

Recruitment and perceptions of gender bias in party leader support

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Abstract

Gender differences in who gets recruited by political party elites contribute to women's underrepresentation on the ballot, but recent evidence suggests that even when women are recruited at the same level as men, they are less likely to be interested in seeking office. Why do men and women respond differently to invitations to seek office? We hypothesize that women view party recruitment as a weaker signal of informal support than men do. We use a survey experiment on a sample of 3,640 elected municipal officeholders—themselves prospective recruits for higher office—to test this. We find that female respondents generally believe party leaders will provide the women they recruit less strategic and financial support than the men they recruit. In other words, even when elites recruit women, women are skeptical that party leaders will use their political and social capital on their behalf. This difference may account for many women's lukewarm responses to recruitment.

Research on gender and candidate emergence points to the important role that party recruitment plays in women's representation on the ballot. Party elites tend to recruit men more frequently and more intensely than women (Crowder-Meyer 2013; Fox and Lawless 2010; Lawless and Fox 2010; Niven 1998a, 1998b). And, women are much less likely than men to consider running in the absence of recruitment (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu 2013a; Lawless and Fox 2010). For this reason, scholars have suggested that gender-balanced party recruitment is an important way to increase the number of female candidates (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu 2013a; Crowder-Meyer 2013; Fox and Lawless 2010, 2010; Sanbonmatsu 2006a).

At the same time, political practitioners regularly lament that women are much more difficult to recruit than men (Sanbonmatsu 2006b). And, recent research confirms that women tend to be less likely than men to respond positively to party recruitment efforts (Preece and Stoddard 2015; Preece, Stoddard, and Fisher 2015). Hence, though more gender-balanced recruitment by political parties and political elites may help, it is unlikely to close the gap between men and women on the ballot. Closing the gap will require a deeper examination of why women disproportionately shrug off party efforts to encourage them to run for office.

We hypothesize one reason for the gender gap in responses to recruitment is that men and women have different perceptions about the extent to which recruitment implies continued elite help and support throughout the campaign. Informal support from party elites is crucial during both the "invisible primary" and general election. We consider whether men view recruitment as a request to run *and* an implicit promise of future

campaign support, while women view recruitment as simply a request to run. We also examine an even more worrying question: do women believe men who are recruited by party leaders will receive future campaign support, while women who are recruited will not? If either or both of these differences in perceptions about the meaning of recruitment exist, it could help to explain why women are hesitant to run even when they have been recruited by political elites.

We explore these questions by conducting a survey experiment with a national sample of 3,640 municipal officials in 2014. We present these elected officials with a vignette about party recruitment for a state legislative seat in which the sex of the recruit is randomly assigned. This allows us to compare whether respondents believe identical male and female recruits are treated similarly by party leaders. We ask the respondents how likely the party leader would be to give the recruit three types of valuable informal support: 1) help with campaign strategy, 2) help with fundraising, and 3) help with securing endorsements. We then analyze how male and female respondents answered these questions so that we can identify their perceptions about how much elite support recruits are likely to get. Conducting this experiment with a sample of municipal officials is especially valuable because they represent a pool of potential candidates for higher office who are likely to be targets for recruitment.

Male and female respondents share the same overall sense of how much party leaders generally help their recruits throughout the course of the campaign. However, the female respondents in our sample reveal that they believe that this help usually goes disproportionately to male recruits. The male respondents do not perceive there to be gender disparities in the extent of support implied by recruitment. These findings suggest

that women and men interpret party efforts at recruitment quite differently. As a group, men are more likely than women to believe that recruitment by party elites signals a willingness to provide behind-the-scenes support for candidates like them. It is not surprising, then, that men tend to respond to recruitment with more enthusiasm than women. On a practical level, this means that party leaders who seek to recruit more women to run for office may need to be quite explicit about the ongoing support they will provide these recruits during the campaign process. If not, women are likely to see recruitment as an empty request when targeted at people like them.

Recruitment and Candidate Emergence

Although the conventional wisdom paints American politicians as ambitious office-seekers, most candidates are not “self-starters.” Party recruitment plays a significant role in shaping who runs for office in the United States (Broockman 2014; Fox and Lawless 2010; Huckshorn and Spencer 1971; Kazee and Thornberry 1990; Maestas et al. 2006; Maestas, Maisel, and Stone 2005; Moncrief, Squire, and Jewell 2001; Sanbonmatsu, Carroll, and Walsh 2009). For example, in a survey of first-time state legislators, Moncrief et al find only about a third of these officials are self-starters (Moncrief, Squire, and Jewell 2001). Carroll and Sanbonmatsu probe this question more deeply and find that the rate of “self-starting” is different by gender, as well as by party. Among male state legislators, 39% report that it was entirely their idea to run for office; that number is only 22% for female state legislators. In fact, more than half of female legislators “had not seriously thought about running until someone suggested it” (Carroll

and Sanbonmatsu 2013a). Thus, while recruitment plays a role in most candidates' decision to run for office, it appears to be especially important for women.

However, women are significantly less likely to be recruited by political elites than men (Crowder-Meyer 2011, 2013; Fox and Lawless 2010; Lawless and Fox 2010; Niven 1998b; Sanbonmatsu 2006b). Research suggests that there are two primary reasons for this. First, party elites tend to believe that ideal candidates have characteristics similar to their own, including personality traits and occupation (Niven 1998b). Because most party elites are men, prospective female candidates are less likely to seem ideal than prospective male candidates. Second, recruitment works through networks, and political and personal networks tend to be gendered (Crowder-Meyer 2013). Among the most common sources that party elites look to for prospective candidates are party member and officeholder networks, lower-level office-holders, and among affiliated business organizations (397). Because women are generally underrepresented among these networks, they are less likely to get recruited.

Even when women are recruited, it's not clear that they respond as positively as men. Fox and Lawless find no differences in political ambition between elite, professional men and women who recall being recruited by political operatives (Fox and Lawless 2010). However, in interviews, political recruiters regularly insist that women are more difficult to recruit than men (Sanbonmatsu 2006b). One noted that "one of the most difficult things is convincing women to run or getting women to run...I think that's the biggest stumbling block to get over" (126). Recent scholarly research supports this claim: equal recruitment of men and women does not lead to equal outcomes. In both a large field study of male and female responses to actual party recruitment and in an exit

poll survey experiment, women were less responsive to recruitment than men, especially Republican women (Preece and Stoddard 2015). Hence, because women are harder to recruit, even more equitable recruitment of men and women is unlikely to solve the gender gap in representation.

Gendered Perceptions of Recruitment Signals

There has been very little research that directly addresses *why* women might be less likely to respond positively to recruitment, though there is a great deal of related literature. The literature on election aversion offers one plausible explanation (Kanthak and Woon 2015; Preece and Stoddard 2015)—women may find the competition of campaigns so distasteful that it requires much more to convince them to run. The literatures on family obligations (Fulton et al. 2006; Sapiro 1982; Silbermann 2015) and beliefs about qualifications (Lawless and Fox 2010) provide other explanations for why women might demur. All of these explanations suggest rich avenues for exploring how recruitment interacts with the social, structural, and psychological constraints that women disproportionately face.

In this paper, we choose to focus on one specific mechanism: perceptions about the support that recruiters will provide candidates like them during the campaign. The existing literature on recruitment has focused on attempts to recruit (who recruits, who they recruit, how they recruit, etc.). But, recruitment is an interactive process, and it is important to think about how recruits perceive and interpret recruitment efforts. This may be especially important for understanding women's reactions to recruitment because, as Carroll and Sanbonmatsu point out, “women's decision making about office holding is

more likely to be influenced by the beliefs and reactions, both real and perceived, of other people” (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu 2013a, 45). For these reasons, we focus on what recruitment implies to individuals who are recruited.

We propose that one reason women are systematically less responsive to recruitment is that they perceive recruitment signals differently than men do. On its face, recruitment is simply a request that an individual consider running for office. But, many recruits also reasonably interpret recruitment as a signal of support and promise of informal help throughout the campaign. Interpretations of that signal are probably particularly important in the American context. In more party-dominated systems, party leaders control ballot access—so party recruitment is a clear, credible signal of support (Carey and Shugart 1995; Rahat and Hazan 2001). In the United States, however, party leaders generally have no direct control over whose name appears on the ballot. Instead, party leaders have social and political capital that they can expend on behalf of candidates they support: endorsements, introductions to donors, access to party money, campaign advice, etc.

Research on endorsements, extended party networks, and the “invisible primary” suggests that this kind of informal, behind-the-scenes elite support plays a significant role in candidate success (Cohen et al. 2008; Desmarais, La Raja, and Kowal 2015; Dominguez 2011; Hassell 2015; Kousser et al. 2015; Masket 2009). Elite support can clearly be very valuable, but the extent to which the recruiter can or will provide these optional resources to the recruit is often ambiguous and open to interpretation. Running for office is a costly endeavor, so assumptions about the level of support one can get from political insiders are important. Someone who believes that a recruiter will go to great

lengths to facilitate a recruit's success is more likely to seriously consider running than someone who does not.

Men might be more likely than women to believe recruitment implies continued support for candidates like them for several reasons. Women are at the periphery of most professional and political networks (Crowder-Meyer 2013). While the stereotypical "old boys network" that actively excludes women may be less common than it used to be, there is significant evidence that homophilous interactions continue to exist in the workforce and in politics (McDonald 2011; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001; Sanbonmatsu 2006b).

This leads to two potential mechanisms through which women may doubt that party elites will invest in recruits like them: 1) a mechanism that works through knowledge diffusion and 2) a mechanism that works through experiences of bias. First, women's position at the periphery of professional and political networks may mean that they are simply less familiar with the extent to which party leaders support candidates and the ways in which this happens. They may not expect recruiters to provide much informal help and support to any of their recruits, assuming that all candidates are more or less on their own as they campaign in an ostensibly candidate-centered system. Fundamentally, this is an artifact of the way in which information diffuses through networks. Those at the periphery of social networks generally have less knowledge about the norms of the network (Granovetter 2005). They also have more trouble learning from the relationships they do have in the network (Borgatti and Cross 2003). If this mechanism is at play, we would expect to see that women have overall lower expectations of party elite involvement because they are unfamiliar with the ways in

which party leaders help recruits. In other words, female respondents' estimates about how much elite help the *average* candidate is likely to get will be lower than men's.

Second, women may be as aware as men of the potential benefits that can come from party support during the invisible primary and beyond; however, they may be skeptical that those benefits are likely to accrue to women. This mechanism comes through experience with bias. Women's prior experience at the periphery of political and professional networks may reveal to them that although political elites do expend extra social and political capital on some recruits' behalf, those fortunate recruits tend to be men. They understand that the "old boys network" can be very helpful, but they doubt it will go out of its way to invest in them (Sanbonmatsu 2006b). Indeed, there has been some research that suggests that party elites do bring gendered assumptions to the table when they consider who to support (Bos 2015; Niven 1998a). Sanbonmatsu finds that party leader perceptions of female candidates' viability are not systematically correlated with female candidates' vote share and success rates in their state (Sanbonmatsu 2006a). And Sharrow et al find that national party convention delegates evaluated female candidates in their respective parties based on their personal attitudes about women's roles (Sharrow et al. Forthcoming). If this mechanism is at play, we should see women expecting that more elite support will go to male recruits than female recruits. These two mechanisms are not mutually exclusive—women may believe political elites are less involved in supporting candidates overall *and* especially less involved in supporting women.

Measuring Potential Recruits' Perceptions

To measure men and women's perceptions about what kind of informal party help might come along with recruitment, we designed a survey experiment that was fielded to several thousand municipal officials across the United States. When party leaders consider whom to recruit to run for office, individuals in these lower-level positions represent a great resource. Because they are already serving in public office, party leaders know that these individuals are willing to serve. Further, they typically have some electoral experience (indeed, successful electoral experience). Party leaders also more likely to have had past experience with these individuals. For party leaders who recruit candidates to run for the state legislature, elected city officials (mayors and councilors) represent a strong pool of potential candidates. Indeed, survey evidence suggests that party leaders often turn to this group to recruit candidates. In a recent survey of county party chairs, Crowder-Meyer found that two-thirds of county party chairs from both parties look for candidates among sub-county office holders (2013, 397). This group is targeted for recruitment more than any other. Hence, we believe they are an ideal subject pool for the question of how political recruits perceive invitations from party leaders to run for a seat in the lower-chamber of their state legislature.

Because we are interested in measuring these officials' perceptions, we created a vignette experiment that was included as part of a survey sent to a national sample of elected officials during the summer of 2014. The sample of city officials for the survey was constructed by first downloading a list of all of the cities in the U.S. Census with a population of 3,000 or more. Research assistants were then hired in the spring of 2014 to search for the website of each town or city taken from the census. If the research

assistants were able to identify the city's website, they then collected the name and email address of the city's mayor and council members (or the equivalent). This search yielded 29,136 officials. We invited these officials to take our survey by sending them an email (the text of the invitation is given in the supplementary materials).

Overall, we had a response rate of 18 percent,¹ on par with recent expert surveys of this nature (e.g., Fisher and Herrick 2013; Harden 2013). The respondents come from across the United States with more populous states representing a larger portion of the sample (see Figure 2 in the Supplementary Materials). Early in the survey respondents were asked several demographic questions, including their gender and self-identified partisanship. Because we are interested in how politicians perceive the recruitment efforts of their party leaders, we only focus on the city officials who self-identified with either the Republican or Democratic Party.² Partisanship was the only screen used to exclude respondents from the sample for analysis (e.g., no attention checks or other criteria were used). Table 1 gives information about the public officials in our sample, broken down by gender.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Our sample includes nearly an equal number of Republicans and Democrats (Republicans make up 51 percent of the sample). It also has good gender representation, with about 1,100 female officials (roughly 30 percent of the sample). As is observed at other levels of government, the majority of women in the sample are Democrats.

¹ 5,370 took at least part of the survey.

² The majority of cities use non-partisan elections to elect municipal officials and many of the officials from those cities self-identify as being independent. We replicated the analysis with respondents who identified as independents, and the results were substantively similar.

However, the sample has a large number of female respondents from both parties, with nearly 40 percent of the women in the sample self-identifying as Republican.

The women in the sample are slightly less likely to be serving as elected executives. While approximately 20 percent of the men in the sample are mayors (or the equivalent), only 15 percent of the women are. The rest of the sample serve as city councilors or the equivalent. The women in the sample do come from cities that are slightly larger on average. Women come from cities with an average population of 42,000 (and a median of 18,000), while men come from cities with an average population of 36,000 (and a median of 15,000). As a robustness check, we control for these variables in the analysis.

The advantage of studying this sample is that we have a chance to go beyond typical student convenience samples in order to learn directly from public officials (Kam, Wilking, and Zechmeister 2007). Because of their background and experience, public officials may simply react differently than others would (Butler and Kousser 2015). In this particular case, it might actually be harder to find any differences in anticipated support between men and women because all of the officials in our sample are individuals who have been successful in holding office. As a result, the men and women in our sample may have experienced greater levels of equality in terms of party support than those who do not make it into office. Among the broader recruitment pool (see Lawless and Fox 2010), there may be larger differences in men's and women's perceptions of recruitment. And of course, the experimental approach allows us to maximize internal validity in the experiment.

We presented the officials in our sample with the vignette experiment shown in Box 1. The vignette focuses on the situation of a party leader recruiting a candidate to run for a seat in the state legislature. For our experiment we varied the bolded items in brackets. Each of the bolded items was randomly assigned independently of one another. Qualtrics performed the randomization as part of the survey, with each of the treatments for each item having equal probability of being assigned to each participant.

Box 1. Vignette Design

Think of the party label you would run under if you sought a seat in the state legislature. Imagine that the state party chair for your party was evaluating whether to recruit the following individual to **[run for an open state legislative seat / challenge an incumbent state legislator from the opposing party]**.

Name: **[Andrew/Thomas/Michael/Richard / Karen/Laura/Heather/Christine]** Wilson

Age: 44

Family Situation: Married, **[no children / 3 children (ages 16, 12, and 9)]**

Professional Background: Real Estate Agent

Political Experience: **[None / 4 years as a county party chair]**

After some consideration, the state party chair decides to make a personal appeal to **[NAME]** to run for the state legislative seat. How likely are the following?

{Options on 5-point scale: Extremely Likely/Somewhat Likely/ Neither likely nor unlikely / Somewhat Unlikely/Extremely Unlikely }

--The party chair will meet with **[NAME]** to discuss campaign strategy

--The party chair will introduce **[NAME]** to prominent campaign donors and encourage his/her executive board to invest extra party campaign funds into **[NAME]**'s race

--The party chair will help **[NAME]** get meetings with prominent politicians (governor, Member of Congress, etc.) to secure their endorsement

As Box 1 shows, we varied four aspects of the vignette—the implied sex of the candidate, plus three other candidate characteristics. We varied the first name of the potential recruit in order to measure whether respondents thought leaders would support male and female recruits differently.³ Because we varied all of the aspects of the

³ We used more than one name to mitigate any possible concern that the results are driven by the idiosyncratic nature of reactions to a specific name.

description independently, varying the putative sex of the candidate (via variation of their name) allows us to see how respondents believe the party leaders will treat otherwise comparable male and female candidates. Essentially, this allows us to ask respondents how they believe people like them will be treated by party leaders after they are recruited. Although it would have been interesting to ask the officials about whether party recruiters would be likely to provide various types of support to them personally if they were recruited, this would shift the project away from an experimental study in which the male and female recruits in the vignette are otherwise identical. We believe that the gains to internal validity were worth the abstraction of the vignette.

We also varied whether the party leaders were recruiting the candidate to run for an open state legislative seat or to challenge an incumbent state legislator from the opposing party; whether the candidate had children; and the recruit's political experience. Although we had some informal expectations about the effect of these profile variations on the dependent variables, we primarily varied them to see how robust our main findings would be and to provide context and points of comparison. Informally, we expected respondents to believe that party leaders would provide more support for candidates who fit the profile of those likely to win: those running for an open seat (Mayhew 1974; Gelman and King 1990); candidates without children at home—especially among women (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu 2013a; Lawless and Fox 2010); and more politically experienced candidates (Cox and Katz 1996).

We finished the vignette by having respondents state, on a five-point scale, how likely the state party chair would be to support the hypothetical candidate in three different activities: campaign strategy, fundraising, and networking (See Box 1). These

activities represent ways in which a party chair has discretion in expending additional political and social capital to support a candidate, and they were selected after we talked with an experienced party chair about the dynamics of informal elite support.

Essentially, they are measures of how much mentoring party leaders are likely to provide to those they recruit to run for office.

First, we asked respondents how likely the party chair would be to meet the candidate in the vignette and discuss campaign strategy. This is a form of optional, private, personal investment that requires a chair's valuable time. Even if a party leader publicly supports a candidate, he or she may not take the time to personally mentor him or her. Second, we asked about how likely the chair would be to encourage prominent campaign donors (including those who control the party coffers) to support the candidate. Donor support is important for candidates, but party leaders are likely to selectively introduce and recommend candidates to donors because doing so takes time and uses political capital. Third, we asked how likely the party leader would be to help set up meetings with prominent politicians to secure their endorsements. Endorsements matter (Cohen et al. 2008; Dominguez 2011), but again, facilitating them requires the time and political capital of party leaders. Busy party leaders could plausibly decline—or simply ignore—a candidate's request for help with networking.

For the analysis we used factor analysis to create a summary support scale. The factor loadings for the three measures of support are all high (in this case all greater than 0.9). Further, the first dimension predicts 85 percent of the variation in the three outcome variables. In the main body of the paper we present the results using this summary support scale as the dependent variable. We present the results when using the three

original items (campaign strategy, fundraising, and networking) as dependent variables in the supplementary materials. For the analysis we also present the results both without any control variables and when controlling for several variables suggested by reviewers: whether the city official was a mayor (as opposed to a councilor), the population of the city, the official's partisanship, and state fixed effects.

Results

We are interested in understanding whether there are differences in men's and women's perceptions of what implicit promises of support accompany recruitment. Differences could come from two sources: women systematically believe that recruitment implies less help for everyone (the information diffusion mechanism), or women systematically believe that recruitment implies less help for female recruits than male recruits (the experience with bias mechanism).

Table 2 clearly shows that the information diffusion mechanism is not at play. It presents the regression results in which we ignore all of the randomized treatments and simply regress the measures of likely leader support on the gender of the respondent. The coefficient on the gender of the respondent is substantively and statistically insignificant. Women and men do not differ in how much they think leaders support their recruits *on average*. This suggests that it is not the case that women's experience on the periphery of political networks has influenced their perceptions of the overall amount of help from political elites that is available to recruits.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

The results in Table 2 present the average across all of the candidate profiles that the respondents see. So, they do not tell us anything about whether respondents believe this help is equally available to male and female candidates—the experience with bias mechanism. To test this, we turn to the experimental conditions, which allow us to measure female and male respondents’ perceptions about the help that identical hypothetical female and male recruits are likely to get from party leaders.

Female Respondents:

We are able to examine women’s perceptions of the impact of the sex of the recruit on elite support by estimating regression models that include dummy variables for the candidate characteristics we randomized in the vignette (see Box 1). Columns 1 and 2 of Table 3 present the results for what predicts female officials’ perceptions of leader support. Column 1 presents the results of the direct effect of candidate sex in order to see respondents’ perceptions about the differences between men and women, all else equal. In Column 2 we add interactions between the sex of the recruit and the other characteristics we varied to see if respondents believed that some circumstances moderate the level of support that women receive from party leaders.

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

As Column 1 shows, female respondents perceive that party leaders may make marginally less effort if the recruit is a women, all else equal; however, the result does not achieve statistical significance. Column 2, which includes a fuller model with

interaction terms, reveals why this coefficient is not significant: women with different characteristics are expected to be treated differently, and these differences partly cancel each other out in the aggregate. The coefficient on the dummy variable *female recruit* in Column 2 gives the perceived difference for how men and women in the baseline category are treated. In this case, the baseline category is an inexperienced challenger with no children. Under these circumstances, the coefficient for whether the recruit is a woman is large—about third of a point on a 5-point scale—and negative and statistically significant. These women are expected to receive much less help from party recruiters than men.

The major exception to this perception of gender bias regards women with children. There is a positive coefficient on the interaction term with children, suggesting that women believe that officials will be less likely to make hollow requests to women with children. This is not what we expected a priori, but one possible explanation for this pattern is that women believe party leaders are sensitive to familial obligations. Running a campaign is hard on a family. These results are consistent with the possibility that women believe leaders to be aware of these difficulties, so only ask women to run if they are committed to truly supporting their candidacy. None of the other characteristics we experimentally manipulated—political experience or running in an open seat—seem to counterbalance the overall perceived bias against women.

In short, the results suggest that although female respondents are equally likely to believe that party elites help recruits overall, they do not believe party elites will help the women they recruit to the same extent as they help the men they recruit. The size of this difference is quite large. The only exception is that women expect that female recruits

with children will be supported as much as male recruits. Since most women in the traditional candidate eligibility pool (Lawless and Fox 2010, 73) and in state legislative office (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu 2013, 33) do not have children at home, this may be cold comfort. Without being directly asked about it, female respondents reveal that they believe party officials will behave in biased ways, even after making ostensibly equivalent recruitment efforts.

Male Respondents: Columns 3 and 4 of Table 3 present corresponding regressions analyzing the perceptions of the male respondents in our sample. The men do not believe that party leaders will treat recruits differently based on their gender. Instead, the men in our sample believe that officials treat candidates differently based almost solely on their level of experience. They believe that recruits who have served as the county chair for the past four years will receive much more support than recruits who have no political experience. It is worth noting, however, that the magnitude of the difference between experienced and inexperienced recruits that men report is smaller than the magnitude that women report between (most) male and female recruits.

On the one hand, male respondents' belief that male and female recruits will be treated equitably could be seen as an unwillingness to admit that men have advantages in political networks. However, because no respondent saw both male and female profiles, they were not primed to make gender comparisons. They spontaneously evaluated these candidates as equally capable of getting support from party elites. In other words, male respondents revealed that they judged these male and female recruits as more or less interchangeable. Further, they did not believe that, for example, experience was more important for women than for men. This may be an encouraging finding that suggests

that male municipal officials are generally capable of fairly judging the quality of a recruit.

Conclusion

Most of the literature on political recruitment has focused on recruitment from an elite perspective: who recruits, who they recruit, how they recruit, how frequently they recruit, etc. Scholars have rightly identified gender gaps in who gets recruited as an important contribution to the gender gap in political representation. Women are less likely to be recruited, and this is especially problematic because they are also significantly less likely to “self-start” than men. But recruitment is an interactive process, and so we assert that it is also important to look at recruitment from the perspective of those who are recruited.

Previous research suggests that women are less responsive to recruitment than men, and our results provide one explanation for why. Male and female respondents in our survey experiment have similar beliefs about the average amount of help with fundraising, endorsements, and campaign advice that party leaders generally give to their recruits over the course of the campaign. In other words, women are not naïve to the role that elites play in the behind-the-scenes political process to facilitate recruits’ success. Our sample consists of male and female elected officials who are likely to be quite familiar with the political process, though, so this result may not be particularly surprising in retrospect. That does not mean, however, that this mechanism might not be at play for recruits without prior political experience. If the experiment was replicated

with a pool of qualified but less politically experienced individuals (such as the sample in Lawless and Fox 2010), we might see different results.

Nevertheless, female respondents (but not male respondents) do believe that recruiters are generally more likely to give that support to male recruits than to female recruits. The only mitigating factor seems to be if the female candidate has children. From a substantive perspective, this is not necessarily encouraging because women in the candidate edibility pool are much less likely than men to have children, especially young children (Lawless and Fox 2010, 73). In fact, Carroll and Sanbonmatsu find that only about 14% of women in the state legislature have children under 18 (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu 2013, 33). Hence, female respondents would predict that the vast majority of women that are being recruited to the state legislature (the recruitment scenario in our experiment) would experience significant bias.

In colloquial terms, female respondents believe that the “old boys network” is still relevant when it comes to the kinds of support that recruits will get over the course of the campaign. This is consistent with Sanbonmatsu’s elite interviews with female elected officials. They felt like “women were much less likely to be groomed and mentored than men” and that men were much more frequently seen as “golden boys” than women (Sanbonmatsu 2006b, 136). Respondents repeatedly pointed to their experiences with gendered political networks to reinforce this claim.

Hence, we argue that skepticism about the amount of practical mentorship that will come with recruitment likely contributes to women’s more hesitant responses to recruitment attempts by political elites. If women believe the likelihood of continued informal elite support is lower for candidates like them, recruitment seems less

meaningful in a costly and taxing electoral environment. It is not surprising, then, that they respond less enthusiastically than the men who don't see their sex as an impediment to getting practical party support.

These findings suggest that political elites who are interested in encouraging more women to run for office should not assume that female recruits believe a request to run for office comes with an implicit promise of concrete support. It may be necessary to be explicit about the ways in which they are willing to use their political and social capital to help the recruit be successful. Without considering this difference in perception, even more gender-balanced recruiting methods are unlikely to close the gender gap in political representation.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1. Information about Officials in Sample

	Men (N=2,546)	Women (N=1,094)
Proportion who are Republicans	57.6% (N=1,466)	38.4% (N=420)
Proportion who are Democrats	42.4% (N=1,094)	61.6% (N=674)
Elected Executive (e.g., Mayor)	19.5% (N=496)	14.4% (N=158)
Average City Population	36,234	42,580

Table 2. Perceived Strength of Recruitment Outreach by the Respondent's Gender

<i>Dependent Variable = Support Scale</i>	(1)	(2)
Respondent is Female	-0.001 (0.036)	0.013 (0.037)
Mayor		0.002 (0.035)
Population (10K)		-0.044 (0.045)
Republican Officials		-0.004* (0.002)
Includes State Fixed Effects?	No	Yes
Observations	3,612	3,612
R-squared	0.000	0.020

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.05. Models estimated using OLS regression models.

Table 3. Perceived Strength of Recruitment Outreach

Dependent Variable = <i>Support Scale</i>	Female Officials		Male Officials	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(3)
Female Recruit	-0.099 (0.062)	-0.324* (0.124)	0.026 (0.038)	0.047 (0.077)
Experienced Recruit		0.075 (0.092)		0.143* (0.055)
Female*Experienced		0.149 (0.126)		0.009 (0.077)
Open Seat		0.014 (0.091)		-0.041 (0.054)
Female*Open		-0.008 (0.125)		0.060 (0.077)
Has Children		-0.188* (0.092)		-0.004 (0.055)
Female*Children		0.313* (0.126)		-0.112 (0.077)
Republican Official		-0.033 (0.068)		0.007 (0.040)
Mayor		-0.110 (0.093)		-0.025 (0.050)
Population Size		-0.008* (0.003)		-0.003 (0.002)
Includes State Fixed Effects?	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	1,130	1,130	2,595	2,595
R-squared	0.002	0.072	0.000	0.034

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$. Models estimated using OLS regression models.

Supplementary Materials

Appendix A. Details about the sample

Text of Email Invitation

“Dear [Official’s Title] [Official’s Name],

My name is [Redacted] and I am a [Position] at [Name of University]. I am conducting research to learn more about municipal officials, the decisions they make, and local politics and policy. Would you be willing to complete a confidential, 15-minute survey on this topic?

To take the confidential survey, please click the link below:

[Take the Survey](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

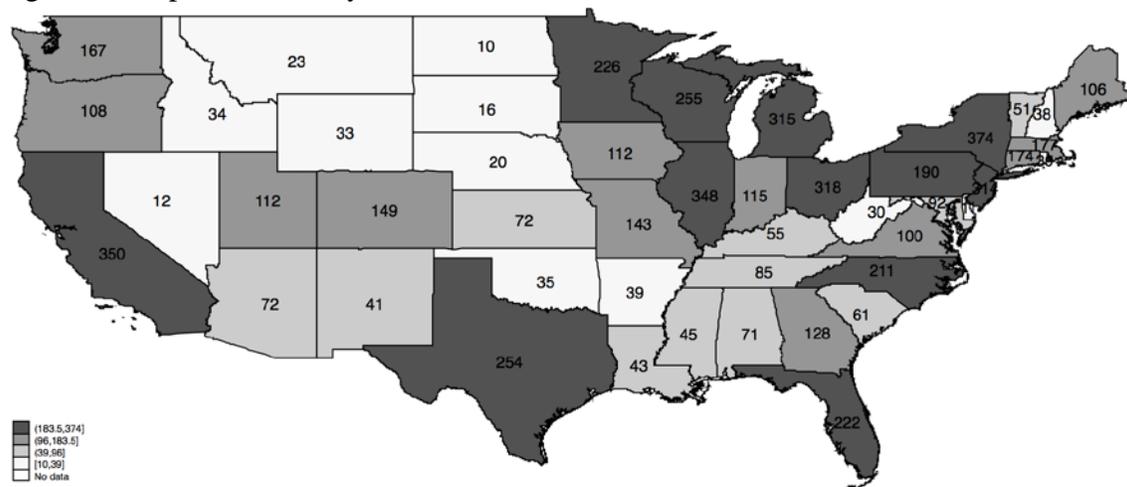
[Redacted]

The results from the study we conducted two years ago can be accessed at the following website: [Redacted] ...

[Information about human subjects protection, including contact information]

[Salutation]”

Figure 2. Response Rates by State



Note: Distribution of the number of respondents by state. Darker shades indicate more respondents in the sample from that state.

Table 4. Perceived Strength of Recruitment Outreach by the Respondent's Gender

Dependent Variable:	(1) <i>Strategize</i>	(2) <i>Donors</i>	(3) <i>Endorsement</i>
Respondent is Female	-0.006 (0.040)	0.004 (0.039)	0.010 (0.039)
Constant	3.613* (0.022)	3.481* (0.022)	3.445* (0.022)
Includes State Fixed Effects?	No	No	No
Observations	3,640	3,632	3,626
R-squared	0.000	0.000	0.000

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$. Models estimated using OLS regression models.

Table 5. Perceived Strength of Recruitment Outreach (Female Officials)

Dependent Variable:	(1) <i>Strategize</i>	(2) <i>Donors</i>	(3) <i>Endorsement</i>
Female Recruit	-0.104 (0.068)	-0.096 (0.068)	-0.100 (0.066)
Constant	3.651* (0.049)	3.529* (0.049)	3.503* (0.048)
Includes State Fixed Effects?	No	No	No
Observations	1,142	1,138	1,136
R-squared	0.002	0.002	0.002

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. ^ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$. Models estimated using OLS regression models.

Table 6. Perceived Strength of Recruitment Outreach (Female Officials)

Dependent Variable:	(1) <i>Strategize</i>	(2) <i>Donors</i>	(3) <i>Endorsement</i>
Female Recruit	-0.396* (0.136)	-0.365* (0.136)	-0.220 (0.134)
Experienced Recruit	0.042 (0.101)	0.090 (0.101)	0.093 (0.099)
Female*Experienced	0.270* (0.138)	0.125 (0.138)	0.056 (0.135)
Open Seat	-0.024 (0.100)	-0.005 (0.100)	0.073 (0.098)
Female*Open	0.047 (0.138)	0.010 (0.137)	-0.061 (0.134)
Has Children	-0.174 (0.101)	-0.246* (0.101)	-0.169 (0.099)
Female*Children	0.272 (0.139)	0.411* (0.139)	0.261 (0.136)
Republican Official	-0.048 (0.074)	-0.033 (0.074)	-0.047 (0.073)
Mayor	-0.101 (0.102)	-0.119 (0.102)	-0.096 (0.099)
Population (10K)	-0.009* (0.003)	-0.008* (0.003)	-0.008* (0.003)
Includes State Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,142	1,138	1,136
R-squared	0.073	0.069	0.064

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$. Models estimated using OLS regression models.

Table 7. Perceived Strength of Recruitment Outreach (Male Officials)

Dependent Variable:	(1) <i>Strategize</i>	(2) <i>Donors</i>	(3) <i>Endorsement</i>
Female Recruit	0.035 (0.043)	0.010 (0.042)	0.037 (0.042)
Constant	3.592* (0.031)	3.474* (0.030)	3.426* (0.030)
Includes State Fixed Effects?	No	No	No
Observations	2,614	2,607	2,603
R-squared	0.000	0.000	0.000

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. ^ p<0.10, * p<0.05. Models estimated using OLS regression models.

Table 8. Perceived Strength of Recruitment Outreach (Male Officials)

Dependent Variable:	(1) <i>Strategize</i>	(2) <i>Donors</i>	(3) <i>Endorsement</i>
Female Recruit	0.055 (0.086)	0.064 (0.084)	0.034 (0.084)
Experienced Recruit	0.190* (0.062)	0.138* (0.060)	0.116 (0.060)
Female*Experienced	-0.063 (0.087)	0.002 (0.085)	0.081 (0.085)
Open Seat	-0.068 (0.061)	-0.031 (0.060)	-0.020 (0.060)
Female*Open	0.114 (0.087)	0.016 (0.084)	0.053 (0.085)
Has Children	-0.058 (0.062)	0.020 (0.060)	0.019 (0.060)
Female*Children	-0.080 (0.086)	-0.129 (0.084)	-0.135 (0.085)
Republican Official	-0.016 (0.046)	0.026 (0.044)	0.017 (0.044)
Mayor	-0.049 (0.056)	-0.031 (0.055)	-0.018 (0.055)
Population (10K)	-0.003 (0.002)	-0.004* (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)
Includes State Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,614	2,607	2,603
R-squared	0.031	0.034	0.032

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$. Models estimated using OLS regression models.