruent, but the effect is not uniform and varies by candidate and electoral context. Although partisan and, at times, ideological congruence are associated with role-model effects for Democratic role-model events, there is no complimentary response among young Republican women following Palin's candidacy. It remains unclear if the absence of Palin role-model effects can be explained by factors specific to Palin, dynamics of the 2008 campaign, resistance to symbolic gender cues on the part of young Republican women, or some other factor.

Do State Political Role Models Matter?

We next reassess evidence for a statewide role-model effect using 2006 and 2007 data from the *National Survey of Political and Civic Engagement of Young People*. We use pooled data from two surveys of 1,000 nonmilitary, college, and noncollege respondents aged eighteen to twenty-four, limiting our analysis to the 1,861 respondents who are citizens of the United States and permanently reside in a U.S. state.[11]

Like previous work (Hooghe and Stolle 2004), our dependent variable measures anticipated political involvement based on respondents' agreement with the statement, "I will participate in future political activities." Responses are scored using a 5-point ordinal scale ranging from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*).

Prior research suggests gender and partisan cues matter more in electoral contexts than in office-holding contexts (Reingold and Harrell 2010, 283).[12] Furthermore, Atkeson (2003, 1053) argues that role-model effects occur not simply in contexts defined by "like" candidates but rather in those defined by "like viable" candidates. Accordingly, our key independent variables capture viable female candidates at the state level, with viability defined as being within ten points of the winning candidate.

We use HLM, a more appropriate method for modeling multilevel data than traditional ordinary least squares (OLS) because it takes into account effects of social context as a nested source of variability that may affect individual-level behavior (Palus and Yackee 2009; Snijders and Bosker 1999). HLM allows us to partition the effects of both individual-level (level 1) and state-level (level 2) variation in explaining individual political engagement. In the presence of higher order levels in data (such as those which occur in statewide variables), the standard OLS assumption of the conditional independence of individuals is violated. HLM provides leverage to assess whether the social context characterized by viable female politicians within a state systematically affects individual-level behavior of citizens. Accordingly, we present two sets of HLM models, each with group-level (level 2) variables. All models include a viable female candidate indicator—our key role-model effect variable—and a non-South indicator, controlling for variation in political context for states.[13]

Atkeson (2003) argues role-model analyses need to account for the varied distribution of political and psychological resources among young men and women. Accordingly, our model specifications control for individual-level (level 1) factors, including whether a respondent attends a four-year *college* or university, *age, race* (black), and *marital status* (married and domestic couples are coded "1" and others "0"). We also include *religious attendance*, ranging from 0 (*rarely or never attends*) to 4 (*attends every week*), and a control for *socioeconomic status* of respondents' households while they were growing up. The values for socioeconomic status range from 1 to 5 (lower class, lower-middle class, middle class, upper-middle class, and upper class).

Table 1. Impact of Viable Female Candidates on Anticipated Political Involvement (Women and Men).

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Individual-level variables				
College	0.218** (0.081)	0.217** (0.081)	0.219** (0.080)	0.217** (0.081)
Age	−0.035 (0.020)	−0.035 (0.020)	−0.033 (0.020)	−0.035 (0.020)
Race (black)	−0.143 (0.213)	−0.148 (0.211)	−0.152 (0.213)	−0.147 (0.213)
Socioeconomic status	−0.041 (0.061)	−0.040 (0.061)	−0.042 (0.062)	−0.040 (0.061)
Married	−0.322*** (0.087)	−0.325*** (0.087)	−0.330*** (0.088)	−0.325*** (0.087)
Ideological liberalism	0.037 (0.044)	0.035 (0.045)	0.038 (0.045)	0.035 (0.045)
Party (Democratic)	0.279** (0.116)	0.283** (0.116)	0.277** (0.117)	0.283** (0.116)
Political knowledge	0.019 (0.029)	0.018 (0.029)	0.019 (0.029)	0.018 (0.029)
News consumption	0.196*** (0.015)	0.196*** (0.015)	0.195*** (0.015)	0.196*** (0.015)
Church attendance	0.090* (0.042)	0.088* (0.042)	0.088* (0.043)	0.088* (0.042)
Gender (female)	−0.338*** (0.106)	−0.340*** (0.106)	−0.338*** (0.105)	−0.340*** (0.106)
Between-level variables				
Non-South	−0.039 (0.097)	−0.062 (0.091)	−0.046 (0.104)	−0.061 (0.095)
Total number of viable female candidates	0.133* (0.070)	—	—	—
Viable female Democratic candidates	—	0.155** (0.065)	—	0.156** (0.065)
Viable female Republican candidates	—	—	−0.031 (0.165)	0.014 (0.169)
Observations	*n* = 1,487	*n* = 1,487	*n* = 1,487	*n* = 1,487
Akaike Information criterion	4,053.85	4,053.29	4,055.89	4,055.28

HLM Regression Analysis. Dependent variable: anticipated political involvement. HLM = hierarchical linear modeling.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Partisanship is measured using a nominal (dummy) variable for *party* (*Democrat*). We utilize *ideological liberalism* for respondent ideology, an ordinal measure with five categories from (1) *very conservative* to (5) *very liberal*. The analysis employs interactions for the *party* and *ideological liberalism* measures to assess whether role-model effects are conditioned by party or ideology. *Political knowledge* is an additive index, ranging from 0 to 8, based on two questions in which respondents assess their understanding of community issues and national affairs. Likewise, we include an additive index ranging from 0 to 15 for *news consumption* based on the frequency young people get news from newspapers, television, radio, online news, and blogs.

The HLM random intercept models estimated here take the general form, $Y_{ij} = \delta_{00} + \delta_{10}X_{lij} + \cdots + \delta_{p0}X_{pij} + \delta_{01}Z_{lj} + \cdots + \delta_{0q}Z_{qj} + U_{0j} + R_{ij}$, where U_{0j} represents the residual from the group-level effect and R_{ij} represents the residual from the individual-level effect. U_{0j} and R_{ij} are independent with 0 conditional means (Snijders and Bosker 1999).

Table 1 presents results for models 1 to 4, analyses of the entire sample of women and men. Role-model context is measured as the total number of viable female candidates, viable female Democratic candidates, and viable female Republican candidates in a given state for senate and gubernatorial elections. The results are very consistent across the models. College, marriage, party, news consumption, and church attendance all significantly affect anticipated political involvement. Gender (female) is significant and negative, indicating that, all things equal, young women report lower levels of anticipated political involvement than men.[14]

Importantly, we find the total number of viable female candidates (model 1) and the total number of viable Democratic female candidates (model 2) associated with significantly higher levels of anticipated political involvement. We find no similar effect for the total number of viable female Republican candidates (model 3). Including viable female Democratic and viable Republican candidates in the same model provides further confirmation that the role-model effect occurs for viable female Democrats but not for viable female Republicans (model 4). Together, these models support Atkeson's (2003) suggestion that social context and the symbolic cues of viable state-level female candidates can shape young people's anticipated political involvement.[15]

Next, we split the state-level sample between women and men to assess the role of party and ideology on state role-model effects.[16] We used similar specifications with party interactions between party of respondent and party of the viable female candidate to assess party congruence. Although not shown here, we found no evidence of a state-level role-model effect under conditions of party congruence between viable female candidates and women respondents but marginally significant results for party congruence among men.[17] However, we find evidence state-level role-model events are conditioned by ideology

(Table 2). The model specifications for women only (models 5–8) and for men only (models 9–12) are similar as before but include interaction terms for respondent ideology and viable female candidate variables. The number of viable female candidates is associated with higher levels of anticipated political involvement for college-age women (model 5) as well as college-age men (model 9). For young women, living in a state with viable female Democratic candidates is associated with greater anticipated political involvement relative to states without such candidates (models 6 and 8). There is no parallel role-model effect from viable Republican female candidates.

Models 6 and 8 also include an interaction variable for viable female Democratic candidates and women respondents' ideology. The interactions show liberal young women in states with viable female Democratic candidates had significantly lower levels of anticipated political involvement than moderate and conservative women from such states. In other words, moderate and conservative women reported significantly higher political involvement in the presence of viable Democratic female candidates. This finding indicates state-level role-model effects can occur in cases of ideological *incongruence*. Contrary to our hypothesis (H6), this suggests women react to viable state-level female candidates even when ideological predispositions are not shared. As we will see, the results are very different for men.

Moving to models for men only (Table 2), we observe viable female Republican candidates significantly increase anticipated political involvement among men (model 11). There is no parallel effect on men from viable female Democratic candidates. We also examine the interaction of viable female Republican candidates and ideological liberalism on young men's anticipated political involvement. The interactions show viable Republican female candidates significantly decrease liberal young men's anticipated political involvement (models 11 and 12). Put another way, viable Republican female candidates increase the political involvement of moderate and conservative men. Thus, for men, we find evidence of ideological *congruence*—conservative and moderate men reported significantly greater levels of political involvement than liberal men in response to the presence of Republican female candidates. Similarly, we find marginally significant evidence of partisan congruence between Republican men and viable Republican female candidates (Online Appendix F Table 5).

Overall, the results indicate the presence of viable female candidates in senate and gubernatorial elections significantly shapes the anticipated political involvement of college-age respondents. For men, role-model effects are relatively straightforward and depend on the presence of viable Republican candidates; ideological congruence and, to a lesser extent, partisan congruence condition the state-level role-model effect. Our findings for women are more complicated, as viable Democratic female role models significantly increase young women's political involvement under conditions of ideological *incongruence*.

What explains varied findings for parties at the state level? One possibility is moderate and conservative women rallied against viable female Democratic candidates for senator and governor. But if that were the case, we would expect to see a similar effect among Republican women. We find none (Online Appendix F Table 4). A second possibility is there could be systematic differences between young women in states with viable Democratic female candidates and those in states with viable Republican female candidates. However, we include a barrage of individual-level controls in our analysis, making this explanation less persuasive. More plausibly, campaign issues raised by Democrat and Republican candidates may differ systematically in relation to substantive women's concerns or, other characteristic(s) of the candidates themselves, led women to respond differently. Unfortunately, the limitations of our data prevent us from assessing campaign-specific or candidate-specific factors. Regardless, our findings suggest viable female Democratic candidates enhance young women's anticipated political involvement in ways that cannot be explained by ideological congruence.

Discussion

Role-model theory is intuitively simple: young women will be more likely to participate in politics when there are visible and viable female role models inspiring them to do so. However, previous studies find inconsistent empirical support for role-model effects, inviting questions about the conditions under which role-model effects occur, for whom the effects matter, and why. At a minimum, past research complicates any neat understanding about the symbolic benefits derived from women's descriptive representation in U.S. electoral politics.

We hypothesized that high-profile national role-model events in 2007 and 2008—Pelosi's ascendancy to the House Speakership, Clinton's bid for the Democratic presidential nomination, and Palin's vice-presidential run—would be associated with higher levels of anticipated political involvement among young women (H1). Although national news coverage during this period heightened attention on women politicians *as women*, young women's anticipated political involvement did not significantly increase relative to men. There were, however, slightly higher levels of anticipated political involvement among young female liberals during this period and sharply higher levels among young female Democrats. This suggests, as we hypothesized (H2 and H3), that recent role-model effects were conditioned by

Table 2. Impact of Viable Female Candidates and Ideology Interaction on Anticipated Political Involvement, Women Only and Men Only Models.

	Women only				Men only			
	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
Individual-level variables								
College	0.147 (0.126)	0.143 (0.127)	0.148 (0.128)	0.145 (0.127)	0.312** (0.130)	0.320** (0.129)	0.287** (0.121)	0.295** (0.124)
Age	−0.010 (0.028)	−0.012 (0.029)	−0.013 (0.028)	−0.013 (0.029)	−0.059 (0.038)	−0.057 (0.038)	−0.064 (0.037)	−0.064 (0.038)
Race (black)	−0.141 (0.236)	−0.155 (0.233)	−0.166 (0.235)	−0.161 (0.233)	−0.194 (0.398)	−0.186 (0.396)	−0.202 (0.404)	−0.196 (0.401)
Socioeconomic status	0.086 (0.088)	0.094 (0.087)	0.089 (0.088)	0.092 (0.086)	−0.198** (0.079)	−0.204*** (0.077)	−0.195** (0.080)	−0.193** (0.081)
Married	−0.363** (0.129)	−0.369** (0.131)	−0.361** (0.129)	−0.373** (0.132)	−0.331** (0.141)	−0.351** (0.141)	−0.350** (0.140)	−0.334** (0.140)
Ideological liberalism	0.128 (0.068)	0.119 (0.065)	0.088 (0.058)	0.126 (0.071)	0.083 (0.058)	0.018 (0.072)	0.050 (0.056)	0.083 (0.059)
Party (Democratic)	0.176 (0.139)	0.200 (0.139)	0.189 (0.143)	0.203 (0.142)	0.440* (0.203)	0.431* (0.203)	0.420* (0.202)	0.430* (0.202)
Political knowledge	−0.020 (0.043)	−0.020 (0.043)	−0.024 (0.044)	−0.021 (0.044)	0.057 (0.045)	0.058 (0.046)	0.064 (0.044)	0.061 (0.044)
News consumption	0.191*** (0.020)	0.190*** (0.020)	0.189*** (0.019)	0.190*** (0.020)	0.208*** (0.026)	0.208*** (0.026)	0.205*** (0.027)	0.206*** (0.026)
Church attendance	0.114 (0.060)	0.110 (0.059)	0.106 (0.061)	0.108 (0.060)	0.083 (0.055)	0.077 (0.057)	0.071 (0.057)	0.076 (0.056)
Between-level variables								
Non-South	−0.172 (0.136)	−0.210 (0.127)	−0.205 (0.126)	−0.215 (0.122)	0.174 (0.165)	0.156 (0.171)	0.168 (0.183)	0.162 (0.177)
Total number of viable female candidates	0.527* (0.259)	—	—	—	0.938** (0.380)	—	—	—
Viable female Democrats	—	0.687** (0.247)	—	0.697** (0.261)	—	0.307 (0.345)	—	0.504 (0.331)
Viable female Republicans	—	—	−0.084 (0.396)	0.096 (0.422)	—	—	1.495*** (0.572)	1.637*** (0.568)
Interaction variables								
Total Number of Viable Female Candidates × Ideological Liberalism	−0.128 (0.071)	—	—	—	−0.247* (0.112)	—	—	—
Viable Female Democrats × Ideological Liberalism	—	−0.138* (0.067)	—	−0.145* (0.071)	—	−0.065 (0.103)	—	−0.123 (0.102)
Viable Female Republicans × Ideological Liberalism	—	—	−0.033 (0.148)	−0.071 (0.154)	—	—	−0.442*** (0.104)	−0.474*** (0.107)
Observations	n = 782	n = 782	n = 782	n = 782	n = 705	n = 705	n = 705	n = 705
Information criteria	AIC = 2,171	AIC = 2,168	AIC = 2,172	AIC = 2,172	AIC = 1,894	AIC = 1,901	AIC = 1,894	AIC = 1,896

HLM Regression Analysis. Dependent variable: anticipated political involvement. HLM = hierarchical linear modeling.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

party and ideology. Although Hillary Clinton's candidacy and Pelosi's speakership were associated with a rise in political involvement among young women who shared their politics, Palin's candidacy did not move conservative or Republican women in the same way. We think this finding may reflect differences in the way prospective female role models project themselves, the issues they focus on, or the rhetoric they employ (see Gibson and Heyse 2010).[18]

We also performed a cross-sectional analysis of state-level role-model effects, using independent variables that capture the presence of viable female candidates for senator and governor in the 2006 elections. Here, we found support for Atkeson's (2003) suggestion that symbolic cues associated with the presence of viable female candidates shape young people's political involvement. In our analysis of all college-age respondents (men and women), those in states with higher numbers of viable female candidates (from either party) reported significantly higher anticipated political involvement.

Turning to our analysis of female respondents, the total number of viable female candidates (both Republican and Democratic) was likewise associated with higher levels of anticipated political involvement (H4). Further analysis, however, indicates the role-model effect on women was limited to the presence of viable female Democratic candidates. There was no parallel role-model effect on women for Republican candidates. Moreover, we found party and ideology condition role-model effects, but not in the same way for young women and young men (H5 and H6). Young men followed the expected pattern, with Republican and conservative young men reporting higher levels of anticipated political involvement in states with higher numbers of viable Republican female candidates. Party and ideology worked somewhat differently for young women, however, as viable female Democratic candidates were associated with increases in political involvement among *moderate* and *conservative* young women.

Our findings suggest ideology and partisanship influence role-model effects, sometimes in unexpected ways. National role-model effects follow anticipated partisan and ideological frames for the two Democratic role-model events (Clinton and Pelosi). In contrast, at the state level, young men responded to the presence of viable Republican female candidates for senate and governor with ideological congruence (and to a lesser extent partisan congruence). Women did not. For women, role-model effects occurred in an ideologically incongruent way. One plausible explanation for the variation between national- and state-level effects is that state election contexts tend to be somewhat less polarized than national contexts. Media coverage of national politics, the campaign strategies employed by national parties and candidates, and the issue stances that national figures adopt are likely to reinforce partisan and ideological cues. In contrast, some research suggests gubernatorial candidates and former governors running for senate are more pragmatic, placing less emphasis on partisanship and ideology (Kamarck 2015), while other studies find voter evaluations of those same offices are much less dependent on partisanship (Jacobson 2006). As a result of these conditions, state-level role-model effects among women may be less rigid or even, at times, ideologically incongruent.

Do female role models matter in a polarized age? Our answer is a tentative yes, although our findings—like those of Atkeson and Carillo (2007) and Wolbrecht and Campbell (2007)—suggest the effects of visible female candidates cannot always be explained by simple gender congruence. Unlike Dolan (2006), who finds scant evidence female candidates have any impact on women, our analysis points to substantive symbolic effects in both national- and state-level contexts. Here, the party of the candidate matters in that we find role-model effects on women in the presence of viable female Democratic candidates, but not for viable female Republican candidates. Furthermore, and in contrast to Reingold and Harrell's (2010) finding that female role models inspire cross-party opposition among men, we find that in some contexts, female role models (i.e., viable female Republican candidates) inspire political involvement among young men. Further research is needed to better understand the mechanisms underlying the varied partisan and ideological role-model effects identified here and the conditions likely to produce congruent or, alternatively, incongruent effects. We believe the different effects may be driven, at least in part, by the candidates themselves, the substantive issues they emphasize (especially as they relate to women's interests), and the environment in which political campaigns take place. Indeed, the 2016 landscape seems ripe to further test how party and ideology condition role-model effects, as viable women candidates emerge for the presidency and other high-profile political positions.

Great importance is attached to the concept of descriptive representation, particularly given the continued underrepresentation of women in legislative bodies and lower levels of participation for women, relative to men, in many political activities. The assumptions that underpin role-model theories—that gender is the defining symbolic factor communicated through the descriptive representation of women—may be too simplistic to capture the relatively complicated messages young women and young men receive from different female candidates and officeholders. In Pitkin's (1967) formulation, symbolic representation results not simply from descriptive similarity between representatives and constituents but rather from the responses evoked in constituents by representatives who are "standing for" them. If role models are understood in this way,

we would expect the effects of female candidates to vary among different groups of citizens and, increasingly, reflect the partisan and ideological prisms through which the voters view themselves and candidates frame their respective campaigns.

Acknowledgments

We thank Randy Davis at Southern Illinois University for assistance with hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) analysis, Kent Portney at Tufts University for the 2006–2007 *National Survey of Political and Civic Engagement of Young People*, and Christina Wolbrecht and David Campbell for sharing their data from the Vanderbilt Television News Archive.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006) show this also applies to national-level candidates (e.g., Ferraro in 1984).
2. In 2006, for instance, just 14 percent of eligible voters lived in one of the fifty-nine districts with a competitive House seat (see Drew Desilver 2014).
3. In separate analyses of 2000 American National Election Studies data, just 16.8 percent of voters aged eighteen to twenty-four could recall the name of the House candidate in their district. No figures are available in 2000 for senators and governors, though previous data (1974–1992) indicate name recognition of senators among young people was 35.4 percent, compared with 23.3 percent for House members. Media market overlap also affects statewide races but is more acute in House races due to district size. In addition, fixed state boundaries make it clear whether senate/gubernatorial races are relevant to a person in a given state.
4. On Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey administration, see http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/purpose.html#Administration.
5. The election of a Democratic majority in November 2006, which secured Pelosi's speakership, could not influence student responses to the 2006 surveys used here.
6. For details on coding for this and other variables, see Online Appendix A.
7. For data on the statistical significance of differences between men and women, see Online Appendix B.
8. This drop in anticipated involvement could evidence a shift in public opinion against the war in Iraq, declining support for President Bush, or another factor.
9. Anticipated political involvement of women relative to men among those in the moderate/don't know category is provided in Online Appendix C.
10. Anticipated political involvement of women relative to men among those in the independent/no preference/don't know category is provided in Online Appendix D.
11. The sample of 916 men and 945 women was divided between college and noncollege students; 50.2 percent attend a four-year college/university. Men and women were of similar socioeconomic status, but women were less likely married, more likely to identify as Democrats, and more likely to be racial minorities. Female respondents were slightly more liberal and slightly more likely to attend a four-year college/university.
12. We found no evidence of role-model effects using the total number of female senate and gubernatorial candidates in 2006 and, separately, the total number of female senate and gubernatorial officeholders (also 2006). See Online Appendix E.
13. Palmer and Simon employ the *Non-South* measure as a component of their female friendly district-level index. Similarly, we employ *Non-South* as an indicator of states where women candidates may be more likely. In previous analyses, we utilized Elazar's (1984) categorization of states with a *traditionalistic* political culture and found no significant results. *Non-South* and *traditionalistic* are correlated at (−.75) and interchanging them in models provides no substantive differences.
14. In analyses not presented here, we found no evidence of an interaction effect when accounting for the interaction of gender and news consumption or, separately, gender and political knowledge.
15. Gender interactions showed no evidence that women differed significantly from men in anticipated political involvement in states with viable female candidates.
16. Splitting the sample frees us from three-way interactions and multicollinearity characteristic of such interactions (Atkeson 2003).
17. See Online Appendix F for our analysis of a party-specific role-model effect at the state level.
18. Dolan (2006) finds little support for symbolic representation in *generalized* terms, but suggests female candidates provide such representation in *particular* terms.

Supplemental Material

Replication data for this article can be viewed at http://prq.sagepub.com/supplemental/.

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