

WE'RE NOT ONLY LADIES. WE ARE POLITICIANS.  
GENDER, ROLE MODELS, AND THE DECISION TO RUN FOR THE U.S. CONGRESS

by

KAREN LESLIE OWEN

(Under the Direction of Charles S. Bullock, III)

ABSTRACT

Traditional elections and gender politics studies focus on women's underrepresentation in collegial bodies and predominately ask why women do not run for political office. The recent electoral seasons in American politics demonstrate women's keen interest and involvement as candidates for executive, legislative, and judicial positions. Political scholars suggest that more women would be politically engaged if they were encouraged and recruited from political insiders, yet none have tested empirically the influence of political role models on females' progressive political ambition, candidate emergence, and electoral outcomes.

Women possess political ambition, albeit in varying degrees, and as such, women run for elective offices. This present study explores women in politics by asking why do women run for higher political offices. Who or what influences a female state legislator to run for the U.S. House and/or the U.S. Senate? Specifically, this dissertation examines the influence of female political role models (i.e. female elected officials – either female U.S. representative, female U.S. senator or female governor) on female state legislators' candidacy decisions and electoral successes.

Evidence from personal interviews with nine congresswomen and forty-two female state legislators reveals the ambitious nature of female politicians, the influence of political actors in their decisions to advance in politics, and their perceived responsibility to be role models to other women. This study tests the theoretical assertion and anecdotal accounts that political role models affect women's candidate decision-calculi and electoral outcomes. The results from logistic regression models estimated on elections data from 1976 to 2010 indicate female state legislators are more likely to run for the U.S. Congress and are more likely to win these seats when they have a female political role model. Interestingly, female members of Congress significantly affect a female state legislator's decision to seek a congressional career. Furthermore, female state legislators are strategic politicians, and their decisions to run for Congress are greatly influenced by the political and contextual environment. This study highlights the importance of women as symbolic representatives; female politicians are instrumental in emboldening a new generation of women to engage in politics and seek congressional careers.

**INDEX WORDS:** Female politicians, female state legislator, political ambition, progressive ambition, political role model, U.S. Congress, congressional elections

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to two individuals who sparked my passion for politics.

In memory of my grandmother, Vera A. Ingram,  
who introduced me to our American political  
system through presidential inaugurations and lively partisan discussions.

In memory of my true friend, Clayton T. Moore,  
who broadened my world view of politics, motivated me to seek  
every political endeavor, and enriched my life through our trusted friendship  
built while interns at the Georgia State Capitol.

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practical notions of the U.S. Congress and the Georgia General Assembly. Dr. Bullock introduced me to the study of political science and opened my eyes to a future career in politics and academia. Initially, he encouraged me to intern at the Georgia General Assembly. I worked with legislators and lobbyists, and somehow, I just knew I would become an influential lobbyist who one day would be called to guest speak in his classes. I had not realized that Dr. Bullock was molding me into a political scholar. He has encouraged each step of my journey in the political field. Dr. Bullock has taught me to be constantly engaged in learning and in asking the significant and meaningful political questions. He has trained me to be disciplined and thorough in all my work and to be mindful of each individual involved in our political environment. Dr. Bullock has been an unfailing supporter, advocate, and mentor. His quiet belief in my potential has kept me advancing through the trenches of graduate school. I pray that I will inspire my students as he has motivated generations of UGA students. Dr. Bullock, you have my utmost respect, and I have enjoyed every moment of working with you. Thank you for everything!

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## CHAPTER 1

### WOMEN'S ASCENSION INTO AMERICAN CONGRESSIONAL POLITICS

Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands...If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies, we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.

*-Abigail Adams writing to her husband, John Adams in 1787<sup>1</sup>*

Since the founding of the United States, many women have vocalized prudently their desires for full citizenship and political rights. These women held that the laws of this new democracy must reflect the represented will of *all* the people and that they were certainly as determinative a force of the consented populace as the men. They were indeed members of the civil and political society not servants to the men in power. By the early 1800s, American women planted roots in the political arena. They organized civic clubs and reformists' organizations and joined political parties attempting to influence men and the public discourse. Nevertheless, women did not become full political participants in the United States until the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Most notably, women received the right to vote "*after they proved themselves to be an important political force*" (Freeman 2000, 3). It is at this juncture that the roles for women in politics undeniably changed. Women were no longer sidelined to traditional roles in society or to the activist's movements and organizational issues, but granted the full power to influence electoral politics. Women were emerging as equal partners in the American democracy; and as such, women began their ascent into public life.

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<sup>1</sup> Quote is from Carol Berkin et al. 1995. *American Voices: A History of the United States*. Glenview, Illinois: Scott Foresman & Company, 128-129.

Ambitious women in several western states began to seek local and state elective office even before they were nationally recognized with the right to vote. Moreover, by the 1930s, numerous women had sought seats in the U.S. Congress, and twenty-eight had been successful in their electoral bids.<sup>2</sup> What motivated these pioneering women to seek political change through representative bodies? Why would these women become actively engaged and interested in representing the people's interests through elected office? Furthermore, these early female activists and officials blazed the political course becoming leaders and role models to future generations of young girls. It is because of these early women's trials, errors, and successes that today's women see government as an instrument to represent ideas, serve justice, and affect change.

The last twenty years in electoral politics have provided conclusive evidence that there is a new era for women in politics. Ascension to highly prestigious political office in the United States and public service are now more attainable. The recent electoral seasons witnessed a female Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, two female presidential candidates, a female Republican vice-presidential nominee and numerous women holding governorships, congressional seats, and state and local offices. These female candidacies illustrate that millions of cracks are being made into the political glass ceiling, and that each woman previously elected or running for elective office provides an exemplary role model to ambitious women and girls. They symbolize that women can aspire, run, and challenge the male-dominated political world. Their attempts and efforts reveal that significant gains are being made, and more women are choosing public service through the American electoral system.

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<sup>2</sup> The first two women elected to the U.S. Congress were Jeanette Rankin (1917 to the U.S. House of Representatives) and Hattie Caraway (1931 to the U.S. Senate).

Progress into positions of political power has been slow, and women still comprise a small proportion of elective offices. Nonetheless, “female candidates have become more successful in the political arena as their roles in society have expanded” (Hernson, Lay, and Stokes 2003). Throughout U.S. history, only 277 women have served as either a U.S. representative or U.S. senator (Women in Congress 2012). Women now comprise 16.8% of the U.S. House of Representatives, and they hold 17 seats in the U.S. Senate. Additionally at the state level, six women serve as governor, nine serve as mayor in one of the 100 largest cities, and nearly 24% of all state legislators are women (Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) 2012).

It is not surprising, then, that much of the political scholarly and journalistic attention not only focuses upon women’s increasing electoral opportunities and successes, but also on the relative paucity of women elected to the U.S. Congress and many other representative bodies. Researchers have attempted to explain the lack of female candidates and elected officials as well as the effects that gender plays in candidate recruitment, emergence, and elections. These authors have examined structural barriers, women’s traditional societal roles, women’s political ambition, and the feminist movement. However, very few scholars have examined empirically female elected officials who have decided to advance their political careers and run for higher public office (see, e.g., Palmer and Simon 2003; Maestas, Fulton, Maisel, and Stone 2006; Fulton, Maestas, Maisel and Stone 2006). Missing from the current political debate are strong and sufficient explanations and predictions of the conditions that affect women’s efforts to climb the political ladder and whether their electoral attempts are successful. Furthermore, there is considerably less research focused on understanding the effects that political role models have

upon women's direct political participation, and in particular, their candidacies for elective office and electoral successes.

This dissertation evaluates why American women run for political office. This research suggests that political role models, identified as publically elected officials and/or those who have served in the political arena, have greatly motivated women to seek political office. This study argues that women, and more specifically female state legislators, are more likely to run for higher political office when they have witnessed another female achieve political acceptance by the electorate of a congressional district, the state, or national office. These political and even familial public role models influence the ambition and motivations of women to seek political office. I will examine this theoretical assertion of the influence of political role models on female candidate emergence and electoral successes to higher public office through historical and quantitative analyses and case studies of elected women who decided to run for the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate.

A closer assessment of these women who seek and run for elective office will provide valuable insight into the descriptive and predictive evaluations of congressional and statewide elections and outcomes. Moreover, what motivates women to run for higher political office and the conditions necessary for a successful electoral outcome have substantial implications for our understanding of women's strategic and representative role in politics.

Political scientists, feminist theorists, and other activists advocate descriptive representation for women. These advocates argue that increasing the number of women in the political system affords a variety of benefits. Having more females in collegial bodies tends to lead to different policy debates and different policy outcomes. Furthermore, scholars have found

that as the number of women officeholders increases women and women's issues receive greater representation (Burrell 1994; Saint-Germain 1989; Swers 2002; Thomas 1994).

However important it is to have women descriptively and substantively represent each other and female interests, it is significantly imperative that we further our understanding of the role of women as symbolic representatives. Women candidates signal a greater openness in the system and demonstrate access to political opportunities. Furthermore, "women candidates can also serve as role models or symbolic mentors to women in the public, sending the signal that politics is no longer an exclusive man's world and that female participation is an important and valued act" (Dolan 2006). Increased representation of women can affirm to others in this group that females are capable of governing and they can serve to connect these female group members to the polity (Mansbridge 1999). These indicators evidenced by the presence of female officeholders and candidates can, in turn, engage and stimulate political participation by women. But perhaps, it is not only an incentive to women citizens; the symbolic representation of women in higher office (acting as role models) influences the future candidacies and electoral prospects for women currently engaged and holding lower elective office.

### **Strategic Decision-Making for Candidacy**

Elections scholars have contributed a rich literature to the understanding of how political ambition and electoral incentives affect the strategic considerations of potential candidates to seek political office. Joseph Schlesinger (1966) pioneered the political ambition field showing that electoral advancement was a product of a goal-oriented behavior, party competition, and the political opportunity structure. He drew distinctions between discrete, static, and progressive ambition; each reflecting the career ladder or opportunity structure for ambitious politicians

within the U.S. electoral system. Later political researchers would recast this original depiction of ambition into a rational-choice framework. For example, Black (1972) posits that individuals consider whether to run for higher office by weighing the benefit of attaining the office, discounted by the probability of obtaining the office and the costs required to run a campaign. David Rohde (1979) contributed to our understanding of office seeking. His analysis of members of the U.S. House of Representatives considering a run for higher office demonstrates a precise calculation whereby they weighed the risks, the probability of success, and the relative benefits of service in the U.S. House compared to a higher office.

Most traditional studies of candidate emergence analyzing ambition have focused extensively on progressive ambition: asking under what conditions would a member of the U.S. House of Representatives run for the U.S. Senate, a state legislator run for the U.S. Congress or when would a U.S. senator seek the office of president (Rohde 1979; Brace 1984; Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde 1987; Maestas, Fulton, Maisel and Stone 2006; Wanless 2011). However, very little of this research considers the actual development of ambition, the distinctions in ambition at differing levels of political office or the differences in the strategic calculation between men and women when considering a run for elective office or higher political office. In addition, most political researchers have centered their inquiries on modern elections and the strategic calculi of recent and current officeholders and office seekers.

Nevertheless, political interests, political ambition, and the desire for elective office have not been bound by time or by gender. Some recent scholarship has redirected the American elections subfield to evaluate the substantive differences between male and female candidates and officeholders as well as their ambitions and strategic decision-calculi for campaigning and representing. It is well documented that when women run for Congress they win at the same

rates as their male counterparts. Yet, there are continued efforts to explain the lack of female candidates and female elected officials. Researchers seek to understand why women do not run for public office. Some earlier works attributed women's exclusion from the political environment to discrimination and overt bias against women office seekers (Githens and Prestage 1977; Kirkpatrick 1974; Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1994). However, in contemporary congressional elections, when one controls for incumbency and district demographics, women face no systematic bias at the polls (Carroll 1994; Cook 1998; Duerst-Lahti 1998; Fox 2000; Seltzer, Newman and Leighton 1997; Smith and Fox 2001; NWPC 1994).

Indeed, many contend that structural barriers and lower levels of political ambition contribute to the greater disparities in candidate emergence and the composition of the U.S. political institutions (Carroll 1994; Darcy and Choike 1986; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Thomas and Wilcox 1998; Fox and Lawless 2004). Lawless and Fox (2005) argue that the literature on ambition theory largely ignores the role of gender on candidate emergence. They write, "gender exerts one of the strongest influences on who ultimately launches a political career" (Lawless and Fox 2005, 2). These authors contend that candidate emergence is a two-stage process where differences exist between men and women in each of these stages (ambition and emergence). Lawless and Fox (2005) find that women are more risk-averse and feel less qualified to run for office, and they conclude traditional gender socialization accounts for this gender gap.

In addition, several scholars examine the ambition, assumption of risk-taking, and whether there are gender differences in state legislators seeking election to the U.S. House of Representatives. The costs and benefits of running for and holding higher office affect the ambitions of state legislators, yet these calculated utilities do not influence the decision to run for

office (Maestas, Fulton, Maisel and Stone 2006). Moreover, female state legislators display lower ambition for higher office, yet they are just as likely as their male counterparts to seek a position in Congress. If women are less ambitious, why would they still seek a congressional seat? Research demonstrates that women are responsive to the “expected benefit of the office;” therefore, they are more sensitive to the strategic opportunities and considerations concerning a run for higher political office (Fulton, Maestas, Maisel and Stone 2006, 235).

Furthermore, it appears that female politicians behave like male politicians. That is, women employ a political decision calculus similar to men when considering a run for elective office. Women are as likely as men to weigh and account for their ambitions along with the opportunity structure available within the political environment (Palmer and Simon 2006). Female U.S. House incumbents have exhibited progressive ambition, strategically deciding to enter a senatorial contest when the probability of winning and the value of the office are high as well as when the costs of running are low. Therefore, women do respond to similar strategic forces as their male colleagues (Palmer and Simon 2003).

Although women may be just as deliberative and strategic as men when considering whether to seek a political position, the routes to elective office which each sex has taken have varied greatly in the past. A few political scientists and historians in the midst of the political movements in the late 1960s turned their attention to women’s past roles in politics to understand the nature of women serving in office and whether links could be drawn to the mechanisms urging the rise of the feminists’ arguments for equal political rights. These scholars examined descriptively the first women who served in the U.S. Congress, analyzing their biographies to assess their personal characteristics and experiences before, during, and after serving in this representative institution (Werner 1966; Bullock and Heys 1972; Darcy and Schramm 1977;



Fowler 1996). Moreover, several scholars examined the theory of the “widow succession” in explaining the rise of women in Congress (Kincaid 1978; Tolchin and Tolchin 1973; Gertzog 1980; Bledsoe and Herring 1990). These studies argued convincingly that the important route for women to enter Congress is through some familial connection or the replacement of a deceased husband (Kincaid 1978; Solowiej and Brunell 2003; Maltzman, Sigelman and Binder 1996; and Wuffle, Brunell, and Koetzle 1997). As one author states, “...for women aspiring to serve in Congress, the best husband has been a dead husband” (Kincaid 1978).

Conversely, Freeman (2000) documents how women became involved politically by stepping into the “political house, one room at a time.” Women began their political service in many nonpartisan groups before later joining political parties. These new political and civic associations spurred significant political interest in women, and many women saw electoral office as the next step to more engaged participation in the process (Freeman 2000). These researchers offer solid descriptions of the first generation of women in Congress, specifically noting a “widow effect,” the importance of a familial connection to politics, and the effect of gender in these earliest electoral contests. However, these works regrettably provide little to no evidence of how and why these pioneering women decided to run for elective office. What motivated these women, many of whom had succeeded their deceased husbands, to participate in politics and seek elective office? In addition, these works offer no insights into the modern post-feminist era to evaluate whether conditions and motivations for women have changed.<sup>3</sup> Are women’s decisions for political participation different or are certain connections and symbols pertinent to a woman’s decision-calculus for political office?

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<sup>3</sup> For an exception, see Barbara Palmer and Dennis Simon. 2003. “Political Ambition and Women in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1916-2000.” *Political Research Quarterly* 56 (2): 127-138. However, these scholars focus on the conditions that manifest different distinctions in ambition in female members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Moreover, there is an increasing literature examining gender differences in the encouragement to participate in politics and the recruitment of candidates to elective office. Although many people who run for office are self-starters, others, including numerous women, are recruited to run. Yet, Lawless and Fox (2005) find potential women candidates receive less encouragement from party leaders and other elected officials to run for office. A few scholars note that women were recruited by party leaders and activists to run only as the “sacrificial lambs,” offered for defeat in districts safely held by an incumbent or the opposing party (Deber 1982; Thomas 2005). Perhaps the reason more women do not run for office is that they lack relationships with the influential local and state party gatekeepers. Through six state case studies, interviewing party and elected leaders, Kira Sanbonmatsu (2006b) examines the role that parties have in shaping who runs for the state legislature. She finds that parties are consequential for who runs, and many state party leaders see women as not yet qualified to be candidates or that these women cannot possibly win an election in certain state districts.

The scholarly consensus is that more women would seek elective office if they were encouraged to run by either their party or other elected officials. Recruitment by politicians and encouragement to seek elective office from family as well as other political leaders play significantly into the decision-calculi of potential office seekers (see, e.g., Rule 1981; Carroll and Sanbonmatsu 2009). Do these potential candidates have the sponsorship and backing of those in their political community? This encouraged recruitment lends legitimacy to the office seeker’s candidacy and further shapes her ambitions and motivations.

## **The Candidate Achieving Electoral Success**

Several of the factors associated with whether an individual decides to run for elected office can influence the likelihood of success in her electoral contest. Success in elections depends upon key components: the candidate, political support and encouragement, the campaign organization and expertise of workers, fundraising, state or national contextual factors, and the electoral and structural environment at the timing of the election. Paul Herrnson (2008) writes, “Candidates need to achieve several interrelated objectives to compete successfully in an election, including raising money, formulating a strategy, and communicating with and mobilizing voters” (72). The means to achieve an electoral victory are no different for men or women.

Scholars have addressed specific factors that affect the electoral outcomes in state and congressional elections. Politicians and potential challengers strategize about when the opportune moment and environment exist for electoral success. Quality challengers (those with previous elective experience) are selective when they run for office, evaluating the district competitiveness and the current legislator’s behavior in the collegial body (Jacobson 1989; Carson 2005). Potential office seekers fare much better when they run for open seats as opposed to challenging incumbents (Gaddie and Bullock 2000; and for a specific discussion of women’s success, see Burrell 1994; Dolan 2006; Fox 2006; Palmer and Simon 2001). Similarly, potential candidates are keenly aware that incumbents hold a distinct advantage in their reelection attempts. It is argued that the incumbency advantage affects the slow rate of change in the U.S. Congress and many state legislatures; also, it plagues the growth of women in elective office. Palmer and Simon (2006) contend that within the United States there are “woman-friendly and woman-unfriendly congressional districts” (136). It is in these “woman-friendly” districts –

mostly urban, diverse, liberal, and educated districts where women find electoral success. These districts offer the best opportunities for women to make inroads into the U.S. Congress and affect the diversity of the institution. Therefore, any potential candidate for office will position herself astutely in the best district and contextual environment.

Strategic planning and the contextual environment alone cannot garner electoral success. Campaign resources, including the organization, staff experience, and finances are all particularly salient to candidate success. Running for office requires candidates to build a campaign organization to reach voters with their particular messages. An effective campaign organization usually involves the solicitation of experienced staff who can connect to an established network of community, party and other elected leaders and can develop the plans to target likely voters (Herrnson 2008). Additionally, money is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for winning an electoral contest. Successful campaigns increasingly rely upon well-conditioned and productive fundraising machines (Jacobson 1978; Green and Krasno 1988; Herrnson 2008). Candidates are also likely to position themselves closely to well-established donor groups (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Uhlaner and Scholzman 1986, Francia et al. 2003; Herrnson 2008; Crespín and Deitz 2010). Utilizing these campaign resources effectively can mobilize the office seeker's likely voters and translate into a successful electoral outcome.

Electoral victories are not elusive to female candidates. Women have proven their effectiveness in campaigning, reaching out to voters, and ensuring the opportunity to represent their constituents' interests as well as other women's interests in the halls of collegial bodies. As women have achieved electoral success, they have become representatives of political success and political leadership. Their work symbolizes active engagement in the political system.

These women have become the political role models for other female citizens and elected officials.

### **Encouragement by Political Role Models**

There are thousands of women who are inspired to serve; and therefore, they condition themselves to the challenge of seeking elective office. Some scholars have asked: who decides to run? Why do women not seek elective office? When do women decide to run for the state legislature or for Congress? And under what conditions are these decisions considered and manifested? (Burrell 1994; Darcy, Welch and Clark 1994; Dolan 2006; Lawless and Fox 2005; Fox 2003). Women who have successfully campaigned for local or state office exhibit political interest and ambition, and many of these women aspire for advancement in their political career. Most likely these women officeholders have received support and encouragement from family, political friends and activists, and party leaders and officials. Nonetheless, descriptive and symbolic representation of other women in office might motivate greater political ambition and elicit new considerations in the decision-calculi of female office seekers.

Numerous researchers have examined the impact of female candidates and female politicians (alluding to the presentation of female political role models) on the political interests, attitudes, and participation of young girls and women. Some have studied the impact these female role models have on female citizens' perceptions of government, its responsiveness, and the electoral system (MacManus 1981; Cook 1998). Their evidence finds that female political leaders (whether candidates or officeholders) have a positive and significant impact on the political engagement and efficacy of adolescent girls and female citizens (Burns, Scholzman, and

Verba 2001; Atkeson 2003; Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006; Atkeson and Carrillo 2007; Koch 1997).

Furthermore, Wolbrecht and Campbell (2007) analyze a cross-national survey investigating whether female politicians serving as political role models foster political activity in girls and older women. These authors find that female members of Parliament affect the political discourse of other women. When there are more female members of Parliament or more women in elective office, girls and women are more likely to discuss politics and participate politically through boycotting, demonstrating, or joining political groups (Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007). Importantly, female citizens are inspired and motivated toward involvement in the political arena when they witness the representativeness of female political role models. Even limited research indicates that women who hold elective office symbolize to female office seekers that the political environment is ready for increased female representation. However, these works reveal that women are more prone to challenge each other for elective office (Ondercin and Welch 2005; Palmer and Simon 2005; MacManus, Bullock, DePalo, and Ivey 2011). Nevertheless, these studies do not fully explain the “why”: why do women seek political office and once elected, display progressive ambition? But most importantly, the current political inquiry into the influence of female political role models and the encouragement that they can provide to other women fails to explain whether these symbolic representatives affect the decision-calculi, candidacies, and electoral outcomes of other women already serving and actively engaged in politics.

## **A Theory of Female Candidate Emergence and Electoral Success**

This detailed body of literature espouses significant findings related to political ambition, the conditions under which potential office seekers emerge to run for office, the important components influential in an electoral victory, and the differences men and women face in the U.S. political sphere. Many of these ideas can be reconciled into a theory that clarifies the changing nature of women's decisions to seek elective office, specifically higher office and how they can achieve electoral success. Numerous women are drawn to service, and they find that the political arena offers them the opportunity to serve others and represent great change. Yet, most of the political discussion has centered on why women do not run for office. But, since the mid-1800s, women have eagerly sought political offices. Therefore, this dissertation offers insight into the question of why women run for elective office. Is it political ambition, party recruitment, the beneficial electoral environment or the symbolic and perhaps personal influence of political role models that affects a female's candidacy decision and her electoral outcome?

Building upon the vast political scholarship on candidate emergence, candidate recruitment, electoral outcomes, and the influences of political role models,<sup>4</sup> this study suggests that the motivating factors that influence a woman's candidate decision-calculus and her electoral outcome have changed throughout the course of American politics and the emergence of women's equal political rights. Moreover, I argue that women are rational and ambitious actors within the political arena, and therefore, are fundamentally strategic in their decisions to run for any elective office, and most particularly for higher office. In addition, this research

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<sup>4</sup> Specifically, see Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox. 2005. *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press. Kira Sanbonmatsu 2006b. *Where Women Run: Gender and Party in the American States*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Christina Wolbrecht and David E. Campbell. 2007. "Leading by Example: Female Members of Parliament as Political Role Models." *American Journal of Political Science* 51(4): 921-939. Barbara Palmer and Dennis Simon. 2003. "Political Ambition and Women in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1916-2000." *Political Research Quarterly* 56 (2): 127-138.

suggests that the influence of political role models encourages women to seek elective office. These political role models are not static representatives within the political environment. Political role models for women perhaps began as familial connections and male sponsorships; but, have grown to encompass the female political role models that emerged when women became officeholders and leaders.

Involvement in civil society is a key factor in the development of women's political associations and interests in the representative forum offered by public service. But, for many women, a family or marital connection within politics opened the door of political interest and activity (Werner 1966; Gertzog 1980). Having family entrenched in the political parties, a political office, and the political culture provided women access, acceptance, and name recognition. These women witnessed the necessary work involved to court party and activists' gatekeepers for support and resources; also, they learned how best to reach and serve an electorate.

Furthermore, women who had husbands serving as state legislators or congressmen often worked on their campaigns or served as advisors and sometimes their personal secretaries (see, e.g., Solowiej and Brunell 2003; Wasniewski 2007). For many women, this inside view of politics and public service created a distinct political ambition and a call to political service. Some women even became the "placeholder" of their deceased husband's legislative seat (Solowiej and Brunell 2003; Maltzman, Sigelman and Binder 1996; Wuffle, Brunell and Koetzle 1997). This "widow succession" reduced risk, increased a woman's name recognition, and also fostered ambition and the desire to carry forth certain policy initiatives. Therefore, I argue their close associations with political actors motivated these first women to seek political office. These pioneering women sought state and particularly national office when they witnessed a



family member or family associate serve in public office, succeeded their deceased spouses, or were encouraged to run by these family members. Many of these pioneering women won elective office due to these familial connections and support. These first women established a political foundation from which they could lead in public policy and encourage other ambitious women to seek elective positions.

Women still are strongly influenced and motivated by their familial associations and networks within the body politic. This study suggests that these influences have changed over time, not diminishing entirely, but lessening with the emergence of more successful women candidates and officeholders. Since the feminist movement and the advocacy of the Equal Rights Amendment, women have dramatically changed their roles in society. Women are increasingly cracking the glass ceilings in education, business, and in politics. More women have been elected to local and state offices, and there is an increase in the number of women seeking and serving in the national legislative, executive, and judicial branches. These women symbolize a greater political acceptance and a political will to be actively involved. Those who have achieved electoral success at any level of government serve as political role models to other women and especially adolescent girls. This research proposes that over time these female political role models have legitimized the work in the political sphere and have stimulated interest in the role of representative democracy.

Because of their representation, female political role models not only influence women's political activism, but they affect a woman's decision to seek and run for public office. Witnessing these women campaign and win elective office encourages other women to participate in politics, and it symbolizes an acceptance of women in higher public office. I argue that female political role models have a profound effect on those women currently serving in

lower levels of government. This study suggests that a female state legislator is more likely to run for higher political office (U.S. House of Representatives and/or the U.S. Senate) after she witnesses a woman achieve electoral success. Specifically, these female state legislators' progressive ambition, emergence decisions, and electoral outcomes are affected by the presence of a female political role model (governor, U.S. representative or U.S. senator) from their respective state. These female political role models can stimulate a stronger desire for service as well as somewhat affect the contextual environment, voters' perceptions, and resources available for ambitious political women in their electoral contests. This study argues that political role models can contribute to some of the factors associated with a successful electoral bid.

### **Scope and Plan of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is concerned with the changing nature and effects that political role models have on candidate emergence decisions and electoral successes of politically engaged and progressively ambitious women. Specifically, this research analyzes the decisions and electoral outcomes of women who seek higher political office (U.S. House of Representatives and/or U.S. Senate). This study identifies potential female office seekers and female officeholders who weighed the costs and benefits to run for higher political office. As such, several different methodologies, an assessment including women in all fifty states, and a substantial time frame are utilized to understand why women run for political office and what motivates (principally the personal and symbolic influence of political relationships and political role models) their desires to climb the political ladder.

The analysis covers the period 1976 to 2010 to examine the effects after the women's cultural and political movement and before and after the 1992 "Year of the Woman" elections.

This expansive time horizon allows for the investigation of how women's motivations within their decision calculi for seeking elective office and the conditions and opportunities for electoral successes have changed. Likewise, this study will cover all the fifty states to capture variation amongst each state's recognition and acceptance of women in society and their activism within the political environment.

This research involves both qualitative and quantitative analyses. I conduct personal interviews with current and former state legislators and U.S. Congresswomen to understand their unique decisions for running and serving in elective offices. These in-depth discussions reveal fascinating and generalizable findings about women's political ambition and their motivations for advancing their political careers. These interviews with female elected officials highlight the distinctive role that family relationships and female political role models have had on their decisions to seek public office and their successes or failures at the ballot box.

In addition, I employ multiple regression analysis to estimate several models in order to assess female candidate emergence and electoral success and to confirm the female politicians' anecdotal accounts. For the different models, the dependent variables employed are female emergence to a higher political office and female electoral success for higher political office. Furthermore, the key explanatory variable in the models is the presence of female political role models. Some specific control variables include the female official's partisanship, prior electoral experience, district competitiveness – an open seat versus incumbent/contested race, the partisanship of both the congressional district and state, the state legislature's professionalism, campaign resources, whether there was a special election, and whether the state has term limits for its legislators.

The following is a brief description of the chapters in the dissertation. The subsequent chapters advance these theoretical assertions in greater detail, propose the research design to test the claims of my arguments, present the results for the empirical analysis and relate the implications of these findings for women in politics, strategic candidate decision-making, electoral behavior, and representation in the United States political system.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature that defines the conditions and contexts employed when potential office seekers decide whether to seek political office, as well as the scholarship on electoral successes and the influential positions of political role models. Building upon this literature in chapter 3, I lay out my theoretical argument regarding the influential role of political role models on female candidate emergence and electoral successes. I discuss the research design to test this theoretical assertion. Chapter 4 describes the personal motivations and political journeys of successful women who have run for or serve in the U.S. Congress. This chapter specifically details how these women advanced from state to national office and the influence that political leaders and female political role models had in shaping their political ambition and decisions to run for the U.S. House or U.S. Senate. Having this understanding about the first ambitions of women to serve in local office and at the state level provides leverage to the theoretical argument concerning female progressive ambition and the influence of female political role models on certain female state officials' decisions to advance their careers and climb the political ladder. Chapter 5 reports the empirical results from the regression analyses used to estimate and predict whether female political role models affect a female state legislator's (from any state) decision to run for the U.S. House of Representatives and if these role models affect her success in the electoral contest. In Chapter 6, I detail the results of women's emergence to the U.S. Senate. Since very few state legislators run directly from their

state positions for a U.S. Senate seat, I evaluate the effects that female political role models have on female state legislators as well as the motivating factors for women in the U.S. House of Representatives to advance their political careers to the Senate. The final chapter provides concluding thoughts on the empirical findings and discusses the implications regarding the descriptive and substantive representation that women in politics afford to the U.S. polity.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE FOR WOMEN'S ASCENSION

There are now no limitations upon the ambitions of women. They can be elected or appointed to any office in the land.

*-Rebecca Latimer Felton (D-GA) on her appointment to the U.S. Senate in 1922*

Full democracy is when everyone is at the policy table. There are no barriers or exclusions for women. Democracy is transformative when everyone, that is, *everyone*, has access to government and its positions.

*-Female State Senator, 2011*

The general advancements articulated in the women and politics literature concern women's underrepresentation in representative democracy as well as the relative elucidations of how women can best be encouraged and motivated to engage in the political system. Scholars justify the subfield's study with these normative arguments for the need of more women representatives. Many passionately argue the presence of females on collegial bodies affects issues, government legitimacy, and quality representation via descriptive and/or substantive effects. These authors systematically examine the causes by which women are underrepresented in politics. Discrimination, overt electoral bias, traditional societal roles, and self-doubt affect the paucity of women elected to political office (Burrell 1994; Thomas 1994; Saint-Germain 1989; Swers 2002; Lawless and Fox 2005). However, if women decide to run, they are as successful as men, and the American electorate is becoming more receptive and favorable of women candidates (Kirkpatrick 1974; Witt, Paget and Matthews 1994; Carroll 1994; Darcy,

Welch and Clark 1994; Gaddie and Bullock 1995; Thomas and Wilcox 1998; Fox and Lawless 2004; Reingold 2008).

Ideally, we desire a citizenry (men and women) to be actively engaged in the national political discourse, fully participating, confident and trustful of the government and its policies. This requires individuals to feel connected to those whom they have elected and to those delivering governmental services.<sup>5</sup> Legitimate and effective representation necessitates that the governing officials reflect and respond to the governed populace. Therefore, political scientists and democratic theorists examine carefully elected officials in order to understand fully the role that gender, race, and other demographic characteristics play in the quality of representation by those serving in our government (Pitkin 1967; Grofman 1982; Dodson 1991; Mansbridge 1999; Dovi 2002; Sanbonmatsu 2003; Dolan 2006).

Notably, the political science discipline attempts to present a more precise meaning of representation and the value espoused by those elected to serve. Hanna Pitkin (1967) offers, perhaps, the most useful conception of representation. She distinguishes between descriptive representation and substantive representation. Descriptive representation is a shared connection of demographic characteristics of representatives with those of their constituents, and substantive representation is a shared connection between the representatives' interests and goals and those of their constituents (Pitkin 1967; see, also, Weissberg 1978; Swain 2006). Thus, elected

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<sup>5</sup> A more complete discussion of the quality of representation involves the implementation and provision of governmental resources and services. This literature references "representative bureaucracy." For analyses, see Frederick Mosher. 1982. *Democracy and the Public Service*. New York: Oxford University Press. Sally Coleman Selden. 1997. *The Promise of Representative Bureaucracy: Diversity and Responsiveness in a Government Agency*. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe. John J. Hinder. 1993. "Representative Bureaucracy: Imprimis Evidence of Active Representation in the EEOC District Office." *Social Science Quarterly* 74 (March): 95-108. Kenneth J. Meier and J. Stewart. 1992. "Active Representation in Education Bureaucracies: Policy Impacts." *American Review of Public Administration* 22: 157-171. Kenneth J. Meier, Robert D. Wrinkle, and J.L. Polinard. 1989. *Race, Class, and Education*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. Lael R. Keiser, Vicky M. Wilkins, Kenneth J. Meier, and Catherine A. Holland. 2002. "Lipstick and Logarithms: Gender, Institutional Context, and Representative Bureaucracy." *American Political Science Review* 96 (3): 553-564.

officials “stand for” those similarly identifiable constituents, and/or these representatives “act for” their constituents through shared views and goals of public policy.

Therefore, researchers emphasize the importance of increasing the numbers of women and minorities in governmental institutions. More women serving in Congress and other legislatures enhance descriptive representation for all women. Women now see others like them; that is other women “standing for them” in positions of power and influence. Moreover, these female politicians are given the duty to represent substantively the needs and interests of women as a whole. Furthermore, the emergence of women in active politics, offering fresh perspectives and serving constituents and new interests, attempts to rectify a representative democracy incomplete in its access to every individual. Descriptive representation and substantive representation are invariably important. Men, women, and minorities serving in positions of political influence affect other’s perceptions of politics and policies, and their quality representation affects political participation as well as offers role models.

Because men and women are biologically and culturally different humans, it is assumed their representation in the political environment differs. Most of the current empirical research involving political representation focuses upon the different styles and issues men and women bring to the legislative arena. Female politicians possess a distinctive orientation in their political perspectives and policy positions. Scholarly evidence reveals that female legislators tend to be more liberal than men and more supportive of women’s issues such as family values, child care, health care, and education (Diamond 1977; Dodson and Carroll 1991; Dodson 1998; Thomas 1990; Carey, Niemi and Powell 1998; Poggione 2004; Epstein, Niemi and Powell 2005). Additionally, women in their representational roles focus more on constituency service. Women report that they invest more energy in their constituency work than men, and that they are more



attentive to women in their districts and throughout the nation (i.e. descriptive and substantive representation) (Thomas 1992; Richardson and Freeman 1995; Carey, Niemi and Powell 1998; Reingold 2000; Carroll 1994; Epstein, Niemi and Powell 2005).

Furthermore, Anzia and Berry (2011) contend that “sex-based selection” – the process of selection into elective office – is different for women than it is for men, resulting in differing legislative performances between men and women. They argue sex-based differences in candidate emergence decisions and electoral consequences force women who run and are elected to political office to be more effective legislators than their male colleagues. Examining U.S. House members’ representative roles through delivering federal appropriations to their districts and their legislative activities through bill sponsorship and co-sponsorship, these coauthors find that women do outperform the male representatives on these particular measures (2011, 490).

However, due to the greater percentage of women occupying state legislative seats, researchers focus much more attention on these women’s legislative and representative roles. For example, Epstein and coauthors (2005) examine the differences in legislating between male and female state legislators. Through survey analyses, these authors find that female state legislators are more professionalized than men in their perceptions of their careers and their behavior in office. Importantly, they show that “women state legislators spend more time communicating with their constituents, negotiating with other legislators to build coalitions, and studying legislative proposals” (Epstein et al 2005, 94). Moreover, recent studies reveal that women legislators are more likely than men to specialize in policy areas and within committees. Women legislators conceptualize public policy problems more broadly and therefore seek different types of solutions (Thomas and Wilcox 2005; Epstein, Niemi and Powell 2005; Kathleen 2005).

Nonetheless, political scientists are intrigued by the roles and behaviors of women at each level of government. For women to utilize their ideological proclivities and issue positions, they must be active and fully engaged at every stage of the legislative process. Studies suggest that women at both the state and federal levels are full participants in legislating. Female legislators are as active as men in bill introduction, committee work, legislative bargaining, and floor speeches (Blair and Stanley 1991; Friedman 1996; Thomas 1994; Norton 1995; Tamerius 1995; Dolan and Ford 1998; Shogan 2001; Wolbrecht 2002; Swers 2002).

The academic evidence demonstrates men and women are indeed different legislators, offering different representative styles and participating in the process with distinctive perspectives. And, this current study espouses that this comprehension of the representative nature of women, women as descriptive and substantive representatives, is valued for our complete understanding of the American political process and the development of critical solutions in public policy. Building within this framework of the need for more women and their unique representative qualities for campaigning, legislating, and mentoring, I contend it is essential that we further our knowledge of the role women play as symbolic representatives. National female political figures serve as role models to other women, serving at the state and local levels, and they are role models for a future generation of women interested in politics. Women have had a gradual ascension into politics, and through their electoral motivations, opportunities and successes, we are able to discern a more complete assessment of women as representatives and as effective change leaders. Therefore, which routes did women take to engage in the political sphere? How have women made in-roads in politics and affected descriptive and substantive representation? Moreover, how have the successes of women in political office affected potential office seekers and the elections of other women?

## **The Routes by which Women Enter Electoral Politics**

### ***The First Paths for Women into Politics***

Advances by women in electoral politics are both extraordinary and fundamentally important. Extraordinary because for the first time significant numbers of women seem confident about achieving success in the political arena, and they have attempted to break the stereotype of politics as the “man’s dominion.” Fundamentally, women’s success is important to governing participation and representation because “politics is the lifeblood of the system under which our society operates as a collective entity” (Mandel 1981, 4).

In 1866, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, although not eligible to vote, decided to run for the U.S. House of Representatives. She ran as an Independent from New York and received twenty-four of 12,000 votes. Her electoral attempt for Congress was unsuccessful, but it did provide an impetus for women to become more politically involved, encouraging them to seek their suffrage rights and to affect governmental affairs. Women throughout the nation began to work fervently for political organizations and the minor political parties, and many sought political office at the local and state levels. Several of the western states granted suffrage to women by 1890, and this fostered political women. In 1887, Kansas granted women the right to vote in municipal elections and soon thereafter, the voters elected a woman for mayor. Furthermore, in 1894, three women were elected to the Colorado state legislature. Nevertheless, the election of a woman to the U.S. Congress would not occur until 1917 with the victory of Jeanette Rankin from Montana. It was not until 1922 that a woman served in the U.S. Senate. Rebecca Latimer Felton was appointed and served for only two days. However, in 1931 Hattie Wyatt Caraway was appointed to succeed her late husband, and then subsequently became the first woman ever elected to this chamber (CAWP 2012).

With the political movements of the 1960s, especially the rise of feminists protesting for equal rights, a few political scientists and historians focused on women's past roles in politics. Werner (1966) examines the first women who served in the U.S. Congress. She uses biographical data to assess the experiences of these women once they were serving and to understand what they did after they left the chamber. Werner (1966) finds that a majority of the early congresswomen graduated from college and worked as teachers, lawyers, and writers (1966, 21-23). Many of these pioneering women who ran for elective offices were married, enthusiastic world travelers, and were from the middle and upper stratum of society. They pursued electoral office after working in a profession and after their children had left the home. In addition, Fowler (1996) documents the characteristics of those individuals who have run for Congress. She notes that since the founding of the United States legislators have been drawn "from the ranks of the highly educated professional and business classes... [there is a] socioeconomic bias in recruitment" (1996, 431). Both these scholarly analyses provide descriptive portraits of these first congresswomen, but they fail to explain why or how women decided to run for Congress.

Moreover, several scholars began to examine the theory of the "widow succession" in explaining the rise of women in Congress (Kincaid 1978; Tolchin and Tolchin 1973; Gertzog 1980). It is argued convincingly that the single most important historical method for women to enter Congress is replacing a deceased husband (Solowiej and Brunell 2003; Maltzman, Sigelman, and Binder 1996; Wuffle, Brunell and Koetzle 1997). During the 1920s and 1930s, the majority of congresswomen gained their seats not by their own efforts but via the road of "widow succession." Some women were appointed by the governors of their states to fill their husbands' Senate seats after their deaths, and several widows won the elections held for their

husbands' House seats. Many were selected by the political party as a viable candidate because of name recognition, but more perceptively to be a "placeholder" until a strong, partisan man could be recruited. Solowiej and Brunell (2003) investigate the "widow effect" for entrance into the U.S. Congress. They find that when a husband had amassed more seniority in his respective chamber, the higher the probability that his widow would take over his seat upon his death. These coauthors contend that the traditional incumbency advantage has a "spillover effect for widows" (Solowiej and Brunell 2003, 290).

Additionally, other scholars have noted that by the late 1930s and through World War II, these widows began to seek and win these congressional seats by their own efforts (Werner 1966; Gertzog 1980; Bledsoe and Herring 1990). Interestingly, these widows must have had specific motivations for seeking the electoral seats vacated by their deceased husbands. Solowiej and Brunell (2003) argue that women "piggyback[ed] on their spouse's electoral success....given the context of reduced risk" (290). Bullock and Heys (1972) signify the differences in characteristics between widows and regularly elected congresswomen, stressing that while "regularly elected congresswomen look similar in terms of education and prior political activities to the majority of congressmen, the majority of widows look quite different" (421). In addition, Darcy and Schramm (1977) investigate the effect that gender has upon voters' decisions for selecting candidates. They find that "the electorate is indifferent to the sex of congressional candidates" (1977, 8).

All of these researchers offer solid descriptions of the first generation of women in Congress, specifically noting this "widow effect" and the effect of gender in elections. However, these works lack sufficient explanations of when and under what conditions these pioneering political women decided to run for elected office; nor do they examine how these women

facilitated political aspirations in other women. Furthermore, these works fail to examine the role of women serving at the state and local levels who are politically ambitious and perhaps seeking career advancement.

The first women elected to political office served in local municipalities or in state positions (e.g. state legislators or state Superintendent of Public Instruction). Freeman (2000) documents how women became involved politically through small steps, entering at different stages in the political arena. She describes how women were involved first in many nonpartisan government groups. These women were encouraged by politically savvy men to join in the reform movements to “clean up the mess in municipalities” (2000, 39). Later, these women formed women’s civic clubs and began to work as campaign organizers and lecturers for the minor political parties, the Populists and the Prohibitionists. “Party activity by women...flowered in the 1880s... [these] women were loyal and active partisans long before they could vote” (Freeman 2000, 33-34). Party activities allowed women into the inter-sanctum of politics. These women witnessed recruitment, position meetings, and mobilization of voters. Many historians contend that men accepted women into their political parties in order to bring “morality to the system” (Freeman 2000, 39).

By working as party activists, women not only learned how the political system operated, but also, they honed their skills. These women sharpened their organizational and rhetorical skills, and they developed a network of associates, particularly key relationships with prominent political leaders. Forming these relationships provided women with more opportunities to influence the votes of men as well as affect the party’s political stances in upcoming elections. Some of these relationships were akin to political sponsorship. “Sponsors often educate their protégés into the real world of politics...the stronger the sponsorship, the more ready the

acceptance, and the easier the access” (Freeman 2000, 231). Finding a man willing to act as a sponsor to a female partisan was sometimes difficult. These relationships were suspect to many observers. Therefore, “the women with the best chance for sponsorship were family members of politicians;” however, even when families did not sponsor the women, “the associations built up over the years and the family name served to legitimate them to the male politicians as well as to voters” (Freeman 2000, 231).

Family political connections and involvement in politics are as equally important for women’s decisions to be politically engaged and to seek elective office as community and party associations. Irwin Gertzog (1980) writes “for the pioneer generation of Congresswomen [1917 through 1934], a marital or other familial connection was the most common route to political office” (820). In addition, Werner (1966) notes that between 1916 and 1963 “about one-half of the women who serve in Congress have had relatives in Congress; slightly over one-third had husbands who were congressmen before them” (1966, 20). Women gained access, recognition, and respect through their families’ roles in the political parties and elective offices. Women learned as political surrogates and in their support roles how to play the political game and serve the voters.

Furthermore, when a husband served in an elected post, whether the state legislature or the U.S. Congress, his wife was not only his campaign worker and advisor, but many times she was his personal secretary helping to run his political office (see, e.g., Solowiej and Brunell 2003; Wasniewski 2007). Examples of female congressional partners include Rebecca Latimer Felton, Frances Bolton, Margaret Chase Smith and Hattie Wyatt Caraway. Working alongside a spouse or even a father permitted these women to be political insiders. Some were key advisors on policy, and for many voters, these women were also the faces of public service. Becoming a

political partner and worker encouraged these women's ambition, and some genuinely felt a call to political action. These women found obtaining elected office as an avenue to affect change and redirect the American public to prominent issues affecting westward expansion, labor, and family/children issues. Thus, having these familial connections and the insider political knowledge and associations, women during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were more likely to run for local, state, and national office. These familial connections garnered political support and recognition for their candidacies.

Most assuredly, this first research provides only a descriptive portrait of these women and fails to expound on how these pioneering women acted as the political role models to women actively leaving home to begin life's journey into college and career as well as to those women already serving at lower levels of government. This previous political scholarship does not test these assumptions, but I posit these familial connections prompted the first females to seek political office, and they then laid the political foundation for future generations of women to seek elective offices.

### ***The Woman Candidate –***

#### ***Women's Strategic Candidacy and New Self-Route into Politics***

Unarguably, women greatly changed American politics, its discussion and institutional structures, in the 1970s. Women exercised their political rights through the ballot box and activist grassroots movements seeking equality. Likewise, women broke through the political door with their electoral aspirations, attempts, and successes to serve in the body politic. During this time period, more women competed for electoral offices, especially at the state and local



levels. These women, winning and serving at lower levels of government, provided the candidate infrastructure for female ascension to higher political office.

In the United States, free elections are the means by which office seekers claim their duties to represent people and interests before the government. And yet, elections are predicated on the need for candidates – ambitious and self-motivated individuals who are inspired to seek electoral office. The elections subfield provides a vast discussion of how political ambition and electoral incentives affect the strategic considerations of potential candidates to seek political office. Joseph Schlesinger (1966) writes, “Ambition lies at the heart of politics. Politics thrive on the hope of preferment and the drive for office” (1966, 1). He defines uniquely three “directions” or types of ambition: discrete, static, and progressive. Discrete ambition relates to an individual who seeks an office for one term and then seeks neither reelection nor another office. Static ambition relates to the politician who seeks an office with the intent to establish a political career in that specific office. Progressive ambition relates to the politician who holds an office and then seeks election to another more attractive office. Schlesinger (1966) analyzed people who behaved ambitiously and showed that political advancement was a product of a goal-oriented behavior, party competition, and the political opportunity structure.

Later researchers reevaluated ambition through rational-choice theory. David Rohde (1979) advances the examination of office-seeking and the role of progressive ambition on candidate decision-making. He analyzes progressive ambition of U.S. representatives during the time period 1954 to 1974, attempting to predict which of these officials will seek higher office, either a U.S. Senate seat or a state governorship. He finds that House members are about three times more likely to run for senator than for a four-year governorship and that risk-takers are about two and half times more likely to run for higher office than nonrisk takers (1979, 15).

Furthermore, Rohde demonstrates how representatives are deliberative when they weigh the risks and benefits of service in the House compared to service in the Senate.

Studies of ambition within the candidate emergence literature focus predominately on progressive ambition. When will members of one legislative chamber run for the other chamber or run for an executive position (see, e.g., Rohde 1979; Brace 1984; Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde 1987; Maestas, Fulton, Maisel and Stone 2006; Wanless 2011)? Few analyses evaluate the differences in the strategic calculation between men and women when considering a run for higher elective office. But, we know that political ambition and the desire to serve in politics are not restricted by gender.

Therefore, recent scholarly works have redirected our evaluations to the substantive differences between male and female candidates and politicians. Particularly, ambition and strategic decision-making of men and women potential office seekers differ. Many academics posit that structural barriers (e.g. incumbency advantage and the proportion of women in the “pipeline” positions preceding political careers) and lower levels of political ambition affect the greater disparities in candidate emergence and the composition of the U.S. political institutions (Carroll 1994; Darcy and Choike 1986; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Thomas and Wilcox 1998; Fox and Lawless 2004).

Lawless and Fox (2005) argue that this literature largely overlooks the role of gender in explaining potential candidacies. These authors claim that the candidate emergence process is different for men and women; they contend gender differences must be evaluated first in the context of political ambition and then in the decision-calculi for candidacy. They provide an in-depth analysis of how gender interacts with and affects levels of political ambition. Theorizing about the gender differences in the candidate emergence process, they write, “interest in seeking

elective office is likely motivated not by the political opportunity structure, but by attitudinal dispositions and personal experiences” (Lawless and Fox 2005, 30). Foremost, Lawless and Fox (2005) argue and substantiate through survey research that men and women differ in how they weigh the costs and benefits of entering the electoral arena because of the pervasive influence of traditional gender socialization. They contend that traditional sex-role socialization through the division of familial responsibilities, role orientations, and a culture of masculine ethos, leads women to be less politically ambitious than men, and thus, are less likely to consider a candidacy for elective office (Lawless and Fox 2005, 41-47).

Moreover, Lawless and Fox (2005) find women are more risk-averse, and that most women do not run for political office because they “do not feel qualified” (2005, 148). Interestingly, they find that when women respondents in their survey received “personal encouragement or a suggestion to run, their probability of considering a candidacy increases by approximately 45 percentage points” (2005, 70). These authors suggest that female role models inspiring and encouraging women to run might foster more female candidacies and therefore, lessen the gender gap in political representation. However, these coauthors do not examine whether encouragement and motivation from female political actors or role models affect political ambition and thus future candidacies.

Other scholars explore state legislators’ political ambition and gender differences when these politicians advance to the U.S. House. Maestas, Fulton, Maisel, and Stone (2006) employ a two-stage decision model of progressive behavior distinguishing between ambition formation and the decision to enter an electoral contest. They analyze data collected through a survey of over 2,700 state legislators to gauge political ambition and a potential career decision to run for the U.S. House. Markedly, these authors depart from traditional studies assessing the strategic

choice of whether an individual will run for higher office by reporting the choice as when someone will run. They find that “intrinsic costs and benefits associated with running for and holding higher office shape ambitions but do not influence the decision to run” (Maestas, et al. 2006, 202). Moreover, these authors show that “opportunity alone is insufficient to stimulate ambition for higher office” (2006, 206). Maestas, et al. contribute significantly to our knowledge of when state legislators will emerge for higher office by revealing how the evaluation of the House seat, family costs, campaign costs, along with party recruitment, age, personal motivations, and gender influence ambition and the prospects of running (2006, 202). Nonetheless, these authors’ valid conclusions pose potential concerns and lead to other questions. How accurately can the empirical analysis decipher the effects of ambition versus costs/risks measurements? Furthermore, are men and women’s ambition and pursuit of higher office affected differently by role model encouragement and the benefits assessment of what the higher office could provide to them and their policy leadership?

Moreover, these same coauthors (2006) examine three ways in which gender influences state legislators’ ambitions and decisions to run for seats to the U.S. House of Representatives. Fulton and coauthors investigate the cause of women’s lower level of ambition and expound upon findings of how gender affects candidate emergence. Using data from a 1998 state legislators’ survey, these researchers report that “female state legislators are much more responsive to the expected benefit of office than are males, and this sensitivity to the strategic environment offsets women’s diminished ambition level” (Fulton, Maestas, Maisel and Stone 2006, 239). Much of the gender disparity in ambition reported in this analysis is linked to the presence of children in the household. In addition, they note more female state legislators would be attracted to a career in the U.S. House if they were contacted by party, community leaders or

other female elected officials (2006, 242). Similarly, the subjective chances of winning exert a greater influence on ambitious women than men. Therefore, female state legislators may be motivated to seek higher office by witnessing the success of other female politicians from nearby congressional districts and within the state.

Palmer and Simon (2006) investigate the political ambition of women congressional candidates. They find that “female politicians...employ a political decision calculus similar to that of similarly situated male politicians” (2006, 68-74). These women behave like male politicians. Female U.S. House members have displayed progressive ambition, strategically deciding to enter a senatorial contest when the district contextual factors and the personal cost-benefit utility are maximized. “When faced with the opportunity to run, ...women respond to the same strategic considerations as men” (Palmer and Simon 2006, 16).

There are developments in the political ambition and candidate emergence literature that focuses upon the gender differences in the encouragement to participate in politics and the recruitment of candidates to political office. Some candidates are highly motivated and industrious – running without any encouragement. But, many other potential office seekers, including women, need to be recruited to run. As one female state legislator remarked, “Other people thought I should run for office. I was encouraged by county officials and other state representatives to seek office. At that point then, I thought I could to do this – I could run for any elective office” (Phone Interview 2011).

Yet, the political science literature finds party leaders and other elected officials rarely offer encouragement to women to seek elective office (Lawless and Fox 2005; Deber 1982; Thomas 2005). Kira Sanbonmatsu (2006) explores the role that political parties have in shaping who runs for the state legislature. She interviews party and elected leaders in six states –

Alabama, Colorado, Iowa, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Ohio – to learn whether these officials actively recruit women to run in their states and, if they do not, then why not. She argues that “political parties are, indeed, consequential for who runs for and wins office” (2006, 2). Through these case studies, Sanbonmatsu discovers that stronger party organizations within states have a negative effect on women’s representation. “Fewer women run for and hold state legislative office where parties are more likely to engage in gatekeeping activities” (Sanbonmatsu 2006, 3). State party organizations have been bastions of male dominance, and many of these state officials are close-minded to the role women can play in state parties and legislatures. Therefore, many consciously ignore opportunities to recruit qualified female potential candidates.

Arguably, we see that each of these scholars suggests that more women would seek political office and even climb the political ladder if they were encouraged to run by either their respective parties or other politicians. Political recruitment affects the decisions of potential office seekers (see, e.g., Rule 1981; Carroll and Sanbonmatsu 2009). However, as each hint at a role model effect, none has empirically tested the contention that political role models influence candidacies and electoral outcomes. Thus, what role do elected female officials play in the encouragement and motivation of other women to seek political office and to aspire for political career advancement? Identifying female political role models and their inspiration on future female candidacies provides further insight into the shaping of political ambition and the decisions of female office seekers and politically progressive women.

## **The Path Blazed Before Them – Influence of Political Role Models**

“Because of their positions, women officeholders can play an inspirational role; through speaking to individual women and groups of women, they can motivate others to become involved in politics” (Carroll and Strimling 1983). Indeed, many say women are the most natural caregivers and pass along to future female generations a special characteristic to help and serve others. Many women sense a calling to serve and be moved beyond themselves. Societal changes and movements for more equitable treatment have allowed women to move beyond the home to serve. Avenues have opened up for them to be full political participants. Some such women actually find an inspiration to serve their nation, state, and local communities. Furthermore, many political women aspire for public careers and advancement up the political ladder. And, these decisions to be actively involved in these collegial bodies prompt researchers to examine these women and their political motivations. How do women psychologically and personally motivate other women? Perhaps, our understanding of women’s recent political motivations needs to look no further than the women who blazed the political paths to the U.S. Congress and the state legislatures.

How do we become who we are? Psychologists attempt to understand human cognitive development as well as the impact of societal forces on human learning. Albert Bandura (1977) first proposed that people learn from watching other people. He writes, “Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action (1977, 193). Men, women, and children observe the behaviors of others and then model their own behaviors either positively or negatively, on such learned behaviors. As such, Bandura’s theoretical work sparked a new generation of research

investigating the impact of role models on academic aspirations and success, career development, and organizational leadership (Pleiss and Feldhusen 1995; Hackett and Betz 1981; Greene 1990; Karunanayake and Nauta 2004).

Moreover, the psychological connection of what motivates an individual to learn, modify behavior, and develop certain behavioral characteristics encouraged many political scientists to expand their focus of social politics to an examination of political psychological behaviors. Much attention in the 1960s surrounded social-psychological influences on voting behavior (Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes 1960). These studies led to broader analyses of the influence of individual politicians, the media, and campaigns on political interest, engagement, activism and participation. Numerous scholars even examine the influence of female candidates and female politicians (alluding to these pioneering women as female political role models) on the political attitudes, engagement, activism, and participation of young girls and women. Others research the impact of these female politicians on female citizens' perceptions of government, its responsiveness, and the electoral system (Atkeson 2003; MacManus 1981; Cook 1998).

For example, several scholars identify how women candidates and politicians affect female political involvement. Atkeson (2003) finds overwhelming evidence that female citizens in states with competitive and visible female candidates increase their political engagement. She also writes that "women's lives in the public sphere have increased, providing women with more political resources" (2003, 1041). In addition, Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006) conclude that "the more women politicians are made visible by national news coverage, the more likely adolescent girls are to indicate an intention to be politically active," and the more visible female candidates campaign for higher office, these girls reported increased political involvement (2006,



241-242). These works imply that the presence of female political figures shape the perceptions of young girls about politics and motivate them to be politically engaged.

The gender politics literature has found mixed results regarding the role that descriptive representation plays on external efficacy. Barbara Burrell writes, “Women in public office stand as symbols for other women, both enhancing their identification with the system and their ability to have influence within it” (1994, 151). Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (2001) systematically analyze citizen survey responses to uncover the gender disparities in political participation. These authors contend that political participation disparities between men and women result from cultural inequalities which are rooted in gender-differentiated experiences of everyday life (i.e. family, school, church, volunteer associations, and the workplace) (2001, 3-4). They find the presence of a statewide female incumbent or candidate enhances women’s political efficacy.

Jennifer Lawless (2004) provides additional support for women political officials’ influence on female political efficacy, but with somewhat curious conclusions. Using NES data from 1980 to 1998, she evaluates whether the presence of female congressional members affects female citizens’ trust in government, identification with their member of Congress, and political efficacy. Her results show female congressional members increase external efficacy for men, but not for women, while having a female senator influences men and women. Nonetheless, Lawless writes that “successful women’s presence in politics may instill more confidence in women citizens to climb various career ladders... Women who hold elective office could inspire women citizens to overcome patterns of traditional socialization, not only politically, but also economically and socially” (2004, 93).

Similarly, Dolan (2006) asks whether female candidates mobilize interest in politics. She examines survey and elections data from 1990 to 2004 evaluating whether the presence of female

candidates (symbolic representatives) influences the levels of voter attitudes and behaviors. She finds very limited evidence that symbolic representation by women candidates impacts women's political attitudes and behaviors. However, she agrees with Lawless in that "we make a mistake in assuming that any influence of symbolic representation is a one-on-one relationship...suggest[ing] that a woman does not have to be directly represented by Hillary Clinton or Mary Landrieu to experience the symbolic benefits of an increase in the number of women in elected office" (Dolan 2006, 701).

Nevertheless, more recent studies argue that there is more to the gender and politics discussion surrounding the impact of descriptive representation. Atkeson and Carrillo (2007) examine "collective descriptive representation" and conclude that "higher levels of collective female descriptive representation promote higher values of external efficacy for female citizens" (79). They note, "when more women are in these offices [higher political offices]...visibility from leadership positions and press coverage promotes an environment wherein women citizens can see women politicians in action" (2007, 84). Additionally, "if a woman holds the governorship, the greater visibility of the office may enhance women's perceptions" (2007, 84).

Moreover, Wolbrecht and Campbell (2007) move beyond the examination of whether female politicians affect women's psychological engagement in politics (e.g. interest and efficacy). They analyze how female members of Parliament as symbolic representatives (i.e. political role models) affect different aged women's active political participation. They utilize cross-national data and find support for the "role model effect." These authors show that women and girls talk more about politics and actively participate in politics (e.g. boycott, demonstrate, and work with a political party) when there are more women serving in elective office (2007, 928-930). Also, Wolbrecht and Campbell find that the role model effect is greater among

younger girls than older women (2007, 933). Most importantly, they conclude, “As exemplars of the possibility and potential of female political activism, female politicians in democratic nations do function as true role models, inspiring women and girls to be politically active themselves” (2007, 936). With each of these findings, it seems quite evident that descriptive representation matters; therefore, witnessing a successful female candidate or officeholder affects women’s perceptions, confidence, and involvement. Nonetheless, the scholarly evidence to date neglects to determine how female political role models affect future female candidacies and their electoral outcomes.

### **Her Electoral Opportunity and Success**

Any serious contender for an elective office weighs a calculated decision tree, and he or she evaluates the current and nearby electoral environment. A female state representative stated,

It is usually not a knee-jerk reaction. It’s not; ‘oh, yeah, I want to run.’ You carefully consider many factors when deciding to risk a run in politics. I know I thought about the political support, my family, and then was there an opportunity for me in this district. Was the environment ripe – good – for me to run?  
(Phone Interview 2011).

Analogous conditions for whether a potential candidate decides to run for political office (e.g., quality challengers, open seat/incumbent contests, and a national tide in favor of her respective political party) may affect her electoral victory or defeat. Success in political contests depends not only on the personal connection of the candidate and her experience to organize an effective campaign machinery, but also the outcome depends upon contextual factors, the structural environment, and the timing of the election. Women and men are no different since both must be strategic, seeking the right opportunity to run, and working effectively to get every vote.

Many political scientists and Washington, D.C. politicians examine key factors that affect the electoral outcomes in congressional elections. Jacobson (1989) examines strategic politicians and the interactions between national conditions/ issues and vigorous electoral challenges. He defines a dichotomous measure for “quality challenger” distinguishing between those that have held elective office (quality) and those that have not (non-quality). He finds that high quality challengers are selective when they decide to run for the U.S. House and when they do run in congressional elections, that they do better than challengers who have never held elective office (1989, 776).<sup>6</sup> In addition, Carson (2005) models strategic interaction between congressional challengers and incumbents. He finds that the more competitive the district as well as the higher a legislator’s score on the party index for key votes, the greater likelihood a quality challenger will emerge to challenge an incumbent. Examining the interactions of strategic choices by challengers and incumbents demonstrates that these electoral decisions are related and clearly sequenced.

Furthermore, contextual and structural opportunities play into who runs and who wins electoral contests. The district and electoral environment are possibly significant determinants that any potential candidate must evaluate when deciding whether to seek an elective position. What is the partisan make-up of the district’s electorate? Potential office seekers must consider whether their partisanship aligns with the district’s voters and whether that party is in favor nationally and locally. Also, a candidate must consider whether the contested race is an open seat or does it require challenging the incumbent? Other candidates look for electoral opportunities such as when there is a special election and only a few months for potential office seekers to qualify and run for the elective seat.

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<sup>6</sup> See Jeffrey S. Banks and Roderick D. Kiewiet. 1989. “Explaining Patterns of Candidate Competition in Congressional Elections.” *American Journal of Political Science* 33: 997-1015 for a discussion on weak candidates (i.e. non-quality challengers) competing against incumbents in congressional elections.

Political evidence demonstrates the value of these considerations by candidates. Gaddie and Bullock (2000) conclude, “Open seats, not the defeat of incumbents, are the portal through which most legislators enter Congress” (1). Several other studies conclude that women are much more successful when running for open seats as opposed to challenging incumbents (Burrell 1994; Gaddie and Bullock 1995; Dolan 2006; Fox 2006; Palmer and Simon 2001). Nonetheless, through examining the electoral constraints for women, Bernstein (1986) argues that there are so few women in the U.S. House of Representatives because they receive “more of the nominations to challenge incumbents than nominations to open seats” (155). Additionally, Nixon and Darcy (1996) find that “special elections have been one of the key components for women getting elected to the House” (104). Special elections have proven disruptive because they occur on short notice. Party leaders have “sometimes chosen women and widows because of their partisan loyalty, their experience as political advisors to their husbands, their names make them electable and because their choice forestalled or prevented intraparty skirmishes” (Wasniewski 2007).

Palmer and Simon (2006) address the slow progress of women being elected to the U.S. Congress. These authors agree with the institutional explanation that the incumbency advantage affects the slow rate of change in the Congress, yet they argue that there are “woman-friendly and woman-unfriendly congressional districts” within the United States (2006, 136). Urban, liberal, diverse and educated districts are where women will find the majority of their electoral successes. Women are more likely to make significant gains in the legislatures and affect the diversity of the institutions when they run in these districts.

In addition to the contextual environment and district competitiveness, campaign resources are particularly salient to the success of candidates running for political office.

Jacobson (1978) finds that campaign spending influences congressional elections. He argues that additional campaign spending is more beneficial to challengers than incumbents. Moreover, Jacobson writes, “how well nonincumbent candidates do on election day is directly related to how much campaign money they raise and spend” (2008, 45). Paul Herrnson (2008) states “nonincumbents who have significant political experience or who have assembled professional campaign organizations typically raise more money...” (195). Nevertheless, some argue that there is a gender gap in political fundraising capabilities. This gender gap has been attributed to donor discrimination (Erhenhalt 1982; Mandel 1981); whereas, later work has found no such discrimination exists when candidates’ political skills and status are considered (Uhlener and Schlozman 1986; Burrell 1994; Dabelko and Herrnson 1997). Furthermore, Crespín and Deitz (2010) find female quality challengers have a substantial advantage in attracting donations and that women candidates who are supported by female donor networks or ideological donor groups receive a boost in campaign fundraising compared to their male counterparts.

Equally, success in an electoral contest can depend upon the campaign organization and expertise of the staff as well as the campaign strategy. For candidates to compete, they must have campaigns equipped to raise substantial amounts of money, create a strategy and communicate well with voters. As Jacobson (2008) notes, “Campaigns require organization” (87). Paul Herrnson (2008) finds that nonincumbents who have held elective office have advantages in assembling a campaign organization over those who are political amateurs (72-82). Having a competent and experienced campaign staff helps candidates win congressional elections. For most competitive congressional elections, candidates seek professional staffers who can fundraise, write press releases, research, and poll (Herrnson 2008).

Several authors have examined the roles of female candidates (after the decision to run) and the effect of gender in strategic campaigning. Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) find that gender stereotypes affect perceptions of candidates and that voters have differing views of male and female politicians. Women are seen as handling “compassion issues more competently” and are viewed as more Democratic, liberal and feminist than men (1993, 142; see also, Dolan 2006; Alexander and Andersen 1993; Saint-Germaine 1989; Thomas 1994; Kahn 1996; Sanbonmatsu 2006; Dolan, Deckman, and Swers 2007). In addition, Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes (2003) examine the interaction of gender and campaign strategy. They conclude that “women gain a strategic advantage when they run ‘as women’ stressing issues that voters associate favorably with female candidates” (2003, 244). Candidates know the importance of developing a strong campaign organization with experienced staff to fundraise and to create a targeted strategy with a precise and keen message. Yet, this research lacks adequate explanations regarding the roles other political actors play in the election of qualified candidates, specifically state legislators, seeking career advancement to the U.S. Congress.

The scholarly contributions from the political elections and gender politics subfields relate clear distinctions in the ambition and political behavior of men and women potential office seekers. Several researchers suggest that political role models encourage and influence candidacy decisions and electoral successes. The next chapter presents the theoretical argument for the influence of political role models in female candidate emergence and electoral outcomes, and it discusses the research design employed to test such claims.

### **CHAPTER 3**

## **FEMALE POLITICAL ROLE MODELS EMBOLDEN THE ASCENSION OF WOMEN TO CONGRESS**

It is essential to provide positive female role models, who make women realise [sic] that getting involved into politics must not be left to men in suits.

*-Sandra Gidley, 2004<sup>7</sup>*

### **A Theory of Female Political Role Models' Influence**

Gleaning from the extensive elections literature in the previous chapter, it is evident that potential office seekers have tremendous considerations and precise calculations to make when deciding to run for political office and also when building and executing successful campaigns. How politically motivated are these individuals? Women have been effective campaigners and have reached great victories in electoral politics. With their electoral achievements, women have become representatives of political success and leadership. "Those women now serving in elective offices are a critically important resource for bringing more women into office" (Carroll and Strimling 1983). As female political role models, these women have a particular ability to influence female participation, female political candidacies, and female electoral victories. Therefore, how can the presence of women in elective office motivate women to run for office and achieve greater electoral success?

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<sup>7</sup> Quote is from Christina Wolbrecht and David E. Campbell. 2007. "Leading by Example: Female Members of Parliament as Political Role Models." *American Journal of Political Science* 51 (4): 921-939.



This study offers insight into the valuable question: why do women run for higher political office? Do females serving in the U.S. Congress provide to other females a concrete and sincere example of how to launch a political candidacy and how to achieve electoral success? Building upon the vast scholarship regarding political ambition, candidate emergence, strategic electoral outcomes, and the influence of other political actors on these decisions, I posit that the motivating factors that influence a woman's candidate decision-calculus and her electoral outcome are myriad, but fundamentally structured by her behavioral modeling of other successful political women and the opportunistic electoral environment. A potential female candidate for the U.S. Congress is rational and ambitious; however, most assuredly, she is very strategic in her decision to run for higher political office. A female potential office seeker cannot easily choose a perfectly conditioned, woman-friendly district. Women must choose to run in districts and states within which they have resided for some time, and most women do not uproot families or themselves in hopes of securing an ideal elective district. Therefore, contextual and structural forces play limited roles in the decision-calculus. Other personal and motivational factors or examples must prompt women to run for office and especially to ascend the political ladder.

Women's decisions to be engaged politically have changed greatly. First, women were involved through community organizations, local political parties or with the political work of family members, either parents or husbands. For example, Katherine Langley (R-KY) served in the U.S. House of Representatives during the 1920s for two terms. She was the daughter of a four-term congressman from North Carolina and had been the secretary for her husband's congressional office. She did not ascend into politics via widow's succession, but she won the seat vacated by her husband when he was sent to jail. Langley commented to local papers that

she was drawn into politics as a child, campaigning with her father and did not imagine she would serve one day. But, she later stated how compelled she was to continue the goals and service established through the Langley name in Kentucky. The first woman elected to the U.S. Senate, Hattie Caraway (D-AR), wrote that she filed for election “because I really want to try out my own theory of a woman running for office” (Kincaid 1979, 9). Caraway’s “first” for women symbolized women’s changing roles in society and politics. She helped push for women’s equal rights, and she opened the door for many women to pursue careers in public office. Many women finally said “my turn has come” (Mandel 1981, 13).

Thus, by the 1960s, hundreds of women were elected to state and local offices, and more than twenty served in the U.S. Congress. However, from 1976 to 1990, women increased their numbers in the U.S. House an average of less than two seats every election. All would change in 1992 with the “Year of the Woman” when women doubled their ranks in the U.S. House and tripled their seats in the U.S. Senate (CAWP 2012). Women continue to make gains in the U.S. political system. Female politicians in national, state, and local legislatures have been calling for more women to seek political office and serve their communities, yet many still face some “gender opposition” (Foerstel 1999, 11). As one congresswoman remarked,

One day, a local man asked me ‘what qualifies you, little lady, to be in Congress?’ And, I said, there have been many women before me in Congress. It is not new. Many great women have led in Congress; they have been effective because of women’s different skills and views. Yes, I am a woman, and yes, I can work for you. I know the issues we face, and I am a fighter – tougher than any man. I know how to get the job done. Women, especially those before us, knew how to get the problems fixed. And, I can work with those boys in D.C. better than anyone (Phone Interview 2010).

Thus, we see that female members of Congress are cognizant of the pioneering women who blazed trails into the vast political landscape. However, how can these former and current female elected officials affect the motivations and ambitions of other women to participate in

politics, run for office, and even advance their political careers? They are political icons and symbols, but are they role models affecting candidate decisions and electoral outcomes?

Who are role models? The notions of role models stem from developmental theories of identification and modeling in childhood (i.e. social learning theory (Bandura) and cognitive development theory (Kohlberg) in Goslin 1969). Kemper (1968) describes a “role model as a person who possesses skills and displays techniques which the actor lacks...and from whom, by observation and comparison with this own performance the actor can learn” (31). Additionally, Lockwood (2006) writes, “Role models are individuals who provide an example of the kind of success that one may achieve, and often also provide a template of the behaviors that are needed to achieve such success” (36). Much psychology and sociology research on role models investigates the relationship between young children and their parents. Many of these studies report ambiguous findings on whether one parent provides more meaningful behavioral modeling for children (see, e.g., Hennig and Jardim 1977; Almquist and Angrist 1971; Tangri 1972).

Other scholars extend the role model theory testing how external actors affect college, business, and career decisions (Karunanayake and Nauta 2004; Pleiss and Feldhusen 1995; Hackett and Betz 1981). “Individuals’ career decisions may be facilitated by role models – persons who are deemed worthy of emulation – because these individuals provide information about the outcomes associated with pursuing a particular career field and illustrate how to cope with career decision making tasks” (Karunanayake and Nauta 2004, 226). Moreover, some individuals may seek career role models whom they “perceive as similar to them regarding some easily identifiable characteristics because they assume that such role models’ experiences would apply to their own lives as well” (Karunanayake and Nauta 2004, 226). Those role models, who

seem relevant, meaning their success seems attainable, and encourage strategies fitting another's concerns, provoke self-enhancement and inspiration in others (Lockwood and Kunda 1997; Lockwood, Jordan and Kunda 2002).

Incorporating these definitions and bridging their findings into the political sphere, I contend that female U.S. representatives and senators are distinctive role models. These female politicians are political role models who provide examples of not only electoral successes, but also legislative and policy leadership within their respective institutions. "At present, women's advancement in politics is important, too, for its immediate impact on the changing self-concept and aspirations of women in general. Of all the new roles women are playing, that on the political stage is among the most visible" (Mandel 1981, 4). Education and business are private spheres, whereas elections and government service are public. The media shares every day with us the public nature of politics and politicians. And, yet, due to their disproportionate numbers and relatively small increases, "women in politics stand out and attract attention," (Mandel 1981, 4). More people today recognize political women – such as Hillary Clinton, Barbara Boxer, Nancy Pelosi, Michele Bachmann, Condoleezza Rice, and Sarah Palin – than could identify many influential businesswomen. "The image of political woman – in general, that of a leader, an independent, self-confident, outspoken, and knowledgeable person – is confirmation that women can venture into previously restricted areas, whether in politics, in professional life, or elsewhere" (Mandel 1981, 5). Women and young girls can aspire to be political women.

Furthermore, those women who currently serve in state and local offices can look toward congressional women as role models. Women in Congress exemplify similar characteristics of public service, and they illustrate to political women the decisions and strategies necessary to ascend the political ladder. "Women who rise in public life bring other women up, too" (Mandel

1981, 23). Political scholars note that elected women officials are role models and can perhaps inspire efficacy and participation (Lawless and Fox 2005; Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007). Some even suggest a role model effect on candidacy, yet no one has empirically examined how these women motivate a next generation of candidates and congressional women. Therefore, I argue systematically that these female political role models inspire female elected officials at the state level to seek a higher political office in the U.S. Congress.

As women holding political power and influence modeling representative roles, women in Congress do more than just establish a political example. These women motivate and embolden other women. Some women hold many of the same motivational reasons as men do when seeking elective office. Each wants to serve, provide good government, change issues, as well as each, perhaps, has personal attributes such as the attraction to politics, ambition, and power. However, on another level, women have unique underlying motives for elective office holding. One state representative noted, we are “running for office because we are not satisfied with the job men are doing, and now we have a shared confidence with those women already serving that we can do at least as well as men but probably better” (Phone interview 2011). Therefore, women may respond differently than men to specific personal motivating stimuli facilitated by witnessing the successes of other women.

Moreover, nearly two-thirds of the forty-two state officials I interviewed for this study mentioned they were motivated by other women’s examples and the support they have received from female officials. One Georgia state senator commented,

While working in a union, I was sent to Washington, D.C. There I met Shirley Chisholm. She was a strong woman, talking about issues and solving problems. She thought positively about how we could make a difference. She told me to ‘aim high and don’t settle for anything less.’ And, I continued my relationship with Ms. Chisholm, and she encouraged me to run at the state level. Then I decided to run for Congress. I took what she said, her messages, just like the

Bible right to my heart. I knew I wanted to be Shirley Chisholm. I wanted to be in Congress (Phone Interview 2011).

Carroll and Strimling (1983) find that elected women are “directly involved in recruiting and encouraging other women to run” (135). These female politicians not only recruit other women to run for congressional and state seats, but they also campaign and fundraise for female candidates. Increasingly, female politicians, either indirectly by example or through direct support, are stimulating women to advance in public life. And most poignantly, Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm states, “I think one of my major uses is as an example to the women of our country, to show them that if a woman has ability, stamina, organizational skill, and a knowledge of the issues she can win public office” (1970, 130).

These female politicians affect the perceptions and ambitions of other female candidates and provide examples of how to achieve success in the political arena. They embody success not only through winning elections, but also through their leadership roles on powerful committees, in shaping the policy debate, and with taking positions on key legislative matters. Their activities within the institution demonstrate how other female political power brokers are advancing and supporting policy issues pertinent and significant to an entire female constituency. Women in Congress propose a new public dialogue on certain policy issues and craft changes to current legislation which can affect not only the female’s electoral constituency, but the lives and behaviors of other women in the country.

Congresswomen advance policies and change the debate of national affairs. Their actions resonate with other women that they, also, can be involved in public service and representative democracy. Women currently serving at lower levels of public office identify with women in Congress by their efforts to influence legislation and change public policy.

Female congressional members' behavior sets an example of how to be engaged in the legislative game and institution. This behavior and attention motivates other women by showing that if they want to transform the country and its policies, then they can run for higher elective office and make significant changes within the institution of Congress. Therefore, women's roles in Congress not only as symbolic representatives, but also their behavior in substantive representation, affects the motivations of women to run for elective office because they, too, desire to shape public policy.

In addition, women in Congress can shape female candidates' elections. Female congressional members are well-connected to political consultants, interest groups, and fundraising networks. These resources from female political role models given to like-minded women seeking political career advancement can provide those female candidates with an advantage in their electoral contests. A proven record of campaigning and election success by the female role model provided to a female candidate through careful strategy and resources could be determinative elements in one's election. "Winners inspire imitators" (Mandel 1981, 23).

To illustrate a female role model's influence, in 1974, Betty Roberts, an Oregon state senator, decided to seek the Democratic nomination for the U.S. Senate. She called her campaign, "a shock treatment for Oregonians" (Mandel 1981, 24). Although she lost the bid for the U.S. Senate by less than 2 percent, Roberts played a trailblazing role. Two years later, two state legislators decided to run for statewide positions, secretary of state and state treasurer. Each female candidate commented that Roberts' candidacy made it easier for them and other women to run. She had initiated the "female shock" into politics. Roberts' candidacy showed

how a woman could capture votes and make the electorate more accepting of the idea of women officeholders.

The theory outlined in this dissertation regards the influence female political role models have on female state legislators' decisions to run for seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. In addition, this study examines whether female political role models affect female House members' decisions to run for U.S. Senate seats. This female political role model theory argues that the presence of congressional women in a respective district or state encourages women, but more specifically female state officials, to run for a congressional seat. These female state legislators are inspired by the self-confidence, campaign and leadership skills, as well as the electoral experiences the female political role models have. The efforts of these female political role models provide evidence of viability to these female officeholders in the political pipeline. Furthermore, I posit these female political role models influence the career development and progressive ambition of these elected female officials. Female state legislators observe the successes and representative roles of these women officeholders (female political role models), and they then model their own political paths after such women. These female role models symbolize an acceptance of women in higher elective office and influence female state legislators to climb the political ladder and achieve electoral successes.

### **The Qualitative Analyses: Analyzing Congressional Female Candidates**

To comprehend and appreciate women's political behavior, motivations, and involvement, one should directly seek answers from the sources of this knowledge and action – the female politicians and congressional candidates. This dissertation traces the political career paths of women who have served in state legislatures and then decided to climb the political



ladder to either the U.S. House of Representatives and/or the U.S. Senate through personal interviews and biographical resources. I discuss the political ambition of these women and the motivating factors or persons that influenced their decisions to seek higher political office. These interviews paint a more vivid picture of the influential relationships and the encouragement of other female political actors on women's decisions to ascend the political ladder and their electoral outcomes. I conducted telephone and in-person interviews in 2010, 2011, and 2012. To generate a more candid discussion and gather more details about their motivations and encouragement to run for higher offices, I explained to each female congressional member or female state legislator that her responses would remain anonymous. Therefore, the analyses in the next chapter reveal direct statements of fact and quotations, but the personal identification of these individuals are withheld.<sup>8</sup>

## **Research Hypotheses**

These women's personal accounts of their political ambition, engagement in politics, and the decisions to advance their careers to Congress provide testament to distinctive political paths and the theoretical assertion of the influence of political role models. These political stories offer leverage and a framework by which we can determine and test the influential people and factors which have shaped female candidate decision-making and electoral successes. Considering the changing nature of women in electoral politics and the relatively gradual ascension to their successes in the U.S. Congress, the following hypotheses are used to examine the influence of female political role models on first, the candidate decision-calculi, and second, the electoral

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<sup>8</sup> I use similar identifying markers as Richard Fenno uses in *Homestyle: House members in their districts*. 1978. Boston: Little Brown. Thus, a congresswoman is identified as "Congresswoman A," "Congresswoman B," etc.

outcomes of female state legislators and female House members, in seeking higher political office:

### Candidate Emergence

*H1: Female state legislators are more likely than their male colleagues to run for the U.S. House of Representatives when they are motivated by another woman's electoral success in their respective state. She is motivated when her respective state has or has had a female governor, female U.S. senator, or female member of Congress.*

*H2: Female state legislators from states with female political role models will emerge at higher rates to run for the U.S. Congress than female state legislators from states lacking those role models.*

*H3: Female state legislators from districts which have elected a female member of Congress will emerge at higher rates to run for a congressional seat than those female state officials who lack a district female role model.*

*H4: Female members of the U.S. House from states with female political role models will emerge at higher rates to run for the U.S. Senate than congresswomen from states that lack these female role models.*

*H5: Female politicians are more likely to run for higher office, U.S. House or U.S. Senate, when the electoral contest is for an open seat.*

*H6: Female state legislators are more likely to run for a congressional seat when their respective states impose term limits on their service.*

### Electoral Outcomes

*H7: Female state legislators who are quality challengers are more likely to succeed in their electoral bids for the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate.*

*H8: Female state legislators from states with female political role models win seats in Congress at higher rates than female state legislators from states lacking such female role models.*

*H9: Female members of the U.S. House from states with female political role models win seats in the U.S. Senate at higher rates than congresswomen from states lacking such role models.*

*H10: Female state legislators will be more successful when seeking open congressional seats than when challenging incumbents.*

In the following section, I describe the research design and data. As well, in the following chapters, I will test these hypotheses and examine the empirical results.

## **Modeling the Influence of Political Role Models**

The previous section provides two distinctive sets of hypotheses to examine what influential relationship exists between female political role models and female candidate emergence and electoral success. The first collection of hypotheses evaluates the differences between female and male state legislators' decisions to emerge to run for a higher political office, and these hypotheses explore whether the presence of female political role models in a woman's respective state affect her decision to seek office. More importantly, I seek to understand whether a female political role model who has held or currently holds the specific higher office of interest to a female state legislator influences her decision-calculi to seek that office. For instance, the female state legislator might identify more closely with a woman who serves or has served in the U.S. House of Representatives. Does a female state legislator react to a female member of Congress' influence and support, and thus, model her political career after this woman and seek a seat in the U.S. House? As well, does this relationship of modeling influence female state legislators advancing to the U.S. Senate or a female member of the U.S. House emerging for the U.S. Senate? In addition, these first six hypotheses look at whether contextual environmental measures affect legislators' progressive ambition and decisions to seek seats in the U.S. Congress.

The second collection of hypotheses assesses the electoral outcomes for state legislators who run for the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate. These hypotheses examine whether female political role models are related to the electoral outcomes of female state legislators and congresswomen, and they assess the structural forces within the electoral environment which might affect the election's outcome. Similarly, I analyze whether female role models provide

electoral support through their own electoral successes. Can that witnessing and support of a successful candidacy embolden female state candidates in their elections for higher office?

The remainder of this chapter highlights the data and methodology used to test each of these hypotheses. To test empirically these expectations regarding the influence of female political role models on the candidate decision calculi of female state legislators to run for the U.S. Congress and the electoral outcomes of these state officials requires a considerable amount of demographic and elections data. The data are a combination of many distinct individual and district/state level variables. I collected the data on state legislators, congressional elections, and role models across the time period 1975 to 2010 as well as across all fifty states. This variation in the data allows for a more complete assessment of the changing nature of women in politics across the different regions of the nation and these women in their political emergence after the feminist movement and the 1992 “Year of the Woman” elections. These data allow me to analyze eighteen election cycles and capture an increase in female representation in Congress and the establishment of female political role models.

Moreover, I focus on state legislators who decide to run for higher office. State legislatures provide the dominant pathway to the U.S. House of Representatives and other higher elective positions. For example, nearly half of the members of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress (265 members: 222 representatives, 2 delegates, and 41 senators) held office in a state or territorial legislature prior to winning their congressional seat (National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL) 2012). And, in 2010, over three-fourths of the competitive races for the U.S. House involved a state legislator.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the presence of female state legislators represents a

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<sup>9</sup> Author coded using U.S. House of Representatives official website, U.S. House primary data from secretary of state’s offices, and candidate campaign websites 2011.

potentially significant eligible pool of congressional candidates (Darcy, Welch and Clark 1994). The U.S. House of Representatives is the most heavily traversed pathway to the U.S. Senate.

Using these data, I employ multiple regression analysis to estimate several models. The first series of models estimate state legislators' potential emergence as candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives. These models examine whether female and male state legislators differ in their decisions to run for the House. Furthermore, these models test whether female political role models significantly influence the decisions of female state officials who reside in states with such political role models. Similarly the models estimate external and structural factors in the decisions of potential officer seekers advancing their political careers. The second series of models estimate the electoral outcomes of these candidates for the U.S. Congress, utilizing each election's vote results, to determine what factors (e.g. candidate personal factors, the electoral environment or role models) influence their electoral successes.

### **Determining State Legislators' Emergence to the U.S. Congress**

To understand fully candidates' decisions to seek elective office, especially to advance their careers to a higher political office, involves the careful consideration of personal, demographic, and district-level variables. For this model, I examine whether state legislators emerged to run for a congressional seat. Individual state legislators are the unit of analysis, and the following equation represents the logistic regression model.

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{(\text{gender})} + \beta_2 X_{(\text{female political role model})} + \beta_3 X_{(\text{gender} * \text{female political role model})} + \beta_4 X_{(\text{party congruence})} + \beta_5 X_{(\text{gender} * \text{party congruence})} + \beta_6 X_{(\text{state legislator's party})} + \beta_7 X_{(\text{state legislator's prior electoral experience})} + \beta_8 X_{(\text{state legislator's legislative chamber})} + \beta_9 X_{(\text{district competitiveness})} + \beta_{10} X_{(\text{district partisanship})} + \beta_{11} X_{(\text{term limit})} + \beta_{12} X_{(\text{special election})} + \beta_{13} X_{(\text{state legislature professionalism})} + \epsilon_i$$

The dependent variable is a dichotomous variable coded one for a state legislator who ran for a U.S. House or U.S. Senate seat and coded zero otherwise.<sup>10</sup> I code all the state legislators who have served in either a state house or state senate in any of the fifty states since 1975. These state legislators provide a selection of qualified elected officials who could potentially emerge to run for Congress in the elections from 1976 to 2010. Moreover, the independent variables used in these logistic regression models fall into three main groupings: state legislators' demographic characteristics, female political role models, and the political and contextual environment. These groupings represent the full spectrum of explanations for potential office seekers' motivations to emerge for political office offered by the literature on strategic politicians and candidate emergence.

### ***The State Legislators***

Individual state legislators' names and demographic characteristics are coded from *The Council of State Governments State Directory: Directory I Elected Officials*. In addition, some of the state legislators' names, demographic and electoral characteristics are collected from Thomas Carsey and contributors' *State Legislative Election Returns, 1967-2003*.<sup>11</sup> I code a ***state legislator's political party*** as zero for Republican, one for Democrat and nine for nonpartisan/other. The state legislator's partisan measure includes a value for nonpartisan to include Nebraska's unicameral legislature. Furthermore, I code the ***state legislative chamber*** in which the individual serves; one for the lower chamber (i.e. state house) and zero for the upper chamber (i.e. state senate). I code for the legislator's ***district number*** in order to place more

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<sup>10</sup> Since very few state legislators emerge to run for the U.S. Senate, a fully specified regression model is not estimated. Instead, descriptive statistics are reported along with results from U.S. House members who have run for the U.S. Senate. The U.S. House is a more favorable path to service in the U.S. Senate.

<sup>11</sup> Carsey, Thomas M., William D. Berry, Richard G. Niemi, Lynda W. Powell, and James M. Snyder. *State Legislative Election Returns, 1967-2003*, Release Version 5. ICPSR 21480.

accurately that state official in a respective congressional district.<sup>12</sup> I also code *state legislators'* *gender*, one for female and zero for male. I code *prior electoral experiences* for each state legislator. I examined whether the state official had served in some prior elective office (i.e. city or county office). I use a measure similar to Gary Jacobson's quality measure, coding one if the state legislator had had prior experience and zero otherwise. These variables are identified through resources and databases available from the National Conference of State Legislators, The Council of State Governments, Center for American Women and Politics, and respective state websites for their legislators. These demographic variables provide some insight into these individual state legislators and their backgrounds before making such decisions to advance their political careers.

We should expect to see more Democratic women emerging to run for higher office, especially given that more women tend to be liberal, and therefore, run and are elected as Democrats.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, we should expect to see more members from the upper chambers of the state legislatures emerging and those with prior legislative experience who are seeking

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<sup>12</sup> For complete candidate emergence analysis, each state legislator must be located in a congressional district. Arguably, a potential candidate for the U.S. Congress does not have to reside in a particular congressional district; she could run in any district within the state. However, for these analyses, I have placed each individual state legislator in a congressional district. I decided which congressional district to place the state official in by looking at how his or her own electoral district fits within a congressional map. Determinations of the congressional districts are based upon whether a majority of the two districts overlap. Furthermore, I examined voter ballots to see which state districts fall within congressional districts. I used a GIS mapping tool from: <http://mcdc2.missouri.edu/websas/test/geocorr2k.html> as well as voting ballots obtained from states' secretaries of state offices to make such determinations.

<sup>13</sup> See Irene Diamond. 1977. *Sex Roles in the State House*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Debra L. Dodson and Susan J. Carroll. 1991. *Reshaping the Agenda: Women in State Legislatures*. New Brunswick, NJ: Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University. Debra L. Dodson. 1998. "Representing Women's Interests in the U.S. House of Representatives." In *Women and Elective Office: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox. New York: Oxford University Press. Sue Thomas. 1990. "Voting Patterns in the California Assembly: The Role of Gender." *Women and Politics* 9:43-56. John M. Carey, Richard G. Niemi, and Lynda W. Powell. 1998. "Are Women State Legislators Different?" In *Women and Elective Office: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox. New York: Oxford University Press. Sarah Poggione. 2004. "Exploring Gender Differences in State Legislators' Policy Preferences." *Political Research Quarterly* 57(2):305-314. Michael J. Epstein, Richard G. Niemi and Lynda W. Powell. 2005. "Do Women and Men State Legislators Differ?" in *Women and Elective Office: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox. New York: Oxford University Press. Ronald Keith Gaddie and Charles S. Bullock, III. 1995. "Congressional Elections and the Year of the Woman: Structural and Elite Influence on Female Candidacies." *Social Science Quarterly* 74 (4): 749-762.

additional career advancement. Lastly, we should see more men seeking higher offices due to the simple fact that there are more men in the state legislative pipeline.

### ***The Female Political Role Models***

Female political role models are the main explanatory variable for the theoretical argument of this study. ***Female political role models*** are defined as women who have served or are currently serving in a national or state elective office. These women have proven their pioneering achievements, leadership, and electoral successes by their service in public office. I utilize data from the Center for American Women and Politics, the United States House and Senate, and the National Governors Association to identify women who have held elective office. Then, I determined the states that have had or currently have a female governor, United States senator, or member of Congress and at what time these women won their respective seats. I create five distinctive female political role model variables. First, I code each state with a one, indicating the presence of a female elected official either as governor, U.S. senator or U.S. representative and zero otherwise. Then, I created three unique categories for female political role models (i.e. governor, U.S. senator, or U.S. representative). I code specifically each state's respective role model per these distinctive categories. I code a one for whether the state has a female governor, female senator or female representative, each individually and respectively and a zero otherwise. The final female political role model variable identifies a cumulative total of how many female elected officials a state has had (0= no female role model, 1 = one female role model (any of the respectively defined offices), 2= two female role models, and 3= three (for all of the elective offices) female role models.) The models include an interaction variable (gender of state legislator multiplied with the female political role model variable (zero/one



measurement) to examine the relationship of female role models specifically with female state legislators. Importantly, I expect that female political role models positively influence a female state legislator's decision to run for the U.S. Congress. More specifically, I expect that female political role models who represent the exact office a female state legislator desires positively and significantly influences her decision to seek that office.

Female political role models may only influence female politicians if they are of the same political party. I created a *partisan congruence* variable to measure whether the female state legislator and female political role model in her respective state share the same partisan identification. I code this partisan variable one if the female state legislator and female political role model are partisan sisters (i.e. they are both Republican and/or Democrat) and zero otherwise. Lastly, I include an interaction term to examine whether the partisan similarity affects differently the female state legislator's decision to climb the political ladder. I expect female state legislators who have identical partisanship with their states' female political role models to be positively influenced to seek higher political office.

### ***The Political Environment***

Six independent variables are included to assess the district, state, and contextual environment that can influence state legislators' evaluation of whether to attempt to climb the political ladder. First, I code a variable measuring the congressional district's electoral competitiveness. *District competitiveness* is coded one for an open seat and coded zero when the contest involves an incumbent legislator. Open seat versus incumbent/contested races are determined using several resources, including *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S.*

*Elections, fourth edition*, McGillvray et al.'s *America Votes* series, and recent election data reported on states' secretaries of state websites.

Second, I code the ***district's partisanship***, as the percentage of the Democrat's share of the two-party vote in the previous election in the congressional district. District partisanship was calculated from the above sources as well as through Gary Jacobson's U.S. House of Representatives elections dataset. Third, I code ***state partisanship***, as the percentage of the Democrat's share of the two-party vote in the previous presidential election for the respective state, and it was collected through the above election resources. A fourth independent variable, ***term limit*** measures whether the state limits its state legislators' length of service. I code this as a binary variable, one for the states that impose term limits and zero otherwise. I collected these data from the National Conference of State Legislators. Fifth, I include a measure for whether the electoral contest is a special election for the U.S. House or the U.S. Senate. ***Special elections*** are determined through the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate websites' reference sections as well as through *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections* and Barone and McCutcheon's *The Almanac of American Politics 2012*. I code special elections as one and zero otherwise.

And finally, I use a variable for ***state legislature professionalism*** to assess the political, professionalized structural environment for state legislators. I use Squires' (2007) rankings of state legislatures' professionalism. His rankings (1 to 50) are categorized into four time periods (1979, 1986, 1996, and 2003), and each is computed based on legislator pay, the number of days the legislature is in session and the legislative staff. For example, in 2003, California is ranked first for professionalized legislature, and New Hampshire ranked fiftieth. The professionalization of the state legislature can affect state officials in two distinct ways. First,

the more professionalized the state legislature, the more legislators perceive their work as a full-time career and have more resources to fulfill their policy and electoral goals. Thus, these officials may seek to continue in their respective state career service. However, those serving in more professionalized legislatures are also building valuable skills and tools that may be necessary and even can be translated into more effective legislating at the national level. These politicians seek to continue a full-time political career; and thus, they desire a role in the U.S. House or the U.S. Senate. Yet, those in less professionalized legislatures may like their “part-time” legislative service and continue their work at the state level. But, some may seek the full-time political career; and therefore, they seek career advancement to the U.S. Congress.

We should expect strategic state legislators to run for Congress when the contest involves an open seat and therefore, they do not have to challenge an incumbent. Furthermore, I expect when state legislators reside in districts favorable to their own partisanship, they will run for Congress. I expect these state politicians to advance their political careers when they are term-limited and when the contest is a special election. Finally, I expect state legislators who serve in highly professionalized state legislatures, and therefore serve in similar capacities as congressional members, will be more likely to run for higher political offices.

### **Determining State Legislators’ Electoral Outcomes to the U.S. Congress**

The second series of models estimate the factors which influence a state legislator’s electoral success for the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. I employ two different regression models to estimate the effects of personal, female political role models, and political environmental factors on the vote shares of congressional candidates. For the first model, I examine the electoral outcomes as a binary variable of whether the state legislator won

or lost the congressional contest. I employ a logistic regression model to assess these relationships with the dichotomous outcome of a win or a loss. The second model employs ordinary least-squares regression analysis to examine the outcomes of candidates based upon their percentages of the vote share. I use OLS regression to evaluate what conditions might increase or decrease a candidate's percentage of the vote. Candidates, specifically state legislators, are the unit of analysis for both these models, and the following equations represent the models employed.

***Logistic Regression Model:***

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{(\text{gender})} + \beta_2 X_{(\text{female political role model})} + \beta_3 X_{(\text{gender} * \text{female political role model})} + \beta_4 X_{(\text{party congruence})} + \beta_5 X_{(\text{gender} * \text{party congruence})} + \beta_6 X_{(\text{state legislator's party})} + \beta_7 X_{(\text{state legislator's prior electoral experience})} + \beta_8 X_{(\text{state legislator's legislative chamber})} + \beta_9 X_{(\text{district competitiveness})} + \beta_{10} X_{(\text{district partisanship})} + \beta_{11} X_{(\text{special election})} + \beta_{12} X_{(\text{state legislature professionalism})} + \beta_{13} X_{(\text{campaign expenditures})} + \epsilon_i$$

The dependent variable is a dichotomous variable coded one for an electoral victory for a state legislator running for a congressional seat and coded zero for a loss. I code all state legislators who ran in a congressional primary and advanced to the general election. Each state legislator who won the general election is coded with a one showing the electoral success.

### ***Ordinary Least-Squares Regression Model:***

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{(\text{gender})} + \beta_2 X_{(\text{female political role model})} + \beta_3 X_{(\text{gender} * \text{female political role model})} + \beta_4 X_{(\text{party congruence})} + \beta_5 X_{(\text{gender} * \text{party congruence})} + \beta_6 X_{(\text{state legislator's party})} + \beta_7 X_{(\text{state legislator's prior electoral experience})} + \beta_8 X_{(\text{state legislator's legislative chamber})} + \beta_9 X_{(\text{district competitiveness})} + \beta_{10} X_{(\text{district partisanship})} + \beta_{11} X_{(\text{special election})} + \beta_{12} X_{(\text{state legislature professionalism})} + \beta_{13} X_{(\text{campaign expenditures})} + \epsilon_i$$

The dependent variable is the candidate's percentage of the vote received in the contest. I code the candidate's vote share from several sources including *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections*, Barone and McCutcheon's *The Almanac of American Politics 2012*, and a dataset created by Owen and Pettigrew (2012) using McGillvray et al.'s *America Votes* series.

The key explanatory variables fall into three similar groupings as described in the candidate emergence models: state legislators' personal and demographic characteristics, female political role models, and the political environment. Each reflects the full possible explanations offered by congressional elections scholars on the determinants of electoral outcomes. As positioned in the two above models, many of the independent variables are identical to the variables previously reported in the candidate emergence models. For example, these two electoral outcome models include state legislators' names, political parties, respective state legislative chambers (house or senate), prior electoral experience, gender, female political role models, and contextual factors, such as district competitiveness, district/state partisanship, special election and state legislature professionalism.

However, it is important to include a measure of campaign financial resources. Money is not necessary for every electoral victory, but it can prove decisive in many electoral contests

(Jacobson 1978; Green and Krasno 1988; Herrnson 2008; Jacobson 2008). I include a variable of campaign expenditures, coded as the difference between each candidate's exact dollar expenses. I use the difference in candidates' expenditures in order to address any issues of endogeneity. I collected the campaign disbursements from the Federal Elections Commission and from Gary Jacobson's congressional elections data (2011).

Based upon these two models, I expect to find no statistical difference between the success rates of men and women state legislators who run for the U.S. Congress. Moreover, I expect to find that female role models in a female state legislator's respective state positively affect and increase her vote share and her electoral success rate. I also expect positive relationships between the political environment and the state legislators' electoral outcomes. Finally, I posit that the more money a candidate spends on the campaign the greater her vote share will be. Therefore, I expect a positive coefficient for campaign expenditures.

In the following chapter, I detail the political and progressive ambition of state and congressional female politicians. These women describe their individual political journeys into Congress and reveal their responsibility to serve as political role models. In the subsequent chapters, I report the statistical results for the described influence of political role models on female state legislators and congresswomen's decisions to run for higher political office and their electoral outcomes.

## CHAPTER 4

### *DECIDING TO RUN FOR THE U.S. CONGRESS:*

#### FEMALES' PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR POLITICAL JOURNEYS

I needed someone to plant the seed in me that I could run and be one of those elected officials. I needed someone to make the connection that women could be those people on the opposite side of the door, making decisions. Finally, I saw the successes of other women in this state, and I began to see within me that I could run for office, too.

*-Female State Representative, 2011*

A political career, much like the city of Rome, is not built in one day. The political aspirations of candidates can falter in a single day, but their decisions to seek elective office and to build and advance successful tenures in politics require steadfast determination and hard work for years. “The engine that powers political careers is ambition. All politicians, we say, are ambitious; and it is ambition that most often links the milestones of a political career with one another” (Fenno 1996, 19). This chapter explores the unique political stories and candidacy decisions of female state legislators and congressional women. The following examines the personal motivations of why these progressively ambitious women chose to run for the U.S. Congress. These accounts are taken from biographical and congressional resources and personal interviews I conducted with female state legislators, congresswomen, and senators over the last three years.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> I conducted telephone and in-person interviews with these female state legislators and members of Congress in 2010, 2011, and 2012. In hopes to elicit a richer conversation with each congresswoman or senator, I insured that her identity would be kept anonymous. I have labeled each in a generic manner such as Congresswoman A or Senator A. Also, some specific names of individuals they identified as influential role models or mentors have been

The legislative careers of these female politicians begin with ambition. Ambition oxygenates their blood with new objectives and encourages a motivation to serve in public office. Their ambition enables them to see and believe in the possibility of a political career and future. However, for many of these women, this ambition needs a spark to ignite a full-blown calculated candidacy for higher office. Thus, from this political ambition, their candidate decision-making and rich political journeys differ.

“Running for elective office is a choice along the path of life,” stated a West Coast female state representative. Some women are purely self-motivated in their aspirations and decisions to seek elective office. These women are the political pioneers, blazing the path as the first females elected to public office. Other women come into politics through familial associations. As political wives or daughters, they witness and engage in the family’s political work either as campaign staff, office personnel, or surrogates. These family members serve as political sponsors and mentors, encouraging women to follow their political courses. Some women need encouragement to run for political office, and they seek a successful female to imitate and her political path to follow. Much of her political conscience and choice to run for political office has been fueled by the encouraged acceptance and successes of pioneering women candidates and female elected officials. These female political role models can provide general inspirational encouragement. Some female role models provide direct motivation and support with their assistance in establishing an exact political path for aspiring female office seekers to follow. Not only do women need to witness the successes of other political women, but they must understand the concrete realities of choosing a political candidacy and life. A

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changed in order that their identities cannot be discovered. The interview questionnaires are reported in the Appendix. Overwhelmingly, these female politicians reported on the influence of a political role model before I asked the question regarding who influenced their decisions to run for political office.



former congresswoman remarked, “Deciding to run [for Congress] really requires us, as women, to accept the fact that we might lose. You’ve got to be prepared to lose before you can win.”

Therefore, in this chapter, I present a typology of women who run for higher political office in order to understand the differences of who and/or what encourages these women to choose congressional careers. I classify these women into four distinctive categories according to the individual motivation for seeking political office. These women reveal the impact that self-motivation and political actors, specifically, female political role models, have on their candidacy decisions for Congress. Furthermore, these female politicians stress their profound role in encouraging and motivating the next generation of women to run for elective office. They consider it their duty to be female political role models.

### **The Feisty “I Can” Political Pioneer**

Political history in America is rife with stories of women unabashedly fighting for political recognition and acceptance. In many states, women were organizing political movements, participating in campaign rallies, and running for elective positions before they even had the right to vote nationally. These suffragettes and women rights leaders were not willing to let men decide their political fates. Similarly, today, we have women with strong convictions concerning their political rights, and they are eager to affect change. Many of these women are self-motivated. No one needs to encourage their political behavior and decisions to run for elective offices. These women are the “I Can” generation of political trailblazers. They find their own political paths and make cracks in the political glass ceiling.

America’s female pioneer in electoral politics is Jeannette Rankin. As the first woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, Rankin (R-MT) stated, “The individual woman is

required... a thousand times a day to choose either to accept her appointed role... or else follow an independent line of behavior..." (Lewis 2012). Rankin's "rugged upbringing" on a Montana ranch and her family's determination to "pursue lofty goals" influenced her political courage and independent spirit to seek women's suffrage and fight for new public policies (Foerstel 1999). She did not accept the prescribed woman's role, but her ambition to affect change in national policy motivated her to seek a congressional seat. She believed women needed to have a voice in the national discussion of war and social issues. She stated, "Men and women are like right and left hands; it doesn't make sense not to use both. We're [women] half the people; we should be half the Congress" (Lewis 2012). Rankin opened the doors of the U.S. House to women.

Rebecca Latimer Felton (D-GA), the first woman to serve in the U.S. Senate, firmly believed that women were no longer restricted in their political rights and roles. Her appointment to the Senate marked the historic beginning for women in this elite body. Nonetheless, it would take ten years for a woman to be elected to this chamber in her own right. Hattie Caraway, appointed to her husband's Senate seat in 1931, ignited a political firestorm in Arkansas politics when she decided to file for reelection. Although pressured by the male political elite to resign her Senate duties, Caraway was insistent in her political endeavors. Her political ambition never wavered. She wanted to test and demonstrate a woman could run for office. Caraway's victory promoted a wider path for women in congressional politics.

These first female politicians cultivated a blooming political interest in more women. Recognizing that women could provide a unique perspective to the public dialogue, many female citizens became disgruntled at the male-only candidate pool. Iris Blitch (D-GA), seemingly always interested in politics, first decided to run for the state legislature when she could not find a candidate to support. Blitch lost her initial run, but she was not dissuaded. She began to work

in state party politics, building a base of supporters. She went on to serve in the state house and state senate. But, in 1954, her own political motivations prompted her to challenge incumbent Rep. William Wheeler. A longtime family friend commented, “Iris was determined to be in politics at any level. She just felt she was the right candidate at that time to run. We could not get her to stay here in the state. She said she had to help fight for South Georgia in D.C.”

Bella Abzug, also, found the candidates for Congress unacceptable. She felt women were being excluded from political and legal discussions. A true feminist, Abzug, ran on the women’s rights platform. She remarked, “The other women in Congress were running not because they were women, but because they happened to be women. I was running because I was a woman” (Foerstel 1999). She needed no persuading to seek a congressional seat. Full of political zeal and spirit, she campaigned on the committed slogan “a woman belongs in the House” (Foerstel 1999). She aptly believed she was the best political candidate – a woman to represent women.

Congresswoman A, born in America’s heartland, moved to the South to attend college. She began teaching middle school students in a very, small rural town. In her second year of teaching, students came to her upset about the local city’s decision to close a nearby recreational beach area. “I told my students to get on the city council’s agenda. Go and express your opinions before the council. I helped them organize and prepare remarks to deliver before the council members.” Because of her students’ actions, the city reversed its decision. The students then pleaded earnestly with her to run for the city council. “I went home and told my husband what the students said. I asked what he thought. His comment was ‘You should do it, but you have to give it your all.’” And from that moment, this teacher worked tirelessly to blaze a political career from that small city to the U.S. Capitol.

At twenty-four, this teacher, now political candidate, won by only five votes a seat on the city council. “I loved politics from the beginning, and it was wonderful getting to solve problems for people.” She became an advocate for environmental and water issues. However, after eight years in city government, she decided to seek office in the state legislature. “I had done what I could for the city. It was time for me to go to the state senate and provide a new perspective to that body,” she stated. “Having local government experience, teaching experience and being a woman, I knew I could shake up a few things.” At thirty-one, she became the youngest elected state senator, and she also made her mark as the first woman to chair two prominent male-dominated committees.

In 1992, this female state senator calculated climbing the political ladder to the U.S. House of Representatives. New congressional districts were being drawn in her state due to the substantial population growth, and much of the growth had occurred in her area of the state. A new congressional seat was drawn that contained all of her senate district constituents. As she commented, “It was a great opportunity – a new seat, no incumbent. But, this is a full-time political career requiring me to travel back and forth to D.C., and I needed my family’s support.” Her family encouraged her to run for Congress, and she exclaimed, “My mother really made me. She was a strong woman who was never afraid to try something new. She took risks, and she was so influential in teaching me to go for whatever I wanted. I wanted to run, and she helped motivate and encourage me to run for Congress.” Throughout her political campaigns and career she held to the belief that one should seek the next political office only when “you can be helpful and help move important issues.” She proclaimed, “I really thought I could be helpful at the national level, and I thought the only way I could help my constituents was to serve them in D.C..” She ran for the seat and won in a close three-person contest.

All political glass ceilings have not been shattered. There are many elective offices within states still void of female politicians, and in these electoral situations, not all women contemplating a run for office need or seek encouragement. Many women possess the ambition and self-motivation needed to launch a political career. A female Midwestern representative stated,

Holding state office has been rewarding, but it wasn't enough. I decided to run for Congress because I wanted it. I had seen the negative influence of current congressmen – being unfair and unwilling to work with all citizens. I knew I could do better. I decided to get out there and be a candidate. I told myself – run for Congress and get elected to make a difference.

One southern female state senator remarked, “I knew as a young girl I would be in politics. Once I graduated from college and visited the Capitol and D.C., I knew that this was where my career was to be. I just decided to run for the House. Maybe it was always in me to be a representative.” Finally, former Congresswoman Pat Schroeder wrote when asked why she engaged in politics, “I was never a shrinking violet” (Schroeder 1998).

### **The Political Heiress**

For some women, politics runs deep within their blood. These women have been immersed into political lives either through marriage or birth. Many political wives and daughters do not shy away from the family's public roles. They embrace public service; some actively engage in the family's politics through campaigning, consulting, or constituent work in the elective office. Eleanor Roosevelt once commented, “It was a wife's duty to be interested in whatever interested her husband, whether it was politics, books or a particular dish for dinner” (Lewis 2012).

A politician's wife learns and experiences politics and public service each day through her husband's words and actions. She inherits a political sense and responsibility, and some acquire their husband's political ambition. Several wives have taken leadership roles within their husband's political offices. These women become loyal and dedicated political partners.

For example, Margaret Chase Smith, as her husband's personal secretary, handled the constituent mail, wrote speeches, and researched legislative bills. In 1940, her husband, Rep. Clyde Smith, who was in poor health, appealed to the voters to elect his "partner in public life" to succeed him (Foerstel 1999). She won the special election to fill his unexpired term. She first gained valuable campaign and legislative experience as a political spouse, but she catapulted her political identity and career through her role and service in the House. Smith, cognizant of congressional operations, actively worked in her committee assignments, legislative initiatives, and constituency services. She built a strong reputation in her service, and Maine voters rewarded her with four more terms to the House. But, in 1948, Smith decided to run for an open seat in the Senate. She remarked, "When people keep telling you that you can't do a thing, you kind of like to try it" (Lewis 2012). Her ambition and desire to prove to others that she could succeed in a political career encouraged her run for the Senate, but her political interest and role had been shaped by her husband's political involvement and passions. She easily defeated three challengers including the state's governor and former governor. She became the first woman to be elected to both the House and the Senate, and she was the first woman to have her name placed in nomination for the presidency of the United States.

Congresswoman B came to the U.S. House to fill the unexpired term of her late husband. During her husband's years in the U.S. House, Congresswoman B established a profitable public affairs and grassroots consulting business. She gained experience through her husband's

campaigns, and she helped other groups and candidates in their lobbying or campaign strategies. When her husband died, state party leaders approached her about running for his seat. “They told me I had great name recognition in the state, and I could easily continue his policy initiatives. Basically, I could just finish his term.” Congresswoman B decided to run for Congress “because I wanted to finish what Louis had started, and I wanted to really serve our people. They had entrusted us to help them. He taught me how to help people, and I wanted to do that.” She won the special election, and then decided to seek an additional term.

Congressional widows not only face the tragic sorrow of losing their husbands, but they encounter the reality of losing their family’s influence in the political environment. Many of these women accept the political establishment’s support for them to fulfill their husband’s terms until well-suited and ambitious candidates can run for the office. These women acknowledge a new political order and return to their lives before Congress. Other congressional widows do not want to be place holders. They are highly motivated to follow their husband’s examples and build their own political careers. Eight congressional widows – Frances Bolton, Mary Bono Mack, Beverly Byron, Lois Capps, Cardiss Collins, Jo Ann Emerson, Edith Nourse Rogers, and Margaret Chase Smith – built successful tenures in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate and served longer than their husbands. Congresswomen Rogers and Smith served over thirty years in congressional politics, and many of these widows served twice as long as their husbands (Women in Congress 2012). Congresswoman Byron commented, “Before I knew what was happening...my children [had] made the decision for me. I campaigned and ran because I knew the things he [Goodloe Byron] stood for and I understood how he felt. I wanted to give it a try. All you can do is try” (Romano 1983). Byron served three more terms than her husband, and she was the first woman to chair an Armed Services subcommittee. Congresswoman B stated, “I

was bitten by the political bug at that point [after winning the special election]. I had my own ideas, and I wanted to see them through.” She continued, “My husband helped open the door, but I really had more to offer now. I wanted to build my own political career in serving and helping the state and its people.” At first, these congressional widows, perhaps, continued their husbands’ political mantra, but soon they engaged themselves in political affairs and successfully developed their own strong refrain.

Being born into a political family does not necessarily destine one to public service. A child can be deterred from participating in the political world if she witnesses her parent engrossed in difficult campaigns or constant service for voters who are ungrateful. However, some children inherit political ambition, and they seek the political offices their parents held. A female state representative recalled, “I had campaigned for my great-grandfather as a young child. I went with him on the campaign trail. These were the days of barbecues and outside rallies. I remember all the excitement around the political race, and I didn’t want to ever miss that.” She later stated, “I just knew I would follow in his footsteps. I decided to run for office because I wanted to be like him – always feeling that campaign excitement and ability to meet people’s needs.” Senator Nancy Landon Kassebaum ran for the U.S. Senate in 1978 with the slogan “A Fresh Face, a Trusted Kansas Name.” Critics argued her campaigns would have been a joke if she had any name other than “Landon.” Her response, “It has been said I am riding on the coattails of my dad [Alfred Landon, former governor and presidential nominee], but I can’t think of any better coattails to ride on” (Kassebaum 1982).

Similarly, Barbara Kennelly’s life was spent surrounded by politicians. Kennelly inherited political blood from her father, John Bailey, the legendary Connecticut Democratic boss and chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Her marriage to James Kennelly,



Speaker of the Connecticut House, solidified her role in the political arena. She became a political wife, but she could not escape the political calling developed from her childhood. At the age of 40, Kennelly entered electoral politics. She won a seat on the Hartford City Council. However, she had set her eyes on a higher political office, Connecticut Secretary of State, the presumed stepping stone for females to Congress. Against the state Democratic establishment, Kennelly began to assemble a coalition of supporters similar to what many observers remembered as “her father’s deal-making skills” (*Politics in America* 1990). She won that election. But, a new political opportunity would emerge when an incumbent congressman died.

Kennelly, now captivated by political life, decided to run for the congressional seat. Building on her family’s name and connections, Kennelly was able to raise significant funds to campaign against a local female mayor. She was criticized for bringing in outside money. She stated, “To me, in 1981, it is very important to be the daughter of John Bailey. I used to try to separate it. I don’t try to separate it anymore...I’m not running as John Bailey’s daughter. I’m running as Barbara Kennelly, a woman who has established a record” (Madden 1981). Kennelly ascended the Democratic Party’s leadership ladder. She won a seat on the Ways and Means Committee, and she was named to the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee. Her House colleague Geraldine Ferraro said, “Her father must have injected her and her mother must have fed her political milk because she really has this sixth sense” (Purdom 1994).

Congresswoman C, also, is no stranger to politicians. She grew up in politics, campaigning at a young age for her father who was governor and later U.S. Senator. She worked as a recruiting officer for the Peace Corps, and later, she served as a staff assistant for a U.S. representative in his D.C. office. These work experiences helped crystallize her political aspirations.

Returning to her home state, Congresswoman C made her electoral debut by running for the city council at age thirty-seven. She served two years, honing her political knowledge on local affairs, especially fiscal solvency. Subsequently, motivated by new state issues and her father's role in state government, she ran for the state senate. In her three terms, this female state senator worked with colleagues to reduce and restructure the state budget and combat hunger and nutrition problems.

Not long into her state career, she felt a pull to serve in the U.S. Congress. "I grew up watching my dad serve in Washington, and I had worked on the Hill for a congressman. Also, I had seen female members of Congress, and I knew their roles were unique in the legislature," she commented. "I saw firsthand their legislative work, and I knew that at the right time, I would want to run for Congress." The House district encompassing her home became vacant when the congressman decided to run for governor. In this highly competitive district, she won by a plurality of only 5,400 votes against a former newspaper editor and city mayor. Her tenure within the U.S. House focused predominately on banking and finance issues. She continually called for combating pork barrel legislation, and thus, seeking "[to] spread a little sunshine on Capitol Hill" (*Congressional Record* 1991). She remarked, "I had to walk in the partisan middle because of my competitive district. I worked for those who wanted us to be conservative with tax dollars, but, too, I fought for more socially moderate measures and programs."

Her middle-of-the-road legislative style may have contributed to her defeat. "She was so moderate she was hard to define," commented one political observer (Rosenfeld 1992). Each reelection attempt for Congresswoman C had been a challenge. Seeking her third term, she lost 50 to 47 percent. She reported how upsetting it was to lose to a political novice, especially since she felt she knew her constituents and had worked so hard for them. Congresswoman C did not

lose her political will. Two years later, she sought the lieutenant governorship of her home state. She won the primary, but lost in the general election. “I wanted to continue to serve and show the value of my perspective and knowledge. I felt I could help the state. But the political climate here was changing, and our party was not the welcomed leaders.”

Not all children of politicians or political spouses are drawn into public service. Some travel an entirely different career path and run from politics. However, others are left with this keen political calling and seek identical political careers as their parents. A southern female state representative noted, “I was my father’s daughter – that is really a congressman’s daughter. I liked everything in politics that he did. I gained all my political knowledge from him. I would not have run for office if it had not been for him. I wanted his job. He shaped my life, and he pushed me to get me there.”

### **The Politically-Inspired Adherent**

Female politicians assuredly give great acclaim to their families for molding who they are and encouraging their successes in politics. However, sometimes the individuals who inspired these female state legislators and congresswomen to run for the U.S. House and U.S. Senate are not family members. They are people with whom they worked and political women whom they never personally met. Interested in politics, history, and social services, some of these women worked for state officials and congressmen, and they witnessed in national and global politics the ascension of women into leadership roles. As Lockwood and Kunda (1997) contend, these “role models who excel at one’s own domain of interest can be inspiring” (101).

Many women enter the political world from legal professions. Their legal careers establish a foundational interest in politics and in shaping new legislation. Law partners and

associates are many times personal mentors. Eight female state representatives recounted how a law colleague had served in the state legislature and had encouraged them to think of political careers. These women witnessed how their legal partners could run campaigns, meet with voters, and manage a law practice and the legislative sessions. A female state senator remarked,

I started private practice with James Howard, and he was my closest example of managing politics and business. He had a leadership role in the state senate. He encouraged me to run for the open state house seat in our area. He told me I could win. Then, I decided I wanted to serve with him and follow his lead. I decided to run because James influenced what I thought I could do and how I could be a success.

A West Coast female state representative stated, “I had worked with Mark Timms in our law practice for ten years. He had been serving in the state house, and he always joked with me about how I should run for state office.” She continued, “I knew if Mark was capable of it, then I could do it. He plotted out a political trajectory for me – going all the way to Congress. He told me I could win, and he inspired me to make these decisions to run for the state and then the House.”

Other women decide to run for political office after serving in the elective office of a state legislator or congressman. Seven current female members of Congress once worked for a U.S. representative, U.S. senator or congressional committee. Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) now holds the Senate seat once held by her boss, Senator William Cohen. She credits much of her political inspiration and legislative prowess to her work experience with Senator Cohen. Furthermore, Barbara Lee (D-CA) succeeded her former boss, Rep. Ron Dellums. She campaigned on the slogan, “Carrying the baton,” and she spoke highly of Dellums’ influence on her political thinking and decisions to run for Congress (Foerstel 1999). Congresswoman D commented,

I interned for Congressman George one summer, and I got to see his role in the chamber. He had clout; people listened to him. I was inspired, and I thought, ‘I want to do this.’ I returned home, finished college, and then I started working with our female Lieutenant Governor. Caroline was a friend and mentor. I talked with her about my decision to run for Congress. I asked her what I needed to do because she had been successful statewide. She told me some interesting facts about campaigning, and things that I still think are great advice. I decided to run because of what I learned from my time in D.C. with George. He showed me a congressman’s life, and he told me to strive for anything. But Caroline, also, inspired me to run because I saw her achievement as a woman.

In addition, a recently elected female state representative stated, “I ran because of my mentor, state senator Adams. Senator Adams hired me to be his chief of staff. From here, I learned the legislative ropes. He strongly encouraged me to run, and I think he is the main reason I entered the House race. He told me I could achieve any office.” These personal experiences with politicians reveal attainable achievements. These mentors helped these women develop political goals and encouraged their decisions to seek political office.

Pioneering women in politics and in congressional leadership have greatly influenced female citizens and potential office seekers. Women acknowledge how these firsts among female politicians motivated their engagement and candidacy decisions. Many female elected officials recall the accomplishments of outstanding women, including Eleanor Roosevelt, Margaret Thatcher, Barbara Jordan, Geraldine Ferraro, Patricia Schroeder, and Hillary Clinton.

Female activist, Caroline O’Day, lobbied with Jeannette Rankin for women’s right to vote. Through her state political efforts in New York, she became good friends with Eleanor Roosevelt. The two friends worked to organize voters and “women Democrats into a powerful force” (Foerstel 1999, 211). O’Day decided to run for Congress in 1934. She noted the importance that Eleanor Roosevelt had played in her decision to seek political office. O’Day remembered how the First Lady stated, “I think Mrs. O’Day represents in herself the real reason why most women enter politics, which is in order to achieve changes in our social organization,

which they become convinced can be reached only through government” (“President’s Wife Raising O’Day Fund” 1934). O’Day was moved by Roosevelt’s genuine belief in her ability, and the First Lady fostered a will in her political candidacy. A current Democratic state representative from the Midwest stated, “Eleanor Roosevelt showed that women were as politically knowledgeable and determined as the men. She inspired me to learn more about our nation and its policies. It might sound crazy, but in some ways, she really motivated me to get involved and run for office.”

A southern female state representative recalled her decision to seek higher political office. “I had met with many congressional figures in my past work, and I knew female leaders. But, I know my biggest political influence or role model is Margaret Thatcher. I saw her as the first woman to step out and lead. She kept her values and principles while leading, and I decided then I could run for our national legislature and be effective.” Similarly, Congresswoman E stated, “I was inspired by many women in politics. I can’t say one decisively motivated me to run for Congress. But, I took ideals and virtues from a few women.” She continued, “I was greatly influenced by Margaret Thatcher in Britain. She was leading a nation. I guess I got into politics because I saw her and a few other women succeed. I owe those women for inspiring in me a desire for a top political career.”

Numerous female politicians speak of Geraldine Ferraro as a role model. Former Texas Governor, Ann Richards, commented on Ferraro’s selection as the Vice-Presidential nominee, “The first thing I thought of was not winning in the political sense, but of my two daughters. To think of the numbers of young women who can now aspire to anything” (Martin 2011). Ferraro inspired young women to reach and seek new goals in national politics. Some believed “her ascendance gave many women heart” (Martin 2011). Ferraro stated in her 1984 speech at the

Democratic National Convention, “If we can do this, we can do anything” (Martin 2011). Her achievements made success in politics for women seem possible. Former Congresswoman A stated, “I respected Geraldine Ferraro. She took women to new heights in politics. She showed us we could do anything in the political world. Her example motivated many of my political decisions, especially when I wanted to advance my career.”

Two female politicians related the inspirational influence of Hillary Clinton in their candidacy decisions. A southern female state senator commented, “Clinton is inspiring. She faced tough situations, but rose above them to go after what she wanted. After seeing her try and succeed, I was moved. I decided then to run for Congress – go after it like Hillary.” A former congresswoman remarked, “Hillary Clinton was able to frame issues so well. She really strove to get things done, and she has such respect for women and our abilities. I watched her run for the New York Senate seat. She mounted a great campaign, and when our Senate seat opened up, I looked to her. She really encouraged my run.”

“Outstanding women can function as inspirational examples of success, illustrating the kinds of achievements that are possible for women around them” (Lockwood 2006, 44). Many of these women saw an exceptional individual who seemed relevant to their future political career decisions. In many instances, she compared herself to this individual and became inspired by her accomplishments – inspired to the point of seeking elective office or advancement in politics.

### **Her Lady’s Political Protégé**

Some ambitious female politicians perceptively model the careers of successful political women. Some women aspiring to climb the political ladder to the U.S. Congress need the

examples set forth by female political role models. “A role model in one’s own field shares more correspondence with oneself than does a role model in an unrelated field, and thus offers more information about one’s own future prospects and potential” (Lockwood 2006, 37). These female congressional role models serve as guides to the prospective achievements for which many female state legislators and female office seekers strive. These women choose a political course similar, if not identical, to the female role model, and they, especially, welcome opportunities to advance their public service careers. Congresswoman F astutely remarked,

We need to see someone doing something up the political pipeline to see ourselves able to do it. As women, we want to know all the answers before we run for office. We need to see the answers through other women’s successes. Up the political pipeline, we see our role models of successful women. And if possible, we choose political paths similar to those successfully serving women.

Prominent congresswomen, Margaret Chase Smith, Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Jordan and Patricia Schroeder, encapsulate female political role models. These are women in the political pipeline who created political career paths by which ambitious females have followed. They personally motivated female politicians in their states to run for higher office.

Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins “each mention [Margaret Chase] Smith as an important role model” (Sherrill 2011). Senator Collins recalls how Smith took her into her Senate office and talked to her for two hours. “The meeting still fuels me. Even though my family was very encouraging of opportunities, there were a lot of mixed messages for women in that era. But I left her office that day thinking that a woman could do anything” (Sherrill 2011).

A southern female state senator revealed how influential Shirley Chisholm was to her political career. This state senator, as a young child, campaigned for her uncle in a state senate contest. “It was fun to pass out pamphlets and tell people about my uncle who was running, but I didn’t think about politics as a career then. I wanted to be a good government worker.” She



continued, “Then, I met Shirley Chisholm, and my life was changed.” She recalled, “I worked with her in her organization, and we talked about issues and talked about solving problems. She inspired me to run at the state level first. I could gain experience in state issues. But, I wanted to be like her – just like her. So, I decided to run for Congress. Shirley Chisholm is the reason I ran for office. She motivated me to seek a congressional career.”

In addition, a female state representative stated, “There is no black woman in politics today that is not in her [Barbara Jordan’s] debt. She taught us to take charge.” Representatives Eddie Bernice Johnson and Sheila Jackson Lee praise Barbara Jordan’s accomplishments and work within the U.S. House. She provided these women political courage, political guidance, and acted as an influential mentor. Johnson began her political career in the Texas state legislature which followed Jordan’s first political path. She quipped, “Jordan had plenty of political advice” (Trescott 1996). In 1992, seeking to climb in politics and imitate the success of Jordan, Johnson, who chaired the Texas Senate Special Congressional Redistricting Subcommittee, was determined to create a majority-minority district for herself. With her influence, the committee drew a heavily black Democratic district around Dallas. She ran in the district and won the congressional seat with over 75 percent of the vote. In Houston, Representative Sheila Jackson Lee ran for the congressional seat once held by Barbara Jordan. She remarked in an interview that her political ambitions emerged from her desire to help women and black people. She decided to leave the Houston City Council and run for Congress because of the example set by Barbara Jordan. Lee hoped to continue and build upon Jordan’s congressional initiatives for Houston (Bruni 1999).

In 1996, Patricia Schroeder, Colorado’s first female congresswoman, decided to retire after twenty-four years in the House. She had become “the dean of the House women – the

longest serving woman at that time” (Foerstel 1999). Her legacy as a liberal outsider refusing to play by the rules of the male-dominated Congress energized women throughout the nation. She garnered national respect, and many women aspired to be her. Congresswoman Schroeder endorsed Diana DeGette as her replacement. DeGette commented she sought the congressional seat because of Schroeder’s influence and encouragement. At a press conference, Schroeder asked DeGette to try on her congressional shoes. DeGette replied, “I feel like Cinderella” (Brooke 1996). Her dreams to advance in politics, as Rep. Schroeder had, would come true. She won the seat, and many refer to her as “a Schroeder clone” (Brooke 1996).

Congresswomen Patricia Schroeder and Diana DeGette have indeed affected female state legislators’ decisions to advance in politics. One female state representative stated, “I grew up watching Pat. She was fiery, and I wanted to be like her. She and Diana have encouraged me to run for office. I’m in the state house now, following Diana, hopefully to learn what I need to move up. I’m now looking for a time when I can run for Congress, and I’ll do it because they showed me how.”

Congresswoman G first experienced politics when running for her eighth-grade class presidency. She challenged her then boyfriend for the class position and lost. “I lost by one vote. My vote. You see, I voted for my opponent because I thought it was polite,” she later recalled. “Well, he voted for himself, and I learned my lesson: if you believe in yourself, vote for yourself” (Washington 1995). This early political contest taught Congresswoman G to trust her own abilities, speak out for herself and her issues, and to strive for positions that might seem unattainable.

She became extremely interested in her community while teaching high school English. Congresswoman G stated, “I was concerned with the local government. It seemed ‘out of touch’

with the current issues, its spending, and the people's interests. That's when I decided to get involved." At the age of thirty-three, she ran for the county board. She won, and within four years, she decided to seek a seat in the state legislature. "I enjoyed my service on the local board, but I knew I wanted to affect things at the state level. Ann Kersey, a state senator, motivated me to run for the state house." Congresswoman G continued, "I saw Ann's success. I had seen her win her district, and, even though we are not partisan sisters, I thought, if she can, I can do it, too."

She served in the state house for six years before deciding to run for the state senate. Once enamored by politics, Congresswoman G gravitated to her political mentors. She sought their counsel and encouragement in an attempt to fashion her own political career after theirs. "In some ways, I followed Ann's lead. She served in the state senate, and I wanted to move up as she had. Once again, she encouraged me. I learned from her how to organize volunteers and raise money. She was ambitious, and she was determined to change things. Sometimes, I think I also wanted to outshine her." Certainly, this female politician was eager to advance her political knowledge and use her talents in the broader political spectrum.

The perfect political prospect for ascending the political ladder emerged for this Midwestern state senator. "Our U.S. Representative retired to run for the presidency. It was an open seat, and I knew the field would be crowded with ambitious people," she stated. "But, I knew that I had been successful in the state senate representing many of these people, and I could mount a strong campaign. I decided to run because I had seen the successes of others and my own success." She acknowledged the encouragement from her political role models. She stated, "Ann ran for Congress years before, and I saw what her campaign needed. Ann told me the time was right for a woman." She also remarked, "I had met Congressman Daniel Church. He was a

leader in Congress, and he gave me some really good advice about running for the House. He told me I could win if I was tough and if I focused on what people wanted. After meeting with Daniel, I thought I could do it, and I decided to run.”

She won the U.S. House seat and quickly became a leader within her political party. Congresswoman G did not want to be seen as a feminist or a party trailblazer. She exclaimed, “I didn’t think of myself and I didn’t go everywhere humming, ‘I Am Woman.’” Later she commented,

I did not want to stand at the back of the chamber. I wanted to be a player and lead. I had a unique woman’s perspective, and at that time, some men in the House needed to hear from us and learn from us. I had learned from great women before me. I was shaped by their examples in public service, but now was the time I wanted to show the truth of what women could accomplish and do within politics.

Personal tragedies in her young life helped shape Senator A’s resolve and character. From the death of her parents and her husband, she learned how to relate to people and found a passion to serve – to serve in the political world.

Strongly encouraged by friends and political colleagues, this political widow decided to run in the special election to fill her husband’s vacant state legislative seat. “I wasn’t sure I wanted to run. But, I had good friends tell me that I should be involved and continue my husband’s work. They said you can do this; you have already been actively involved in politics through your office and his.” She won with sixty percent of the vote, and two years later, won a second term. “I was ready to move on in politics. I wanted to build a career and serve more people,” she remarked. And, she did. After two terms in the state house, she won a seat in the state senate.

However, two years later her old boss, Congressman Davis ran for the U.S. Senate. With the open seat, this female state senator saw an advantageous opportunity to move ahead in

politics. “I knew the congressional district from my previous work with him [Davis], and I was currently serving people within the district. Also, I felt I understood the people and their interests,” she commented. She continued to recall,

Therefore, if I campaigned explaining I would work for them, I thought I could win. [State X] has been good for female candidates. Our voters are willing to listen to us, and I knew how successful Frances [former U.S. Representative and U.S. Senator] had been. She helped me decide to run. I followed her lead in many instances. I learned from her what I needed to do, and I did it.

Her state’s senior senator decided to retire in the mid-1990s. Again, the opportunity was present for this female to climb the political ladder, and she did. She won the Senate seat to become the fourth woman in history to serve in both the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate. Senator A paid great tribute to her illustrious female predecessor, Frances Clifford. “Our state’s first woman representative and senator is certainly a great role model. She combined political and personal virtues that inspire other women seeking to serve. Her independence was legendary, and she certainly paved a path of integrity and honesty.” Senator A may have been inspired by her state’s female role model, but, now, she is the exemplar of the successful female politician.

“Thus, women may choose female role models in part because they provide important evidence that women can achieve career success despite gender barriers; this overcoming of obstacles appears to be one component of what transforms these successful women into role models for other women” (Lockwood 2006, 43). A Midwestern female state representative stated, “I started in politics to make a difference. I had met [Vera], and she showed me how women could provide a different perspective. She represented success in this political field. I charted a political career after hers – ran for the state legislature and then I ran for the U.S. House.”

## **Becoming a Female Political Role Model**

Current female officeholders believe it is their responsibility to encourage young girls and women to run for political office. These women have utilized their specific talents and skills to achieve electoral successes. Their political struggles and accomplishments are testaments of how to build political careers. These female politicians are now political role models.

Overwhelmingly, these current female politicians desire to be more than just inspirational examples. “The first women in Congress were significant pioneers. We now have opportunities as role models to mentor personally females deciding to run. It is our duty to encourage them to be candidates and show them the tools they’ll need to win,” stated Congresswoman A. “It is my belief that we are to try and groom young women for elective office. We are to encourage and motivate them. We tell them – yes, you can do this,” remarked one southern female state senator. Moreover, Congresswoman F noted, “It is important for women to help other women. Politics is very challenging, and if we have succeeded, we need to motivate and help other women get seats at the table.”

Several congresswomen described how they contact female state legislators in their states to encourage them to run in future electoral contests. A former congresswoman stated, “We may not think we are role models, but we are examples for women wanting to be in politics or move up in politics. We must let women know that their voices need to be heard.” She also noted, “I believe I must encourage women to be involved and to run for office. I work every day to get women elected. I hold workshops where female officeholders can build their public speaking skills and learn the important resources needed to campaign for Congress.” In addition, Congresswoman D stated, “Women have a different skill set to offer the political world, and we should not hide from it. We need to encourage each other to be whatever you want to be.” She

continued, “Our current female state officials are building useful knowledge, and I encourage them to run for Congress. I offer to help them fundraise and network. I want more women in Congress, and I would encourage them to follow my political path.” Interestingly, Congresswoman A stated, “We must teach women that we can’t be pigeon-holed. We set our own hurdles before us. And I believe it is time for us, as congresswomen, role models, if you like to call us, to show how to take risks, build coalitions, and win. We can reach the political top.”

Finally, Senator B spoke of her role and belief about women in politics. “My goal is to inspire young woman (and men) with stories of women who have found their own path rather than following a conventional road. I was inspired by women in my state, and I want to share my own political successes and the stories of other women trailblazers. We have so much to learn from one another. We need to share and encourage each other.”

## **Conclusion**

Deep-seated political ambition or ambition sparked by the encouraged words and successes of political actors prompted these female state legislators and congressional women to run for higher political office. Each woman in politics has a distinctive personal background and rise into the public sphere. Some women are inspired by familial relationships where individuals taught them to take risks, and others are politically motivated through professional mentoring relationships. Many of these women built political careers shaped after the electoral successes of their political role models. Female political role models facilitate inspiration and have provided a pathway of electoral achievements by which women have followed. Role models seem to matter in female candidate decision-making. For some, her political career advancement to

Congress is uniquely tied to the political pathway blazed by a highly ambitious and courageous woman. These female politicians, also, discuss their commitment to encourage a new generation of women to seek elective offices. They believe they are role models for women aspiring to climb the political ladder. If female politicians allude to their perceived inspiration by female political actors, and they, too, feel a responsibility to mentor women in politics, then there must be some evidence that female political role models influence the decisions of female candidates to run for higher office and their electoral successes. The next two chapters test this argument of whether female political role models influence women to run for higher office. I present quantitative evidence in support of the influential nature of female political role models on female politicians' emergence to the U.S. House and U.S. Senate.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN'S ASCENSION TO THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Women shape the views of other women. Women motivate and influence each other. We, as elected female officials, influence other women to be engaged in the process, not just learning politics to discuss and vote. But, we shape women's views of being candidates. We demonstrate women can run and raise money, and really, what we show them is we can win votes.

*-Five-Term Female Member of Congress, 2010*

The preceding chapters reveal the current gaps in the elections and women and politics subfields surrounding outside political role models' influence on potential candidates' emergence and electoral outcomes. Scholars allude to the influence of role models on shaping political ambition, encouraging political discussion, and eliciting participation, yet none have tested empirically such claims on candidate decision-making and electoral successes. Importantly, we are unsure if women's candidate decision-making differs when they are motivated by the successes of other female politicians from their states.

In chapter three, I theorized how female politicians serve as political role models to female state officials, and it culminated into two sets of research hypotheses to examine the influence these female political role models have on female state legislators' career decisions to climb the political ladder – running for the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate and succeeding in their electoral endeavors. The previous chapter described what personally motivated many female politicians to decide to run for the U.S. Congress. Some women possess an inner confidence and political ambition to be the first female risk-taker for higher office in her

district or state. Other women need encouragement from family members, mentors, or political role models to seek higher political office. Female politicians acknowledge the importance of female political pioneers, female political role models, and their own interest in serving as role models. Therefore, have these female political role models significantly affected women's aspirations, progressive ambition, and decisions to run for Congress?

This chapter highlights the influential forces that drive state legislators' decisions to run for higher political office and their electoral successes to the U.S. House of Representatives. The first set of models considers the motivating factors (personal or political) for a potential candidate to emerge to the U.S. House and suggests that male and female state legislators differ in their decision-calculi based on a perceived encouragement from female political role models. Moreover, this analysis proposes that female state legislators are not monolithic political actors, equally affected by the same female political role model. Female state politicians respond to the presence and distinctive offices that female political role models hold. The second set of models analyzes the political dynamics associated with the electoral outcomes of state legislators in congressional contests. These electoral outcome models support the discipline's literature that men and women are equally successful in their congressional attempts, yet they suggest that female political role models soundly influence a female state legislator's victory or defeat.

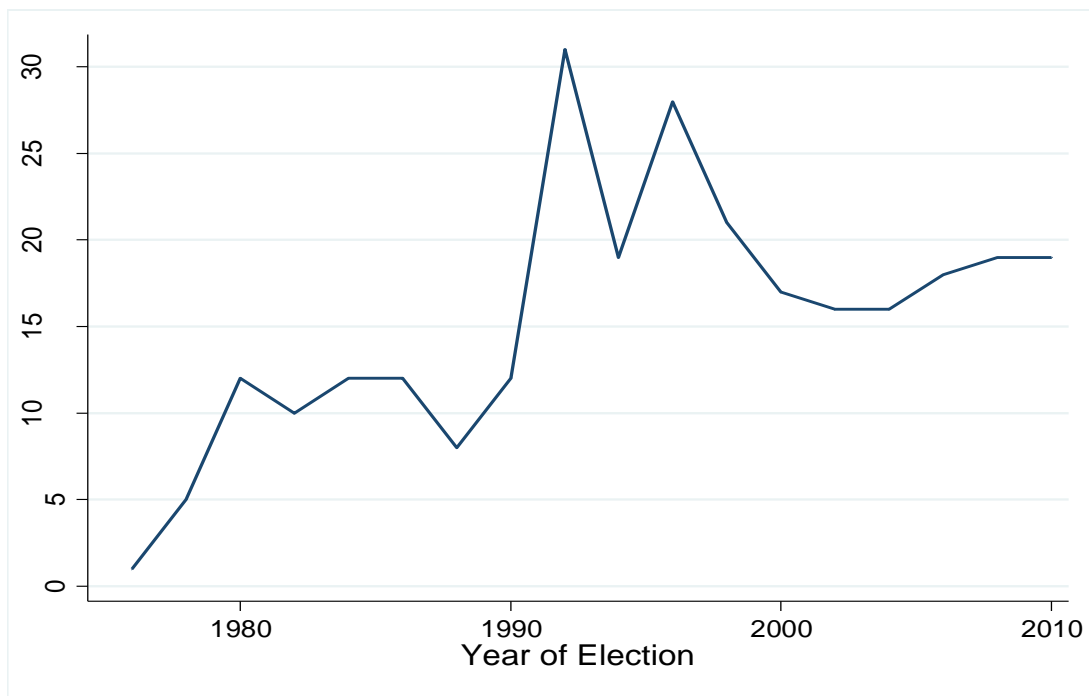
### **State Legislators' Candidacy Decisions**

A potential office seeker's decision calculus varies based upon numerous personal and contextual factors. As one southern female state legislator remarked, "The right timing and opportunity has to come together for me to consider a run for higher office. I just wouldn't take that risk blindly. I would consider a woman's chance of success, the district, who's running, and

what the national conditions look like. All perfect conditions must align – all together” (Phone Interview 2011). The costs-benefits utility model for any candidate to run for office must contain such personal factors as one’s own political background, experience, and skills, but also, one may evaluate the political structural environment of the electoral contest. Other political actors can provide encouragement and momentum, thus offering a greater utility for one’s decision to ascend the political ladder. Therefore, the following empirical tests consider each of these elements to discern what significantly affects a state legislator’s decision to run for a congressional seat.

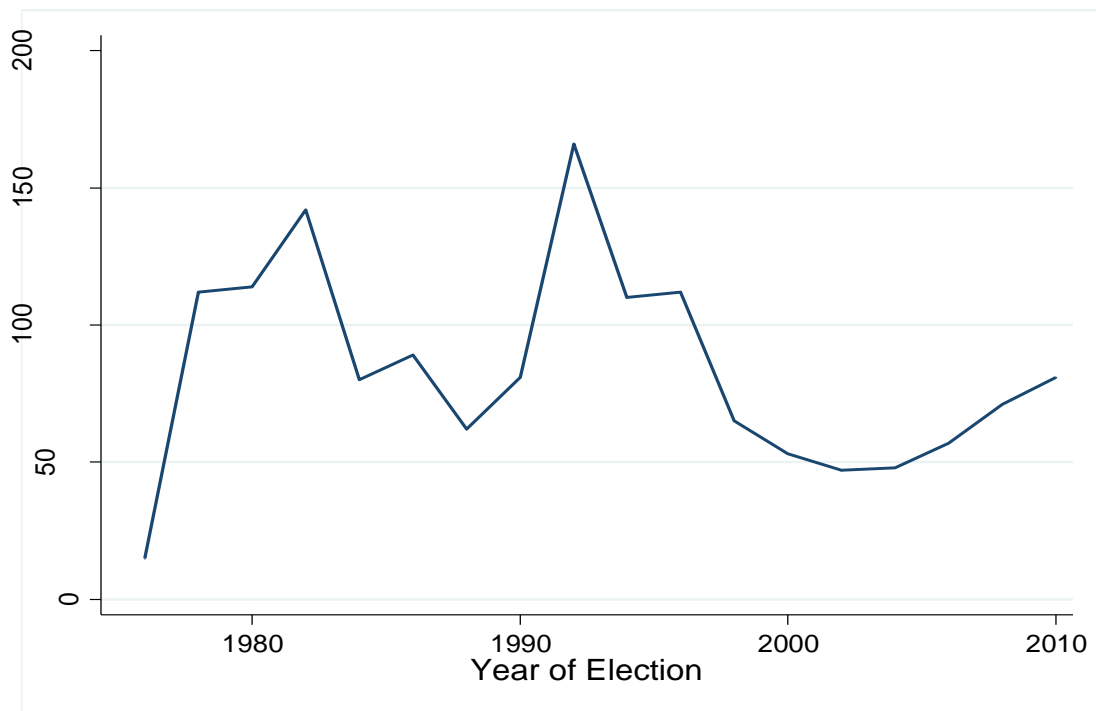
This study’s data consist of 45,861 state legislators serving in either a state’s senate or lower house. Through the eighteen election cycles for the U.S. House of Representatives, 1,781 state legislators sought career advancements; therefore, respectively 3.88% of state legislators ran for a congressional seat. Two hundred and seventy-six female state legislators (15.5%) emerged to run in these congressional elections. Interestingly, of the women who made it into general election contests, seventy (44.6%) were successful in their congressional bids, which is a success rate comparable to their male colleagues (44.8%).

Figure 5.1 shows the pattern of female state legislators’ emergence to the U.S. House. Female state legislators began their career ascent in the 1980s with a steady progression throughout this decade, with only a slight decline in 1988. As expected, the greatest numbers of female state legislators, thirty-one, emerge for the U.S. House in 1992, the “Year of the Woman.” In 1996, another significant peak for women emerging occurs. Perhaps, many Democrats were motivated to reclaim seats lost in the 1994 elections. Then after 2000, the tendency for women emerging steadies with approximately twenty female state legislators seeking congressional seats each electoral cycle.



**FIGURE 5.1 Female State Legislators’ Emergence to the U.S. House of Representatives**

For purposes of comparison, Figure 5.2 demonstrates the unique pattern for male state legislators’ emergence to the U.S. House of Representatives. There is a significant progression of male state legislators running for Congress until 1982, and then there is a decline until the 1990s. Much like female state legislators, their male colleagues emerged in greater numbers for the 1992 congressional elections. In 1992, one hundred and sixty-six male state legislators sought political career advancements to the U.S. House. These increases in state legislators seeking House seats may suggest a prominent role of the 1992 redistricting in the candidates’ decision-calculi. We do not see another spike in emergence for male state legislators after 1992. The numbers of male state legislators emerging for the House since 1996, declined with a low of forty-seven in 2002. However, since 2006, there has been a gradual increase in the numbers of men leaving state offices for congressional offices.



**FIGURE 5.2 Male State Legislators' Emergence to the U.S. House of Representatives**

These two figures reveal the total number of state legislators who emerged for the U.S. House over this thirty-five year time period. But, individually who are these state legislators who emerged and what opportunity structure did they face when deciding to run for the U.S. House? Table 5.1 presents this pool of potential congressional candidates and the political environment in which these candidates ran for office.

Over fifty percent of these state legislators reside in states where a female political role model currently holds elective office. Most of these state legislators have witnessed the electoral success of a female member of Congress. Six states: Alaska, Delaware, Iowa, Mississippi, North Dakota, and Vermont have yet to elect a woman to the U.S. House. Moreover, there have been fewer electoral successes for women to state governorships and the U.S. Senate. Only twenty-six states have had a female governor, and twenty-three states have had female U.S. senators. In

many instances, a woman was appointed to the Senate seat, serving only a few days or months, and she did not seek or win election to the seat.<sup>15</sup>

**TABLE 5.1 Profile of State Legislators – the Candidate Eligibility Pool**

	<b>State Legislators</b>	<b>Female State Legislators</b>
<b>State Legislative Service</b>		
Senate	9.5%	10.0%
House	90.5	90.0
<b>Held Prior Elective Office</b>	38.3	77.0
<b>Party Affiliation</b>		
Republican	41.3	41.8
Democrat	55.3	54.5
Other	3.4	3.7
<b>Term Limited</b>	13.5	16.1
<b>Have Female Role Models</b>	56.4	62.5
<b>Contested Open Seats</b>	41.2	41.3
<b>Contested Special Elections</b>	12.6	11.6
<b>N</b>	45,861	9,172

Almost sixty-three percent of female state legislators serve in states where a woman currently holds a higher political office. These actively serving female politicians provide a testimony of political success to the female state legislators. These female state legislators have witnessed the candidacies and career successes of respective state female political actors.

<sup>15</sup> In the Appendix, I provide the number of women who have served in higher office per state and year to give an exact account of female political role models.

However, if we consider all female politicians who have served in higher elective office throughout the years as female political role models, less than nine percent of female state legislators have lived in states without these female political examples. Are women in state legislatures influenced by the electoral successes of female politicians in higher office? Are they more willing to seek political career advancements when they have female examples to follow?

Descriptive results show evidence that over ninety percent of the female state legislators who ran for the House emerged from states that at some time have had a female political role model.<sup>16</sup> In order to assess whether there is a relationship between female political role models and female state legislators' decisions to ascend the political ladder, I estimate several logistic regression models. Ordinary least-square regression is an inappropriate statistical tool for these empirical tests of the data because the dependent variable is a dichotomous measure of whether a state legislator emerged or not (Aldrich and Nelson 1994). Therefore, I estimate the probability of state legislators emerging to run for the U.S. House (emerged=1) when there are female political role models serving in the states and when the personal and political context is opportune for career advancements.

The models' results for state legislators' emergence are presented in Table 5.2. Robust standard errors are reported to account for the possibility of heteroskedasticity. I estimate two models with the entire dataset of state legislators to avoid any concerns of selection bias. Model 1 examines the influence of female political role models upon the candidacy decisions of state legislators to determine if female state legislators respond differently to a female role model's electoral success. Model 2 utilizes the variables of Model 1, but adds two new variables to examine whether female political role models of the same partisan affiliation significantly affect

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<sup>16</sup> Seventeen of the 276 female state legislators who ran for the House sought these seats without witnessing a female political role model's electoral success in their states. Eight-four percent of these women ran prior to 1992, and sixty-eight percent ran in three states: Nevada, New Hampshire and Wisconsin.

female state legislators' decisions to seek congressional seats. I code this partisan congruence variable one if the female state legislator and female political role model are of the same political party (i.e. they are both Republican and/or Democrat), and zero otherwise. Included, as well, is an interaction term to account for whether the partisan congruence significantly affects females' decisions for political career ascension.

First, Models 1 and 2 show female state legislators are significantly less likely than their male colleagues to seek a congressional seat. I generated predicted probabilities for state legislators emerging. For these electoral cycles, a female state legislator's probability of emerging is 1.3% less than her male colleague's probability. Female political role models negatively affect all state legislators' emergence to the U.S. House of Representatives. So few state legislators emerge to run for the U.S. Congress, and as measured, most state legislators reside in states with female political role models. Perhaps in some instances, many state legislators face an environment where they would be required to run against these female political incumbents; and therefore, their probability of running is smaller.

However, I argue that female state legislators would respond more intently to the examples set by female political role models. Both models capture the effects that symbolic representation have upon a female state legislator's decision to seek higher office. Female political role models significantly influence a female state legislator's decision to run for a congressional seat. Female state legislators are significantly more likely to run for the U.S. House when they witness the success of a female political role model from their respective states.



**TABLE 5.2 State Legislators' Emergence to the U.S. House of Representatives 1976-2010**

Logit Analysis for Emergence=1		Coefficient (Robust Standard Errors)	
		<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>
<b>Gender</b>		-1.23*** (0.24)	-1.24*** (0.24)
<b>The Political Role Models</b>			
	Female Role Model	-0.18*** (0.04)	-0.17*** (0.04)
	Gender * Female Role Model	0.44* (0.25)	0.45* (0.25)
	Partisan Congruence		-0.07* (0.04)
	Gender *Role Model Same Party		0.00 (0.01)
<b>The State Legislator's Characteristics</b>			
	State Legislator Party	0.00 (0.01)	0.07* (0.04)
	State Legislative Chamber	0.22** (0.08)	0.22** (0.08)
	Prior Elective Experience	1.48*** (0.06)	1.48*** (0.06)
<b>The Political Environment</b>			
	Open Seat/Contested Race	1.09*** (0.05)	1.09*** (0.05)
	District Partisanship	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01** (0.00)
	Term Limits	-1.06*** (0.12)	-1.05*** (0.11)
	Special Elections	0.21** (0.08)	0.22** (0.08)
	State Legislature Professionalism	0.02*** (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)
<b>Constant</b>		-4.32*** (0.14)	-4.32*** (0.14)
Log Likelihood		-6665.4562	-6664.0091
Likelihood Ratio chi2(1)		25.04	2.86
Area under ROC curve		0.7623	0.7626
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>		0.1131	0.1133
Number of Observations		45861	45861
***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10			

Again I generated the predicted probabilities of female state legislators emerging. For example, with all control variables held constant at their means or medians, the probability of a female state legislator emerging to the U.S. House when she has any one of the respective female political role models is 2.21 percent. Furthermore, a female state legislator's probability of emergence when she has a female role model increases by 1.7 percent when the congressional race is for an open seat.

Having a female political role model in a female state legislator's respective state may not motivate her to seek higher office if that female success has been found in the opposing political party. Model 2 captures the partisan story of female state legislators and their female political role models. Most of the women in the dataset are Democrats. Over 75 percent of the female state legislators and female role models represent this same political party; whereby, only 21 percent of the Republican women have Republican female role models. Seventy-seven percent of Democrat female state legislators who emerged had a Democrat female role model versus almost nineteen percent for Republican female state legislators.

Model 2 provides very similar evidence to Model 1 for candidate emergence. Importantly, Model 2 shows a female political role model of the same political party significantly decreases the probability of state legislators emerging for congressional seats. The data contain four times as many male state legislators as female state legislators. Therefore, I would not expect female political role models of the same party to affect state legislators equally. Male politicians would not be motivated by the successes of female political role models. However, these men may be inclined to challenge female politicians of opposing parties. I expect female political role models of the same party to influence female state legislators'

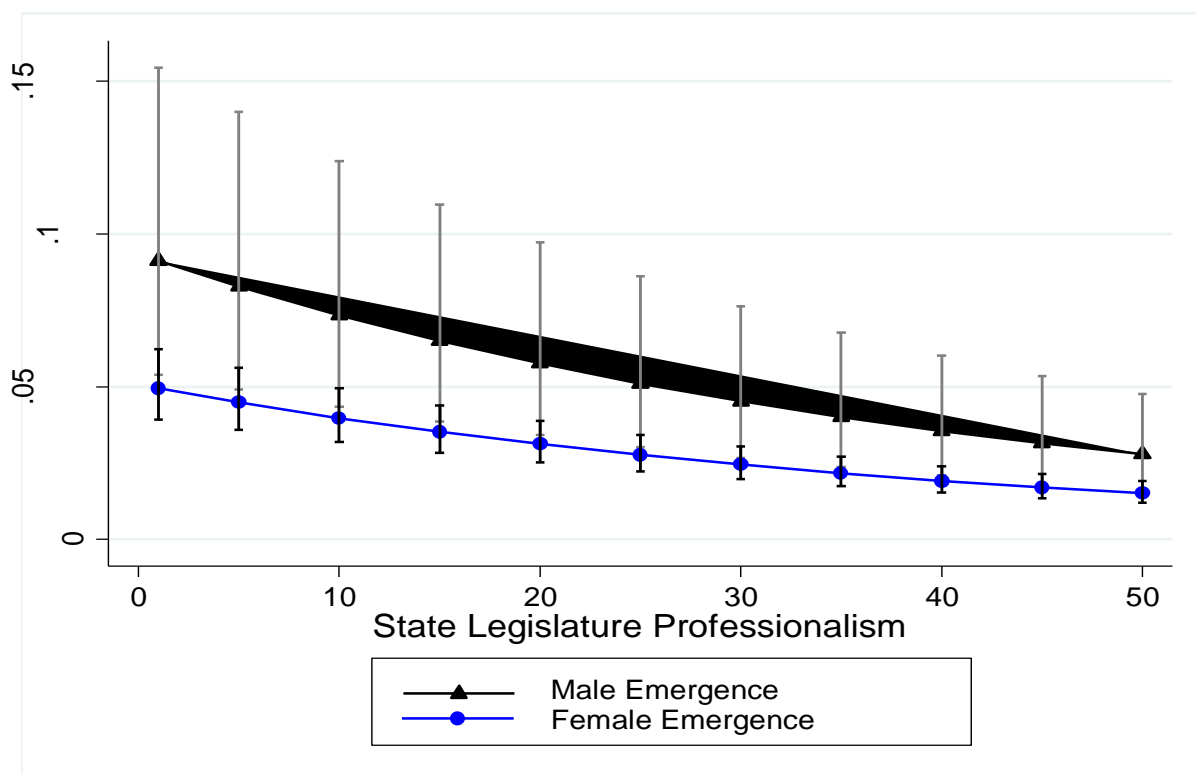
decisions to seek higher office. Nonetheless, there is no significant relationship between female role models of the same political parties as female state legislators.

Several of the control variables are statistically significant. State legislators are more likely to emerge when they are members of the states' house chambers and when they have prior elective experience. Overwhelmingly, state legislatures' lower chambers contain a larger membership base upon which to draw potential candidates than the upper chambers. Some state representatives may find ascension to the U.S. House similar in legislative styles and work to their current representative bodies, and thus, seek a career in this body. Many politicians may find their prior political experiences have sharpened their political skills and whetted their appetites for careers in higher political offices.

In addition, each of the political environment variables significantly affects a state legislator's decision to run for the U.S. House. State legislators are significantly more likely to run for congressional seats in special elections and when the seats are open contests, not challenging incumbents. State legislators are less likely to run when they are term-limited. Some state legislators, facing the end of their political terms, may find an electoral environment for Congress unreceptive to their candidacies. These state legislators may have to face incumbents who have held office for numerous years or they may reside in a congressional district that is unfavorable to their respective political party. Many contextual factors other than their service ending at the state level could affect the decisions to emerge. Also, the models show that as the congressional districts become more heavily Democratic, state legislators are less likely to emerge for the U.S. House. Until 1994, the Democratic Party controlled the U.S. House, and many of these state legislators, who are Democratic legislators themselves, would

have been forced to run against a Democratic incumbent or to give up their seniority or their leadership positions in Democratic-controlled state legislatures.

Finally, state legislators from the most professionalized state legislatures are significantly more likely to run for Congress. Figure 5.3 reports the predicted probabilities of male and female state legislators emerging across levels of state legislature professionalism. California is ranked number 1 in state legislature professionalism, while New Hampshire has the least professionalized state legislature.



**FIGURE 5.3 Probability of Emergence Across Levels of State Legislature Professionalism for Both Men and Women**

The probability of a Republican female state senator from California emerging to run for the U.S. House is 0.5%, when all the other control and political variables are held constant at their means or medians. A similarly situated male state senator's probability of emergence is 0.95 percent. In Oregon, which is ranked 25th in state legislature professionalism, the probability of a female state legislator emerging is 0.38%, and her male colleague's probability is 0.67%. The probabilities for both male and female state legislators in New Hampshire, at the end of the spectrum, emerging for Congress are less than 0.48 percent.

Model 1 and Model 2 provide evidence of the significant relationships between the explanatory variables and state legislators' decisions to run for the U.S. House. Specifically, these models report findings that substantiate results from the strategic politicians and women and politics literature that women are less likely to run for office than men and state legislators are strategic and opportunistic, seeking office when there is an open seat. Have these models captured the data in the aggregate? By examining two measures, the likelihood ratio test and a plot of the ROC curve, we can determine how well these models predict state legislators' emergence to the House. Model 1 predicts fairly well state legislators' emergence. I examine the likelihood ratio test measurement to compare whether including the female political role model variable in Model 1 improves the predictive capability over a base model without such a variable. The likelihood ratio test ( $LR\ chi^2(1) = 25.04$ ) shows that adding the female political role model variable results in a statistically significant improvement in model fit. Moreover, the ROC curve demonstrates that this model predicts emergence 26.23% better than if there was no model at all and we just flipped a coin for each legislator. It is reasonable to say that this model is a fair assessment of the influences motivating state legislators to emerge to the U.S. Congress. Model 2 incorporates variables of partisan congruence between the female political actors.

Again by examining the likelihood ratio test and the plot of the ROC curve, we see that adding these new variables significantly improves the model fit.<sup>17</sup>

### **Persuasive Examples of Individual Female Political Role Models on Female Candidacies**

These previous empirical tests show the significant influence female political role models have on female state legislators' decisions to seek higher office. However, it is not apparent through these findings whether specific female role models – female member of Congress, female U.S. senator, or female governor – affect the female state legislators' candidacy decisions. I argue that a female state legislator would be encouraged by the success of the female political role model who holds the office she seeks. Therefore, the candidacy and success of a female member of Congress in her district versus a female U.S. senator in her state would greatly influence a female state legislator who seeks to advance politically and serve in the U.S. House.

Table 5.3 provides logistic regression model results for the probability of only female state legislators emerging for the U.S. House from 1976 through 2010. Selecting only the females as possible office seekers does potentially introduce selection bias. However, I argue that we must examine these female state politicians separately to see whether individual female political role models affect them differently. Furthermore, the women and politics literature espouses distinctive findings regarding the role of women in politics before and after the 1992 elections. Therefore, I contend that we need to investigate carefully these female state legislators who emerge before and after 1992. Many of the female state legislators who ran for the U.S.

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<sup>17</sup> Goodness of fit measures for Model 2 incorporating the partisan similarity variable: (1) Likelihood Ratio test: LR chi 2(1) = 2.86 – compares Model 2 to a model without such variables (e.g., Model 1) and (2) the area under the ROC curve = 0.7642 – predicting emergence 26.42% better than guessing.

House prior to 1992 became the female political role models for the post-1992 generation of women running for higher elective office.

These logistic regression models estimate the probability of a female state legislator running for a congressional seat based upon related personal and political environmental control variables as the previous logistic models (e.g. state legislator's party, district partisanship, state legislature professionalism and female political role models). Model 1 tests whether any female political role model affects a female state legislator's candidacy decision. Model 2 incorporates three variables for female political role models to test whether one individual role model significantly affects female state legislators' emergence decisions. These three variables are female member of Congress, female U.S. senator, and female governor. If a state currently has one of these female political role models, then the variable is coded one respective to that female officeholder and zero otherwise.<sup>18</sup>

Model 1 reports no significant relationship between a female political role model and the decision of a female state legislator to run for the House. However, in Model 2, we see a female member of Congress significantly increases the probability of a female state legislator emerging to the U.S. House. Her probability of running for a congressional seat in general with any female political role model is 2.21%, but when she has a female member of Congress as her political role model her probability of emergence increases by 0.95%. These results provide empirical support to female legislators' accounts of how successful congresswomen influenced their political aspirations and decisions to seek House seats. A female state representative remarked, "I watched Cora win her congressional contest in 1992. I was impressed by her abilities and her

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<sup>18</sup> Additionally, I estimate separate logistic regression models for each of the female role models. These results are presented in the Appendix. Similarly, I find a female member of Congress positively influences a female state legislator's decision to emerge, and a female governor decreases the probability of emergence to the U.S. House.

**TABLE 5.3 Female State Legislators' Emergence to the U.S. House of Representatives  
1976-2010**

Logit Analysis for Emergence=1	Coefficient (Robust Standard Errors)	
	Model 1	Model 2
<b>The Political Role Models</b>		
Female Political Role Model	-0.11 (0.08)	
Female Member of Congress		0.46** (0.20)
Female U.S. Senator		-0.14 (0.14)
Female Governor		-0.59*** (0.16)
<b>The State Legislator's Characteristics</b>		
State Legislator Party	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
State Legislative Chamber	0.28 (0.21)	0.26 (0.21)
Prior Elective Experience	-0.53*** (0.13)	-0.36** (0.14)
<b>The Political Environment</b>		
Open Seat/Contested Race	1.27*** (0.13)	1.23*** (0.13)
District Partisanship	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Term Limits	-1.07*** (0.27)	-1.09*** (0.27)
Special Elections	0.14 (0.20)	0.10 (0.20)
State Legislature Professionalism	0.02*** (0.00)	0.01** (0.01)
<b>Constant</b>	-3.80*** (0.34)	-4.06*** (0.37)
Log Likelihood =	-1149.4843	-1143.0273
Likelihood Ratio chi2(1) =	1.68	6.54
Area under ROC curve =	0.7177	0.7334
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> =	0.0723	0.0775
Number of Observations =	9172	9172
***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10		



campaign style. She inspired my political path at that moment. I really thought I could follow her lead, and I did decide to run for the House, too” (Phone Interview 2011).

In addition, these results show female state legislators are significantly less likely to run for Congress when there is a female governor as a role model in their states. Her probability of running for Congress decreases by 1.2%. Perhaps the success of a female governor encourages females within her state to seek state offices, such as governor, lieutenant governor, or secretaries of state and education. These opportunities would allow the female state politician to continue to reside in her state and serve her state, and not travel to Washington, D.C., for work responsibilities. One former state representative remarked, “I considered a run for Congress and the U.S. Senate. I was certainly encouraged to run for the Senate, but I chose to run for governor because I wanted to continue my service for this state here. I didn’t want to be a back and forth D.C. politician” (Phone Interview 2012). Upon sensing the potential for success statewide, another motivation is that as a leader in the executive branch, the female politician would have more influence than as a freshman in the House.

For the control variables, female state legislators are significantly less likely to run for the U.S. House when they have prior elective experience and when they are term limited. Women scholars note that female office seekers tend to run for political office at a later age due to childrearing and other familial responsibilities. Therefore, these female state legislators who have served in previous electoral positions and now serve in state legislatures may believe themselves “too old” to run for another office, especially one that requires them to leave their states to serve. One state senator stated, “I always thought about running for Congress, but I think I waited too long to start my political career. I served in my county first, and then I didn’t run for the state legislature until I was almost sixty. After six years of service, I think I have

passed my political prime” (Phone Interview 2011). Furthermore, as noted before, many women who are term-limited may face electoral environments unwelcoming and unfavorable to their candidacies for Congress, and many might decide to seek statewide offices.

Female state legislators are significantly more likely to seek open seats for Congress and to run from states that have a more professionalized legislature. Female state legislators are strategic politicians, seeking the most opportune moments for electoral successes, and they seek career advancements once they have built experiences within politically professionalized legislatures.

Evidence for these eighteen election cycles reveals that female members of Congress significantly influence state level female politicians to seek political careers in the U.S. House. However, much of the growth in female political role models occurred with women’s electoral successes in 1992. Therefore, by examining only the emergence decisions of female state legislators serving after 1992, I should capture the full effects of more female political role models and their influence on women’s ascension to Congress.

The logistic model results are presented in Table 5.4. How well does this model predict female state legislators’ emergence to the U.S. House after the “Year of the Woman” elections? This model predicts well these women’s decisions to climb the political ladder. When comparing this model with a base model without the three female political role models variables, the likelihood ratio test ( $LR\ chi^2(3) = 19.90$ ) demonstrates that adding these variables results in a statistically significant improvement in model fit. Additionally, the ROC curve shows that this model predicts emergence 30% better than guessing.

The probability of a female state legislator emerging after 1992 is 1.67%. All three female role model variables significantly influence a female state legislator’s decision to seek a

**TABLE 5.4 Female State Legislators' Emergence to the U.S. House of Representatives  
1994-2010**

Logit Analysis for Emergence=1	Coefficient (Robust Standard Errors)
<b>The Political Role Models</b>	
Female Member of Congress	0.942** (0.423)
Female U.S. Senator	-0.450** (0.201)
Female Governor	-0.811** (0.240)
<b>The State Legislator's Characteristics</b>	
State Legislator Party	0.020* (0.011)
State Legislative Chamber	0.766** (0.342)
Prior Elective Experience	-1.138*** (0.224)
<b>The Political Environment</b>	
Open Seat/Contested Race	2.699*** (0.216)
District Partisanship	-0.009 (0.006)
Term Limits	-0.971** (0.292)
Special Elections	0.629** (0.290)
State Legislature Professionalism	0.019** (0.007)
<b>Constant</b>	-4.783*** (0.598)
Log Likelihood = -460.84311	
Likelihood Ratio $\chi^2(1) = 19.90$	
Area under ROC curve = 0.8000	
Pseudo $R^2 = 0.1939$	
Number of Observations = 6159	
***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10	

seat in Congress. A female member of Congress increases a female state legislator's probability of emergence, and therefore, her probability of emerging is 2.55 percent. However, a female U.S. senator or female governor significantly decreases the probability of a female state legislator emerging for the U.S. House. Her probabilities of emerging with either of these female role models are less than 1 percent. These role models are not negative influences on a woman's political career; however, these two female political actors decrease the probability of running for the U.S. House. Their motivations may be to encourage these female state legislators to seek statewide offices or seats within the U.S. Senate.

A female state legislator's own personal characteristics and factors within the political environment significantly affect the probability of her seeking a House seat. For instance, after 1992, those female state legislators who are Democrats, state representatives, and have no prior elective experience are significantly more likely to run for the House. Substantiating political scholarship and earlier findings, female state legislators are more likely to run in special elections (probability =1.7%) and for open seats (probability =15.98%), and they are more likely to run from states with professionalized legislatures (probability =1.45%).

### **These Female Congressional Candidates**

From 1976 to 2010, two hundred and seventy-six (respectively three percent) female state legislators ran for the U.S. House. These 276 female state legislators held distinctive political resumes. Over 90% of these women who ran were representatives in their state's lower legislative chambers. Almost 60% of these female state legislators were Democrats, and 39% were Republicans. One hundred and eighty-one of these women held prior elective office, either serving as a local mayor or city/county councilmember.

These ambitious women desired to climb the political ladder. Almost three-fourths of the female state legislators who decided to run for Congress ran in the 1992 election or thereafter. One hundred and fifty-seven of the 276 female state legislators won their congressional primary contests and advanced to the general election. Of these, seventy female state legislators won seats in the U.S. House.

Overwhelmingly, many followed the same paths blazed by female political pioneers in their states. Ninety-one percent of these female state legislators who ran for the House had a female political role model in their respective states. Few female state legislators have been privileged with a female governor or female U.S. senator as a state political role model. Respectively, less than twenty percent of these women who ran for Congress had witnessed the success of a female governor, and only twenty-six percent had a female U.S. senator as a role model. However, nearly 84 percent of female state legislators who decided to run had a congresswoman elected from their states providing a concrete example of a female congressional role model.

Of these female state legislators ascending the political ladder, seventy-two percent had at least one of the female role models serving when they decided to run for the U.S. House. One hundred and eight-six (or 67.4 percent, respectively) female state legislators had an actively serving female member of Congress as a role model. These women decided to run against a political backdrop of successful women already serving in Congress.

Interestingly, four female state legislators, Barbara Vucanovich (NV), Leslie Byrne (VA), Tammy Baldwin (WI) and Barbara Cubin (WY) were the first congresswomen elected from their states. Each symbolized female acceptance by voters and provided an electoral and political success story by which other women could follow. In Nevada, three female state legislators,

including Vucanovich, first sought congressional seats in 1982. Five female state legislators ran after the success of Rep. Vucanovich. Two of these women, Shelley Berkley and Dina Titus, were successful congressional candidates. In addition, three female state legislators ran after Wisconsin's Tammy Baldwin's pioneering success. Gwendolynne Moore followed Baldwin's political journey into the House in 2004. Finally, in Wyoming, Barbara Cubin inspired many women to pursue political careers, and when she retired in 2008, Cynthia Lummis, a female state legislator followed Cubin's lead and succeeded her political role model.

Moreover, states which have a greater number of female political role models tend to have more female state legislators deciding to run for the U.S. House. For example, California has had thirty-four women elected to higher political office, and they have the second highest number (14) of female state politicians seeking congressional seats. Florida is ranked third amongst states with female political role models in higher offices, and this state boasts the greatest numbers (23) of female state legislators deciding to run for the House. Furthermore, states with three or fewer female political role models tend to have less than six female state legislators who decide to run for the House during these elections cycles.

A female political role model who is a congresswoman appears to provide motivation for female state legislators to run for the U.S. House. However, when there is no female political role model for female state legislators in their states, will they seek congressional seats? Three states: Iowa, Mississippi, and North Dakota have never had a woman elected to the governorship, the U.S. House, or the U.S. Senate.<sup>19</sup> In Mississippi and North Dakota, no female state legislator ran for the U.S. House. These women did not have a personal female political success to model or encourage their aspirations. During this time period, only one female state

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<sup>19</sup> In 1992, Jocelyn Burdick was appointed to the U.S. Senate from North Dakota to fill her husband's vacant seat. She served three months and did not seek election for the position.

legislator, Elaine Baxter, ran for a congressional seat in Iowa. She ran in 1992 when more women were encouraged and recruited by the parties to run for higher office. Baxter sought to be Iowa's female political pioneer. Each of these states has so few congressional seats to contest. The strategic female politician either has to challenge an entrenched incumbent or wait for an open seat. However, the absence of female political role models suggests a political glass ceiling as well as presents evidence that female political actors have yet to experience the pioneering success of a woman who can inspire and encourage their political career development and advancements.

Furthermore, six states – Alaska, Delaware, Iowa, Mississippi, North Dakota, and Vermont – have never had a woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. No female state legislators ran for the U.S. House in Delaware, Mississippi, and North Dakota. In Alaska, three female state legislators ran for Congress. Each ran in a different year. Democrat Virginia Collins ran in 1992, and she may have been inspired by this year's call for women candidates. Democrat Georgianna Lincoln challenged Republican incumbent Don Young in 1996 when many Democrats sought to reclaim and gain seats lost in the 1994 Republican Revolution. In 2008, Gabrielle LeDoux emerged to challenge Rep. Young in the primary. At this point, state Rep. LeDoux had witnessed the successes of two female politicians in Alaska, Governor Sarah Palin and U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski. In Vermont, two women ran for the U.S. House. State Senator Jan Backus, self-motivated and politically ambitious, ran for the U.S. House in 1984. Although Vermont did not have a female political role model as I have defined it, Backus had witnessed the successes of Madeleine Kunin as Lieutenant Governor and in her candidacy for the state's governorship. Backus later ran for the U.S. Senate in 1994 and 2000, challenging incumbent Senator Jeffords. In 1996, when state Senator Susan Sweetser ran for the U.S. House,

she did not have a female member of Congress to be her political role model, but she had witnessed the achievements of female Governor Kunin.

Seven additional states had fewer than two female state legislators run for congressional seats. Many of these states have very few contested congressional seats, but more importantly, in all but two of these states, female state legislators did not witness the successes of female political role models until after the 1992 election. In Montana and Oklahoma, the female congressional success was not until the mid-2000s.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, in some states where female state legislators did run for the House, they became the female political role models. For other female state politicians, they ran after the ‘Year of the Woman’ elections and the successes of other women in their state’s higher political offices and in national politics.

### **State Legislators’ Electoral Outcomes to the U.S. House of Representatives**

The above statistical findings provide an understanding of the structural and contextual factors which motivate female state legislators to seek congressional seats. Also, we see the influential role that female political actors play in the emergence decisions of other female state politicians. What explains an electoral success for a state legislator who runs for the U.S. House of Representatives? State legislators are quality candidates who can effectively compete for higher elective office, and as such, they are most successful when they seek open congressional seats. Moreover, I posit that female state legislators win seats in Congress at higher rates when they are from states that have female political role models.

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<sup>20</sup> In 1972, Elizabeth Andrews from Alabama won the special election to fill her deceased husband’s remaining term in the House. However, she did not compete in the next election for his seat. Andrews was the first woman elected to Congress from Alabama; however, it was not until 2010 that two women won seats to the House on their own records.



From the emergence models, 1,781 state legislators from 1976 to 2010 sought seats in the U.S. House. Of these, only 970 won their congressional primaries and competed in the general election. Of the 970 general election congressional candidates, one hundred and fifty-seven (15.9%) were female state legislators. Interestingly, of these 157 women, seventy (44.6%) were successful in their congressional bids. This is a success rate comparable to their male colleagues (44.7%) who won congressional races. Nonetheless, of all the state legislators (433) competing in congressional races and winning contests, female state legislators won only 16.2% of the elections. There is little variation for state legislators' victories over time. On average, state legislators won twenty-four contests in an election year, and the greatest gains came in three years: 1982 (39), 1992 (46), and 1996 (29). Similarly, female state legislators show little variation over time in their victories. Significant gains of seven wins in 1992 and eight successes in 1996 exceeded well their average of four victories per election cycle. Furthermore, I find that men are successful 46.6% of the time in open seat contests, whereas their female colleagues are successful 51.4% of the time.

Sixty-six of the seventy female state legislators (94%) who won congressional races had a female political role model. The four women who were victorious in their House contests without female role models became the political pioneers of their states (i.e. Barbara Vucanovich (NV), Leslie Byrne (VA), Tammy Baldwin (WI), and Barbara Cubin (WY)). Fifty-two of these women (or 74% respectively) had a female member of Congress currently serving in their respective state when they won their electoral contests. More than half of these women who won had a female governor or female senator as a female political role model. These figures might suggest a very favorable electoral environment for female candidates or the influential support of female political role models on female candidacies.

Is there a relationship between the successes of these female state legislators and the motivation and support from female political role models? In order to examine the influential factors on these congressional electoral outcomes, I estimate two sets of models. The first logistic regression models examine the probability of state legislators winning their electoral contests for the U.S. House. The dependent variables are dichotomous measures. I code one for state legislators who are successful in their congressional bids and zero otherwise. Model 1 for electoral successes is quite similar to the emergence models, including measures for female political role models. Also, included in these new models is a measurement for campaign expenditures. As previously noted in the emergence analysis, female state legislators may find more encouragement and support from female political role models who are of the same political party. Therefore, I examine whether party congruence between female state legislators and female political role models affects these female politicians' congressional attempts. Model 2 incorporates an interaction term for gender and party congruence between female role models and female state legislators. The second ordinary least-squares regression models examine what conditions affect these House candidates' share of the vote. Model results are presented in Tables 5.5 and 5.6. Both models predict fairly well the electoral outcomes for state legislators seeking careers in the U.S. House.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Table 5.5 reports the likelihood ratio test and the area under the ROC curve for logistic regression models 1 and 2 for electoral success=1. The LR test reveals that adding female political role models in Model 1 significantly improves the model fit (LR chi2 (1) =0.20). This test compares a base model without female political role models with Model 1 incorporating this variable. For Model 1, the area under the ROC curve is 0.7636, a 26% improvement over guessing. The LR test assesses the model fit when adding the party congruence variable between female political actors in Model 2 to Model 1 without such a variable. The LR test reports (LR chi2 (1) =0.56) significant improvement in model fit. For Model 2, the area under the ROC curve is 0.7549, a 25% improvement over guessing. Table 5.6 presents the results from the OLS regression analyses on the candidates' percentage of the vote. For Model 1, the R-squared is 0.0874 and Root Mean Squared Error is 18.668. The OLS Model 1 captures 8.74% of the variation of the explanatory variables on the candidate's share of the vote. Model 2's R-squared is 0.0920 and the Root Mean Squared Error is 18.641. Model 2 captures 9.20% of the variation of the explanatory variables on the candidate's share of the vote and seems a better fit of the data.

**TABLE 5.5 Electoral Successes for State Legislators to the U.S. House of Representatives  
1976-2010**

Logit Analysis for Electoral Success=1		Coefficient (Robust Standard Errors)	
		<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>
<b>Gender</b>		-14.10*** (0.58)	-26.94*** (1.21)
<b>The Political Role Models</b>			
	Female Role Model	0.17 (0.23)	0.17 (0.23)
	Gender * Female Role Model	12.55*** (1.18)	12.65*** (1.21)
	Party Congruence		-0.14 (0.63)
	Gender* Role Model Same Party		13.03*** (1.19)
<b>The State Legislator's Characteristics</b>			
	State Legislator Party	0.47 (0.54)	0.48 (0.55)
	State Legislative Chamber	-1.01 (0.70)	-1.00 (0.70)
	Prior Elective Experience	1.65** (0.60)	1.64** (0.60)
<b>The Political Environment</b>			
	Open Seat/Contested Race	0.14 (0.59)	0.15 (0.59)
	District Partisanship	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
	Special Elections	-0.07 (0.76)	-0.07 (0.76)
	State Legislature Professionalism	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
	Campaign Expenditures	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
<b>Constant</b>		-4.38*** (1.13)	-4.32*** (1.14)
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	Log Likelihood	-73.9675	-73.6863
	Likelihood Ratio chi2(1)	0.20	0.56
	Area under the ROC curve	0.7636	0.7549
	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.0929	0.0963
	Number of Observations	970	970
***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10			

In Table 5.5, Model 1 and Model 2 show female state legislators are significantly less likely to win their electoral contests for the U.S. House compared to their male colleagues. Female state legislators' probability of success is 1.9% less than their male colleagues. The data during this time period hold an overwhelming percentage of male state legislators as candidates winning seats in Congress (84% versus 16% of female state legislators). Of the electoral contests for the U.S. House, men competed in four times as many races and women only won 15% of all contests. However, when we compare the actual success rates of men and women competing in these congressional contests, male and female state legislators are comparable in their successes (i.e. 44.7% for men to 44.6% for women). In both models, state legislators' prior elective experiences significantly increase the probability of their electoral successes for the House. Holding political offices at the local and state level has enabled these politicians to build legislative and electoral experiences that can be utilized in campaign messaging, fundraising, and organization. Furthermore, the interaction terms assessing the impact of female political role models on female state legislators' electoral outcomes are positive and statistically significant. Female political role models significantly increase the probability of a female state legislator's electoral success for the U.S. House.

In Model 2, female political role models of the same party as the female state legislators positively and significantly influence the electoral outcomes. When the two are of the same political party, the female state legislator is more likely to win her electoral attempt. Perhaps, the electoral environment is most favorable for women in one partisan camp.

I generated predicted probabilities of state legislators' electoral successes. The probability of state legislators succeeding in their congressional attempts is over 2%. The overall probabilities of state legislators winning the congressional seats when they have a female

political role model are 0.2%. But, a female state legislator's probability of success when she has a female political role model is 1.81%. Competing in open seats should prove most beneficial for state legislators seeking career advancements. A state legislator's probability of electoral success when competing in open seat contests is 5.4%.

Next, in Table 5.6, the results of the OLS regression analyses for whether female political role models and other contextual factors affect a state legislator's percent of the vote in the congressional election are presented.<sup>22</sup> Model 1 is a base model to examine the influence of female political role models on female candidates' vote share. Similarly, Model 2 incorporates the partisan congruence variables. In both models, there is no statistical difference in the percentage of the vote obtained by male and female state legislators. Furthermore, there is no statistically significant relationship between female political role models and the percentage of the vote female candidates win. Interestingly, party congruence between state legislators and female political role models significantly increases the state legislator's vote share in his/her congressional election by 2.84 points. However, there is no significant relationship between votes and the interaction of female state legislators and female political role models of the same partisan persuasion. In Model 1 serving in a state's lower chamber significantly increases state legislators' vote share by 4 points. In Model 2, the service in the lower chamber increases the vote share by 3.94 points. When state legislators run in special elections, their vote share increases 3.67 points in Model 1 and 3.63 points in Model 2. In Model 2, state legislators who run in more heavily defined Democratic districts (Democratic leaning in presidential vote percentages) significantly decrease their vote shares by 0.10 points. Finally, these results show that when state legislators spend additional monies in their campaigns, they increase their votes by 0.08 points.

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<sup>22</sup> The term limit variable is not included in the OLS model since it predicts failure perfectly.

**TABLE 5.6 Electoral Outcomes for State Legislators to the U.S. House of Representatives 1976-2010**

Ordinary Least Squares Regression Dependent Variable: U.S. House General Election Percentage of Vote		Coefficient (Robust Standard Errors)	
		<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>
<b>Gender</b>		-1.15 (3.17)	-2.45 (3.78)
<b>The Political Role Models</b>			
Female Role Model		0.68 (0.92)	0.55 (0.92)
Gender * Female Role Model		-1.07 (3.43)	-0.97 (3.41)
Party Congruence			2.84* (1.48)
Gender * Role Model Same Party			1.54 (3.38)
<b>The State Legislator's Characteristics</b>			
State Legislator's Party		0.59 (1.19)	0.21 (1.19)
State Legislative Chamber		4.00* (2.14)	3.94* (2.11)
Prior Elective Experience		1.00 (1.41)	1.09 (1.41)
<b>The Political Environment</b>			
Open Seat/Contested Race		0.09 (1.39)	0.12 (1.39)
District Partisanship		-0.09 (0.06)	-0.10* (0.06)
Special Elections		3.67* (1.94)	3.63* (1.94)
State Legislature Professionalism		0.06 (0.04)	0.06 (0.04)
Campaign Expenditures		0.08*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)
<b>Constant</b>		39.40*** (3.91)	38.12*** (4.02)
R-squared		0.0874	0.0920
Root MSE		18.668	18.641
Number of Observations		970	970
***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10			

## Conclusion

The degree to which female political role models and contextual political factors affect the emergence decisions and electoral outcomes of state legislators running for the U.S. House is complicated. Potential office seekers carefully calculate the opportune moments for ascension to higher office. State legislators are indeed strategic. Legislators are more likely to seek a U.S. House seat after they have established political careers, if they served in more professionalized legislatures, and when the political environment is favorable with an open seat race and/or a special election. Moreover, I find that female political role models, specifically female members of Congress, significantly matter in the candidacy decision-calculi of female state legislators. Furthermore, these findings show female political role models affect the electoral outcome of a victory or defeat for female state legislators, yet their presence in the state does not increase a female candidate's vote share. However, when the female political role model and state legislators share political partisan identification, the state legislator's share of the vote modestly increases.

Finally, the empirical findings of this chapter provide greater insight into the symbolic representation of female politicians. I find support for the influence of female political role models on female candidate decision-making and their electoral outcomes for the U.S. House. The next chapter examines those ambitious politicians who seek political career advancement to the United States Senate. The U.S. Senate is a prestigious institution that attracts the attention of not only career politicians, but also industrious and ambitious citizens. I examine whether many of the same personal and structural forces that shape the emergence decisions of state legislators to seek congressional seats affect their motivations for advancement to the U.S. Senate. As well, in Chapter 6, I study the strategic decisions of members of the U.S. House, asking whether the

same determinants, specifically female political role models, influence their decisions as significantly as state legislators to climb the political ladder.



## CHAPTER 6

### ***CLIMBING HIGHER: WOMEN'S ASCENSION TO THE U.S. SENATE***

We will crack open the doors of the Senate, open them wide and start running a country, not a country club.

*-U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA), 1993<sup>23</sup>*

The United States Senate deemed the old boys' club – a prestigious body where men have dominated not only the membership, but its legislative agenda and policy discussion – was transformed in the twentieth century with the inclusion of women. Rebecca Latimer Felton in 1922 became the first woman to serve in this elite body. Her successful path led to the appointments and elections of thirty-eight women. This rise of women has been glacially slow with half of the women ever serving in the Senate elected after 1980. Significant progress for women in the U.S. Senate was not achieved until 1992. Indeed, the 1991 confirmation hearing of Clarence Thomas and the Senate Judiciary Committee's approach to hearing Anita Hill's allegations of sexual harassment revealed a true image of this elite men's club. What ensued was a public outcry against women's underrepresentation in Congress, resulting in the candidacies of more women for the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate. Nine women won Senate seats in the 1990s, and currently, seventeen women serve in the U.S. Senate.

Running for the U.S. Senate involves taking great risk, sometimes challenging incumbents, and frequently encountering the strong ambitions of other actors. The U.S. Senate

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<sup>23</sup> Quote is from Susan Yoachum and Jerry Roberts. 1993. "Historic Night for 6 Women Candidates," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 7 January 1993, A:1.

attracts attention from career-minded politicians and ambitious political amateurs.<sup>24</sup> State legislators, members of the U.S. House, and prominent citizens or celebrities aspire to serve in this esteemed upper legislative chamber amongst the 100 individuals regarded as real political power brokers. During the last few decades, on average, forty percent of all U.S. senators have been former state legislators, and nearly half have been former members of Congress. Therefore, women have had to challenge a vast political establishment and prove themselves among high quality candidates. Many women aspiring for careers in the Senate have built political foundations at the state level and within the U.S. House. Of the thirty-nine women who have served in the Senate: thirteen were former state legislators, eight were former members of the U.S. House of Representatives, and three built political careers within both these state and national legislative institutions. Twenty-two of these female senators were elected in 1992 or after. Of these most recently serving women: twelve were former state legislators, six were former members of the House, and three served in state and national legislative bodies.

This chapter expounds upon the earlier findings of women's ascension into congressional politics through the examination of female candidates to the U.S. Senate. I analyze senatorial primary and general elections data to evaluate male and female candidacies. I examine under what conditions established politicians emerge and seek career advancement to the U.S. Senate. Moreover, do female state legislators or female members of Congress emerge in greater numbers when they witness the successes of female political role models, especially female U.S. senators? I expect that career politicians will behave strategically when deciding to risk a climb up the political ladder. Men and women who desire Senate seats will seek advantageous opportunities. These may include Senate seats which are open, special elections, and those favorable to their

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<sup>24</sup> See David T. Canon. 1990. *Political Amateurs in the United States Congress*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. Canon provides a more complete discussion of prominent individuals and celebrities who sought careers in the U.S. Congress and whether their candidacies and successes affect the institutions and its policies.

political parties. I expect that female politicians who have female political role models will seek seats in the U.S. Senate more often than their female colleagues who lack such female political role models.

## **The Senatorial Candidates**

Political scientists conclude that a major barrier to increasing the number of women in electoral offices has been the dearth of female candidates.<sup>25</sup> I present the data on female emergence to the U.S. Senate in two ways. First, I look at the incidence of women competing for Senate seats, and there are instances in which more than one woman has contested a senatorial seat. Later, I consider the number of state legislators and members of the U.S. House who have competed in Senate primaries and succeeded in the general elections.

Over 3,200 candidates have competed in six hundred and four Senate primary contests since 1976. As reported in Table 6.1, three hundred and forty, (or 10.4 percent), of those seeking a seat in the U.S. Senate were women. These female senatorial candidates had measurable success in the initial round. A success is defined as either an outright victory in the initial primary or advancing to a runoff. The success rate of women (40.6 percent) is slightly higher than the 36.3 percent success rate for men.<sup>26</sup>

Fewer than ten percent of the contests required a runoff to determine the winner. Women competed in six of these contests and won five (or 83 percent). Each runoff contest involving a

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<sup>25</sup> Barbara Palmer and Dennis Simon. 2001. "The Political Glass Ceiling: Gender, Strategy and Incumbency in U.S. Elections 1978-1998," *Women and Politics* 23:59-78. See also, Philip L. Dubois. 1983. "The Influence of Selection System and Region on the Characteristics of a Trial Court Bench: The Case of California," *Justice System Journal* (8): 75.

<sup>26</sup> The number of men competing in these senatorial primaries and consequently the success rate for males reported in Table 6.1 is influenced by many all-male contests.

**TABLE 6.1 Success of Senate Primary Candidates Controlling for Gender and Electoral Status. 1976 - 2010**

	All Contests		Open Seats		Women Incumbent		Men Incumbent	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Round Election	Runoff	1 <sup>st</sup> Round Election	Runoff	1 <sup>st</sup> Round Election	Runoff	1 <sup>st</sup> Round Election	Runoff
Contests	604	38	122	15	34	2	448	21
# Women	340	6	109	2	64	1	167	3
Female Success	138	5	34	2	25	1	79	2
<i>% Success</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>67</i>
# Men	2945	70	855	28	178	3	1912	39
Male Success	1069	33	212	13	28	1	829	19
<i>% Success</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>49</i>

Source: Compiled by the author

woman pitted the woman against a male. The 1998 Senate primary runoff in Oklahoma is the only race in which the male candidate defeated the female contender.

Strategic politicians look for the best electoral opportunities when considering a run for higher office. The literature notes how the best prospects for career advancement and increasing the number of female officeholders are through open seat contests and not challenging incumbents. Twenty percent of the Senate contests since 1976 were for open seats. Since women have greater opportunities for success in open seats, it is somewhat surprising that they did not compete in more of the open seat races. One hundred and nine women ran in 64 of the 122 contests (approximately 53 percent). Fifty of these women (or 45.9 percent) were “quality candidates,” meaning they had held prior elective office either at the county, state or national level. These quality female challengers competed in 42 of the open seat contests. Choosing to compete in open seat contests paid off for some of these strategic women. They succeeded in 31.2 percent of these races. The success rate of men falls slightly below women at 24.8 percent. Only two women (Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) and Denise Majette (D-GA)) were forced into a runoff for an open seat, and both won their runoff contests handily.

Another promising opportunity for potential Senate candidates is to run in a special election. Fourteen special elections for Senate seats have been held since 1976. One hundred and thirty-four candidates competed in these contests. Women composed only 14.2 percent of the entire candidate pool, and they won four of these Senate seats. All of these female victories came after 1992. Two female state legislators and one female member of Congress competed in special elections for the U.S. Senate. These female candidates were quite successful in their attempts, with Kay Bailey Hutchison (former Texas state representative and state treasurer) and Kirsten Gillibrand (former New York congresswoman) winning Senate seats. Comparatively,

seven congressmen (or 44 percent) were successful in their electoral bids, while no male state legislator won a special election contest.

Sixty-four women ran for seats held by a female senator. They competed in 25 of these 34 Senate primaries, and won all twenty-five of their party's primary nominations. The 39.1 percent success rate for women challenging a female incumbent senator is substantially higher than the 16.2 percent success rate for male candidates seeking to unseat female senators. Barbara Radnofsky (D-TX) challenging U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison in 2006 was forced into the Democratic primary runoff with male state legislator, Gene Kelly. Radnofsky was successful in the runoff, only to lose in the general election. Kay Hagan (D-NC) has been the only woman to defeat an incumbent female senator in a general election. Hagan defeated Senator Elizabeth Dole (R-NC) 53 percent to 44 percent in 2008.

In the 448 contests involving male incumbent senators, 167 women competed in 133 (or approximately 30 percent) of these races. Women have success rates slightly higher than the male challengers (47.3 percent and 43.4 percent, respectively). Carol Mosely-Braun (D-IL) has been the only woman to defeat a male senator in a primary contest. Runoffs were required for three women competing for seats held by male incumbent senators. Of these contests, Susan Parker (D-AL) and Jacquelyn Ledgerwood (D-OK) were successful in the primary runoffs only to lose in the general elections. Paula Hawkins (R-FL) was victorious in both the runoff and in unseating the male senator. Four other women, Debbie Stabenow, Maria Cantwell, Claire McCaskill, and Jeanne Shaheen, defeated their state's sitting male senator in general elections.

## **Candidacy Decisions and Electoral Successes of State Legislators - Ascension from State Capitol to U.S. Capitol**

Most politically ambitious individuals follow certain career paths. Many begin their public tenures in local offices, and then, some progress to state legislative positions. From these state legislative chambers, progressively ambitious politicians may set their eyes to the U.S. House or even a statewide office. Thus, it is more uncommon for state legislators to take the political leap from state house or state senate to U.S. Senate. Perhaps, not the path of some, but for others, a state legislative career may be the political foundation for a U.S. Senate candidacy.

Across these election cycles, over 45,000 state legislators, including more than 9,000 female state legislators, could have potentially emerged for higher office, yet so few sought career advancement to the U.S. Senate. Conceivably, many of these state legislators felt the first political ladder to climb is a statewide political office or a seat in the U.S. House. Indeed, as noted in Chapter 5, approximately four percent of state legislators ran for the U.S. House from 1976 to 2010. Many of these state legislators were successful in their congressional contests, and they may not have felt compelled to seek a Senate seat. Also, some state legislators may have faced an unfavorable electoral environment or a personal obstacle to seeking seats in the U.S. Senate.

As reported in Table 6.2, of the 3,286 Senate primary candidates, three hundred, ninety-six, or 12.1 percent, are former state legislators who competed in 297 Senate contests. Sixty of the 396 state legislator candidates were women. The success rate of female state legislators is 62 percent which is significantly higher than their male colleagues' success rate of 35 percent.<sup>27</sup> Only seven runoff contests involved state legislators. No female state legislator competed in a runoff election, and of the seven male state legislators who competed, only two were successful.

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<sup>27</sup> There are over five times as many male state legislators competing in senatorial primaries as female state legislators. Consequently, the success rate for males reported in Table 6.2 is influenced by many all-male contests.

**TABLE 6.2   State Legislators as Senate Primary Candidates Controlling for Gender and Electoral Status. 1976 - 2010**

	All Contests		Open Seats		Women Incumbent		Men Incumbent	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Round Election	Runoff	1 <sup>st</sup> Round Election	Runoff	1 <sup>st</sup> Round Election	Runoff	1 <sup>st</sup> Round Election	Runoff
Contests	297	7	63	4	20	1	214	2
# Women	60	0	11	0	10	0	39	0
Female Success	37	0	10	0	4	0	23	0
<i>% Success</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>0</i>
# Men	336	7	69	4	17	1	250	2
Male Success	118	2	22	1	1	0	95	1
<i>% Success</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>50</i>

Source: Compiled by the author



State legislators competed in sixty-three open seat contests for the U.S. Senate. Open seats should be the best portal for these politicians to enter the Senate. Surprisingly, relatively few state legislators competed for these seats. Only eleven of the 60 (or 18.3 percent) female state legislators and 69 of the 336 (or 20.5 percent) male state legislators sought career advancement in open seat competitions. Women won over 90 percent of the open seat contests they challenged. Four of these open seat contests required a runoff. Four male state legislators were forced into these runoffs, but no female state legislators succeeded to a runoff. Of these four men in runoff elections, Don Nickles (R-OK) was the only successful candidate. He then won the Senate seat in 1980.

Overwhelmingly, state legislators chose to run against male incumbent senators (i.e. 72.1 percent). Female state legislators were quite successful seeking their party's nominations and challenging sitting senators. These female state politicians won 23 party nominations to challenge their state's male incumbent senator (i.e. success rate of 59 percent). These ambitious women may have received encouragement and support from the political parties and leaders. The state's political elite may have thrown its weight behind these female candidates knowing their probabilities of unseating a male incumbent were slim. Perhaps, these women were "sacrificial party lambs" in these challenging Senate races. Comparatively, male state legislators won 38 percent of the Senate primary contests involving male incumbent senators. Moreover, less than seven percent of the three hundred and ninety-six state legislators ran in primaries to challenge female incumbent senators. Female state legislators won forty percent of their primary contests while only one male state legislator succeeded in his primary contest for the seat held by a female incumbent senator.

Due to the relatively few cases of state legislators emerging for the U.S. Senate, the following analyses describe these individual senatorial candidates.<sup>28</sup> Table 6.3 provides a comparative evaluation of the entire senatorial candidate pool. Listed are descriptive results for all candidates and female state legislators who ran for the Senate. Of the 396 state legislators seeking U.S. Senate seats, two-thirds of these state politicians ran after 1990. More Democratic state legislators ran for the Senate, and interestingly, twice as many Democratic female state

**TABLE 6.3 Profile of U.S. Senate Candidate Eligibility Pool**

	<b>All Senate Candidates</b>	<b>Female State Legislators</b>	<b>Female Members of Congress</b>
<b>State Legislative Service</b>			
Senate	1.3%	10%	8.0%
House	10.8	90	28.0
<b>Held Prior Elective Office</b>	22.6	61.6	36.0
<b>Party Affiliation</b>			
Republican	49.7	31.7	40.0
Democrat	50.1	65	60.0
Other	0.21	3.3	0.0
<b>Have Female Role Models</b>	90.9	91.7	100
<b>Contested Open Seats</b>	29.4	18.3	44.0
<b>Contested Special Elections</b>	4.1	3.3	4.0
<b>N</b>	3,286	60	25

Source: Compiled by the author

<sup>28</sup> I do not empirically test the relationships between personal and contextual factors and candidate emergence to the U.S. Senate.

legislators ran as Republican female state legislators. Ninety percent of the female state legislators seeking U.S. Senate seats had served in their state's lower legislative chambers, and almost two-thirds of the female state legislative senatorial candidates had served in elective office at the city and/or county level.

Primarily, this study seeks to explain whether female political role models influence female state legislators and female politicians to run for higher elective office. Witnessing the electoral and legislative successes of women in the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate from their respective states could manifest political inspiration in female state legislators seeking career advancement. As reported in Table 6.3, over 91 percent of the female state legislators who sought seats in the U.S. Senate had female political role models in their states. Of these women with female political role models, fifty-five percent have witnessed only the success of one woman for higher office. Fifty of the sixty female state legislators who sought U.S. Senate seats had a female member of Congress as a political role model. Fewer than twenty percent of these fifty women had a female member of Congress actively serving as a role model when they sought the Senate seat. Twenty of these sixty female state legislators have witnessed the success of a female U.S. senator in their respective states, and nine have a female governor as a political role model.

Running for the U.S. Senate requires a well-coordinated statewide campaign machine. Thus, some women may find electoral inspiration from the political successes of women who have won statewide offices such as lieutenant governor or secretary of state. Twenty-eight of these sixty female state legislators emerged in states where a woman has served as lieutenant governor or secretary of state.

Almost thirty-two percent of female state legislators with two female role models emerge for the U.S. Senate. These women have seen the successes of a female member of Congress and a female U.S. senator. States with two female officials in higher offices, specifically the U.S. Congress, are perhaps electorally favorable environments for women. A female state senator remarked,

[State X]'s voters are supportive of women candidates. We're lucky in that the best women candidates have run and done well in office. We have won several top statewide positions, and we are doing well in Congress. I am encouraged as a woman to be a candidate for office. I have watched Sarah's election to the Senate and Kathleen's role in the U.S. House. They have shown me it can be done and encouraged me to make my run.

Fourteen of the 340 female candidates ran for the Senate without witnessing the electoral success of a female political role model in their states. Some women are highly ambitious, self-starters, and they do not need any encouragement for a political career. Also, other women may be drawn to the prestige of the Senate. Half of these women without female political role models ran after the 1992 elections. Feminist groups and political organizations strongly encouraged female senatorial candidacies in 1992. Only five female state legislators sought a Senate seat without the influential electoral success of a female role model. These five female state legislators ran in three states – Nevada, New Hampshire and Wisconsin. Nevada and Wisconsin have yet to elect a female U.S. senator. New Hampshire currently has two female U.S. senators. Shaheen, elected in 2008, is a former state legislator and governor; and Ayotte, elected in 2010, is the state's former Attorney General.

No woman ran for the U.S. Senate from 1976 to 2010 from two states, Idaho and Utah. Idaho's first female member of Congress, Gracie Pfof, was elected in 1953 and served until 1963. Both states had women elected to the U.S. House in the mid-1990s. In 2003, Utah

elected Olene Walker as its first female governor. Cracks are emerging in these states' political glass ceilings, yet no woman has decided to risk a run for the U.S. Senate. The recent female electoral achievements may provide a new impetus for women to seek higher elective office.

Female state legislators in eight geographically diverse states did not seek Senate seats despite having witnessed the electoral successes of a female political role model. Although she has a female political role model (U.S. representative or governor), a strategic female state politician might not seek career advancement when her only electoral opportunity for the Senate in her state (e.g., Connecticut, Hawaii, Michigan and New York) would force her to campaign against a very strong and well-established male incumbent. In these states, female state politicians did not have a female U.S. senator to follow or encourage their political aspirations. Two of these states, Michigan and New York, elected their first female senators in 2000. Senators Stabenow and Clinton blazed paths for future women now to climb the political ladder.

In eleven states, no female state legislator ran for a Senate seat. For example, female state legislators decided against Senate candidacies in Delaware, Mississippi, and Vermont. These states are where women have yet to find electoral successes for the U.S. Congress. Mississippi's voters have not elected a woman to Congress or to the state's governorship. A female state senator or representative in one of these states found electoral acceptance within her district, but she may not feel emboldened to be the pioneer to challenge the male political establishment in higher electoral politics. These female state politicians do not have an influential female political example to provide candidacy support or a political path to follow. Female political role models in Congress inspire political career aspirations, and women in these states did not have these leaders to motivate ascension to the Senate.

Prevailing in a U.S. Senate primary competition proved quite difficult for many state legislators during this time period. One hundred and fifty-five (or 39.1 percent) state legislators advanced to the general election. Over three-fourths of these state legislators were state representatives, not term-limited in their services, who challenged their state's sitting senators. More than fifty percent were Democratic state legislators. Yet, of these state legislators competing in the November elections, thirty-seven (or 24 percent) were women. These female state legislators overwhelmingly challenged incumbent senators. Ten female state legislators advanced to the general election in an open seat contest. Eighty-seven percent of these female state legislators who competed in general elections had a female political role model. Of these thirty-seven women, thirty (or 81 percent) had witnessed the success of a female member of Congress, and thirteen (or 39 percent) had a female U.S. senator as a role model.

These state legislators took significant electoral risks to seek a Senate seat. How successful were they? Seventy-four (or 47.7 percent) of one hundred and fifty-five state legislators or former state legislators won their senatorial elections. Eleven of these Senate victories went to female state legislators. When examining open seat contests, five female state legislators succeeded in their Senate elections, while ten male state legislators won. Female state legislators fared quite as well as their male colleagues when challenging incumbent senators. Success rates for the former were fifty-five percent, and the men succeeded in almost fifty percent of their contests.

Importantly, each of the eleven female state legislators who reached the U.S. Senate had a female political role model. Ten of these female state legislators had seen a woman elected to Congress in their state, and three had female governors and female U.S. senators as political role models. These female political role models provided evidence of a constituency accepting of

women, and these female role models suggested that the public would accept a female senator. Additionally, these female role models provide examples of how to campaign effectively and gain citizens' votes and respect. These successful female state legislators had female exemplars who to imitate or from whom to learn the invaluable skills of how to climb the political ladder. Senator A stated, "She [Senator Frances Clifford] built a political career we could follow. Running statewide is daunting, and she really laid out a framework by which I learned and I used. I needed her example, and I used her encouragement for my own run."

### **U.S. Representatives' Political Career Ascension –**

#### **Leaving the Independence Avenue side for the Constitution Avenue side**

Many members of the U.S. House of Representatives turn their political eyes across the Capitol wondering whether to pursue a run for the Senate. Political ambition studies conclude that members of Congress calculate U.S. Senate candidacy decisions by assessing the weighted risks and potential of success with the expected benefits of serving in this elite body (Rohde 1979; Brace 1984). For three hundred and six members of Congress, the utility of serving in the Senate far exceeded the risks of leaving the House and campaigning statewide. Of all U.S. Senate primary candidates since 1976, fewer than ten percent have been members or former members of the U.S. House. As reported in Table 6.4, these House members have competed in 219 Senate primary contests. Of all the congressional members seeking Senate seats, twenty-five (or 8.2 percent) were women. The success rate for women in Senate primaries is 64 percent

**TABLE 6.4 U.S. Representatives as Senate Primary Candidates Controlling for Gender and Electoral Status. 1976 - 2010**

	All Contests		Open Seats		Women Incumbent		Men Incumbent	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Round Election	Runoff	1 <sup>st</sup> Round Election	Runoff	1 <sup>st</sup> Round Election	Runoff	1 <sup>st</sup> Round Election	Runoff
Contests	219	10	88	5	11	0	120	5
# Women	25	2	11	2	1	0	13	0
Female Success	16	2	7	2	1	0	8	0
<i>% Success</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>0</i>
# Men	281	9	143	3	12	0	126	6
Male Success	172	4	89	2	7	0	76	2
<i>% Success</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>33</i>

Source: Compiled by the author



which is three points higher than their male House colleagues' success rate (61.2 percent).<sup>29</sup>

Ten of the 219 contests required a runoff. Nine male House members competed in these runoff elections, and two female U.S. representatives, Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) and Denise Majette (D-GA), were forced into such competitions. Of the nine male congressional members, four won the runoff elections. Two of the victories came in open seat primaries (i.e., MacKay (D-FL) and DeMint (R-SC)), whereas the other two men succeeded in runoff contests for seats held by male incumbent senators (i.e., Gunter (D-FL) and Boulter (R-TX)). Representatives Lincoln and Majette won their runoff contests. Lincoln won the Senate seat in 1998, and Majette lost in the general election to her House colleague Johnny Isakson.

Many of these congressional members advanced to the U.S. House through an open seat opportunity. Therefore, many seeking to climb the political ladder would welcome an open Senate seat. Forty percent of the contests were for open Senate seats. Fifty percent of male and female members of Congress contested open Senate seats including eleven congresswomen. The success rate for these women (63.6 percent) was slightly higher than the success rate of their male House colleagues (62.2 percent).

One hundred and fifty-two members of Congress challenged incumbent senators. One female member of Congress, Linda Smith (R-WA), ran for the Senate seat held by incumbent U.S. Senator Patty Murray. Smith followed in the footsteps of her state's female political pioneers, yet she was unsuccessful in defeating the sitting female senator. Congressmen did fare seemingly well in their primary contests for Senate seats held by female incumbent senators.

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<sup>29</sup> These findings substantiate earlier political science research. See Barbara Burrell. 1992. "Women Candidates in Open-Seat Primaries for the U.S. House: 1988-1990." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 17: 493-508. Barbara Burrell. 1994. *A Woman's Place is in the House: Campaigning for Congress in the Feminist Era*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Susan J. Carroll. 1994. *Women as Candidates in American Politics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Susan J. Carroll and Richard L. Fox. 2010. *Gender and Elections*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Seven of these twelve congressmen succeeded in their primaries, but only two (Talent, R-MO and Boozman, R-AR) actually defeated the female incumbent senator. The greatest proportion of U.S. representatives to contest incumbent-held seats (91 percent) challenged male sitting senators. Thirteen congresswomen, in ten different states, and one hundred and twenty-six congressmen competed for Senate seats held by male incumbent senators. The success rate for congresswomen (61.5 percent) was slightly higher than the success rate of their male colleagues (60.3 percent).

The political backgrounds and the contextual nature of these congressional members who sought Senate seats vary greatly. Nearly sixty percent of the congresswomen who sought a Senate seat ran in 1992 or after this historic election for female candidates. Their male House colleagues were far more evenly divided in their electoral attempts for the Senate (i.e. 51 percent ran in 1992 or after). Of these 306 House members seeking careers in the U.S. Senate, 163 were Republicans and 143 were Democrats. Twenty percent more Democratic congresswomen than Republican congresswomen ran for the Senate during these electoral seasons. [See Table 6.3 for a profile of female members of Congress who ran for the Senate].

As reported in Table 6.5, no female member of Congress ran for the U.S. Senate without a female political role model. Ninety-two percent of all congresswomen seeking Senate seats had one or two female political role models. Seven of these twenty-five female House members running for the Senate had female U.S. senators as political role models. In several instances, these female congresswomen were the pioneering female political role models in their states. Moreover, two female House members became their states' first female U.S. senator (e.g. Mikulski in Maryland and Stabenow in Michigan).

Members of Congress compete very effectively for U.S. Senate seats. These politicians have a core constituency of support in their congressional district on which to build statewide electoral appeal. Additionally, these congressional members utilize their previous political services and skills as well as their abilities to raise substantial funds to mount successful senatorial campaigns. Of these 306 congressional members, 187 (or 61.1 percent) were victorious in their Senate primary elections. Sixteen congresswomen won Senate primary elections, and all these female successes were achieved in states with a previously serving female political role model. Forty-four percent of these women had a female U.S. senator as a political role model. Seven congresswomen (Mikulski, Boxer, Snowe, Lincoln, Stabenow, Cantwell and Gillibrand) won a Senate seat. Of the one hundred and seventy-two congressmen who won Senate primary elections, eighty-one were victorious in the general election and claimed a Senate seat.

**TABLE 6.5 U.S. Representatives Running for the U.S. Senate with Female Political Role Models**

	Male House members	Female House members
<b>No</b> Female Political Role Model	6.4%	0.0%
<b>One</b> Female Political Role Model	50.2	72.0
<b>Two</b> Female Political Role Models	34.5	20.0
<b>Three</b> Female Political Role Models	8.9	8.0

Source: Compiled by the author

## **Conclusion**

Many public servants and ambitious individuals believe the U.S. Senate to be the ultimate prize in a political career. Climbing the political ladder and achieving the status of senator requires progressively ambitious politicians and political amateurs to calculate not only personal costs and benefits, but also, to find a favorable political environment. It appears that progressively ambitious female politicians must overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles to win seats in this elite boys' club. Fewer than eleven percent of Senate candidates since 1976 have been women. Those female politicians with established public service records seem more successful at seeking careers in the U.S. Senate. Sixty female state legislators and twenty-five congresswomen ran for the Senate during these electoral cycles. Of all these women, only five female state legislators did not have a female political role model. The remaining eighty female politicians had female political role models or they were the trailblazing women of their states. And, their achievements prompted not only their own career advancements, but also, the career ascension of other women.

Ninety-six percent of the three hundred and forty women who competed for Senate seats had female political role models. Prior findings in this study suggest that having a female senator as a role model may be more likely to prompt additional women to run for higher office. Forty-five percent of all female senatorial candidates had a female U.S. senator as a role model, and almost sixty percent had a current female senator serving when they sought a Senate seat. Since 1992, women have represented fourteen states in the U.S. Senate. Four states: California, Maine, New Hampshire, and Washington currently have two female U.S. senators which is almost half of all women serving in the Senate. One hundred and thirty-one (or 39 percent) of all female senatorial candidates have sought seats since 1992 in one of these fourteen states.

Furthermore, 43 of these women (or 33 percent) were inspired by the electoral successes of their state's two female senators, and they challenged these incumbent females in their respective states.

It appears that female political role models encourage other female political actors to consider a run for the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate. Female members of Congress provide many women the political examples needed to foster greater political ambition and electoral risk-taking. Very few states have had female U.S. senators, but their presence and successes attract other female politicians to run for higher office.

When women compete, they are as successful as their male colleagues. Of the women senatorial candidates, over forty percent were successful in the primary contests and twenty-three went on to serve in the Senate. These findings paint a picture of female candidacies for higher office occurring where female political role models reside. Electorally, women are finding favor in these environments, and most assuredly, these female successes are prompting other established female politicians to consider career advancements.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

#### *FEMALE POLITICIANS – ROLE MODELS ADVANCING*

#### *THEIR GENDER'S REPRESENTATION*

Inspiration is most likely when the other's domain of excellence is self-relevant because that is when one is most likely to model oneself on the other. To be inspired by another's outstanding accomplishments, one must believe oneself capable of comparable success (Lockwood and Kunda 1997, 101).

Female Role Models may be especially beneficial for women. [They] serve as proxies, guides to the potential accomplishments for which other women can strive (Lockwood 2006, 44).

I think that just by being in the House of Representatives, I fight for women...I work hard to represent my district. This gives other women the courage to run and shows that women can do the job.

*-Former Congresswoman Marjorie Holt (R-MD), 1975<sup>30</sup>*

Political debate continues regarding the causation of female underrepresentation in elective offices and its implications for representative government. Gender politics scholars have provided systematic theoretical arguments and conclusive findings surrounding why women do not run for office, and they have suggested many bold recommendations that can be taken to encourage female candidacies and to foster a sizable increase in female politicians to promote gender parity in government.<sup>31</sup> This dissertation explored the role of women in politics

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<sup>30</sup> Quote is from Sue McCauley Patterson. 1975. "From Maryland with Promise (and Reservations)," *Ms.*, April 1975, 78.

<sup>31</sup> See Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox. 2005. *It Takes A Candidate. Why Women Don't Run for Office*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Also, see Marianne Githens and Jewel L. Prestage 1977. *A Portrait of*

from an opposing angle: why do women run for political offices? Specifically, this study sought to understand the influence of female political actors on the candidacy decisions and electoral outcomes of women seeking political career advancement. In the last thirty years, women have made significant, although slow, progress in electoral politics. Female politicians have become prominent leaders in their respective political parties, and several have aspired to climb to the pinnacle of a political career, the U.S. presidency. Their successes and continued determination to influence political discourse must inspire other women in the political pipeline to ascend to advanced political careers. Female political role models serve as successful examples and provide a guided course for women in lower political offices to follow in pursuit of a career in higher elective office, especially the U.S. Congress.

The existing political science literature contends most, if not nearly all, politicians are progressively ambitious (Rohde 1979; Palmer and Simon 2003; Maestas, Fulton, Maisel and Stone 2006). When the costs and benefits are carefully calculated, politicians, male and female, will seek advantageous opportunities to advance their political careers. Have men and women serving in state legislatures differed in their decision-calculi for seeking congressional seats? Further, if they do differ, what accounts for those women who ascend the political ladder? The literature reviewed in chapter 2 notes that women face structural barriers when running for office, and they possess lower levels of political ambition than men. Scholars report that women feel less qualified to run and become more easily discouraged to consider ever being a candidate for political office (Carroll 1994; Lawless and Fox 2005). To motivate a woman to run for political office, researchers have suggested that party leaders and political elites take a greater

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*Marginality: The Political Behavior of the American Woman*. New York: Longman. Jeanne J. Kirkpatrick. 1974. *Political Woman*. New York: Basic Books. Linda Witt, Karen Paget, and Glenna Matthews. 1994. *Running as a Woman*. New York: Free Press. Susan J. Carroll. 1994. *Women as Candidates in American Politics*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

role in recruiting and encouraging women to be candidates (Mandel 1981; Thomas 2005; Lawless and Fox 2005; Sanbonmatsu 2006). According to Lawless and Fox (2005), to understand and gauge women's representation and needed roles in government, the scholarly focus should be on the interactions among political actors and eligible female candidates.

This dissertation took this research challenge to examine empirically if and how female political role models influence the decisions of female legislators to run for the U.S. Congress. Women who run for office are as successful as men. Building upon psychological and political ambition and recruitment theories, I argued in chapter 3 that female state legislators would ascend the political ladder and seek congressional careers when they have witnessed and received encouragement from female political role models – women in Congress or female governors. Having these female role models provides female state officials inspiration and political paths blazed with electoral acceptance and success to follow. “Would a woman presidential nominee serve as a lightning rod to fuel women's political ambition?” (Lawless and Fox 2005, 155). Indeed, female politicians serving at the state and national levels bolster women's political ambition and promote a keen sense of motivation that female officeholders can successfully advance their political careers. Evidence from personal interviews with congresswomen and female state legislators as well as congressional elections data affirm women are encouraged by the successes of female political role models, and many model their political careers after a female politician from their state. Also, female state legislators who have female political role models succeed more often in their congressional attempts than women who lack such mentors.



## **The Findings and the Implications for Democratic Representation**

In-depth interviews with seven U.S. congresswomen, two U.S. senators, and forty-two female state legislators, as detailed in chapter 4, reveal the distinctively ambitious characters of female politicians. Each woman is a unique political candidate, and her decisions to run for elective office or advance her career are complex and varied. Even though these women weigh their political prospects differently, we can discern patterns and make generalizations about their candidacy decision-calculi and electoral successes. Some women feel an inner-calling or self-motivation to become public servants. They need no encouragement from the outside; they just need a political opportunity. For other women, their political ambition must be molded. They need to inherit the family's political role or they need to witness a woman's political success and then model their own political future according to a similar path. Female politicians discuss how pioneering political women motivated their decisions to advance to the U.S. Congress. Several testify how their state's first woman in Congress contacted them, encouraged their current political careers, and supported their efforts through networking and fundraising to run for Congress. Interestingly, each woman, also, spoke of her own personal role to mentor and encourage other women – a new generation of women – to follow in her political path to Congress and to become political leaders.

Through their personal stories, female politicians relate the importance of symbolic representation. Many women need to see female electoral acceptance and successes for their own personal decisions to enter the political arena. The statistical results for female candidacy decisions and electoral outcomes to the U.S. House and U.S. Senate substantiate these anecdotal accounts. Politicians are strategic actors, and they will seek opportune elections (open seats or special elections) to seek congressional careers. Fewer than five percent of state legislators ran

for congressional seats from 1976 to 2010. Female state legislators are less likely to run for the U.S. Congress than their male colleagues, but when they enter congressional contests, they are as successful as their male counterparts.

The empirical analyses elicit several principal findings. Over 1,700 state legislators ran for the U.S. House, and almost forty-five percent were successful in their congressional contests. More than fifty percent of the state legislators reside in states with female political role models, and sixty-three percent of the female state legislators serve in states where a woman currently holds a higher political office. The first principal result is female state legislators are more likely to run for the U.S. House when they have a female political role model. A female state legislator's probability of running for the House increases by one percent when she has a female political role model. It does not matter whether the female state legislator and her female political role model are of the same political party; the importance is whether the female state politician has a female political role model to imitate and follow.

Second, and most importantly, the female political role model who positively and significantly influences the candidacy decisions of female state legislators to run for the U.S. House is a female member of Congress. Female state legislators who have congresswomen as role models are almost twice as likely to run for the House as their female colleagues who lack these mentors. Congresswomen hold the political offices that many female state legislators desire, and therefore, witnessing their successes and their political trajectories into the House encourages a congressional attempt. Nevertheless, female governors acting as political role models decrease a female state legislator's probability of running for Congress. These women may provide inspiration for female politicians to serve in higher offices within their respective states and not to seek congressional careers in Washington, D.C.

Third, the political environment and electoral context also influence the candidacy decisions of female state legislators. These women are more likely to run for the House in special elections, when the contest is for an open seat, and when they have served in more professionalized state legislatures. Female state legislators are less likely to run for congressional seats when they are term-limited and have prior elective experience at the local level. Furthermore, more female state legislators ran for the U.S. Congress after the 1992 “Year of the Woman” elections when women were strongly encouraged to seek congressional careers.

Another significant finding is female state legislators are more likely to succeed in their congressional contests when they have female political role models and the two represent the same political party. Ninety-four percent of female state legislators who won their congressional primaries had female political role models. Pioneering female politicians have helped create an accepting electoral environment for women. Voters accept, recognize, and reward qualified female contenders, and female political role models can provide female candidates additional resources either through encouragement, campaign support or a utilized political strategy to enable women to win congressional contests.

Finally, three hundred and forty women ran for the U.S. Senate, including sixty female state legislators and twenty-five congresswomen. Ninety-five percent of all female senatorial candidates have witnessed the success of a female politician for higher political office. Fifty-five of the sixty female state legislators who ran for Senate seats had a female political role model, and a third of these women followed the political path blazed by their state’s female U.S. senator. In eleven states, including Delaware, Mississippi and Vermont (e.g. three states where no woman has won a congressional seat), no female state legislator ran for the U.S. Senate. Almost ninety percent of the female state legislators who contested in the general election for the

Senate had female political role models. The eleven women who won Senate seats all had female political role models. In addition, every congresswoman who sought career advancement to the Senate had a female political role model, including seven who had a female U.S. senator to inspire their ambition and endeavors. States that lack female political role models had no women run for the U.S. House and only one or two women run for the U.S. Senate. In many instances, these women who ran for the Senate contested in the momentous 1992 race for female candidates or they ran to be the state's pioneering political woman.

The primary goal of this dissertation is to understand the decision-calculus that female politicians employ when seeking to advance their careers to the U.S. Congress. The previous findings demonstrate women respond to the successes of female political actors. They are more likely to decide to seek congressional careers when they have another woman's political path to witness and follow. Therefore, we cannot take for granted the importance of having women serve in collegial bodies. Female politicians do more than motivate and engage other women in political dialogue and activism. They are instrumental in encouraging more women to run for office, and they are the fundamental keys of political excellence and electoral accomplishment who other women can strive to emulate.

Political scientists have been greatly concerned with the representation of different groups, especially women, because of the legitimacy and accountability it affords democratic institutions. Not only do women bring different perspectives, skills, and backgrounds into government, but they also provide a sense of fairness, acceptance, and responsiveness to a particular group. Female politicians have opened the halls of democracy for women, and these female political role models serve as symbolic representatives. It matters for governance and campaigns to have these women actively engaged in the body politic for we see a greater

fulfillment of democratic principles. Understanding women's candidacy decisions and political influence affects how we study and address candidate recruitment, electoral behavior, and public policy aimed at increasing the number of women in politics.

For many researchers and activists, an ultimate success of democratic government will be to have gender parity in politics and in elected bodies. Scholars contend that achieving gender parity is most difficult in an electoral system such as the United States where structural barriers exist. The United States' single-member plurality or first-past-the-post electoral system compounds the difficulties of women emerging as candidates and obtaining elective offices. Voters may be reluctant to select a woman as their only representative for the district or state in the legislature. Whereas, in proportional representation systems with multi-member districts, voters may be willing to choose a woman as one of a group of representatives. Proportional representation systems on average have higher percentages of women legislators (Farrell 2001). In twenty-seven nations, women comprise as much as 32 percent of the national legislatures (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2012). Also, some nations have implemented affirmative action programs to encourage women to run for office and to help them get elected. Argentina, in 1991, was the first nation to institute quotas for women in its legislature. At present, forty-six nations have a similar national or political party-mandated quota system for guaranteeing women's representation in elective offices. Proportional representation systems and these electoral rules (e.g. quotas) promote female candidacies and attempt to ameliorate a patriarchal history and legislative culture. Lacking these institutional electoral structures in the United States solidifies the important role of a female political pioneer whose behavior can be modeled. Women need to see female successes in order to feel embolden to run for office and to achieve electoral acceptance.

Others scholars note that achieving gender parity in electoral politics is challenging because of a large gender gap in political ambition. Women do possess political ambition, but in varying degrees. However, it is a political ambition that can be ignited. A woman's accomplishments in the political arena can fuel another woman's political ambition and inspire her to move ahead in a political career. She can aspire to attain the level of success of her female political role model – the congresswoman, the female U.S. senator, or the female governor. For more eligible females to emerge as political candidates, they must see the electoral and legislative successes of other women. Current female officeholders strive to encourage more women to run for elective office, and this pattern cannot cease. For women to feel accepted and to find inclusion in politics, more women serving in political offices must reach out and plant the seeds of political service and career success.

In 2012, women comprise 16.8 percent of the U.S. Congress and 24 percent of the state legislatures (CAWP 2012). Where women are successful seems diverse, yet clustered. Four states: California, Maine, New Hampshire, and Washington have two female U.S. senators (respectively, 47.1 percent of all women serving in the Senate), 23 congresswomen (32 percent of all female House members), and each of these states has nearly 30 percent female representation in its state legislature. States that have the most women serving in the state legislatures (i.e. Colorado, Hawaii, Arizona, Minnesota, Washington, Illinois, Maryland, Maine, and Connecticut) also, have female members of Congress, and three have female U.S. senators.

Electoral, these states have advantageous environments for women to serve in office. Women have succeeded in these states, perhaps, because these electoral districts hold many of the “woman-friendly” characteristics (e.g. diversity, liberal and educated) Palmer and Simon (2006) describe, and/or the electorate in these states is more accepting of female candidates and

politicians. Washington has had two women in its seven-member congressional delegation as far back as 1961 and had three women in 1993. Hawaii has had a woman in its congressional delegation since its recognition as a state, and since 2003, has had a female governor and two female congresswomen. These states are laboratories for female political role models to motivate future women to climb the political ladder to Congress. Over the eighteen electoral cycles analyzed in this dissertation, thirty-six percent of the female state legislators who ran for the U.S. House and thirty-three percent of the female state legislators who ran for the U.S. Senate emerged from these eleven states. Forecasting to future congressional elections, we should find more female state legislators following their female political role models' paths to successful political careers in the U.S. House or the U.S. Senate.

## **Future Research**

This theory of female political role models' influence on female state legislators' decisions to run for the U.S. Congress complements psychological literature concerning the impact of mentors and role models on future career aspirations and considerations. Further, this theory and findings impart a new empirical understanding of women's active role in shaping the future of their own gender's political representation in higher levels of government. The ideas espoused here have only brushed the surface of our understanding of women's roles in politics. There are many questions that remain to be answered. First, do female political role models motivate women to seek other elective offices, such as governor, lieutenant governor or state constitutional offices? What is the influence of a female state representative in encouraging women to run for the state house or state senate or even a local office? Does the political role model influence female candidacy and electoral outcomes at other governmental levels? In

addition, are there other female political role models who also significantly affect women to engage in the political system and run for elective office at any level? Women who have won statewide offices such as lieutenant governor, secretaries of state and education or state constitutional positions (e.g. treasurer, insurance commissioner, etc) may provide a necessary and successful political example and path for women to become politically involved as candidates. At local government levels, some offices are increasingly held by women suggesting a norm that some offices are for women and other posts are for men. Is there evidence that some statewide constitutional offices are passed from women to women? Is there something akin to a modern underground railroad which helps encourage women to follow their already-accepted sisters and contest statewide offices or the bench in circuits that already have women jurists?

How influential are women's families in their decisions to run for political offices? Beginning with the first women who ran for office at local and state levels, do we find their fathers, mothers, or other relatives serving as role models and encouraging them to become public servants?

Aside from political role models, what other structural factors motivate women to run for office? Do women seeking state office tend to run in districts that are closer to their state's capital? Are certain states electorally advantageous for women? Is there a clustering effect for women's success? In states where women have been successful for state and national office, are more women running, serving, and building political careers? Potentially, other factors influencing female candidate emergence and electoral success might be traditional roles socialization, political encouragement or discouragement from party leaders, political scandal, leaving a promising career outside of their political service, and movement from their home state to Washington, D.C. These conditions may be as instrumental in a woman's decision to run for



Congress as the influence of another female political actor. Finally, once women become politicians, are they legislative role models? How influential are congresswomen in showing new female politicians how to be effective legislators?

### **Final Thoughts**

Little girls and young women around the United States are still waiting for the political glass ceiling to be shattered. Recent political seasons provide more hope and belief that women can ascend to the highest and most attractive political offices, and therefore, succeed in influencing the public discourse in American democracy. Based upon the findings of female political role models' influence in female candidacy and electoral successes, we can predict where more women will emerge for higher office. Knowing that female politicians encourage other women to decide on furthering their political careers, we now more fully understand the power of descriptive representation. Women officeholders – serving as political role models – embolden more women to engage in politics and seek congressional careers. It is their successful political examples which can spark women's political ambition, motivate career decisions, and increase their representation in government. Female politicians hold a great power of influence. They are paramount to more women seeking politics as a career and in changing the dialogue of what politically can be.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Interviewing Female Politicians**

#### Interview Questionnaire for Women in Congress

1. When were you first interested in politics? What shaped this interest in politics?
2. How did you first become politically active or involved?
3. Has there been a political figure that influenced your interests in politics or motivated you to become more politically involved (i.e. motivated you to run for office)? Who?
4. How did “he or she” motivate or influence you?
5. Have you ever had a political role model or mentor? Who is (was) it?
6. How did he/she influence you?
7. Who motivated you to run for Congress? What affected your decision to seek higher office?
8. Do you believe it is important for you as a woman representative to encourage other women to seek political office, especially to run for higher elective office such as the U.S. House, Senate or your state’s governorship?
9. How do you encourage young women to be politically active and interested in public service?
10. Do you think it is important for you to represent women’s issues?

## **Interviewing Female Politicians**

### Interview Questionnaire for Female State Legislators

1. When were you first interested in politics? What shaped this interest in politics?
2. How did you first become politically active or involved?
3. Has there been a political figure that influenced your interests in politics or motivated you to become more politically involved (i.e. motivated you to run for office)? Who?
4. How did “he or she” motivate or influence you?
5. Have you ever had a political role model or mentor? Who is (was) it?
6. How did he/she influence you?
7. Have you ever thought about running for higher political office? If yes, which office?
8. Do you believe it is important for you as a woman representative to encourage other women to seek political office, especially to run for the state legislature?
9. How do you encourage young women to be politically active and interested in public service?
10. Do you think it is important for you to represent women’s issues?



## APPENDIX B

### Female State Legislators' Emergence to the U.S. House of Representatives

**TABLE 1: Female State Legislators' Emergence to the U.S. House of Representatives, 1976-2010**

Logit Analysis for Emergence=1	Coefficient (Robust Standard Errors)
<b>The Political Role Models</b>	
Female Member of Congress	0.487** (0.197)
<b>The State Legislator's Characteristics</b>	
State Legislator Party	0.006 (0.011)
State Legislative Chamber	0.273 (0.213)
Prior Elective Experience	-0.535*** (0.131)
<b>The Political Environment</b>	
Open Seat/Contested Race	1.261*** (0.130)
District Partisanship	-0.005 (0.005)
Term Limits	-1.203*** (0.272)
Special Elections	0.107 (0.197)
State Legislature Professionalism	0.017*** (0.005)
<b>Constant</b>	-4.184*** (0.365)
Log Likelihood = -1147.057	
Likelihood Ratio $\chi^2(1) = 6.54$	
Area under ROC curve = 0.7228	
Pseudo $R^2 = 0.0743$	
Number of Observations = 9172	
***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10	

**TABLE 2: Female State Legislators' Emergence to the U.S. House of Representatives, 1976-2010**

Logit Analysis for Emergence=1	Coefficient (Robust Standard Errors)
<b>The Political Role Models</b>	
Female Senator	-0.022 (0.135)
<b>The State Legislator's Characteristics</b>	
State Legislator Party	0.007 (0.012)
State Legislative Chamber	0.284 (0.213)
Prior Elective Experience	-0.532*** (0.131)
<b>The Political Environment</b>	
Open Seat/Contested Race	1.278*** (0.131)
District Partisanship	-0.005 (0.005)
Term Limits	-1.127*** (0.269)
Special Elections	0.134 (0.196)
State Legislature Professionalism	0.021*** (0.004)
<b>Constant</b>	-3.899*** (0.333)
Log Likelihood = -1150.3117	
Likelihood Ratio $\chi^2(1) = 0.03$	
Area under ROC curve = 0.7159	
Pseudo $R^2 = 0.0716$	
Number of Observations = 9172	
***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10	

**TABLE 3: Female State Legislators' Emergence to the U.S. House of Representatives, 1976-2010**

Logit Analysis for Emergence=1	Coefficient (Robust Standard Errors)
<b>The Political Role Models</b>	
Female Governor	-0.634*** (0.160)
<b>The State Legislator's Characteristics</b>	
State Legislator Party	0.007 (0.013)
State Legislative Chamber	0.275 (0.212)
Prior Elective Experience	-0.519*** (0.131)
<b>The Political Environment</b>	
Open Seat/Contested Race	1.250*** (0.131)
District Partisanship	-0.004 (0.005)
Term Limits	-1.065*** (0.269)
Special Elections	0.139 (0.195)
State Legislature Professionalism	0.018*** (0.004)
<b>Constant</b>	-3.715*** (0.332)
Log Likelihood = -1141.754	
Likelihood Ratio $\chi^2(1) = 17.14$	
Area under ROC curve = 0.7297	
Pseudo $R^2 = 0.0785$	
Number of Observations = 9172	
***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10	

## APPENDIX C

### Female Political Role Models

**TABLE 1: Female Political Role Models per State**

State	Governor	Total Gov (w/o widows)	Total Gov	Senator	Total Sen (without widows)	Total Sen	MC	Total MC (without widows)	Total MC	Total RM Dum	Total RM (no widows)	Total RMs
Alabama	1	1	1	1	0	2	1	2	3	3	3	6
Alaska	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	1	2
Arizona	1	4	4	0	0	0	1	4	4	2	8	8
Arkansas	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	2	4	2	2	6
California	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	34	34	2	34	36
Colorado	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	4	1	4	4
Connecticut	1	2	2	0	0	0	1	6	6	2	8	8
Delaware	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Florida	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	13	13	2	13	14
Georgia	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	4	6	2	4	7
Hawaii	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	4	4	2	5	5
Idaho	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	2	2
Illinois	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	12	13	2	12	14
Indiana	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	5	1	5	5
Iowa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kansas	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	0	5	3	2	9
Kentucky	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	2	3	3
Louisiana	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	3	2	6
Maine	0	0	0	1	3	3	1	3	3	2	3	6

Maryland	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	7	8	2	7	9
Massachusetts	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	4	4	2	5	5
Michigan	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	3	8	9
Minnesota	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	3	3	2	3	5
Mississippi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Missouri	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	6	6	2	6	8
Montana	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	2	2
Nebraska	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	2	4
Nevada	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	3	1	3	3
New Hampshire	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	3	2	5
New Jersey	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	5	5	2	6	6
New Mexico	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	2	3	3
New York	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	22	23	2	22	25
North Carolina	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	4	5	3	5	8
North Dakota	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Ohio	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	9	10	2	9	11
Oklahoma	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	2	3	3
Oregon	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	3	6	7
Pennsylvania	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	7	1	6	7
Rhode Island	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
South Carolina	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	5	2	2	6
South Dakota	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	4
Tennessee	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	6	1	3	6
Texas	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	4	6	3	5	9
Utah	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	3	3	2	4	4
Vermont	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Virginia	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	3	1	3	3
Washington	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	8	8	3	10	12
West Virginia	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	2	2
Wisconsin	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	2	2
Wyoming	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	2	3	3

**TABLE 2: Female Political Role Models per State and Year**

	1976	1978	1980	1982	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010
Alabama	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Alaska	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	1
Arizona	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Arkansas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
California	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Colorado	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Connecticut	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
Delaware	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0
Florida	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Georgia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Hawaii	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Idaho	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Illinois	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Indiana	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Iowa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kansas	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	0	0	0	1	1	2	2
Kentucky	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Louisiana	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1
Maine	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Maryland	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Massachusetts	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
Michigan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	3	3	3
Minnesota	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	2
Mississippi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Missouri	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
Montana	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
Nebraska	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nevada	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
New Hampshire	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	2	2
New Jersey	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	0

New Mexico	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
New York	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
North Carolina	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	
North Dakota	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ohio	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Oklahoma	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Oregon	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pennsylvania	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Rhode Island	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Carolina	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
South Dakota	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Tennessee	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Texas	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Utah	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
Vermont	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Virginia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0
Washington	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3
West Virginia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
Wisconsin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Wyoming	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1