

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

BIAS, GATEKEEPING, OR AMBITION?: FEMALE CANDIDATES IN STATE

LEGISLATURES

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

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Norman, OK  
2015

BIAS, GATEKEEPING, OR AMBITION?: FEMALE CANDIDATES IN STATE  
LEGISLATURES

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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## Acknowledgements

I owe a debt of gratitude to so many people. First and foremost, I need to thank my children, Adam and Samantha Bracy. The two of you have kept me going, giving me encouragement in the times I wanted to quit and sharing in the joy as checkpoints were met. I know that having a single mother who was writing a dissertation was not easy for you, but I hope that this completion teaches you that even when situations become less than ideal, you keep chasing what matters to you. Also, many thanks to my mother, Mary Holmes, who never failed to believe in my academic endeavors.

I also thank my dissertation chair, Cindy Simon Rosenthal, for both fostering my interests in gender and politics issues and her insightful guidance and enormous patience with me as I prepared this dissertation. My committee – Keith Gaddie, Glen Krutz, Alisa Fryar, and Kelly Damphousse – were also excellent sources of guidance.

During the drafting of this dissertation, I worked for two different universities. The faculty and staff at both of these institutions provide immeasurable support and encouragement for me. From Oklahoma State University, Dr. Jeanette Mendez and Dr. Rebekah Herrick proved to be a wealth of knowledge about my topic and provided great ideas and counsel. I would like to thank the staff there – Cindy Hutchinson, Pam Amos, and Vince Burke - for all of their kindness and support. At Mississippi State University, Dr. Brian Shoup and Dr. Eddie Hearn patiently answered all of my methodological questions and provided needed tutoring in statistical analysis. Dr. Staci Zavattaro provided a wealth of encouragement, a sympathetic ear, and the

occasionally needed threat to my personal safety to keep me working away. The staff in the MSU Political Science office, Quintara Miller and Kamicca Brown-Lott, also provided much needed support in keeping me on track in my first full-time teaching position.

To all of my mentors and friends who encouraged me along the way – thank you. Your friendship and support has meant the world to me. My academic pursuits began at the University of Arkansas. Friends and faculty there were my first source of encouragement and ideas for a multitude of papers and assignments that led to this dissertation. I thank Dr. Todd Shields and Dr. Lori Holyfield for getting me interested in a wealth of gender issues. Gwynda Shields, your friendship and awesome grammatical and editing skills are always appreciated. All the friends I made my first year as a Ph.D. student at OU, especially Kate Carney Huston, helped me hone my interest in the intersection of gender and politics.

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## **Abstract**

Women hold only 24.2% of the seats in state legislatures across the United States, despite being 50.8% of the total population. This low figure presents serious concerns about the quality of representation for half of the population. In this dissertation, I examine the state of Oklahoma, which is currently ranked 48<sup>th</sup> in the nation in regard to female representation.

There are three explanations for the low level of female representation in state legislatures. The first explanation centers on voter and fundraising biases, in addition to other state legislative structures, such as term limits and district characteristics. The second explanation argues that political gatekeepers fail to recruit, endorse, or otherwise support female candidates. The third explanation posits that women are not politically ambitious and therefore do not seek elected office. This dissertation utilizes a single state study that examines all three explanations to determine the explanation that best explains the low representation in Oklahoma.

I use a mixed methods approach. I develop an original dataset of the legislative elections in Oklahoma from 2002 – 2012. The database includes candidate information, such as gender, party, vote share, campaign funds, and incumbency status. District level variables include measures for urbanness, political ideology, level of ethnic population, and distance from the capitol. I also survey state legislative candidates, party chairs, and other political gatekeepers about campaign experiences. I also interview several legislative candidates, party chairs, and recruiters. I further utilize interviews from the Women of the Oklahoma Legislature project.

Statistical analyses, survey data, and narratives from interviews provide evidence of a lack of political ambition in Oklahoma women. Data from elections and statements made by political gatekeepers demonstrates that the low level of female representation in Oklahoma is due to a lack of candidates and a viable recruitment strategy by the parties. Further, female legislative candidates in Oklahoma principally only emerge when they perceive a threat to a preferred policy. If an active and successful recruitment strategy is employed in the state, the numbers of female representatives should rise. By testing all three explanations for the low level of female representation in a single state, this dissertation contributes to the discourse of the lack of descriptive representation.

## **Chapter One: What Accounts for Female Underrepresentation the Oklahoma Legislature?**

*“[Legislatures] should be in miniature an exact portrait of the people at large.” John Adams*

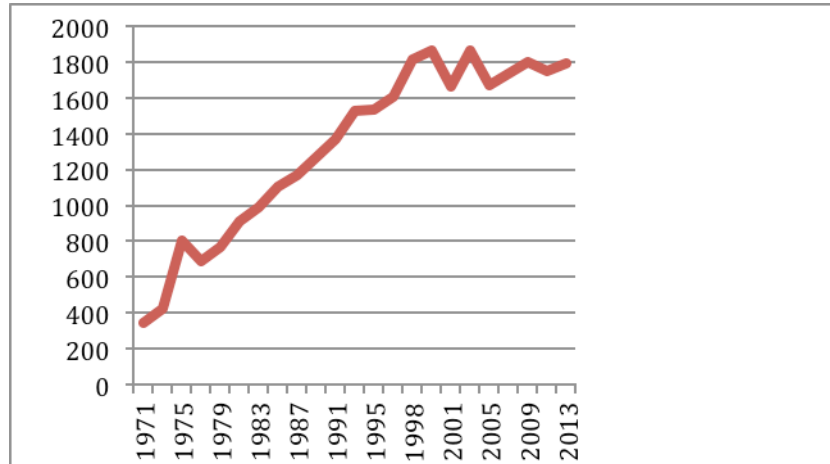
In a 2008 PEW research poll, Americans stated that women, not men, had the qualities that voters value when it comes to selecting leaders. Overwhelmingly, the public stated that women were more honest, creative, compassionate, and intelligent than men. Women and men tied on the values of being ambitious and hardworking. The only highly regarded leadership value where men scored higher than women was being decisive. In perceptions of performance skills, women had a distinct edge. Respondents felt that women were much better equipped to work out compromises, keep government honest, represent interests, and stand up for core beliefs. Yet, when asked whether men or women made better leaders, only 6% of the respondents stated that women make better political leaders. Twenty-one percent stated that men were better political leaders, while 69% felt that men and women were equally qualified to be political leaders.

Given that most citizens feel that women possess leadership qualities that are equivalent or better than men, the fact that there are not more women serving in elected legislative and executive positions is puzzling. In 1979, the number of women in the national and state legislatures began to rise consistently. For the 20-year period between 1979 and 1999, women made significant gains in winning seats in both the state and national legislatures. In 1979, in the national legislature, there were 17 women in the US Congress. There was only one woman in the Senate and there were

16 women elected in the House of Representatives, comprising 3% of Congress. Since 1981, women have increased their number in the national Congress every session. Women made slow but steady gains in the national Congress, increasing to 11% in 1999, with 9 women in the Senate and 64 women in the House of Representatives. By 2014, Congress had 99 women serving, with 20 women in the Senate and 79 women elected to the House of Representatives, which comprised 18% of the national Congress.

At the state legislative level today, a different pattern exists among the 7,383 state legislative seats. In 1979, there were 770 women serving in the state legislatures, or 10.3% of the total number of seats. That number consistently increased in the next 20 years, more than doubling the percentage of women in state legislatures to 1,664 women or 22.4% in 1999. But, according to the 2013 data from the Center for Women in Politics (CAWP), the trend of increasing membership for women stabilized then and actually declined at times, beginning in 2000. Since then, women have not made any appreciable gains in the number of seats that are held in state legislatures. The average percentage of women holding legislative seats in all of the 50 state legislatures in 2014 is 24.2% (CAWP 2014).

**Figure 2: Number of Women in State Legislatures, 1971 - 2013**



Data Source – Center for Women in Politics

This trend is troubling. What stopped the increase in women in state legislatures? Women increased in their net share of state legislative seats between the 1979 and 1999 elections by 13.9%, with an average annual percent growth rate of 5.8%,. After 1999, if women had continued to increase their share of seats at the same level each year as the previous two decades, then women should occupy 42.6% of the current legislative seats. Yet, women only hold 24.2%. Today, there are wide variations between states in the amount of women in each particular legislature, from 12.5% of the Louisiana state legislature comprised of women to a respectable 41.1% in Vermont.

### **Statement of the Problem**

If examined through a democratic lens, there are not enough women serving in state legislatures today. Basic theories of descriptive representation suggest that more female legislators are necessary in a democratic society. Women are 50% of the population in most states. Further, women typically vote more in elections than men. Women often have a different set of policy concerns than men. So, why are there not



more women serving in legislatures? And what accounts for this wide variation of women's representation across each state? These are important questions, as they go to the core concepts of democratic representation and equality. It is also apparent that women's representation in the state legislatures has reached a plateau, instead of increasing. Gender affects all elections, but evidence now suggests that it does not affect all elections in the same way. We need to know more about the state level pathways to elected office, not only for the sake of gender representation in those institutions, but also for the fact that state level offices often serve as a pipeline for higher national office. To truly understand the inadequate levels of representation for women at the national level, we must have a stronger understanding of the barriers women face at the state level.

### **Conceptual Framework for the Study**

There are three explanations in the literature focused on the underrepresentation of women in legislatures. Previous studies have tested one explanation, either across several states or in a single state study. All of these studies reveal useful information about the underrepresentation of women in state legislature. The first explanations of underrepresentation focuses on the state, questioning whether or not there are structures within the state electoral system that may impact the election of women. A range of factors, from voter bias to election and service characteristics, inhibit female representation. The second explanation focuses on the recruitment and gatekeeping system within the state, questioning whether female candidates are kept out of the elections. The third explanation focuses on women

themselves and questions whether women are politically ambitious. A brief description of each of the three explanations follows below and will be discussed in greater detail in the corresponding chapters.

### **The State Structure of the Political System**

First, scholars assumed the broader political environment and electoral structures disadvantaged women. These institutional and structural explanations focused on several factors to explain the lack of women in elected legislatures. The first sets of factors were based in the electoral structures of the state. States are able to make a range of choices in elections and the way the legislature is structured. The original explanation for the lack of women in legislative offices was the incumbency advantage. As voters simply returned the same politicians to office time and again – and those politicians were mostly male – then women’s chances of winning office were remote (Darcy, et. al 1994). The solution to the incumbency advantage – term limits for a lot of state legislatures – has not had the predicted favorable effect on the number of women in legislative service.

The choice to use the single member district is one inherent to most state systems and not likely to change. Women fare much better electorally in legislative systems that are proportional or multi-member. In a 1985 study, Susan Welch, Janet Clark, and Robert Darcy found that in 14 states that used a combination of single-member and multi-member districts, women were elected more from the multi-member districts. Further, states that switch to using only multi-member districts always have an increase in the number of women in the state legislature. The opposite is also true, for when states that have used multi-member districts and change to single

member districts, female representation declines. For example, Wyoming used a multi-member district until the 1990's and was ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in the nation in women in the state legislature. After the change, the number of women fell and Wyoming now ranks 46<sup>th</sup> (King 2002). There is evidence that multi-member districts help women get elected since it is easier to run competitive campaigns in those types of districts, which female candidates prefer (Fox and Lawless 2011, Kanthak and Woon 2013).

Further, a female candidate may encounter voter bias, as voters may simply choose a male candidate, based on the core belief that men are better suited to politics (Duverger 1955). Yet, the voter bias against female candidates that was present in many elections in the 1970's and 1980's appears to have ended. Current research finds that female candidates win as many elections as male candidates (as well as raise as much in campaign funds), leading many scholars to agree with the adage "when women run, women win" (Newman 1994, Thomas and Wilcox 1998, King and Matland 2003, Sabonmatsu 2006).

### **Gatekeeping and Female Candidates**

Scholars found evidence of bias against women in early research. There are two levels to the bias issue. First, there is mixed evidence about bias in the party system in regard to women's recruitment, endorsement, and encouragement to run for office. The political parties' ability and willingness to recruit candidates and engage in gatekeeping can be a deterrent to women running in some states, but can also aid women in their electoral bids in other states. For example, the party's ability to endorse favored candidates helps female candidates in Minnesota (Kenney, Pearson, Fitzpatrick, and Sharrow 2009) but the strong party system in Alabama deters female

candidacies (Sanbonmatsu 2006). While there is evidence in recent elections that there is little recruiting bias toward women, female candidates (and those who consider candidacy) still report that they feel there is a bias against women in politics, regardless of the previous electoral success of women. Further, women still report also feeling that they are not as supported by political recruiters and party leaders (Lawless and Fox 2005).

### **Limited Female Political Ambition**

More recently, scholars have turned to the constraints that potential female candidates may place upon themselves. Jennifer Lawless and Richard Fox (2005) posit that women may simply not be politically ambitious. They suggest that women are less likely to consider running for office, less likely to consider politics as a valid career option, and more likely to need encouragement to run for office. Political ambition may also be constrained due to family commitments. Women may not want to take time away from families in order to serve. But, when women do choose to run, they find that voters often question whether they will be able to balance their family and legislative commitments. Lawless and Fox (2005) also find that potential female candidates question if they have the qualities makes them a good choice for office. As with the family question, this self-doubt creates a cycle that often makes potential women candidates further question whether or not they should run.

Two main themes that emerge from this brief review. First, each state is different in the levels of female representation. Second, there changes in the broader political environment are sufficient to expect an increase in female representation. Scholars expected women to gain seats in legislatures until women reach comparable

levels of service with their male counterparts, given term limits breaking the incumbency advantage and creating more open seats, more gatekeepers noting the viability of female candidacies, and successful bids for the legislature by female candidates encouraging more women to run. (Darcy, et. al, 1995; Gaddie and Bullock 2000, Lawless and Fox 2005, 2013). Yet, in many states, increases in female representation have not occurred.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Previous research is limited by the focus only on one explanation. Each explanation needs to be tested in order to verify the validity of the findings. This dissertation uses all three explanations of gender underrepresentation in a focused study of one state. This study explores which of the current explanations of female underrepresentation is the best reason for the low levels of female representation in the Oklahoma state legislature. Studies of the above explanations demonstrate that there are factors that are unique to individual states that may encourage or constrain women from pursuing and winning elected office. Kira Sanbonmatsu (2006) has suggested that individual state studies are now needed to uncover the cause of underrepresentation in each of the states and to better understand the complexities of the state system and its impact on women's legislative electoral success. In order to overcome the issue of female underrepresentation, we first need to understand the cause.

### **The Need for Single State Studies**

Most of the previous studies of gender representation (and others discussed in the empirical chapters) have focused on testing one particular theory across multiple

states. Most elected officials begin their political careers by running for lower state offices, therefore it is very important to examine multiple explanations of electoral success or failure in-depth at the state level. As state legislative careers are often the springboard for national legislative careers, we must know more about the factors that constrain and/or promote women in state legislative seats. No studies have attempted to examine all of three main explanations of female representation in one study.

### **Oklahoma as a State of Study**

Oklahoma provides an excellent state for an in-depth case study. The state possesses many characteristics that are thought to increase female representation. Conversely, there are some characteristics about Oklahoma that might deter high levels of female representation. Given this duality, an examination of Oklahoma and its legislative composition can advance our knowledge about how women choose to enter and win legislative office.

The Oklahoma state legislature consists of 101 seats in the House and 48 seats in the Senate. Currently, women only hold 20 of those seats – 16 seats in the House and 4 seats in the Senate. Female legislators hold only 13.4% of the seats, but women comprise 50.8% of Oklahoma's total population. This distribution of seats has Oklahoma currently ranked 48th in the nation in gender representation.

Since 1979, the number of women in the Oklahoma legislature has not increased by an appreciable margin. In fact, the gains have been so miniscule in comparison to other states; Oklahoma has decreased in the overall ranking of states. In 1979, Oklahoma ranked 43<sup>rd</sup> in the nation in terms of women in the state legislature. During the same time frame, for example, the neighboring states of Oklahoma have

increased the number of women in the legislature and are now very close to the national average of 24.2% of women in the legislature (CAWP 2014).

### **The Positive Attributes of Oklahoma for Increasing Female Representation**

The positive characteristics of Oklahoma first include the use of term limits.

Oklahoma was the first state in the nation to adopt term limits on its state legislators, passed by the voters in 1990. The term limits are also the most restrictive in the nation, as members can serve no more than 12 years total in the legislature, regardless of chamber. The limits took full effect in the 2004 elections, as members who were serving on January 1, 1991 were allowed the full 12 years (Rausch and Farmer 2013). Term limits are hypothesized to increase female representation, as it ends the incumbent hold on seats held mostly by men.

Second, Oklahoma is a relatively small state that has many districts that are within commutable distance to the capitol. Further, most of the commutable districts are in urban and suburban areas. Female candidates are elected more from urban and suburban districts (Palmer and Simon 2006). Lawless and Fox (2005) suggest that women will run from districts that are close to the capitol, and therefore, allow them to serve without spending the entire legislative session away from home.

Palmer and Simon (2006) further argue that wealthier districts are likely to elect women. Oklahoma's economy is ranked as the fourth best in the nation in the 2012 Accountability for a Competitive Economy report<sup>3</sup>. The recent diversification of the economy of Oklahoma brought large aerospace and aviation technology sectors, energy, farming, and business interests. The large rural areas make Oklahoma good for

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<sup>3</sup> There are a multitude of economic measures available. Oklahoma ranks around 4<sup>th</sup> in many of those measures.

agriculture, as Oklahoma is ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the nation for wheat production. The disparities in the income levels between the lower and higher income have shrunk.

### **Attributes that Depress Female Representation**

Palmer and Simon (2006) find that districts that elect female candidates are racially/ethnically diverse, highly educated, and urban. In Oklahoma, there is a homogenous population. The racial, ethnic, and religious differences in Oklahoma are minimal, as most of the citizens are white and Christian. There are a high number of Native Americans in the state, as they comprise 8.6% of the population and are the highest minority population in the state. Recently, the Native American population has become more politically organized and active in state politics. Few Oklahomans hold college degrees, despite the significant number of higher education units in the state. While most of the urban districts are within commutable distance of the capitol, the rest of the districts in the state are rural, especially in the panhandle and the southern region of the state. Female candidates run less often from rural districts.

The changing political culture of Oklahoma is important to the discussion of women and their electability to the Oklahoma legislature. First, the partisan control of the legislature changed in the previous 10 years. For much of the state's history, the Democratic Party has dominated the state legislature, which would be positive for the election of female candidates. Overall, nationally and in many state legislatures, more women are elected from the Democratic Party, although just as many women run from the Republican Party. Term limits for the Oklahoma legislature ended the Democratic dominance and the Republican Party has become the majority party in the legislature.



Beyond partisanship, the larger political culture in Oklahoma may play a role. Rosenthal (1998) argues that since Oklahoma combines two areas of Elazar's political culture map – the traditionalistic and the individualistic – this creates a unique political situation. Elazar's traditionalistic culture is characterized by a socially conservative bent that maintains the current social and economic systems and does not encourage the political participation of the masses. The individualistic cultural characteristics of Oklahoma include an emphasis on private initiatives, not policies that provide public goods or address broader public concerns. Female candidates are more motivated to run on issues of the broader social welfare. When these characteristics and attitudes combine with the traditionalist culture, it creates an atmosphere that is not conducive to women's electability. Moralistic cultures typically are more accepting of new groups entering politics and traditionalist least accepting, with individualistic cultures in the middle. Hogan (2001) finds that the traditionalistic culture reduces the political opportunities for women noticeably but individualistic states are better for women's electoral chances.

#### **A Comparison of Oklahoma and Neighboring States**

Oklahoma's neighboring states, with which the state shares many common features, often rank higher in the percentage of women who serve in the state legislature. The table below details some key demographics for Oklahoma and her neighboring states. These key figures show regional similarities, except for the fact that Oklahoma has significantly fewer female representatives in comparison to the

neighboring states.<sup>4</sup> Oklahoma provides an interesting case study because of its anomalous circumstances.

Table 1.1: Economic, Education, Urban, and Diversity Measures, Oklahoma and Surrounding States.

	OK	AR	CO	KS	MO	NM	TX
<b>Ranking</b>	48	42	2	24	30	13	30
<b>% Women in State Legislature</b>	13.4	17	41	24.2	21.8	28.6	21.5
<b>% Women Population</b>	50.7	51	49.6	50.4	51.2	50.7	50.1
<b>% College Educated</b>	22.4	18.8	32.7	29	24.5	27.4	25.1
<b>Total Per Capita Income</b>	23,001	21,270	24,049	26,022	24,760	22,781	27,079
<b>Women's Income, as % of Men's</b>	86	86.9	85.8	76.3	76.3	86.6	82.6
<b>% of Adult Women in the Workforce</b>	56.9%	55.6%	63.6%	63.5%	60.6%	57.2%	58
<b>% Minority Population</b>	22.1	19.4	9.5	11.5	15.1	16.4	17.9
<b># of Urban Areas</b>	5	7	9	5	8	4	34
<b>Term Limits?</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
<b>Term Limit Years</b>	12	14	18		16		

Source: CAWP 2014, United States Census Bureau Data, 2012

The comparisons between states yield few differences. Four of the seven states have term limits, which is thought to increase the representation of women. Colorado fits the model of states with term limits having more female representation, as Colorado is ranked second nationally in the most women in their state legislature. Oklahoma also has term limits and they rank amongst the lowest of the states. New Mexico does not have term limits, but is ranked 13<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Arkansas just recently lost a number of female legislators. In 2010, Arkansas ranked 28.

The states do show some variation on key economic and population factors that are thought to influence the representation of women. Colorado has slightly higher levels of women in the workforce and people with a college education, which often leads to higher percentages of women in the state legislature. Again, Colorado appears to most closely follow the explanations of the state factors that increase female representation. Other than Colorado, Oklahoma has similar levels of education, income, diversity, and working women as the other states. The comparison to its neighbor states suggests more nuanced reasons may provide an explanation to the differences in the number of female representatives present the Oklahoma legislature.

#### **Significance of the Study**

Thus, as Sanbonmatsu (2006) suggests, single state studies are now needed to uncover all of the subtle reasons why there is such variation in female representation. I use Oklahoma as a case study, examining the main explanations for the lack of gender parity in state legislatures. Previous studies have determined that different explanations explain the variation across states in levels of female representation. The significance of this study is that it adds to the states that we know the cause of the underrepresentation. It also sheds light on the underrepresentation of female representation in states that have several markers that are thought to contribute to higher representation, but also have characteristics associated with depressed female representation.

## **Organization of the Study**

The dissertation proceeds as follows. Chapter Two contains a detailed review of the methodology used to study the three explanations of underrepresentation. I use a mixed methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Quantitative analysis is used with data on voting outcomes, campaign contributions, and district data that includes ethnicity, urbanity, and distance from capitol to examine some of the structural explanations of female underrepresentation. Surveys and interviews are used to examine the attitudes of electoral gatekeepers toward female candidates and the political ambition of female candidates.

Chapter Three focuses on the state level explanations of gender underrepresentation, beginning with the effects of term limits on female candidacies in Oklahoma. Term limits did increase female candidacies and representation. The rest of the chapter examines the type of districts where female candidates run, the districts where they win, the vote shares they receive, and the amount of funds they are able to raise for their campaigns in comparison to male candidates. Briefly, female candidates in Oklahoma run and win in urban and suburban more often than rural districts. Female candidates win by the same margins in vote share. While female candidates mean campaign funds are slightly less than male candidates, it does not have a significant impact on their electoral outcomes.

Chapter Four examines the role of party leadership, recruiters, and other gatekeepers in the legislative campaigns in Oklahoma, focuses on their attitudes and recruitment strategies toward female candidates. Gatekeepers state that they feel that, in most districts, female candidates will do as well as male candidates and have little significant concern over their viability as candidates. The parties have no formal

recruitment strategy and do not endorse favored candidates in the primaries. This lack of a formal strategy actually depresses female candidacies, however, as female candidates often need to be encouraged to run.

Chapter Five focuses on the political ambition of female candidates in Oklahoma. The interviews and surveys demonstrate that female candidates feel supported by gatekeepers when they run. However, female candidates do not have the early political ambition of male candidates and instead are motivated to run due to a policy concern. Female candidates also do not demonstrate the progressive ambition of male candidates, stating that they do not intend to run for higher offices. Chapter 6 draws conclusions and implications from the study.

### **Summary**

I seek to determine what best explains the predominately low number of females serving in the Oklahoma state legislature. Previous research has found that three different explanations may be more suitable for different states. Oklahoma ranks 48<sup>th</sup> in the nation, despite sharing important characteristics with states having higher numbers of female legislators. A mixed method approach is utilized, incorporating quantitative analysis of election data, as well as survey data and interviews.

## **Chapter Two: Data and Methods**

Prior research into the pathways for women in state legislative office has shown both commonalities and variations among the different states about the factors that constrain or advance women's election. My study positions the research questions to be specific to Oklahoma. Are there institutional barriers that are different for women running for the Oklahoma State Legislature than for men? Is there a bias against women running for office in Oklahoma? Are women able to raise as much in funding and win as many elections as men in Oklahoma? In their roles as gatekeepers, do the state political party organizations discriminate against women? Do women running for the Oklahoma State Legislature perceive a bias against them in the electoral system? The above questions, derived from the literature discussed briefly in Chapter 1, generate a substantive set of research questions and hypotheses, each requiring a different set of data or level of analysis.

### **Data**

#### **Candidate Information**

I created a database about the state legislative elections from 2002–2012 (discussed in detail below) to assess if any of the electoral bias explanations were present in Oklahoma. For each election cycle, variables were also used for tests of the prevailing explanations. To examine election dynamics, I collected data on candidates' gender, party, vote share, and amount of raised campaign funds. I also collected data on key demographic variables for each Oklahoma house and senate district: district urbanity, mileage from the capitol, percentage of minority population in the district, and an ideology score for each district, based on the presidential vote share of the

district.

From the Oklahoma State Election Board (OSEB) I obtained a comprehensive list of all candidate filings for each Oklahoma district's legislative election since 2002. Given the focus on the role of the party in female representation, independent candidates were dropped from the database.<sup>5</sup>

### **Candidate Gender**

The sex of the candidate was determined primarily through name or photos in the newspaper or on candidate websites. For the 4 remaining candidates who had a unisex name and no additional information was available, those candidates were removed from the database. The sex of the candidate was coded with a dummy variable (0 = female; 1 = male).

Between 2002 and 2012, there were 758 district races for the Oklahoma house and senate that yielded candidates, 1265 candidates for the house and 436 candidates for senate. Among house races, there were 178 female candidates and 1087 male candidates. In the senate, there were 371 male candidates and 65 female candidates.

### **Party Affiliation**

Candidate party affiliation was determined by the listing in the Oklahoma State Election Board filing. Party affiliation was coded with a dummy variable (0 = Republican; 1 = Democrat). Candidates who dropped out of the race before the primary were removed from the database.

### **Vote Share**

For candidates who stayed in the race until the primary election, I determined the percentage of the votes they received in the primary and the general election.

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<sup>5</sup> No independent won a seat in either chamber during the study period.

For each candidate, variables were also coded for the outcome of the primary and general election (0 = lost election; 1 = won election), whether or not the candidate ran unopposed in both the primary and general elections (0 = unopposed; 1 = drew a challenger), and whether candidate was the incumbent officeholder of the seat for which he or she was running (0 = challenger; 1 = incumbent).

### **Campaign Donations**

The National Institute for Money in State Politics, an independent electoral watchdog group, collects information on campaign fund donations for all legislative and gubernatorial elections in all 50 states and makes this information available on their website ([www.followthemoney.org](http://www.followthemoney.org)). The information that is provided by the National Institute for Money in State Politics is aggregated for the entire race and is not separated for primary, runoff, and general elections. The data available from the Oklahoma Ethics Commission, while separating funding by election cycle, was often incomplete, especially for races in 2002 and 2004, and also for candidates who did not win primaries. I obtained the amount of campaign funds donated to each candidate. In total, the candidates for the Oklahoma house were able to raise a total of \$57,113,090.00, yielding an average campaign fund of \$45,148.00 per candidate per election. Male house candidates raised an average of \$44,816.00. Female house candidates had an average campaign fund of \$47,177.00 per election. In the Oklahoma senate, the total amount of campaign funds was \$38,615,194.00, for an average of \$88,566.00 per candidate, per election. Male senate members had an average contribution of \$90,374.00 per election and female candidates had an average of \$78,248.00.



## **District Level Variables**

### **District Ideology**

A commonly used approach to calculating district ideology is to use the percentage of the district voting for either the Democratic or Republican presidential candidate in elections, based on the assumption that more liberal voters tend to vote for Democratic candidates and more conservative voters tend to vote for Republican candidates. The Oklahoma State Election Board reports votes received by each presidential candidate for the presidential elections not only by county, but also by house districts in the state. A district ideology score was derived by obtaining the percentage that the Republican presidential nominee received in the election, thus creating a conservative ideology score for each house district. This raw data was not available for the senate, but was calculated as an estimate from the house data. The OSEB also reports the voting data for each county in the state. I created an ideology score for the senate districts by averaging the percentages of votes that the Republican presidential candidate received in each of the counties in the district.

For the 2002 state legislative election, the 2000 Presidential election was used to calculate the conservative ideology score. For the 2004 and 2006 legislative elections, the presidential results from 2004 were used. For 2008 and 2010, the presidential results from 2008 were used. The 2012 data utilized results from the 2012 presidential election.

### **District Urbanness**

Prior research suggests that women are more likely to run in and be elected from urban or suburban districts rather than rural districts. Data for *district urbanness*

came from the Oklahoma State Higher Education commission (OSHE). This commission assesses each legislative district and assigns it to one of three categories: urban (coded as 1), mid-size, (or suburban) (coded as 2) and rural (coded as 3). OSHE does this in part to ascertain what parts of the state are facing teaching shortages, to use in reports to the Oklahoma state legislature and to individual legislators. As this classification follows the legislative district lines in the state, I used their system to assign an urbanity score to each district. According to OSHE data, there are 29 rural house districts, 44 suburban, and 28 urban districts. In the senate, there are 15 rural districts, 26 suburban, and 7 urban districts.

### **District Minority Level**

The literature contends that districts that have higher populations of minorities or have a higher level of diversity in ethnicity are more likely to elect women (Palmer and Simon 2006). The U.S. Census data from 2000 reports the number of people who define themselves in each of the classifications in regards to race or ethnicity by House and Senate District (e.g. Caucasian, African-American, Native American, etc.). (This population report is generated for redistricting purposes.) A minority variable for each district was calculated by subtracting the number of people who identified as any race other than Caucasian from the total population for that district and then dividing the minority population by the total population to derive a minority population percentage. The 2000 data was used for the districts from 2002 – 2008. The data from the 2010 Census was used for the 2010 and 2012 elections.

Oklahoma's population is predominantly white, as 72.2% of the population identifies as Caucasian and 27.8% of the population identifies with another race or

ethnic category. There is some diversity in Oklahoma. The districts that contain the lowest minority population are State House District 58 (11%) and State Senate District 27 (16.2%). These districts are located in the northwestern area of the state, just west of Enid (and share some geography). The districts with the highest minority population are State House District 73 (81.8%) and State Senate District 11 (68.5%), which are both located in central Tulsa. There are only 8 house or senate districts in Oklahoma that have a minority population above 50%. The mean minority score in the house was 28.29% with 16 districts whose minority population contains 40% or greater. In the senate, the mean minority score is 28.19% and there are 6 districts that contain a minority population of 40% or greater.

#### **District Distance from Capitol**

One commonly cited barrier for women's representation is the need for state representatives and senators to remain in the state capitol during the legislative session. Women who have children at home are viewed as more reluctant to leave for extended periods of time. Women should see legislative service from districts close to the capitol as easier and should run from those close districts than they do from districts that are not commutable daily (which I define as 90 minutes, based on some interviews with legislators). The distance from the capitol was measured from the center of the district to the Oklahoma City Capitol using the mileage reported by the web-based program Mapquest.

## **Survey Data**

Survey data was obtained through two surveys that were conducted online using the Qualtrics software (see complete survey in the appendix). Legislative candidates and party chairs received separate surveys. The data was supplemented by survey data from local elected officials in Oklahoma, conducted by Rosenthal and Collins (2013).

### **Legislative Candidate Survey**

A survey was sent to all current members of the Oklahoma State Legislature, as well as candidates who ran for election between 2002 – 2010 election years for whom contact data was available. Most people surveyed received an email request for their participation in the survey, accompanied by a link to the online survey. Each survey respondent received three requests for participation. Thirty-one legislators and candidates complied with the request for a survey. The response rate was 20.8%.

### **Party Chair Survey**

A separate survey was sent to the state party chairs, as well as the county chairs for both political parties. Both of the two major political parties in Oklahoma release email addresses for all state and county party chairs. Each party chair received an email requesting his or her participation in the survey, accompanied with a link to the survey website. These surveys focused on their views of ideal candidates, recruitment practices and necessity, and whether certain types of candidates hold electoral advantages (see complete survey in the appendix). The response rate to this survey request from party chairs was 22%.

Data from another survey, conducted by Rosenthal and Collins (2013), about the political ambition of local elected officials was also analyzed to study the

progressive ambition of female candidates who are holding local offices.

### **Personal Interviews**

Finally, I conducted personal interviews because a multi-method approach to understand the obstacles women face in attempts to run for legislative office. As Denise Baer (1993) suggests, the struggle for women's parity in party and legislative structures and for equality in politics in general is driven through a social movement, which is hard to thoroughly study through survey data. Since social movements often represent an "out-group" and challenge the status quo, participants may feel pressured to give the most "socially desirable answers" that appear on the survey options. Also, the "out-group" mentality and power struggles reflected in social movements are often lost through mass surveys. Baer recommends more qualitative approaches to this area of study. These informal barriers may be better revealed through open-ended interviews with candidates about their recruitment and campaign activities. As Sanbonmatsu (2006: 11) argues

"personal interviews are a valuable technique for studying attitudes about gender, the subtleties of which may be more difficult to gauge through other approaches...perceptions are important and critical to understanding potential women's candidates' ability to attract informal support prior to entering the primary."

Due to the above reasoning, I interviewed candidates for the Oklahoma State house and senate in the studied time frame and party leaders from both the Democratic and Republican Parties.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with nine women who have run for, have served, or are currently serving in the Oklahoma State Legislature, focusing on the critical questions of why they chose to run, who aided them, and their perceptions

of any bias they may have encountered in the race or decision to enter (full interview guide available in the appendix). To gain the best perspective on the recruitment practices of the parties and the perception of bias, I also interviewed nine men who have run for, have served, or are currently serving in the Oklahoma State Legislature, in order to gauge the differences and similarities in their experiences with recruitment and campaigning. Two of the interviews with male legislators, one from an urban and one from a suburban district, were matched pair interviews to focus on political ambition. The males were paired with two women from their districts who would make quality candidates according to statements made by legislators and party chairs, but have never run for office.

The average duration of the legislative interviews was approximately 45 minutes. The longest interview was 2 hours and approximately 15 minutes. The shortest interview was completed in 26 minutes. I conducted most of the interviews over the phone during the legislative session.

In addition, I was able to interview 19 of the county party chairs, again mostly over the phone. The average duration of chair interviews was 25 minutes. Questions for the party chairs focused on various questions: Does the party need to heavily recruit? Or do the party have such an ample supply of potential candidates that it might be able to act as gatekeepers? State parties leaders were also asked to identify characteristics of their preferred candidates, as well as the involvement of the legislative caucuses in choosing candidates.

I also interviewed several people who would be able to give insights on the political process in Oklahoma, especially pertaining to the recruitment of candidates

for legislative seats. Interviews with expert informants included the founder of an organization recently formed in Oklahoma with the purpose of getting women to run for the state legislature and four women who work as lobbyists at the capitol.

### **Women of the Oklahoma Oral Histories**

I supplemented my interviews with transcripts from the 46 oral histories of female legislators in the Women of the Oklahoma Legislature project, a part of the Oklahoma State University Oral History Project. In 2006, Tanya Fitchum, a professor at Oklahoma State University, interviewed 46 of the 77 women who had served in the Oklahoma State Legislature between 1907 and 2006. Fitchum's interviews focused on the decision to run for legislature, campaign experiences, and policy priorities while serving in the Oklahoma State Legislature. The transcripts of Fitchum's interviews are available online at the OSU library website (<http://www.library.okstate.edu/oralhistory/wotol/>). I coded the 46 interviews for experiences with recruitment, treatment received by the parties, and reasons for running for the legislature.

### **Summary**

Oklahoma has many of the qualities that researchers have identified would strengthen women's abilities to get into the state legislature: term limits to break the incumbency advantage, a good number of higher education institutions in the state, a good economy relative to the nation, and lots of women in the field of education. Yet, the gains have not occurred and neighboring states of Oklahoma have higher numbers of women in the state legislature.

Three explanations dominate the literature as to why women do not have parity in some state legislatures. First, state characteristics and institutional structures in the state might prevent women from running, such as a lack of term limits, the professionalization of the legislature, the distance from the capitol for most districts, and the education, urbanization, and diversity in the district. Second, bias from voters, political parties and other groups who recruit, endorse, and support women candidates might keep women out of the legislature. Third, women simply may not be politically ambitious and are not running for office.

This dissertation tests all three of the prevalent explanations about women's representation in one study to better determine the cause of the lack of women in the Oklahoma legislature. Sanbonmatsu (2006) argues that developed one-state studies are now what is needed in order to fully study the lack of women's parity in state legislatures. Using a mixed methods approach, I combine quantitative data and surveys, with qualitative interviews with legislators, candidates, political party chairs, and recruiters.



### **Chapter Three: Female Candidates and Oklahoma Voters**

In 1984, encouraged by family and political connections, Jan Collins decided to run for the Oklahoma house from District 93, an urban district located between Oklahoma City and Moore. She ran as a Republican, in a predominantly Democratic district. She recalls that she often felt dissuaded during the campaign process:

There were many neighborhoods where I tried to walk door-to-door - the police would stop me and say, 'you should not be doing this. This is not a safe neighborhood you should be walking in.' There were times when I tried to reach groups - I was just discounted as a candidate. So being (A) - a woman and (B) - a Republican in a district in which you just couldn't do that. I was not invited to speak. All of us were a little bit surprised when I won (Finchum, 2007f).

The above experience from Rep. Collins' first run for the Oklahoma State legislature demonstrates three key elements. She felt open hostility from political groups simply based on her gender. The issue of party affiliation became important. There are certain districts that are more likely to prefer one party, which can be a difficult obstacle to overcome. Also, there are variations in districts that make those districts more or less likely to elect female candidates.

In her run, Collins faced several of the core obstacles that scholars suggest make electoral victories more difficult for female candidates. In his 1955 work, Charles Duverger first suggested that voter hostility toward women would be one factor to impinge on female representation. If voters are biased against women, then women will have a difficult time being elected. Further, voters may not expressly be biased against women, but simply prefer masculine or feminine traits in candidates, depending on the level of the office.

Second, each state can choose different electoral and legislative arrangements, which may impact the election of female candidates. To begin, states choose how much legislators are paid, how much office staffing and assistance they receive, and how often the legislature meets. Also, states choose (often at voter behest through ballot initiatives) whether or not state legislators will be limited in the number of terms they may serve.

Finally, more recent research suggests district attributes may affect female candidates' ability to be elected more than male legislators. Overall district attributes of urbanity, wealth, ethnic, and racial diversity may be important to the election of women. This effect may also be related to partisan affiliation. All of these explanations deserve attention, as research has found variation in many of these factors across states.

### **Literature Review**

Duverger's first obstacle for women is voter hostility. Given Oklahoma's consistently low ranking of women in the legislature and the lack of gains over time for women, voter hostility warrants investigation.

#### **Are Voters Biased Against Women?**

Early studies on state legislatures did show that voters had a definitive preference for male candidates. Women did not run for significant number of seats in legislatures in any state until the 1970's, but when women did run, they lost most races. Typically through the 1970's, most electoral victors were male (and white), which led to the conclusion that voters simply preferred male candidates.

There are two methods to determine if voters are, in fact, hostile to women. First, surveys and polling about male and female candidates demonstrate voter acceptance of candidates regardless of gender. According to Welch, Ambrosius, Clark, and Darcy (1985), surveys "have yielded mixed findings but in general show that voters are not predisposed either for or against female candidates." Polls demonstrate that level of office does matter in voters' thinking about candidate gender. Respondents demonstrate more willingness to elect women for local and state offices, while they are less likely to support women for national offices, including the presidency. Women more than men have consistently been more likely to say they would vote for a female candidate for President. Compared to male voters, women express more support overall for female candidates (Dolan 1989). Polls since 2008 have shown variation in the amount of people who are not willing to vote for a qualified woman for President, from as low as 4% to as high as 25% (Gallup 2008, Streb 2008, Rasmussen 2014).

Further, surveys and poll results can be skewed if people want to give socially acceptable answers (Sapiro 1981). In other studies using an experimental design, researchers ask respondents to read speeches, profiles, or policy statements of candidates and evaluate the candidates on whether they would be good legislators or executives. In the experimental design, some respondents are told the candidate is female, while other respondents are told that the candidate is male (Sapiro 1981; Leeper 1991). Sapiro (1981) found no bias against women using this method, as respondents rated female candidates as favorably as the male candidates; however,

Sapiro, as did Leeper (1991), reported that respondents felt the female candidate would be less likely to win her election.

Another approach to determining evidence of voter bias examines actual election outcomes. Initially, female candidates appeared disadvantaged. In studies focused on single states, female candidates in Pennsylvania, New Mexico, California and Wisconsin were shown to be at a disadvantage in the state congressional elections simply due to gender (Darcy et al. 1984; Clark 1984; Deber 1982; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994, Fox and Smith 1998). But, Carroll (1994) and Smith and Fox (2001) argue that the lack of success, especially for female candidates in the 1970's, was related to the incumbency advantage, as voters really just preferred incumbents and as these tended to be male, the natural result was that the male incumbents were reelected.

As the number of female candidates increased in a majority of states, women began to win more seats and do just as well in open seat elections as did male candidates (Gaddie and Bullock 2000). In the Congress and many state legislatures, the number of women continues to rise steadily, as women have been able to win at relatively similar rates as men in both primary and general elections at the state legislative level. In both the national and state legislatures, women win at the same rates, controlling for party and incumbency (Fox 2000; Dolan 1997; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994).

### **Is Voter Bias Masked?**

While there is no overwhelming evidence of a consistent voter bias at the state legislative level, two factors may "mask" any real gender preferences. First, voters do

engage in gender stereotyping, as they subscribe different strengths to male and female candidates. Women are viewed as more competent in handling policy considerations in education, health, childcare, and poverty. Men are viewed as more competent in tax and security policy, as well as foreign affairs (Huddy and Terkilsen 1993, Burrell 1994, Barbara Lee Family Foundation 2002). Anecdotal evidence does not consistently demonstrate that female candidates will be elected less frequently in times when economic or military crises dominate the preferences of voters (Fox 1997; Fox and Smith 1998). However, Lawless (2004) finds that post 9-11, potential voters initially responded that they preferred masculine traits in candidates in the few years past the terrorist attack. Women are often motivated to run on different issues than men, which raises the question of whether a vote against a woman reflects a gender bias or a policy preferences (Paolino 1995).

Further, voters may view female candidates as better suited to run for lower level offices. Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) found that voters preferred candidates with more masculine qualities for higher-level offices, such as Governor or President. Feminine traits were more acceptable at lower level offices, such as city councils, but the possession of feminine traits did not give any actual advantage in those races. Additional stereotyping may affect female candidates when the intersection of party affiliation is considered. Female candidates overall are viewed as more liberal by voters in either party, when compared to their male counterparts. Overall, more women are elected from the Democratic Party, but just about as many women run from the Republican Party as from the Democratic Party (Koch 2000, King and Matland 2003 and Dolan 2004).

The above discussion suggests that female candidates have to carefully craft electoral strategies that are very different than the campaigns of male candidates. Women have to balance gender stereotypes in a calculated way, taking level of office, district ideology, and the major issues of the election cycle into consideration. Yet, with managing all of these different campaign issues, women generally win as many of the races that they enter, as do men, when controlling for incumbency.

### **State Electoral Structures**

Duverger also argued that state electoral structures inhibit election of female candidates. Predominant reasons for the lack of gender representation include incumbency advantages due to the lack of term limits, legislative professionalism, and the use of a single member or multimember district. District level characteristics that may influence whether voters are more or less inclined to elect women include the level of minority population in the district, whether the district is rural, suburban, or urban, the wealth and education of the voters in the district. The distance from the district to the state capitol is also a factor.

States are able to organize their legislatures in a myriad of ways, as the state is able to control legislative salaries and other perks, as well as district factors listed above. There is mixed evidence that legislative professionalism affects the election of women. Previous research does not find consistent correlations in the level of legislative professionalism and gender representation. Robert Hogan (2001) argues that the effect of legislative professionalism is simply correlated with other factors that can inhibit or advance the number of women in state legislatures, such as the political culture or electoral structures.

Some states opt to use multi-member districts instead of the more common single member districts, where one person is elected to represent the district. While the use of multi-member districts is very limited in state legislatures in the United States, the legislatures who use this form often have higher numbers of female representatives.

Oklahoma uses a single member district for allocating representatives and recently ranked 20<sup>th</sup> in the nation in legislative professionalism, according to Squire's 2007 list. The effects of legislative professionalism may be closely linked to other political attributes in the state and that there are no multi-member districts in Oklahoma. While these attributes are important, I will not test for their effects in Oklahoma, given that the sample is drawn from a single state.

#### *The Incumbency Advantage and Term Limits*

Oklahoma is one of the states that use term limits. Many states have recently enacted term limits for their state legislatures. Scholars assumed that term limits would assist in breaking the "incumbency advantage" and help women get elected to more legislative positions, as women perform as well as men in open seat races (Carroll 1994; Darcy, et al 1994; Gaddie and Bullock 2000). Incumbents generally win their reelection easily, as incumbents provide some level of benefits to their districts that they may "credit claim" as an advantage to retaining office (Pritchard 1992, Mayhew 2004). Incumbent legislators further benefit from name recognition and a proven track record for protecting the district's preferences in state policy.

Further, the incumbency effect benefits male and female incumbents equally, and female incumbents are just as likely to win reelection as male incumbents. There

is considerable evidence in recent literature that female incumbent candidates for Congress are reelected at comparable rates to male incumbents. While there is little recent research on the reelection rates of female incumbents in state legislatures, in previous studies of state legislatures, female incumbents have won their house seats in state legislatures at 93.6 %, which is only .2% less than the return rates for male incumbents. In state senate seats, 90.1% of female incumbents reclaimed their seats, compared to 92.2% for male senate incumbents (Darcy and Schramm 1977; Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997).

Heather Ondercin and Susan Welch (2005) find that once a district has elected a female candidate, that district is more likely to elect a woman in the future. Thus, a district's election of a woman may increase the likelihood of nearby districts. In a focused study in Indonesia, Sarah Shair-Rosenfield (2012) finds that districts close in proximity to a district with a female incumbent are more likely to elect females. When more women do run and are elected, it does increase political knowledge and interest in other females to run (Wolbrecht and Campbell 2006). Female incumbency serves to increase success when women run for office. The issue is getting more women to incumbency status.

Yet, term limits have not produced the same effect on gender representation in state legislatures as previously predicted. In studies of states where term limits now exist, the numbers of women in the state legislatures have not risen (Bernstein and Chadra 2003). In fact, women's representation declined in some states after term limits were enacted (Carroll and Jenkins 2001). Examining the current status of female



representation in term limit states, term limits appear to have limited success in increasing female membership. Table 3.1 illustrates this pattern.

Table 3.1: States with Term Limits; Number of Women in Legislature

State	Year of Impact	Rank at Impact	# of Women at Impact	2014 Rank	# of Women 2014
Maine	1996	12	48/186	12	55/186
California	1998	24	26/120	17	32/120
Colorado	1998	3	35/100	1	41/100
Arkansas	2000	43	21/135	41	23/135
Michigan	2002	26	33/148	36	28/148
Florida	2000	23	39/160	23	41/160
Ohio	2000	30	27/132	26	31/132
South Dakota	2000	42	16/105	28	24/105
Montana	2000	17	37/150	16	41/150
Arizona	2000	2	32/90	3	31/90
Missouri	2002	24	45/197	30	43/197
Oklahoma	2004	46	19/149	48	20/149
Nebraska	2006	21	12/49	34	10/49
Louisiana	2007	38	24/144	50	18/144
Nevada	2010	9	20/63	14	18/63

Data Source: CAWP 2014

Many of the states that had low rankings to begin with, such as Oklahoma and Arkansas, did not see a significant change (although Arkansas did rise in rankings for a time, with a rank of 28 in 2010). Similarly, states that already had a significant number of women serving retained similar numbers after the implementation of term limits. Colorado and Arizona retained their high level of female legislative membership after the implementation of term limits. The remaining states have a mixture of gains and losses. South Dakota and Ohio made appreciable gains in the number of female representatives. Yet, six of the states lost female representatives after term limits. In just five years after implementing term limits, Nevada had a notable decrease in the number of female representatives. Most prominent of the losses is in Louisiana. In just seven years after the implementation of term limits,

Louisiana dropped 12 spots to rank at the bottom in female representation among states.

Susan Carroll and Krista Jenkins (2001) noted that early studies after the implementation of term limits in some states demonstrated there was simply not a significant increase in the number of women filing to run for legislative office. While not focused on term limits, Lawless and Fox's work (2005; 2013) confirm that there has not been an increase in many states of women filing to run for office. So, term limits have not produced consistent effects on the level of female representation in the states that have been studied.

### **District Level Factors**

More recently, scholars have found that certain types of districts may be important in the election of female candidates. There are certain types of districts where women are more likely to secure legislative victories. According to Palmer and Simon (2006), the majority of female legislators in the U.S. Congress come from just 3 states – California, New York, and Florida. In their 2012 research, the top 10 districts for electing women to the U.S. Congress over time were all located in New York or California, except for one district in Massachusetts. These states have some commonalities in terms of several demographic factors, which influence the election of women. Palmer and Simon (2006) find there are districts that are "friendly" to the election of women. Women, especially Democrats, are more likely to be elected from geographically smaller districts that are urban, wealthier, more educated, and have higher minority populations. Republican women are elected from similar districts, but their districts are less conservative than ones that elect Republican men. The

"unfriendly" districts are more numerous in the US, especially in the South. Female candidates are also more likely to run and be elected from districts that are close to the state capitol. In their single state study of Minnesota, Kenney, et. al. (2009) find that female candidates are more likely to run from urban districts.

### *Funding*

Connected to the state and district characteristics, there are other considerations for the election of women. First, candidates must raise adequate funding in order to run for office. Early explanations for the failure of most female candidacies in the 1970's and 1980's suggested that female candidates do not raise as much in funding, the amount is not significantly less (Burrell 1985). In general, women are not at a disadvantage when it comes to funding (Thompson et al. 1998; Darcy & Choike, 1986). Hogan (2001) finds that large or heavily populated districts may require more funding and may deter female candidates from running. While most scholars find that female candidates raise as much in funding, these candidates feel that they must work harder to raise the same amount in funds. Women state 2 primary reasons for this: they do not belong to networks as men, where there are potential big donors, plus they feel less comfortable asking for money. Also, the question remains whether women receive smaller fund amounts in contributions so they need to campaign more or make more personal contacts to achieve the same amount of financial support (Carroll 1994).

To summarize, there are multiple explanations for gender inequality in the legislatures that involve state political attributes. Term limits have not produced the predicted gains in most states, but some states that enacted term limits did see an

increase in female legislators. Voters do not profess any overt bias against women, but do hold preferences for masculine or feminine traits in candidates, depending on the office and policy needs of the district. While female candidates are under-represented in the primary and general competitions for the legislative offices, they often win in half of the elections they do enter. Female candidates usually raise as much in funding as male candidates, but many female candidates report that they feel they have to make more contacts in order to do so. Districts do not appear to be gender neutral either, as districts with more liberal, wealthy, urban and diverse populations are more likely to elect women.

## Hypotheses

### *Term Limits*

Reasoning from the findings of Carroll and Jenkins (2001) and Lawless and Fox (2005), I expect to find that *there was no increase in the number of women running for the Oklahoma legislature after the implementation of term limits*. This is an important distinction. Term limits may actually aid in the election of women in states where the implementation actually encourages more women to file for candidacy. In states where there is no increase in filing, term limits would have no effect, but not because the logic of term limits increasing female representation is faulty. Carroll and Jenkins (2001) and Lawless and Pearson (2008) have noted the low entry rates of female candidates in many state legislative races, even after the implementation of term limits. They feel that the low level of entry is the actual cause of the lack of female representation in state legislatures. Therefore, *I expect that there*

*are low numbers of female candidates relative to male candidates in the Oklahoma legislative races.*

### ***Districts***

Palmer and Simon (2006) find that there are commonalities in the districts that are more likely to elect female representatives. Female candidates are more likely to be elected to districts that are smaller, more urban, more liberal, have a higher level of education, diversity, and wealth. Palmer and Simon's (2006) findings generate three hypotheses about female candidates in Oklahoma legislative districts. *More female candidates run from and are elected from districts that are urban or suburban, as female candidates enter more urban/suburban races. More female candidates will run from and be elected from Oklahoma districts that have higher levels of racial or ethnic diversity. More female candidates will be run from and be elected from districts that are more ideologically liberal.*

Female candidates often attract more competition in primary and general races than men. Also, female candidates often draw more competitors in primary races than male candidates and are more likely to run against other female candidates when they do run. Therefore, *I expect to find that female candidates in Oklahoma draw more competition in primary and general races and run more often against other female candidates than male candidates.*

### ***Fundraising***

Female candidates are generally able to raise as much in campaign funding as male candidates. However, most female candidates will state that they feel that they have to work harder to raise enough in funding. I expect to find that *winning female candidates will raise equivalent amounts in campaign funding as winning male candidates.*

### ***Voter Hostility***

Despite low entry rates, when female candidates enter the race, they win as many elections as men do. We should expect to see women winning as many races in comparison to men. I expect to find that *female candidates will win as many elections as male candidates, when there is a female candidate in the race for the Oklahoma state legislature.*

## **Summary of Methods**

To determine from which districts female candidates enter and win legislative races, I collected data on each legislative districts for the percentage of minorities living in the district, the political ideology of the district, the mileage of the district from the capitol, and an urban, suburban, or rural designation.

The percentage of minorities (*Ethnicity*) was calculated by subtracting the percentage of people who identified as white on the Census from 100%, leaving the percentage of individuals who identify with a race other than Caucasian. For the regression analysis, the actual percentage was used. To determine types of districts that elect female candidates, districts were assigned a categorical variable of 1, 2, or 3. The amount of minority populations in the district ranged from 11.1% to 81.79%, leaving a range of 70.78% in the difference in the minority population. Districts were

labeled as 1 (low minority population) if the minority population was between 11.1% to 24.88%, as the minority population in the districts was less than 25% of the total population. Districts with a moderate amount of minority population were labeled as 2. Populations in this range were between 26.27% and 45.44%. Districts with high minority populations were coded as 3 and had a range of population from 53.86% - 81.79%.

*Political ideology* was determined by the percentage of voters in each district who voted for the Republican Presidential candidate. For the regression analysis, the actual percentage was used. For the analysis on types of districts from which female candidates run, districts were categorized as conservative, moderate, or liberal, based on the percentage of the presidential votes. Districts were labeled as conservative (coded as 1) if the vote percentages were between 14.79 – 35%; labeled as moderate (coded as 2) if the vote percentages were between 37.1 – 59%; and labeled as liberal (coded as 3) if the vote percentages were above 60%.

*Mileage* from the district was measured from the town or city closest to the center of the district to the street address of the Oklahoma capitol building, using Mapquest. For the regression analysis, the actual mileage was used. For the district analysis, I divided the distances into four categories: less than 50 miles, 51 – 100 miles, 101 – 150 miles, and over 151 miles. In interviews (both WOTOL and mine), candidates indicated that districts under 100 miles away were considered commutable. In districts that were 101 – 150 miles from the district, the ability to commute daily was debatable. Some legislators chose to stay in Oklahoma City during the

As stated in Chapter Two, the Oklahoma Board of Higher Education, to determine which types of districts face teaching shortages, performed the coding for urbanity. I used their designation for whether a district was urban (coded as 1), suburban (coded as 2), or rural (coded as 3).

*Fundraising* was collected from the National Institute on Money in State Elections. The finance total for each candidate was calculated as both a total dollar amount and a percentage of the total amount the candidate received from the total campaign donations for that district race. There were a large number of candidates who received no or very small amounts of campaign funds and a large number of candidates who received campaign funding much higher than the mean amount of funds raised (mean = \$79,330.65). Due to the curvilinear nature of the finance data, I performed a log transformation to normalize the data.

The *vote share* was calculated as the percentage of votes each candidate received in the election for that district race. The candidates' win or loss in the race was coded as 0 for a loss and 1 for a win.

To analyze the data, I used several different types of tests, from comparison of means and independent samples t-tests, ordinary least squares regression, and logistic regression where appropriate.

## **Findings**

### **Term Limits Did Increase Female Candidacies**

In the first hypothesis regarding term limits, I expected to find that term limits had no impact on the number of female candidates or their ability to win elections. Many scholars suggested that after term limits were implemented in several states,



female representation would increase, as male incumbents would be forced to vacate seats and open opportunities for other candidates (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994). Carroll and Jenkins (2001) find that female candidacies did not rise after term limits were implemented in several states. Yet, several states did see an increase, as detailed in the table above.

To answer whether or not the implementation of term limits encouraged more women to run in Oklahoma, I examined whether or not more women filed for candidacy after 2004, when term limits took effect. As Carroll and Jenkins (2001) infer, if more women were encouraged by term limits and open seats to become candidates, then term limits were successful, even if those female candidates did not win.

In Oklahoma, term limits became effective after the 12-year limit, the first open seats created by term limits occurred in 2004. In the 12-year period before implementation, the number of women steadily increased (with a substantial one-time increase in 1996). The number of female candidates filing for legislative seats after the implementation of term limits in 2004 represented the largest increase since 1996, as 33 women entered legislative races. Yet, the numbers of female candidates did not increase dramatically after 2004, but rather stabilized around a mean slightly lower than the 2004 figure (28.88), which is higher than the pre-term limit mean of 24.33 female candidates. Female candidates who did win their race also increased after 2004. The mean number of female candidate wins prior to the implementation of term limits is 12.33. After term limits in 2004, an average of 16 female candidates won their elections.

Table 3.2: Number of Female Candidates and Wins in the Oklahoma State Legislature, 1992 – 2012

Year	Candidates	Wins	Hold Overs
2012	27	17	3
2010	30	16	2
2008	25	14	3
2006	29	15	4
2004	33	18	4
2002	24	13	4
2000	28	13	2
1998	22	11	4
1996	35	13	2
1994	16	11	3
1992	21	13	1

Source: CAWP (2014)

A comparison of means test for the number of female candidates entering and winning district races before and after the implementation of term limits demonstrates that term limits did have a slight positive effect. In the 6 legislative electoral cycles before term limits, an average of 24.33 female candidates ran for the legislature and 12.33 female candidates won their race. In the 5 legislative electoral cycles since limits were implemented, an average of 28.8 female candidates ran for office and an average of 16 won.

Table 3.3: Comparison of Means, Female Candidacy and Wins, Pre and Post Term Limits

	Before Limits	After Limits
<b># of Female Candidates</b>	146	144
<b>Mean #/election</b>	24.33	28.8
<b>Std. Deviation</b>	6.53	3.03
<b># of Female Wins</b>	74	62
<b>Mean #/election</b>	12.33	16
<b>St. Deviation</b>	1.03	1.58

Thus, term limits had a small positive effect on female candidacies in Oklahoma legislative races, as the mean number of female candidacies and wins did

rise following the implementation of term limits, significant at the .05 level. I do not find support for the hypothesis that term limits did not increase female candidacies and wins.

### **Limited Female Candidacies**

The candidate pool for the primary races is primarily filled with male candidates. Between 2002 and 2012, there were 758 district races possible within the 101 House district and 49 Senate districts (51 districts in the 2002 Senate race). The 758 district races are each treated as an opportunity for a woman to enter the race and win a legislative seat.

In the elections for the Oklahoma house between 2002 and 2012, there were 1701 candidates who filed and remained in the race as a Democratic or Republican candidate: 118 female Republican candidates, 125 Democratic female candidates, 789 male Republican candidates, and 669 Democratic male candidates. Male candidates comprised 1,458 of the candidates. There were 243 female candidates.

Thus, only 14.2% of the candidates were women. Female candidates do not enter state legislative races in any of the states in large numbers. The highest average number of female candidates entering the state legislative races is in Colorado, where 31.33% of the primary candidates were female (CAWP 2014), which aids in explaining why Colorado has one of the highest rates female representation in state legislatures. Female candidates in Colorado win 59.10% of their races. The low percentage of female candidates entering races in Oklahoma is an anomaly, not only for the nation, but the region, as all of the neighboring states of Oklahoma have significantly higher primary entry rates for female candidates.

While I expected to find that female candidates do not enter the primary races as often as male candidates, which is consistent with Lawless and Pearson's finding's (2008), the lack of female candidates in Oklahoma is more pronounced than in Lawless and Pearson's findings. The lack of women who enter legislative races in Oklahoma is a critical component to the underrepresentation of women. The reasons that do motivate women to run are addressed in detail later in Chapter Five.

### **Who Enters the Race?**

While the general election is the main focus of the balance of this chapter, I first examine patterns of women running in Oklahoma primaries. Female candidates must, of course, enter and win primary races in order to win in the general race. If women are underrepresented in the primaries, then increasing gender representation through wins in the general election becomes a more intractable problem.

### ***Female Candidates Enter Races in a Variety of Districts***

Despite the gains after term limits, fewer women than men enter the Oklahoma state legislative races. The table below gives the distribution of Republican and Democratic female candidates who entered a primary race in state legislative races along district demographics. Previous research discussed above has indicated that female candidates are more likely to be candidates in urban or suburban districts or districts that are more liberal or have a higher minority population. Female candidates are also more likely to run from districts closer to the capitol. Certainly, female candidates are more likely to run from urban and suburban districts. Initially, it appears that female candidates in Oklahoma are more likely to enter races that from conservative districts or from districts that have low minority populations. The entry

into these races is likely due to the low number of liberal or highly diverse districts. If Democratic women are going to run at all, they will have to run in districts that are conservative.

Distance from the capitol does not seem to affect the number of female candidates as strongly as in other states. Both Republican and Democratic female candidates are running as often in districts are 100 – 150 miles from the capitol. There are fewer female candidates who run from districts that are more than 151 miles from the capitol, but there are only eleven house districts and seven senate districts that are more than 151 miles from the capitol. These districts have strong incumbents who often run unopposed.

Table 3.4: Total Percentage of Candidates by District Demographics, In Primary Election Races that had a Female Candidate

<b>Entered Race</b>	<b>District Type</b>	<b>Republican Female Candidates</b>	<b>Democratic Female Candidates</b>
	Urban	35.90%	30.19%
	Suburban	43.59%	52.83%
	Rural	20.51%	16.98%
<b>Diversity</b>	Low	53.85%	47.17%
	Medium	23.08%	33.96%
	High	23.08%	18.87%
<b>Ideology</b>	Liberal	10.26%	11.32%
	Moderate	48.72%	35.85%
	Conservative	41.03%	52.83%
<b>Distance</b>	>50	23.08%	41.51%
	51 – 100	33.33%	15.09%
	100 -	41.03%	39.62%
	150+	7.69%	3.77%

Thus, while I do find support for the hypotheses that female candidates run largely from urban or suburban districts, female candidates in Oklahoma are also running

from broader district types than female candidates in previous state legislative studies, likely due to the conservative, ethnically homogenous nature of the state.

*Female Candidates Draw As Many Primary Challenges as Male Candidates*

One way to examine if elections may be more challenging for women than men is whether or not they face as many contested races as men. The literature suggests that when a female candidate, challenger or incumbent, enters the race, she draws more competition, both from male candidates and from other female candidates. Whether or not a candidate runs unopposed in an election speaks to how other potential candidates view his or her electability. A candidate may run unopposed in a race because he or she is viewed as such a strong contender that other potential candidates decide to wait for another opportunity to enter a race. Conversely, a candidate who is considered weak may attract more challengers.

Often today, the primary race is the most contested race, as in many states redistricting has created safe seats. Out of the 1701 candidates who filed to run in the state legislative races, 684 candidates were unopposed in the primary race. Female candidates need to win in these races to move on to the general race and secure the seat. Female candidates ran unopposed in as many primary races as male candidates. The results displayed below demonstrate that female candidates are as likely as men to face a contender in the Oklahoma primary legislative races where a female candidate is present, as both Democratic and Republican women in both house and senate races run unopposed in over 50% of their races.

Table 3.5: Unopposed Candidates in Primary Races

<b>2002 – 2012 OK Primary Races with Female Candidate</b>	<b>Number of Total Candidates</b>	<b>Number Unopposed</b>	<b>Unopposed in House or Senate Primary</b>
<b>Republican Women</b>	90	51	56.6%
<b>Republican Men</b>	580	305	52.6%
<b>Democratic Women</b>	88	45	51.1%
<b>Democratic Men</b>	507	283	55.8%

In the other studies discussed above, female candidates are often more likely to draw competition in primary elections. In Oklahoma, while there is a definitive lack of female candidates entering state legislative primaries, I do not find support for the hypothesis that female candidates are more likely than male candidates to draw competitors in a race or that women are more likely to run against other female candidate. Female candidates in Oklahoma do not run against other female candidates as much as in studies of previous states or Congressional races. Of the 178 female candidates who filed, they ran against another female candidate in only 17 primary races.

Most primaries that do draw challengers only draw two candidates for the party nomination. However, in challenged primary races, female candidates do have more competition. A comparison of means test for number of challengers for male and female candidates was significant ( $t(321) = 3.476, p = .001$ ). Open seat races do often draw multiple challengers.

In races where there are challengers, Republican female candidates win 58.9% of their primary elections, while Republican men win 53.7% of their primary

elections. Democratic male candidates win 41.6% of their primaries. Democratic female candidates win fewest of their primaries (34.6%).

Of course, the primary is the initial stage of the electoral process. The performance of female candidates in general elections is most important to the lack of female representation in the Oklahoma state legislature. Yet, the examination of primaries demonstrates that female candidates can win elections in Oklahoma. The fact that as many female primary candidates are unchallenged as male candidates is encouraging for female representation.

### **General Election Entries**

An examination of general election data in head-to-head races between male and female candidates will offer better insight. Of the 1701 candidates in the primaries, 65 Republican female candidates, 63 Democratic female candidates, 413 Republican male candidates, and 362 Democratic male candidates moved on to the general election. Most of these races included two male candidates and there were several general races where both the Democratic and Republican candidates were female. If the intention is to explain the lack of female representation and the overrepresentation of males in state legislatures, the important races to focus on are between male and female candidates. Races between two male candidates will not provide much insight into female representation, and races between two female candidates, while interesting, offer little insight other than perhaps the effect of party in those races. From this point forward, the analysis will focus solely on head-to-head races in the general election that included a female and male candidate.



In the general elections between 2002 and 2012, of the 178 races where a female candidate was present, there were 84 races where a female candidate and a male candidate were the party nominees, and as such, had head-to-head races. There were 36 Republican female candidates that ran against Democratic males and 48 Democratic female candidates that had Republican male opponents.

*Does District Type Matter to the Election of Women?*

Which districts are more likely to elect a woman? The types of districts that women run in and are elected from are important to the discussion. In my database of electoral variables of personal candidate attributes, such as party, gender, amount of campaign finance raised, and incumbency, I also included each district's level of urbanity, minority population, and an ideology score derived from the vote share for the Democratic and Republican Presidential candidate in the previous election.

An examination of the percentage of wins and losses by female candidates in the different districts demonstrates that female candidates do win in certain types of districts than others. As discussed above, female candidates may enter more primary legislative races in suburban districts, but they win races in urban and suburban districts equally. The winning rates for female candidates in urban and suburban districts are remarkably similar to male candidates. Female candidates are most successful in urban races, winning 52.7% of the races, which when broken down by party represents female Republican candidates (31.6%) compared with Democratic women (21.1%). In suburban areas, female candidates win 51.5% of the elections with female Democratic candidates winning slightly more elections in suburban districts than female Republican candidates (27.3% to 24.2%). Fewer female candidates enter

a rural district race. In the rural district races they do enter, Republican female candidates are able to win 33.3% of the races that they enter, while Democratic female candidates win 20.2% of the rural races they enter. Republican male candidates win at much greater rates than either female candidates as they win 55% of the races they enter. The female candidates do perform better than Democratic males, who only win 12% of the races they enter. “The races they enter” is an important caveat, though, as previously stated, the eleven rural districts are held by strong incumbents.

Female candidates fare as expected in districts when the level of minority population is considered. Democratic female candidates win a strong number of races in districts that have a medium to high level of racial/ethnic diversity. Republican female candidates perform best in districts that are predominately white, but do win 33.3% of the races they enter in highly diverse districts.

Republican female candidates win very few elections that they enter in districts that would be considered liberal (only 8.3%), but win exactly half of their races in conservative districts. Democratic female candidates perform best in moderate districts, as they win almost half of the races (47.4%).

The mileage to the district does not seem to affect the election outcome. Female candidates are elected as often as male candidates from districts that are between 100 – 150 miles from the capitol. This distance would likely necessitate overnight stays in the capitol during the term. As discussed above, there are few districts over 151 miles from the capitol. There were nine races in these districts where a female candidate was present.

To test the simple percentages, a one-way ANOVA test was conducted to compare the rates of female candidate wins and losses in the districts, given district urbanity, ethnicity, ideology, and distance from capitol (group 1 was females who won their general election race (coded as 1); the second group was females who lost their race (coded as 2). For each of the different independent variables, there were no outliers, as assessed by boxplot.

Female wins were lowest in the rural areas ( $\bar{x} = .31$ ,  $SD = .471$ ) and increased in the suburban areas ( $\bar{x} = .36$ ,  $SD = .482$ ) to the highest in urban areas ( $\bar{x} = .69$ ,  $SD = .466$ ). There was a statistically significant differences between winning female candidates and losing female candidates based on the urbanity of the district,  $F(2, 165) = 9.707$ ,  $p < .00$ . A Tukey post-hoc test revealed that the ability for female candidates to win in urban districts was significantly higher than in suburban or rural areas. Female candidates were much more likely to win in urban areas.

In the head to head races between male and female candidates, female candidates did not win in any races that was over 150 miles from the district ( $\bar{x} = .00$ ,  $SD = .000$ ). (There were only six races with a male and female candidates in districts over 150 miles.) Female wins increased in districts that were 100 – 150 miles from the capitol ( $\bar{x} = .48$ ,  $SD = .504$ ) and were the same in districts under 50 miles from the district. There was a reduction in the amount of wins in the districts 51 – 99 miles from the capitol ( $\bar{x} = .42$ ,  $SD = .500$ ). There were not statistically significant differences between winning female candidates and losing female candidates based on the distance of the district from the capitol,  $F(3, 164) = 1.886$ ,  $p < .134$ .

Female candidate wins were lowest in districts that had a low level of minority population ( $\bar{x} = .34$ ,  $SD = .477$ ). Wins increased in the districts that had a moderate level of minority population ( $\bar{x} = .42$ ,  $SD = .498$ ) and were the highest in areas with a high level of minority population ( $\bar{x} = .81$ ,  $SD = .397$ ). Female candidates were more likely to win as the minority population increased. There was a statistically significant difference between winning female candidates and losing female candidates based on the minority population of the district,  $F(2, 165) = 12.051$ ,  $p < .00$ . Again, a Tukey post-hoc test revealed that the ability for female candidates to win in higher minority districts was significantly higher than in districts that had low to moderate minority populations.

Female candidates wins increased when the district ideology became more liberal. Female wins were lowest in races in districts that were conservative ( $\bar{x} = .40$ ,  $SD = .494$ ) and increased in the moderate areas ( $\bar{x} = .48$ ,  $SD = .503$ ) to the highest in liberal areas ( $\bar{x} = .62$ ,  $SD = .506$ ). But, there was not a statistically significant differences between winning female candidates and losing female candidates based on the ideology of the district,  $F(2, 165) = 1.178$ ,  $p < .311$ .

The ANOVA tests demonstrate that some of Palmer and Simon's findings about female candidates and winning districts hold in Oklahoma, but there are some anomalies. Urbanity and ethnicity of a district is important to the ability of female candidates to win. Similar to Palmer and Simon (2006), I find that female candidates win more often from urban districts and districts where there is a higher minority population. But, district ideology and mileage from the capitol has limited impact on the ability of female candidates to win their races, which runs counter to the findings

of Palmer and Simon (2006). While the wins of female candidates do increase in liberal districts, it is not statistically significant. Female candidates will need to be able to compete effectively in conservative districts, given the ideological nature of the state, if female representation is to increase. Also, while female candidate wins increase in districts close to the capitol, they are also able to win as often in districts that are 100 – 150 miles from the capitol. Palmer and Simon find support for the former, but the latter runs counter to their findings.

Thus, some of the district demographics then do impact a female candidates ability to win. A logistic regression using the district level data was performed to predict the effect of gender, party, the minority composition of the district, mileage, and district ideology on the likelihood of winning the election. The dependent variable was whether the female candidate won the election (0 = no, 1 = yes). The model correctly classified 69.1% of the cases. The district level variables thought to increase winning female candidacies are significant (Palmer and Simon 2006). Female candidates win more often in urban districts and districts that have higher racial and ethnic compositions. Campaign funding is positive, but not significant, which is not expected, given previous findings about the correlation between campaign spending and electoral outcomes. Conservative districts are less likely to elect females, but again, the variable is not significant.

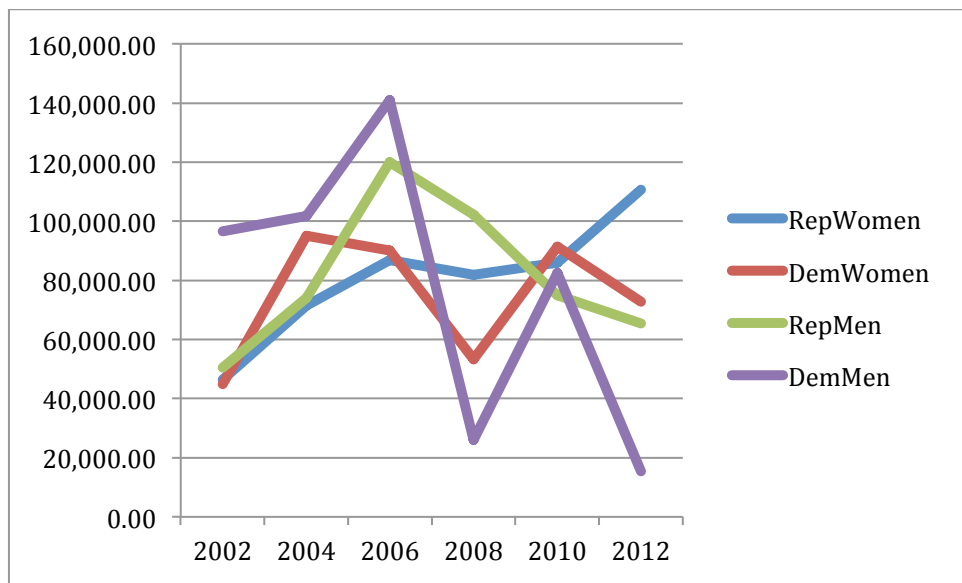
Table 3.6: Variables That Predict Female Win  
Table (Female Win) About here

### *Finance*

In interviews, female candidates stressed the importance of campaign finance. Many of the female candidates thought that it was more difficult for them to raise

funds than it is for male candidates. The amount of funds that a candidate can raise in their general election race is important. Candidates who can raise a large amount of funds are able to conduct a competitive election, through advertising, travel, and staffing. Fundraising is often seen as a marker of candidate "charisma" and often, the candidate who raises the most money wins the election. In the general elections that included a male and female candidate, fundraising means varied greatly over the ten-year period by party and gender.

Figure 3.1: Mean Fundraising Totals by Party and Gender



Data Source: National Institute on Money in State Elections

The means demonstrate that the female candidates who declared their belief that it is more difficult for female candidates to raise funds are correct. Female candidates usually raise fewer funds than their male counterparts, except for Democratic male candidates in 2008 and 2012. Yet, fundraising for male candidates peaked in 2006. The means demonstrate that Republican female candidates have

made steady progress in raising more funds over the decade and they are the only group that has made consistent gains during the decades. Democratic female candidates have certainly made gains in fundraising, but it is not as consistent as for Republican female candidates.

In most election cycles, the male candidates raised more money than female candidates. The graph above suggests that the difference in averages is likely significant. An independent-samples t-test conducted to compare fundraising for male and female candidates suggests that the ability to raise funds does differ between male and female candidates. The Levene's t test revealed significant variance between male and fundraising for male and female candidates;  $t(168) = -.320, p = .013$ .

Differences in fundraising become important to female candidates, as fundraising is often correlated with vote share. Female candidates often state that they feel they must raise more funds to do as well in elections as male candidates. A simple correlation model between the vote share for candidates and the amount of funds is significant (Pearson Correlation = .400, significant at the .000 level). Yet, an independent samples t-test of the vote share means of male and female candidates initially suggests that there is no significant difference in vote share between the two groups ( $t(168) = 1.23, p = .222$ ). Comparing means between all Democrats and Republicans, male and female, does show a significant difference ( $t(168) = 3.48, p = .001$ ). A linear regression of the vote share will give a clearer understanding of the impact of finance, gender, party, and district variables on votes.

Table 3.7: Variables That Predict Female Vote Share  
Table (VOTE SHARE) about here

As suggested by the correlation and the comparison of means tests above, the linear regression demonstrates that party and finance are significant predictors of the vote share. Being a female candidate is also significant. As expected, being a female candidate or a Democratic candidate has a negative effect on vote share. There are as many Democratic women running as Republican women, so if half of the available female candidates are having difficulty getting elected based on party affiliation, the chances of increasing gender representation in the Oklahoma legislature is compromised.

### *Overall Wins*

In the general elections where female candidates were going head to head with male candidates, Republican female candidates won 63.9% of their races, and 68.8% of Republican male candidates won their election. Democratic female candidates won 32.6% of their races and Democratic male candidates won 35.1% of their races. The total female candidate win ratio was 45.8% of the races they enter, when they run against a male candidate. Republican women do very well in their races. Republican candidates fare better in Oklahoma in general, but the fact that female candidates are able to win almost as many of their races as their male counterparts demonstrates that Republican voters are as willing to elect a female candidate.

When examining all of the general races that a female candidate entered, which would include races where two female candidates were present as the Republican and Democratic nominees, 72.3% of Republican female candidates win their races and 68.6% of Republican male candidates win their races. For the Democrats, 48.8% of



Democratic female candidates win their races, while their male counterparts win 40.5%. This gives female candidates an overall win ratio in all general elections of 60%. Male candidates win 56% of their general elections. Getting a female candidate to enter and pass the primary stage, then, is critical. Further, female candidates who do get passed the primary stage are more likely to run unopposed in the general race than male candidates. Republican female candidates run unopposed in the general race 31.5% of the time, while Republican male candidates run unopposed in only 17.6% of their races. Democratic female candidates run unopposed in 24.9% of their races, while only 16.2% of the Democratic male candidates run unopposed. These averages are likely reflective of both the large number of males who enter the races, as well as the creation of safe seats in the Oklahoma districts.

When examining female candidate wins in all races in the general election in a logit model, the same variables are significant as in the model for head-to-head races with only male candidates.

Table 3.8: Variables That Predict Female Win  
(Female Win – All Races) about here

## **Conclusion**

While the results presented above demonstrate support for several of the hypotheses, some of the findings are inconsistent with previous research and present interesting implications for female representation in Oklahoma. The findings here are consistent with recent literature. First, there are fewer female candidates entering primaries in Oklahoma than the neighboring states. The lack of female primary candidates is consistent with Lawless and Pearson (2006) findings. Second, female candidates typically win in urban or suburban districts that are more ethnically diverse

and liberal. This finding is consistent with Palmer and Simon's 2006 research. Also, term limits did encourage more female candidates to file and did have a small positive influence on the amount of gender representation in the Oklahoma legislature.

Previous research has been inconclusive on the effects of term limits, as a few states did see an increase in female candidacies and wins, while female representation actually decreased in other states when they enacted term limits.

Yet, there were findings that were inconsistent with previous research, but positive for female candidates. Female candidates in Oklahoma do not draw more challengers in elections than male candidates and they run unopposed just as often as male candidates in Oklahoma. While female candidacies are lacking, the women who do run win many races, which is to be expected from previous literature. While women do not win half of their races as a whole, the issue appears partisan-based rather than gender-based, as Democratic female candidates comprise half of the female candidacies. Democratic candidates have faced tough competition for seats in the Oklahoma legislature, regardless of gender. Republican female candidates do very well in their races.

One finding that is inconsistent with the literature raises some interesting points. Female candidates in Oklahoma do not raise as much in funding as male candidates. Previous research finds that female candidates raise as much in campaign funds as male candidates, although female candidates feel that they need to make more contacts in order to do so. Female candidates in Oklahoma did say in interviews that they felt it was harder for them to raise funds and had to work harder to raise adequate funding (further addressed in the next chapter). Campaign spending was positively

correlated to vote share and significant in models with all female candidates (although not in the model that just examined head-to-head races with female and male candidates). While the mean numbers in fundraising suggest that female candidates are not raising quite as much money as male candidates, it does not appear that this hinders female candidates' vote share in those head-to-head races. Female candidates are winning races by the similar vote shares as male candidates. These findings will merit further examination in future research, as it raises many questions about the ability of female candidates in Oklahoma legislative races to raise funds and effectively campaign.

Thus, the issue for the underrepresentation of women in the Oklahoma State legislature does not appear to be from lack of votes, fundraising, term limits, or district characteristics. The fact that female candidates do not seem to face any of Duverger's "voter hostility" when running for office is promising for the future of female representation in Oklahoma. When women run in Oklahoma, they are able to win many of their races. The issue seems to stem from the lack of female candidates. Why are women not running for office in Oklahoma? Is it a lack of recruitment or encouragement from party leaders? Or do women in Oklahoma simply lack the ambition to run? The next two chapters will investigate these proposed causes for female underrepresentation.

Table 3.6 (Female Win): Determinants of Vote Share for Candidates, Oklahoma State Legislature

Dependent Variable: Female Candidate Win/Lose

Independent Variables

Democrat	.037 (.395)
Incumbent	-.106 (.383)
Urbanity	.529** (.293)
Mileage	-.002 (.004)
Ethnicity	3.472* (1.678)
Ideology	-1.371 (1.210)
Campaign Funding	.222 (.640)
Constant	.854 (7.433)

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N =	178
R-Squared =	.169
F =	9.738*

Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses

\* =  $p < 0.05$

\*\* =  $p < .10$

Table 3.7 (Vote Share): Determinants of Vote Share for Candidates, Oklahoma State Legislature

Dependent Variable: Vote Share Received in the General Election

Independent Variables

Female Candidate	.312 (.498)
Democrat	-1.742* (.488)
Incumbent	-.345 (.493)
Urbanity	.336 (.378)
Mileage	.003 (.005)
Ethnicity	1.538 (1.698)
Ideology	-.074 (1.439)
Campaign Funding	.004* (.001)
Constant	-2.695 (1.460)
<hr/>	
N =	178
R-Squared=	.415

Table 3.8 (Female Win – All Races): Determinants of Female Win for All General Election Races, Oklahoma State Legislature

Dependent Variable: Female Win

Independent Variables

Democrat	-.707* (.327)
Incumbent	-.401 (.326)
Urbanity	.434** (.231)
Mileage	.002 (.003)
Ethnicity	2.671* (1.175)
Ideology	.018 (.924)
Campaign Funding	2.440* (.402)
Constant	43.424 (7.433)
N =	178
R-Squared=	.214
F=	9.738*

*Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses*

\* =  $p < 0.05$

\*\* =  $p. < .10$

## **Chapter Four: Gender and the Electoral Strategies of the Oklahoma Political Parties**

Representative Helen Arnold decided to run to the Oklahoma house in 1976, based mostly on the opposition of the current occupant of the seat to the Equal Rights Amendment. Arnold had worked very hard to get the Equal Rights Amendment ratified during her work as the head of the local League of Women Voters and could not get then-representative Warren Green to vote for ratification. After her entry into the race, the representative decided to run for another office, but she remained in the race and beat two other primary candidates – one male, one female – to move on to defeat a male Democratic candidate in the general election. During her campaign, she managed all aspects of her campaign, with no party support, even getting registered voter lists on her own, as the party did not supply them to her. Arnold won her first election with a large majority of the votes, mainly because her competition was “iffy. He didn’t really know if he wanted to run or not” (Finchum 2008a).

Yet, in 1978, Arnold found little party support for her reelection campaign. “In ’78, there was a move in the conservative wing of the Republican Party to get rid of me. So they recruited a person to run against me” (Finchum 2008a). Her opponent, who was another female candidate, failed to meet the residency requirements and was subsequently disqualified. Arnold went on to win in 1978 and again in 1980, until she retired from the house in 1982.

Arnold, like most of the female candidates I interviewed, reported that there was little party involvement at all in their campaigns. These comments from candidates imply that party gatekeepers in Oklahoma are perhaps detached from most campaigns, only to become active in recruiting when a current candidate is found

unappealing to the gatekeepers. Most research finds that party gatekeepers are very active in candidate recruitment. Plus, to win elections, parties may consider gender when they recruit candidates. Since 1980, the number of female voters in Presidential elections has outnumbered male voters and more women have turned out to vote in mid-term elections since 1986 (CAWP 2014). Given these statistics, it is important that both parties pay equal attention to both men and women as voters and candidates. Ambitious parties that wish to control government need to reach all possible voting blocs.

## **Literature Review**

### **Why Are Parties Important?**

Today, the two major political parties in the United States do not possess many of the defining characteristics of strong parties. John Aldrich (1995) suggests that parties have evolved over time, in response to societal or political changes. When the parties have lost influence in some crucial areas of the political process, they have refocused their efforts in order to gain strength in others. Indeed, it seems that political parties are fluid and adaptable, as they have been able to "recreate" themselves whenever a restriction – be it from the courts or the public – has been placed upon them. For example, party leaders lost the ability to just name their preferred candidate for the general election unilaterally when popular support for direct primaries became insurmountable and parties surrendered the nomination power to the electorate. Today, the parties have developed endorsement and recruiting strategies to adapt to the loss of control over nominees.



### **Elections and Ambition**

At the heart of all political party activity is the ambition to control the power of government, initially by overcoming collective action problems and increasing voter turnout. Today, that ambition is channeled through supporting the elected party system by offering professional expertise and assistance in elections (Aldrich 1995). Political parties and other gatekeepers then can be conceived of as ambitious entities (Aldrich 1995). If the goal of a political party is to control government and policy, they must focus on elections. The ambitious nature of parties in elections manifests in different ways. If the ambition is simply to win elections, then parties can be conceived of a loosely connected pool of both potential candidates and voters. The role of the party is to find candidates that can connect with voters in order to secure partisan dominance in the elected offices (Aldrich 1995, Baer and Bositis 1988). Another view is that parties consist of gatekeeping elites that organize to increase their chances of winning through building party and government structures for their benefit, or to shape the political opportunity structure (Sanbonmatsu 2002). In both of these views, political parties must find viable candidates to run for office, since securing partisan dominance or shaping the political culture requires a majority in the legislature. Thus, the controls that gatekeepers may want to develop to limit party candidacy could be significant.

### **Endorsement and Recruitment**

Since losing the ability to nominate any candidate they choose, partisan gatekeepers have developed new techniques to assure the candidates are committed to party ideals and are viable candidates for election. When good candidates do not emerge on their own, parties must often recruit candidates. When parties recruit

candidates, they are implicitly stating that the targeted candidate would make a good legislator and they believe the candidate to be viable.

Also, parties can use endorsements to control the candidate slate. When candidates file for the primary, party leadership may formally endorse the candidate. This formal endorsement signals to committed party members that this particular candidate meets the party standards. An endorsement may increase the vote margin received by the candidate in the election. Following endorsements, candidates may benefit further by increased campaign contributions.

Formal endorsements are often critical for success in legislative runs. Candidates who receive an endorsement are more likely to win their primary election (Dominguez 2011). The formal endorsement process implies that many candidates decide to run for office without party leaders' approval. The endorsement may then serve as a separation mechanism, allowing the parties to distance themselves from candidates who may try to run under the party's name but are not found to be acceptable.

The recruitment and endorsement practices now signal which candidates who gatekeepers view as viable candidates. The main question is whom do gatekeepers recruit. The relationship between partisan elites and women, either as voters or as candidates, has been difficult in the past.

### ***Parties and Women***

Both of the two major political parties developed largely in response to competing views of the proper role of government, long before women could vote. As such, both the Democratic and Republican parties largely ignored women as potential

candidates and party leaders, leaving them to assist in the "licking and sticking" in campaign offices. Neither party was very helpful in the suffrage movement, until it became obvious that the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment would pass. After passage, the parties would see the necessity of giving women limited influence. Women were often used to develop policy, fill committees, and provide new voting blocs, but rarely as candidates. Women lost political power within the parties through the disbanding of networks and committees in the 1920's and 1930's, mostly due to the rise of war and defense issues (Harvey 1998). Women did not recover any level of recognition from either party until the 1970's. The development of the National Organization for Women and the attempted ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970's motivated women to again engage in politics (Freeman 2006; Harvey 1998). Baer and Bositis (1988) argue that women gained some authority in the political parties through organizing as a social movement for women's rights. As the social movement empowered women, men in the political party structure had to respond to the requests for more inclusivity in the partisan structure. Women were able to join in the partisan decision-making and became members of the political elites in the party structure. The incorporation of women in the partisan elite was a necessary step in the recruitment practices.

When women first began to gain seats in the late 1970's and early 1980's, female candidates were elected from the Republican Party. By 1989, more women in state legislatures were members of the Republican Party (Lawless 2010). Yet, that trend has reversed. In the 1980's and 1990's, a socially conservative base started growing in the Republican Party that was not as receptive to female candidates

(Palmer and Simon 2008). The number of female legislators did not increase, especially in the South when the Republican Party became the majority party in most state legislatures. The conventional wisdom is that the Democratic Party is the more receptive party for the election of women today. In the 2010 primaries, more women filed as state legislative candidates from the Republican Party, but more Democratic women won their primary race (Walsh 2010). Today, 63.9% of women in state legislatures are in the Democratic Party, while 35.8% are Republican (CAWP 2014).

### *Can Parties Help Women Win?*

Parties have been both credited and blamed for the number of women serving in elected office. There is mixed evidence that parties can aid in the election of more female candidates. Parties began to accept female candidates more readily in the 1990's, as female candidates demonstrated that they were competitive (Burrell 1994). Sanbonmatsu (2010) argues that parties have both the reasons and the ability to aid women. If women are viable candidates now and comprise half of the voting populace (often more), then it is in parties' interest to aid women.

When it comes to the strength of the political party organization, evidence is again mixed that strong parties can contribute to an increase in women's representation. Minnesota, a state with an unusually strong party system that has powerful control of primary endorsements and nominations, does have more female representation than average (Kenney, et. al. 2009). But Sanbonmatsu (2006) finds that strong parties are a deterrent to women serving in state legislatures. In her seven-state study, she finds a consistent result correlation with the state political party structure. State party leaders who assert that women are just as strong as candidates (or perhaps

more viable than) a man reliably are associated with higher numbers of women in the state legislatures. The same also holds true when party leaders state that they do not take gender into consideration when fielding candidates regardless of the party's role in the primary endorsements. In interviews and surveys with political leaders and recruiters in Colorado, Massachusetts, and Minnesota, these leaders felt that women can do as well as men. In Iowa and Alabama, political gatekeepers stated that there were viability concerns with female candidates, especially in rural districts. The number of women in these state legislatures is markedly lower. Interestingly, women candidates across all seven states reported feeling a bias from gatekeepers.

#### *Partisan Recruitment/Endorsement and Female Candidates*

When good candidates do not emerge on their own, parties must often recruit candidates. When parties recruit candidates, they are implicitly stating that the targeted candidate would make a good legislator and they believe the candidate to be viable. If there are partisan differences in the recruitment of female candidates, then this may signal that the parties feel that women may not either be electable or would not represent the party ideals.

There are also contradictory findings regarding the recruitment of female candidates. Lawless and Fox (2005) find that female candidates are not as likely to be recruited by a gatekeeper as a male candidate, while Niven (2006) states that potential female candidates are actually more likely to be contacted by recruiters than potential male candidates. One reason for this contradiction is rooted in demand side explanations. Many recruiters often select people who are “like them” and are in the same networks when fielding candidates, and thus, the legislatures have little

diversity. For example, Carnes (2012) finds that the lack of working class people in legislatures can be explained by the fact that not many legislators or party chairs are from working class backgrounds. Similar to Carnes, Bergmann (1996) suggests people have a tendency to hire, or recruit, based on just a couple of different factors, such as their own status or class. White men like to hire white men. They also look for recommendations from their own social or business network of people to hire. Further, the one doing the hiring (or recruiting) may think that their target audience wishes to have white men in public positions. Also, recruiters may believe that

if a male candidate for a job held only by males is highly acceptable, those in charge of making the selection may wonder why they should take a chance on a woman, even if she looks as though she could do the job. By the same token, if all previous successful incumbents in a certain job have been white and a white candidate who looks like a good bet is available, the natural tendency is not to take a chance on a black, not even one who looks promising (Bergmann, p. 78).

To apply this logic to political recruitment, Melody Crowder-Meyer (2010), in her national survey of local party chairs, finds that recruitment takes place based on recommendations amongst people active in the party, for people in the party members' networks or from current officeholders, or from business, education, or professional groups. She further finds that reliance on current officeholders and other higher up party members is detrimental to the number of female candidacies, as "it is clear that parties dominated by party actor recruitment networks are less likely to run women." Clark (1994) finds that female candidates do not inhabit the same network areas as gatekeepers, as recruiters are often in law and business.

Active encouragement of potential female candidates is a needed step toward increasing female representation. While both male and female candidates state that

their final decision to run was aided by contact from at least one party elite, female candidates may need more contact. Most female candidates state that they ran because of an active recruitment strategy from gatekeepers (Lawless and Fox 2005; Niven 2006). Female candidates do report more feelings of bias from recruiters (Lawless and Fox 2005). Sanbonmatsu (2006) did not uncover any systematic bias against female candidates in her study, as few gatekeepers outright dismiss the viability of female candidates. In Sanbonmatsu's study, some party chairs and other recruiters did state that there were districts within the state that would be difficult to win. Yet, overall, political recruiters are optimistic about female candidacies (Sanbonmatsu 2006). Still, female candidates reported that they felt relegated to lower political offices and roles (Niven 2006).

Sanbonmatsu (2006b) further argues that parties have not done enough to aid women in achieving greater representation in legislatures. Recruitment activity could be increased. At times, political gatekeepers appear to be oblivious to the viability of female candidacies. While vote share studies demonstrate that female candidates win at the same rates as male candidates, gatekeepers stated that they had concerns about women's electability. Surprisingly, Democratic leaders felt that women would have more problems winning elections than Republican leaders (Sanbonmatsu 2006b). Yet, Democrats actively recruit more female candidates than the Republican Party (Sanbonmatsu 2006).

Kenney, et. al. (2009) find that the formal endorsement practice also makes a significant difference in the number of women who win their legislative race. But not all state political parties make formal endorsements. The formal endorsement process

implies that many candidates decide to run for office without party leaders' approval. The endorsement may then serve as a separation mechanism, allowing the parties to distance themselves from candidates who may try to run under the party's name but are not found to be acceptable.

Collectively, these findings suggest that gatekeeping and recruitment strategies are important to the question of female representation. Parties are able to recruit, endorse, and train candidates to run and they will assist candidates that can further the parties' ambition of securing election. Partisan recruitment matters to the election of female candidates. The question is whether or not partisan gatekeepers consider women to be viable candidates.

#### Parties in Oklahoma

There has been a distinct party change in Oklahoma in the past two decades. The Ranney Index (1976) originally placed Oklahoma as a modified one-party state, controlled by the Democratic Party. Democrats typically won the state legislatures and most of the governor races. Between the period of 1907 – 1963, there was no Governor elected from the Republican Party. While the Democratic Party was able to maintain tight control over the legislature and governorship during that time, the state's more conservative nature was evident in their preferences for President. The state would vote for the Republican candidate in those races (Morgan, England and Humphreys 1991: 142; Johnson and Turner 1998).

The move to a true two party system has been slowly coming over time. The state elected Democrats for most offices, including Governor. Henry Bellmon was the first Republican Governor in 1962 (and again in 1987), and the voters have elected



Republicans as Governors three other times - Dewey Bartlett, Frank Keating, and Mary Fallin.

The state legislature was also predominately controlled by the Democratic Party since statehood. But Oklahoma's state legislature has gone through several key partisan changes over the past decade. In the legislature, term limits ended the dominance of Democratic incumbents. The Republican Party gained control of the house in 2005. The Republican Party became the majority party in the senate after the 2010 elections. Today, Democrats hold a minority of the seats in the legislature. The pattern is consistent with overall change in the South, as the "southern" Democrats have switched party allegiance to the Republican Party. Reapportionment has also loosened the one-party dominance, and the shift from rural dominance to more urban and suburban representatives has brought better-educated legislative members to the capitol.

The party system is closed in the primaries in Oklahoma. Thus, most people register with a party. According to the Oklahoma Election Board, registration shows that Republicans have slowly made gains:

Table 4.1: Voter Registration in Oklahoma

<b>Year</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>	<b>Independents</b>
<b>1969</b>	76.2	22.2	1.6
<b>1979</b>	75.1	23.1	1.8
<b>1989</b>	66.9	30.4	2.7
<b>1999</b>	57.4	34.8	7.8
<b>2009</b>	50.1	39.1	10.8
<b>2014</b>	44.5	43.1	12.1

Source: Oklahoma State Election Board 2014

Structurally, the state party organization in Oklahoma is similar to a pyramid structure. There are many local precinct committees, followed by county committees,

and then the state level party committees at the top. The county committees elect two members to sit on the state committee. Both of the state party chairs said that the state party committees do not try to exert much influence or control over the county committees, allowing them to recruit and sponsor their own candidates. Following the national trend, the party system in Oklahoma has become very candidate-centered (Morgan, England and Humphrey 1991: 114).

Thus, there are aspects to the Oklahoma political party system that can both attract and deter female candidates. More female candidates run from the Republican Party, which is the majority party. Female Republican candidates might view having more opportunities, or conversely, more competition. However, more female candidates are elected from the Democratic Party, which is the minority party today in Oklahoma. The decentralized party structure allows for any candidate to enter without needing endorsements, but female candidates often need recruitment before they run.

### **Research Questions**

Sanbonmatsu's general argument is that parties do matter in the recruitment and election of women to run for office, as formal recruitment strategies for female candidates are effective. The central questions then become: What party factors constrain or encourage women to run (or not run) for office? Is it the recruitment strategies or other party strategies? What do party leaders do to increase or decrease the number of women candidates? Who does most of the recruiting? Does Oklahoma have more or less restrictive access in primary elections?

## **Summary of Methods**

For this chapter, I utilize information from a survey sent to the state legislative chairs and legislative candidates (available in appendix). Both surveys were conducted online with Qualtrics. The survey and interview questions were developed to determine if the findings of previous research are consistent with both Oklahoma's political gatekeepers' and legislative candidates' experiences. A survey was sent to all 77 county-level political party chairs, as well as both the state party chairs (both parties have contact information for party chairs available on their websites). Each of the party chairs received a request for participation in the survey via email, sent to the address indicated on the party website. Each party chair received the email request for survey participation three times. The response rate was 22%.

Another survey was sent to all current members of the Oklahoma State Legislature, as well as candidates who ran for election within the 2002 – 2010 election years for whom I could find contact data. Most people surveyed received an email request for their participation in the survey, accompanied by a link to the online survey. Each survey respondent received three requests for participation.

I also conducted interviews with party chairs, legislative candidates, interest group leaders, and the founder of a political consulting group that works to assist female candidates for office in Oklahoma. Interviewees were asked for their views on political recruitment and gatekeeping strategies (interview guide also located in appendix). I contacted all party chairs via email to ask for an interview. Nineteen party chairs (eleven Democratic and eight Republican) agreed to an interview. Legislative candidates were also contacted via email. I asked the party chairs and the legislators for the names of interest group leaders who are influential in the

recruitment process and followed up with phone calls to ask for interviews with those leaders. I interviewed four interest group leaders, in addition to the founder of the female recruitment group. I also utilized the Women of the Oklahoma Legislature project, again coding the interviews for party activity in the campaigns of female legislators.

## **Findings**

### **Party Tasks**

Parties perform a multitude of tasks in elections. Party chairs in Oklahoma focus their energies on a variety of tasks, the most important being voter files. Female candidates, especially in the WOTOL interviews, mentioned the difficulty of getting those lists on their own if the party did not provide them. The party chairs also spend time on more providing technical assistance with campaigns, such as using email and social media for outreach. The party chairs report that they devote considerable effort in recruiting and assisting with campaign funding. Other campaign assistance, such as creating television advertising, paying for campaign staff, and conducting polls are not important tasks for the parties.

Table 4.2: Tasks For Candidates, Provided by State or Local Party

<b>TASKS (could choose more than one)</b>	<b>% of Time</b>
<b>Recruited Candidates</b>	25%
<b>Provided Technical Assistance with Campaign Materials</b>	30%
<b>Assisted candidates with fundraising</b>	25%
<b>Created and mailed campaign materials</b>	10%
<b>Made direct campaign contributions</b>	30%
<b>Created television ads for candidates</b>	5%
<b>Held get-out-the-vote drives</b>	15%
<b>Loaned or paid campaign staff for candidates</b>	5%
<b>Shared voter lists with candidates</b>	35%
<b>Trained candidates or campaign staff</b>	25%
<b>Conducted polls for candidates</b>	5%

### **An Informal Endorsement Process in Oklahoma**

Neither of the parties in Oklahoma make formal endorsements of candidates in a primary election. This appears counterintuitive, as a party would want to selectively support a candidate who would be loyal to the party's goal and also be electable.

Parties do not benefit from losing races. One of the state party chairs in Oklahoma explains that primaries "are supposed to show what our particular party voters want.

To endorse would make the choice less fair. Plus, it enables us to use all of the money we can commit to the general election. It's better to save all of our resources for that.”

The survey results (displayed below) support the above and following statements that endorsement is rare, although they do admit to endorsement in a few or some seats. Even though party leaders report that they rarely make endorsements in the primary, all of the party chairs agreed that when most party leaders support a candidate, the candidate's chances of winning the primary do increase. Implicitly, party chairs can find ways to show their support of a candidate without making a formal endorsement. Several of the candidates did say in interviews that other endorsements were important, such as former legislators, governors, or congressional

members. Access to these informal channels of party support would be critical for female candidates. As these channels are informal, candidates who are not "in the loop" or already politically connected may not be able to make the connections needed for these informal endorsements.

Most of the candidates did feel that the party was not overly involved in the primary process. A male Republican house member stated that

If the party were to favor someone in the primary, they would keep that behind closed doors. You know some people are 'darlings' already - they have the connections, money, and popularity already without the party's help. But I have never heard of them [the party] trying to keep someone out of it.

He went on to say that endorsements from other people, like local businesspeople, interest groups, and retired members of the legislature were more important, which was a sentiment echoed by many other candidates and legislators. Several of the current members stated that they felt it was most important to receive the blessing of the previous officeholder (if of the same party) more than any endorsement or consent from a party official. A Democratic female house member decided to run for her seat when term limits would keep the current male representative from running again.

I reached out to [the outgoing member] early, before anyone had announced they were running. I thought that was the most important thing in the race, that if he thought I would be okay that I would run. I got his blessing. I didn't talk to anyone else in the party. Just went and filed my paperwork.

Other members said they followed a similar path. Twelve of the candidates I interviewed stated that they asked the current occupant if they could run for the seat. In all but one case, the outgoing member gave the blessing. Even in the one case where the new candidate did not receive a positive response, he decided "to just go

ahead and try. I knew I had a lot of support elsewhere. I'd made a lot of connections through work, had some financial support already. I knew I would regret not trying.”

Thus, there seems to be no formal endorsement strategy for the Oklahoma political parties. Further, party chairs do not actively discourage any one from running. Only 25% of the chairs responded in the survey that a party chair might discourage a candidate in a few races. All of the legislative respondents except for two stated that they were either encouraged to run or that local and state party leaders did nothing when they filed. Two legislators in the survey stated that legislative party leaders did discourage them from actively seeking a seat, though these respondents did win their elections, nonetheless.

#### **A Flexible Recruitment Strategy**

Since the political parties in Oklahoma do not make formal endorsements, any preference that they may have for a particular type of candidate would have to be demonstrated in other ways. One method of determining party preferences is the type of candidates that are recruited. Party leaders, either in the formal party structure or in the legislature, would want to find the best qualified candidate to run in any legislative race. The type of candidates recruited by leadership demonstrates whom parties believe can be elected to legislative seats in Oklahoma. The party chairs from the state and county levels state that they must occasionally do some recruiting, just to be able to fill the seat (more so in rural areas). Thus, it becomes important to the election of women to study how the party recruits candidates and shows tacit support in the pre-primary stage.

As discussed above, recruitment often demonstrates which candidates are viewed as more likely to win. If the parties are recruiting a large number of women, it demonstrates confidence that women are electable in the state.

### **When is Recruiting Done?**

The political party leaders and legislators state that they rarely have to recruit in Oklahoma for state legislative seats. In the interviews, 80% of the legislators and party chairs agreed recruitment is unnecessary. According to survey responses above, as the party chairs report spending only 25% of their time on recruitment. Several party chairs in the urban and suburban areas stated that they never need to recruit.

"Most people come forward on their own. Of course, there are always a few where we wish we could tell them to stay out. But we never do, even if we know they can't win. [We] can't hurt feelings – we might need that person someday."

There are instances where the party chairs state someone in the party is active in recruitment. The one specific area of regular recruitment is in some rural districts or outlying districts far from the capitol. One-third of the party chair respondents say that they feel that legislative leaders or party chairs do have to recruit for those seats.

Also, term limits created a new impetus for recruiting. When Democratic incumbents could no longer run for reelection again beginning in 2004, the Republican Party saw potential. Republicans began to recruit heavily when term limits began, as it ended the incumbency advantage that favored the Democrats.

As legislators remarked below, the Republican takeover affected any recruitment strategy that either party might have possessed. The Republican Party leaders and legislators state that they actively looked for good candidates in 2005,



when they believed the party could gain control and become the majority party of the legislature for the first time.

There was a victory recruitment phase for us. We could feel that it would be the time to take over completely. We even ended up being able to find people to run in areas that had always been Democratic. Some of them just signed up to run, without much recruitment, hoping that the wave would bring them in.

A Democratic member went on to say that the recent Republican victories have discouraged Democrats from doing any recruiting, after the Republican victory "kicked our teeth in." Democrats state that now they are often just looking for someone who would be competent to run. Another male Democratic representative stated, "We would like for there to be more challenges. We're just happy when someone wants to run. It's hard to get somebody when they are sure they will lose."

Safe seats can also dampen efforts to recruit. When asked in the survey and interviews how many seats the party considered safe or very certain that the party would win, none of the chairs expressed optimism that many seats were assured for their party, Democratic or Republican. The chairs were asked to identify the number of seats they felt were (open ended, could identify any number). In all but one survey response, the Democratic and Republican county chairs and state vice-chairs, equally, stated that they believed only 2 seats in the state were safe seats. Only one Republican county chair (from a rural area) felt that many seats were secure, as he stated that 70 Republican seats were safe.

Yet, there was a disconnect with some of the statements that were given during the interviews and questions answered in the surveys. In personal interviews, all of the party chairs stated that they rarely needed to recruit, as candidates emerged on their own. When asked if candidates enter races on their own or they have to be

recruited, while 40% of the chairs reported that they felt candidates emerged on their own, 35% of the party chairs stated that they would need to recruit for offices. A quarter of the party chairs felt that the involvement of the parties in candidate recruitment had increased over the past 10 years, while 20% said that recruitment had either stayed the same or decreased.

When recruitment was needed, usually a legislator or interest group would find a good candidate. The survey responses demonstrate that the party chairs do feel that recruiting is done.<sup>6</sup> When asked how active leadership and interest groups were in recruitment in the previous election, the responses varied.

Table 4.3: Activity level in Recruitment

Recruiting Source	Not Active	Limited Activity	Somewhat Active	Fairly Active	Very Active
Local Party Leaders	10%	10%	10%	20%	15%
State Party Leaders	5%	20%	15%	5%	20%
Legislative Party Leaders	5%	20%	10%	15%	15%
	None	Few seats	Some seats	Most seats	All seats
How many seats do interest groups recruit?	0%	10%	15%	25%	0%

The range of responses on the activity level in recruitment is fairly evenly distributed (The chairs could select “I don’t know”). The party chairs reported that there were similar levels of activity from both local and state party leaders at each level of activity. The level of activity for legislative leaders is also similar across the levels of activity. Although the party chairs state that they themselves rarely recruit, they are aware of recruiting activity at other levels.

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<sup>6</sup> There is some question in the literature and perceptions as to what recruitment actually entails. If a potential candidate is simply asked by a party leader if they have thought about running, has that person been recruited? Or does a higher threshold, such as formal requests to run and presentation of campaign strategy need to be present?

### Who Does the Gatekeeping?

In the survey responses, the party chairs reported that they themselves are not very engaged in any type of recruitment activity, according to the tables below.

Beyond formal recruitment or endorsement, it is even rare for the chairs to be involved in candidate selection, find incumbent challengers, or take sides in a primary (which would constitute an informal endorsement). They also do not discourage candidates.

Table 4.4: Chair Activities in Candidate Emergence

How Often Has A Party Chair	Never	Very Few Seats	Some Seats	Many seats	All seats
Encouraged a candidate to run	5%	20%	20%	10%	5%
Encouraged a candidate not to run	40%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Formally endorsed a candidate in a primary	35%	15%	10%	0%	5%
Helped challenge an incumbent in a primary	20%	25%	10%	0%	5%
Taken sides in a primary	30%	20%	10%	0%	5%
Selected a candidate for a targeted race	20%	10%	15%	10%	5%

While party chairs themselves reported that they do not engage in much recruiting, they do suggest that recruiting needed to be done in many districts and are obviously aware that recruiting does occur, given the responses above. If the party chairs are not the gatekeepers for the nomination process, then who does the majority of the recruiting? The party chairs often turn to elected legislators and interest group leaders to find new candidates.

Most of the time, the parties turn to the legislative members to find good candidates for a nearby district or to pick the legislator's replacement due to retirement or term limits. In the survey, 45% of the party chairs reported that individual legislative members recruit like-minded potential legislators to enter the primary in other districts. This is not a recent development. Many of the female legislators in the

WOTOL interviews stated that the outgoing or a current member of the legislature had recruited them. Representatives Lisa Billy (R) and Laura Boyd (D) had similar recruitment stories to the majority of the female legislators in those interviews.

Helen [Cole, the former state senator] called me one fall afternoon and she said, “Lisa, I have a question for you,” and Helen would often call me. I would help her with little odds and ends, maybe if she needed a ride somewhere, if she wanted me to pick up something at the store and drop off to her—and so I just assumed it was something along that nature and I said, “Sure, what can I do for you?” I was sitting there with my new baby, about a year old now at this point, and she said, “I want you to run for the House of Representatives,” and I literally laughed. I was drinking a cup of coffee and I was like, “I don’t think so,” but I didn’t say that out loud because you don’t say those things to Helen Cole.”

Here’s a woman who really believes in me, who overcame those obstacles herself when she first ran. She was a bank teller when she first ran, and I thought, “How can I tell her no?” So I really felt that strong obligation, especially seeing her in the hospital continuing to work, “No excuses”—that just kept coming back to my mind, “No excuses,” and so I made the decision. I remember when I went in to visit with her and I said, “Helen, I’ve made the decision, I’m going to run,” and she said, “Good, I’m glad (Finchum 2007b).

The element of surprise in the recruitment call was evident in Laura Boyd’s experience, as well, indicating that no one had tried to recruit her for office previously.

I received a phone call on a particular day. I guess it must have been a Monday, from the predecessor in my house district asking would I run for the House of Representatives and I said I did not know anything about taxes. I do not know anything about roads and bridges. I do not even vote regularly. And she said to me, “You can do this. You’re bright, you like people, you learn quickly. You can do this.” And so I said, well let me think it over, talk to my husband, think it over overnight and we will make a decision. And she said, “You have an hour and a half until filing closes (Finchum 2006).

The above stories are indicative of the recruitment stories from the members interviewed in the WOTOL interviews, of the female candidates who were recruited.

Out of the 44 women interviewed, 20 of female legislators stated that someone initially asked them to run. In 14 of those recruitments, the candidate was asked by

either the person vacating the office or another office holder in the district, such as the district's office holder in the other chamber or the district judge. All of the recruited candidates indicated that the initial ask for their candidacy was unexpected, indicating that the legislator or other district official doing the recruiting did not have more informal conversations with the prospective candidate to consider running. The consistent theme across the statements was the decisive nature of the request to run. The legislators and other elected officials had decided the recruited candidate was the best choice and often continued to ask the recruit to run until they convinced them to enter the race.

In my interviews, all of the legislative members stated that they are always asked to find candidates, even those legislators who are just in their first or second terms. One new female legislator, who had a difficult primary and was considered unelectable by many in the local party due to her young age, says that she is now asked for help in fielding good candidates for the party. "I am asked all the time now, just one year in, who the party should try to run in the district next to me. They know that I know the area, what people want." (She did say she was trying to get a woman she knows to consider running.) The idea that the party trusts the choices of the current legislators was a common theme. Legislators made comments similar in nature to this male house member:

We are always asked who we know who would make a good candidate. Right now, I am actively seeking someone to run in the district next to me. It's a term limit thing, we think we got a shot to take that district. The party thinks we [current legislators] pick better.

Further, the outgoing legislator does identify a possible successor, as 45% of the chairs state that individual legislators will work to actively recruit a person to run

for a vacated seat. A female Democratic member stated that she is currently "grooming" a candidate now who will run for her seat when she terms out in four years. A majority of the legislators I interviewed stated that they had been asked to help with finding or recommending someone to run. While the party chairs may not do the active recruiting, there is an active effort to recruit candidates through the current legislators. Forty percent of the chairs state that individual legislators will then actively work on the campaign or formally endorse a preferred successor in the legislative race.

Another recruitment channel may be through interest groups. Interest groups often play a role in recruiting sympathetic candidates for state legislative positions for some time and their influence in the system continues to grow (Rozell and Wilcox 2005). Fifty percent of the chairs report that interest groups have some level of active recruitment for the Oklahoma state legislature, recruiting for a few (10%), some (15%) to most (25%) of the seats. When asked to identify which groups were the most helpful in recruiting candidates, there was no clear preference amongst the party chairs (they were able to select 3 areas of interest). While there is not one of the interest groups that tend to have more influence than others in recruiting candidates, the fact that so many of the party chairs have stated that interest groups play an important role in recruiting candidates will merit further future research in the recruitment of women for the Oklahoma state legislature. Interest group recruitment could prove to be a significant avenue for women's parity in the Oklahoma legislature. It is heartening to see that women's groups were on the list, even if it is a low figure (many groups were not considered influential in the recruitment process). The teachers and local activism

groups would likely aid women's recruitment as well, as most of the teachers in Oklahoma at the primary and secondary levels are women. Local activist groups often are comprised of a majority of women, also (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1998).

Table 4.5: Interest Groups Active in Recruiting

Interest Group	%
Labor	25%
Business	15%
Women's Groups	15%
Christian Coalition	25%
Pro-Life	0
Pro-Choice	0
Gun Owner	10%
Gun Control	10%
Environmentalists	0
Teachers	5%
Farmers	5%
Local/Community Activists	5%
Lawyers	0
Tax Relief	0
Other (open to answers)	0

Thus, in the absence of a formal endorsement process for the parties, the support, recruitment, and endorsement practices of interest groups and legislative candidates may form a viable substitute.

#### **Gatekeepers Hold Positive Views of Female Candidacies**

While evidence is mixed regarding whether or not the parties do actively recruit, party gatekeepers perform tasks that at the very least resemble active recruitment. When they do engage in these tasks, do they look to women as potential candidates?

Perception of their ability to win is key for all candidates, as well as for gatekeepers. Female candidates especially report that they lack confidence in their

ability to win (Lawless and Fox 2006). The gatekeepers need to have positive perceptions of female candidates to encourage them. As discussed in the literature review, scholars identify several characteristics that create "quality" candidates. Jacobson and Kernell's 1983 definition included someone who has held previous elected service at a lower level. For a state legislative position, this would include school board, city council, county board, mayor, or similar service. A quality candidate would be someone who fits the "political mood" of the area, as well. In Oklahoma, in most districts, that would include a candidate who is pro-family, pro-business, pro-military, and interested in lowering taxes. Other scholars define quality candidates by the ability to fundraise (or self-finance),<sup>7</sup> and attract a following, broadly defined as "charisma," (Bond, Covington, and Fleischer 1985; Squire 1995; Krasno and Green 2008), as well as high name recognition (Johnson and Turner 1998; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1996).<sup>8</sup>

For female candidates in Oklahoma, the premise that a quality challenger is someone who has run for office or is currently in office is problematic. In Oklahoma, there are low levels of women in most elected capacities in the state, as Oklahoma ranks 38<sup>th</sup> nationally in the number of women holding elected offices throughout the state (Institute for Women' Policy Research 2004). If female candidates are not running for or holding as often as many offices as males, then the view of quality

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<sup>7</sup> However, the difficulty in using money as a marker of a quality challenger is the prevalent use of personal funds in races today, as it "automatically makes candidates with their own financial resources higher quality challengers without any reference to other relevant characteristics they may or may not possess" (Squire 1995: 894).

<sup>8</sup> The data on Oklahoma has not been recently updated in the literature. Indeed, much of the literature available about the political system in Oklahoma has become dated. This dissertation fills a secondary need in updating the current information on much of the Oklahoma political system, albeit through a gendered lens.



candidacy for women is compromised. Women must enter these lower level races more often if state legislative parity is to be achieved.

According to the male party chairs and legislators, they feel that gender is now a non-issue, but that was not always the case in terms of who was seen as a quality candidate. "It's just been recent. A lot of the 'old-timers' would not allow women to be considered, didn't think they were electable. But most of them have left politics [due to retirement]. I would just as soon we have as many women as we can get."

When asked if either party actively tries to get women to run for office, the majority of legislative candidates stated that they usually just look for the better candidate. "Party leaders are gender neutral, so women are not recruited either way. We just look for stamina, attitude," according to one male representative. All of the women I interviewed felt that the party did not either hinder or aid in their initial decision to enter the race. None of them reported being asked by an official party member to consider not running.

When asked in the survey about the effect of gender on candidacies, there were some differences between male and female party chairs. When asked if men or women are better candidates overall, the majority of the survey respondents, both male and female, stated that there is no difference between the genders. Neither the male or female party chairs felt men make better candidates, while ten percent of the male chairs and a quarter of the female chairs felt that women make better candidates. An independent t-test showed no significance in the differences between male (mean = 2.42, standard deviation = .707) and female party chairs (mean = 2.0, standard deviation = 7.79),  $p = .326$ . Overall, these figures suggest that the party chairs are

positive about the ability of women to get elected, since the responses suggest that party chairs rarely assess candidates' abilities in terms of gender.

Table 4.6: Perceptions of Better Candidacies

	Male Chairs	Female Chairs
<b>Male Candidates</b>	0	0
<b>Female Candidates</b>	10%	25%
<b>Neither</b>	75%	75%

Most of the male party chairs reported that they felt that neither male nor female candidates have an advantage in the elections. Ten percent of the male party chairs thought that female candidates have the advantage in election and twenty percent for male candidates. The female party chairs felt that male candidates had an overwhelming advantage in the elections, as 80% of the female chairs reported a male candidate advantage. Here, the independent t-test showed a significance difference between male (mean = 2.17, standard deviation = 1.03) and female party chairs (mean = 1.6, standard deviation = .894),  $p = .060$ .

Table 4.7 Perceptions of Gender Advantage

	Male Chairs	Female Chairs
<b>Male Candidates</b>	20%	80%
<b>Female Candidates</b>	10%	20%
<b>Neither</b>	65%	0%

Despite the positive observations above of female candidates, when asked if there were any districts in Oklahoma where it might be difficult for a woman to win election to the state legislature, only 20% of the male party chairs said no. Most agreed that there would be some level of difficulty, with all of the female chairs believing that there would be problematic districts.

Table 4.8: Difficult Districts for Female Candidates

	Male Chairs	Female Chairs
<b>A few</b>	35%	75%
<b>Many</b>	20%	25%
<b>No</b>	20%	0

The independent t-test also showed significance in the differences between male (mean = 2.75, standard deviation = 1.09) and female party chairs (mean = 2.2, standard deviation = .622),  $p = .096$ ).

While there certainly would be districts in any state where either a male or female candidate might have difficulty, the divide between the two different sets of responses merits further investigation in subsequent research. Both Sanbonmatsu and Lawless and Fox suggest that potential female candidates are able to pick up on subtle cues in the political environment that a candidacy might be difficult. Women will need to be assured that they are seen as equal candidates in order to get them to run, as women generally need more encouragement to run for legislative positions (Lawless and Fox 2005).

More male legislative candidates stated that men and women were equally encouraged by party leaders to become candidates, as 40% of the women and 60% of men agreed with the statement that men and women were equally encouraged.<sup>9</sup> The fact that 40% of the female respondents who are legislative candidates felt that women are now as encouraged to run as men are marks a decided shift in the perception of

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<sup>9</sup> The majority of the rest of the respondents stated that they did not know if one gender is encouraged over another. There were three single respondents who agreed with the other statements. Only one male respondent agreed that women were more encouraged to run for office than men, while one female respondent thought that men were more encouraged. One male respondent did state that he felt men were sometimes more encouraged to run (the rest of the respondents did not know if any encouragement bias occurred).

women's ability to run, given the statements made by the female legislators in the 1970'S and 1980''s, referenced through this chapter.

**Who are “Good Candidates?”**

When the party chairs and legislative members think of the traits or abilities that a good candidate should possess, what do they consider? In their separate surveys, the two groups were asked to select the most important qualities in a person that they would look for in a person that they were trying to recruit to run for office or should possess in order to successfully run for a legislative seat.

There were differences in many of the characteristics between the legislators and the party chairs. Overwhelmingly, the legislative survey respondents stated that the most important quality for a potential candidate to have is charisma, but of none the party chairs felt that this was an important characteristic. The chairs also felt that having held previous local office before running for office was also critical, while the legislators did not feel that previous office experience was a needed trait. Chairs thought that education or legal experience was more helpful for candidates than the legislators. As there are more women in education than men and more women serve at the local level than at the state level, these could be critical differences. As discussed in the introduction, education is one of the most prevalent professional careers for women in the state. While women are not as widely represented in the legal profession as men, there are more women enrolling in Oklahoma law schools now, a trend consistent with most other states (US News and World Report, Best Law Schools Report 2013, accessed January 20, 2015). The fact that these two career paths

are not seen as vital in Oklahoma is interesting, in and of itself, as it is contradictory to previous research.

Party chairs and the legislators agree on the importance of prominence in business. First, candidates who come from the "pipeline" occupations of business are considered to be good fits. The second most important attribute to being considered a good candidate from party and legislative leaders is being prominent in business. Women in Oklahoma are not prevalent in owning businesses in Oklahoma. If party and legislative leaders seek to recruit from business when recruiting is necessary, then the number of women that might rise to the top of the list is lower than it would be for men. This would be especially true in the rural areas, which is the only area that party leaders stated that they needed to do recruiting. In urban and suburban areas, candidates nearly always emerge with no recruitment needed, according to the interviews.

Table 4.9: Most Important Qualities in Potential Candidates

<b>Trait</b>	<b>Candidates</b>	<b>Chairs</b>
<b>Charismatic</b>	81.3%	-
<b>Prominent in Business</b>	68.8%	65%
<b>Political Activist</b>	31.3%	65%
<b>Prominent in Church/Religious Activist</b>	31.3%	60%
<b>Able to finance election on own</b>	25%	35.5%
<b>Well educated</b>	25%	-
<b>Prominent in Education</b>	12.5%	30%
<b>Prominent in Law</b>	6.1%	20%
<b>Have held local office</b>	-	45%

The finding that it is important to be an activist, either for an interest group or for a political party, is supported by the quality candidate literature, as activists are one of the top four sectors that are recruited (Moncrief et al 2001, Lawless and Fox 2005). The chairs felt that this was a very important trait. The legislative candidates did not discount the importance of activism, although they did not rank the trait as high as party chairs. Total numbers of men and women engaged in political activism in Oklahoma is difficult to determine, as many political activists are either not paid for their work or they perform it as a part of their job.

### **The Role of Religion**

The role of religious activism has not been explored much in the quality candidate literature and poses some interesting questions. The evangelical nature of many of the prominent churches in Oklahoma and their more conservative position on women in roles outside of the home deter female candidacies, especially from the Republican Party. The socially conservative nature of a large section of the party embraces traditional roles for women, which precludes leadership positions outside the home. The Oklahoma electorate is very religious and that religious base is rooted in evangelical denominations. Oklahomans identify with an evangelical or fundamentalist religion much more than most of the Southern states, as about 44% report an affiliation with those churches, which is close to twice the national average of 23% (Gaddie and Shapard, 2010). Consistent with evangelical and fundamentalist religion, Oklahoma voters have supported a constitutional ban on same-sex marriages, limitations on alcohol sales, and high levels of support for abortion regulation. Those who identified with an evangelical religion support the elections of George W. Bush

and John McCain by close to 80%. Likely voters in Oklahoma also claim to attend religious services quite often.

Table 4.10: % of Likely Voters' Church Attendance by Party and Ideology

Church Attendance	Several times a week	Once a week	Monthly	Several times a year	Annually
<b>Party</b>					
Democrat	46.2%	51.1%	56.4%	53.8%	59.7%
Republican	49.7%	44.4%	34.9%	37.4%	33.3%
Independent	4.2%	4.6%	8.6%	8.8%	6.9%
<b>Ideology</b>					
Liberal	5.6%	8.7%	10.1%	15%	10.3%
Moderate	27.1%	39.6%	51.3%	51.4%	53.6%
Conservative	63.3%	48.6%	35.5%	29.3%	27.8%
Don't Know/Refused	4%	3.1%	3.1%	4.2%	8.3%

Source: Gaddie and Shapard, 2010 (Original Source: TVPoll.com, 9/1 – 11/1, 2008)

Given the correlation between religion and ideology in Oklahoma, the connections between religion and quality candidacy should not be surprising. Most of the legislators and candidates I interviewed brought the role of religion up at some point. One male Democratic candidate felt he had lost his race because he did not talk about his faith enough:

I got asked about it at door knocks, meetings. People wanted to know if I was a Christian, was going to promote Christian values. I would acknowledge that I was religious, but would steer the conversation back to what I thought was most important – the economy and jobs. That's all I wanted to talk about. My challenger – she mostly talked about her service to her church and a lot of things she did for the community through that.

A female Democratic member who has served several terms tied the new focus on religion to term limits:

Term limits had a bad effect on the Democratic members. We were the majority until then. We focused mostly on economic issues, some social stuff. This new wave that has come in – much more religious and conservative, even in the rural districts. They have brought a 'no-think' mentality into office and they truly believe you just push God, gays, and guns, people will show up and vote for you.

Evangelical voters are solidly Republican. As Gary Bauer, a former Republican strategist once remarked, "At this point, I don't even think of evangelicals or Christian conservatives being a segment of the Republican Party. They are the Republican Party" (Carrucci 2006). The "new evangelical movement" of the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century focused on traditional values and gender roles, an antidote to feminism, and the perceived threats to the traditional family structure, such as abortion and same-sex marriage. The new evangelical movement prescribed a specific role for women: submissive to her husband, dedicated to home, and shunning political and business life (Gallagher 2003).

The prescription in evangelical religions for women to stay out of politics has implications for women in the Oklahoma legislature. Republican women have as much success in running for state legislative office as Democratic women in Oklahoma. As Republican women are more likely to be a member of an evangelistic religion, potential candidates may receive messages not to run. Still, according to Marie Griffith (2010), there has been a "cooptation" of feminism for many of these evangelical Republican women. While feminism used to be synonymous for a liberal or radical agenda for women, many conservative women can now use the feminist label for meaning "a fiscally conservative, pro-life 'butt kicker' in public, a cooperative helpmate at home, and a Christian wife and mother" (Miller 2011). Sarah Palin and Michelle Bachmann are held as the ideal example of the new conservative feminist.



Their assertive calls to women to get involved in the political process is in direct opposition to former expectations of evangelical women, but has been successful. Griffith states that "now, I really see evangelicals taking hold of that view that women can speak out...they can make an impact on the world. Not only that, they should make an impact on the world." If these evangelical women are supportive of this newer view, it should spur more Republican women to run for office in Oklahoma.

Many of the Republican female candidates and legislators commented that they, or their recruiter, felt "lead" to enter the race. Representative Ann Coody recalls:

I felt that the Lord was calling me to run for office. I didn't know if I would win or not, but I knew He would take care of that. So I did run in 2002 for the House of Representatives and I lost, which was okay because I just left it up to the Lord to tell me what I should do. So I was perfectly happy to continue in retirement.

But after the end of those two years, I still felt as though as He were leading me to run. The interesting thing is that I ran as a democrat the first time around and lost. I'd been a democrat for 45 years. I'd always been a democrat. When my husband and I registered, we registered as democrats. We never thought of anything else. Our parents were democrats, our grandparents were, and, you know, everyone was a democrat. But during those years I realized that my beliefs—which didn't change—were not the same as certainly the national platform, of the democratic party. In fact, my children registered as republicans when they were old enough to register, and they always told me that I was a republican. I said, "No, I'm not a republican, I'm a democrat. I'm an educator and you can't be an educator as a republican." Well after I became a republican I found out that there were a lot of educators who were republicans. I just didn't know it because I thought everybody was a democrat. I felt that I should become a republican before I decided to run again. I knew that I had to make a change because I had realized in running before as a democrat that my philosophy was not that of what I felt was a change in the democrat party. So I became a republican. Then after that I decided to run for office again in my new role as a republican. So in 2004 I ran for office, and this time I was elected (Finchum 2009a).

Representative Lisa Billy recounts that her initial reluctance to run for office did not dissuade her recruitment from Helen Cole, based on religious convictions:

[Helen said] ‘Now before you answer me, I know that you tell me you’re a woman of faith so I would assume you’ll pray about the matter.’ So what do you say at that point? And I said, ‘Oh, yes, ma’am. I will pray.’ I hung the phone up and I thought, ‘Well, I don’t hear any booming thunder from the Lord to tell me to do this so I don’t think so,’ and I didn’t give it another thought. She called me three days later almost to the exact time and she said, ‘Lisa, Helen—what did the Lord tell you?’ and I said, “Miss Helen, I haven’t heard anything so I’m kind of thinking that’s a no.” She said, “I believe you’re wrong and I believe you are supposed to run for the House of Representatives’ (Finchum 2007b).

The above experiences suggest that religiosity is not dissuading female Republicans from running for office, but rather supplementing any political ambition. If more Republican women decide to embrace the “new conservative feminist” model, it may encourage more of them to run for office. The question remains as to whether they are receiving this message often through church services or partisan activities.

### **Conclusion**

Most Oklahoma political gatekeepers feel that female candidates are good candidates and show no overt bias against them. In general, female candidates feel supported by party chairs, as they did not perceive any overt bias and think that female candidates are just as encouraged as male candidates. Even when a formal endorsement process is lacking and parties allow for anyone to run under the party label, the implicit support for female candidates should be important for encouraging more women to run. These findings could hold promise for the future of gender representation in the Oklahoma legislature, as they are much more positive for female candidates than in previous studies of other states.

However, the lack of a formal strategy for gatekeepers to recruit for office also presents complications for the future of gender representation in Oklahoma. The key

question that remains is whether or not potential female candidates who have yet to run are attuned to the positive attitudes of gatekeepers. Previous research has found that female candidates do pick up on any hesitation in gatekeepers about their candidacy. The female candidates in my interviews and surveys might have felt as supported as men when they did choose to run, but, similar to Lawless and Fox (2005), they were more likely to report that they did not feel that gatekeepers reached out to them or offered aid. Plus, the detachment shown in the electoral process by the parties, especially during the primaries, could discourage potential candidates. For any male or female candidate, especially one who has never run for political office before, the prospect of having to run a campaign without party organization may be daunting. Also, while male party chairs and legislators are positive about female candidacies, this attitude could produce negative results for female candidacies, if they do not see that female candidates need more encouragement. Male chairs and legislators need to be the individuals recruiting female candidates, given that they outnumber the female chairs and legislators. Further research is needed to determine if males positioned to recruit understand that potential female candidates needed additional encouragement.

Further, the implication of allowing legislators or interest group leaders to do recruiting may keep more female candidates from being recruited, if the demand side explanations are viable in Oklahoma. The majority of legislators are male, so they might be more likely to look for male candidates. Conversely, female legislators do seem more likely to recruit female candidates, based on my interviews and those done for the WOTOL project. Female recruitment and recommendations are less likely, too,

when gatekeepers rely on business groups. More Republican chairs are more likely to use business organizations for recruitment and recommendations than Democrats.

Thus, if female candidates do not feel supported, this can suppress any ambition that is beginning to form for these candidates. While the detached attitude about recruitment and entry into office may first appear to be helpful to female candidates, as they do not have formal gatekeepers to contend with, it may actually negatively affect female political ambition.

## Chapter Five: The Political Ambition of Oklahoma Women

Rep. Barbara Staggs' lifelong ambition had been to be a teacher, as her favorite aunt had instilled a love of education in her. She became active in the Oklahoma Education Association during her teaching career and recalls that legislators were not always sympathetic to the needs of teachers.

Whenever we had meeting and visited with our legislators, I decided I didn't like the fact that we didn't have their attention. I've always been a responder to what I consider a negative threat...if you tell me I can't do something, I'm determined to prove to you that I can. I just felt like people thought the teachers would not be good legislators, and so I thought that what we need to do is send more teachers to the legislature then maybe we can get something better done with the teacher retirement system (Finchum 2007bb, p. 5)

Staggs filed to challenge the over 20-year incumbent representative from her district in the next election. She won the seat in primary run-off race. She served in that office until the term limits prohibited her from running again after her 2004 election.

Prior to the election, Rep. Staggs stated that she had no interest in politics. The locus of her motivation to run was the perceived threat to education, which is similar to the motivations of many of the female candidates to the Oklahoma state legislature. Male candidates, however, will state that they had long held political aspirations before they filed for candidacy for their first office. Why is there a distinct difference in the ambitions for political office for men and women? How does this affect Oklahoma legislative elections?

Most of the previous explanations of the lack of gender representation focused on structural limitations or voter bias. These explanations are lacking as explanations for the low numbers of female representatives in the Oklahoma legislature. In

Oklahoma, it does not appear that women face any consistent bias from voters or recruiters, as women do win approximately half of their races and women are able to raise as much funding for their races as a male candidate when they chose to run in Oklahoma. Recruiters state that they either do not target potential candidates based on gender or would actually prefer to have female candidates. However, the lack of a formal recruitment strategy by both parties may be detrimental to female candidacies. The need for formal recruitment for women is connected to another explanation for the lack of female representation.

It is likely that only certain women will be motivated to run by other female candidates. The women who do run on their own likely are politically ambitious and would have run regardless of recruitment efforts or the candidacies of other women. Yet, naturally politically ambitious women seem to be rare. Recent research has identified a lack of political ambition in women as a significant reason for the lack of female representation. The main question is whether the lack of political ambition is natural for women or whether it is a learned attitude.

## **Literature Review**

### **Sources of Ambition**

Jennifer Lawless and Richard Fox (2005) argue that the lack of political ambition in women is not innate, but rather learned through three different sources in society – the masculinized ethos of the political system, the gendered psyche, and the traditional sex roles of women. These three factors create doubt in women that they should express and follow through on any political ambition.

First, the masculinized ethos of the political system creates an atmosphere that women hesitate to enter. Men created the governmental systems. As such, entry into the system is subject to rules that appear to be friendlier to male candidates than female. The difficulties that women have encountered in the past, such as not being allowed to run for office or unwelcome in their attempts to run, have created an atmosphere that makes women hesitant to run. Lawless and Fox (2005) find that women are less likely to even consider running for office. On the occasions that they do run for office, women typically will choose to run for lower level offices (such as school board or city council) rather than jump into higher state or national races on the first attempt to run for office, while men are more likely to attempt a higher state or national seat in their first electoral competition (Dolan 2004; Sanbonmatsu, Carroll and Walsh 2009). While many of the structural barriers for women – incumbency advantages, voter bias, fundraising issues – have disappeared, women still perceive that they are not welcome in politics.

The gendered psyche that stems from the masculinized ethos of the political system creates a mindset where women cannot really feel comfortable to enter into the predominately male world of politics. The willingness to run and engage in a campaign requires a certain level of self-promotion. Citing numerous studies, Lawless and Fox (2005) discuss that men are taught to be confident, engaging, and promote their successes and strengths, women often get the opposite message, leading them to downplay accomplishments and feel that they should not be ambitious. The patriarchal system makes politics seem to be a valid choice for men, but “does not even appear on the radar screen for women” (Lawless and Fox 2005: 9). Women are

not taught to be confident or assertive, which are qualities needed for running for office.

However, when women do make the decision to run for office, strategic calculations are often in their benefit. Women do take into consideration the potential for winning the office and the benefits that office might convey when deciding whether or not to run for office, and when women calculate that they are highly likely to win the race, they are more likely to run than are men. The expected benefits of the office are also important, as women are more likely than men to perceive a positive benefit from holding an office. When the expected benefit is high, women are more likely to express an interest in the office (Fulton, Maestas, Maisel, and Stone 2006). Lawless and Fox (2005) find that women who are considering a run often take more than the calculation of winning the office into consideration. They argue that women will calculate family obligations into decisions to run much more often than men will when weighing a potential run.

### **Family Constraints**

The socialization aspects from a patriarchal society make it hard for women to conceive of themselves as politically viable, to the extent that “the broader dimensions of electoral politics in the United States perpetuate and reinforce women’s perceptions and reluctance” (Lawless and Fox 2005: 11). There are also more personal factors that reduce a woman’s nascent and prospective ambitions for running for office.

The traditional sex roles of women cause them to work more at home, even when they work outside of the home. The average woman typically spends more time on household and child-rearing chores, even if she works the same amount of hours



outside of the home as does her husband. The fact that women typically still take on more of the duties at home restricts women in many ways other than ambition. When women with families do run, they are often questioned about how they expect to manage their family as well as their legislative duties, giving rise to concerns that the woman may not be a good candidate because her attention is so divided. Male legislators are rarely asked these questions (Lawless and Fox 2005). This discrepancy suggests that voter bias might be subtler than an overt vote against women in the election.

Thus, being married, having children, and increasing age have a negative effect on women's political aspirations and decision to run for office (Bernstein 1986; Carroll 1994; Kirkpatrick 1976; Sapiro 1982). Women are more likely to put on hold any political aspirations once they marry, citing concerns that political service would require too much time away from home and have a negative impact on the children and marriage. This is especially true for women who would be serving in rural districts or running from districts located far from the seat of government, whether state or national. Hogan (2001) finds that female candidates who live closer to the capital are more likely to run for the state legislature, as it is difficult to make a daily commute to the capital from the outlying areas, especially when there are young children at home. Service from districts far from the capitol would force the legislator to stay in the capitol for extended periods of time. For male candidates, there appears to be less concern about being away from family and children for extended periods of time.

Since marriage and children constrain the amount of time a woman feels that she can give to political service, she will often wait until later in life to consider a political career. Women who enter a state legislative race typically are older than the average first-term legislator, as women are on average 50 years old when they first run for state legislative office (Sanbonmatsu, Carroll, and Walsh 2009). In Sanbonmatsu, Carroll, and Walsh's 2009 study, women candidates state that a primary consideration on deciding when to run is the age of their children and whether children are dependent upon their mothers. They find that of women in the 2008 state legislatures, only 14% of the women had children under the age of 18, and only 3% had children who were under 6. For men, the numbers double, as 22% of male legislators had children under the age of 18 and 8% had children under the age of 6. The family considerations weigh heavily on the decision to enter the race and the methods they used campaigns:

You would never find a woman with children on her campaign sign. Unfortunately, the assumption would be that she is too busy, [that] she would not be able to meet the demands professionally (Sanbonmatsu, Carroll, and Walsh 2009).

Delaying a run has a negative impact on women's progressive ambition, as increasing age makes a woman less likely to consider a higher office (Fox and Lawless 2005).

Younger women (and men) are seen as having more of the necessary energy for the long hours entailed in a campaign, such as fundraising, networking, and the countless meetings (Fowler and McClure 1989). Younger office holders may also simply have more progressive ambition, as suggested by a study of political convention delegates, where younger delegates were more likely to state they wanted to run for elective office one day (Gaddie 2004). Lawless and Fox (2013) recently found that young

women are not socialized from an early age to be either politically knowledgeable or ambitious. They found that girls are less likely to be encouraged to pursue politics as a career by their parents, be exposed to political information at school, and be encouraged to enter politics by anyone. Younger women in their chosen career paths are less likely to think they are qualified to run. Girls are less likely to play organized sports and care about winning, which Lawless and Fox (2013) connect to having a competitive spirit. Further, Lawless and Fox (2005) find that women are less likely to feel they will be successful in a legislative campaign, either due to voter bias or the demands of a campaign.

Overall, then, the messages that young women are receiving are that politics are not a viable career path for women and that path is not encouraged in women. It should be no surprise, then, that women are less likely to be self-motivated to run and do not run unless they are asked or encouraged by family, peers, interest groups, or party recruiters (Lawless and Fox 2005). Women who do enter the legislative races report feeling that they needed to work harder for every vote and campaign dollar they raise. When women have the concern that they are going to have to work harder, they are less likely to run (Lawless and Fox 2005). In the previous chapters, several of the female candidates noted that they felt they have to work harder to win.

Oklahoma voters and recruiters show no overt bias against female candidates. Political parties do not engage in a restrictive gatekeeping process that would keep women out of legislative races, but neither do they have a recruitment strategy that could help potential female candidates. It is possible that women in Oklahoma either

do not want to run, feel that women should not run, or feel that female candidates might face a difficult race, due to some sort of bias against women.

### **Research Questions**

In this research, I explore several factors that may constrain the political ambition of women. First, previous research in other states finds that women tend to put off running for office until they are retired and/or their children have left home. Younger women will run for office, but usually before they have children. When women with children at home do run for office, they run from districts that are close to the capitol so they can return home daily. The above research produces several research questions for Oklahoma. Do these above patterns hold in Oklahoma? First, are the family concerns present in female candidates in Oklahoma? Are female legislators and candidates, on average, retired and have grown children? Or younger without a family yet? Do women with children usually run from districts to the capitol?

Second, recruitment and encouragement are critical for female candidacies. Do female candidates in Oklahoma feel encouraged to run? The literature also suggests that women need to be asked to run before they will consider running, while men are more likely to run without being asked. Therefore, I expect to find that recruitment is vital to getting women to run. Do women in Oklahoma feel recruited? Do they feel that political leaders are supportive?

Third, the motivation to run is different for male and female legislators. In Oklahoma, are women just as likely as men to consider a run for office without

external motivation? Do women run to help with a policy concern or do they view political office as a career or to help further an existing career?

### **Summary of Methods**

This study used mixed methods and multiple sources of data to better understand political ambition and gendered political pathways in Oklahoma. Among these sources were 20 personal interviews of current and potential officeholders, 46 oral histories of Oklahoma women legislators that were coded and analyzed, and survey data from current legislators, local elected officials who might consider legislative service, and political elites involved in the recruitment of legislative candidates.

To study political ambition among the Oklahoma legislative candidates, I included several questions on the survey to legislative candidates regarding ambition and the motivation to run, including support from family. Candidates were asked about marital status, family structure, and the number of children under the age of 18 and under the age of 6 years of age that they currently have at home. I also analyzed survey responses from 200 local elected male and female officials regarding their political ambition and motivation to run conducted by Cindy Simon Rosenthal and Savannah Collins (2013) to examine the progressive ambition of female and male local officeholders in Oklahoma. Independent t-tests were used to uncover any statistically significant differences between male and female candidates and chairs.

I also asked in the legislator and candidate interviews several questions about their motivations to run, as well as perceptions of difficulty for men and women running for office. I asked the party chairs and the interest group recruiters I interviewed about any potential difficulty in getting women to consider their requests

to run for office. I also interviewed the founder of an organization that recruits women to run for the Oklahoma state legislature and other offices.

Finally, in addition to the regular interviews with legislators and candidates, I conducted interviews to better understand the decision process of potential candidates when considering a legislative run. The matched legislators and potential candidates were selected from a suburban and an urban district in Oklahoma (women are more likely to run from and have the most success running from urban and suburban districts than rural districts). I then interviewed a potential female candidate in the male legislator's district who has never run for office. During my interviews with party chairs and legislators, I asked if there was a potential female candidate they personally knew, who has not run for office at any level. Both of these women were mentioned by at least three of the interviewees. I then interviewed these two women as to why they have never run for elective office. Beyond that, I interviewed five other women (again mentioned by political leaders who are considered to be good potential candidates but have never run for office). This "matched pair" study and additional interviews help to supplement the survey and interview data on political ambition, as well as giving a richer understanding of motivations and ambition that cannot be determined through survey data alone.

To supplement the above interviews and determine whether or not there has been a change over time in political motivation, I again coded all of the 46 WOTOL interviews with the women who have previously served in the Oklahoma legislature, as they discussed their initial decision to run and what factors were considered in that decision.

## Findings

In the local elected official survey, few of the local female elected officials indicated that they are planning on pursuing higher office. Local officials are often considered to be quality candidates for higher state office, as the experience as a local official grants many benefits for any progressive political ambition. As such, it would be advantageous if many of these female officials wanted to run for higher state or national office later. These women would make excellent candidates for the state legislature, as they now have campaign and fundraising experience, as well as name recognition.

Table 5.1: Local Elected Officials Who Would Consider Running for Higher Office

Office	Men	Women
<b>State Legislator*</b>	66.20%	52.63%
<b>Other State Office+</b>	12.68%	31.58%
<b>Congress</b>	18.31%	15.79%
<b>No Interest*</b>	48.92%	63.46%

Source: Local Elected Official Survey, Rosenthal and Collins 2013  
Significance level: +p < .01, \* p < .05

Local female officials do not demonstrate the same level of progressive ambition of local male officials. Over 63% of the local female elected officials do not want to run for higher office. Just over half of the local elected male officials would like to run for higher office. The number of quality female candidates for state legislature is more limited. While it is encouraging to see that over half of the local female officials who would run for a higher office would consider running for state legislature later, the numbers for a significant increase simply are not there, as only 37% of the local female officials have that ambition.

### **Children, Commuting, and the Willingness to Serve**

The impact of children and running for office is apparent at both the local and state level. Of the 137 male local officials and 52 female officials in the poll who responded that they had children at the time of their candidacy, most of them had children when they first ran for office. Yet, female local officials were less likely to have children at home at the time of their first candidacy (and is statistically significant).

Table 5.2 Local Officials and Children at Home

	<b>Local Male (N=137)</b>	<b>Local Female (N = 52)</b>	<b>State Male</b>	<b>State Female</b>
<b>Children living at your home*</b>	51%	41%	45%	20%
<b>Children under age of 6 now</b>	23%	15%	30%*	0*
<b>Children under age of 18 now</b>	28%	26%	45%*	20%*

Source: Local Elected Official Survey, Rosenthal and Collins 2013

Significance level: \*  $p < .05$

The female state legislative candidates were also less likely to have young children at home at the time of the first candidacy (and is statistically significant). In my survey, legislators and candidates were asked if they have children at home. Forty five percent of the male legislative candidates have children under the age of 18 at home and 30% have children under the age of 6 at home. Only 20 percent of the female candidates who returned the survey had a child or children under the age of 18 at home. None of women returning surveys had children under the age of 6 at home (but several members of the legislature did remark that there are women with pre-school aged children in the legislature and I interviewed 2 female candidates with young children). Obviously, there are female legislators who have young children are running for office than local, which suggests that family concerns may have an impact



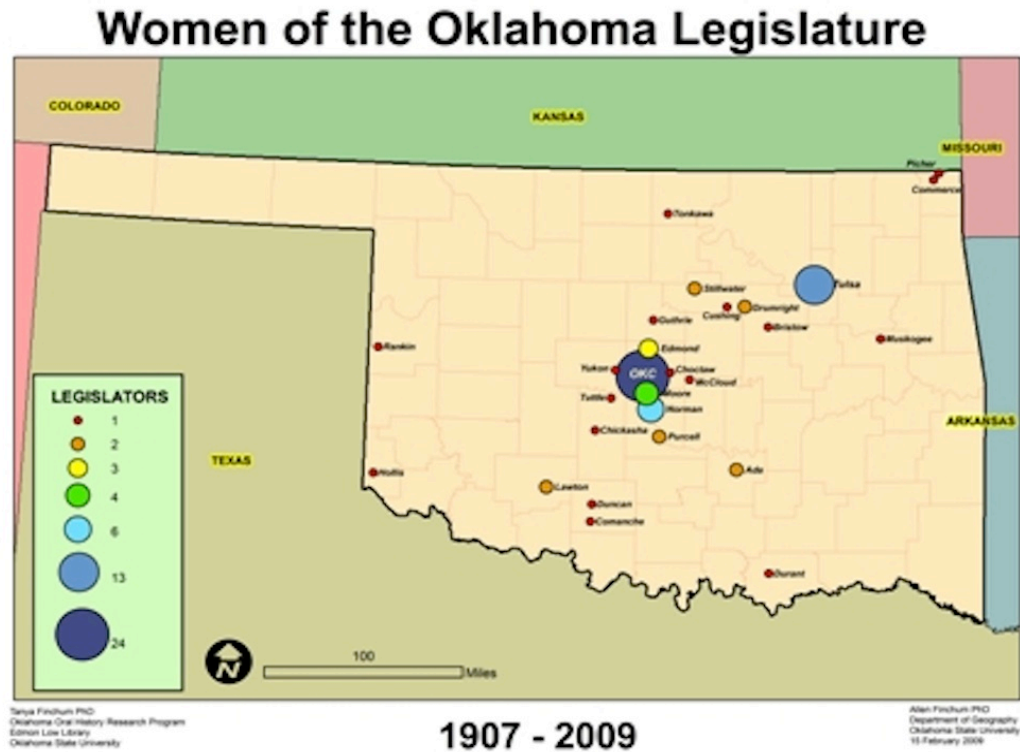
on progressive ambition. The majority of female legislative members have grown children and those children were adults at the time that their mothers ran for the Oklahoma legislature. A few of the younger members who have been recently elected do not have any children yet.

The concerns about family and children may factors not only in the overall decision of when to run, but from what area. The data above suggests that, for women, local service is more compatible if they have children at home. Female legislative candidates do have to consider whether they can commute daily or would need to spend time away from home during the legislative session.

In Oklahoma, female legislative candidates are much more likely to run from urban or suburban districts. In state legislative races where there was a female candidate, most of the districts were urban districts, which means that they would most likely be located in or commutable distance to Oklahoma City (where the capitol is located) or in or around Tulsa, which is an approximate 90-minute commute from the capitol. As shown in Figure 5.1, most of the women in the Oklahoma state legislature have been elected from districts that are close to the capitol or from the Tulsa area. I define “close to the capitol” as any district that would be roughly a 90-minute commute, so then most of the women who have served have been elected from a district that would allow her to return home at the end of the legislative day. The diameter of the circle on the map indicates the number of women who are serving or have served from that area (the larger the circle, the more female legislators from that area). Beyond the reasons discussed in Chapter 3 (female legislators are more easily elected from districts where there is a higher level of education, income, and

diversity), urban and suburban districts tend to be located in or around the capitol city or have interstates connecting them to the capitol. As female candidates discuss below, it is important for them to maintain the home connection while serving.

Figure 5. 1 Map of Districts Electing Women to State Legislature



The concern for female candidates that legislative service will take a toll on the family was apparent in both my interviews and those done earlier by the Women of the Oklahoma Legislature project. In interviews done for WOTOL, women who previously held office discussed how difficult it was to come to the decision to run and then stay in office. Many of the comments were similar in nature to this statement from Mary Fallin:

Probably the biggest obstacle I've had in public service is just the self-arguments that you have, if that makes any sense. It's your mind arguing with yourself about 'is this the right thing to do for your family?' And probably just the balancing between family and work. There's always tough decisions you have to make when you're in leadership for voting on a piece of legislation or maybe it's running a campaign. But the balancing act of making sure you're family is taken care of, that you're able to give them appropriate time. Although, it is a sacrifice. The time that they loan their mother or their father, whomever it might be, to public service is really a sacrifice of a family. But I don't ever want to do it, to serve at the detriment of my family (Finchum 2008d, p. 24).

Many of the current and former female legislators who had children stated that being able to be home at the beginning and end of the day was important. In an interview, Rep. Lisa Billy remarked that she makes the choice to commute, even though it is a long drive. "My husband and I have 3 children (over 6) and it's very important for me to make sure I have breakfast on the table. I want to make sure that my children are well fed and their clothes at least semi-match. When my husband's in charge, they don't always match, but he can at least get them seasonal" (Finchum 2007b, p. 15). For the most part, the women who do have younger children at home live close enough to the district to commute. Rep. Skye McNeil says she chose to commute, for the same reason: "I'm an hour and ten minutes away from my desk...the way they scheduled it this year, some days we don't start session until one. So I can get up there mid-morning, spend a little bit of time with my children that morning" (Finchum 2007v, p. 10).

Some of the women who are serving said that they would not have run if they did not live in a district that was close by or would face a long commute. A female Republican house member stated that "I couldn't have done this if I did not live in Oklahoma City. I can't be away. I just can't imagine what I would miss." Likewise, a female Democratic house member who serves from a close district said, "I may have

waited to run if the capitol was in Tulsa or we lived further away. I may get home [during the session] after they go to bed, but at least I can kiss them goodnight. And I'm there when they get up." A male Republican house member acknowledged that family obligations are one of the barriers to getting women to run: "Women just view that role differently. They think they need to be home while they have kids at home. So we get women who have retired from their careers, then want to move on to the legislature." Many women, like Senator Susan Paddock, stated that they waited until their children were grown before running, as they felt that the family needs came before legislative service.

Honestly, I never would have done this when my children were little. It's pretty much a 7 day a week job...and to really give what I think you need to be giving to the people of your district, it takes total commitment and it takes just about every minute of your time (Finchum 2007x, p. 7).

Over time, this dilemma of family needs and the demands of public service has not completely changed for women. A female Democratic senate member stated that "Here [in Oklahoma] people still think that women have to be a bitch in order to run. Not honoring commitments. The husbands get insecure. They want their home-cooked meals. But it's women that make all of the sacrifices though." When I asked her to elaborate more on what she meant by "sacrifices" she went on to say "It's time women got a seat at the table. We're the ones who run the campaigns. But then we don't get asked to run. We have to take the back seat. We shouldn't have to run the campaigns and then be waiting at home with the kids." One male Republican representative stated "Oklahoma has a reputation that women stay home and men run the business. Women tend to retire from careers, then move to legislator. You saw how Governor Fallin caught grief in all of her runs, even for Governor to an extent.

She was questioned at lot about being able to juggle family and duties. ” In her WOTOL interview, the Governor (then Congresswoman) remarked that in her first run for the state legislature in 1990, the party actually recruited someone to run against her because she was pregnant at the time of the race (Finchum 2007d).

As late as 2004, a female Democratic senatorial candidate said that she got “the ‘woman thing’ Voters told me ‘I really can’t vote for you as a woman, you should be home’ but you just show them how hardworking you are, your ethics and commitments. ” Still, many see any lingering concerns about women’s ability to have both a family and a legislative career as being in a state of change. The director of the recruitment group stated that they see the women they support for running for the state legislature getting the question about family commitments “once or twice in the entire campaign. It’s not as much of an issue anymore.” Again, most candidates and legislators who perceived any bias against women saw it in the older generation. “Older women are the worst about electing other women. They have been programmed to think to stay in the background. It is to be a helpmate. But the middle-aged, young women don’t think that way.” A male Democratic house member agreed “The older generation is getting better about considering the female, but still, they need to rise above and beyond it for it to get better for women.” A male Republican house member felt that women do take family status into consideration more, but that perhaps female candidates should not be as concerned.

Women view motherhood differently and it does impact [the decision to run]. We have women in the legislature that have young kids and they are serving just fine. One of my colleagues is pregnant right now and it doesn't bother anyone. They are just as able to do the job. But they don't miss their kids anymore than I do.

These comments suggest that women are overcoming previous biases from an older generation. A few members commented that as soon as the younger citizens of Oklahoma become habitual voters that gender and familial status would become a non-issue for nearly all voters and recruiters. The head of the recruitment group for female candidates stated that, “It’s changing. We have women with younger kids running now. We have 2 openly gay members in the legislature now. These are not the issues that they once were.”

Women calculate the demands of family and legislative service into the decision to run, even today. As Lawless and Fox (2005) suggest, this negatively impacts a woman’s ability to rise in political leadership in the legislature. Most leadership positions in legislatures require seniority, which is difficult to achieve when starting a political career later. Term limits can help to further women’s advancement into legislative leadership positions, as the incumbency advantage in chair and other leadership assignments is removed. The waiting game may also make the transition to a more prominent office, such as Governor or the national legislature. Very few of the women in the WOTOL interviews went on to higher political office after serving in the legislature (most of those women were over 50 at the time that they first ran for office). Three of the women ran for Governor (Laura Boyd, Jari Askins, and Mary Fallin, who also served in Congress). A few went into executive branch positions, both in the state and at the national level. In my interviews, none of the women claimed to have a desire to run for higher political office after their terms are over. One female Democratic house member stated that “people tell me that after all my

terms, I'll be in a perfect position to run for Governor or House [national]. But I'm not sure I want to do that. I do want a family one day. We'll see.”

Hence, female candidates in Oklahoma often put the family considerations first when deciding to run. Family based obligations do not constitute the only constraint on their political ambition. Some of the reasons given in the literature as to why women may lack ambition in entering politics are perception based. In the previous section, the quote from the female Democratic senator contained an interesting phrase choice: “women don't *get asked to run*.” Most of the current and potential female candidates are often not self-starters. They discussed extensively that they were encouraged or recruited to run. Second, the female candidates in Oklahoma often perceive that party leadership that they may have a more difficult time getting elected.

#### **Who Discourages and Encourages Male and Female Candidates to Run?**

While female candidates cite the concern for family in deciding whether or not to run, the role of the family as an external motivation to run is interesting. In the local elected official survey, the male and female local officials were asked if they received any discouragement from running for their office in their first race. In the survey of local officials, they were asked if they had any discouragement when they first ran for office. Of the 190 respondents to the survey question, 60 reported discouragement from someone. When they did face discouragement, they were most discouraged by friends, coworkers, or acquaintances from running (they had the option to choose more than one source of discouragement). The role of the family in the decision to run is evident. For female local officials, they received more opposition from family or spouses than did the male local officials. Men receive a considerable

amount of opposition from elected officials, while the female local officials cited very little discouragement from local officials (the only source that there was a statistically significant difference between male and female officials).

Both local male and female local officials received minimal discouragement from party officials, but 34% of the male local elected officials felt that elected officials discouraged them from running. Only six percent of the female candidates thought either party or elected officials discouraged them from running. Party officials encouraged local female officials more than male officials, as 23% of local female officials stated they were encouraged to run, as opposed to 13.9% for male officials.

Table 5.3: Sources of Discouragement for Local Office Candidacy

Source:	Men	Women
Party official	14%	6%
Elected official*	34%	6%
Spouse	23%	25%
Family Member	27%	38%
Friend or Coworker	45%	50%
Member - Women's Org	5%	0%
Member - Men's Org	5%	6%
Member - Other Org	14%	13%
Other	9%	6%

Source: Survey of Local Offices (Rosenthal and Collins)

Significance level: \*  $p < .05$

In my candidate survey, I asked questions generally in the opposite direction, as I asked about encouragement of candidacies. I did ask the legislative candidates how often party leaders discouraged any candidate from entering a legislative race (irrespective of gender). Thirty percent of the female candidates felt that the parties never discourage potential candidates. Just five percent of female state legislative candidates and legislators agreed that “sometimes” party leaders would discourage



women from running. Slightly more male candidates (10%) agreed with the statement. No female or male legislative candidate agreed with the statement that discouragement happens often.

In the state legislative candidate survey, I ask if anyone had encouraged the candidate to run or if the decision to run was entirely his or her idea (again, they could choose more than one source of encouragement). The responses from male and female candidates demonstrated that women are less likely to be self-motivated to run, needing more of an external stimulus to run. None of the women stated that it was entirely their idea to run for the legislature, but they received most of their encouragement from family and friends, whereas that was the source of opposition for local female officials.

Table 5.4: Sources of Encouragement for State Legislative Candidates

Source	Men	Women
Friends and Family*	36%	60%
An Organization	0	0
Party officials/leaders	11%	0
Local Elected Officials*	0	20%
Thought about/other encouraged	18%	20%
Entirely my idea*	35%	0

Significance level: \* p < .05

None of the female candidates in the state legislative survey reported that it was entirely their idea to run, while 35% of the male candidates decided on their own that they would run for a legislative seat. While 36% of the male candidates did not consider a run until family or friends suggested it, 60% of the female candidates needed that encouragement before they decided to run. Again, the influence and support of family appears to be critical to the decision to run for female candidates.

Male candidates are much more likely to be self-starters, while female candidates need the support of family before running.

In Oklahoma, women appear less likely than men to be self-starting candidates. If women are not expressing any political ambition, it is possibly more difficult for any one to give them the initial encouragement that they need. The head of the recruiting group stated that when they suggest to qualified women that they run, the initial reaction is one of shock. "I wish that we could have cameras on them when we ask. Sometimes the looks we get are priceless. A lot of times, no one has mentioned it to them." She draws her lists of possible candidates from political leaders who know them. If her suggestion that these women should consider running induces surprise, then it implies these women are not receiving much encouragement prior to the recruitment from her group, even from the political leaders who are suggesting them.

#### **Candidate Perceptions of Party Leader Encouragement**

Beyond family, a key source of encouragement for candidacies is party and elected officials. The assertion in the previous chapter from the party officials that they do not try to discourage anyone from running for office nor do they encourage/recruit is mostly supported by the survey results of officials and candidates.

Of the state legislative candidates, most male and female candidates felt supported by party leadership. When asked if they felt if their potential candidacy was encouraged from any of the following party leaders, male candidates were more likely to say that they felt encouraged by local party officials, while state legislative female

candidates were more likely to say that they were more encouraged by state party leaders.

Table 5.5: Perceptions of Encouragement in State Legislative Elections

	Men	Women
<b>Received encouragement from local party leaders*</b>	45%	27%
<b>Received encouragement from state party leaders*</b>	22%	40%
<b>Male and female candidates are equally encouraged*</b>	60%	80%
<b>Male candidates are more encouraged</b>	30%	20%
<b>Female candidates are more encouraged*</b>	18%	0%

Significance level: \*  $p < .05$

While the majority of the male and female state legislative candidates felt that men and women were receptors of encouragement overall, the difference between male and female candidates is statistically significant. But, female candidates are more likely to feel that male and female candidates are encouraged equally, which bodes well for female candidacies. Female candidates in Oklahoma do not feel the discouragement for their candidacy that female candidates have reported in previous studies. Sixty percent of the male candidates stated that they thought that the parties encouraged men and women equally as candidates. A few candidates (18%) thought female candidates were more encouraged by the parties and 20% of the female candidates thought that male candidates were more encouraged by the parties.

Thus, potential female candidates in Oklahoma do not perceive that they are receiving any message that they would not make viable candidates. Some statements from recruiters seem to suggest that the Republican Party is not encouraging or recruiting women to run. The head of the group that recruits women to run in

Oklahoma stated that she has tried to meet with various Republican Party officials to develop strategies to get more women to run and that the party has not been receptive to the idea. Yet, the Republican Party chairs and legislators I spoke with indicated support and encouragement for female candidates.

The fact that a lot of the candidates felt that they were urged or supported by gatekeepers is encouraging. As discussed above, other research has found that female candidates tend to think they will not be encouraged or supported in their candidacies. This belief is inhibiting for women to actually consider running. Women seem to believe that the parties will support them in their elections in Oklahoma, which may encourage future runs.

### **Perceived Disadvantages**

While most candidates felt that leadership treated them equally, 60% of the female candidates still felt that male candidates have some advantages in the elections. Most of the female candidates felt they had to work harder than men to raise the same amount of money and get the same amount of votes, a finding that is consistent with female candidates in other states' legislative races (Burrell 1994; Fox 2006). Only 20% of the female candidates in the survey thought that female candidates might have an advantage in the elections. While 45% of the male candidates said that neither men nor women had an advantage in elections, 35% of the male candidates stated that women had an advantage in elections.

In the interviews, female candidates thought the advantage for males in elections was in the electorate. Like many of the women in the studies performed by Sanbonmatsu and Lawless and Fox, the female Oklahoma candidates felt that there

would be a voter bias in their district by the voters. While female candidates might get vote shares comparable to the male candidates in Oklahoma, 80% of the female candidates, in my interviews and the WOTOL interviews, remarked at some point that they had to work harder to get their votes. “I went to every door in the district four times. The men running against me went once. I held four times as many fundraisers as they did, I think.” As Lawless and Fox suggest, any feeling that potential female candidates have that the election will be difficult discourages those candidates from actually entering the race. The head of the group that recruits female candidates stated that female candidates tell her that they think it is difficult for women to run, because they see so few women in the legislature. “You can’t be what you don’t see. They look and they see no women on the floor. So, there’s a lot of handholding at first. We get them together with other candidates and let them hear the success stories.”

Lawless and Fox (2005) suggest that the perception of a difficult or unwinnable election will cause women to not consider running. Women often believe that they will have difficulty winning, raising funds, or the tenor of the campaign will be too negative. Women often believe that advantages in elections go to men, even though there is a large body of evidence to suggest that this advantage is rarely present.

Potential female candidates in Oklahoma do seem to have some concern about voters supporting them. Support is critical to women’s decision to run. Women who are actively supported or recruited are more likely to run (Lawless and Fox 2005).

### **Female Candidates and “Going Negative”**

In the interviews, the most stated perception of a gender advantage for women was in the tenor of the campaign. As noted by a couple of the male candidates in

Chapter 2, the male candidates perceive that women often have an easier time on the campaign trail, often as people are more willing to open doors to female candidates on house visits. The majority of candidates, both in the WOTOL interviews and mine, discussed the overarching importance of going door to door in the district to meet people in the district. They all believe that is the most important aspect of the race. As Lisa Billy mentioned in her WOTOL interviews, “Helen [Cole, a former legislator] told me that if you don’t wear out at least one good pair of tennis shoes out door knocking, you didn’t do nearly enough of it” (Finchum 2007b, p. 10).

Fifty percent of the male legislators in my interviews further discussed their perception of a gender advantage for females, stating that in races where a female candidate is present, they cannot “go negative” as much. One male Democratic house candidate echoed the sentiments of a lot of the male candidates when he stated “with a woman in your race, you have to keep it cleaner. There’s a backlash in general in negative stuff. It does work, but it brings the polls down on both sides. But when men attack women in the campaign, it can really come back on you.” Several of the women thought that their male opponents “took it easy” on them in the campaigns. “There were three male opponents in my primary, two of them were really legitimate contenders. They were not too hard on me. And they had some stuff that they could have used to attack me.” As a result, once a female candidate has entered the legislative race in Oklahoma, men feel that they need to change their campaign strategy, as attacking women in their race can negatively impact the ability to win. The female candidates thought this was an advantage for the entire system, not just their particular races.

Women tend to run less negative campaigns. Fallin and Askins had stuff that they could attack each other with, for the most part they didn't. When men run against women, they have to pull punches, too. It's better that we have cleaner campaigns. It shows that we can run cleaner campaigns. That's good for Oklahoma.

### **What Motivates Men and Women to Run in Oklahoma?**

Turning to the interviews where candidates can discuss their motivations to run in more detail, the need for an external stimulus to motivate women to run is still apparent. In the WOTOL interviews, 90% of the women interviewed stated that they did not think about running until another person (often the outgoing state legislator) asked them to consider a run.

Male candidates often state that they usually were politically active early in life and interested in politics (Lawless and Fox 2005, 2013). Many male candidates discuss early political ambition and are often self-motivated to run. Female candidates normally have to be asked to run for offices. When female candidates do decide to enter a political race (at least their first office), they usually do so because they are motivated by a particular policy concern (Lawless and Fox 2005; 2013). All of the men (100%) I interviewed told me that they had been interested in politics most of their adult life and they were self-motivated to run. Eighty-five percent of the male candidates I interviewed said that they had been involved in a college group, such as the inter-collegiate legislature, Young Democrats, or College Republicans, which is consistent with Lawless and Fox's 2013 findings, as men are more involved in politics at an earlier age. One of the Democratic male house members had gotten into political life at the Oklahoma capitol during college through paging and internships and went to work at the capitol as soon as he graduated. "I guess I always had been interested in

politics. Where I grew up, that's where all the stuff with the council ban on dancing, that inspired 'Footloose,' took place. So I saw early how important politics can be. I went to work after college in the mailroom at the capitol, just to get my foot in the door."

Another Democratic male senate member stated that he had worked in politics during college and law school through internships and then worked in Washington for a while. A missed opportunity made him realize he wanted to run for office.

It wasn't until [a previous office holder] suddenly said that he wasn't going to run again that I realized I wanted to run. For that seat, it was too late, so I decided to get my act together so I could run the next time an opportunity came up. I became more politically active, worked on the campaigns for the guys running for [US House, US Senate] so I could see what it was like to be on the campaign trail. For 2 years, I made it a point to never eat breakfast or lunch alone...just made as many contacts as I could. "

Further, most of the male candidates I interviewed viewed service in the state legislature as a natural extension or complement to their occupation. "I figured if I am going to practice law, that I should take a look at both sides of the table. I decided to run after about 10 years in practice. " Others saw a business advantage. A male Republican senate member said that his business contacts suggested he run so he could be an advocate for the industry. "Plus, once I was done in the legislature, I could go back with more knowledge, more contacts. It seemed like a good fit. "

In the two matched pair cases, both of the male legislators demonstrated a remarkable amount of political ambition from youth. As with the other male legislators I interviewed, both of the legislators in these interviews stated that they had always been interested in politics, to the point that they were active in high school. The Democratic house member worked as a legislative page for a member of the



Oklahoma legislature in high school and the Republican senate member was active in the student council, serving as its president in his senior year, as well as working on campaigns for local and state candidates through high school.

I think that was when I decided I wanted to run for office myself, when I was working on the mayor's campaign. She [the mayoral candidate] told me she thought I would do well in politics, that people responded well to me. I had a good time meeting people, listening to what they were concerned about.

Both recall being active in politics during college as well, often helping on campaigns (and one was also a member of the Oklahoma College Legislature). The Democratic house member decided to run for legislative office shortly after finishing law school and returning to his hometown.

I knew I wanted to run at some point. I certainly had time. We had had our first child and I thought I should be around more. But there was just a good opportunity. My district usually elected Republicans, but he wasn't running again and I just thought that now was the time. I could see the way the legislature was trending. I thought if I waited another 10 years I would not be able to get elected. So, I just decided to run.

So, both of the male legislators in the paired study, as well as many of the male legislative candidates I interviewed, had been politically interested and active early in life and were self-motivated to run. Another important distinction that emerges is how the male candidates had a plan to run in place, usually well before the election in which they planned to enter.

Yet, most of the women of the Oklahoma legislature were motivated to run for office neither as a career extension nor a life-long love of politics or any interest in politics as a career. When women in Oklahoma choose to run for the legislature, the motivation to do so usually stems from a policy area of concern. In the WOTOL interviews, many of the female legislators acknowledged encouragement to run but

ultimately, the reason most of them agreed to run is because they saw it as an opportunity to change or protect a specific policy, not as a decision to implement an overarching political agenda or get ahead in law or business. Seventy percent of the women made statements that they were concerned about a specific policy concern.

The majority of these policy concerns stemmed from education. Jan Collins (R - House) remarked that she was a member of the Parent Teacher Association and they were interested in a certain legislative action. “As a result, I went down to volunteer to help in a campaign and somehow ended up being the candidate. It was not my intent to do that but lacking a candidate in that area the Republican Party just sort of said ‘here, sign this and you’ll be the candidate’” (Finchum 2007f, p. 6). Education policy also drew Bernice Shedrick run for office. She was helping to implement an open classroom curriculum and the superintendent encouraged her to contact legislators. “I became a little upset...in the way that the state mandated us to use only one textbook in a classroom of 30 – 40 students.” She was asked to provide testimony and at that meeting, “I thought, ‘I believe that I could do this. I believe that I could do this very well’.” Shedrick ran for office in the next legislative session (Finchum 2007aa, p. 6). The policy motivations were there for the majority of the previous female legislators, as they ran due to business, education, and reproductive policy concerns. Several of the women who ran in the 1980’s were motivated to do so by the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment.

In my interviews, the majority of women had similar motivations to run. Some of the policy concerns were specific. One female Democratic senator stated that she ran without being encouraged to do so by anyone, because she was concerned over

health policy. “I was working for a state association and I had a lot of concerns over health and medical issues. Term limits opened up a seat and I just went for it. We really need to empower women to think that they can do that.” This motivation to change policy from “within” was a common theme. One female Democratic senator remarked that she had been a political activist for a while but then felt like she needed to “be in on the decision making. You can’t stand on the outside and throw rocks.”

The younger members of the legislature were not as motivated by a specific policy concern that they had encountered in their occupation, but still felt that they needed to be present in the legislature for general representation of their generation.

I got involved in politics at a young age. Worked through a non-profit. I wasn’t planning on running, especially this early in life. Maybe later. But my representative was going to run for national office. My dad said someone needs to run who could represent my generation. I thought about that for a couple of months. Then I decided that if Oklahoma is going to be a place that I want to live in for the rest of my life, then I need to do it now. I need to stand up now.

Another Democratic female house member stated that she had grown up with political activism and city council service in her family and thought she would run someday. Again, the fact that the legislative seat would be open (through retirement) made her consider she should run early. “I was involved in a lot of community service and just saw so many services being cut. It was an a-ha moment that I needed to help.” These two younger female members were politically active at a young age and are obviously more politically ambitious than most of the current women serving in the Oklahoma legislature. These traits hopefully signal a generational change in thinking. Lawless and Fox (2013) posit that as younger women are exposed more to political information, competitive sports, and changing attitudes about competition for women,

they will be more likely to choose to run on their own. A male Democratic senator remarked that he sees that shift.

The more women who get into sports and the more women who go to law school - that will make more women willing to run. The one thing that sports and law have in common with politics is that it teaches you to take the setbacks. You can't get too high on the highs or too low on the lows. You just have to keep going.

For local female officials, the motivation to run was similar to the state legislative candidates. When asked why they ran for office, the majority of the female officials reported they ran because they cared passionately about an issue (86.5%), which was a statistically significant difference from the local male officials, although the male officials still reported being motivated by an issue (63.3%). Female local officials did not feel quite as confident that they could win as male local officials in their first race (55.8% and 63.4% respectively), but the female local officials felt as capable as the other candidates, more so than the male officials (94.3% to 81.3% respectively).

The lack of political knowledge and experiences do appear to affect the political ambition of the two women I interviewed from the male legislator's districts. Like most of the women in both the WOTOL and my interviews, both of the women who have never run were never interested in politics in high school or college (although both did play sports, a trait that Lawless and Fox finds key to women's political ambition later. Neither of the male legislators were active in a sporting team in high school or college). It was in college for the female suburban activist that she became active in community events.

Our sorority was always doing a community project of some sort – food drives, clothing drives, that sort of thing. That's what I enjoyed most about college, was getting out there and helping on those things. I wanted to continue to do that after college. My church had a lot of engagement in the community, doing

similar events that we did in college. Meeting people through those events got me hooked into a couple of larger organizations. Of course, being at a university as my employment now gives me opportunities to volunteer, too.

While she does a lot of community engagement work today, she has never considered running for office, although she has volunteered to work on the campaigns of political candidates. The urban professional female stated that she also had little political engagement in high school or college.

For me, it wasn't until I got out of law school and into my job that I had any brush with politics, really. Wasn't interested until then. I was academically driven. I had to make good grades for law school in college, so I didn't do much. Law school takes a lot of time. But in my job later we would be asked by politicians for information about oil and gas regulations, how they were impacting us. It was funny. Until then, I never thought about the political process that way. In school, I thought I would just be using the laws that were passed by the legislature. I didn't know there would be some collaboration. So I do feel like I work in politics to an extent.

When asked if they had considered running for office on their own, both women said no. They both did acknowledge that others had suggested that they run. When asked why they do not want to run, both cited family as the main concern. The suburban activist said that her children were too young for her to be away from home during the week. "Right now, my girls need me. Don't get me wrong - my husband is a wonderful parent. But at their ages (8 and 10), they need a female presence. They don't need me gone." She went on to say that her husband would be very supportive if she did decide to run, even now. "He gets it. He knows how much I need my volunteer projects, that I am trying to make things better. That's important to me. If I did run, he would be my best campaigner."

The urban professional woman has both of her children (one male and one female) in college, so the "kids at home" issue is not as relevant for her, although both

children do attend universities in Oklahoma and are often home. Her reasoning for not wanting to run still had a home component.

We can't take the loss of my salary right now. Both of the kids are in school and that tuition is a chunk. We still have a mortgage. I know there are people in the legislature, especially lawyers, who still have their practices and serve, but since I'm not private, I'm not sure I could do it. I think my employer would have an issue with me being gone all day for several months out of the year.

The head of the recruitment group commented that the salary issue is a reason women often do not run these days. "The only person that said no to my request to run in this next election, it was the salary. She said she just couldn't give up the salary.

Otherwise, she would. With most of them, they are either retired or their husband is the main wage earner." Right now, she said that one of the women recruited to run for the next session is an attorney, who is in private practice, "so she can scale back and still serve."

While the home issues prevent these women from wanting to run at this point in time, I asked if there was anything that would persuade them to run. For both, it was a policy motivation. For the suburban activist, some of the recent birth control and personhood bills that have been introduced have been troubling.

If one ever really got through, then I might consider running. I keep thinking it's ridiculous that these bills still come up. It's like we got stuck in some sort of time warp. I'm glad the negative press keeps it [bill passage] from happening. If it keeps up, I might want to run. I should do something to keep my daughter's options open. But I hope that never comes about.

The urban professional woman also had a policy concern that would drive her into considering a run for the legislature.

Just because I work in oil and gas doesn't mean I think the industry is right about everything. I have some concerns about some of the environmental damage we're doing with gas right now. I'm kind of the odd man out. The mantra used to be 'drill, baby, drill,' but now it's focused on the fracking. Right

now, there are people both in my industry and in the legislature that think that regulations are not a bad thing there. I feel like I'm listened to. If that changes, I might leave the industry, maybe go to work for a group that counters that. So, yes, maybe I'd think about running then. Right now, I think I make a difference where I'm at.

Evident in both of those comments is a hesitancy to consider running. Both of the women hope that the policy concerns will never come to fruition or that someone else will always be the champion for those areas.

Both of the male legislator's wives occupations are ones that are considered pipelines to legislative service (medical and education) and there is a precedent in Oklahoma for women running for seats that were previously held by their husbands. I asked the legislators if their wives would consider running for their seat when term limits took them out of office. They both said no, but not because they thought they would not make good candidates or were not supportive of the idea. The Democratic house member felt that his wife thought her policy concerns were taken care of for now and she was focused on their children. If there would be interest in running, it would not be in the near future.

She has to keep up with everything at home when we're in session. And she sees how much the boys miss me when I am gone. I don't think she would want to put them through that. If she did run, she would wait until they're in high school at least, probably college.

He did go on to say that she does have policy issues that she is concerned about.

Right now, he can address those policy concerns, since he is in the legislature.

Being in [a medical field], she sees first hand how important getting early treatments are. I've worked a lot on the SCHIP expansion (Oklahoma's state medical insurance coverage for minors). She wanted that done and she's seen first hand the benefits of that expansion. She knows it has its opponents, though. If it fell apart later, I could see that she might run, at least work for someone who supports it.

The Republican male senator ruled his wife's candidacy out immediately, but not due to the fact that his wife would not make a good candidate or has no policy concerns.

He felt his wife would be too concerned about the tone of the campaign.

You know, I think she'd be great in the legislature. Probably better than me – she listens better (Laughs). But my first election was tough. It was an open seat and several people filed. We ended up having a run-off and the ads from the other side got really nasty. They sent some people to this open forum we were having one night. They heckled, said a lot of mean things. She and our kids were there. Seeing how mean politics can be. She left [the event] early and later told me that she wouldn't go to those events again. And she still doesn't, even now. The person who ran against me in my second election, we were friends before the race. That's over. No, she doesn't like campaigning. I don't think she would ever run.

The above discussion connects to the head of the recruiting group's statements of women's concerns about the tone of campaigns. The concern in some of these women of how to manage difficult campaigns may keep them from running. While women who do end up running feel male candidates run cleaner campaigns when they have a female opponent, the perception of dirty campaigning might also be undermining women's political ambition.

### **Conclusion**

The political ambition argument best explains the lower levels of representation in Oklahoma. Female candidates demonstrate most of the traits that Lawless and Fox (2006) found in their study: women enter fewer races in general, they need more encouragement from family and party leaders to run and often need a policy motivation; women wait until children are older or grown to run; are less likely to express progressive ambition; and they do voice concerns over financing issues. The



implications from a lack of political ambition are more intractable, as involves overcoming a particular mindset, rather than making a change in election structures.

Both of the parties and interested organizations need a strong recruitment strategy that resembles the work of Emily's List or the nascent Maggie's List (a group that recruits Republican women) to encourage more women to run. Not only would active recruitment strategies aid in getting more women to run in Oklahoma, they might be able to help female candidates develop longer-term campaign strategies. One of the most interesting themes to emerge in my interviews and the interviews involves all of the four previous points. Since female candidates often delay service, are motivated to run on policy issues, have concerns about viability, and are often recruited to run by outgoing members, female candidates often enter the races without a formal plan of action for winning the office. Many female legislators told stories about having only an hour to decide to enter the race, being pushed to run at the last minute, or "sign here and you will be the candidate." Carolyn Coleman's decision was similar to many of the female candidates:

People said, "Well, why don't you run? It's time for a woman to run for that seat." And I had no idea what I was doing. I'm honest. I had no idea what I was doing. I just knew that I didn't agree with him (the incumbent) on some of the things he'd voted for, and I thought, "Well, shoot. I can do this." And so we ran. I ran on a very meager campaign, and I won 63 to 36 or something like that (Finchum 2007e, p. 6).

The male candidates planned their runs, often two years in advance. They had made political connections before their campaigns. The fact that female candidates are able to win at the similar rates as male candidates, despite often entering races at the "last minute" and lacking a developed strategy, demonstrates the strong abilities of female candidates for women to win races in Oklahoma. If parties and organizations in

Oklahoma had an active recruitment and strategy for female candidates, then the number of female candidates will likely increase, as many of the recruited women were receptive to the idea. If the number of women who want to run can be increased, the rest of the data and statements suggest that women should be able to win a respectable share of the legislative seats. As a female Democratic senate member remarked, “Women just have so many other things going on, so they don’t think about running. But the emphasis should be on getting more women to run. We should drag them, kicking and screaming if need be.”

An active recruitment strategy for female candidates is needed. The emergence of a well-funded group that recruits female candidates is a needed addition. Since party leadership endorsement is so critical to female candidates’ decision to run, both of the parties need an active recruitment strategy.

## **Chapter Six: The Future of Female Representation in Oklahoma**

In 2012, Senator Brian Crain, a Republican from a Tulsa senate district, introduced Senate Bill 1433, which stated that life begins at conception and allowed the state government to move to protect fetal life. The introduction of the bill produced a strong reaction from several of the female legislators. Democratic senator Constance Johnson introduced a handwritten amendment to the bill that stated a man who deposits semen “anywhere but in a woman’s vagina shall be interpreted and construed as an action against an unborn child.” Later, a male Republican representative, Ralph Shortey, argued that the amendment allowed “the government to tell men what they can do with their bodies.” Later, the Democratic female members joined other women in a protest of the bill outside the state capitol. The bill failed, but was reintroduced, unsuccessfully, in the 2013 legislative session. One of the female representatives I interviewed stated that the bill “showed why we need more women in the legislature. If there were more of us, they never would have introduced that legislation.”

The necessity of more female representation is obvious. It is apparent that the lack of descriptive representation in state legislatures is impacting policies that have a more direct affect on women. Indeed, the introduction of policies that are not friendly to women have seemingly become more frequent in many state legislatures, especially in conservative states.

## Summary

### **Rationale for the Study and Methods**

This dissertation sought to explain the reasons for the underrepresentation of women in the Oklahoma state legislature. Women are underrepresented in all of state legislatures in the United States, as women comprise 50.8% of the average population but hold only an average of 24.7% of state legislative seats. Three possible explanations have emerged to explain the low levels of female representation. The first explanation focuses on election structures within the state, from possible voter bias, campaign financing, and the effect of term limits. The second explanation questions the role of gatekeepers in the recruitment process and whether or not female candidates are recruited. The latest explanation posits that women are not politically ambitious and are not actively seeking to run for office.

Different studies have found that the best explanation to the lack of female representation varies from state to state. Further, previous studies that have examined the lack of female representation have tested for only one explanation. This dissertation examined a single state and sought evidence for the explanation that most closely explains female underrepresentation.

The dissertation employed a mixed model approach, utilizing data from three different surveys. One survey asked state legislators and candidates about their experiences running for office, including partisan engagement, family dynamics, and support for their candidacy from several sources. A survey of state and local party chairs asked questions regarding recruitment strategies and concerns about gender and electability. Finally, I used data from a survey of local elected officials conducted by Cindy Simon Rosenthal and Savannah Collins in 2013. This survey asked similar

questions as the state legislative survey, with questions regarding recruitment, family support, and progressive ambition.

Interviews were conducted with state legislators, candidates for legislative office, party chairs, interest groups, the head of a female recruitment group, as well as women who gatekeepers feel would make good candidates for the state legislature but have not run. The interview questions focused on campaign issues, concerns about electability, and motivations for running. I also utilized a set of interviews of current and former female state legislators, conducted by Tanya Finchum between 2006 and 2009.

### **Findings**

In the study, there were several findings consistent with the literature. Female candidates are less likely to enter primaries. When they do enter elections, they are more likely to win races from urban and suburban districts that are more ethnically diverse and liberal. Term limits did have a slight positive improvement on the number of female candidates entering races, as predicted by earlier studies.

Overall, female candidates for state legislature in Oklahoma demonstrated concern about adequate fundraising or vote share, which is also consistent with earlier studies. Yet, there is no statistically significant difference in the vote shares for female and male candidates. And, while they do not win exactly half of the races they enter, that is an effect of party, not gender, as the number of Democratic female candidates is slightly larger. The party chairs, current legislators, and interest groups state they have no bias against female candidates. In the period under study, the voter and

gatekeeper bias does not appear to be a viable explanation for the low levels of female candidates in the state legislature.

There were several findings that were inconsistent with the current literature on female underrepresentation. Female candidates in Oklahoma are not more likely to draw challengers in their elections and they are also as likely as male candidates to run unopposed. This demonstrates that female candidates can be just as competitive as male candidates in the races they choose to enter. Yet, female candidates raise fewer funds in legislative races. While this may be considered an impediment to office, it does not affect the vote share that female candidates receive, which is equivalent to male candidates.

In previous studies of other states, female candidates felt that they were not as accepted by party leadership. Party gatekeepers in Oklahoma state they have few issues with female candidates and female candidates do perceive that there is support. Most female candidates thought that the party leadership was just as encouraging for them as they are for male candidates. As Lawless and Fox (2005) find, women need to be encouraged to consider running for office.

The main finding of this dissertation, then, is that female candidates could likely have a much larger share of the seats in the legislature, if only they would run for office. There is simply a lack of candidates. Of the three explanations for the underrepresentation of women in the Oklahoma State Legislature, a lack of political ambition is most compelling. The results of the surveys and interviews demonstrate that women in Oklahoma are not as motivated to run for office as men.

First, female candidates in Oklahoma often delay any legislative service until their children are self sufficient or they run from districts where they do not have to spend nights away from home. Obviously, this limits the pool of eligible candidates, if potential female candidates are delaying runs or only running from commutable distances (Lawless and Fox 2005). The literature suggests that many female state legislators will usually wait until their children are grown before they enter the political arena. Women will cite the concern for family stability and needs of the children to put off any political considerations. Thus, the female legislator who enters the race is often older than the typical male candidate at the time he will enter a legislative race. This later entry for women may impact how long they choose to serve in the legislature, even in states with term limits. Lawless and Fox (2005) discuss that this late entry also directly impacts women's progressive political ambition, as many of these women cannot rise in the ranks of party and legislative leadership or may not seek higher office. Women who do run while they have children often run from districts that are close to the capitol, so that they can return home at the end of the day during session. Many studies find that these concerns are not present in male legislative candidates. Male candidates in my interviews view legislative runs as valid choices, regardless of the need to be away from family.

Second, women are less likely to be self-motivated to run for state legislature (although just as many local female officials as male stated they decided on their own to run). Potential female candidates are more likely to consider a run for a lower level political office, while potential male candidates will run for higher offices, such as state legislator, in their first run. Further, once a male candidate has run for a local or

state office, he will often run for higher offices. Again, progressive ambition appears to be limited in many of the female state legislators, as many said they do not plan to run for higher office.

Third, female candidates are more likely to be motivated to run by a policy issue, while men are motivated to run out of political ambition or for professional advancement. Female candidates do not view political office as a career in and of itself or as a career advancement measure. Their policy concerns revolve around social issues, such as education, health care, and protection of women's rights. Lawless and Fox (2005, 2013) suggests this, too, may further limit the progressive ambitions of female candidates, as they may stay in the position if they feel they are accomplishing goals. As suggested above, most of the female candidates who are winning state and local offices in Oklahoma do not intend to pursue higher office, especially those in local offices.

### **Implications**

Overall, as it appears that a lack of political ambition in women is the cause for the low numbers of female candidates in Oklahoma state legislative races, a viable strategy for increasing the numbers of women running for office must be pursued. If the number of women who want to run can be increased, the rest of the data and statements suggest that women should be able to win a respectable share of the legislative seats. As a female Democratic senate member remarked, "Women just have so many other things going on, so they don't think about running. But the emphasis should be on getting more women to run. We should drag them, kicking and screaming if need be." Indeed, most of the findings suggest that women could hold a



very sizable share of the legislative seats, if only there were female candidates to fill them.

The implication of the strategy employed by the parties – that they do not have an active gatekeeping strategy - makes the above wish to drag female candidates in “kicking and screaming” unlikely to occur. The parties do not feel a need to recruit or endorse, thus women will not be targeted as potential female candidates. An active recruitment strategy for female candidates is needed. Since party leadership endorsement is so critical to female candidates’ decision to run, both of the parties need an active recruitment strategy. Luckily, a recruitment group has begun in Oklahoma that not only recruits and aids women in elections, but also tries to dispel negative beliefs about the tenor of campaigns to motivate more women to run. This recent recruiting group is a corrective measure, but it is not a statewide initiative at this point. More localized recruitment groups are needed. Further, as many Republican female candidates as Democratic win office in Oklahoma, so a parallel group for should be started to recruit for conservative candidates.

### **Contributions and Limitations of the Study**

As previously stated, other studies about the low level of female representation have focused on only one explanation, while usually examining more than one state. The differences that have emerged from the multi-state studies led Sanbonmatsu to call for more focused, single state studies. The contribution of this dissertation is two-fold. First, I developed a mixed method approach that allows all three explanations to be examined. As previously stated, other studies about the low level of female representation have focused on only one explanation, while usually examining more

than one state. The differences that have emerged from the multi-state studies led Sanbonmatsu to call for more focused, single state studies. The contribution of this dissertation is two-fold. First, I developed a mixed method approach that allows all three explanations to be examined. This method confirms Sanbonmatsu's concern that each state may indeed have different issues that are keeping women out of the state legislature. When only one explanation is tested, it leaves out the opportunity for the other explanations to be considered.

#### *Limitations*

Obviously, it would have been beneficial to have more respondents to the survey and interview requests. Given the numbers, it is difficult to generalize their experiences to the whole of all men and women have run for Oklahoma State Legislature. Certainly, the fact that there appears to be several commonalities in the issues raised by the candidates and political gatekeepers lends legitimacy to the overall findings. However, greater numbers would be beneficial. Further, studying more states in the same manner will help.

While Lawless and Fox (2005) have found overarching support for their political ambition explanation, my findings in this study are limited to the state of Oklahoma. Several states have been studied from the sole perspective of one explanation and have usually found support for that explanation. Future studies should analyze more states within a framework that utilizes all three explanations.

Another limitation is that I did not extensively interview or survey women who have never run for political office. The claim that women are simply not politically ambitious is incomplete without hearing from women who have not entered the

political arena, especially women who do possess both the qualities of a good candidate and have policy concerns. The female candidates who do run, even ones that run motivated by policy protections, do have some political ambition. They understand that the political process is a valid way for getting their goals accomplished. It is difficult to definitely state that the issue of low female representation in Oklahoma is the issue without fuller discussions with women who have not entered the political arena.

#### Avenues of Future Research

The limitations discussed above presents several avenues for future research. More research is needed on women who do not run for office or find alternative paths to pursue policy and political goals. When faced with a policy concern that lies within legislative reach, citizens have three options: accept the status quo, run for office, or find an alternative approach to address the issue, such as starting an interest group or public awareness campaign. Extensive research has been conducted on the second option, especially in regard to female candidates. Political researchers have largely ignored the former and latter groups. More research is needed in regard to women who are considered to be good candidates but have never run.

When a woman is concerned about a certain political or social issue, what motivates her to pursue political office as a viable solution, especially if she has never previously considered running? Why would a woman concerned about education or medical policy (two of the most common areas of interest for female candidates in Oklahoma) decide to run for legislative office, instead of working with the Parent-Teacher Organization or try to obtain a position on a hospital board? Conversely, why does a

woman concerned about sex trafficking of young girls in Oklahoma decide to start a large public awareness campaign in the state (She's 13 – shes13.com) instead of running for the legislature and advocating for more funding to rid Oklahoma of this horrendous practice? Given that there are so few women running for offices, even at the local level, broadly expanding the scope beyond just candidates will allow for more women to be included in the study of low female representation. Most studies are very conclusive about the fact that there are very few women who run for office. The study of women who never enter the political arena or those who seek alternative methods to address their policy concerns deserves further investigation. These questions can aid in a fuller understanding of the political ambition of women.

While the female candidates in my surveys and interviews felt supported by partisan gatekeepers, this is a retrospective feeling. They had already entered the race, ran the campaign, and had experiences on which to base their feelings of support. I cannot generalize that the parties are very supportive of women, based mostly on the statements and survey responses of female candidates who actually made the commitment on their own and entered the race. The truer test of how supportive parties are of female candidates would be whether or not they actively recruit or endorse female candidates at the same level as male candidates, but that approach is not an option in the state of Oklahoma. Women who have not run or are newly weighing a decision may not be aware of the level of support that the parties will give to them. Another benefit of having more women who have not run for office in the study help determine if there are any conceived notions about the party system that are acting as deterrents to female candidacies. One of the next areas of research should be

how much support women who would consider running for office feel that they would receive. If women who have not run believe that support is lacking, then parties will need to make concerted efforts, outside of recruiting, to convince women of support. Further research should focus on the above questions.

The religion aspect that emerged also needs further consideration. The role of religion was not an initial research question for the dissertation. Religion emerged as a secondary finding out of the interview and survey process. Further research needs to be conducted. The message that women receive from the prominent religions in Oklahoma likely depresses any latent political ambition. Yet, the message that the Republican Party sends to women, through their support of evangelical political women like Sarah Palin, Michelle Bachmann, and Joni Ernst, is that they have a place in politics. Women run for office as Republicans as often as Democrats, so it is important to see which message is getting through to potential female candidates.

### **The Future of Women in the Oklahoma Legislature**

What would it take for female representation to increase in Oklahoma? There are many factors that are thought to increase female representation. Perceived policy threats to women's interests will often motivate women to run. A slight increase in the number of female candidates is thought to increase female candidates in the next election. However, these issues do not appear to be increasing female representation in a significant way.

In 2010, both of the candidates for the highest office in Oklahoma were female, as Mary Fallin (Republican) and Jari Askins (Democrat) made state history as they

were the first dual female candidates for the gubernatorial office. Yet, in 2012, there was not a significant increase in female candidates for legislative office.

While several of the female candidates cited policy concerns as the reason to run for office, the policy concerns seem to provide insufficient motivation for women. One would think that several more women would have decided to run for legislative office after the personhood bill was introduced in 2012 and reintroduced in 2013. The “Year of the Woman” in Congress occurred shortly after many females witnessed patriarchal behavior toward women in the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings on the confirmation of Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas. Yet, the introduction of the personhood bill – which may have had far-reaching implications not only for birth control access for women, but also for fertility treatment for women – did not motivate more women to file for candidacy. In the primary elections in 2014, only 15 women filed for candidacy in the state legislative races (seven Republican and eight Democratic women).

It follows, though, that having more women may not translate into policies that are actually seen as beneficial to women. The Republican agenda in the Oklahoma state legislature is very conservative about many issues related to gender, as evidenced by the above personhood legislation. Many of the female representatives from the Republican Party have written or cosponsored legislation that appears to be unfriendly to women or have made statements that are hostile to women. While Sally Kern is arguably the most conservative female in the Oklahoma legislature, she has made comments that cut right to many beliefs about women, in any position, not limited to representation: “Women usually don’t want to work as hard as a man. Women tend to

think a little bit more about their family, wanting to be at home more time, wanting to have a little more leisure time.” (House Floor, April 27, 2011). Given the political culture of Oklahoma, it appears that having more female Republican members is the most viable path for increasing the number of women in the state legislature. The very conservative nature of the Republican Party in Oklahoma, more women elected from that party does not necessarily translate to protections of women’s issues. There is little to no evidence that the Republican women in the Oklahoma legislature would react to such legislation in a similar manner as Republican women in the Congress, who derailed an attempt at a federal version of a personhood bill in January 2015. But, as one rural activist in my interviews suggested, she would run if a bill restricting women actually passes. As in the case of the Year of the Woman, it may indeed take such an exhibition of a lack of regard for women, which actually passes into law, to get more female candidates in the races.

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## Appendices

### Survey Instruments

#### Survey Of Oklahoma Legislative Leaders

Thank you for responding to this survey. Your responses are completely confidential. The following questions concern election to the Oklahoma State House of Representatives or Senate only. I will send you a summary of the results as soon as all surveys are returned and tabulated.

You are a

- House Party Leader
- Senate Party Leader
- State Party Executive Director
- Member of the House or Senate leadership staff
- Other (please specify position)

How many years have you served in this capacity? \_\_\_\_\_

You are a  Democrat  Republican  Other

Did the party/leadership assist House/Senate candidates with any of the following activities in the last election? (Please check all that apply.)

- Recruited candidates
- Provided technical assistance with campaign materials
- Assisted candidates with fundraising
- Created and mailed campaign materials
- Made direct campaign contributions
- Created television ads for candidates
- Held get-out-the-vote drives
- Loaned or paid campaign staff for candidates
- Shared voter lists with candidates
- Trained candidates or campaign staff
- Conducted polls for candidates
- Other (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

In your opinion, how important is it that a candidate from your party has the following qualifications in order to win election to the Oklahoma State Legislature? (Please check one per row.)

	Not important	Not too Important	Somewhat important	Very important	Extremely important
	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Has held local elected office	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----

- Has held local appointed office --------------------
- Has been active in the party --------------------
- Is a businessperson --------------------
- Is a teacher --------------------
- Is independently wealthy --------------------
- Is a community activist/volunteer --------------------

In your view, how active was each group in recruiting Oklahoma state legislative candidates for your party in the last election, on a scale for 1 to 5? (Please check one box per row.)

	Not all all active	Not very active	Somewhat active	Fairly active	Very active
	1	2	3	4	5
Most local party leaders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The state party	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The legislative leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local Community Leaders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Term-Limited/Former Legislators	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In Oklahoma state legislative elections in recent years, in how many districts has the party/leadership...

	Never	Very Few	Some	Many	
	Seats	Seats	Seats	Seats	
	1	2	3	4	5
All	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encouraged a candidate to run	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encouraged a candidate not to run	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formally endorsed a candidate in a primary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helped challenge an incumbent in a primary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taken sides in a primary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Selected a candidate for a targeted race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In Oklahoma state legislative elections in recent years, in how many districts have the local party leaders from your party...

	Never	Very Few	Some	Many	All
	Seats	Seats	Seats	Seats	Seats
	1	2	3	4	5
Encouraged a candidate to run	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encouraged a candidate not to run	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formally endorsed a candidate in a primary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helped challenge an incumbent in a primary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taken sides in a primary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Selected a candidate for a targeted race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In Oklahoma, about how many legislative seats are considered safe or very certain that your party will win? \_\_\_\_\_  Don't know

In about how many seats do you expect close races between the 2 major parties?  
\_\_\_\_\_  Don't know

How many seats do you believe will be uncontested? \_\_\_\_\_  Don't know

Were there any races in which party leaders had to recruit a candidate to run, as a good candidate did not emerge on his/her own? \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, how many races? \_\_\_\_\_

If the party leadership recruited candidates in the last election, for about how many total legislative seats were candidates recruited? \_\_\_\_\_

If candidates were recruited, how many had held local elected or appointed offices previously? \_\_\_\_\_  Don't know

Is there a staff person who assists the state party in recruiting candidates for the legislature?  
 No  Yes, full-time staff person  Yes, Part-time staff person

Over the past 8 years, the involvement of the state party in candidate recruitment has:  
 Increased  Decreased  Stayed about the same  Don't know

When a candidate is supported by most party leaders, the candidate's chances of winning the primary:  
 Increase  Decrease  Stay the same  Don't know

In your opinion, is it generally better if the party avoids a primary contest in an Oklahoma state legislative race that is going to have a competitive general election?  
 No  Yes, always  Yes, sometimes  Don't know

About what percentage of nonincumbent state legislative candidates come forward on their own to run without being asked by the party?  
 0 – 25%  25 – 50 %  50 – 75%  75 – 100%  Don't know

How often do interest groups recruit candidates for the Oklahoma state legislature?  
 Never  Some seats  Many seats  All seats  Don't know

Which interest groups are helpful in your party in recruiting candidates for the OK state legislature (please check al that apply)?

<input type="checkbox"/> Labor/Union	<input type="checkbox"/> Business	<input type="checkbox"/> Women's Groups
<input type="checkbox"/> Christian Coalition	<input type="checkbox"/> Pro-Life	<input type="checkbox"/> Pro-Choice
<input type="checkbox"/> Gun Owner	<input type="checkbox"/> Gun Control	<input type="checkbox"/> Environmentalists

- Teachers
- Lawyers
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Farmers
- Tax Relief
- Local/Community

Aside from leadership or caucus activities, how often do individual legislative members recruit like-minded potential legislative candidates to enter the primary in other districts?

- Never
- Some seats
- Many seats
- All seats
- Don't know

About how many OK state legislative members from your caucus are likely to run for statewide or federal office at some point in the future?

- None
- Very few
- Some
- Many
- Most
- Don't know

How often does an outgoing state legislator from your party

- |                                     | Never                          | Rarely                         | Sometimes                      | Often                          | Always                         |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Identify a possible successor?      | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- |
| Endorse/ assist possible successor? | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- |

In races for the OK state legislature, other factors being equal, do you think that women or men have an electoral advantage as candidates?

- Women have some advantage
- Men have some advantage
- Neither has an advantage
- Don't know

Are there districts in Oklahoma where it might be difficult for a woman to win election to the Oklahoma state legislature?

- Yes, many
- Yes, a few
- No
- Don't know

Do you think that women or men usually make better candidates for the OK state legislature?

- Women are better candidates
- Men are better candidates
- No difference
- Don't know

What is the year of your birth? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you male or female?

What is your race or ethnic background? (Please check all that apply).

- White
- African American
- Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Native American
- Other

Your answers to this survey are confidential. Would you be willing to participate in a future telephone survey?



The best number to reach me at is \_\_\_\_\_ and the  
best time for me to take your call  
is \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you very much for your time. Please return the survey in the enclosed envelope.

**Survey Of Oklahoma Legislative Leaders**

Thank you for responding to this survey. Your responses are completely confidential. The following questions concern election to the Oklahoma State House of Representatives or Senate only. I will send you a summary of the results as soon as all surveys are returned and tabulated.

You are a

- House Party Leader
- Senate Party Leader
- State Party Executive Director
- Member of the House or Senate leadership staff
- Other (please specify position)

How many years have you served in this capacity? \_\_\_\_\_

You are a  Democrat  Republican  Other

Did the party/leadership assist House/Senate candidates with any of the following activities in the last election? (Please check all that apply.)

- Recruited candidates
- Provided technical assistance with campaign materials
- Assisted candidates with fundraising
- Created and mailed campaign materials
- Made direct campaign contributions
- Created television ads for candidates
- Held get-out-the-vote drives
- Loaned or paid campaign staff for candidates
- Shared voter lists with candidates
- Trained candidates or campaign staff
- Conducted polls for candidates
- Other (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

In your opinion, how important is it that a candidate from your party have the following qualifications in order to win election to the Oklahoma State Legislature? (Please check one per row.)

	Not important Extremely at all	Not too important	Somewhat important	Very important
	1	2	3	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Has held local elected office	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----
<input type="checkbox"/> Has held local appointed office	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----
<input type="checkbox"/> Has been active in the party	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----
<input type="checkbox"/> Is a businessperson	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----

Is a teacher --------------------  
  
 Is independently wealthy -------------------------  
 Is a community activist/volunteer -------------------------

In your view, how active was each group in recruiting Oklahoma state legislative candidates for your party in the last election, on a scale for 1 to 5? (Please check one box per row.)

	Not all all active	Not very active	Somewhat active	Fairly active	Very active
	1	2	3	4	5
Most local party leaders	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----
The state party	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----
The legislative leadership	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----

In Oklahoma state legislative elections in recent years, in how many districts has the party/leadership...

	Never	Very Few Seats	Some Seats	Many Seats	All Seats
	1	2	3	4	5
Encouraged a candidate to run	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----
Encouraged a candidate not to run	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----
Formally endorsed a candidate in a primary	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----
Helped challenge an incumbent in a primary	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----
Taken sides in a primary	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----
Selected a candidate for a targeted race	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----

In Oklahoma state legislative elections in recent years, in how many districts have the local party leaders from your party...

	Never	Very Few Seats	Some Seats	Many Seats	All Seats
	1	2	3	4	5
Encouraged a candidate to run	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----
Encouraged a candidate not to run	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----
Formally endorsed a candidate in a primary	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----
Helped challenge an incumbent in a primary	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----
Taken sides in a primary	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----
Selected a candidate for a targeted race	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----	<input type="checkbox"/> -----

In Oklahoma, about how many legislative seats are considered safe or very certain that your party will win? \_\_\_\_\_  Don't know

In about how many seats do you expect close races between the 2 major parties?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  Don't know

If the party leadership recruited candidates in the last election, for about how many total legislative seats were candidates recruited? \_\_\_\_\_

For how many legislative seats was recruiting candidates a priority?  
\_\_\_\_\_

If candidates were recruited, how many had held local elected or appointed offices previously? \_\_\_\_\_  Don't know

Is there a staff person who assists the state party in recruiting candidates for the legislature?

No  Yes, full-time staff person  Yes, Part-time staff person

Over the past 8 years, the involvement of the state party in candidate recruitment has:

Increased  Decreased  Stayed about the same  Don't know

When a candidate is supported by most party leaders, the candidate's chances of winning the primary:

Increased greatly  Increase somewhat  Stay the same  
 Decreased greatly  Decrease somewhat  Don't know

In your opinion, is it generally better if the party avoids a primary in an Oklahoma state legislative race that is going to have a competitive general election?

No  Yes, usually  Yes, sometimes  Don't know

About what percentage of non-incumbent state legislative come forward on their own to run without being asked by the party?

0 – 25%  25 – 50 %  50 – 75%  75 – 100%  Don't know

How often do interest groups recruit candidates for the Oklahoma state legislature?

Never  Very few seats  Some seats  
 Many seats  All seats  Don't know

Which interest groups are helpful in your party in recruiting candidates for the OK state legislature (please check all that apply)?

Labor/Union  Business  Women's Groups  
 Christian Coalition  Pro-Life  Pro-Choice  
 Gun Owner  Gun Control  Environmentalists  
 Teachers  Farmers  Local/Community  
 Lawyers  Tax Relief  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Aside from leadership or caucus activities, how often do individual legislative members recruit like-minded potential legislative candidates to enter the primary in other districts?

- Never                       Very few seats                       Some seats  
 Many seats                       All seats                       Don't know

About how many OK state legislative members from your caucus are likely to run for statewide or federal office at some point in the future?

- None                       Very few                       Some                       Many                       Most                       Don't know

How often does an outgoing state legislator from your party

- |                                     | Never                          | Rarely                         | Sometimes                      | Often                          | Always                   |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Identify a possible successor?      | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Endorse/ assist possible successor? | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- | <input type="checkbox"/> |

In races for the OK state legislature, other factors being equal, do you think that women candidates usually have an electoral advantage over men candidates, that men have an advantage over women, or that neither has an advantage?

- Women have some advantage  
 Men have some advantage  
 Neither has an advantage  
 Don't know

Are there districts in Oklahoma where it might be difficult for a woman to win election to the Oklahoma state legislature?

- Yes, many                       Yes, a few                       No                       Don't know

Do you think that women usually make better candidates for the OK state legislature than men, that men usually make better candidates than women, or that there's no difference?

- Women are better candidates  
 Men are better candidates  
 No difference  
 Don't know

What is the year of your birth? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you male or female?

What is your race or ethnic background? (Please check all that apply).

- White                       African American                       Hispanic  
 Asian/Pacific Islander                       Native American                       Other

Your answers to this survey are confidential. Would you be willing to participate in a future telephone survey?

The best number to reach me at is \_\_\_\_\_ and the best time for me to take your call is \_\_\_\_\_.

## Survey Of State Legislative Candidates

Thank you for responding to this survey. Your responses to this survey are completely confidential. I will send you a summary of the survey results when the study is completed.

You are a Democrat Republican Other \_\_\_\_\_

Are the voters in the district from which you ran:

- Much more likely to be Republicans than Democrats
- Somewhat more likely to be Republicans than Democrats
- About evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats
- Somewhat more likely to be Democrats than Republicans

Before you ran for the legislature for the first time, how active were you

	Not all	all	Not too	active	Somewhat	Active	Very	Active
At the <b>local</b> party level	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----
At the <b>state</b> party level	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----
At the <b>national</b> party level	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----

Before you ran for the legislature for the first time, what public offices did you hold?  
(Please check all that apply.)

	None	Local	Judgeship	Statewide	Local	State	National
					Party	Party	Party
Appointed	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----	<input type="checkbox"/>
Elected	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----	<input type="checkbox"/>	-----	<input type="checkbox"/>

How many total years did you serve in:

Appointive office? \_\_\_\_\_

Elective office (excluding the state legislature): \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever worked as a staff member in the office of an elected official?

No  Yes, for a state legislator   Yes, other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

When you ran for the state legislature for the first time, were you holding public office?

No  Yes, appointed office   Yes, elected office

In thinking about your initial decision to run for the legislature, which of the following statements most accurately describes your decision: (Please check one.)

- It was entirely my idea to run
- I had already thought seriously about running when someone else suggested it
- I had not seriously thought about running

If someone encouraged or suggested that you run, who were those people?

- friends, family, co-workers, and/or acquaintances suggested it
- members of an association or organization suggested it
- party officials and/or legislative leaders suggested it
- local elected officials suggested it

When you were first deciding to seek a seat in the legislature, did you discuss your potential candidacy with any of the following party leaders?

- |                                  |                              |                             |  |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Local Party Officials            | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not recall |
| State Party Officials            | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not recall |
| Local elected officials          | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not recall |
| Leaders in the state legislature | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not recall |

If yes: Did they encourage you to run, discourage you, or neither encourage you or discourage you?

- |                            | Encouraged               | Discouraged              | Neither | I do not recall          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| Local Party Officials      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| State Party Officials      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Local elected officials    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Leaders state legislatures | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Local Community Leaders    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Former Legislators         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |         | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Did you have a primary opponent when you ran for the legislature for the first time?

- Yes  No (If No: Please skip to Question 12).

If you had a primary opponent when you ran for the legislature for the first time, do you feel the following gave more, less, or equal support to your candidacy in comparison to your opponent?

- |                           | More                     | Less                     | Equal                    | I don't know             |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| local party officials     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| state party officials     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| legislative party leaders | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

In the most recent election, did the state party or legislative leadership target your race as one of the most important state legislative races to win that year?

- Yes  No  I don't know

Did you have a campaign manager, coordinator, or director in the most recent election?

- No  Yes, part-time volunteer  Yes, part-time paid

Yes, full-time volunteer     Yes, full-time paid

Approximately how many contacts did you make to raise funding for your race?  
(Leave blank if not applicable.)

Primary election \_\_\_\_\_ General Election \_\_\_\_\_

How many people did you have on your campaign staff who regularly worked toward your election?

\_\_\_\_\_ # Volunteers    \_\_\_\_\_ # Paid Staff

In races for the state legislature, other factors being equal, do you think that women or men candidates usually have an electoral advantage?

- Women have some advantage
- Men have some advantage
- Neither has an advantage
- Don't know

What about most party leaders? Do you think that most party leaders think women or men candidates usually have an electoral advantage?

- Women are better candidates
- Men are better candidates
- No difference
- Don't know

In your district, how often do local/state party leaders or legislative leaders discourage potential candidates from entering the primary?

- Never     Sometimes     Often     I don't know

In your view, are men and women equally likely to be encouraged by your party to become candidates for the Oklahoma state legislature?

- Never     Sometimes     Often     I don't know

In your view, are men and women equally likely to be encouraged by your party to become candidates for the Oklahoma state legislature?

- Yes, men and women are encouraged equally.
- No, women are sometimes more encouraged.
- No, women are more often encouraged.
- No, men are sometimes more encouraged.
- No, men are often more encouraged.



I don't know

How much did redistricting after the 2000 Census change the boundaries of the district in which you ran in 2002?

not at all     somewhat     a lot     I don't know

How much do you think the 2010 Census will change the boundaries of your district?

not at all     somewhat     a lot     I don't know

Please answer the following background questions to complete the survey. Remember that **your responses to this survey are confidential**.

In general, how would you describe your political views?

Extremely liberal     Liberal     Slightly liberal     Moderate

Slightly Conservative     Conservative     Extremely Conservative

If you currently hold elective office, are you also employed in another occupation?

No     Yes

If yes, about how many hours per week do you usually spend at this job?  
\_\_\_\_\_ hours per \_\_\_\_\_ (week or month).

What is or was occupation outside politics (please specify):  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any children under the age of 18 living at home?  Yes     No

Do you have any children under the age of 6 living at home?  Yes     No

What is the year of your birth? \_\_\_\_\_

What was your approximate family income last year – before taxes?

under \$50,000     \$50,001 – 100,000     100,001- 150,000     over 150,000

How much formal schooling have you completed?

Grade school or less     Some high school     High school graduate  
 Some college     College Graduate     Graduate or professional degree

Are you:  Male     Female

What is your race or ethnic background? (Please check all that apply).

Caucasian     African American     Hispanic

Asian/Pacific Islander     Native American     Other -

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Thank you very much for your time. Please return this survey in the enclosed envelope.

## **Interview Guides**

### **Interview Guide: State Legislators**

How did you first decide to seek your seat?

Did anyone encourage you to run? If yes, who recruited you?

Had you held elective office or party office before you sought your seat?

In your area, is the local party involved in candidate recruitment?

Is there often a “favorite” candidate? Do you feel that it is important to seek support from particular leaders in the primary?

Have you helped to identify other candidates for the legislature, either formally or informally?

Do you think the majority or minority status of your party affects who runs for the legislature?

What effect, if any, do you think term limits have had on who runs?

Has the type of candidate who runs for the legislature change over time?

Have you noticed anything different about the backgrounds or prior experiences of men and women before the legislative career?

What about differences between Democratic women versus Republican women?

Do you think that legislators try to recruit other people to run for the legislature? Why or why not?

Do you think women candidates or potential candidates for the legislature face any particular barriers or opportunities compared to men?

During your campaign, did you encounter any overt voter reactions (either positive or negative) because you were a man/woman?

Why do you think there are not more women serving in the legislature?

Do you have any experiences with women who chose not to run? If so, what reasons did she give for not running?

Is there anyone else you can identify outside of the legislature that I should speak to?

## **Interview Guide: Party Chairs and Legislative Leaders**

What party organization plays the biggest role in state legislative candidate recruitment and what do they do?

How involved is the party organization in candidate recruitment? In how many races?

How does this recruitment process work? Who makes the decisions?

How active are you personally in recruiting candidates?

What qualities or characteristics do you look for in potential candidates?

How do you go about recruiting candidates?

Where do you look for candidates? Are there any groups or networks that are particularly important in helping the party with recruitment?

What is the division of labor among the state party, the county parties, and the legislative caucus?

What resources does the state legislative party caucus provide in the primary and general elections?

How has the state party role changed over time? How has the caucus role changed over time?

Are the party's efforts more organized now than in past years?

How has the state legislative party's involvement in candidate recruitment changed over time?

How many county parties make preprimary endorsements? Which counties?

In most political parties, there are key people whose opinion will affect how others think of potential candidates. Are there some counties where the endorsement of these opinion leaders is necessary for success? Can you describe specific examples?

How common is it for interest groups affiliated with the parties to recruit state legislative candidates?

About what percentage of candidates have held prior elected or appointed office?

Do you think that the majority or minority status of your party affects who runs for the legislature?

What effect, if any, do you think term limits have had on who runs?

Has the type of candidate changed over time?

Have you noticed anything different about the paths that men and women take to the legislature in terms of past experience or occupation?

What about the paths of Democratic and Republican women?

How you observed any conscious efforts – formal or informal – to recruit women for the legislature?

Are there any women's groups or networks that are important in the state?

Do you think that women legislators try to recruit other women? Why or why not?

Do you think women candidates or potential candidates for the legislature face any particular barriers or opportunities compared to men?

Do you think voters react to candidate gender in any way? Or are voters indifferent to candidate gender?

Do you take gender into account when slating candidates? If yes, do certain circumstances make you consider one gender over another for particular races?

Have you seen any changes over time in women's electoral opportunities in Oklahoma?

Why do you think women do not have more of the seats in the Oklahoma state legislature?

Is there anyone else I should speak with?