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**GENDER, IDENTITY, AND CANDIDATE QUALITY IN STATEWIDE
ELECTIONS**

A Dissertation in

Political Science and Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies

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Abstract

While women's representation in state-level offices has increased in the past few decades, it has lagged behind in executive offices, especially in women obtaining gubernatorial positions. 45 women, elected or appointed, have ever served as their state's governor, and nearly half the states have yet to elect a woman governor. Yet, this disparity is not consistent across all offices. In order to examine the electoral successes of women throughout state-level or statewide offices, I consider the effects of candidate quality across office type in elections for various offices: governor, US Senate, and state supreme courts.

In the first chapter of my dissertation, I argue that disparities in voter perceptions of candidate qualifications between men and women running for governor negatively affect the success of women candidates at the election level, in that women must be more qualified relative to men in order to achieve a similar level of electoral success. This paper also introduces a more comprehensive measure of candidate quality that incorporates experiences from political, professional, and civic experiences that candidates frequently take on before running for high-level elected office.

My second paper highlights the potential barriers that women, particularly Black women, face in gubernatorial elections and legislative elections. This study entails a survey experiment that manipulates candidate gender and race, levels of candidate quality, and type of office sought. The goals of this study are 1) to distinguish if and how voters evaluate

qualifications differently in executive, rather than legislative, elections, 2) to evaluate voters' demands of quality for Black women relative to other candidates, and 3) to establish if women, overall, must be more qualified than men in order to gain similar support. I generally observe little support for the presence of stereotypes across this experiment, though I do find that race is a significant factor in determining voter perceptions of candidates.

In the third chapter, we rely on a conjoint experiment to test the effects of candidate qualifications and gender stereotypes in U.S. state judicial elections. We find that, on average, women candidates are advantaged in judicial elections, though we find no evidence that citizens view women candidates as more well-qualified. While respondents evaluated male and female candidates with most prior professional experiences similarly, we observe important instances of gendered stereotyping in these elections, suggesting that researchers need to pay more attention to the effects of gender in judicial elections.

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Preface

Chapter 4 of this dissertation, titled “Gender Stereotypes in Judicial Elections” is co-authored with Michael Nelson (Professor of Political Science), my doctoral advisor, and Erin Heidt-Forsythe (Associate Professor of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Political Science), a member of my doctoral committee. I am the first author of the paper, and my contribution to this co-authored chapter is described here. I initially drafted the experimental design, as well as the paper’s introduction, literature review, and theory. The experimental design was further expanded with Michael Nelson, who also aided in fielding the survey experiment, as well as conducting the analyses for the results. Our hypotheses were established as a collective to best align with our theoretical foundation. Additionally, Erin Heidt-Forsythe and I worked in conjunction to redevelop and edit the literature review and theory sections in order to better reflect the political science and women’s studies literature.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Understanding women's representation (and lack thereof) is essential to understanding American politics overall, especially among state governments, where the majority of policy is established. Though a substantial amount of work has been done to examine the roots of gender inequality within legislative positions, both at the federal and state level, the same attention has not been given to executive offices, including governorships. By studying women within gubernatorial elections, US Senate elections, and state supreme court elections, I highlight both differences and similarities in the barriers women face when seeking election across office. The focus of my work on candidate quality in particular fits in with a burgeoning line of research within gender and politics that examines the various qualities and accomplishments women have to have in order to succeed as much as men do. This work specifically benefits the field of state politics, in which executive politics are generally studied through policymaking and the various powers that governors hold, or on gubernatorial campaign dynamics, without considering candidate gender (Barrilleaux and Berkman, 2003; Carsey and Wright, 1998; Kousser and Phillips, 2012).

Candidate quality is an important dynamic in many elections, especially those that are statewide and high-profile, in addition to candidate gender. An examination of the roles that candidate quality and gender have in gubernatorial elections can provide insight into state-level elections overall. Moreover, candidate quality can be a fundamental component of representation, given candidates' abilities to represent their constituents' policy positions and interests, and the relationship this may have with a candidate's overall level of quality (Buttice and Stone, 2012; Funk, 1999; Fulton, 2012). This is an understudied dynamic within the study of American politics in general, one that would benefit from the wealth of data at the state level, particularly among state-level executive elections. My dissertation aims to start to fill the gaps at the intersections of these concepts, providing a foundation for future work that enhances our knowledge of American politics.

Descriptive representation, regardless of the group being represented in question, is essential to substantive representation. In the case of gender and race in elections, this may mean the ability of groups in Congress, for example, to establish coalitions that effectively legislate on issues like civil rights or reproductive rights (Minta and Brown, 2013; Hayes, 2011).

In order to capture the potential effects of bias in gubernatorial elections, as well as across office type, I focus on two distinct methodologies across three chapters to analyze how women may be disadvantaged systematically. First, I will run an observational analysis on primary and general gubernatorial elections in which women run, in order to see how well they do in elections at varying levels of quality, compared to male candidates. In my second chapter, I show the results of a survey that measures individuals' views of varying characteristics in order to examine psychological bias at the individual level, enabling me to see what voters think about candidate quality based on candidate gender, especially in relation to Black women, who are particularly rare as candidates in gubernatorial general elections. This analysis combines statewide offices, both US Senate races and gubernatorial races, to

understand the effects of varying experiences and characteristics on voters' choices. In my final chapter, My coauthors and I conduct an analysis on a study of state supreme court elections, in which we estimate the effects of varying characteristics important to potential judges, in order to understand possible gender effects in state court elections, a distinct analysis that builds on both the judicial elections literature and the gender stereotypes literature to serve as a foundation for examining gender stereotypes in judicial elections at the state level.

My dissertation attempts to to develop a more nuanced understanding of the various ways women may face barriers and bias especially in gubernatorial elections, and how the environment of gubernatorial elections compared to legislative elections, as well as judicial elections, can have an impact on the electoral fates of both men and women. The combination of these methods aims to provide a well-rounded analysis of the relationship between gender and candidate quality by testing if women and men are viewed differently even with similar qualifications, how qualifications may be gendered, and if women need to be more qualified than men to achieve a similar level of success, across distinct office types.

Chapter 2

The Effect of Candidate Gender and Quality in Gubernatorial Elections

2.1 Introduction

Is there an electoral bias against women who run for governor? The paucity of women governors - and women in elected executive offices - throughout U.S. history suggests that the answer to this question could be yes. Just 49 women have ever served as governor throughout the country's history; 18 states have yet to have a woman serve as governor, elected or otherwise (Center for American Women and Politics, 2023^{a,b}).

The outcomes of these elections have significant political consequences. Governors and executives shape state laws and policies, and initial studies suggest that women may govern differently from men (Barrilleaux and Berkman, 2003; Sanbonmatsu, 2014; Shay, 2020). Subnational executive offices often facilitate national prominence, which can help politicians gain name recognition and experience for important federal positions (Center on the American Governor, 2020). Finally, the presence of a woman governor, executive, or political

leader can facilitate increased descriptive representation by influencing women to run for office (Murray, 2014; O'Brien and Rickne, 2016; Ladam, Harden and Windett, 2018; Barnes and Holman, 2020; Bagues and Campa, 2021).

Yet, we know little about the causes of women's underrepresentation as state-level chief executives. When women in gubernatorial elections are studied, it is often as part of a study on executive offices in general (Fox and Oxley, 2003; Oxley and Fox, 2004; O'Regan and Stambough, 2016). Research on gender and elections emphasizes legislative offices, typically Congress, and similar studies in other countries often focus on the effects of gender quotas on women's representation (Lawless and Pearson, 2008; Krook, 2013). Comparatively, research on gubernatorial elections tend to emphasize the relationship between national-level factors and state-level factors in determining an election's outcome, especially in incorporating economic considerations, as well as down-ballot effects driven by the performance of presidents (Carsey and Wright, 1998; Carsey, 2000; Hershey and Holian, 2000; Cummins and Holyoke, 2018; Fullmer and Daniel, 2018). While studies such as these have highlighted key campaign-based factors, especially the effects of salient issues at the time of an election, as well as the effects of presidential popularity, our understanding of candidate-level characteristics and factors remains significantly more limited. Studies that have centered on candidate-level factors have focused primarily on incumbency and the role of previous elected office in the electoral fortunes of gubernatorial candidates (Squire, 1992; King, 2001; Hamman, Gleason and Distefano, 2014; O'Regan and Stambough, 2016). While driven in part by data availability, this focus limits the ability to understand how women ascend to executive offices and the barriers they face in countries without gender-based quotas, including the United States. And, though barriers to women's representation in politics both in and outside of the US have been examined thoroughly - through legislative offices especially - the dynamic may be different for those seeking power in other branches of government (Huddy

and Terkildsen, 1993; Oxley and Fox, 2004; Windett, 2014*b*; Sanbonmatsu, 2014; Niebler, Marchetti and Kozdron, 2020).

Existing studies on women running for executive offices and other high-profile offices that do exist tend to favor the examination of important environmental factors, like media attention or a state’s political culture, instead of candidate-specific factors that could influence voter decisionmaking (Kahn, 1994; Windett, 2011). Yet gubernatorial elections have rich information environments. Voters may learn more about a candidate’s background, such as candidate ideology, past political experience, success in political office, and personality traits, and then use that information to determine their vote (Ditonto, Hamilton and Redlawsk, 2014; Allen, Cutts and Campbell, 2016; Barnes and Holman, 2020). However, even those studies of gender and elections that do include some measure of candidate quality, the measures tend to focus on a restrictive conceptualization of quality that emphasizes previous electoral experience at the expense of the diversity and disparity in experiences that might benefit candidates (Baltrunaite et al., 2014; Allen, Cutts and Campbell, 2016). These measures of candidate quality may especially underestimate the qualifications of women whose path to office is often less direct than many male politicians’ (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu, 2013; Baltrunaite et al., 2014; Barnes and Holman, 2020).

Armed with a novel conceptualization and measure of candidate quality, I argue that women candidates will need to be more qualified than their male counterparts to receive the same or a similar level of support in executive elections. Where previous measures tend to conceptualize of candidate quality with only elected political experience, I measure the concept along three dimensions: political, professional, and civic. I test this theory with an observational analysis of mixed-gender gubernatorial elections from 1974 to 2018, alongside a comparable sample of same-gender elections. The results generally support my expectations. Largely, it appears as though quality has an effect on the success of candidates

depending on the electoral environment, who their opponents are, and what type of quality is being considered. Men benefit from their professional qualifications when competing against women, while women's success is never associated with any type of quality. In elections where men compete against other men, candidate quality is only associated with vote share in specific circumstances.

These findings have broad implications. Across an expansive conceptualization of qualifications, women's electoral success in gubernatorial elections is not related to their own qualifications - limiting the potential success of even well-qualified women. However, under some circumstances, men benefit at the polls from their qualifications. While this bias may not be explicit, these findings provide additional evidence that women face a disadvantage within the electoral system, one that may not be neutralized even when they have significant achievements and experiences.

2.2 Candidate Quality and Gender in Executive Elections

Studies of executive elections and statewide contests in general have largely de-emphasized candidate quality. While work in comparative politics has incorporated a more expansive view of candidate quality that captures more of the variety of experiences and backgrounds candidates come into elections with, though this has been infrequently incorporated into studies on gender in the United States (Barnes and Córdova, 2016). To the extent that candidate quality is considered in studies of American elections, it is typically limited to concepts such as challenger quality, political experience, and some forms of employment (O'Regan and Stambough, 2016; Squire, 1992). Significantly, Fulton (2012) argues that candidate quality should be incorporated into electoral models note that gender effects can

be masked in the aggregate if quality is excluded from analyses of elections. Without the inclusion of quality, they find that men and women see similar levels of support, but when quality is included in their analysis, sex is a determining factor in understanding vote share.

Overwhelmingly, explanations for success in gubernatorial elections prioritize a range of state-level contextual variables, including the economic status of the state, electoral competitiveness, partisanship, and national effects on state-level elections (Cook, Jelen and Wilcox, 1994; Carsey and Wright, 1998; Burmila and Birkhead, 2017). In fewer cases, scholars have studied the effect of individual-level factors – such as previous elected office experience or issue positions – on electoral outcomes (Atkeson and Partin, 1995; Oxley and Fox, 2004; Stambough and O'Regan, 2007; Best and Lem, 2010). For this reason, we have a better sense of what contextual factors are correlated with success in gubernatorial elections than an understanding of what candidate characteristics, qualities, and backgrounds may influence election outcomes (King, 2001; Windett, 2011). Some of these factors within gubernatorial elections include a candidate's ability to fundraise and mobilize their financial supporters, certain policy positions which take on particular importance when they are issues primarily under the purview of the states, and a candidate's previous experience successfully winning an election, even beyond the influence of incumbency (Beyle and Mouw, 1989; Squire, 1992; Cook, Jelen and Wilcox, 1994).

One reason scholars have focused on the effects of gender in legislative, rather than executive, elections is data availability: there are more legislative races to study and also a greater percentage of female candidates in those races (Weeks and Baldez, 2015; O'Regan and Stambough, 2016). Where scholars have studied the effect of gender in executive elections, they have prioritized media bias (especially in presidential elections), the political experience of women who have sought statewide executive office, and the relationship between gender and various external electoral factors (Kahn, 1994, 1995; Windett, 2011; O'Regan

and Stambough, 2016).

Importantly, however, some studies have examined the effects of gender in gubernatorial elections. Fox and Oxley (2003) distinguish the importance of gender stereotypes in gubernatorial elections, finding that stereotypes are especially active in gubernatorial elections. In another study, Oxley and Fox (2005) examine the effects of male candidates running on a joint ticket with female lieutenant governor candidates, noting that the circumstances in which women benefit from voter preferences is dependent on the extent to which a state is “friendly” to women candidates, as well as whether “women’s issues” are the central focus of debates. Niebler, Marchetti and Kozdron (2020) find that in some cases, voters will vote for either a female gubernatorial candidate or a female legislative candidate, but not both, though this effect is party-dependent. However, none of these studies incorporate candidate quality as a potential avenue for stereotype activation and effects, though they do note some essential electoral and campaign dynamics.

2.2.1 The Gendered Qualification Gap

A candidate’s qualifications — the experiences and expertise they would bring to elected office—are an important individual-level factor that might sway voters. Naively, more qualified candidates might be expected to perform better on election day. This isn’t necessarily the case. Bauer (2020*b*) shows that women experience a gendered qualification gap: women have to work harder or do better than their male counterparts to have the same success.

This gap in quality is a result of various forms of bias, which create a high entry barrier for women in politics. For example, women tend to have less linear paths to office than men because they are more likely to hold careers and positions outside of traditional candidate pools (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu, 2013). This disadvantages women’s recruitment for execu-

tive campaigns, but it also carries over to measures of candidate quality that solely consider facts of candidacy like name recognition or ability to obtain campaign funding (Buttice and Stone, 2012; Fulton, 2012).

Additionally, voter’s and elites’ perceptions of viability in elections are gendered (Sanbonmatsu, 2006; Lawless and Pearson, 2008; Fox and Lawless, 2010; Barnes and Holman, 2020; Gothreau and Sanbonmatsu, 2021). While women running for elected office at a whole win at the same rates as men, women that achieve elected office are generally more qualified than their male counterparts (Lawless and Pearson, 2008; Anzia and Berry, 2011). Women may have to work longer and have more success in their careers to credibly campaign for political office, and women may be reluctant to decide to run for office until they have a higher level of qualifications than a typical male candidate.

As a result, there are also baseline differences in the average level of qualifications men and women candidates bring to the campaign trail. Perhaps because of gendered socialization patterns, women usually have more political experience when running for office, tend to have better professional career histories, and may be more educated than similarly situated men (Fulton et al., 2006; Carroll and Sanbonmatsu, 2013; Baltrunaite et al., 2014; Allen, Cutts and Campbell, 2016).¹

Candidate quality is inherently shaped by voters’ perceptions about men’s and women’s viability in elections and how well voters think these candidates will do in the offices they seek. However, “quality” is also influenced by men and women’s differential paths to office and their own individual willingness to run for office, and political parties’ attempts (or lack

¹This gap doesn’t disappear once candidates are elected. Even when holding office, women often have to work harder to succeed or do more to raise money - by defeating higher quality challengers or delivering more federal funding to their congressional districts, as well as by sponsoring more legislation, both in number and in topic diversity (Milyo and Schosberg, 2000; Jenkins, 2007; Anzia and Berry, 2011; Atkinson and Windett, 2018).

thereof) to recruit candidates of different backgrounds and professional networks. At the same time, our current measures of candidate quality are ill-equipped to incorporate the varying paths to office that candidates may take. These barriers - especially gendered socialization affecting ambition, as well as voter and elite perceptions about female candidates' viability - are compounding, and establish increasingly complex limitations on women's ability to achieve elected office, even when they are ambitious and are sought out for recruitment by political parties. Within the electoral process, the effects of disparities in qualifications and perceptions of qualifications may play a role in the success of female candidates despite their navigation of limitations earlier on in an election.

2.3 Theory

According to Lawless and Fox (2010), good candidates are those who are “well-educated, have risen to the top of their professions, serve as active members in their communities, and express high levels of political interest.” Voters gain this information about candidates, among other details, over the course of a campaign, and use it to evaluate candidates and choose who to vote for. Across governments, the perception of what constitutes an ideal candidate can be shaped by institutions – especially electoral mechanisms such as gender quotas or political parties (Barnes and Holman, 2020). Buttice and Stone (2012) note that voters have limited incentives to search for and retain information about candidates, providing incumbents with an inherent advantage in elections. Subsequently, they broaden the conception of candidate quality as policy and leadership quality – not just how likely candidates are to run effective campaigns, but the characteristics that voters intrinsically value in candidates, beyond candidate visibility, incumbency, and resource (i.e., financial) differences. Barnes and Holman (2020) note that diversity among candidate characteristics – including personal and professional experiences and backgrounds – is important for representation,

both descriptive and substantive.

Scholars take this information about candidates' backgrounds and create measures of candidate quality. The most common measure of this concept is a dichotomous measure of previous success at winning an election to a political office (Squire, 1992). While this measure benefits from its simplicity and replicability, it excludes certain kinds of relevant experiences that many candidates undoubtedly hold that could influence voters' perceptions of their fitness for office (Squire, 1992; Buttice and Stone, 2012; Barnes and Córdova, 2016; Barnes and Holman, 2020). Consequently, we know that candidates have a range of previous experiences and backgrounds which constitute candidate quality – whether measured just as previous political experience or beyond – and these measures can be quantitatively measured, though they are admittedly difficult to capture satisfactorily (Fulton, 2012).

Because the men and women who tend to run for office often have different professional paths to office and systematically tend to hold different personal characteristics the use of the single-indicator measure of candidate qualifications is gendered. As discussed above, women may ascend to political office through nonlinear paths such as volunteer groups and parties rather than through lower-level political offices (Clark, 1994; Carroll and Sanbonmatsu, 2013). More broadly, the experiences that candidates have vary across candidate identity – women are less frequently found in the traditional professional pools for candidate recruitment, such as business and law, but may have substantial experience in another relevant field that is less frequently recruited from (Lawless and Fox, 2010; Sanbonmatsu, 2014). Generally, women ascend to political office through nonlinear paths such as volunteer groups and parties - though this may also be the case for some men (Clark, 1994; Carroll and Sanbonmatsu, 2013). For this reason, measures of candidate quality often capture the relevant experiences in male candidates' backgrounds, while excluding details that are essential to understanding women's paths to office, and ultimately, their actual qualifications, relative

to men. As detailed below, I resolve this issue by introducing a new measure of candidate quality that measures candidates' professional, civic, and political experiences separately.

Beyond baseline differences in average levels of qualifications, I expect that voters evaluate male and female candidates differently based on their qualifications. A variety of studies have shown that voters often prefer candidates who align with traditional gender roles (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993; Schneider and Bos, 2016; Bauer, 2020*a*). Voters also expect candidates to be qualified through their careers and experiences, disadvantaging female candidates who succeed on one of these dimensions but not the other, relative to men (Teele, Kalla and Rosenbluth, 2018). The closest tie between gender roles and qualifications appears to be through gender stereotypes as well as belief stereotypes, which affect the roles women are expected to succeed in, as well as the issues they appear to be most confident in (Fox and Oxley, 2003). In some cases, women may benefit from some evaluations of qualifications - for example, women are seen as better at handling ethical issues in government, a particular type of qualification that can be especially important in some electoral contexts (Schneider and Bos, 2016). However, the relationship between gender roles and qualifications across office type remains largely untested.

I theorize that a similar effect holds when considering how qualified candidates must be to achieve success in gubernatorial elections. Anzia and Berry (2011) describe the “Jackie (and Jill) Robinson effect” as one in which women have to perform better than their male counterparts to overcome sex discrimination in the electorate. They suggest that if “voters are prejudiced against women, then a woman must be better than the man she runs against to win.” They test this theory in the US House by examining differences in how much federal funding and legislation sponsoring representatives deliver for districts represented by men compared to women. Extended to political office in general, this theory suggests that a woman, on average, must have a higher level of quality than her male counterparts to achieve

a similar level of success when seeking office. In other words, I expect that voters give more credit to men for their qualifications than women such that women need to have a higher level of qualifications than their male opponent in order to receive the same qualifications boost: *on average, women who are similarly qualified to men will not receive the same benefit as men do.*

My theory holds regardless of bias at other levels of the electoral process – my goal in this article is to examine the electoral effects of candidate qualifications once the candidates have overcome all other barriers to being elected. Consider, for example, differences in recruitment or the strategic nature by which women run for office: the women who self-select into running for governor will on average be disadvantaged by this electoral bias compared to men who also self-select into running for governor even though these women may have higher average levels of qualifications. That is, while bias is certainly likely to exist throughout the electoral process, my paper is aimed at understanding the effects of qualifications once women have overcome barriers such as low recruitment, familial expectations, socialization, and any gender bias that may have an effect in their primary electoral contests. This bias is compounding, which creates a structural imbalance in the qualifications of men compared to women, such that women tend to be more qualified than men when seeking office. The limitations placed on women through barriers such as political ambition and recruitment build on each other, as well as through the potential barrier of women’s qualifications being undervalued by voters.

2.4 Data Analysis

To test my hypotheses, I primarily rely on an original dataset containing all mixed-gender gubernatorial general elections between 1974 and 2018. I study U.S. gubernatorial elections

for several reasons. Gubernatorial elections are an ideal case in which to test my theory, being the most frequent statewide executive election in the United States and having high prominence in the political landscape. Studying state-level elections allows for the examination executive offices that are not quite as electorally expansive as a national executive office – a president or prime minister, for example – and to test my theory on a population that serves as a potential pipeline for more prominent political leadership positions. Additionally, gubernatorial elections and subnational elections can serve as microcosms of national elections, mirroring the most relevant electoral characteristics, including accessibility of information. My data are collected at both the candidate- and election-level, with 252 individual candidates and 126 elections overall, out of 615 total elections during this period ($\sim 20\%$). The data used in this study come from an extensive range of sources - including newspapers, candidate websites, and political information-gathering resources, such as VoteSmart.

Construction of Candidate Quality Following my argument that candidate quality is quantifiable, gendered, and that traditional measures of candidate quality do not accurately capture the dynamics of candidate experience and background when they run for office, I establish a measure of candidate quality that is both multidimensional and accounts for the varied paths individuals take to candidacy. More expansive measures of quality that have established the importance of factors beyond prior political experience generally describe candidate quality as more of an acquisition of resources and skills that candidates can draw upon in an election, rather than in their actual roles as elected officials, rooted in the experiences and roles candidates take on in various aspects of their lives (Buttice and Stone, 2012; Thomas, 1991; Barnes and Holman, 2020). I follow this approach and distinguish three areas in which candidates can develop these skills and resources: political experience, professional experience, and civic experience.

First, I draw upon the conventional idea of quality as *political experience*, in part because this experience has an established relationship with electoral outcomes for candidates, but also because holding political office provides tangible benefits to candidates that they can employ in elections for other offices. This can include, but is not limited to, name recognition and party support.

I measure *political experience* using an indicator of the highest previous elected offices a candidate held. Largely following Squire (1992)'s measure of political experience for challenger quality, candidates' political quality level is based on their highest elected office held out of the following office types: : 1) local or county office, 2) state legislative position, 3) served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, 4) holds a non-gubernatorial or US Senatorial statewide office, or 5) is a non-incumbent previous governor or a U.S. Senator. I score candidates using this scale; the resulting measure ranges from 0 (no previous elected office experience) to 5 (served as a non-incumbent governor or US Senator).²

This measure admittedly flattens some of the variation found across elected offices: certainly, a mayor of a large city would find more prominence than a mayor of a small town, and some state-level positions are more prevalent in certain states over others. However, the sample largely includes candidates who were mayors of small to mid-size cities, rather than mayors of large cities, and it is difficult to record a distinction such as how prominent one elected attorney general is in one state compared to another in a way that is reliable and valid. Thus, I opt for the most transparent measure, acknowledging some heterogeneity within categories.

²Because this measure is based on the conceptualization of political quality as being a candidate's skills and abilities to win an election, rather than their ability to serve in office, I only include political offices to which candidates were elected in the measure of political experience. Offices to which candidates were not elected serve as possible indicators for a candidate's performance in office, much like other career paths taken by candidates. Note, however, that while I omit appointed offices in this indicator, the measure of professional experience includes those positions.

I find that the most common type of political experience is serving as a state legislator (51%). Other forms of political experience that tend to be more common than others are statewide offices such as governor, as well as non-mayoral local offices, such as city councilor. On the 0-5 scale, the average level of political experience for male candidates was 2.3 and the average for female candidates was 2.9. Difference-of-means tests show that the average level of prior political experience does differ according to candidate gender, with the average woman holding a slightly “higher”-level office than the average male candidate - such as serving in the US House compared to the state legislature ($p=0.01$). Substantively, this mirrors the literature on women’s experiences prior to seeking office, in that they tend to have more experience overall, and seek offices at the local or state legislative level before running for federal or statewide positions (Fulton, 2012; Ladam, Harden and Windett, 2018; O’Regan and Stambough, 2016; Welch et al., 1985).

My second dimension of candidate quality is *professional experience*. Many candidates have professional experience in business or law; because these fields are particularly well-connected to politics, they might provide candidates with networks and access that could provide them an electoral advantage. However, it is difficult to rank professions along this dimension, and any ranking of professions would ignore differences in candidates’ levels of professional accomplishments. After all, employment in a particular field does not necessarily confer particular skills that are more valuable to an individual’s candidacy, if their career in a different field employs generally the same responsibilities and skills. Therefore, instead of distinguishing between various fields, I distinguish between job titles, which roughly indicate what experiences candidates have held.

A salient aspect of professional employment which can aid candidates in running for and holding elected office is leadership experience. Especially in executive offices, leadership positions can signal to voters that a candidate is able to “take charge,” which is especially

significant for offices that are inherently tied to leadership. Professional experience can expand an individual's network and provide them with some public name recognition, as well as skills that can be useful in candidacy, such as public speaking or fundraising. These skills occur across fields and tend to rely more on position responsibilities rather than being inherent in some fields over others.

To measure the resources, skills, and networks that come with professional experience, I coded the five previous jobs a candidate had before the gubernatorial election. While this measure may omit some important experiences candidates received early in their careers, it covers a broad swath of most candidates' professional lives and avoids the increased unreliability from measuring further back in candidates' careers, which is particularly difficult to navigate in recording the backgrounds of candidates early in the sample. A candidate received a score for .5 for each job they held and an additional .5 points if they held a leadership position at that job.³ Thus, a score of 0 indicates no previous professional experience, and a 5 indicates that they had at least five previous jobs, with a leadership position (as indicated by their job title)⁴ in each job. To avoid crossover with my measure of political experience, I include employment outside of the bounds of elected office. Political experience in an appointed position or as a non-elected government employee was coded as professional experience rather than political experience. Accordingly, if a candidate holds an elected office - to which they were elected - as their employment, this is not credited as a professional experience. Candidates appointed to typically elected offices receive credit for that position as if it were professional experience, but if they are subsequently elected to that office, it

³While this measure captures some of a candidate's professional experience, it inherently fails to capture some of the depth of candidates' experiences by not including the years that candidates held their positions. Due to consistently missing data on the specific length of time candidates served in various positions, I am currently limited in accounting for time in candidates' professional careers. In future work, I intend to establish closer approximations to more fully capture a candidate's professional experience.

⁴Sample job titles include but are not limited to terms such as: "manager," "chief," "director," and "partner."

reverts to political rather than professional experience.

In terms of professional employment, the average candidate tends to have nearly three non-political jobs, with a corresponding median of three previous non-political jobs. On average, a candidate has held about one non-political leadership positions. With a maximum value of five, this suggests that candidates spend about three of their five previous jobs in professional or private employment. Professional leadership is rarer, though the average candidate does have some prior leadership in their career. Some job titles are more common than others in the sample, with lawyers and business owners or managers seemingly well-represented, mirroring traditional political recruitment pools (Fox, 2018). Professional leadership, which is based on job title, may be holding a partner title in a law office, serving as perhaps a director or manager. The average for male candidates was 2.16 and the average for female candidates was approximately 1.91. A difference-of-means tests reveals that, on average, men do not have significantly higher levels of prior professional experience than women ($p = 0.07$).

Finally, I incorporate “*civic quality*” in my definition of candidate quality, based on work that connects involvement in political and social organizations to both political involvement and the presence of women as candidates (Burns, Schlozman and Verba, 2001; Barnes and Holman, 2020). Working in volunteer organizations can draw individuals into a well-connected network, impart knowledge on campaigns and other political institutions, and provide recognition within their communities. Like the professional category, this political experience is distinct from experiences where candidates hold professional political offices, such as an appointed state attorney general. Where party involvement is present among gubernatorial candidates, it tends to occur at the local or state-level, and candidates tend to hold full-time employment elsewhere, rather than serving professionally as party leaders. Effectively, these positions held by candidates tend to be on a volunteer basis, much like

their involvement in interest groups, churches, and community service.

I measure a candidate's civic and political engagement beyond their record of employment or elected office. I refer to this as civic quality, though it incorporates both candidates' party experience and volunteer work. The civic quality measure is designed to account for the networks and resources candidates might receive, from being involved in their party or being involved in the community. The measure is divided into two primary categories: party experience and volunteer (civic) experience. Candidates have party involvement when they are involved in either their respective party in some official capacity, such as a party convention delegate. Candidates receive a score of 0 for party experience if they have no formal involvement, and up to one additional point for each position they have held in the party (to a total of three points). Candidates who held some type of leadership position within the party, such as state party chair or precinct captain, they receive an additional point. Thus, if a candidate only holds one position in the party, but it is a leadership position, their value in this category is a 2. In total, this category has a scale of 0-3.⁵

Candidates are coded as having volunteer or civic experience when they serve in some non-profit or community group, including groups that are politically active. This involvement is counted regardless of what level it occurs at – candidates are counted as having experience for local groups, as well as state and national groups. Because leadership positions in these groups are substantially harder to code reliably, especially in terms of what level a candidate's involvement occurred at, I count experience with one organization as one point, and experience with multiple organizations as an additional point. Consequently, the maximum value of the civic experience category is a 2.

⁵A brief table of summary statistics for individual-level components of these quality variables is available in the Appendix, in Table A.1

Both party involvement and civic experience are fairly common throughout the sample. While party involvement in general would be general positions, such as working on a campaign, leadership might be serving as party chair, at the county or state-level. Regarding volunteer or civic experience, 36% of the sample had some kind of civic experience. Accordingly, 27% of the sample had experience in multiple civic organizations. These organizations might be volunteering organizations, such as the United Way, or could be more civic-focused organizations, like the League of Women Voters. I then combine these two scales, and the resulting measure ranges from 0 to 5. The average for male candidates was 1.13 and the average for female candidates was 1.22.

A difference-of-means tests reveals that women, on average, do not have higher levels of civic and volunteer engagement than men do, with a p-value of approximately 0.5. This contrasts with literature on women's paths to office that suggest they often enter politics through volunteer organizations and frequently outside the traditional pools of political recruitment, whereas men tend to be recruited from these pools, typically through careers in law and business (Burns, Schlozman and Verba, 2001; Welch et al., 1985; Windett, 2014*b*).

As a substantive example, I include a table of Maggie Hassan's career as quantified by my updated quality measure. She represents the approximate median female candidate in the sample at the time of her election as New Hampshire's governor in 2012. She has a high amount of employment experience, but little professional leadership, held one previous elected office, had no official party involvement, and was involved in multiple volunteer or civic organizations.

Table 2.1: Example Candidate Qualifications for Typical Woman in Sample

Qualification	Maggie Hassan	Maximum Value	Male Average	Female Average	P-Value
Previous Employment Experience	4	5	2.9	2.7	0.24
Leadership Positions	0	5	1.4	1.1	0.04
Elected Office Experience	1	5	2.3	2.8	0.01
Official Party Experience	0	3	0.26	0.31	0.33
Volunteer/Civic Organization Experience	2	2	0.6	0.6	1
Scaled Quality	1.0	3.0	1.07	1.18	0.03

A table summary of the typical woman candidate’s qualifications, using Maggie Hassan as a substantive example. She has a high amount of employment experience, but little professional leadership, held one previous elected office, had no official party involvement, and was involved in multiple volunteer or civic organizations. Her overall value of quality, when scaled, is 1.0 out of a maximum of 3.0.

Dependent Variable The dependent variable is the difference in candidate vote share, measured as the difference between the male candidate’s vote share and the female candidate’s vote share. Thus, the variable takes positive values when the male candidate received a larger percentage of the vote and a negative value when the female candidate received a greater percentage of the vote. The variable has a mean of 5.9 and a standard deviation of 18.11.

There are several reasons to use the difference in vote share as the outcome variable. First, it allows for consideration of not just who wins and loses elections, but also their margin of victory (or defeat). The degree to which a candidate wins an election might indicate more support by the electorate, for their policy positions and leadership, but also for the candidate themselves. Second, it helps us make comparisons between candidates, rather than just considering the probability someone wins an election alone. This is especially important when focusing on candidate gender and electoral outcomes. Prior evidence suggests that there is no bias against women running for office, and that when women run, they win (Lawless and Pearson, 2008). Studying election outcomes at the level of vote share allows us to see 1) if women do win at the same rates as men do, and 2) if they receive comparable levels of the vote, within the context of gubernatorial elections.

Because the outcome variable is interval-level, I use linear regression to estimate the model. This outcome variable requires two research design choices. Because the outcome variable is interval-level, I use linear regression to estimate the model. Additionally, because I only have one observation for each election (rather than an observation for each candidate) I conduct my analysis at the election level rather than the individual level, mirroring the approach of (Buttice and Stone, 2012).⁶

Independent Variables I use my measure of candidate quality in two ways – first, following standard practice, I test for the effect of qualifications using the traditional measure of quality: previous elected office experience. Second, to examine the effects that different types of qualifications might have, I estimate another regression that includes six independent variables, accounting for each of the three quality component variables - political quality, professional quality, and civic quality - for individual candidates by gender.

To complete this multivariate analysis, I collected a range of covariates to account for potential confounding factors that may occur in gubernatorial elections. First, previous analyses of gubernatorial elections have shown that state economic factors are important to understanding gubernatorial elections systematically (Squire, 1992). As such, I include a measure of state unemployment, which is the percentage of the state which is unemployed for the year of the gubernatorial election.⁷

Studies on state-level elections overwhelmingly account for a state’s partisanship or ideology, and I follow suit by including a measure of the state’s government ideology, created by

⁶While there are many ways to model elections and examine the effects of gender within them, as my study selects the independent variable based on gender, I am unable to conduct tests with interactions between gender and other variables, since gender is already inherent in the covariates.

⁷For the three elections in 1974 (CT, MD, and NV), I use the state unemployment rate from 1975. The federal government did not begin estimating state unemployment rates until 1975, and any estimates from 1974 are incomparable to the calculations in following years.

Berry et al. (1998), in which higher scores indicate a more liberal state government. I also created an indicator for the woman candidate being a Republican to account for any gender differences within the parties. Finally, I control for any further influence of partisanship by including a measure of state citizen ideology created by Berry et al. (1998), which measures the ideology of a state based on interest group ratings, where higher scores indicate a more liberal population. I additionally account for the presence of an incumbent candidate, for both men and women candidates. Incumbency advantage can be a powerful determinant in electoral outcomes, with incumbents benefiting from their status and resources (Carson, Engstrom and Roberts, 2007). My study separates candidate quality from incumbency advantage both conceptually and methodologically, distinguishing my analysis from other studies done on candidate qualifications and quality (Squire, 1992; Buttice and Stone, 2012; O'Regan and Stambough, 2016).

In terms of campaign-specific or election-specific factors, analysis on gubernatorial elections over a long period is fairly limited. A consistent measure for campaign finance across states and time does not exist, because of differences in campaign finance policy adoption across the states, both in terms of the years that states established campaign finance laws and in the contents of the laws themselves. Otherwise, I attempt to control for a handful of election-specific factors that can affect various aspects of gubernatorial election outcomes, such as the election occurring in a presidential year.

Finally, I include measures to control for a state's political culture. Examinations of how women fare in state-level elections show that a state's culture can have a major influence on the success women have in running for office, and whether or not they opt to run at all (Windett, 2011, 2014b,a; Sanbonmatsu, 2014). Accordingly, I include three variables to account for a state's relative "friendliness" to women candidates: 1) an indicator of the state's passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, 2) the percent of women in the state's legislature

for the year of the gubernatorial election, which can indicate how many women might be willing to run for governor and 3) a state’s willingness to elect women more generally, and an indicator of a state previously electing a woman to be governor (as of the year of the election) Though there are many ways to measure the sociopolitical culture of a state and how “women-friendly” it is, these are three common indicators across measures, and capture many of the intended characteristics.

2.5 Results

I conduct my analysis in the following series of steps: First, I estimate a model that incorporates only the traditional measure of candidate quality: previous elected political experience. I then estimate a model that incorporates my three quality variables: political, professional, and civic, with the same control variables to test for any differences in the influence of candidate quality on vote share by gender. Though this has the disadvantage of excluding the effect of candidate quality relative to a competitor’s level of quality, it does allow me to specify if either men or women are advantaged or disadvantaged on average, even when the candidates have a similar level of candidate quality.

I begin my central analysis with a model that incorporates only the more commonly used measure of candidate quality - previous experience in elected office - along with the covariates described in the data analysis section. The results of this analysis can be seen in Table 2.2. In this model, candidate quality via elected political experience has no relationship with the outcome variable, difference in vote share. In this model, neither men nor women benefit from being well-qualified. However, following established scholarship, both men and women do significantly benefit from being an incumbent candidate: male incumbent candidates have about a 16 point advantage above their female opponents, while female incumbent candidates

receive a vote share approximately 19 points higher than their male opponents. Notably, the only other variables that achieve statistical significance in this model is the measure of citizen ideology and the measure of government ideology, where higher scores indicate a more liberal state and a more conservative state government, respectively. The relationship between these variables and the outcome variable suggests a positive relationship between state-level conservatism and the vote share of female candidates relative to men, rather than aligning with the expectation that more liberal states are more likely to support female candidates than conservative states.

Table 2.2: Regression results for traditional measure of candidate quality in mixed-gender elections

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Percent Difference in Vote Share
Male Political Experience	-4.890 (2.988)
Female Political Experience	-3.711 (4.910)
Citizen Ideology	-0.240* (0.112)
Prior Woman Governor	4.422 (3.170)
Male Incumbent	15.963*** (2.913)
Female Incumbent	-19.274*** (3.879)
Government Ideology	0.204 (0.113)
Third Party Candidate	2.756 (3.057)
Female GOP Candidate	1.246 (2.697)
Percent Women in Legislature	-0.166 (0.197)
Equal Rights Amendment	-3.065 (3.286)
Unemployment Rate	0.511 (0.504)
Decade	-0.639 (2.293)
Presidential Election	2.207 (2.967)
Education	8.675 (41.301)
Constant	15.226 (9.532)
Observations	126
R ²	0.544
Adjusted R ²	0.482
Residual Std. Error	13.044 (df = 110)
F Statistic	8.742*** (df = 15; 110)

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Regression results for the traditional measure of candidate quality in mixed-gender elections. No quality variables achieve statistical significance in this model.

I follow my initial analysis using the traditional measure of candidate quality by estimating a nearly identical model using my individual measures of candidate quality – three variables for men, three for women. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 2.3: one of the quality variables achieve statistical significance for female candidates. However, men do significantly benefit from their professional qualifications - a relationship not mirrored among women. All else equal, when a male candidate moves from the minimum value of professional quality (zero) to the maximum (one), their vote share increases by about 12%. When candidate incumbency is considered, regardless of candidate gender, it is once again statistically significant in predicting the difference in candidate vote share. Both men and women candidates significantly benefit from being the incumbent candidate: Male incumbents see an average 15.8 point advantage over their opponents, while female incumbents, on average, have a vote share about 20.4 points higher than their opponents. As in the previous model, the measures for ideology - both citizen and government - are statistically significant. These relationships mirror those in the previous model, suggesting a positive relationship between a state's conservatism and female candidate success relative to men.⁸

⁸The standardized coefficients for this model can be seen in the Appendix, in Table A.2. Additionally, I conducted a multicollinearity test for this model, and largely found that the variance inflation factor (VIF) of variables was close to one, with a few exceptions: both ideology measures, state citizen ideology and state government ideology, have VIF values over two, and the time measure of the decade that an election took place in has a VIF of over 5. All other variables have VIF values between one and two, with most relatively close to a value of one.

Table 2.3: Regression results for updated candidate quality measure in mixed-gender elections

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Percent Difference in Vote Share
Male Candidate Political Quality	4.160 (4.123)
Male Candidate Professional Quality	12.189* (5.730)
Male Candidate Civic Quality	-0.579 (5.488)
Female Candidate Political Quality	-7.890 (5.119)
Female Candidate Professional Quality	-6.352 (7.385)
Female Candidate Civic Quality	3.428 (5.242)
Citizen Ideology	-0.239* (0.114)
Prior Woman Governor	5.106 (3.208)
Male Incumbent	16.002*** (3.059)
Female Incumbent	-20.260*** (4.108)
Government Ideology	0.198 (0.119)
Third Party Candidate	2.263 (3.204)
Female GOP Candidate	1.279 (2.727)
Percent Women in Legislature	-0.169 (0.202)
Equal Rights Amendment	-3.823 (3.372)
Unemployment Rate	0.314 (0.510)
Decade	-1.190 (2.371)
Presidential Election	1.900 (3.142)
Education	16.016 (42.324)
Constant	8.946 (9.742)
Observations	126
R ²	0.559
Adjusted R ²	0.479
Residual Std. Error	13.071 (df = 106)
F Statistic	7.061*** (df = 19; 106)
<i>Note:</i>	* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

Regression results for the updated candidate quality measure in mixed-gender elections. The results show that male candidate professional quality has a positive and significant relationship with the difference in vote share, indicating a benefit for male candidates over their female competitors.

Both models have similar predictive value, with an adjusted R^2 for both around 48%. Taken together, these analyses suggest that when using the traditional measure of candidate quality, there is no evidence that quality relates to vote share, for either men or women candidates. But, when looking at different dimensions of quality, professional experience does significantly and positively matter for men. Across these analyses, there is no evidence that women’s qualifications are associated with their success, either positively or negatively. Overall, the dominant determinant in the outcomes of these elections is candidate incumbency, which can be related to qualifications in that voters may view experience in the office being contested as a distinct and compelling type of qualification for that position. I find that incumbency is helpful to both male and female candidates approximately equally, in line with previous work on gubernatorial elections (O’Regan and Stambough, 2016).

Though my initial tests find that men uniquely benefit from their professional qualifications, as measured using an array of candidate experiences, in elections where they compete against women, while women receive no benefits for their qualifications across the board, I conduct a robustness check using same-gender elections from the same time period as my original sample in order to examine the bounds in which men might receive such benefits in elections. In order to do so, I use a similar dependent variable to that of my initial two models, but calculate it as:

$$\text{Difference in Vote Share} = \text{Republican Candidate Vote Share} - \text{Democratic Candidate Vote Share}.$$

This indicates that positive values suggest higher relative vote shares for Republican candidates, while negative values indicate higher relative vote shares for Democratic candidates. The mean of this dependent variable is -0.56, and the standard deviation is 23.92. The following tables correspond to those in the previous analysis, with the traditional model for candidate quality in male-candidate only elections seen in Table 2.4, and the updated model

for candidate quality in Table 2.5.

As seen in Table 2.4, the results are fairly similar to those found in the mixed-gender election sample. The traditional measure of candidate quality, political experience, has no statistically significant relationship to a male candidate's vote share, regardless of party. Additionally, the driving forces of electoral outcomes seem to be largely incumbency, with both Republican and Democratic candidates receiving significant benefits over their competitors when they run as the incumbent governor.

Table 2.4: Regression results for traditional measure of candidate quality in same-gender elections

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Percent Difference in Vote Share
Republican Political Experience	2.120 (3.623)
Democratic Political Experience	-5.842 (4.072)
Citizen Ideology	-0.251 (0.129)
Republican Incumbent	23.616*** (4.466)
Democratic Incumbent	-15.527*** (4.312)
Government Ideology	0.089 (0.164)
Third Party Candidate	1.147 (4.407)
Percent Women in Legislature	-1.385 (0.972)
Unemployment Rate	-0.804 (2.836)
Decade	-3.690 (3.992)
Presidential Election Year	-1.560 (39.332)
Education	16.057 (13.466)
Observations	122
R ²	0.533
Adjusted R ²	0.486
Residual Std. Error	17.170 (df = 110)
F Statistic	11.419*** (df = 11; 110)
<i>Note:</i> *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	

Regression results for the traditional measure of candidate quality in same-gender elections. No candidate quality variables achieve statistical significance in this model.

Turning to the same-gender analysis of the expanded measure of candidate quality in Table 2.5, we again find results that largely mirror those in the main analysis, with a few important distinctions. As consistent with each of the other models, the incumbent candidate

significantly benefits from being the incumbent, regardless of party affiliation. Additionally, citizen ideology has a statistically significant relationship with the difference in vote share, as it does in the mixed-gender models. While most of the quality variables in this model have no relationship to the outcome variable, there is a key difference in the significance of qualifications for men: Democratic men in mixed-gender elections significantly benefit from their political qualifications, in a way that Republican male candidates don't, and distinctly from their other levels of qualifications, which have no significant relationship with the dependent variable.

Table 2.5: Regression results for updated measure of candidate quality in same-gender elections

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Percent Difference in Vote Share
Republican Candidate Political Quality	4.581 (4.994)
Republican Candidate Professional Quality	-7.276 (7.681)
Republican Candidate Civic Quality	2.205 (10.119)
Democratic Candidate Political Quality	-14.317* (5.827)
Democratic Candidate Professional Quality	-4.016 (7.519)
Democratic Candidate Civic Quality	9.941 (11.046)
Citizen Ideology	-0.281* (0.128)
Republican Incumbent	23.934*** (4.359)
Democratic Incumbent	-16.776*** (4.544)
Government Ideology	0.179 (0.166)
Third Party Candidate	0.757 (4.360)
Unemployment Rate	-1.058 (0.984)
Decade	-0.055 (2.896)
Presidential Election Year	-2.920 (3.944)
Education	-5.041 (39.185)
Constant	15.290 (13.109)
Observations	122
R ²	0.564
Adjusted R ²	0.502
Residual Std. Error	16.905 (df = 106)
F Statistic	9.136*** (df = 15; 106)

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Regression results for the updated measure of candidate quality in same-gender (only male candidate) elections. Only Democratic candidate political equality achieves statistical significance in this model.

This chapter shows that the traditional measure of quality reveals no relationship between quality and electoral success, but when my expanded measures of quality are incorporated, we see that there is a relationship between professional candidate quality and political candidate quality and vote share, though in differing contexts. Women do experience electoral bias in gubernatorial elections: men benefit from being well-qualified, while their female opponents do not. Moreover, men benefit from their professional quality when their competitors are women, but this relationship fades when their competitors are men - neither Republican nor Democratic male candidates' success is associated with their professional quality in same-gender elections. However, Democratic men's level of political quality does have a significant and positive relationship with their vote share in elections. This relationship does not hold for Republican men.

2.6 Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, I use an extensive original dataset of mixed-gender gubernatorial elections and a comparative sample of male-candidate-only gubernatorial elections in the United States from 1974-2018 to complete a multi-part analysis that generally finds support for the presence of systematic bias against women in gubernatorial elections based on candidate quality. My analyses find that the traditional measure of quality reveals no relationship between quality and electoral success, but when my expanded measures of quality are incorporated, we observe some relationship between candidate quality and vote share, at least for male candidates. Men benefit from being well-qualified, while their female counterparts do not. Moreover, men only benefit from their level of professional quality in elections where their opponents are women; when their political quality is compared to other male opponents across the same time period, male candidates of either party do not disproportionately benefit from being qualified. Democratic men, however, do seem to benefit relative to Republican

men in considering their political qualifications. Women see no benefit, regardless of what type of quality is being measured.

My study does further elaborate on the important role that incumbency has in elections, especially in gubernatorial elections. Incumbency advantage is a particularly unique but salient type of candidate quality where the incumbent candidate not only has the resources, connections, and experiences of the office that can make them well-qualified, but they are also a distinct figure voters likely have prior knowledge of. A wealth of research has established the relevance of incumbency in gubernatorial elections, and my analyses find that this advantage is experienced by both male and female candidates (Squire, 1992; O'Regan and Stambough, 2016; Barrilleaux and Berkman, 2003). Once women are elected, they see a significant increase in their vote share, on average, similar to the advantage that incumbent men see, suggesting that the barriers to women's representation in executive offices may be in achieving election to an office initially, rather than staying in office.

This paper follows a burgeoning line of research in gender and elections that stresses that women need to do better or do more to achieve success to the same extent that men do, but provides an alternative specification of candidate quality to more accurately measure the experiences and backgrounds of candidates (Anzia and Berry, 2011; Atkinson and Windett, 2018; Jenkins, 2007; Milyo and Schosberg, 2000). Given the lack of women in executive offices within the US, this disadvantage is particularly alarming. If women are inherently disadvantaged in gubernatorial general elections, the growth of women in these executive offices may continue to stagnate in ways not present in other types of elections, including congressional elections. However, it is also important to note that the data show that women significantly benefit from being incumbents, as do men, so women may reap the benefits of incumbency advantage regardless of their qualifications otherwise, potentially improving their ability to keep office once they achieve it. For executive candidates, this analysis

bolsters the expectation that they will largely benefit from being incumbents, regardless of their gender. It could also possibly encourage more high-quality men to run, since they systematically and significantly benefit from having high levels of quality, though this benefit is conditional. The findings are less positive for women. Even when they are highly qualified, women do not benefit from their qualifications.

While my analysis meets my expectations in some respect, in that men see conditional advantages based on how qualified they are while women's success has no association with their quality, there are further steps that could be taken to instill more confidence in these results. While the size of this study is limited by the realities of women's underrepresentation in state gubernatorial elections, one avenue to explore would be gubernatorial primary elections. In particular, the inclusion of primary elections would allow us to study how women may be disadvantaged at multiple stages in the electoral process of gubernatorial elections and could provide a much larger sample to pull from. An alternate version of this study could replicate this research with other executive offices at the state or local level, to provide a more general understanding of women's potential disadvantages in executive offices at large, or for statewide offices overall, as I do in the following two chapters of this dissertation. Similarly, the theory and methods put forth in this paper could be applied to other countries, particularly those without gender quotas, in an examination of executive, legislative, and judicial offices, as is appropriate for each nation's political system. This study also serves as a foundation for future research that probes the effects and importance of candidate quality, both in elections themselves and for voters individually, particularly in the United States.

This paper makes a significant contribution to the subfields of gender, elections, and state politics, and serves as the foundation for the rest of my dissertation. By centering my analysis at the intersection of each of these three subfields, I am able to test how candidate quality

influences candidate success by gender, building upon a developing line of study in both gender and American elections. Additionally, by conducting my analysis at the state level, and particularly on governors, I provide insight into how women fare in state-level elections, moving beyond a legislative focus, and in an office particularly understudied in American politics. Additionally, by distinguishing candidate quality from incumbency advantage, I am able to examine how candidates' qualifications relate to their success in elections, even when they are not the incumbent candidate and in cases where they run in open-seat elections. While examinations on the interaction of candidate quality and gender have been conducted in some countries (see Barnes and Holman (2020)), they often intersect with the study of gender quotas, which alter the electoral environments women come into contact with, as well as the potential barriers women face in running for various offices across democracies. My research suggests that studies on elections, particularly those that involve gender, should move to incorporate some measure of candidate quality, particularly one based on political and professional experience with sufficient variation - beyond a simple indicator of political experience. While this study represents just one possible explanation for the lack of women in executive offices, expansion of this work could focus on the multiple biases and disadvantages that may arise for women in electoral contexts - across countries, branches of office, and units of government. I expand upon this research in Chapter 3, in which I more directly test these hypotheses in hypothetical primary elections using a survey experiment, which centers on the electoral success of Black women based on their qualifications and which office they are seeking, relative to other groups, as well as in Chapter 4, where we extend this line of research to consider the effects of gender in state supreme court elections.

Chapter 3

The Intersectional Effects of Candidate Quality in Statewide Elections

3.1 Introduction

Women are broadly underrepresented in government, despite systemic gains in achieving elected office in the past few decades. However, these gains are uneven across race and ethnicity - in the mid-2000s, White women experienced a plateau of representation, a trend not consistent across women of all races. Black women and other women of color saw representation increase at a steady pace from the 1990s to the mid-2000s, in contrast to this representational plateau among White women (Smooth, 2006). However, Black women have seen distinctly differential gains in their representation: though only about 5% of Congress - most of this being made up of members of the House - is comprised of Black women, this is just slightly lower than parity, with about 7% of the country being Black women (Center for American Women and Politics, 2023*a*). While Black women have achieved success in gaining

elected office to some particular positions, like the US House, there has been a distinct lack of Black women in other major elected offices - in particular, only three Black women to date have served as US Senators, and no Black women has ever been elected governor of a US state.

Consequently, I seek to examine the role of intersectional stereotypes, and more generally consider what electoral factors may influence the outcomes women, especially Black women, face in elections, both in gubernatorial elections and in US Senate elections. I find that my results from the previous chapter are further complicated when taking both race and gender into consideration: race, in this experiment, appears to be a determinant in voter opinions of candidate qualification and in their vote choice. Gender, the primary motivating factor of understanding success in elections in the last chapter, has little relationship with success in this study, with women succeeding similarly to men, within racial categories.

Scholars of gender and politics and racial and ethnic politics have identified the importance of understanding the complexities of categorization, especially in terms of stereotype content and application, and intersectionality theory emphasizes the necessity of contextualizing these categories within power relations, analyzing the distinct experiences within multiple social categories, and their resulting material effects on individuals Crenshaw (1989); Jordan-Zachery (2007); Ghavami and Peplau (2013). In order to examine the electoral consequences of these social categorizations, I center my subsequent discussion on intersectionality in relation to electoral politics.

Broadly defined, women have been historically underrepresented, and as a gender, remain so today, though this representation varies by race, ethnicity, and office type, among other factors. The disparity in women's representation has been studied across a range of concepts, though primarily through state-level recruitment or progress in state-level (but not typically specifically statewide) offices, such as state legislatures (Sanbonmatsu, 2014), or in gubernatorial or lieutenant gubernatorial offices (Oxley and Fox, 2005; Windett, 2011; O'Regan and

Stambough, 2016). Though governorships and US Senate seats share constituencies, as well as prominence – both statewide, and often nationally (Center on the American Governor, 2020), they are not often examined in conjunction, particularly under the context of gender, and infrequently considered in terms of the possible importance of qualifications (Kahn, 1994; Funk, 1999; Koch, 2000; Barghothi, Savchak and Bowman, 2010), or the study focuses on qualifications or quality, within-office - typically, within Congress (Anzia and Berry, 2011; Teele, Kalla and Rosenbluth, 2018). As such, this study is aimed at serving as a starting point to the interaction of candidate identity, qualifications, and statewide offices.

3.1.1 Intersectionality in Context

Intersectionality theory has long emphasized the importance of accounting for multiple oppressions that individuals, particularly Black women, face in their lives – including in their political lives. Crenshaw (1989), in her influential article establishing a formal definition of intersectionality, centers Black women as part of an effort to shift the focus of analyses from the more privileged group members. While her article first discusses the privileges faced in race discrimination and sex discrimination legal cases – among sex- or class-privileged members or race- and class-privileged members, respectively – she also critiques political analyses that center on public policy debates concerning Black women specifically, but not incorporating a methodology that centers on Black women. Studies, even after Crenshaw’s (and many others’ – including but by no means exclusively hooks (1981), Beale (1995), Collins (2000)) critiques, often center on “women” as a broad category, or on Black candidates/voters overall, without specifying distinctions within those groups. Brown, Clark and Mahoney (2022) reiterate this lack of consideration of multiple identities across political science analysis, broadly, but additionally note that all individuals hold “politically salient” identities that shape their experience within politics, and contend that, though intersectionality is rooted in Black feminism, it most significantly should focus on the interrogation of

power relations and dynamics, across examinations of a broad array of identities.

Accordingly, Ghavami and Peplau (2013) employ intersectional analysis across a range of ethnic identities to argue that stereotypes are reflective of social dominance theory: that people tend to organize themselves as group-based hierarchies of power and status, in which dominant groups have better access to resources than subordinate groups do, and that in the US, both gender and race are central to our status hierarchy. They also find that when ethnicity is unspecified, stereotypes of men and women will most often reflect White men and White women – being least similar to Black men and Black women. Thus, when voters or respondents representing voters are provided no racial cue, or studies are not conducted under explicit inclusion of race **and** gender, then the primary understanding of stereotypes we acquire is related largely to White women’s (and men’s) stereotyping, rather than that of marginalized groups. Stereotypes reflect the characteristics of dominant groups, meaning that due to their underrepresentation in ethnic stereotypes and in gender stereotypes, ethnic minority women (including Black women) are least likely to be represented accurately in analyses of stereotyping content.

Intersectionality theory also requires the interrogation of power relations - a key aspect in understanding both elections themselves and in terms of the consequences of election outcomes. In particular, in what ways are individuals from various racial/ethnic-gender groups limited in their ability to seek office? How might one’s identity advantage them among their social peers, and would this impact elections? Kang and Bodenhausen (2015) note that most studies focus on the challenges of integrating information about multiple group memberships, or the challenges of having multiple group memberships, though there are also potential benefits to possessing these multiple identities. In particular, some studies have shown potential benefits for women of color, in terms of the relationship between positive stereotyping and their subsequent public perceptions. Bejarano (2013) highlights the unique environment many Latina women face when they seek electoral office: they may benefit

from their associations with femininity in ways that other women may not, particularly when running in majority-minority districts.

Turning towards the possible consequences of intersectional stereotyping and its effects on elections, American society has developed given roles for men and women and socializes these roles among its citizens, even children, which they are generally expected to ascribe to: “masculinity” has certain associated qualities, and “real men” fulfill these qualities; the same holds for “femininity” and “real women” (Beale, 1995; Collins, 2000). The historical and current oppression of Black women in the United States has led to both different gendered and racialized expectations for Black women and a lack of resources to enable them to fulfill roles in the same ways as White women. Thus, when Black women are able to achieve some kind of experience that might be important to voters, they may be punished relative to other candidates for breaking these gendered expectations, as well as facing racial hostility from voters (Howe, 2022). While women as a whole may be expected to be “better” than their male counterparts, it may also be the case that Black women have to be better than their White female counterparts in order to have the same levels of success, or may face no benefits from their equivalent qualifications at all.

There is a wide range of systemic factors that limit Black women’s ability to seek and obtain elected office. Disproportionately, Black men are more likely to be incarcerated than White men, as a result of numerous structural biases, such as sentencing and criminal justice policies, socioeconomic inequality, and implicit racial bias in the criminal justice system (Simmons, 2018; Collins, 2020; Patterson, Talbert and Brown, 2021). As such, even when Black women do fit the traditional profile of having a successful career, being married to a man, and having children, they are also significantly more likely to have a spouse in prison than White women, regardless of class or socioeconomic standing (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981; Brown, 2014). In addition to this, Black women may disproportionately have to manage

domestic duties at home with career pressures compared to White women, giving them less opportunity to seek out political power relative to other populations (Brown, 2014; Howe, 2022). More than 80% of Black women are the breadwinners of their families, and women overall are generally expected to serve as caretakers, both for their children and for their family members. Black women may have more strain on their time and responsibilities if they are the highest earner in their house and their family relies on them to a greater extent financially (Collins, 1998; DuMonthier, Asha and Chandra Childers and Jessica Milli, 2019). Collins (2000) further notes that the work of Black women often extends beyond the range of what is generally considered to be work within the White, male framing of labor. Collins notes that Black women's labor especially can be both paid and unpaid, and when it is paid, it may be "economically exploitative, physically demanding, and intellectually deadening," which, in addition to being individually exceptionally difficult, can also systematically limit who can run for office (Collins, 2000) .

As running political campaigns and holding office both take up a significant amount of time, resources, and particularly money (in the case of campaigns), Black women and especially those who perform this kind of labor, both paid and unpaid, may lack the resources needed to run for office, and thus, do not get equivalent chances to be directly involved in the lawmaking process relative to individuals part of other racial and gender identities (Robnett and Bany, 2011; Moyer, Harris and Solberg, 2022). However, African American women do participate in politics at higher rates than their male counterparts and make up higher percentages of Black elected officials than White women do of White elected officials (Smooth, 2018). Despite this, in the case of voter evaluations, respondents may maintain biases against Black women candidates, taking their accomplishments as less significant than they do for other candidates. Women overall tend to participate in alternate political activities, while avoiding others, due to the gendered nature of politics - Schneider and Bos (2019) note that, with the exception of voting, men engage in "traditional" forms of

political participation more often, including campaign contributions, running for office and contacting public officials, among other activities, while women do tend to engage more in political engagement that fits with communal goals, including volunteering, voting and engaging in coalitional politics - such as in suffrage or as part of the Tea Party in a separation, in some respects, from the Republican male-domination of the party as a whole (see also Burns, Schlozman and Verba (2001)). While these goals and forms of political involvement in general are not necessarily indicative of “traditional” power-seeking, they have been effective catalysts for the engagement of women in politics, both in terms of gaining political power, and in obtaining political office (Schneider et al., 2016). In particular, women (in general, and White women more specifically) tend to become politically involved around communal goals - Schneider et al. (2016) argue that the perception of politics is that political roles impede communal goals, resulting in negative consequences for women’s attitudes towards seeking political roles (though they note that it is not inherent to political roles themselves, primarily that it is the perception of them). Schneider and Bos (2019) additionally use goal congruity theory (within the context of social role theory) to describe how women and men both seek to occupy roles (both occupational and political) that are “congruous with their sex.”¹ This is frequently the case among Black women, who are generally socialized within Black culture to represent their families and communities, which heavily involves working towards equality and improving the status of Black Americans (Howe, 2022; Collins, 2000; Gay and Tate, 1995). Stereotypes regarding Black women tend to be agentic and negative, painting them as characteristics like aggressive, but also possibly providing space for positive evaluations, such as seeing Black women as good leaders, given their agentic associations (Howe, 2022; Hicks, 2022). This limits the possible descriptive, and thus substantive representation of Black interests overall (specifically, as Dawson (1996) highlights, the institutionalization of

¹The tendency of women to pursue communal goals and outcomes is evident in occupation as well: even within masculine occupations and fields, women are often found in “communally-oriented subspecialties,” such as pediatrics or family law, in medicine and law (Schneider and Bos, 2019).

Black Power), and the interests of Black women more specifically (Dawson, 1996; Montoya et al., 2022; Carreras, 2017).

3.1.2 Hypotheses

In general, both Black men and women tend to be linked with characteristics that scholars associate with masculinity, in ways that inevitably shape their lives and outcomes as political candidates and politicians (Hicks, 2022; Kang and Bodenhausen, 2015). Since Black women and especially Black women elites are frequently paired with stereotypes and assumptions about masculinity, the consequences may differ from women politicians overall, who are also perceived as masculine, but receive negligible benefits from this association. If Black women and the sub-group of Black women elites/politicians are already perceived as masculine, perhaps the stereotypes regarding masculinity take on a different meaning for Black women relative to other groups of women, especially White women.

Consequently, I generally expect that **voters will prefer candidates that have experiences that align with their gender roles**. Both US Senate seats and governorships entail a wide range of important policy knowledge and engagement, women will be preferred under conditions when they have typically “feminine” career or background experiences, and men will be preferred when they have a particularly “masculine” occupations or personal backgrounds. More specific hypotheses, related to the variables incorporated in my analysis, can be found in Section 3.2.2.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Conjoint Experiments

This study incorporates a “paired-conjoint” survey, fielded through MTurk in May 2023, in which characteristics - such as sex or race - are randomly assigned to hypothetical candidates, which are then evaluated by the population of interest, as in (Teele, Kalla and Rosenbluth, 2018), a study particularly influential to this chapter, which examines cross-sectional characteristics of candidates in legislative elections. This method creates candidate profiles that are randomized, in which voters can select between men and women, who are Black or White, shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Treatment Traits and Values

Trait	Values
Gender	Male Female
Age	32 49 66
Occupation	Lawyer Teacher Nurse Small-Business Owner Accountant Police Officer
Civic Experience	None PTA President Scout Troop Leader Chair of County Party Organization
Political Experience	None School Board Member City Council Member Mayor Member of State Legislature
Race	Black White

Table 3.1: Traits and their designated values shown to respondents in treatments. All traits are randomized to allow for a range of hypothetical election scenarios.

There are approximately 1000 respondents in the survey sample overall. These respondents vary in characteristics, including race, ethnicity and gender, as well as age, class, and education, though MTurk can often be skewed in demographics, leaning towards a population of White men with college degrees, which is generally reflected in my overall sample with approximately 57% of the sample being male and 62% of the sample having a college degree (Kirkland and Coppock, 2018). About 61% of the sample identified as a Democrat, 28% identified as a Republican, with the remaining stating they were Independents or “Other.”

This allows the effects of candidate race and candidate gender to be parsed out statistically – both as distinct concepts and as intersectional concepts. Respondents are shown the profiles of two candidates at a time, as they would in an actual election, and be asked to choose between the two candidates as to whom they would vote for - specifically, “Which candidate would you vote for,” with options for Candidate A and Candidate B, where they can choose just one of the candidates. The candidates answered another question for each candidate – “How qualified is Candidate A[B] to be a governor[senator],” with response options of “very qualified,” “somewhat qualified,” “not very qualified,” and “not at all qualified.”

3.2.2 Research Design

Occupational Experience

To balance occupation by gender, I chose six traits to reflect feminine role occupations, “gender-neutral” occupations, and masculine role occupations. The feminine role occupations, teacher and nurse, are occupations that are primarily dominated by women, and are generally seen as fulfilling the gender role expectations typically expected of women – the concept that women are nurturing and caring, as well as compassionate (Bauer, 2020*a*; Fox and Lawless, 2014). Additionally, teaching in particular is a job that may confer civic skills/engagement on individuals, making them effective employment experiences for potential office-seekers. These occupations also fit with expectations regarding women’s issues – education and healthcare being two issues that women are typically considered well-qualified or competent on, within the political sphere (Hayes, 2011). I therefore expect that women who are **1a)** nurses or **1b)** teachers will be advantaged relative to men with the same occupation, regardless of racial identity.

The more “gender-neutral” occupations are lawyer and accountant – Although both of these jobs are within more traditionally masculine fields (law and business), and law is a

traditional pipeline position for candidate recruitment, there are numerous types of law that align more with the expectations society has on women’s competencies, such as family law (Hayes, 2011). Accountants exceed essential gender parity, especially in comparison to other occupations within the business sector – in 2021, about 60% of accountants were women (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023).

I expect that, given that these occupational experiences are “gender-neutral,” voters will make decisions based on their overall preferences for men to hold political offices, aligning with the overall gender role expectations for the office they’re seeking, rather than the experiences they have had. Therefore, I expect that men who are **2a)** lawyers or **2b)** accountant will be advantaged to women who have held the same employment experience, regardless of racial identity.

Finally, the masculine-associated occupations, small-business owner and police officer, were chosen based on their position within more masculine fields – business and law enforcement – and particular theoretical attachment to masculinity. More specifically, the relationship between being a small-business owner and serving as the executive of one’s own (small) company, aligns with the stereotypical traits of men as being good leaders who can make effective decisions, and also reflects the relative lack of women in high-status leadership positions in business (Carli and Eagly, 2001; Schneider and Bos, 2014; Bauer, 2018). Law enforcement in particular is a highly masculine field, with Carlson (2019) identifying two particular types of police masculinity: “warrior” and “guardian.” This dimension of policing amplifies racialized policing. Additionally, given policing’s connections to particular expectations of masculinity and racism, the inclusion of law enforcement as a career provides a unique perspective on the relationship between identity, background, and perceptions of candidates (Barratt, Bergman and Thompson, 2014).

Accordingly, I expect that, given a masculine occupational background, men who are **3a**

small-business owners or **3b** law enforcement will align with voters' masculine expectations for both male candidates and for male occupations, such that men will be advantaged relative to women who have held the same employment background. However, due to the relationship between racial stereotyping, gender, and masculinity, I also expect that **3c** Black women will be selected more often relative to White women, if they have served as police officers, all else equal.

Political Experience

Turning to political experience, I once again generally expect men to benefit from the associations between political office and masculinity. Though some offices are seen as potentially more feminine than others (see Huddy and Terkildsen (1993); Rosenwasser and Dean (1989)), politics overall is a masculine institution, and I expect respondents to thus associate most political offices positively with male candidates (Dittmar, 2015).

As a baseline, the first political experience I include is "None," to give respondents a clear indicator of a candidate having less political experience. Given that the others may vary in terms of constituency and prominence, or may be quite similar, they are difficult to rank in terms of a candidate having more or less experience. Accordingly, I make the comparison between having no political experience relative to each of the individual political experiences in my analysis. I additionally include having served on a school board as the first political experience. This position has associations with femininity due to the necessary competence on education, so I expect that **4a** Women will be advantaged relative to men who have also served on a school board, within racial groups (Koch, 2000; Hayes, 2011).

The second experience I incorporate is having served on a city council. I also include having served as a mayor, capturing the local level legislative and executive branches as considerations for candidate qualifications. Local offices are common positions held for those who seek higher office, particularly for governors or other state level positions(Windett,

2014a; Sidorsky, 2015). Generally, given the tendency of political offices, all else equal, to be masculine, and the disadvantages women face when seeking both executive and legislative office (see Sweet-Cushman (2022), I expect that **4b** men will be advantaged when compared to women who have also served on city council or as a mayor, within racial groups.

The final political experience I consider is having served on a state legislature. This experience is perhaps one of the most common among candidates running for both the US Senate and for state governorships, and serves as a pathway to higher office for many candidates (Sanbonmatsu, 2002, 2006; Fox and Lawless, 2010; Windett, 2014b). Due to the relative masculinity of political offices, even legislative offices, which might be theoretically more amenable to feminine-presenting candidates (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993), I expect that **4c** men will be advantaged when compared to women with similar state legislative experience, within racial groups.

Civic Experience

Finally, I turn to the civic experiences that I include in my candidate profiles. The experiences included here are slightly more brief: I once again use a candidate having no civic experience as a baseline for comparison with each of the other categories.

The first experience included is being a scout troop leader unspecified whether this means Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, intentionally, so that this appears to be a more neutral experience to respondents. As such, I expect that **5a** men will be advantaged when compared to women with scout troop leader experience, within racial groups.

Additionally, I include one more traditionally (in some respects) feminine experience, and one more traditionally masculine experience. The first, more feminine experience, is having been a PTA president, relating to women's perceived competencies on education, which is often seen as a positive trait among political candidates, more generally (Atkeson and Hamel, 2020). As such, I expect that **5b** women will be advantaged when compared to men

with PTA president experience, within racial groups. The final civic experience, and more closely tied to masculinity, is having served as a county party chair. While this position may offer more public prominence, in some respects, and closer explicit association with politics, given that it is an explicitly partisan position, it enables me to examine the relationship between party experience and perceptions of candidates, as well as the effects of having non-elected political (in some respects) experience, traditionally held by men - particularly in the Republican party (Thomsen, 2015; Thomsen and Swers, 2017) Consequently, I expect that **5c** men will be advantaged when compared to women with county party leader experience, within racial groups.

Partisanship of Candidates & Respondents

Party can be a confounding factor in examining vote choice, so in this experiment, I assign respondents to elections within their own parties. Effectively, the elections are reflective of primary elections, which is noted in the survey to the respondents. Respondents are asked their party identification, as well as which primary they would be most likely to vote in, to account for open-primary states, and also to allow independents to vote in a “primary” election of the party of their choice. Respondents are also reminded that each election is co-partisan, with a note prior to each election portion that the candidates shown are running in a Republican or Democratic primary. About 61% of the sample was comprised of Democrats, with 28% identifying as Republican. A small percentage of the sample, about 11%, identified as either Independent or “Other.” When asked which primary they would prefer to vote in, a majority about 59% of the sample opted to vote in a Democratic primary, with 41% of the respondents choosing to vote in a Republican primary.

Overall, respondents completed ten total trials: five for gubernatorial elections and five for US Senate elections. The order of each office race was randomized: respondents randomly saw either gubernatorial elections first, or senate elections first, followed by the office not

selected initially ². The order of attributes was also randomized across respondents, but was the same within each respondent. For example, if gender was randomly assigned to be the first row, it was the first row for an individual respondent’s ten trials. However, it was not the attribute in the first row for every respondent.

	Candidate A	Candidate B
Gender	Male	Female
Age	32	49
Occupation	Lawyer	Lawyer
Civic Experience	Chair of County Party Organization	Scout Troop Leader
Political Experience	School Board Member	Member of State Legislature
Race	Black	White

Table 3.2: Example of treatment received by respondents in experiment

The key attributes in my treatment are race and gender, which are randomized in order to understand the effects of qualifications for each group of interest: Black women, Black men, White women, and White men. Though race and gender are both substantially more complex than these binary categorizations, for simplicity’s sake in an experimental environment, I use the most frequent measurements for race and gender within political science (Schneider, Bos and DiFilippo, 2022). Additionally, I include age as an attribute since candidates’ approximate ages are often known to voters in elections, and in order to control for the potential effects of candidate age for men and women, as women tend to be older than men on average when they actually do run for office (Teele, Kalla and Rosenbluth, 2018). Other attributes in these models largely follow from the expanded measure of quality described in

²The experiment contained 10 trials. Respondents rated five U.S. senate races and five gubernatorial races, and the order of the group of contests was randomized across respondents (some respondents rated gubernatorial contests than Senate contests; others rated Senate contests and then gubernatorial contests). In the analysis that follows, I pool all ten contests and generalize across race types. When analyzing the data, I found that only one of the 48 three-way interactions between occupational/professional/political experience, race or gender, and race type for my two outcome variables was statistically significant (respondents rated Black candidates with mayoral experience as less qualified if they sought a U.S. Senate seat rather than the governorship). The lack of differences across the race type and increased statistical power justify pooling the two race types.

Chapter 2, in order to analyze these experiences through an additional unit of analysis.

In general, the traits included for analysis can be divided into two categories: personal characteristics and personal background. In terms of personal characteristics, I consider those to be gender: Male or Female, age: 32, 49, or 66, and race: Black or White. In order to make comparisons between the dominant identities and marginalized identities in society, I use the dominant identities as the category of comparison: women relative to men; Black candidates relative to White candidates. In the intersectional analyses, the baseline category is thus of a White male, with comparisons between White men to White women, to Black men, and to Black women. The baseline for age is simply 32, to compare views of candidates as age increases.

Turning to personal background, I once again utilize the three categories of experience (professional, political, and civic) from the previous chapter. For occupation, being a lawyer is the baseline category, and the experiences of teacher, nurse, small business owner, accountant, and police officer. In terms of political experience, the baseline category given is “None,” indicating a candidate has never held political office. The baseline is compared to the experiences of school board member, city council member, mayor, and member of a state legislature. Finally, turning to civic experience, the baseline category is again “None,” indicating no previous civic experience. In my analysis, this baseline is then compared to having served as a PTA president, as a scout troop leader, or as chair of a county party organization.

3.3 Results: Candidate Selection

First, before testing my hypotheses, I begin by examining the effects of identity on vote choice.³ In terms of gender and race, as distinct identities, in relation to respondents’

³Comparable results for the effects of traits and candidate identity/occupation on candidate rating can be seen in the Appendix, in Figures B.1, B.2, and B.3.

vote choice, we can see that there is no statistically significant difference (with a p-value of 0.13) between male and female candidates. That is, there is no particular disadvantage (or advantage) to being a woman candidate, exclusive of other intersecting identities, under these conditions. However, in terms of candidates' racial identities, Black candidates overall are 6% less likely than White candidates to be selected, all else equal.⁴

Figure 3.1: Overall Race and Gender Effects

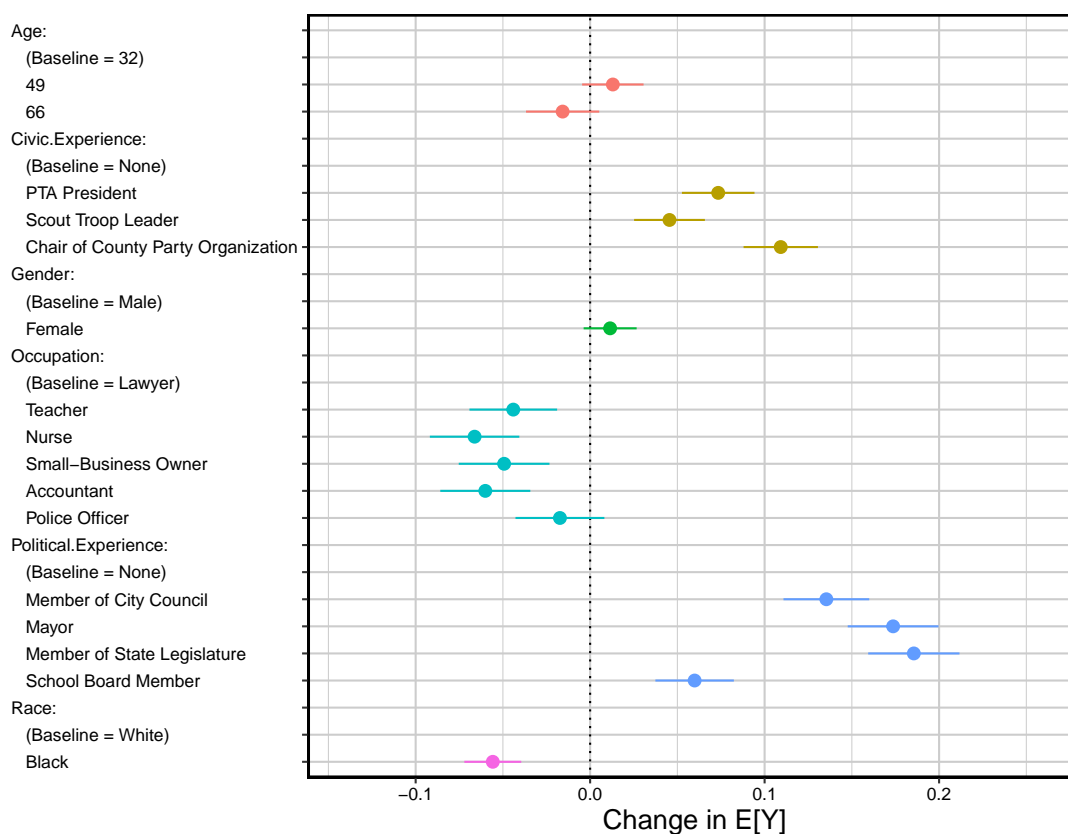


Figure 3.1: Figure 3.1 shows the overall effects of race and gender, as distinct categories, in relation to the probability that a candidate would be selected by respondents. In this figure, we can see that compared to a man, there is no advantage or disadvantage to being a woman. The lines provide 95% confidence intervals.

⁴This is similar to the results in Chapter 2, in which men performed 6% better in terms of vote share relative to women, even when qualifications were similar.

When considering the intersectional effects of race and gender on vote choice, shown in Figure 2, there is similarly no difference in the likelihood of selection between White men and White women ($p = 0.5$). However, there are distinctions evident amongst other gender & race groupings, both when Black men and women are compared to White men, as well as White women. Compared to White men, both Black men and Black women are less likely to be selected ($p < 0.01$), at roughly the same rate. Black men are less likely to be selected by 6% compared to White men, while Black women are 4% less likely to be selected than White men. The differences are similar when considering Black men and women relative to White women: Black men are 7% less likely to be selected than a White woman, while Black women are 5% less likely to be chosen ($p < 0.01$).

Overall, when looking at the effects of race and gender either independently or in conjunction, there seem to be fewer differences on likelihood of being chosen within race (especially when comparing White men and women). Instead, the distinction tends to be primarily along racial lines – regardless of gender, both Black men and women are less likely to be selected than either White men or women.

Figure 3.2 additionally shows the effects of additional characteristics or experiences, without consideration of varying identity categories. Regardless of how old a candidate is, the results show that age is not a statistically significant factor across the board. In terms of civic experience, when the baseline category is having no civic experience (the respondent being shown “None” as the civic experience value in the experiment), voters seemed to value civic experience, and particularly party-related experience. Voters were 5% more likely to choose a candidate if they were a scout troop leader, 7% more likely if they were a PTA president, and 11% more likely to select a candidate who had been chair of a county party. Similarly, there were differences among candidates with varying occupations: voters generally preferred the baseline category of having worked as a lawyer: compared to a candidate with legal ex-

Figure 3.2: Overall Intersectional Effects

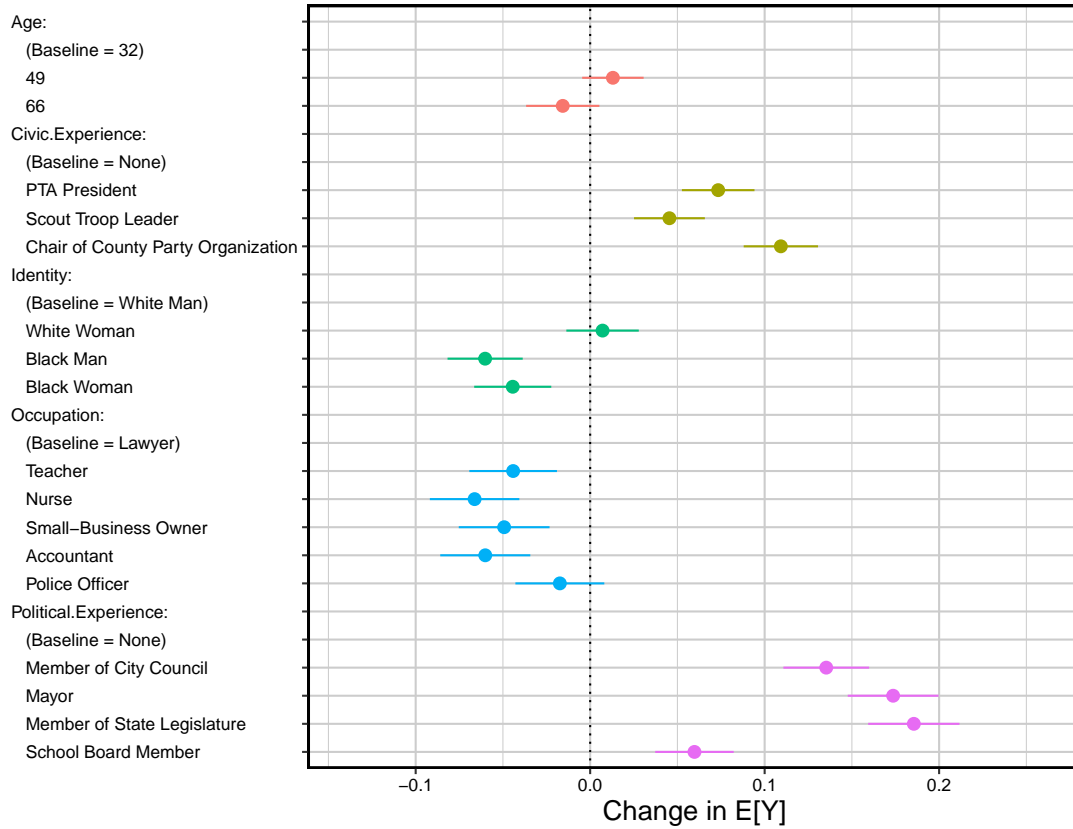


Figure 3.2: Positive estimates indicate that, relative to the baseline, candidates having that particular experience were more likely to be selected; negative values indicate that experience or occupation was associated with a lower probability of selection. The lines provide 95% confidence intervals.

perience, voters were 4% less likely to select a candidate who had been a teacher, 5% less likely to select a small-business owner, 6% less likely to choose an accountant, and 7% less likely to select a nurse. The only occupation with no statistically significant difference to a lawyer was a candidate who served as a police officer.

Finally, when looking at political experience, voters again tend to prefer more experience over no experience. The likelihood of selection also appears to scale with the prominence of the political office: compared to a candidate with no political experience, a candidate

with school board is 6% more likely to be chosen. However, relative to candidates with no experience, the benefits for candidates with “higher-level” elected office experience are even more substantial: city councilors are 14% more likely to be chosen, mayors are 17% more likely to be selected, and notably, especially given the typical political pipeline at the state level, state legislators are 19% more likely to be selected over candidates with no political experience.

The final aspect of this chapter’s analysis turns to testing my hypotheses by examining the effects of experience (political, professional, and civic), intersected with identity, on the likelihood of selection amongst candidates. This analysis uses a baseline category of White men, with the primary results shown in Figure 3.3. Overall, there is no evidence of political or civic experience being significant in terms of differences amongst identity groups – Black men and Black women are not more or less likely to be selected, regardless of whether the baseline group is White men, or when I shift the baseline comparison to White women.

Figure 3.3: Intersectional Results by Occupation and Experience

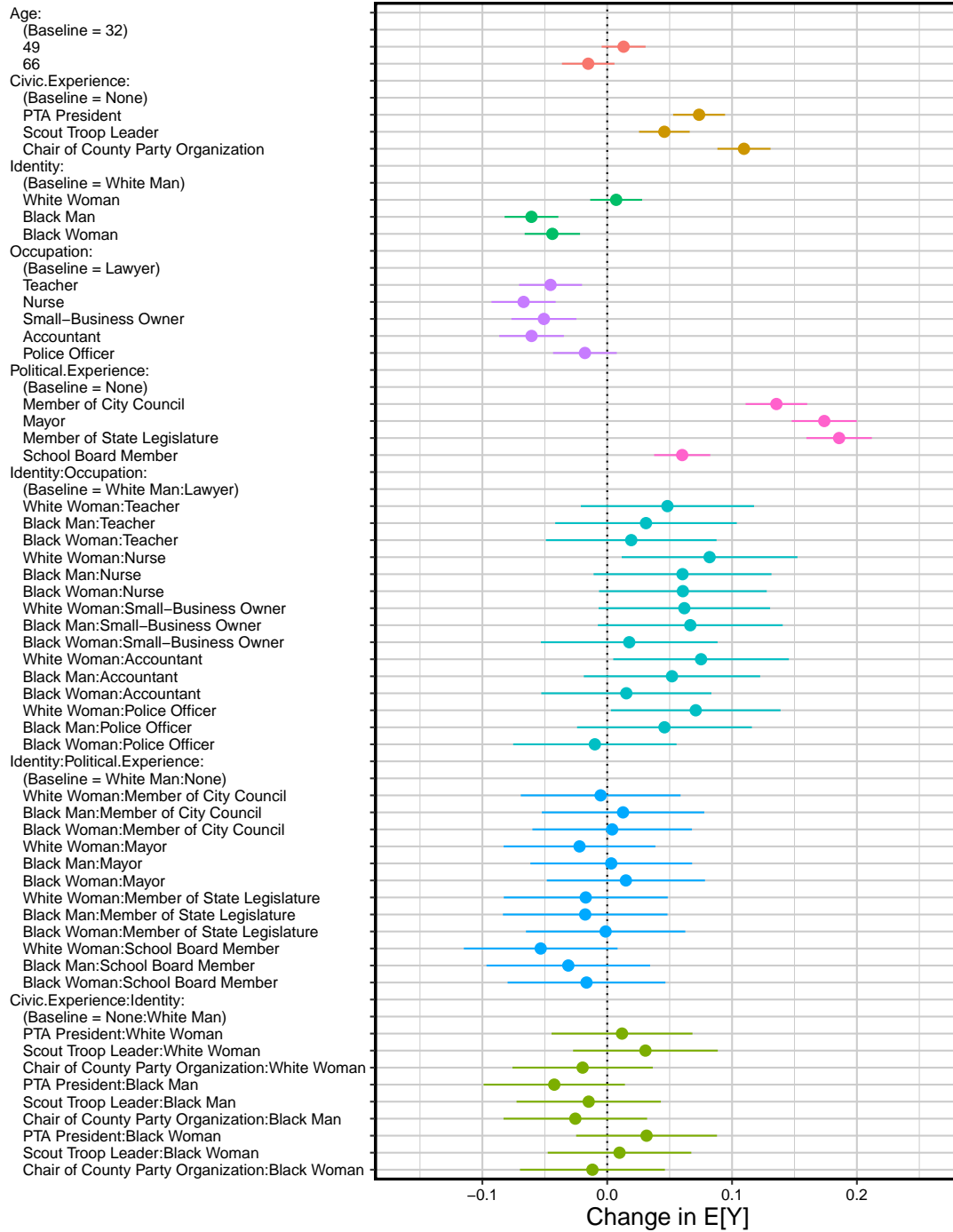


Figure 3.3: Positive estimates indicate that, relative to the baseline, candidates having that particular occupation or experience are more likely to be selected; negative values indicate that characteristic was associated with a lower probability of selection. The lines provide 95% confidence intervals. The key differences in this plot are among the different identity categories, as well as civic, professional, and political experience among the prospective candidates, without accounting for intersectional identity.

However, there are some notable differences among identity groups within occupational experiences, particularly among White women compared to White men. Specifically, White women are more likely to be selected than White men when the shared occupational experience is as a nurse (8%), an accountant (8%), and a police officer (7%). Notably, these occupations span the range of typical gender associations: nursing is a primarily feminine-coded experience, accountant is a gender-neutral occupation, and a police officer is considered a highly-masculine occupational experience.

While there is no evidence that civic or political experience relates to the probability that a candidate is selected, there is tentative evidence that White women, under some conditions, are more likely to be selected than White men, given particular occupational experiences. Conversely, there is no particular evidence that occupational experiences are particularly helpful to White male candidates, relative to others. Similarly, there is no evidence that occupational experience, as well as civic and political experience, have an effect on the likelihood that both Black male and female candidates are chosen. In fact, the only significant difference across occupation and across racial identity type is between White women and Black women: Black women candidates who are police officers are 8% less likely to be selected than White women candidates who have occupational experience as police officers. Overall, however, there is no evidence that any civic or political experience either advantages or disadvantages Black candidates relative to White candidates, regardless of gender. The results for occupational experience are more mixed, but primarily show that White women do face some advantages within occupation, across the gender-roles associated with occupations, in comparison to White men. Black women do face a disadvantage relative to White women, under particular conditions of experience.

3.4 Discussion

Overall, my findings indicate that while the effects of race and gender on candidate perception are complicated, they do have somewhat of an impact under very particular circumstances. There is no statistically significant difference between men and women, in terms of candidate selection, but when looking at perceived candidate qualifications, women are more likely on average, to be rated as highly qualified, when qualifications are held constant. However, these results are inconsistent when taking racial identity into account. there are some differences among and within racial identities. Black candidates, relative to White candidates are less likely to be chosen. Similarly, Black candidates were also less likely to be rated "Highly Qualified" relative to White candidates. Within race, there are also no gender differences present: Black men and women are likely to be selected at a similar rate, and receive similar qualification ratings.

Contrary to my expectations, White women fared relatively well in comparison among the various group identifications: They were selected at comparable rates to White men, even across different occupations, regardless of whether those occupations shared gender-role expectations with femininity or masculinity, or were neutral. Additionally, there is no evidence that any type of civic experience or political experience incorporated in this study makes a Black man or Black woman more or less likely to be selected, regardless of whether comparison is a White man or White woman, and once again, regardless of perceived gender role match or mismatch. Furthermore, the results of this chapter perhaps most intertwined with the previous chapter provide mixed support for my prior analysis. This chapter shows that there is no evidence that any type of political or civic experience has a differential effect on the probability that a candidate is selected, according to either their racial or gender identity - although across the sample, having political or civic experience does help

a candidate gain “support” from the respondents.

My research design in this paper expands upon the measure of quality established in the previous chapter, in order to examine the effects of qualifications in a hypothetical context, in which I can begin to examine the effects of individual traits on voter decisionmaking and opinion-formation on candidates. Though this chapter largely does not support the idea that women overall need to be more qualified than men to succeed, it does expose the possibility of such an effect for Black candidates, though this would need further development in order to be analyzed - a promising avenue for a larger research effort on understanding the dimensions of “quality.” The results in this study overall are more promising for White women, as well as White men, where there are differences among candidates by gender: White women overall are seen as about as equally qualified as White men, with both being viewed as favorably qualified, and White women are no less likely to be selected than White men. These effects are much more stark for Black women and Black men. Rather than finding both gender- and race-based results as I expected, we primarily see only negative racial effects, regardless of occupation.

Contrary to my expectations, my analysis finds little support for stereotyping in voter perceptions of candidates. Across occupation, across experience, and when considering differences in perceptions between office, there are few indications that stereotypes are at play in my analysis. This may suggest that stereotyping at the state-level, even within federal offices, may not be as pronounced as at the federal level. However, this analysis is tentative, and should be expanded on in order to better understand the dynamics of candidate identity and qualifications across elections. The experiment in particular should be replicated, possibly using different methodology. Other potential designs for this analysis included candidate pictures or names perceived to be female/male or Black/White, or to include descriptive profiles of candidates rather than a grid with characteristics, and either of these would be

useful additions to a replication analysis. In particular, a new research design that more closely mirrors the conditions under which respondents may receive information on candidates, such as in a mock candidate website, or by using a mock newspaper article introducing two candidates to a state's constituents. Additional analyses could also incorporate different values of experience, while still retaining the occupational associations with gender.

Additionally, a few key factors must be considered in future studies examining the role of candidate experiences in untangling candidate qualifications: first, that the racial and gender categories in this study are limited by a gender-binary and by considering only two racial identities. In part, this is due to limitations in the number of variables possible to consider in an experiment, balancing the amount of time respondents spend on the survey with the options they are provided, and obtaining enough information on each interacting identity. However, in order to understand the roles that gender and race, as concepts, play in elections, diverse races and genders should be taken into consideration. Additionally, there are a few race-centered considerations that should be incorporated, particularly in the civic experiences category. More specifically, as church is an important cultural and political environment for Black communities and particularly Black women, some type of involvement in church should be incorporated as an experience option, in order to account for the role of this in the personal backgrounds of candidates who run for office, and to understand the role that race and religion play in the formation of views on candidate qualifications for Black respondents in particular (Gay, 2004).

Perhaps most significantly, this study only considers primary elections, and I do not divide the analysis by respondent party affiliation, limiting the understanding this study provides on the effects of party across statewide election outcomes. Analyses conducted by other scholars show that voters may have party-related stereotypes that inform how they perceive candidate qualifications, especially in elections that may have distinct perceptions of masculinity, and

this is something not accounted for in my analysis (Thomsen, 2015; Hayes, 2011). This analysis could also be expanded to incorporate the partisan stereotypes and associations supported by a significant amount of scholarship in political science (Brians, 2005; Butler and Preece, 2016; Crowder-Meyer and Cooperman, 2018; Sanbonmatsu, 2006; Schneider and Bos, 2016; Hayes, 2011).

Between this chapter and the previous chapter, it is evident that stereotyping is complicated, and highly context-dependent, reflecting much of the broader literature on stereotyping in elections. This chapter seeks to expand on my previous observational analysis, in order to more closely examine how voters make choices about candidates, and how candidate gender and racial identity affects this process. While both analyses find some support for a potential relationship between candidate qualifications and electoral outcomes, the findings are quite distinct from each other.

My previous chapter shows some evidence of men benefiting from their professional experiences relative to women, within the context of gubernatorial elections over time. However, this chapter examines the effect of political experience, with more attention to specific occupation, and finds that White women are no less likely than White men to be selected, and in some shared occupational experiences, are more likely to be chosen than White men, further complicating the role that qualifications play in relation to gender in statewide elections. My initial analysis in Chapter 2 indicates that women see no benefits from their qualifications - when considering race as well as gender, this relationship is somewhat clarified: White women do fare relatively well in the context of this experiment, while Black women are viewed as less qualified and less likely to be selected than any White candidates, male or female. We further examine this relationship by extending my analysis of gender and qualifications to other office types by considering judicial elections in the final substantive chapter.

Chapter 4

Gender, Stereotypes, and Judicial Elections

MEGAN KENNEDY, MICHAEL J. NELSON, AND ERIN HEIDT-FORSYTHE

4.1 Introduction

While the presence of women in the legal field and in the U.S. judiciary has risen in past decades, women are underrepresented in state supreme courts. As of 2021, just 39% of state supreme court seats were held by women (Adelstein and Bannon, 2021). This underrepresentation has substantial consequences for state judicial systems. Women and men tend to vote differently in certain types of cases (Boyd, Epstein and Martin, 2010), manage their caseloads differently (Boyd, 2013), and bring different experiences to judicial deliberations (Haire and Moyer, 2015). Further, increased gender diversity on state courts can have positive benefits for the public's esteem for the judicial branch (e.g., Fix and Johnson, 2017).

Why are women underrepresented on state courts? One possible cause of this underrep-

representation is the presence and success of women in judicial elections, which occur in some capacity in most states. On the one hand, judicial elections provide opportunities for women and other underrepresented populations to gain representation on the bench in ways that may be difficult to achieve through an appointive process where the “old boys network” often still looms large. On the other hand, those who run for judge may have to contend with the barriers faced by women and people of color in other types of elections (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993; Schneider and Bos, 2014). When voters have little information about candidates, the effects of stereotyping might be particularly influential (Bauer, 2013; Bos and Schneider, 2017; Ditonto, Hamilton and Redlawsk, 2014). Because judicial elections are often low information contests, the effects of voter stereotyping may be particularly consequential in these contests (Bonneau and Cann, 2015; Klein and Baum, 2001).

These stereotypes may collide with voters’ conceptions of “quality” in judicial elections. Though scholars of legislative politics have devoted careful attention to the gendered ways in which voters judge candidate qualifications (e.g., Bauer, 2020*b*), scholars of judicial elections have largely limited their understanding of whether or not a candidate for judicial office is qualified to a simple, single indicator: whether a candidate for a higher court has previous judicial experience (Bonneau and Hall, 2009; Hall and Bonneau, 2006). By contrast, studies of federal judicial qualifications have used a variety of measures that encompass the myriad experiences a potential judge may have (e.g., Epstein et al., 2006; Sen, 2014). This limited understanding of judicial quality in contests for state judge has the potential to obscure important electoral dynamics that might, in turn, inhibit women’s representation in these important policymaking bodies.

In this paper, we rely on a candidate choice conjoint experiment to examine the effects of candidate qualifications and gendered stereotypes in judicial elections. We hypothesize that like those to select executives and legislators, gendered stereotypes about competence and qualifications affect voters judgments. Drawing on a conjoint experiment mirroring a

nonpartisan judicial election, we find that, on average, women candidates are advantaged in judicial elections. However, we find no evidence that citizens view women candidates as more well-qualified. While our respondents evaluated male and female candidates with most prior professional experiences similarly, we observe important instances of gendered stereotyping in these elections. Our results have important implications for our understanding of qualifications, stereotyping, and judicial diversity and emphasize the need for scholars of judicial elections to draw upon the rich scholarship on gender and politics to understand political behavior in these elections.

4.2 The Importance of Judicial Diversity

Diversity in the judiciary is important to both substantive and descriptive representation, as it is in other political institutions. Even though men and women tend to vote similarly on most cases, except those that explicitly involve gender or sex (Boyd, Epstein and Martin, 2010), research demonstrates that a bench that reflects the diversity of its constituents has many important qualities for law, politics, and governance. For example, a state which descriptively represents its population at the judicial level might potentially have increased judicial legitimacy. As voters see themselves represented in their court system, they tend to be less likely to be disillusioned with their judicial institutions, which could possibly confer judicial legitimacy on state courts (Fix and Johnson, 2017). Additionally, procedural justice theory suggests that citizens care that the decisions which impact them are made through fair procedures to obtain fair outcomes (Olson, 2001). With increased representation on the courts, women and other underrepresented groups might see these courts' decisions as having gone through a fairer process, thereby increasing their support for the judicial branch.

Additionally, the inclusion of more women on state courts might lead to better substantive representation of women in the state through votes on what are traditionally considered

women's interests – such as education, child and family policy, health, and reproductive issues (Fix and Johnson, 2017). Because women are comparatively underrepresented in areas where policy is discussed, developed, and made into law, and in institutions we already understand as being raced and gendered - notably in state legislatures and Congress - courts and other alternative political spaces (including interest groups) can offer a unique opportunity for women to express and advance their policy interests (Beckwith, 2011; Strolovich, 2007; Mansbridge, 1999; Phillips, 1995). These alternative spaces are important for representation in that women may be better represented through some interest groups, especially in terms of their policy goals (Burns, Schlozman and Verba, 2001; Beckwith, 2011). In relation to the judiciary, interest groups can have a strong influence on courts through their efforts on legal cases. When these interest groups become involved with legal cases, outcomes might better reflect women's policy interests that have developed more from activism and advocacy. Issues stemming from interest groups tend to be more naturally developed and might reduce some of the barriers to the identification and representation of women's interests (Beckwith, 2011). With increased representation of women on courts, interest groups may have a unique relationship to the judiciary in their influence and efforts to represent women through these cases.

One potential contribution to the underrepresentation of women in state judiciaries is the method by which candidates are chosen for state supreme courts. Most states hold some type of election for their state supreme court justices, either partisan or nonpartisan. Other states appoint their judges (typically through either the legislature or governor), and a few states use a hybrid system in which they first appoint judges and then hold retention elections on the chosen justices after a given period of service. Appointment-based processes are generally more likely to result in the improvement of diversity on state courts, especially for women, though typically when diversifying courts that are previously all-male, rather than those that already have some representation (Bratton and Spill, 2002). Since appointment processes

lead to public nominations, the inclusion of women and minorities through appointment by a governor or legislature could lead to increased political capital for the person or group of people selecting the judge (Hurwitz and Lanier, 2003). Further, the public and those who appoint judges likely have different motivations in deciding who should serve on the court, with different goals for representation in the judiciary (Gibson and Nelson, 2021). Some scholarship suggests that diversity in the judiciary is associated with appointment methods rather than via elections (Reddick, Nelson and Caufield, 2009; Goelzhauser, 2011).

In states with supreme court elections, voters sometimes must select their justices with little to no information other than candidate name, especially in nonpartisan elections where voters are denied even a party cue on the ballot (Rock and Baum, 2010; Klein and Baum, 2001). In such low information elections, voters may be particularly susceptible to heuristics because a rich information environment cannot counter out these cues. Thus, voters may potentially activate gender stereotypes on the candidates on their ballot, when given a name that indicates candidate gender, and especially when partisan affiliation is not provided.

4.2.1 Judicial Elections and Quality

The extent to which elections are better than appointment systems for putting qualified judges on the bench is one of the frontline debates in the ongoing discussion about the best way to select judges (e.g., Hall and Bonneau, 2006). Studies of judicial selection foreground “quality” as the defining dimension on which potential judges should be evaluated with studies of federal judicial selection noting a graduate decline in the importance of qualifications over ideological concerns in the voting decisions of U.S. Senators (Epstein et al., 2006).

At the federal level, the predominant indicator of judicial quality comes from the American Bar Association, which evaluates Article III judicial nominees by considering judicial integrity, competence, and temperament and publicizes its determination about whether a nominee is “Well Qualified,” “Qualified,” or “Not Qualified” to serve on the federal bench.

According to the American Bar Association (2020), the qualifications that federal judges are evaluated on are solely dedicated to their professional qualifications. When the ABA evaluates candidates, they generally expect candidates to have over a decade of experience practicing law, as well as substantial courtroom and trial experience as a lawyer or as a trial judge. They do note, however, that they also consider alternatives to a lack of courtroom experience: involvement in administrative agencies or arbitration boards, tribal courts, or teaching trial advocacy may serve as a sign of a well-qualified judge in place of courtroom service. The ABA's Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary asserts that civic activities and public service are valuable experiences for nominees, but do not serve as replacement for significant experience in the practice of law in either the private or public sectors. When the ABA evaluates federal judicial candidates, they are able to survey the nominees via the Senate Judiciary Committee, and conducts further intensive research into nominees' legal writings, reported and unreported court decisions, briefs, and speeches, among other documents, and holds an extensive confidential interview with each nominee and with others in the legal field to assess the nominees' integrity, professional competence, and judicial temperament.

However, though these assessments are thorough and consider many aspects of a nominee's background to vet their nomination, the assessments themselves may be flawed in terms of how well they predict judicial success in terms of reversal rates, and in how equitable the ratings are for minority and women nominees relative to white, male nominees (Sen, 2014). These methods instead often result in lower ratings of women and minority candidates relative to white, male candidates. Importantly, these widely-used measures of judicial qualifications are subject to systematic gendered bias.

Scholars and judges have considered other understandings of qualifications, too. Reath (1974), for example, suggests that criteria of judicial performance should be judged by numerous factors, including but not limited to: "integrity and moral courage; judicial temper-

ament; adequate legal ability; adequate legal experience; courteousness, and consideration; and industry and promptness in performance,” within the context of judicial retention elections. He expands upon these factors to suggest a range of qualities which voters and interest groups should evaluate judges who were appointed through the merit process, and thus now must be tested electorally on this merit. Posner (2000), in discussing the empirical judicial quality of the Ninth Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals, essentially defines a good court as one that is effective. Thus, individual justices themselves should be hard-working and have good judgement, which can indicate how well they perform in various areas of law (Choi, Gulati and Posner, 2013). While these are proposed as objective criteria, we might expect that there are gendered expectations and stereotypes surrounding these traits.

At the state level, bar associations and state officials sometimes offer voters Judicial Performance Evaluation (JPE) guides that purport to provide voters with easy-to-understand information on an incumbent judge’s performance; in many cases, these guides provide voters with an explicit recommendation as to whether or not the judge should be retained in office. Unfortunately, like the ABA ratings, these ratings suffer from systematic gender bias (Gill, Lazos and Waters, 2011; Gill, 2014).

While multiple measures of judicial qualifications exist, scholars of state judicial elections have been simplistic in their evaluations of the effect of judicial qualifications on the outcomes of judicial elections. Hall and Bonneau (2006), in examining challenger quality in state supreme court elections, find that voters can determine differences in candidate quality in judicial elections, both partisan and nonpartisan.¹ Their measure of challenger quality entails a candidate having served as a judge on a lower court. This measure adapts the Jacobson (2009) measure of candidate quality (prior electoral experience) to the judicial experience

¹Of course, while this measure is the most widely discussed, it is not the only measure scholars have used. When judicial quality is measured by citations towards their written opinions, Ash and MacLeod (2021), identify that non-partisan elections are more effective in selecting qualified officials than partisan elections are. They note that this is in part due to a lack of partisan bias in selecting candidates, but also that more information on candidates’ capabilities are theoretically more accessible and available to voters.

on the assumption that candidates who have previously served as judge present a qualified alternative to the incumbent, as opposed to those who have not served as judges and may be perceived by voters as failing to meet expectations or (informal) requirements for the job.

While this measure benefits from its simplicity, it raises concerns about validity. First, especially for state high courts, individuals may have varied career paths. While service on a trial court or an appellate court may provide judges with experience in the role of a judge, mere experience does not necessarily make one qualified to perform a task. Extensive experience as an advocate or in the teaching or study of law might provide another path toward a high level of judicial quality. And, given that men and women may have different paths to office in other political institutions, understanding whether measures of prior electoral experience may be biased against women candidates, it is essential to know the span of women's barriers to office at different level and type of office in order to understand the potential consequences these barriers have to women's underrepresentation in politics as a whole. (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu, 2013; Lawless and Fox, 2010).²

Outside of the judicial context, more expansive measures of candidate quality incorporate different aspects of a candidate's background and resources provide a template for a richer understanding of the effects of candidate qualifications on the outcomes of judicial elections. Barnes and Holman (2020) note that diversity among candidate characteristics – including personal and professional experiences and backgrounds – is important for representation, both descriptive and substantive. Candidate backgrounds are gendered, in that the men and women who tend to run for office typically have different professional paths to office and systematically tend to hold different personal characteristics. The experiences and backgrounds that candidates have are not necessarily equivalent across candidate identity – women are

²Additionally, and perhaps surprisingly, research by Greene and Renberg (2022) finds that many judges in lower-level state courts are lay judges, or judges without a legal degree – including judges who make decisions on civil legal cases, including eviction cases. This underscores that studies of judicial elections would do well to take a broad conceptualization of quality.

less frequently found in the traditional professional pools for candidate recruitment, such as business and law, but may have substantial experience in another relevant field, such as education (Lawless and Fox, 2010; Sanbonmatsu, 2014). In elections where candidates are required to hold some formal qualification, such as a legal degree, these paths necessarily converge, but overall, the barrier for entry into politics tends to be more straightforward for men than for women (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu, 2013).

4.2.2 Gender Stereotypes

To this point, we have suggested that the low information environment in which voters make decisions in judicial elections may provide a fertile ground for the use of gender heuristics, which impact how we might understand existing measures of quality in judicial elections. We now turn to a fuller discussion of gender stereotypes in elections and an explanation of how they might affect judicial contests.

Voters often rely on cues like gender in order to make assumptions about candidates, particularly in low information environments. Gender heuristics may make voting easier: based on gender stereotypes, a gender heuristic provides an information shortcut for voters (Lawless, 2004; Mo, 2015). Gender shortcuts may be particularly relevant for voters who don't share a common partisan identity with a candidate (Barnes and Beaulieu, 2014). Gender stereotypes in elections are typically analyzed through the lens of a candidate's competency on issues, and in the US, are studied in legislative and (occasionally) executive contexts.

There are two main theories that account for much of the work on this question: first, that women politicians are associated with stereotypically feminine traits, and so voters have diverging beliefs of what issues women are competent on relative to men. The second approach is based in how voters evaluate politicians' ideology and partisanship: voters may view women politicians as having more liberal beliefs than male politicians (regardless of

party affiliation), and are more likely to think that women are more likely to be Democrats (Bauer, 2018; Devroe and Wauters, 2018). In general, there are three models of gender and party stereotyping in politics: the gender stereotyping model, the party stereotyping model, and the interactive gender and partisan model (Bauer, 2020*b*).

The first of these theories suggests that feminine stereotypes associated with women can undermine their electoral success and support in the electorate, because of gender role mismatches between women – perceived to have feminine qualities – and the masculine expectations that voters hold for those in political positions (Butler and Preece, 2016). Even if women officeholders are viewed positively when associated with traditional feminine stereotypes (such as communal- and compromise-centered leadership styles) the same women may be evaluated less favorably when running for office and are potentially viewed as violating gender stereotypes with their electoral ambitions (Bernhard, 2021; Sweet-Cushman, 2022). The party stereotyping model asserts that gender stereotypes are negligible in terms of understanding electoral outcomes because of the dominance of partisanship as a cue in many elections (Bauer, 2013; Hayes, 2011; Brians, 2005). The final model argues that voters rely on both gender and party-based stereotypes, where voters associate Democratic women candidates to feminine traits and issues relative to male Democratic candidates, such that Democratic women are affected by both gender and party stereotypes (Badas and Stauffer, 2019; Bauer, 2020*b*; Koch, 2000). Women are typically perceived as being more liberal than men (Dolan, 2014; McDermott, 1997; Devroe and Wauters, 2018). Thus, even without a partisan cue, if voters rely on such assumptions about women candidates, they may evaluate them differently based on their own partisanship (Koch, 2000). Moreover, even in nonpartisan electoral contexts, conservative voters are less likely to support women running for office - especially for executive offices (Anzia and Bernhard, 2022).

When and how do stereotypes affect electoral outcomes? Contrasting the idea that women politicians are perceived as having stereotypically feminine traits and are similar

to women as a whole, Schneider and Bos (2014) argue that women politicians experience stereotyping as a "subtype" of women, meaning that they do not benefit from feminine stereotypes like women who are not politicians. In fact, women politicians do not see the benefits of either stereotypically feminine or masculine stereotypes: women politicians are seen as lacking the positive characteristics assigned to women overall, such as empathy and compassion – meaning they lose any advantage over men through the expression of feminine qualities. Additionally, they are not assigned masculine stereotypes which could theoretically benefit them in the political sphere. Male candidates, in contrast, benefit from masculine stereotypes in the realm of politics. Other research finds that while some women candidates and officeholders may benefit from gendered stereotypes - particularly Democratic and liberal women who demonstrate a communally-oriented leadership style that emphasizes consensus - such benefits are limited to legislative offices that are congruent with women's traditional gender roles (Bernhard, 2021; Anzia and Bernhard, 2022; Sweet-Cushman, 2022; Schneider, Bos and DiFilippo, 2022).

Stereotyping is highly context-dependent and can differ widely across different electoral environments (Bauer, 2013; Bos and Schneider, 2017; Ditonto, Hamilton and Redlawsk, 2014). Bauer (2020*b*) rely on role-congruity theory and the categorization of individuals into multiple stereotype categories in order to develop a general understanding of how voters relate traits to their perceptions of candidates. Their study describes how stereotypes can be reinforced by each other, in that cues can have overlapping content that make them congruent to each other in the eyes of the electorate. Gonzalez and Bauer describe this effect in terms of gender and party stereotypes, but other work shows that there are particular stereotypes about different political offices as well. Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) examine the effects of gender stereotyping across different types/branches of office and different levels (local, state, federal), and conclude that masculine-associated traits are preferred by candidates at "higher" levels of office, and especially in executive elections, where candidates

may be expected to serve as leaders or be more aggressive than in other offices (see also Sweet-Cushman (2022)). However, they also note that though this topic requires further examination, feminine traits may be preferred in some cases, such as in the judiciary. In an examination of state supreme court candidates by Sigelman, Sigelman and Fowler (1987), they find that women candidates with traditionally feminine traits and viewed as being “nice” were better supported than women candidates viewed as being “dynamic,” according to their possession of traditionally masculine traits. Conversely, Oliver and Conroy (2018) find that regardless of candidate gender, city council candidates who self-identify as masculine are more likely to be recruited for office - women are not necessarily punished for not conforming to gender roles, but there is a persistent connection between politics and masculine norms.

However, gender stereotype research—even when accounting for other heuristics like party—have yielded mixed results. Dolan (2014) examines how gender-based stereotypes may influence the manner in which voters evaluate legislative candidates, and considers how this evaluation further affects a voter’s final decision. She finds that stereotypes are not central to voter evaluations of candidates, and thus are essentially immaterial when considering the impact of gender on vote choice. However, voters in particularly low-information elections may respond to the choice presented to them using gender stereotyping. Further studies by Bauer (2013) and Bauer (2017), among others, stress the importance of considering context - including in how candidates campaign - in considering when and how gender stereotypes can affect electoral outcomes. Gender stereotypes alone do not always account for electoral variation.

Women candidates can possibly mediate the effects of traditionally feminine gender stereotypes by presenting themselves with more typical leadership qualities (Bos and Schneider, 2017). In judicial elections, this may mean that women who express their traits through traditional aspects of judicial quality can combat some of the negative stereotyping, though

the possible decreased association between masculine traits and judicial offices relative to other offices may lead respondents to perceive a better gender role match among women than they would experience in executive elections, for example.

4.2.3 Hypotheses

We have expectations related to the effects of candidate qualifications and gender stereotyping in judicial elections. Our first set of expectations relates to the effects of various professional experiences on voters' evaluations of candidate qualifications and vote intentions. Our first expectation relates to candidates' prior legal experience. As discussed above, previous attempts to understand the effects of judicial elections privilege prior judicial experience as the most important qualification for a judicial nominee and suggest that voters prefer candidates with higher levels of qualifications. Thus:

H1: Candidates with prior judicial experience will be judged as more qualified for state supreme court and will be electorally advantaged, compared to candidates with other types of legal backgrounds.

Yet the legal profession is broad, providing many pathways to the bench especially when candidates can run for office directly. Therefore, we examine the effects of other types of prominent legal experiences, including service as a prosecutor, a public defender, or in private practice. Prior prosecutors are well-represented on state supreme court benches, while public defenders are few and far between (Gibson and Nelson, 2021). One explanation for the underrepresentation of public defenders on the bench is that voters view them as less qualified and are less likely to vote for individuals with that experience on election day. Similarly, we believe no existing study has benchmarked the relative importance of these different career experiences on voters' evaluations of judicial candidates or their willingness to support candidates who have particular prior career experiences. Therefore, though we

do not make strong hypotheses about the relative ranking of these different experiences, we benchmark them against prior judicial experience.

Second, the American public generally dislikes the politicization (or attempted politicization) of the judiciary (Bartels and Johnston, 2012). Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (1995) demonstrate that, because citizens perceive courts as separate from the explicit politicking that characterizes the “Washington system,” the public tends to approve of the judicial branch at a higher level than the legislative or executive branch. Studies at the state level have led to similar conclusions (e.g., Kelleher and Wolak, 2007; Benesh, 2006). We expect that voters consider the politicization of the judiciary when casting votes in judicial elections, punishing candidates who have previous political experience over those whose prior experiences are entirely in the legal realm:

H2: Compared to a candidate with no prior political experience, candidates with previous executive or legislative branch experience should be rated by respondents as less qualified and be less likely to be selected.

Third, the American legal profession is notoriously elitist, with lawyers who attended elite law schools dominating the U.S. Supreme Court and elite law firms. While such qualifications might make a prospective judge more attractive in beltway legal circles, that elitism might backfire in state-level judicial elections to select judges with the final say on state law (e.g., Gibson and Nelson, 2021). For this reason, we expect

H3: Candidates who completed their legal education in the state in which they are running for judge will be electorally advantaged compared to judges who attended out-of-state or elite law schools.

Our second set of expectations, regarding gender and stereotyping, are rooted in the literature on candidate’s varying paths to office and on conceptions of candidate quality

across elections (Burns, Schlozman and Verba, 2001). Often, women politicians are associated with traditionally feminine characteristics, competencies, and interests, or the women politician sub-type, where women do not benefit from being perceived as masculine or feminine (Schneider and Bos, 2014). In the United States, role congruity theory suggests that women who defy gender roles will be punished, though Oliver and Conroy (2018) suggest that this is not the case for women seeking some offices. Women candidates do not receive the potential benefits from the positive stereotypes assigned to women, but they also “lose” to men on masculine traits, because there is an inherent gender role mismatch between women politicians and masculinity (Schneider and Bos, 2014). Further, because women politicians are viewed as holding more masculine traits compared to other women, they are not associated with femininity, but they are also not positively associated with masculine traits. Consequently, we anticipate that women will be at a disadvantage compared to men seeking judicial office in the states. Thus:

H4: Women will (a) be less likely to be selected and (b) receive lower evaluations on quality than male candidates, holding all other candidate qualities constant.

Aside from a direct effect of gender, studies of gender stereotyping suggest heterogeneity in when women candidates will receive electoral advantages. Voters are more likely to punish a woman candidate who is seen as agentic and dominant traits, such as being seen as intimidating or arrogant (Schneider, Bos and DiFilippo, 2022). And, for women running for executive and legislative office, more positive stereotypes are attributed to women compared to men or ungendered candidates. However, when women face an electoral environment, these positive stereotypes disappear, and in some cases, disadvantage the woman running for office. In particular, women are punished for exhibiting “incongruent” characteristics when running for office (for example, agentic women are punished when running for a communal legislative office) (Sweet-Cushman, 2022). Thus:

H5: Women candidates will (a) be less likely to be selected and (b) be receive lower evaluations of quality when they have professional experiences or traits that are less traditionally feminine, compared to women candidates who do not have those experiences or traits.

4.3 Research Design

We test these theoretical expectations using a conjoint experiment fielded in June 2022 on Prolific, a vendor that connects survey respondents to researchers. The sample was limited to U.S. adults who speak English; given the gender imbalance in many online samples and our substantive interest in gender, we recruited roughly equal number of male and female participants. After answering a battery of questions about their political and demographic backgrounds, respondents participated in a conjoint experiment. Each of our 1,000 respondents rated 10 pairs of candidates.

An experimental approach is particularly apt for our research setting. Because women candidates are likely to be selective about where they seek office, observational studies that seek to unravel gender in judicial elections will encounter severe inferential difficulties. Further, the experimental setting allows us to independently manipulate each type of candidate qualifications, ensuring that (a) all of the potential qualifications we seek to study are present for both male and female candidates and (b) there is no correlation in candidate qualifications brought about by the path dependence of a particular legal career (e.g., attending a top-tier law school and working in corporate law).

At the same time, we are cognizant of a major drawback to this research design: while many judicial elections are low information contests, a survey experiment provides every respondent with full information about each candidate, potentially providing voters with more information than they would have in a typical electoral context. As Barabas and Jerit

(2010) demonstrate, this feature of survey experiments suggests that any results we uncover be treated as maximal-sized effects.

The conjoint experiment presented respondents with pairs of hypothetical candidates for state supreme court, randomizing the candidates' gender, prior experiences, and a newspaper endorsement meant to cue gendered stereotypes. Table 4.1 gives the attributes and their realizations.³

These treatments enable us to test the hypotheses outlined above. Our first hypothesis relates to prior judicial experience, suggesting that candidates will be viewed as more qualified and will be more likely to be selected if they have previous service on the bench. The Occupation suite of treatments enables us to test this hypothesis, comparing prior service as a trial court judge to other types of public and private-sector legal experience.

Our second hypothesis related to candidates' prior political experience, suggesting that candidates who have previous, explicitly political experience should be judged as less qualified and less likely to be selected than candidates whose careers have not involved the political arena. We therefore contrast candidates with no prior legal experience to an set of elected and unelected political experiences in both the legislative and executive branches of government.

Our third hypothesis related to a candidate's prior educational experience. We make three distinctions: (a) whether the law school is an elite law school, whether the candidate attended an in-state law school or an out-of-state law school, and whether the law school was public or private. Recall that we hypothesized that candidates who attended in-state law schools should be advantaged electorally.

Our fourth and fifth hypotheses involve the gender and professional background of the candidates. While the fourth hypothesis straightforwardly predicts an electoral bias against women candidates, our fifth hypothesis suggests that the effects of professional experience

³In designing the treatments regarding occupation, prior political experience, and education, we used treatments employed by Sen (2014) and Kirkland and Coppock (2018) as starting points.

Table 4.1: Conjoint Attributes

Candidate Attribute	Potential Realization
<i>Gender</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male • Female
<i>Prior Political Experience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No political experience • Senior legal counsel to the governor • City Council Member • State Legislator • Majority party leader in state legislature
<i>Occupation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owns own solo law firm • Trial court judge • County prosecutor • Public defender • Attorney in private practice specializing in family law • Attorney in private practice specializing in corporate mergers and acquisitions
<i>Education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduated from Ivy League law school • Graduated from in-state public law school • Graduated from out-of-state public law school • Graduated from in-state private law school • Graduated from out-of-state private law school
<i>Newspaper Endorsement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Someone who is extremely well qualified to serve on the state supreme court” • “This is an opportunity to elect a caring, compassionate lawyer to our state supreme court” • “A dedicated attorney whose tireless work ethic will benefit our judiciary and our state” • “A strong-minded attorney who will bring leadership to our state’s highest court” • “A true legal expert who will bring expansive legal knowledge to the state supreme court”

and personal traits will vary by gender. In designing the experiment, we included two sets of treatments to test this hypothesis. First, in designing our occupational treatments, we included two—expertise in family law and expertise in mergers and acquisitions—that were found to be among the most female- and male-dominated (respectively) legal practice specialities (Isaacson, 2017).⁴

We drew from previous research on gender stereotypes to design a series of five newspaper endorsement treatments aimed at providing respondents with information about the candidates’ personal traits. In designing the treatments meant to prime feminine stereotypes, we looked to Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) who note that characteristics such as “compassion,” “warmth,” and “kindness” are exemplars of feminine traits. Therefore, we included two treatments that highlighted candidates described as “caring, compassionate lawyer” or a “dedicated attorney” with a “tireless work ethic.” Because Lawless (2004) mentions “self-confidence” and “assertiveness” as masculine traits, we also included a “strong-minded attorney” with noted “leadership” skills and a “true legal expert” with “expansive legal knowledge” as two endorsements meant to prime masculine associations. Finally, we included a candidate endorsed as “extremely well qualified” with no additional information as a sort of baseline condition, acknowledging that Lawless and Pearson (2008) and Schneider and Bos (2014) have suggested that the very notion of qualifications may have a masculine veneer.

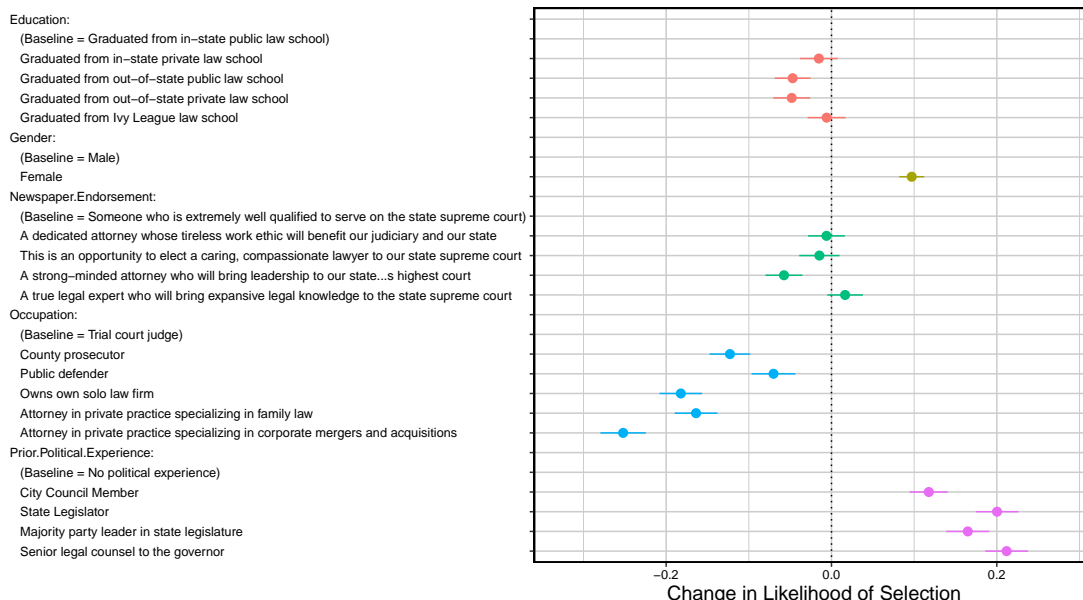
We have two outcome variables: (a) the probability a respondent would vote for a candidate and (b) their rating of the candidate’s qualifications. To measure the former, we asked candidates which of the two candidates they would vote for in an upcoming election. To measure the latter, we asked respondents to rate each profile on a 5-point scale ranging from

⁴Specifically, Family Law is the second-most women-dominated specialty, after Immigration; M&A is the third-most male dominated after Admiralty and Aerospace. We selected Family Law and M&A, rather than the most-dominated specialties in order to avoid priming other attitudes (e.g., immigration-related attitudes or attitudes toward the military).

“Not at all qualified” to “Extremely qualified” to assess perceptions of qualifications.

4.4 Results: Candidate Selection

Figure 4.1: Average Marginal Component Effects, Candidate Selection Outcome



Positive estimates indicate that, relative to the baseline, candidates having that particular experience are more likely to be selected; negative values indicate that characteristic was associated with a lower probability of selection. The lines provide 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 4.1 displays the average marginal component effect for the candidate selection outcome (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto, 2014). Positive estimates indicate that candidates having that particular attribute are more likely to be selected than candidates with the baseline attribute; negative values the attribute was associated with a lower probability of selection, relative to the baseline.

Beginning with our first hypothesis, regarding the effect of candidate gender, we see a relatively large and statistically significant estimate for female candidates. On average, female profiles were about 10% more likely to be selected than male profiles, all else equal.

Next, moving to the effects of a candidate’s education, we observe that respondents were biased against respondents who went to out-of-state law schools, regardless of whether those schools were public or private. Candidates who attended an out-of-state (though not Ivy League) law school were about 5% less likely to be selected. We observe no differences in the probability of selection between a candidate who attended an in-state public law school (the baseline category), an in-state private law school, or an Ivy League law school. Perhaps the most important conclusion we draw regarding the effect of a candidate’s education is that, relative to attending an in-state law school, judicial candidates who attended a top-tier law school are not advantaged in judicial elections. Nor do we find any evidence of home state parochialism. Instead, we find no evidence of a difference in the probability that a candidate with elite legal credentials is selected.

Moving next to the newspaper endorsements, only one of the masculine treatments—“a strong-minded attorney who will bring leadership” to the high court—is associated with a likelihood a candidate is selected. And, the effect is negative. Relative to someone “who is extremely well qualified,” a candidate whose leadership is highlighted is about 7% less likely to be selected by respondents.

Regarding judicial experience, the large negative estimates we observe are, in part, a function of the baseline category: prior service as a trial court judge. That the estimates for all of our occupations are negative demonstrates that candidates view prior judicial service as the most valuable prior occupation for someone running to be a state high court judge. From there, respondents differentiated between other types of occupations. Interestingly, respondents preferred public defenders to prosecutors; that prior public defender experience was the second-most-valuable occupational credential to respondents is interesting given the lack of public defenders on the bench in America today (Gibson and Nelson, 2021). Candidates with only private sector legal experience were the least likely to be selected, with candidates whose experience was in corporate law about 23% less likely to be selected than

former trial court judges.

Finally, regarding candidates' prior political experiences, we had expected to see negative estimates for each experience: respondents would be repelled by candidates who had previously served in an elected or high-profile appointed government office. We were wrong. Candidates who served as state legislators or legal advisors to the governor were 20% more likely to be selected than candidates without any prior political experience. Further, though we observe a slight decrease in the probability that a party leader in a state legislator is selected relative to a rank-and-file state legislator, that difference is not statistically significant. In short, we find no evidence that prior political experiences disadvantage candidates in judicial elections.

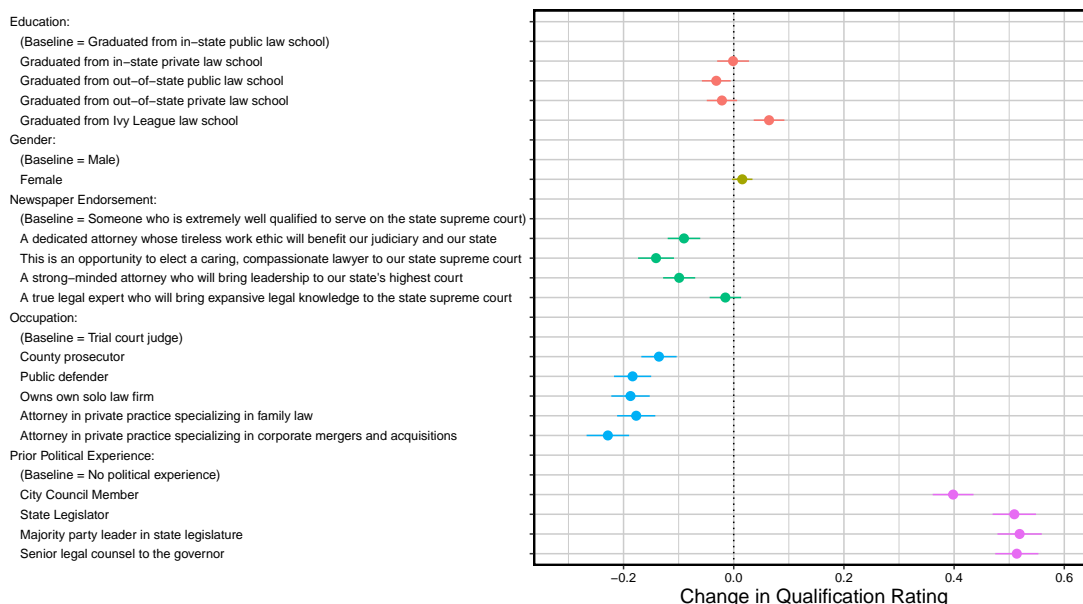
4.5 Results: Candidate Qualifications Rating

Figure 4.2 displays the results for our candidate qualifications outcome. We observe some striking differences between the two outcome variables. First, and perhaps most importantly, we find that female candidates have no qualification advantage. While, as explained above, respondents were more likely to indicate a vote intention for a female candidate, when they were asked to rate the level of qualifications for each profile, they were no more likely to rate a female profile highly than a male profile.

Second, regarding education, we see that, while respondents are no more likely to vote for Ivy League candidates than candidates who went to an in-state law school, they do rate such candidates as more qualified than those who attended an in-state law school.

Third, looking at the newspaper endorsements, we see that these elite cues had much more noticeable effects on candidates' qualification ratings than on vote intention. The "extremely well qualified" and "true legal expert" treatments resulted in indistinguishable candidate ratings; the other three treatments all were associated with lower average qualifi-

Figure 4.2: Average Marginal Component Effects, Candidate Qualifications Outcome



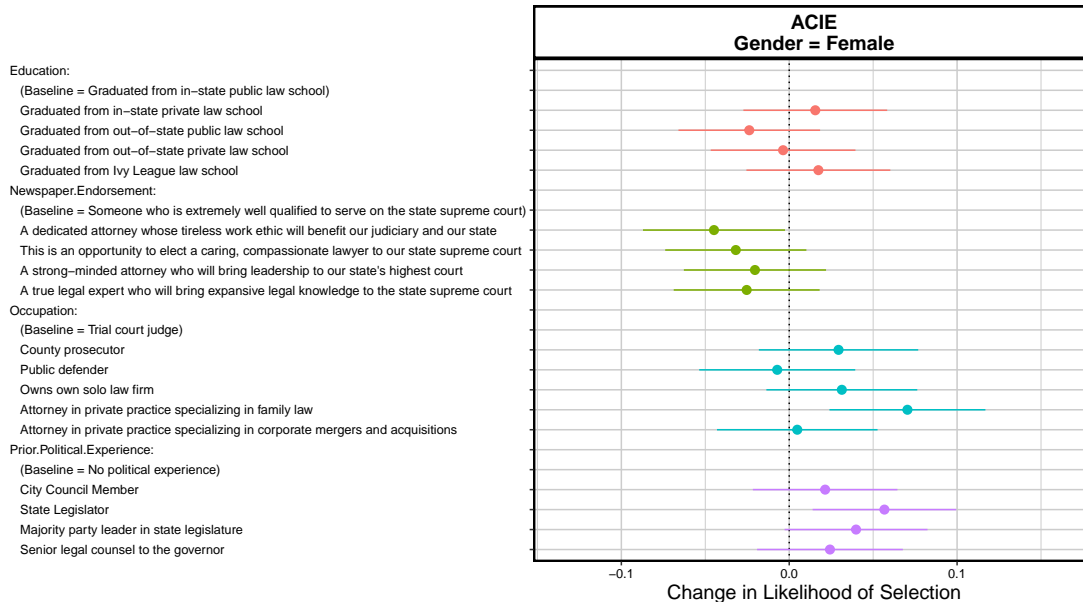
Positive estimates indicate that, relative to the baseline, candidates having that particular experience are viewed as more qualified; negative values indicate that candidates with that characteristic were, on average, viewed as less qualified. The lines provide 95% confidence intervals.

cation ratings.

Fourth, looking at occupation, we again see that trial court judges are viewed as the most well-qualified, but we observe a flip in the relationship between the two public sector jobs: public defenders are *more* likely to be selected than prosecutors but are viewed as less qualified than prosecutors (though that difference is not statistically significant). Further, public defenders and the private sector jobs are not distinguishable from one another.

Finally, regarding political experience, we again observe—contrary to expectations—that political experience is a boon to candidates. Here, the main distinction respondents seemed to draw was between local and state-level experience: candidates with city council experience were viewed as more qualified than candidates with no political experience but as less qualified than candidates with some sort of state-level political experience, be it in the legislative or executive branch.

Figure 4.3: Average Marginal Interaction Effects, Candidate Selection Outcome



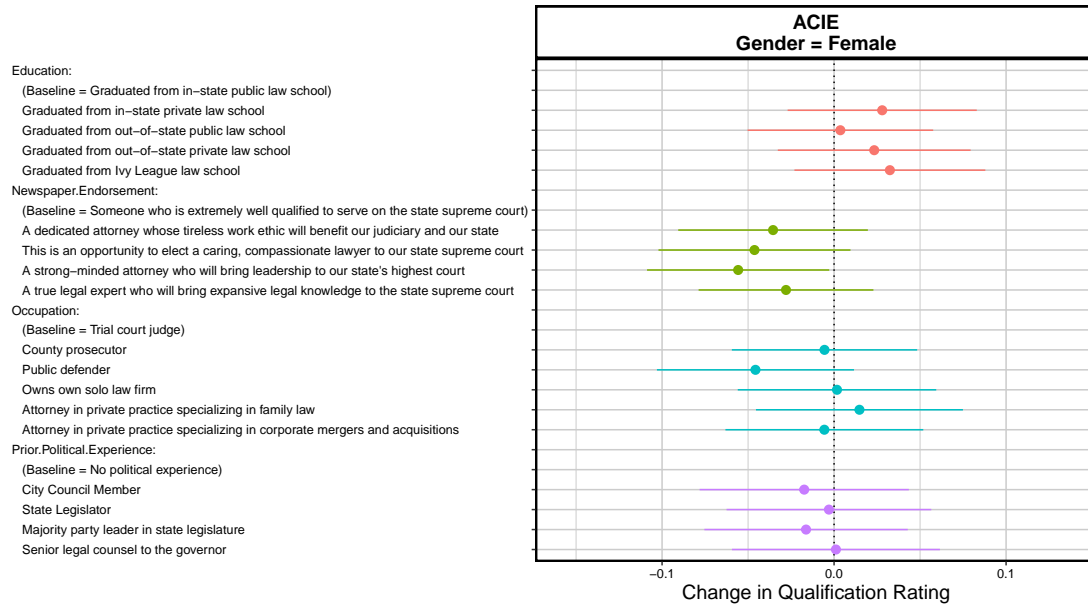
Positive estimates indicate that, relative to the baseline, candidates having that particular experience were more likely to be selected; negative values indicate that characteristic was associated with a lower probability of selection. The lines provide 95% confidence intervals.

Figures 4.3 and 4.4 allow the effects of candidate occupation and newspaper endorsement to vary according to the profile's gender. We had expected to see that the gendered traits—family law vs. corporate law experience and the gendered newspaper endorsements especially—had different effects according to candidate gender. With regard to the candidate selection outcome, “dedicated” women candidates with a “tireless work ethic” receive an electoral boost relative to a male candidate with that endorsement. And, as hypothesized, female candidates with experience in family law were selected more often by respondents than male candidates with experience in that practice area.⁵

With regard to the qualifications rating outcome, we observe even fewer differences. In fact, the only statistically significant difference is that “strong-minded” female candidates

⁵Additionally, while not hypothesized as an attribute where we expected to see a gender-based difference in candidate selection, female judicial candidates with state legislative experience are preferred by respondents at a higher rate than male candidates with that political experience.

Figure 4.4: Average Marginal Interaction Effects, Candidate Qualifications Outcome



Positive estimates indicate that, relative to the baseline, candidates having that particular experience are viewed as more qualified; negative values indicate that candidates with that characteristic were, on average, viewed as less qualified. The lines provide 95% confidence intervals.

endorsed for their leadership are less likely to be selected than male candidates with that characteristic.

4.6 Discussion

We have explicitly taken a narrow focus in this research design, articulating our expectations about how candidate gender—and stereotypes related to gender—might affect voters' evaluations of candidates in judicial elections. We argued that existing studies of judicial elections have taken a narrow track toward understanding what a “quality” candidate looks like in a judicial election, and we have suggested that qualifications might have a gendered component that deserves careful scrutiny, lest it contribute to the underrepresentation of women on the bench.

Still, this paper is just the beginning of a broader research effort. There are two glaring deficiencies in the approach toward understanding the effects of stereotypes in judicial elections that we hope to remedy in future work. First, as we discussed briefly above, voters may have partisan stereotypes that affect voters' evaluations of candidate qualifications in judicial elections.

One debate in studies on judicial elections examines the importance of partisanship and party identification relative to other candidate characteristics. While some studies suggest that quality is an important factor in elections, including judicial elections, others assert that partisanship is the most essential factor in public evaluations of judicial nominees (Sen, 2017). Yet, there are also stereotypes among partisans - both in terms of voters and candidates - that interact party identification with candidate gender, complicating our understanding of how partisanship affects voter perceptions of candidates with differing genders (Koch, 2000; Hayes, 2011). Typically, more feminine attributes and qualities are assigned to Democratic candidates than to Republican candidates, in a way that can benefit male Democratic candidates - they receive the positive effects of being associated with traditionally masculine characteristics because of their gender, and this can affirm the gender role match wherein men have corresponding masculine traits. Democratic men also benefit from the feminine qualities associated with Democratic candidates, which can lead them to be perceived as having traits like compassion or increased focus on collaboration (Hayes, 2011).

This dynamic has yet to be studied in judicial elections. It is possible that the relationship between party identification and gender works differently in an electoral context that could be largely unlike legislative or executive elections. While this paper currently centers on gender differences in perceptions of quality, an important future consideration is partisan identity and how it interacts with or affects candidates of different genders.

These stereotypes might occur through two different pathways: (1) voters evaluate the qualifications of similarly-situated copartisan and outpartisan candidates differently and/or

(2) may have stereotypes regarding Republicans and Democrats generally that they attach to judicial candidates. Our proposed research design will enable us to test whether partisan stereotypes affect evaluations of qualifications in judicial elections as well as to further probe whether partisan stereotypes exacerbate gendered stereotypes in these contests.

Second, the underrepresentation of people of color on state benches is even more pronounced than the underrepresentation of women. Racial or ethnic stereotypes, which may interact with gendered stereotypes, might provide one pathway toward understanding why state high courts lack these voices, just as the qualification standards for women of color differ for the federal bench (Moyer, Harris and Solberg, 2022). Our experimental approach is particularly apt for this context since these candidates are likely to be particularly selective about when and where they seek judicial office, skewing observational studies even in those relatively rare cases in which these candidates seek office. We look forward to unraveling the extent to which voters judge these candidates differently than white candidates in future research.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Understanding the relationship between candidate qualifications, identity, and electoral outcomes is essential to understanding the barriers that women and people of color face in seeking elected office, especially given the disparities in representation across office type and the potential consequences this lack of representation on policy outcomes. In this dissertation, I have contributed to the study of gender, race, and elections in several ways, including the analysis of historical elections, a comparison in support of intersectional candidates across office type, and a distinct examination of the role that stereotypes play in judicial elections.

I will briefly summarize the findings of each chapter before speaking to possible avenues for future research, as well as planned “next-steps” in building on the research presented in this dissertation.

In the first chapter, I examined the relationship between candidate qualifications and candidate vote share using a common measure of candidate quality within political science, and a new measure of candidate quality that is more descriptive and better represents the varying paths that candidates take to high-level offices. I found that men, in some contexts, benefit from their qualifications, while women’s qualifications fail to net any benefits across

elections. This examination indirectly tests and supports my theory that gender bias is present in gubernatorial elections in that women must be more qualified than men in order to succeed - I do find that women's qualifications are not substantially relevant to their success, while men's sometimes are, but observational data limits by ability to directly test bias amongst voters.

In my second chapter, I more directly test the possibility of bias among voters in both gubernatorial and senate elections. I compared the outcomes of two different election types, in order to better understand women's lack of representation in gubernatorial elections and offices, and particularly the lack of Black women in gubernatorial general elections. My results suggest that the differences among individual voters are largely based on race rather than gender: Across the board, I find differences between White candidates and Black candidates, but no differences between White male and female candidates or Black male and female candidates. Additionally, I find that White women are likely to be selected when qualified regardless of office type, contrary to my expectations regarding gender stereotypes and the perceived masculinity of offices.

In the final chapter of my dissertation, Michael Nelson, Erin Heidt-Forsythe and I tested the effects of various experiences on the outcomes of statewide judicial elections, finding that women are more likely to be chosen relative to men. We also find that, among several masculine and feminine-coded quality statements, only one of the masculine statements is related to electoral outcomes, and the relationship between this statement and the likelihood of being selected is negative - contrary to our expectations. Our findings also indicate distinct relationships between voters' valuations of various previous experiences (political and professional) in choosing a judicial candidate

5.1 Reflections

Collectively, this dissertation begins to fill in a gap within the political science literature, especially at the intersection of gender and race in elections. Perhaps most significantly, despite findings that are often contextual and contrary to theoretical assertions, my work finds that qualifications are important to electoral outcomes, across office type, and across candidate identity. Electoral studies have established a foundation of analyses that clarify the state-level and environmental factors that influence elections, while minimally incorporating individual-level factors, especially candidate quality. My work further establishes that different qualifications have different effects on outcomes, across office type.

The broad gender-based conclusions of my dissertation may be more positive than my theoretical explanations predicted: this body of work suggests that White women can benefit from their qualifications, with the caveat that these results are from survey experiments, where respondents might make choices based on what they expect is the most socially-acceptable answer. The results are more pessimistic for Black candidates: their presence is even more minimal than women's in historical elections, and the responses of "voters" in hypothetical elections suggest that they are selected less often and rated as qualified less often, relative to their White counterparts, including when compared to White women.

My work establishes the importance of qualifications in elections, in line with research suggesting that women must be more qualified than their male counterparts to achieve similar electoral success (Bauer, 2020*a*; Anzia and Berry, 2011; Lazarus and Steigerwalt, 2019). When expanding this theory to account for intersectional stereotypes, the consequences are less clear. In general, racial biases seem to persist across offices, while gender biases are more conditional, and in some cases, White women appear to be poised for success in achieving

elected office.

5.2 Next Steps

This work presents a number of possible avenues for future work, some of which I plan to analyze more immediately, and others which have potential to make a larger impact in the literature, both for political science and for women's studies scholarship. The research presented in this dissertation can be used to test a number of theories across gender and elections, including the effects of voter identity and vote choice across voter race, gender, and party identification. Chapter 2's analysis could be further developed by expanding upon its theoretical foundation, as well as its place in both the political science and women's studies literatures. The data from the survey experiment conducted in this chapter are rich, and include a number of covariates not considered in my original analysis, such as voter education, estimated level of sexism, and ideology.

Other research avenues could more substantially build off of the work presented here. Of particular interest might be expanding the time period examined in historical elections, as well as the election's point in the electoral process. This chapter leaves primary elections unconsidered, but they could be a valuable source of data for understanding the lack of women governors and more generally understanding where in the electoral process women potentially face persistent barriers. Studies have examined women's status as recruits for political parties earlier on in the electoral process, but a particular understanding of women's role in gubernatorial primary elections is lacking. Conversely, the experimental data in Chapter 3 could be used as a basis on which survey experiments at the general election level could be conducted. Party is an essential part of vote choice, and it would be particularly compelling to examine the fates of Republican women in particular, as they face various

pressures from their party and gendered expectations.

Broadly, the scholarship would benefit from investigating avenues of potential biases among voters, as well as measurements and conceptualizations of what a “qualified” candidate is. Bias can (and most likely does) occur for both women and people of color throughout the electoral process, and there are myriad explanations that can be tested using both qualitative and quantitative methodology. The conceptualization of quality can be further nuanced - the measures presented in this dissertation are single-dimension, but quality can be a result of many factors, beyond previous experiences, as varied as those experiences might be. The concept of quality is not objective: voters, elites, and political scientists can have different definitions and possible measurements that can be captured and used to more holistically understand the role of qualifications in elections overall. My work presents one way in which to measure quality, but future work can expand upon these measures in order to develop an array of possible measures of quality.

Appendix A

The Effect of Candidate Gender and Quality in Gubernatorial Elections: Additional Details

Table A.1: Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Median	Pctl(75)	Max
Governor	252	0.254	0.436	0	0	0	1	1
Lieutenant Governor	252	0.135	0.342	0	0	0	0	1
U.S. Senator	252	0.012	0.109	0	0	0	0	1
U.S. House	252	0.083	0.277	0	0	0	0	1
Statewide	252	0.230	0.422	0	0	0	0	1
State Attorney General	252	0.099	0.300	0	0	0	0	1
State Legislature	252	0.512	0.501	0	0	1	1	1
Mayor	252	0.067	0.251	0	0	0	0	1
County	252	0.139	0.347	0	0	0	0	1
Local	252	0.155	0.362	0	0	0	0	1
Professional Employment	252	2.667	1.247	0	2	3	4	5
Professional Leadership	252	1.401	1.279	0	0	1	2	5
Party Leader	252	0.171	0.377	0	0	0	0	1
Party Involvement	252	0.381	0.666	0	0	0	1	2
Civic Experience	252	0.357	0.480	0	0	0	1	1
Multiple Civic Experiences	252	0.270	0.445	0	0	0	1	1

Table A.2: Standardized Coefficients for New Measure Model; Mixed-Gender Elections

	Estimate	Standardized	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	8.9458		9.7420	0.92	0.3606
Male Political Quality	4.1596	0.0761	4.1234	1.01	0.3154
Male Professional Quality	12.1888	0.1667	5.7297	2.13	0.0357
Male Civic Quality	-0.5794	-0.0079	5.4881	-0.11	0.9161
Female Political Quality	-7.8901	-0.1174	5.1192	-1.54	0.1262
Female Professional Quality	-6.3518	-0.0678	7.3855	-0.86	0.3917
Female Civic Quality	3.4280	0.0506	5.2416	0.65	0.5145
State Citizen Ideology	-0.2389	-0.2130	0.1144	-2.09	0.0392
Former Female Governor	5.1061	0.1393	3.2076	1.59	0.1144
Male Incumbent Candidate	16.0017	0.4204	3.0588	5.23	0.0000
Female Incumbent Candidate	-20.2596	-0.4477	4.1085	-4.93	0.0000
State Government Ideology	0.1980	0.1655	0.1186	1.67	0.0978
Third-Party Candidate	2.2628	0.0557	3.2045	0.71	0.4817
Female GOP Candidate	1.2794	0.0334	2.7266	0.47	0.6399
% Women in State Legislature	-0.1687	-0.0746	0.2016	-0.84	0.4046
Equal Rights Amendment	-3.8230	-0.0912	3.3724	-1.13	0.2595
Unemployment	0.3145	0.0479	0.5101	0.62	0.5389
Decade	-1.1905	-0.0750	2.3709	-0.50	0.6166
Presidential Election Year	1.9001	0.0443	3.1420	0.60	0.5466
Education	16.0158	0.0579	42.3235	0.38	0.7059

Standardized coefficients for the updated measure of candidate quality in mixed-gender elections. Results mirror those found in the main analysis.

Table A.3: Regression results for traditional measure of candidate quality in mixed-gender elections, open-seat elections.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Percent Difference in Vote Share
Male Political Experience	−3.334 (4.251)
Female Political Experience	−3.244 (11.123)
Citizen Ideology	−0.160 (0.178)
Prior Woman Governor	5.165 (5.251)
Government Ideology	0.138 (0.183)
Third Party Candidate	1.558 (4.537)
Female GOP Candidate	3.850 (4.714)
Percent Women in Legislature	−0.129 (0.291)
Equal Rights Amendment	0.062 (5.301)
Unemployment Rate	−0.568 (0.904)
Decade	1.496 (3.365)
Presidential Election	−4.200 (4.321)
Education	−14.694 (54.943)
Constant	13.389 (16.914)
Observations	58
R ²	0.135
Adjusted R ²	−0.121
Residual Std. Error	13.162 (df = 44)
F Statistic	0.528 (df = 13; 44)
<i>Note:</i> *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	

Regression results for the traditional measure of candidate quality in mixed-gender elections, in only open seat elections.

Table A.4: Regression results for the updated measure of candidate quality in mixed-gender elections, open-seat elections.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Percent Difference in Vote Share
Male Candidate Political Quality	2.843 (6.182)
Male Candidate Professional Quality	10.265 (8.136)
Male Candidate Civic Quality	2.699 (8.911)
Female Candidate Political Quality	-13.758 (7.777)
Female Candidate Professional Quality	-7.356 (12.296)
Female Candidate Civic Quality	6.754 (7.243)
Citizen Ideology	-0.084 (0.182)
Prior Woman Governor	6.489 (5.344)
Government Ideology	0.133 (0.184)
Third Party Candidate	-0.022 (4.663)
Female GOP Candidate	4.297 (4.576)
Percent Women in Legislature	-0.199 (0.265)
Equal Rights Amendment	-1.341 (5.199)
Unemployment Rate	-1.051 (0.844)
Decade	0.854 (2.125)
Presidential Election	-4.402 (4.534)
Constant	10.355 (15.748)
Observations	58
R ²	0.225
Adjusted R ²	-0.078
Residual Std. Error	12.906 (df = 41)
F Statistic	0.743 (df = 16; 41)
<i>Note:</i>	
*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	

Regression results for the updated measure of candidate quality in mixed-gender elections, in only open seat elections.

Table A.5: Regression results for the traditional measure of candidate quality in same-gender elections, open-seat elections.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Percent Difference in Vote Share
Republican Political Experience	11.224 (9.561)
Democratic Political Experience	−0.851 (9.448)
Citizen Ideology	−0.137 (0.232)
Government Ideology	−0.055 (0.206)
Third Party Candidate	−2.325 (9.230)
Percent Women in Legislature	−1.220 (1.430)
Unemployment Rate	−1.665 (5.299)
Decade	−2.784 (5.746)
Presidential Election Year	42.451 (75.103)
Education	−2.325 (21.976)
Observations	31
R ²	0.271
Adjusted R ²	−0.042
Residual Std. Error	12.190 (df = 21)
F Statistic	0.866 (df = 9; 21)
<i>Note:</i> *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	

Regression results for the traditional measure of candidate quality in same-gender elections, in only open seat elections.

Table A.6: Regression results for the updated measure of candidate quality in same-gender elections, open-seat elections.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Percent Difference in Vote Share
Republican Candidate Political Quality	−7.227 (12.195)
Republican Candidate Professional Quality	−23.585 (12.251)
Republican Candidate Civic Quality	−6.785 (13.040)
Democratic Candidate Political Quality	−12.271 (12.458)
Democratic Candidate Professional Quality	−0.663 (11.160)
Democratic Candidate Civic Quality	21.815 (17.967)
Citizen Ideology	0.164 (0.234)
Government Ideology	−0.219 (0.247)
Third Party Candidate	−6.511 (10.349)
Unemployment Rate	0.162 (1.775)
Decade	3.268 (6.101)
Presidential Election Year	−0.546 (6.069)
Education	−21.464 (80.407)
Constant	11.919 (23.460)
Observations	31
R ²	0.432
Adjusted R ²	−0.003
Residual Std. Error	11.958 (df = 17)
F Statistic	0.994 (df = 13; 17)

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Regression results for the updated measure of candidate quality in same-gender elections, in only open seat elections.

Appendix B

The Intersectional Effects of Candidate Quality in Statewide Elections: Additional Details

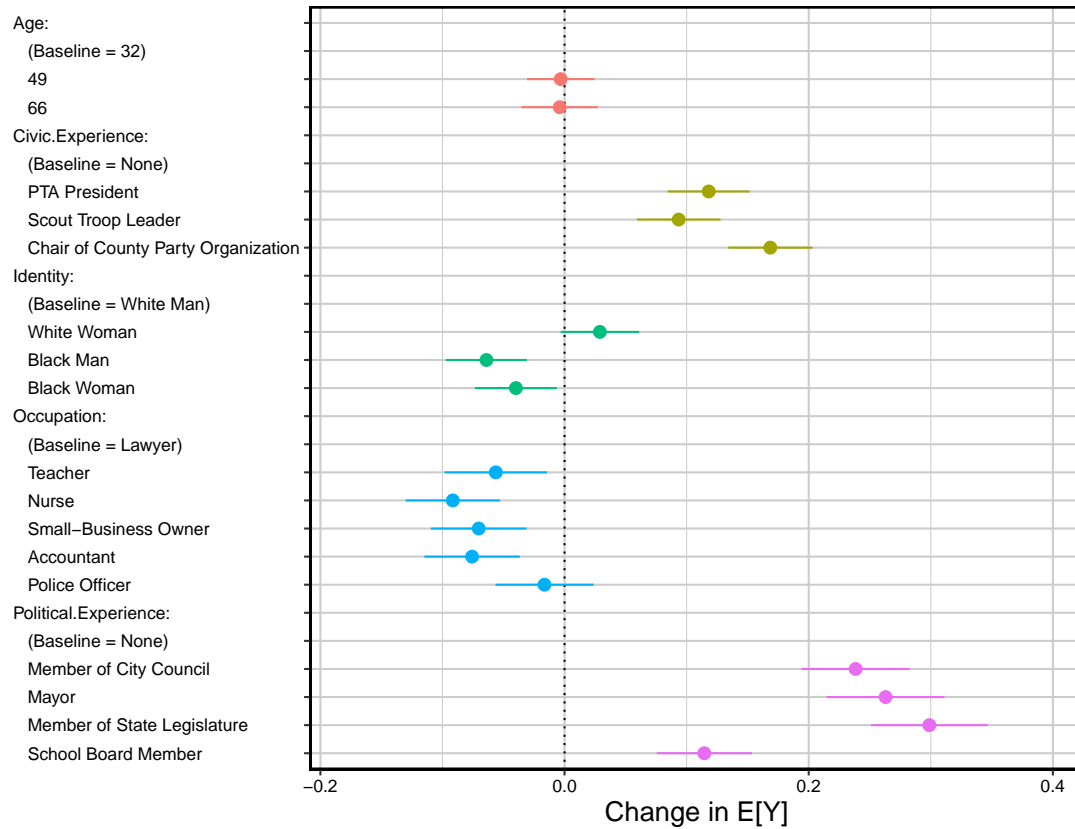


Figure B.1: Overall, non-intersectional, race and gender effects for candidate ratings

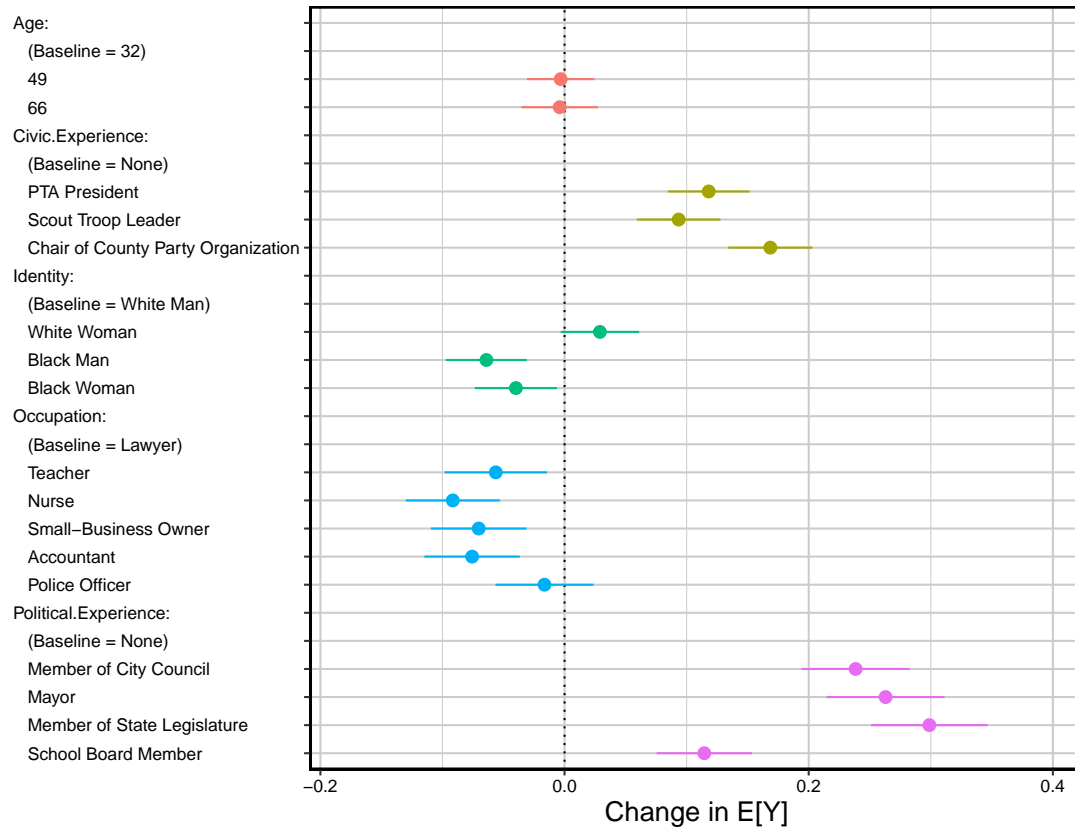


Figure B.2: Overall intersectional effects for race and gender, for candidate ratings

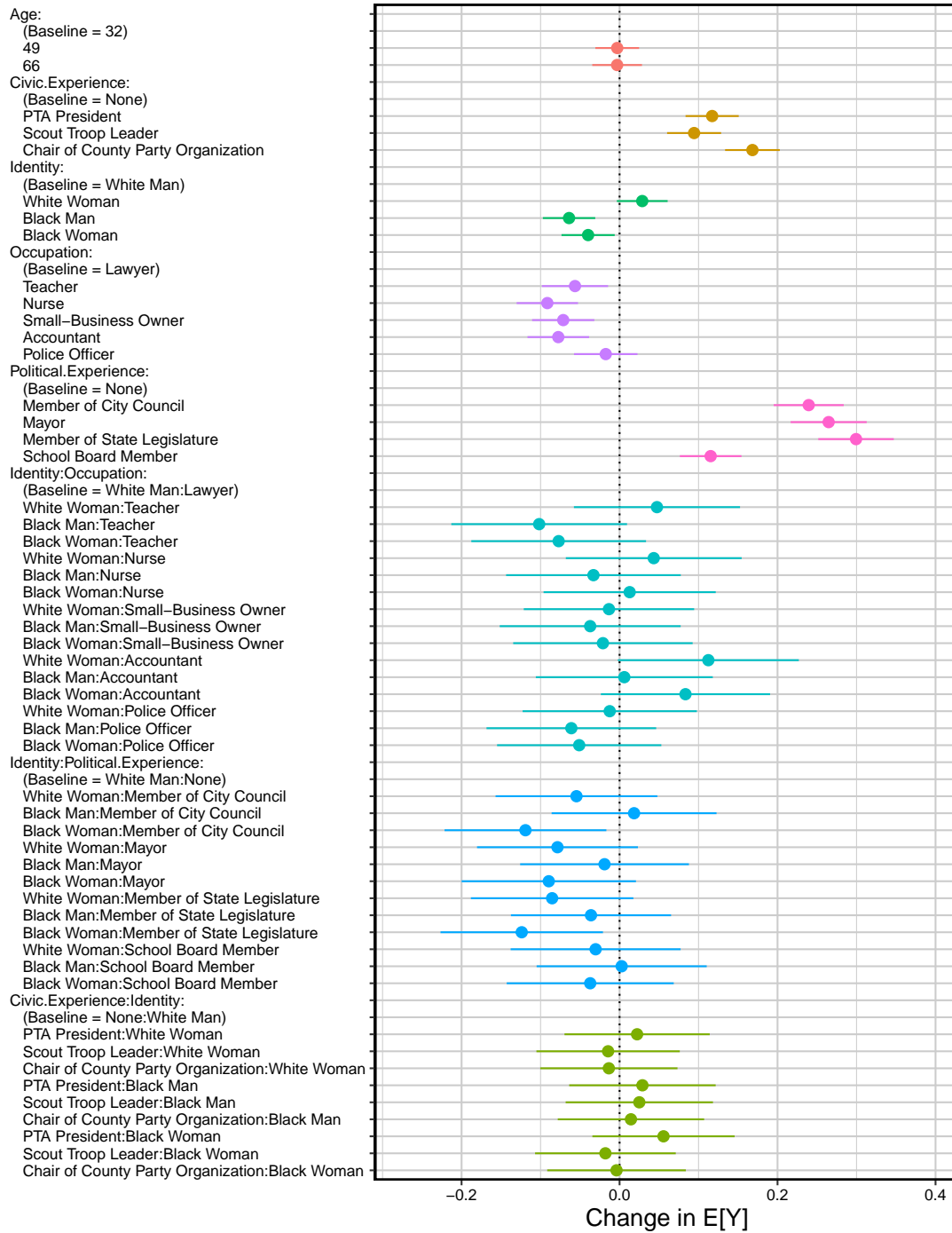


Figure B.3: Intersectional results by occupation and experience, for candidate ratings

Appendix C

Gender, Stereotypes, and Judicial Elections: Additional Details

The analyses in the paper emphasize the Average Marginal Component Effect (AMCE), which provides an estimate of the effect of a profile attribute relative to a baseline characteristic, similar to the interpretation of a categorical variable in a regression model. Leeper, Hobolt and Tilley (2020) note that an alternative estimator, marginal means, can provide an alternative way to understand responses to a conjoint experiment. While AMCEs provide the effect of a profile relative to a baseline, marginal means provide the average value of the outcome variable for each attribute, averaging across all of the other attributes in the experiment. The figures that follow replicate the figures in the paper using marginal means rather than AMCEs and differences in marginal means for male and female candidates rather than AMIEs.

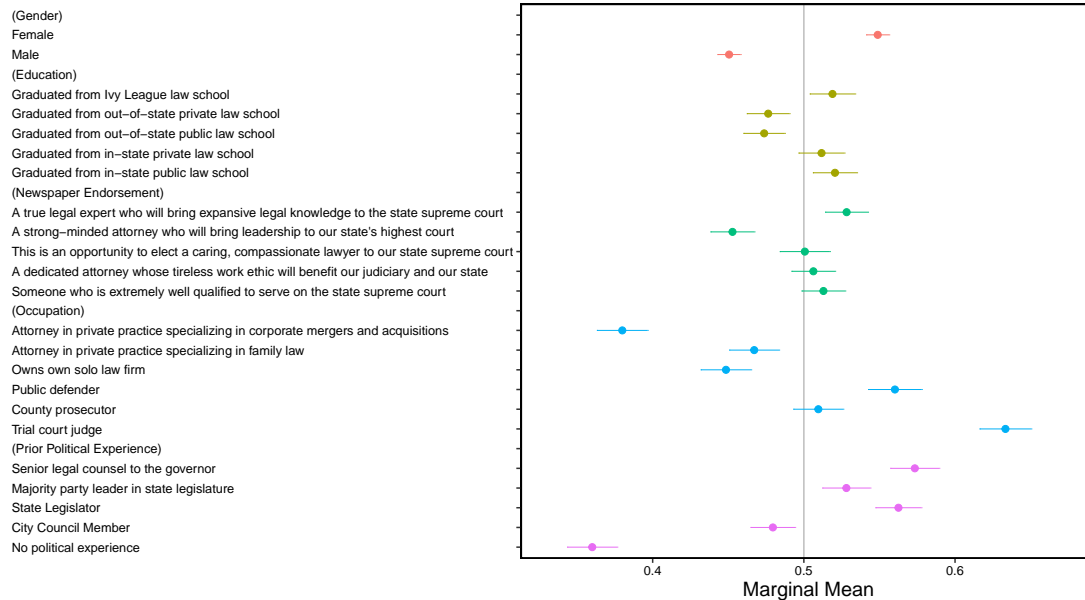


Figure C.1: Marginal Means, Candidate Selection Outcome.

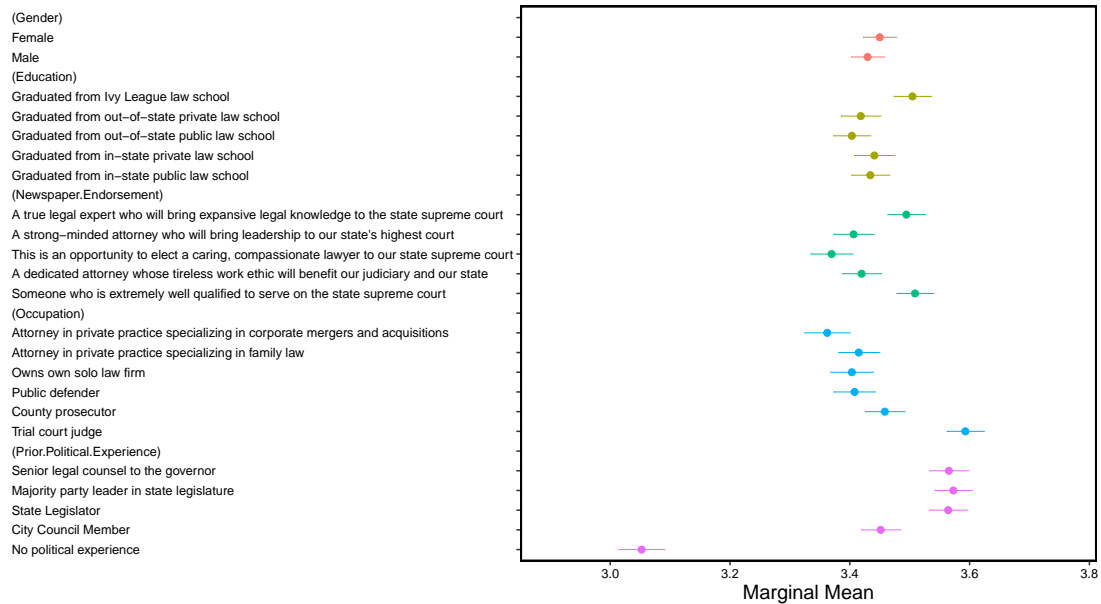


Figure C.2: Marginal Means, Candidate Rating Outcome.

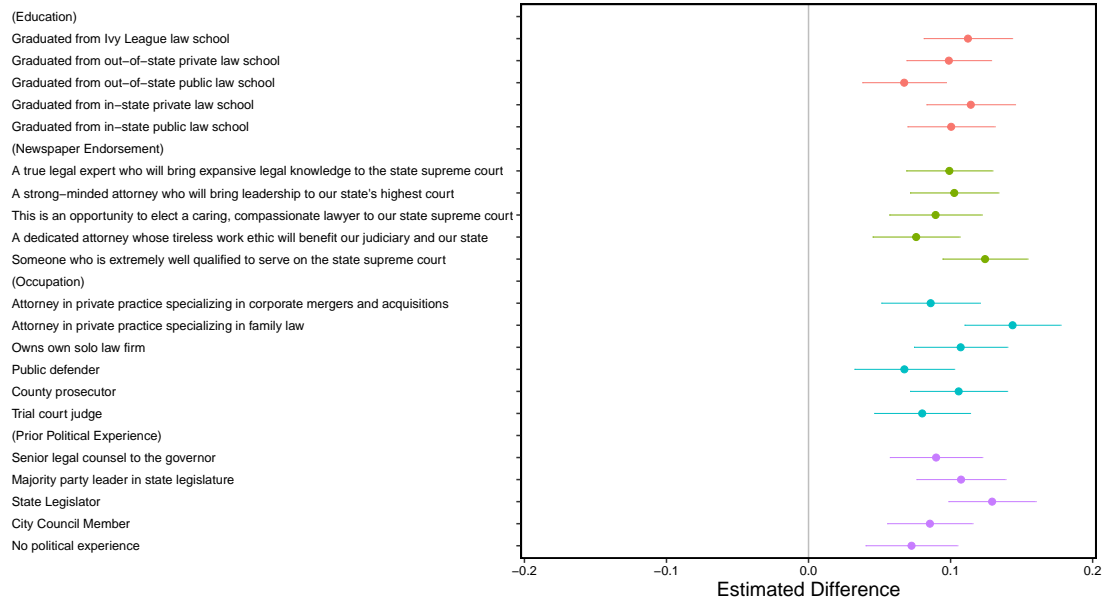


Figure C.3: Difference in Marginal Means, Candidate Rating Outcome.

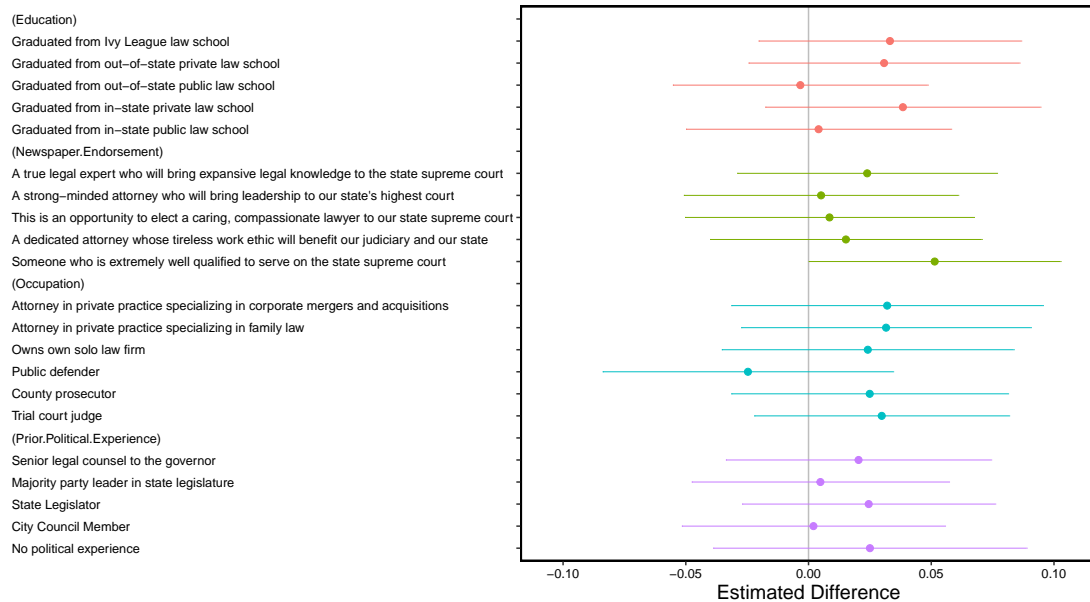


Figure C.4: Difference in Marginal Means, Candidate Rating Outcome.

Tabular Results

Attribute	Estimate	Std. Err	Pr(> z)
Graduated from in-state private law school	-0.02	0.01	0.19
Graduated from out-of-state public law school	-0.05	0.01	0.00
Graduated from out-of-state private law school	-0.05	0.01	0.00
Graduated from Ivy League law school	-0.01	0.01	0.61
Female	0.10	0.01	0.00
A dedicated attorney whose tireless work ethic will benefit our judiciary and our state	-0.01	0.01	0.59
This is an opportunity to elect a caring, compassionate lawyer to our state supreme court	-0.01	0.01	0.24
A strong-minded attorney who will bring leadership to our state's highest court	-0.06	0.01	0.00
A true legal expert who will bring expansive legal knowledge to the state supreme court	0.02	0.01	0.13
County prosecutor	-0.12	0.01	0.00
Public defender	-0.07	0.01	0.00
Owns own solo law firm	-0.18	0.01	0.00
Attorney in private practice specializing in family law	-0.16	0.01	0.00
Attorney in private practice specializing in corporate mergers and acquisitions	-0.25	0.01	0.00
City Council Member	0.12	0.01	0.00
State Legislator	0.20	0.01	0.00
Majority party leader in state legislature	0.16	0.01	0.00
Senior legal counsel to the governor	0.21	0.01	0.00

Table C.1: Estimated Average Marginal Component Effects, Candidate Selection Outcome

Attribute	Estimate	Std. Err	Pr(> z)
Graduated from in-state private law school	-0.00	0.01	0.93
Graduated from out-of-state public law school	-0.03	0.01	0.02
Graduated from out-of-state private law school	-0.02	0.01	0.13
Graduated from Ivy League law school	0.06	0.01	0.00
Female	0.02	0.01	0.10
A dedicated attorney whose tireless work ethic will benefit our judiciary and our state	-0.09	0.02	0.00
This is an opportunity to elect a caring, compassionate lawyer to our state supreme court	-0.14	0.02	0.00
A strong-minded attorney who will bring leadership to our state's highest court	-0.10	0.01	0.00
A true legal expert who will bring expansive legal knowledge to the state supreme court	-0.02	0.01	0.30
County prosecutor	-0.14	0.02	0.00
Public defender	-0.18	0.02	0.00
Owns own solo law firm	-0.19	0.02	0.00
Attorney in private practice specializing in family law	-0.18	0.02	0.00
Attorney in private practice specializing in corporate mergers and acquisitions	-0.23	0.02	0.00
City Council Member	0.40	0.02	0.00
State Legislator	0.51	0.02	0.00
Majority party leader in state legislature	0.52	0.02	0.00
Senior legal counsel to the governor	0.51	0.02	0.00

Table C.2: Estimated Average Marginal Component Effects, Candidate Rating Outcome

Attribute	Estimate	Std. Err	Pr(> z)
Graduated from in-state private law school×Female	0.02	0.02	0.48
Graduated from out-of-state public law school×Female	-0.02	0.02	0.27
Graduated from out-of-state private law school×Female	-0.00	0.02	0.87
Graduated from Ivy League law school×Female	0.02	0.02	0.43
Female×A dedicated attorney whose tireless work ethic will benefit our judiciary and our state	-0.04	0.02	0.04
Female×This is an opportunity to elect a caring, compassionate lawyer to our state supreme court	-0.03	0.02	0.14
Female×A strong-minded attorney who will bring leadership to our state's highest court	-0.02	0.02	0.34
Female×A true legal expert who will bring expansive legal knowledge to the state supreme court	-0.03	0.02	0.25
Female×County prosecutor	0.03	0.02	0.23
Female×Public defender	-0.01	0.02	0.76
Female×Owns own solo law firm	0.03	0.02	0.17
Female×Attorney in private practice specializing in family law	0.07	0.02	0.00
Female×Attorney in private practice specializing in corporate mergers and acquisitions	0.00	0.02	0.84
Female×City Council Member	0.02	0.02	0.33
Female×State Legislator	0.06	0.02	0.01
Female×Majority party leader in state legislature	0.04	0.02	0.07
Female×Senior legal counsel to the governor	0.02	0.02	0.27

Table C.3: Estimated Average Marginal Interaction Effects, Candidate Selection Outcome

Attribute	Estimate	Std. Err	Pr(> z)
Graduated from in-state private law school×Female	0.03	0.03	0.32
Graduated from out-of-state public law school×Female	0.00	0.03	0.89
Graduated from out-of-state private law school×Female	0.02	0.03	0.41
Graduated from Ivy League law school×Female	0.03	0.03	0.25
Female×A dedicated attorney whose tireless work ethic will benefit our judiciary and our state	-0.04	0.03	0.21
Female×This is an opportunity to elect a caring, compassionate lawyer to our state supreme court	-0.05	0.03	0.10
Female×A strong-minded attorney who will bring leadership to our state's highest court	-0.06	0.03	0.04
Female×A true legal expert who will bring expansive legal knowledge to the state supreme court	-0.03	0.03	0.28
Female×County prosecutor	-0.01	0.03	0.84
Female×Public defender	-0.05	0.03	0.12
Female×Owns own solo law firm	0.00	0.03	0.95
Female×Attorney in private practice specializing in family law	0.01	0.03	0.63
Female×Attorney in private practice specializing in corporate mergers and acquisitions	-0.01	0.03	0.85
Female×City Council Member	-0.02	0.03	0.58
Female×State Legislator	-0.00	0.03	0.92
Female×Majority party leader in state legislature	-0.02	0.03	0.59
Female×Senior legal counsel to the governor	0.00	0.03	0.97

Table C.4: Estimated Average Marginal Interaction Effects, Candidate Rating Outcome

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EDUCATION

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ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

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RESEARCH INTERESTS

American Politics: State Politics, Representation, Gender and Politics, Campaigns and Elections, Executive Politics

Political Methodology: Surveys, Experiments, Mixed Methods

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Megan Kennedy. "The Effect of Candidate Gender and Quality in Gubernatorial Elections." Revise and Resubmit.

Erin Heidt-Forsythe, Megan Kennedy, and Michael J. Nelson. "Gender Stereotypes in State Supreme Court Elections." Under Review.

Megan Kennedy, Lee Ann Banaszak, and Erica Dollhopf. "Gendered Paths to Leadership in U.S. Nonprofit Advocacy Organizations." Working Paper.

Rachel Paine Caufield, Alex Freeman, Megan Kennedy, and Michael J. Nelson. "Judging Celebrity." Paper prepared for the Drake University C4 Conference.

Megan Kennedy. "The Effect of Gender-Based Issue Stereotypes in Gubernatorial Elections." Working Paper.