2011

Candidate Non-Emergence or Voter Bias? Explaining the Scarcity of Female Politicians in the Southern United States and the Impact of Cultural Conservatism on Gender Representation in American Politics

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CANDIDATE NON-EMERGENCE OR VOTER BIAS? EXPLAINING THE SCARCITY OF FEMALE POLITICIANS IN THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES AND THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL CONSERVATISM ON GENDER REPRESENTATION IN AMERICAN POLITICS

by
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A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

Oxford
May 2011

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ABSTRACT

LILY CATHERINE HALL: Candidate Non-Emergence or Voter Bias? Explaining the Scarcity of Female Politicians in the Southern United States and the Impact of Cultural Conservatism on Gender Representation in American Politics
(Under the direction of Richard Forgette)

Historically, the United States has consistently elected a smaller percentage of women in all levels of political office when compared to the population at large. Today, the average percentage of American females in politics lags behind the world average. However, some United States regions have fewer female representatives than others; presently, all but one of the Southern states have a smaller percentage of women in politics than the national average. Because of the American concurrence of the importance of equal rights, a lack of female political representatives specifically in the South is of cultural and political significance. In this study, I seek to determine the causes of the gap between the percentage of female politicians in the South and the percentage of female Southerners and focus on two possible sources for the underrepresentation: an absence of Southern female candidate emergence and a Southern voter bias against female candidates. I also seek to establish cultural conservatism's effect on these two possible causes. Through state legislature and survey data analysis, I ascertain that both a lack of female candidate emergence and a voter bias contribute to the deficiency in the number of Southern female politicians and that cultural conservatism is a foundation of both of these agents. With the understanding of these causes, I hypothesize potential methods for reform.

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Throughout the history of the United States, there has been a lack of female politicians when compared to the female population at large. Only 274 of the approximately 15,000 people who have served in Congress have been female (about 2 percent), and a female candidate has never been elected president nor made it through the presidential primary process (http://www.womenincongress.house.gov). Though the number of American female politicians has risen since 1917, when Montana Representative Jeannette Rankin became the first woman to serve in Congress (and especially when women received the right to vote three years later), a large gap between the percentage of females in politics and the female composition of the U.S. population still exists (http://www.womenincongress.house.gov).

According to the 2009 U.S. Census, the American population is comprised of nearly 51 percent females. However, currently only 76 representatives of the 435 in the House of Representatives and 17 of the 100 senators are women; the percentage of females in each of the houses is about 17 percent (http://www.clerk.house.gov). The average percentage of women in parliaments in the world is 19 percent, an average that includes countries that historically and currently hold far fewer womens rights than the

U.S. (http://www.ipu.org). Thus it is somewhat alarming that even America's progressive political history has resulted in a persistent lag behind the world's average number of female politicians. When considering the absence of female presidential candidates along with the small percentage of women in Congress, it is clear that there is an underrepresentation of female politicians at the American federal level of government.

1.1. The South's Underrepresentation of Females in Politics

At the state level, the gender gap in political representation differs from state to state and region to region. The national average of percentage of women in state legislatures is 23 percent, which is a higher average than the percentage of females in Congress. Additionally, the number of female state congressmen has more than quintupled since 1971 (http://www.womenlegislators.org). However, despite the increase in the number of female state legislators, currently South Carolina, Oklahoma, Alabama, and Mississippi (in order of lowest to highest percentage) each has a state legislature composed of less than 15 percent females. These states have the lowest percentages of female legislators in the nation (htttp://www.ncsl.org).

These four states—South Carolina, Oklahoma, Alabama, and Mississippi—are located in the American South. (For the purposes of this thesis, I define Southern states as Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.) Of the Southern states, North Carolina is currently the only state that has a percentage of female state legislators above the national average, with a legislature made up of 25 percent women (http://www.ncsl.org). Because eleven of the twelve Southern states have a percentage of

female state legislators below the national average, it is clear that there is a regional difference in the gender composition of state legislatures and that the South in particular is trailing the nation in terms of percentage of female politicians.

The percentage of female politicians representing the South is even smaller at the national level. According to Kenneth Jost's *Women in Politics*, the South has a miniscule number of female senators and representatives. Over half of the Southern states currently have no women in Congress, while Arkansas, Louisiana, and Tennessee each has only one woman in Congress. North Carolina and Texas state legislatures each have three female congressmen (it should be noted that Texas has one of the highest numbers of congressional districts in the country).

Because of the discrepancy in the percentage of Southern female politicians when compared to the rest of the nation, I seek to determine causes for this disparity. Perhaps if the causes can be ascertained, it will be possible to both understand the gap between regions and prescribe remedies. There are two main plausible explanations for the lack of female politicians in the South, each of which encompasses several other possible explanations. One explanation is that there are fewer Southern female candidates than in other regions of the country. Another explanation is that Southerners are less likely to vote for a female candidate than other voters. These two possible explanations will serve as the framework for the second and third chapters of this thesis.

1. 2. Southern Female Candidate Emergence

The first explanation—fewer Southern females run for office—implies that along with a lack of female candidate emergence there is potentially also a lack of female

candidate recruitment in the South. Possibly, fewer females in the South comprehend or take an interest in politics, do not have as much elective experience, do not enjoy the same amount of campaign fundraising potential, or become active in politics at a later age than their Northern counterparts. But another cause for underrepresentation could be that Southern females have not been recruited as effectively in the South and are thus less likely to run for office. Perhaps a stronger female candidate recruitment effort in the South or simply an encouragement of female interest in politics would help to close the gender representation gap between the South and the rest of the country.

In Lawless and Pearson's *The Primary Reason for Women's Underrepresentation? Reevaluating the Conventional Wisdom*, the UC Berkeley researchers examine congressional primary and general elections. This study demonstrates that women not only enter primaries at much lower rates than men, but "unlike the slow but steady increase in the number of women elected in general elections, the number of women entering primaries is actually decreasing slightly" (*The Primary Reason for Women's Underrepresentation?* 17). This research suggested that women are in fact less likely to emerge as candidates, especially in recent years. Notably, the study also demonstrated that a woman is more likely to enter a primary in order to challenge another female candidate in a general election, which prohibits a substantial increase in the percentage of female politicians. Lawless and Pearson attribute this phenomenon to female candidates enjoying more confidence against other female politicians rather than male politicians and in races in which female candidates have historically won. This confidence leads to an increased likelihood to run for office.

According to Lawless and Fox, researchers from Brown University's Taubman Center for Public Policy, women are not only less likely than men to consider running for politics but are also less likely to run a campaign of their own. In their book, *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run For Office*, the authors discuss their examination a group of people they considered "potential candidates" who are lawyers, business leaders and executives, educators, and political activists from both genders. In the study, Lawless and Fox's potential candidates answered a series of questions about their interest in running for elective office.

The researchers determined that from their pool of potential candidates, 43 percent of women had considered running for political office, a number that can be compared to 59 percent of male potential candidates who had considered running for office. Across professions, men were always at least 50 percent more likely than women to have discussed running with friends, family, community leaders, party leaders, and potential supporters. They were also more than 50 percent more likely to have investigated how to place their name on the ballot.

This study also examines recruitment as an effect on female potential candidates. According to Lawless and Fox, men are much more likely than women to receive the suggestion to run for politics from political actors, and also more likely to receive encouragement to run for politics from non-political sources, such as family members and friends. Their findings show that nationally there is a difference in recruitment between males and females; perhaps this recruitment difference is more pronounced in the South. Importantly, the study also reveals that when a respondent receives external suggestion to run for office, either from a political or non-political actor, his or her

chances of considering candidacy more than double, a likelihood which increases even more in women than in men.

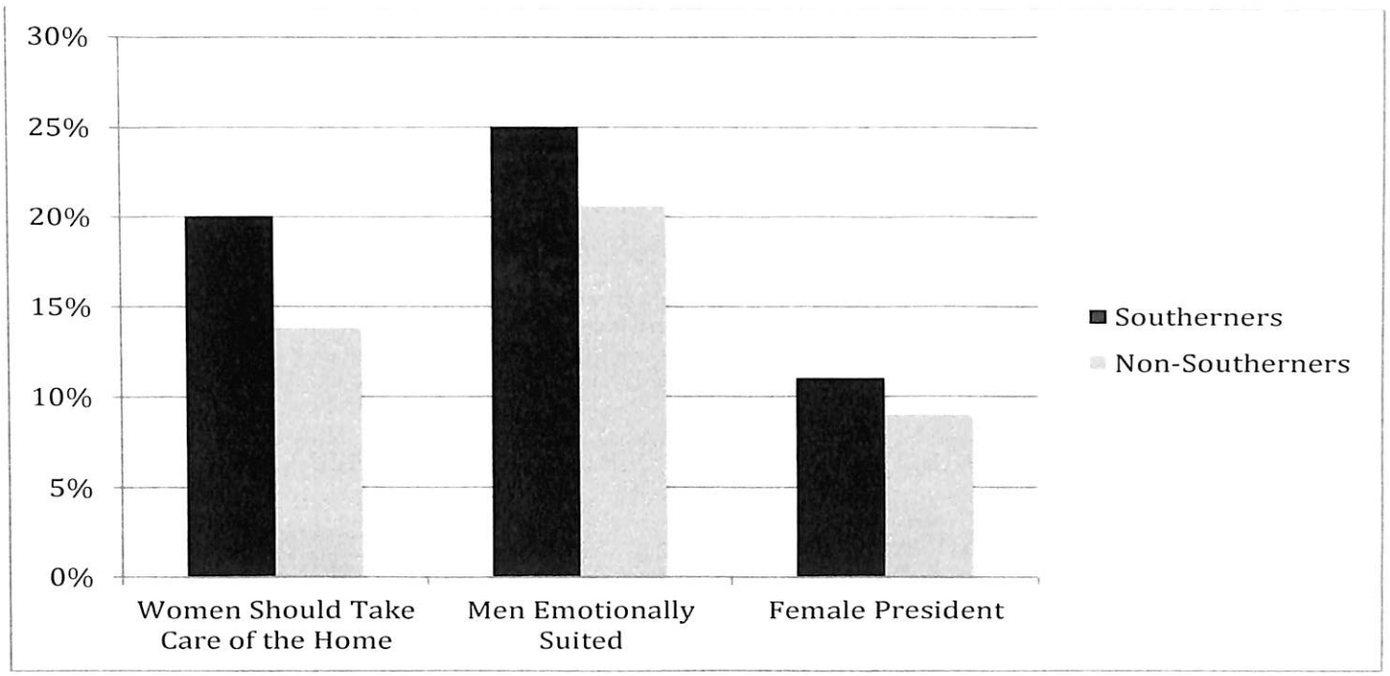
In Chardie Baird's *Women's Early Career Goals and Attainments at Midlife,* the author discusses the impact of a woman's upbringing in relation to her future, specifically if her upbringing included an emphasis on traditional gender roles. Women who were raised by parents with conservatives gender role attitudes, or in communities where these views are prevalent, are less likely to attain occupations with prestige. Young women with traditional gender perceptions are more likely to complete fewer years of education and less likely to have a high paying job. These findings show the ways in which gender perception can affect a woman's likelihood to run for office, as uneducated and low-paid people are less likely to become involved in politics.

1. 3. Southern Voter Bias

Another plausible explanation for the underrepresentation of women in Southern politics is that a voter bias against female politicians exists in the South. This hypothesis is also correlated to the first hypothesis because if a potential candidate anticipates a gender bias against her, she will of course be less likely to run for candidacy. Two researchers, Coates and Rice, implemented a study measuring the likelihood of Southerners to hold traditional gender perceptions of women in politics when compared to other Americans. According the to study, *Gender Role Attitudes in the Southern United States*, "when it comes to politics, Southerners are much more likely than non-Southerners to feel it is a man's realm. Throughout the 40 times that the women in politics questions were asked, Southern responses were significantly more conservative

37 times" (*Gender Role Attitudes* 750). Twenty percent of Southerners agree that women should take care of running their homes and leave running the country up to men, a percentage which can be compared to 13.8 percent of non-Southerners. About 25 percent of Southerners as compared to 20.6 percent of non-Southerners agree that most men are better suited emotionally for politics than most women. Almost 11 percent of Southerners would not vote for a woman for president if their party nominated one and she was qualified while 9 percent of non-Southerners would not vote for a qualified female candidate. This data is shown in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Political Gender Perceptions by Region

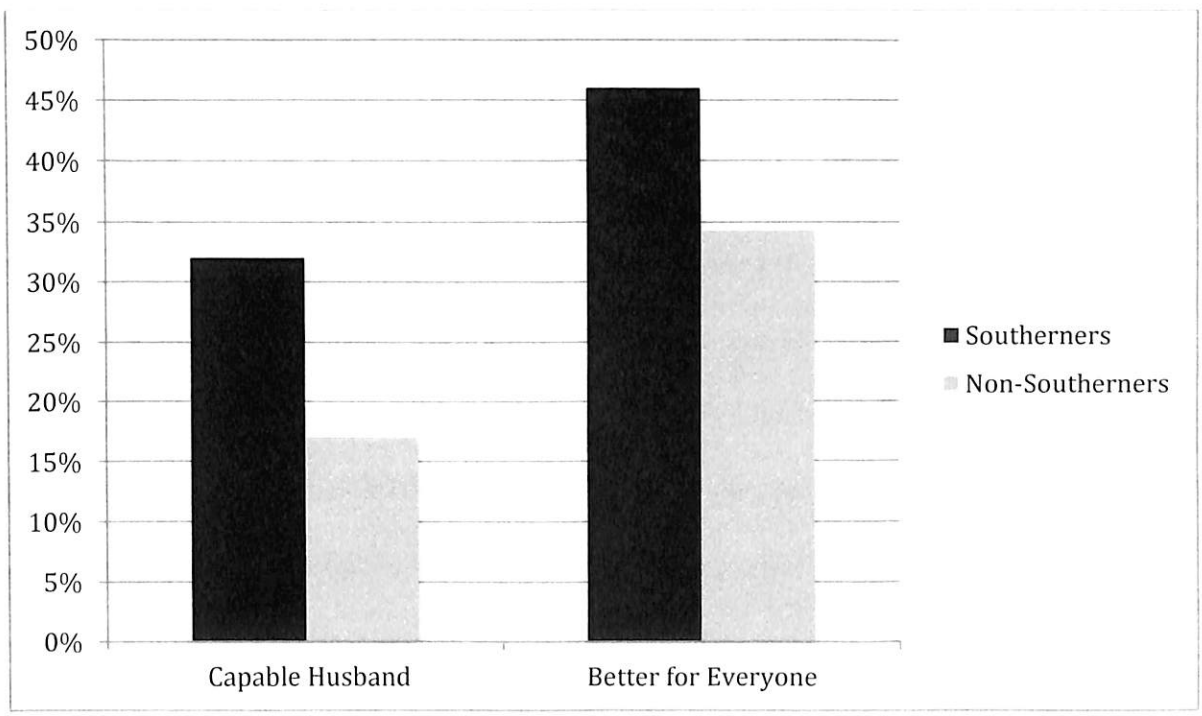


Coates and Rice also analyzed general gender attitudes in the South, and their research suggests that Southerners are more likely to hold traditional gender attitudes in realms outside of politics. The data in *Gender Role Attitudes in the Southern United States* shows that not only are Southerners more likely to have traditional gender role views than non-Southerners, but also that Southern white men, black men, white women,

and black women are also more likely to have traditional gender role attitudes than their non-Southern counterparts.

Interestingly, the researchers showed that Southerners differed from non-Southerners much more about gender attitudes about a woman's duty to her husband as opposed to her children. Though Southerners and non-Southerners have close percentages in agreement that working women can establish warm relationships with their children, about 16 percent more Southerners than non-Southerners disagree that "married woman should earn money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her" (*Gender Role Attitudes* 752), and 12 percent more Southerners than non-Southerners agree that is "much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family" (*Gender Role Attitudes* 754). This data is shown in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2: Gender Role Perceptions by Region



The information in Coates and Rice's study served as inspiration for my own survey in the third chapter of this thesis, and in my analysis of a possible voter gender bias in the South I focus predominantly on the effect of cultural conservatism and traditional gender roles on the likelihood of votes for a female politician.

1.4. Why Women in Politics Matter

It is clear that there is an underrepresentation of women in politics in the Southern U.S., but why does this matter? First, as implied in the last section, the underrepresentation could reflect a trend in general Southern gender attitudes. Coates and Rice's study demonstrates that Southerners are not only less likely to support a woman in politics than Northerners, but also have correspondingly conservative gender attitudes, showing that the underrepresentation of women in politics could depict a deeper trend of both Southern men and Southern women believing that women should conform to traditional gender roles.

Another reason the underrepresentation of women in politics is important is because this underrepresentation could cause a lack of political action and policies that would benefit women. According to Richard Ogmundson in *Does it Matter if Women, Minorities, and Gays Govern? New Data Concerning and Old Question*, "contemporary research has confirmed the traditional view that people feel better if they see authority figures with social characteristics similar to their own in cases of gender" (*Does it Matter if Women, Minorities, and Gays Govern* 320). Anne Phillips states in *Feminism and Politics* that in "the modern nation state, there is no transparently obvious 'public interest', but rather a multiplicity of different and potentially conflicting interests which

must be acknowledged and held in check" (Phillips 230). Gender can affect a citizen's political interests and perhaps a leader who emphasizes with these interests can better represent his or her constituency.

Though politicians in democracies are elected to represent their voters, their own interests can also interfere with policies. Women hold a distinct position in society. They are highly concentrated in low-paying jobs and are more likely to have the unpaid responsibility of caring for others and for their homes. Specific policies directly affect women in particular, such as childcare laws and birth control/abortion laws. As Phillips states, "there are particular needs, interests, and concerns that arise from the women's experience, and these will be inadequately addressed in a politics that is dominated by men" (Phillips 232). Though her argument cannot be explicitly proved, many political scientists agree that politicians whose policies reflect the ideas of their constituencies are more likely to understand and care for the needs of their voters.

This leads to the question of whether women politicians are more likely than male legislators to implement legislation that benefits women. Again according to Ogmundson, a long series of studies has shown that females in authority positions in the U.S. differ from males in their attitudes and behavior. Females are more likely to be liberal and thus to support more liberal legislation. "The presence of females in legislative elites has a policy impact of significance...It seems clear that a female presence has a strong influence on issues such as jobs for females, child support, and domestic abuse" (Ogmundson 322). With female politicians in office, women are more likely to be represented accurately. Also, women's tendency to lean towards liberalism could affect

their political participation in the Republican-dominated South and help to explain the difference in gender representation in the South when compared to other regions.

Yet another reason that women politicians are important is because without the equal opportunity for political representation and political participation, the democratic system may not viewed as legitimate by women. Female citizens in governments without equal gender representation are effectively unequal political participants and thus do not receive equal benefits of the democratic system.

The underrepresentation of women in politics today can also influence the future. Many scholars hypothesize that countries or states with a history of female politicians and equal gender rights are more likely to continue to elect women. A legacy of female politicians can make voters more comfortable with women in politics, and potential female politicians are also given role models and a sense of tradition in politics. As David Hill mentions in *Political Culture and Female Political Representation*, "states which have established an early pattern of electing women to the legislature have generally continued to support women's participation in public affairs" (Hill 123). In order to ensure a future with female politicians, it is important that the gender gap in politics be addressed in the present.

1.5. Overview of Research Methods and Hypotheses

As discussed previously, my thesis will be split into two main parts: one analyzing Southern female candidate emergence and another section focusing on a possible Southern voting bias. In the second chapter of my thesis, which focuses on candidate emergence, I will use state legislature data to determine if there is a difference

in candidate emergence in the South when compared to the rest of the country. State legislature data is effective in this study because American state legislatures currently have a high concentration of females, yet are prestigious when compared to other offices. Elections are separated by state, which can make it easy to differentiate by region.

In this section, I will compare six states, two that are regionally Southern yet culturally less conservative, two Southern states that are more culturally conservative, and two that are not in the South and that have professional legislatures. Professional legislatures may allow more female politicians the chance to participate, as they pay more and have longer sessions. Alternatively, professional legislatures may have fewer open seats and less opportunities for new candidates. I will compare these states over several decades, and use the data to determine the percentage of females who run for candidacy as well as the percentage of females who win elections in these states across fifty years.

In the third chapter of my thesis, which focuses on a possible voter bias in the South, I will analyze the data I have accumulated through my own polling. The survey that will be focus of my third chapter measures participants' perceptions of gender roles as well as their likelihood to vote for a woman for the offices of state governor and county commissioner. This survey will serve to determine if a gender bias exists in the South, as well as if there is a disparity in each gender's likelihood to win candidacy in different levels of office. The data can also be used to examine the effect of incumbency on both genders.

I hypothesize that both candidate emergence and a voter bias exist in the South and that both are causes of the underrepresentation of female politicians in the South. By determining the cause or causes the gap of female politicians by region, I will gain a

better understanding of why there is a gender gap in American and world politics in general, as well as a better understanding of Southern voting patterns. With this knowledge, perhaps solutions to this problem can be uncovered.

CHAPTER II: A Comparison of Female Candidate Emergence by State

The second chapter of my thesis focuses on the recruitment of female politicians in the Southern United States—do fewer females run for political office in the South than in other regions? In order to determine if there is a lack of female candidate emergence in the South, I used Thomas M. Carsey and William D. Berry's data set for State Legislative Election Returns, 1967-2003. Carsey and Berry's data includes every candidate who has run for state legislative office in all fifty states from 1967-2003. Because there are more American female state legislators than females in many other political offices, this data set serves as an appropriate measure of American female politicians. It has been theorized that women are less likely to hold executive positions; therefore, by examining state legislators, any discrepancy between the number of males and females cannot be attributed to a bias against females in executive positions, but can instead be explained by other factors.

2.1. Research Design

To narrow the Carsey and Berry dataset to a comprehendible analysis, I selected specific states and years to analyze. The years I chose to include in my analysis are 1970, 1978, 1990, 1998, and 2002, as these are years close to each decade included in the dataset, and are years in which each of the states held elections. By comparing different

decades, I could measure if the amount of potential female state legislator candidates changes overtime.

I also decided to include only the states of Alabama, Florida, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, and Oklahoma in my analysis. I chose Alabama and Oklahoma because they are two of the more culturally conservative states; though Oklahoma is not considered part of the traditional "Old South," these states have some of the largest percentages of Southern Baptists in the nation, and can therefore be used to examine cultural conservatism and its impact on the candidacy and election of female state legislators.

In Laure Moore and Reeve Vanneman's *Context Matters: The Effects of the Proportion of Fundamentalists on Gender Attitudes*, the researchers examine the changes in gender attitudes in states with different levels of fundamentalist concentration. Invariably, people from states with high concentrations of fundamentalists shared similar traditional gender role perceptions. This stayed the same even when controlling for religious affiliation, beliefs, and practices. Notably, non-fundamentalists in states with high concentrations of fundamentalists were more likely to express conservative gender attitudes than non-fundamentalists in states with lower concentrations of fundamentalists, showing the degree to which environment impacts gender perceptions.

Alabama is comprised of 32.5% Southern Baptists while Oklahoma is comprised of 30.7% Southern Baptists, and these two states also help to make up the five states with the highest proportion of Southern Baptists in the country (http://www.adherents.com). Because of the impact of fundamentalism on gender attitudes, Alabama and Oklahoma

can therefore serve as appropriate studies of cultural conservatism and its impact on candidate emergence.

I chose Florida and North Carolina for my research because these two states are regionally considered part of the American South, but have some of the lowest concentrations of Southern Baptists in the region, and are therefore presumably less culturally conservative. I also chose Michigan and New York as part of my analysis because these two states each have a professional state legislature; perhaps for financial reasons women are more likely to be state legislators in states with professional legislatures that in turn pay more. Alternatively, professional legislatures tend to have fewer open seats and could therefore attract fewer new candidates. Either way, these states will be useful in examining the effect of professional legislatures on gender representation.

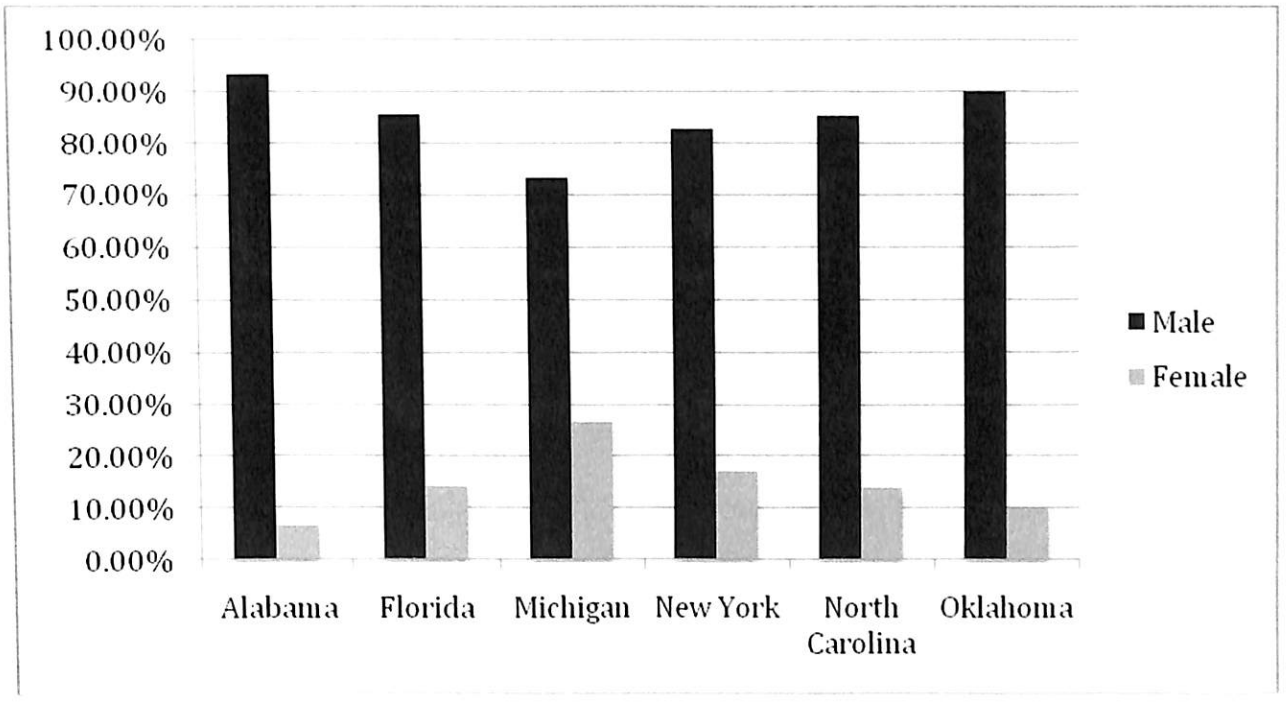
Though the data set did not include a gender variable, I recoded the names of the state legislator candidates as "1" for distinctly male, "2" for distinctly female, and "3" when I could not easily determine if the candidate's name was male or female.

2, 2. State Legislature Candidacy by State

To measure the difference in percentages of female legislature candidates between states, I ran a cross tabulation between the variables "STATE" and "GENDER" and found the percentages of each code for the GENDER variable. Because the "unsure" or "3" code takes up a different percentage of the gender variable in each state, I calculated the percentage of male and female codes alone, using the counts of the codes in each of the states, and continued to do so throughout my analysis.

Within 1970, 1978, 1990, 1998, and 2002, Alabama has the highest average percentage of male state legislature candidates and consequently the lowest percentage of female candidates with 93.5 percent male and 6.5 percent female legislature candidates. Oklahoma has the second highest percentage of male state legislature candidates at 89.9 percent male and 10.1 percent female. Michigan has the highest percentage of female state legislature candidates over the course of these years with 26.7 percent female male legislature candidates and 73.3 percent male candidates. Florida, New York, and North Carolina are all close in terms of the gender representation in their state legislatures, with New York having the most female state legislature candidates across these years. This data is shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Average Percentages of State Legislators by Gender



The results from Figure 2.1 show that perhaps the difference between percentages of female state legislature candidates is first and foremost caused by cultural conservatism, as the most culturally conservative states have the fewest female

candidates, followed by the regionally Southern states of Florida and North Carolina. New York and Michigan's comparative abundance of female state legislature candidates could be explained by the states' professional state legislatures as well as a difference in culture.

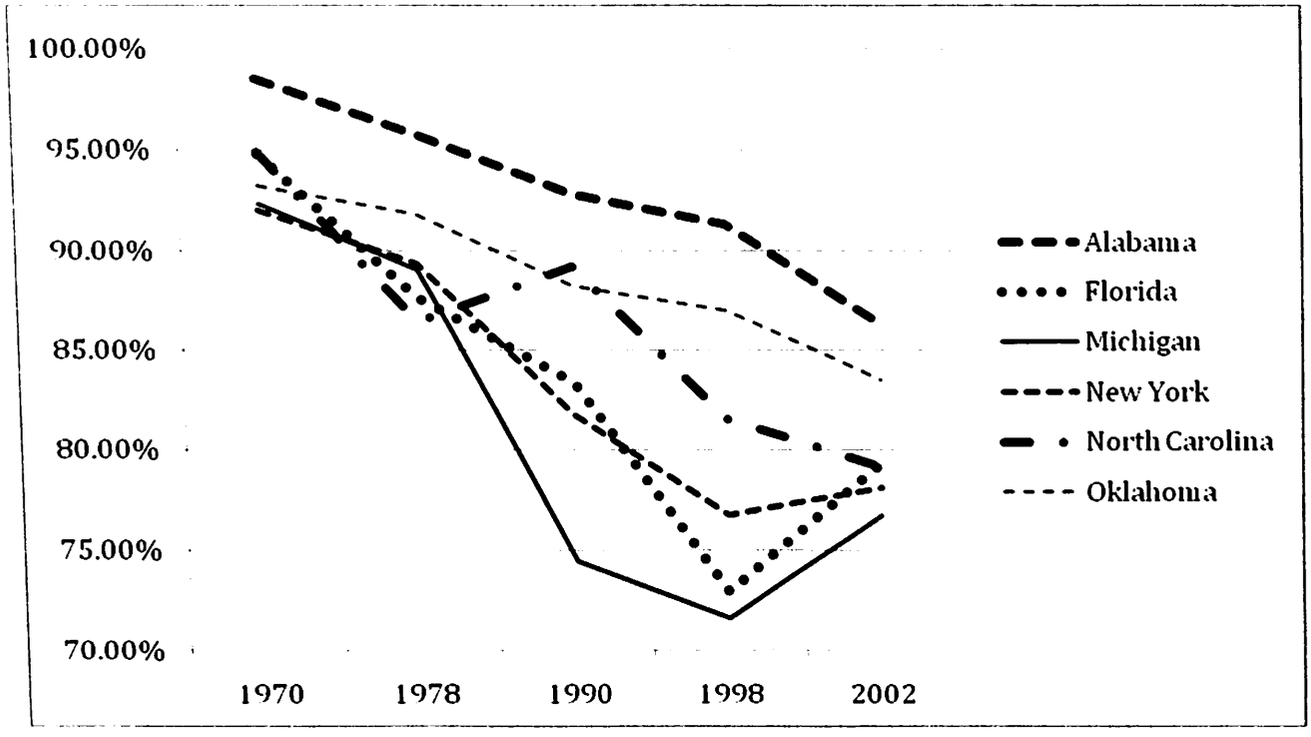
According to http://www.empirecenter.org, Michigan state legislators enjoy the second highest salaries in the nation at $79,650 a year. New York state legislators have the third highest salaries in the nation with a salary of $79,500 a year. This is a far cry from Alabama's state legislator salary, which is $10 a day, and even Florida, North Carolina, and Oklahoma's salaries which are $30,996/year, $13,951/year, and $38,400/year, respectably, so perhaps women are more likely to run for state legislature when they anticipate a higher pay, as women are less likely than men to have a second high-paying job.

These results also show that the fewer open seats offered in state legislature can have an impact on the number of females candidates in a state, as though the two professional state legislatures included in this study, Michigan and New York, have the highest percentage of female candidates, Michigan state legislators are bound to a term limit while New York state legislators are not (http:///www.ncsl.org). Because New York state legislators do not have a term limit, there are fewer open seats in any given New York state legislature election when compared to a Michigan election, and this could explain the smaller percentage of female candidates in New York when compared to Michigan. Oklahoma also has term limits while Alabama does not and it too has a higher average percentage of female candidates. However, North Carolina state legislators do not have term limits while Florida state legislatures do (http:///www.ncsl.org), and North

Carolina has slightly more female candidates than Florida, so perhaps other factors are more important than term limits in female state legislature candidacy.

It is also important to examine the difference in the average percentage of each gender in state legislatures overtime; though nationally the percent of females state legislators has generally increased throughout the years, there are specific years and states in which there are unexpected increases and decreases in the percentages of female state legislature candidates, as depicted in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Percent of Male State Legislature Candidates by State and by Year



Alabama consistently has the lowest percentage of female state legislature candidates, but has also consistently increased its number of female state legislature candidates over time. Like Alabama, Oklahoma's percentage of female state legislature candidates has steadily increased, and had the highest increase between 1998 and 2002. Both states' steady increases can perhaps be attributed to a decline in social conservatism as the states become more culturally modern.

Though Oklahoma has the second lowest overall percentage of female state legislature candidates in these states, in certain years North Carolina had a lower percentage of female state legislature candidates than Oklahoma. In 1970 and 1990, North Carolina had the second lowest percentage of female state legislators within these states, with a slight increase in female candidates between 1970 and 1978. However, since 1990, its percentage of female legislators has gone up in 1998 and again in 2002, making it the state with the third lowest percentage of female legislators in these years, and fourth lowest overall, with Florida having only 0.2 percent fewer female legislators on average. Because the first year included in this study is 1970, North Carolina's low percentage of female legislators that year could be attributed to a national trend of few female legislators as opposed to a state-specific trend because the number of female state legislature candidates increased through 1978. Perhaps the decrease in the number of female state legislature candidates in North Carolina from 1978 to 1990 can be attributed to the popularity of the Republican Party during the early nineties, as 1978 was during the presidency of Jimmy Carter, who was the state's last Democratic presidential vote until 2008. Historically there have been fewer Republican female politicians than Democratic, a difference that was more pronounced during this time.

Florida has the third most female legislative candidates among these states, however its pattern is unclear. Though it had a steady increase in female state legislative candidates from 1970 to 1998, between 1998 and 2002 it had a sharp decrease of female state legislature candidates. Although Michigan has the highest percentage of female state legislature candidates in these states, it too had a steady increase in female candidates from 1970 to 1998, then a large decrease in 2002. New York also steadily increased in its

percentage of female candidates from 1970 to 1998, then decreased in 2002, however its decrease was not as pronounced as in Florida and Michigan. These declines could be attributed to the Republican Party as well. Though the other states in this study are overwhelmingly Republican, Michigan and New York specifically are not considered red states, and Florida is sometimes considered "purple" or a mix between red and blue. Since these states are not as Republican-dominated, and are considered to be political battlegrounds to a higher degree than the other states, national partisan trends can affect their elections more than in solidly Republican states. Therefore, in 2002, only a year after September 11th, a time of patriotism and support for Republican president George W. Bush, these states may have been more inclined to vote Republican. This may explain the lower percentage of voters who were more likely to choose a male candidate.

2.3. Comparison of Incumbent State Legislature Candidates by State

It is also important to consider the incumbency of female state legislature candidates. Are there fewer female incumbent candidates than male incumbent candidates in these state legislatures? The average of incumbent candidates across these states by gender is showed in Figures 2.3 and 2.4.

Though there are on average many more challenger female state legislature candidates in these six states over time than incumbent state legislature candidates, the same holds true for male state legislature candidates. There are a higher percentage of female challenger candidates than the percentage of male candidates, but the difference is marginal on average and overall.

Figure 2.3: Incumbency- Female Candidates

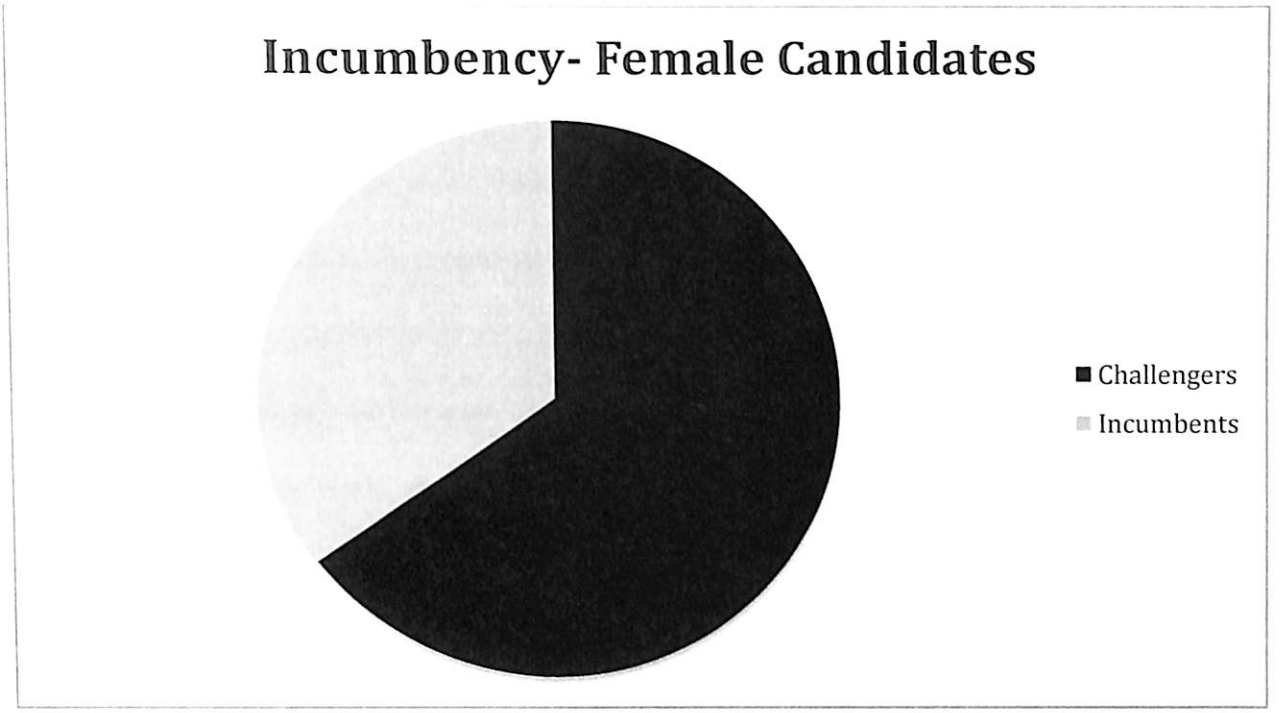
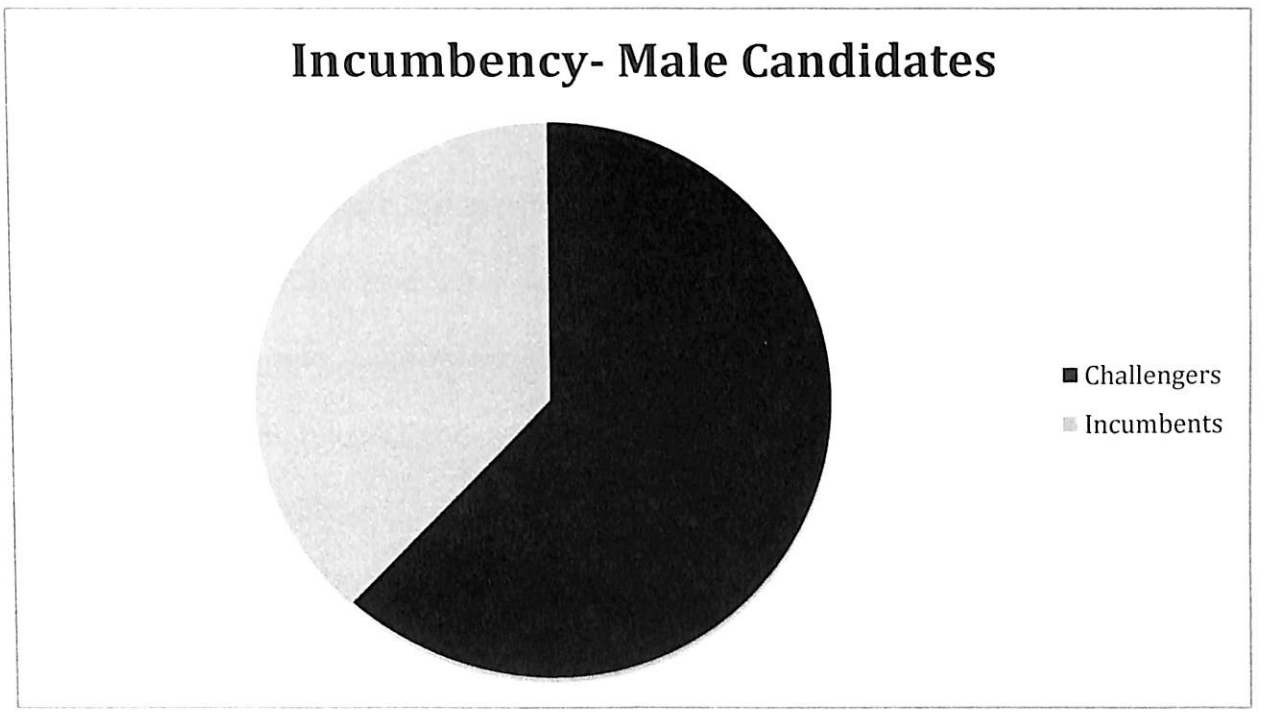


Figure 2.4: Incumbency- Male Candidates



However, Florida has a larger percentage of male incumbent candidates than female incumbent candidates, a difference larger than that in any other state with 76.9

percent male incumbent candidates and 66.4 percent female candidates. But it also has a much higher percentage of incumbent candidates across the years than in any other single state and a much higher percentage of incumbent candidates than the average of the states, so though there are more male incumbents than female incumbents, the explanation behind this discrepancy may be that Florida state legislature candidacy trends lean towards incumbents even more than in the other states, and a difference between the genders could simply be because there were not as many female state legislature candidates to begin with, and so they are not as likely to be incumbents.

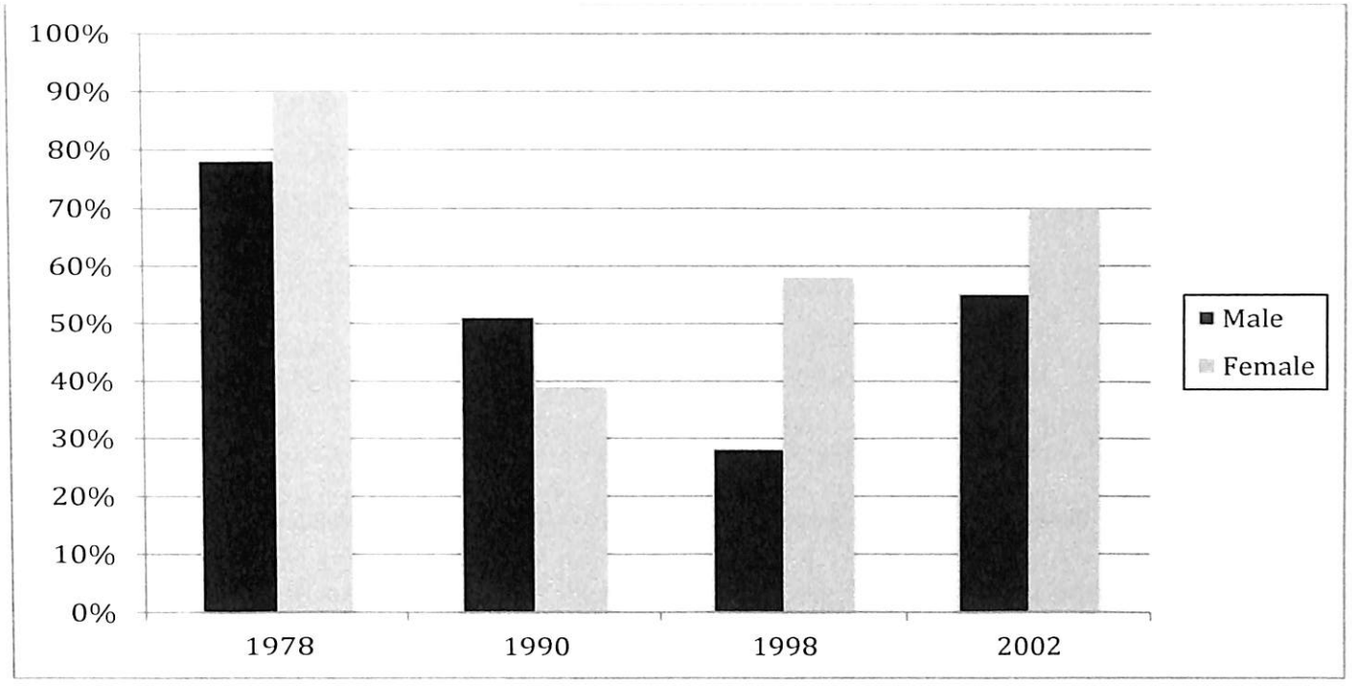
2.4. Comparison of State Legislature Candidate Emergence by State

In order to specifically analyze female candidate emergence in these states, I compared the percentage of male and female candidates who were challengers, as these were the emerging candidates over time. I also left 1970 out of the analysis because the dataset did not determine incumbent and challenger candidates in these early years. The percentages of challengers by state and by gender are depicted in Figure 2.5.

In Alabama, generally there are a higher percentage of female candidates who are challengers than male candidates. The difference between the two genders was largest in 1998, when of the female candidates, there were 35 percent more who were challengers than the percentage of challenger candidates of males. The only year in which there were a higher percentage of male challenger candidates than female was 1990. Both 1990 and 1998 were midterm election years, 1990 being the midterm election year of Republican President George H.W. Bush and 1998 being the midterm election year of

Democratic President Bill Clinton. Though American midterm elections generally swing towards the opposite party of the president, perhaps because females are more likely to be Democratic, they ran for election during a Democratic presidency because they are allocated more resources by the Democratic Party and are more encouraged to run than during a Republican presidency.

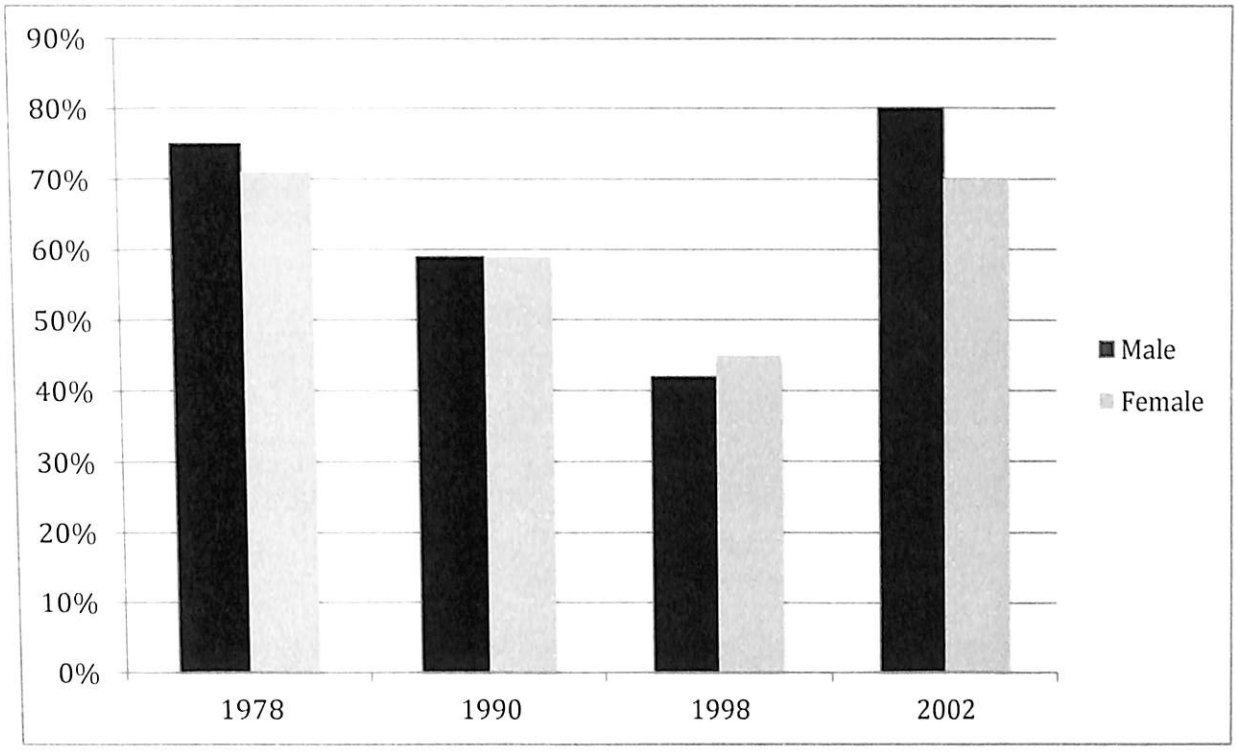
Figure 2.5: Percent of Male and Female Alabama State Legislature Candidates who were Challengers, by Year



As shown in Figure 2.6, the difference between the percentages of challenger state legislature candidates in each gender in Florida is marginal, specifically in 1978 and 1990. In 1998, however, like in Alabama, there were a larger percentage of female challenger candidates than of male challenger candidates. This too could be attributed to the Democratic president at the time. The last year shown in the figure, 2002, marked the largest difference between the two genders in Florida, with there being a much larger percentage of male challenger candidates than the percentage of female non-incumbent

candidates, and this could be attributed to national politics as well, as 2002 was a time of Republican dominance in the wake of 9/11.

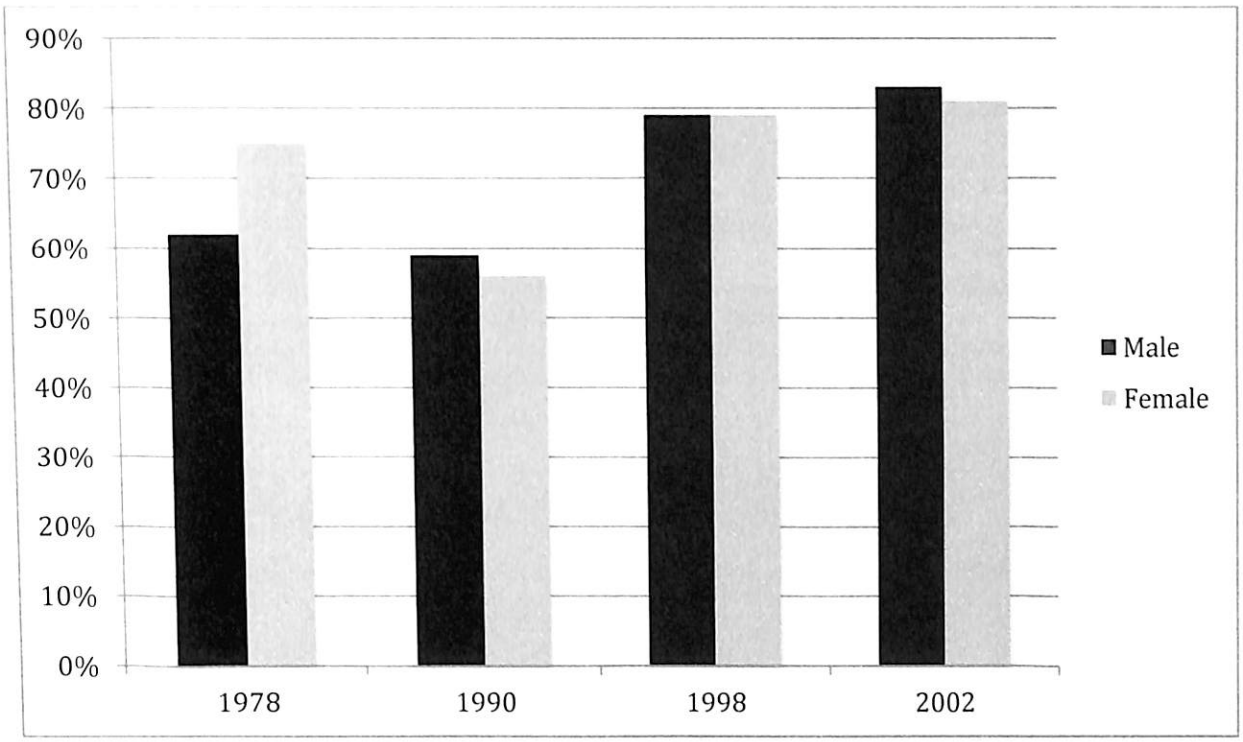
Figure 2.6: Percent of Male and Female Florida State Legislature Candidates who were Challengers, by Year



The difference between the percentages of challenger candidates of the genders is marginal in Michigan, as shown in Figure 2.7. In each year, the percentages are almost identical, except in 1978, when interestingly, more female candidates emerged than male candidates. Perhaps this can be attributed to the Feminist Movement of the 70's and more women were interested in running for politics than in the past.

As shown in Figure 2.8, New York has a higher percentage of female challenger candidates than male challenger candidates in every year studied except 2002. The difference was largest in 1978, which like Michigan, could be attributed to the 1970's Feminist Movement. The difference between the percentage of challenger candidates between the two has steadily decreased, though the number of male challenger candidates

Figure 2.7: Percent of Male and Female Michigan State Legislature Candidates who were Challengers, by Year



has not changed significantly; clearly, the number of female challenger candidates has dramatically decreased, which may be because once female candidates emerged in the 1970s, they continued running for office and hence steadily became incumbent candidates.

Like in New York, the difference between the percentage of challenger candidates between genders in North Carolina has steadily decreased, with the largest difference in 1978, as shown in Figure 2.9. These changes can again be attributed to the emergence of female candidates leading to more incumbent female candidates.

In Oklahoma, the difference between the percentage of challenger female and male candidates is also small, and 1978 was the only year in which there were more male non-incumbent candidates than females, as shown in Figure 2.10. Oklahoma is unlike Michigan, New York, and North Carolina in that it is more culturally conservative, so

Figure 2.8: Percent of Male and Female New York State Legislature Candidates who were Challengers, by Year

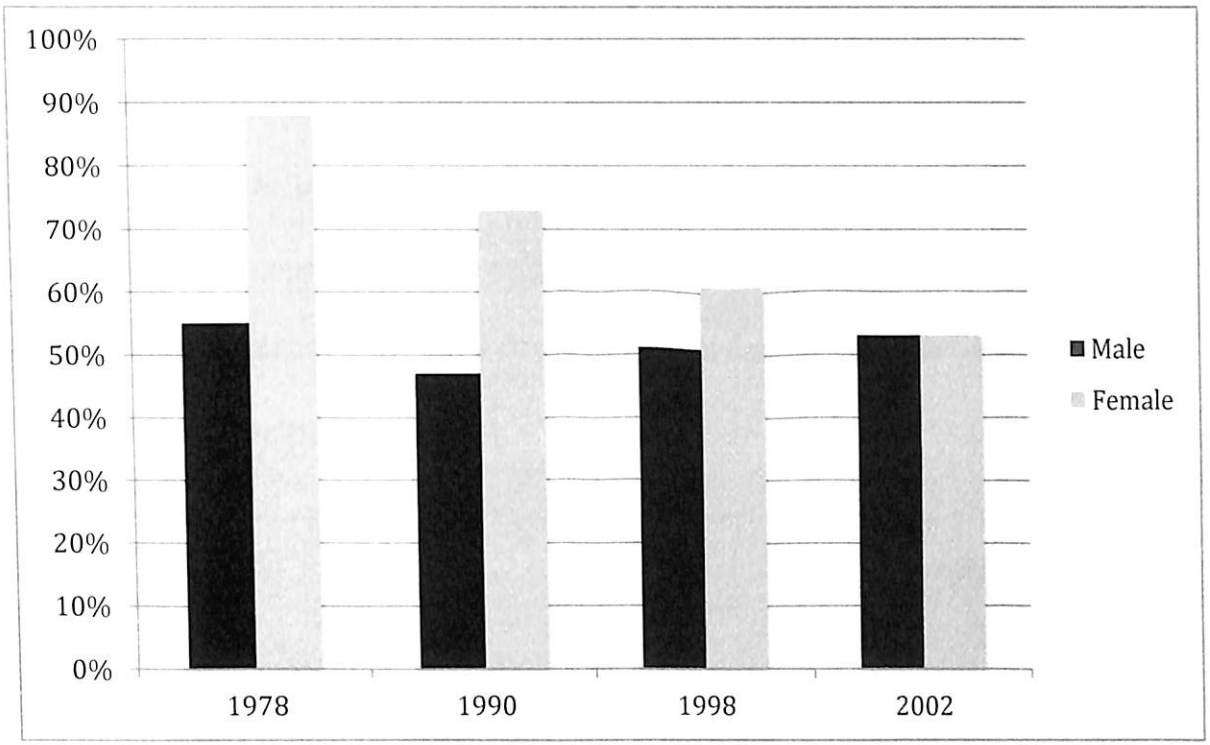
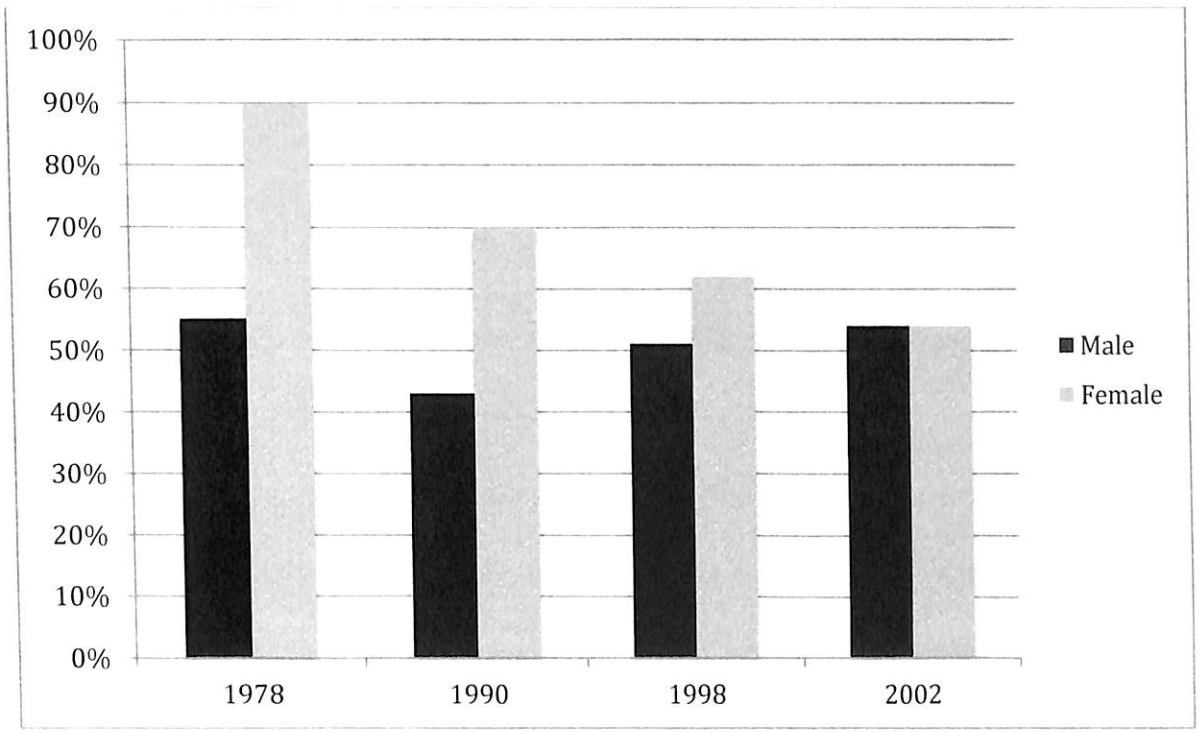
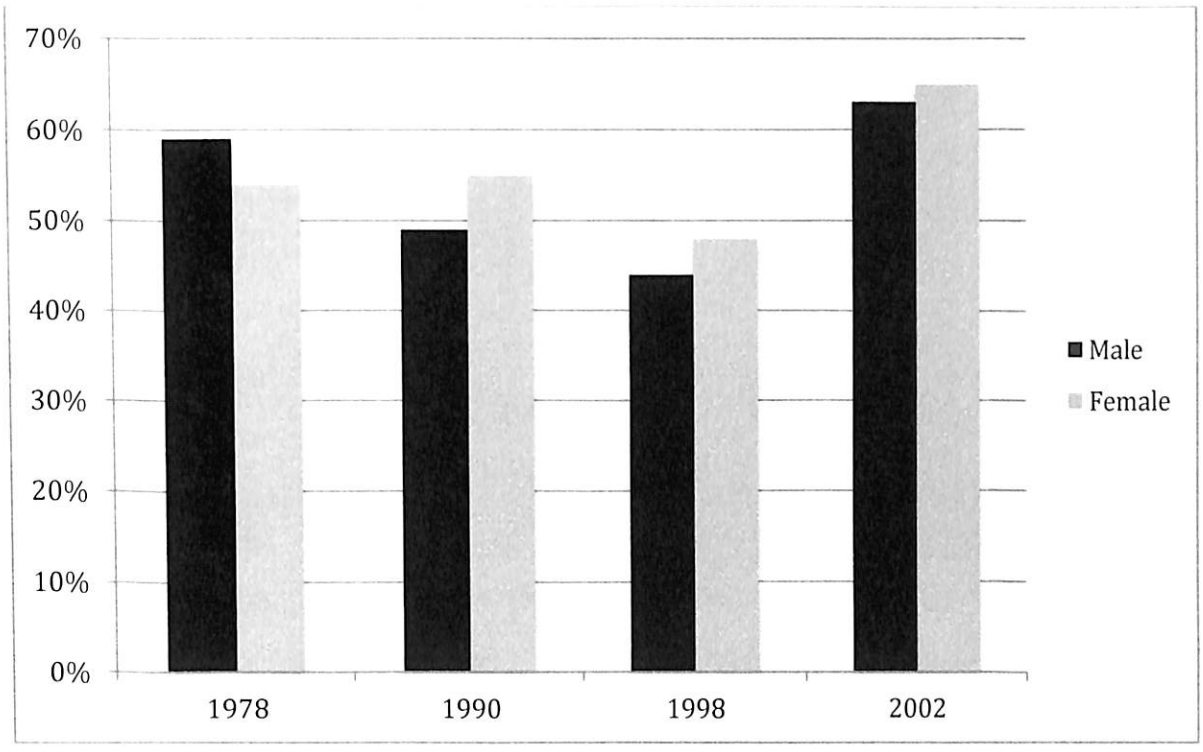


Figure 2.9: Percent of Male and Female North Carolina State Legislature Candidates who were Challengers, by Year



perhaps the 1970s did not bring as large of a Feminist Movement to Oklahoma as it did to the other states. There have been more female challenger candidates than male in all of the other years, which may be because there are fewer female winners in Oklahoma, and consequently fewer female incumbents. But because the differences are so minor, there does not seem to be much of a problem of female candidate emergence in Oklahoma, and in fact candidate emergence between genders seems to be very similar across the states.

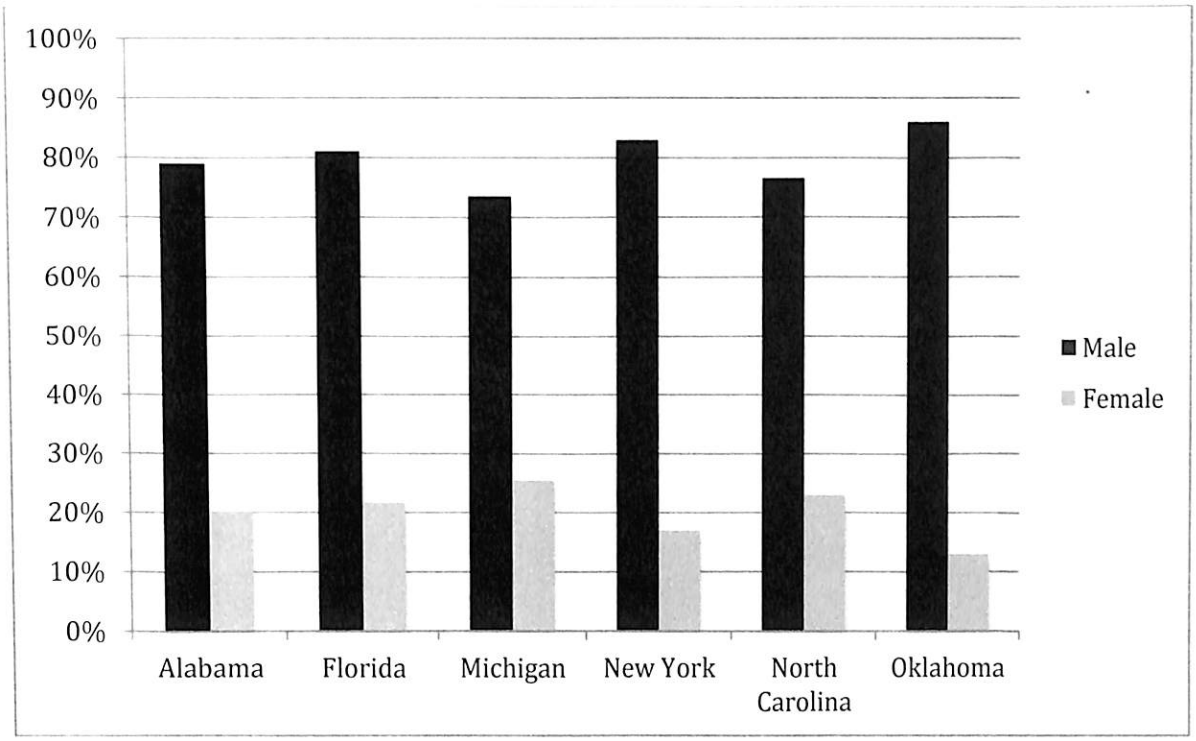
Figure 2.10: Percent of Male and Female Oklahoma State Legislature Candidates who were Challengers, by Year



I also analyzed the percentage of all challenger candidates across the years and by state. Michigan has the highest percentage of female challenger candidates and Oklahoma has the least. Surprisingly, New York has the second lowest percentage of female challenger candidates, which could either be because fewer female candidates emerge in New York or be because there are already dominant female New York state legislators, and so there are not as many challenger candidates. It is also clear from Figure 2.11 that

across all states, there is a much larger number of male challenger candidates than female challenger candidates, but this is because not as many females are involved in politics as males and so do not take up a high percentage in challengers, although the percentage of female candidates who are challengers is close to the percentage of male candidates who are challengers.

Figure 2.11: Gender Composition of the Average Percentages of Challenger Candidates between States by Year

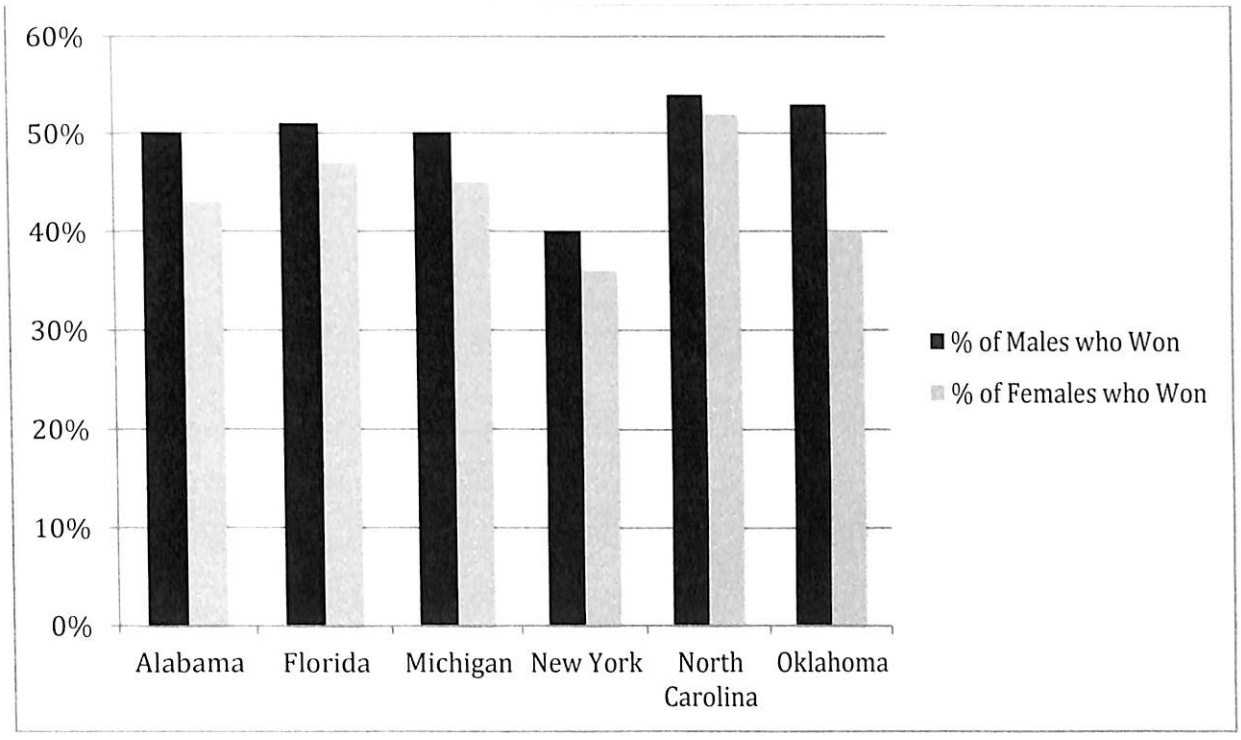


2.4. Percentage of State Legislature Candidates Who Win

The number of female state legislature candidates is not the only useful information in this study, it is also important to determine what percentage of these candidates actually win in their races. In Figure 2.12, the average percentage of state legislature candidates who win office is depicted by state and by gender. As is shown in this chart, though many of the female state legislature candidates did not win office,

neither did many of the male candidates. In each state, however, fewer female candidates won than male. The difference is most pronounced between the two genders in Alabama and Oklahoma, pointing to a voter bias perhaps caused by social conservatism. The smallest difference between the two genders' percentages of winning candidates is in North Carolina, with the other states' differences between genders marginal as well, perhaps demonstrating that it is not a voter bias which causes a smaller percentage of women in state legislatures in Florida, Michigan, New York, and North Carolina, but instead simply a lack of female candidate emergence.

2.12: Average Percentages of Winning State Legislator Candidates by Gender and by Year



2.5. Conclusion

Through my analysis of the Carsey-Berry State Legislative Election Returns dataset, I discovered that there is a lack of female candidate recruitment in the South, as

fewer females run for office in the South, specifically in the culturally conservative states, than in other regions. This also suggests that my theory that cultural conservatism, as shown specifically through Southern Baptism, can affect the likelihood of a person to vote for a female for office could be correct because the states with the highest concentrations of Southern Baptists are also the only states in which the difference between average winning percentages between genders was most significant.

Candidate emergence and a voter bias go hand in hand, and I believe both are related to cultural conservatism. If a person is accustomed to traditional gender roles, he or she may be less likely to vote for a female candidate, and a female potential candidate may be less likely to run either because she holds traditional gender perceptions herself or because she anticipates a loss.

Using Michigan and New York as examples, perhaps a way in which more females could be represented as state legislators is through professional legislatures which pay more and can serve as full-time jobs. I cannot explicitly determine the effect of term limits on gender representation in state legislature, but it seems that term limits can have a noticeable effect on gender representation when comparing two very similar state legislatures. Though Florida and North Carolina do not hold true to this theory, a possible explanation is that these are two battleground states, and so national politics could have a stronger influence on Florida and North Carolina state elections than in the other states that are less contested, and so outside factors may not be as important in these states.

The information I found also showed that over time, more women have run for candidacy and have been elected to office. Perhaps the number of female politicians will continue to increase if cultural conservatism's influence over gender perception wanes.

CHAPTER III: Gender Voting Bias in the South

For the third chapter of my thesis, I examined a possible voter bias against female politicians in the South. As mentioned in the first chapter, it has been hypothesized and even suggested by political researchers that Southerners are more likely to have traditional gender role perceptions than people in other regions of the U.S., and are also less likely to vote for a female for office. Therefore, I hypothesize that it is cultural conservatism that helps to create a bias against female politicians in the South, as traditional gender roles could dissuade someone for voting for a female politician if the voter believes women do not belong in politics.

According to a study conducted by Scott Carter and Casey Borch, *Assessing the Effects of Urbanism and Regionalism on Gender-Role* Attitudes, Southern regionalism does in fact have an effect on gender-role attitudes. The two researchers surveyed people living in both Southern non-urban areas and people in urban areas about gender roles across several years from 1974 to 1998. The researchers found that in other more urbanized areas of America, people did not hold as traditional of gender role perceptions, and moreover, traditional gender roles have decreased in these regions overtime. However, in the South, these conservative gender role perceptions have not changed as dramatically over time, and in fact it appears that the region has become more distinct in

regards to gender role perceptions as the migration of people to cities and other areas causes an increase of like-minded people in the South.

As discussed in the first chapter, Brown researchers Coates and Rice developed the study *Gender Role Attitudes in the Southern United States* and determined that Southerners are not only more likely to have traditional gender role perceptions, but are also less likely to vote for a woman into politics. Because Southern culture has been shown to include more conservative gender perceptions than in other regional cultures, and because of the implications of these perceptions, which discourage a woman to work outside the home, presumably these gender role views could have an impact on vote choice and could cause a lack of female politicians in the South.

3. 1. Research Design

To measure a voter bias in the South, I implemented my own survey. Originally, this was to be carried out via an exit poll on Election Day 2010, November 2. However, due to heavy rain on Election Day, this was not possible. Instead, I used my poll on November 7 at a popular breakfast restaurant in Oxford, Mississippi: Big Bad Breakfast. Because I implemented the poll at this restaurant instead of directly outside the polling places as originally intended, there are some possible issues with my sample population.

First, because Oxford is a small college town, I presumably polled a disproportionate amount of college students when compared to the South at large. Second, not all of the people polled had actually voted in the 2010 Election, creating a sample population that does not reflect the actual voting population of Oxford. Also, there is a possibility that not all of the sample population was from the American South.

Last, Big Bad Breakfast is an upscale restaurant supported by a clientele that may be more financially stable and perhaps more educated than the population of Oxford as a whole. The breakfast restaurant is also supported by a mainly Caucasian clientele. That being said, I polled people of all ages, was able to interview both Caucasians and African-Americans (though a limited number), and determined the demographics of my sample, so my findings still hold legitimacy and importance.

The poll I used asked a series of questions, some about voter identification, others about gender perceptions, and still others to establish the demographics of the sample population. One major error in the survey was that I left out gender identification, and so it is unclear as to who in the sample population is male or female, which would have been of help in the study to determine if voters are more or less likely to vote for a female politician based on their own gender. The survey's demographics included age, highest level of education, party identification, and race, allowing for examination of these important demographics and their relation to a possible gender voting bias.

The poll began with questions about voter identification, voter fraud, vote theft, voter impersonation, election reform, and questions about voters' experiences in the 2010 Election. These questions were to help with another research project, but also served to disguise the purpose of the survey as to disallow some bias (if the sample population knew the poll's intent was to determined gender voting bias, they may have formulated their answers to be socially acceptable instead of completely honest).

The sample population was also given two statements about gender perceptions in which they were asked to determine if they strongly agreed, agreed, were not sure, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with these opinions about gender. These statements were

mixed in with the questions about voting. One of these statements was "it is appropriate for a woman to work outside the home even if her husband can fully financially support her." Another statement was "in an ideal world, it is better for everyone if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family." These two statements were inspired by Coates and Rice's study *Gender Roles in the Southern United States*, and serve to establish if traditional gender perceptions alter the likelihood of a voter to choose a candidate of a certain gender over a candidate of another gender.

The last part of the poll, which served as the most explicit measure of a possible voter bias against female politicians, was a quasi-election. In each version of the survey, a man, John Hall, ran against a woman, Kim Miller. Their pictures showed two reasonably attractive, non-descript, white politicians. Their names are also not ethnically descriptive, as making the two candidates as generic as possible served to isolate potential variables which could affect vote choice besides gender. The candidates were also given similar biographies: each candidate was said to be of the person completing the survey's party, and it was stated that Kim Miller "believes in accountable public officials and support for roads and public transportation" and that John Hall "believes in responsive government and support for education and transportation." Both candidates' descriptions were similar and non-partisan, and the sample population was also given the option of "not sure," which served as the only truly non-biased answer because the only genuine difference in the candidates was gender.

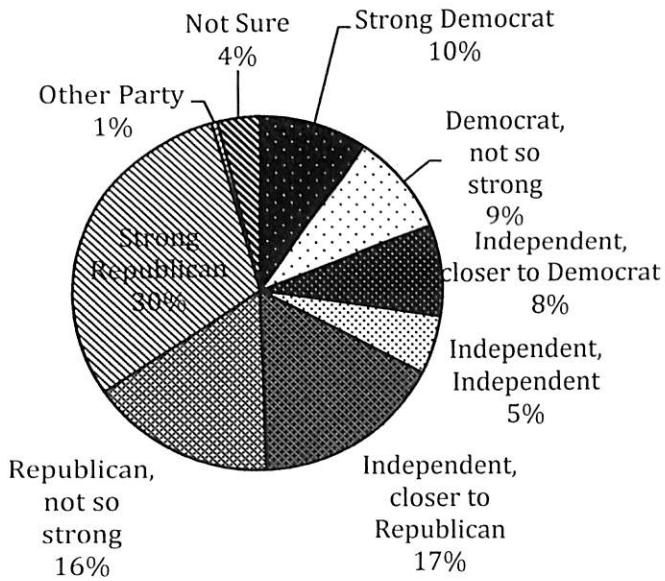
The survey was randomly changed with Kate Miller and John Hall as either the incumbent or the challenger and was changed with the office of the hypothetical election as either governor or county commissioner. These factors differed from survey to survey

to see if incumbency affected the outcome of the elections and to determine if there is a difference in bias against female politicians in executive positions when compared to lower-level offices.

3.2. Sample Demographics

Those polled, as expected, were mainly in their late teens and twenties; about 50 percent identified themselves as 18-29 years of age. However, the other 50 percent were in their thirties to eighties, the majority in their forties to late fifties. About 93.5 percent of the sample population was Caucasian and 4.5 percent African American; though this is not by any means accurately descriptive of Southern voters' races, African Americans are a minority population and have a lower voter turnout than Caucasians in the South, so the sample is not completely unrepresentative.

Figure 3.1: Partisan Composition of Sample Population, n=200



As shown in Figure 3.1, 30 percent of the sample identified themselves as strong Republican; 16.5 percent identified themselves as Republican, not so strong, and 16 percent identified themselves as Independent, closer to Republican. Merely 28.5 percent of the sample identified themselves as either a strong Democrat, Democrat, not so strong, or Independent, closer to Democrat, and 9 percent did not identify with either the Republican or Democratic Party, or were not sure. Because the South is overwhelmingly Republican, the sample population serves as a legitimate sample.

Education was also included in the demographics, and 36.5 percent of the population had completed some college, which is not surprising considering the survey was taken in a college town. Twenty-nine percent had completed a graduate degree, while 19.5 percent had a high school degree as their highest level of education. This is not representative of the South, because the percentage of Southerners and Americans in general who have completed a graduate degree is lower than this percentage, but it could be assumed that perhaps educated people would be more likely to vote for a woman because of more progressive mindsets.

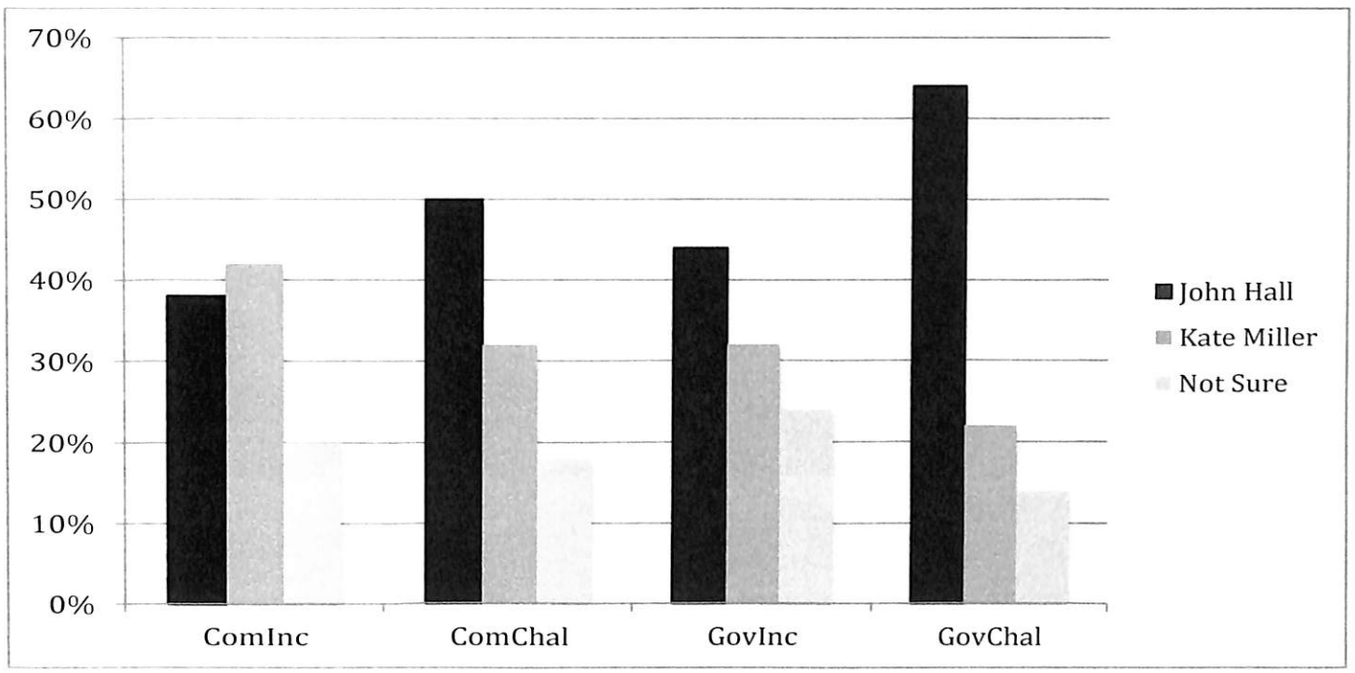
3.3. Election Results

Though the sample population was well-educated, quasi-candidate John Hall beat candidate Kim Miller in all but one of the elections, proving that education may not be a direct cause in the likelihood of someone to vote for a woman. Kate's only win was as incumbent county commissioner, an election she won by 4 percent, with 42 percent of the votes, John Hall winning 38 percent, and 20 percent of the sample selecting "not sure."

The next closest election was that of county commissioner in which Kate Miller was the challenger candidate, an election that she lost with 32 percent of the votes. John

Hall won 50 percent of the votes in this election, with 18 percent of the sample "not sure" about their choice of candidate. However, John Hall won fewer votes in the Governor race when Kate Miller was the incumbent, though he still won the election with 44 percent of the votes. Thirty-two percent of the sample voted for Kate Miller in this race, and 24 percent were unsure. John Hall won by the highest margin in the election in which he was the incumbent for the governor race with 64 percent of the votes. Kate Miller won 22 percent of the votes in this race, with 14 percent of the sample selecting "not sure." These results are depicted in Figure 3.2.

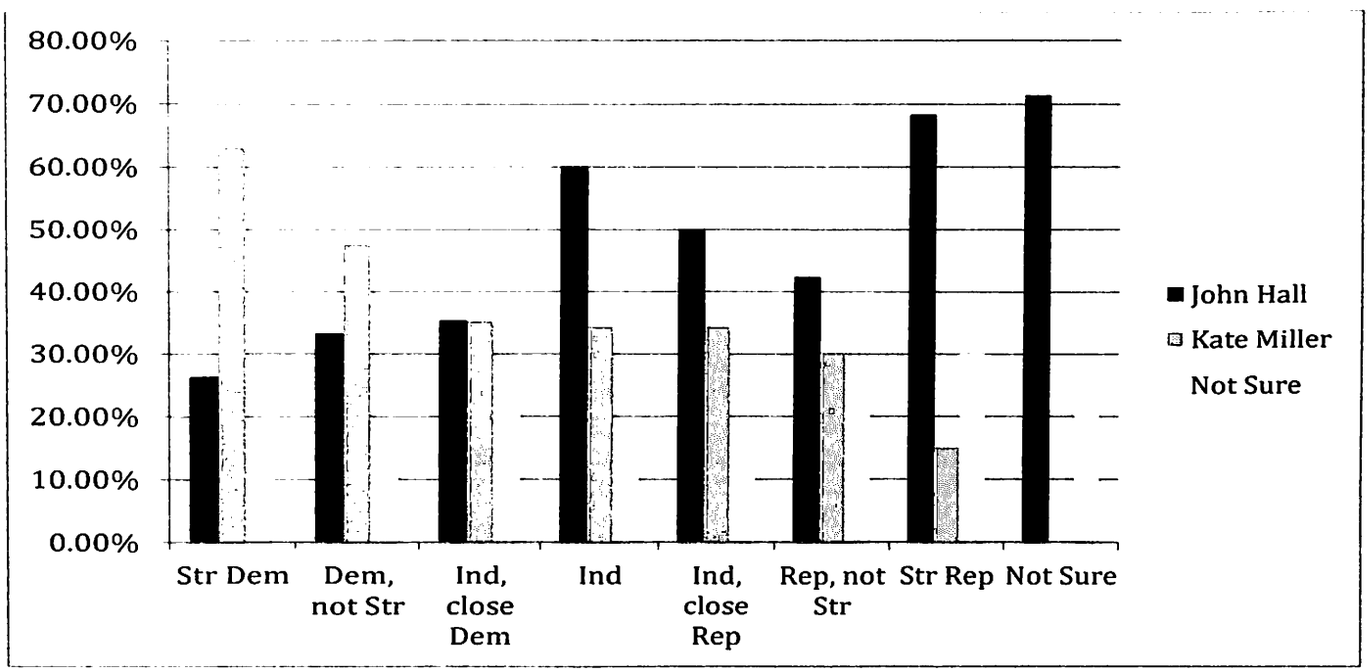
Figure 3. 2. Quasi-election Results by Election, n=200



The results show that a voter bias against female politicians exists, as the candidates were almost identical besides their names and pictures, and "not sure" would have been the only truly unbiased selection in the quasi-election. These results also demonstrate that level of office and incumbency are important in elections. The only election that quasi-candidate Kate Miller won was the election in which she was the

incumbent candidate for county commissioner, showing that a female candidate is most likely to win if she is the incumbent and is running for a low-level office. For vote choice of the sample population, level of office also seems more important than incumbency in regards to gender, as Kate did second-best in her election as the challenger for county commissioner, and did not win in her election as the governor incumbent. From my findings, it can be presumed that women fare best in elections for low-level office, and that incumbency strengthens their chances in winning an election.

Figure 3.3 Average Percentages of Quasi-election Results by Partisanship, n=200



Because the South is predominantly Republican, it is important to examine if partisanship is correlated to a voter's tendency to vote for a male or female candidate. Figure 3.3 depicts the percentage of voters from across the ideological sphere, but, unlike the preceding figures in this study, does not include "Other Party," as only one person from the sample population selected this option.

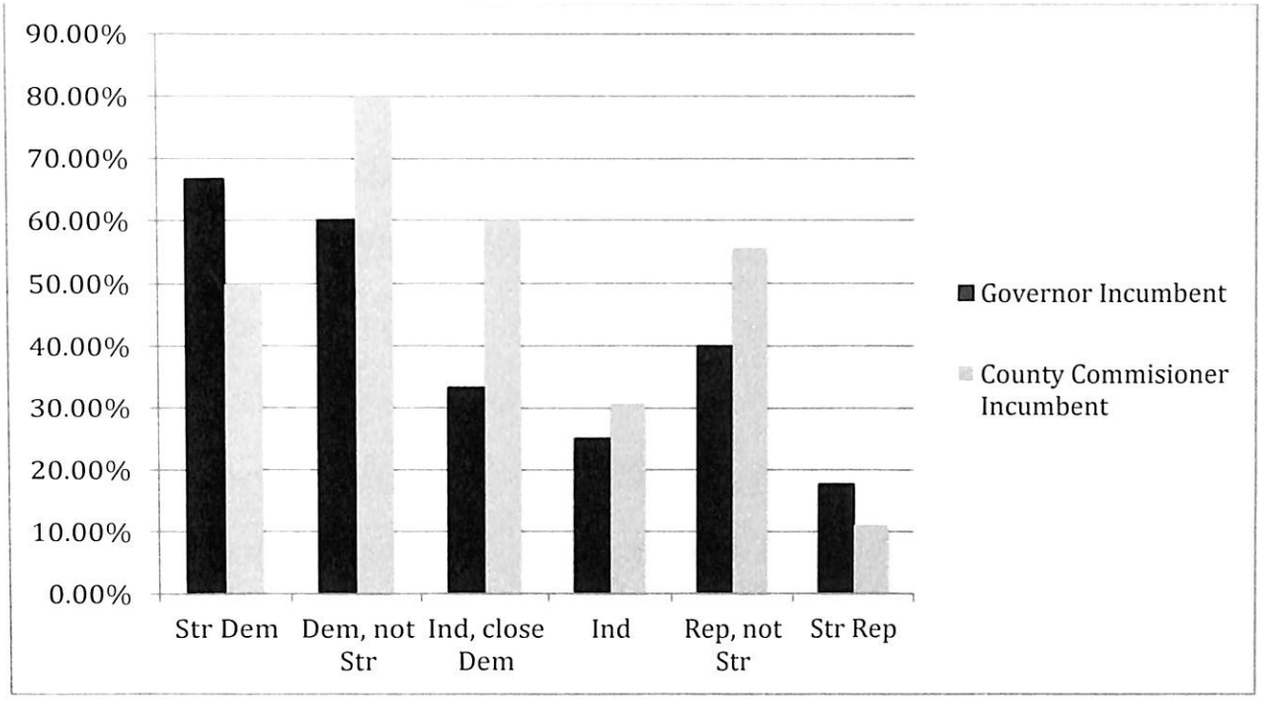
As shown in Figure 3.3, people who were "not sure" about their political party had the highest percentage of votes for John Hall within the political groups, and none of these people voted for Kate Miller in any election, though it should be noted that there were far fewer people "not sure" about their partisanship than the number of people represented in many of the other partisan groups. Following closely behind, "strong Republicans" gave the second highest percentage of their vote to John Hall; almost 70 percent of the strong Republicans voted for John Hall in all of the quasi-elections, and far fewer strong Republicans voted for Kate Miller (a little under 15 percent).

"Strong Democrats" voted for Kate Miller the most out of any other partisanship and "Democrats, not so strong" followed closely behind. Kate Miller's vote share in each of the Independent categories is consistent, and almost the same number of "Republicans, not so strong" voted for Miller as Independents. Notably, a high percentage of Independents who do not lean towards a party voted for John Hall, a percentage even greater than that of Republican-leaning Independents and not so strong Republicans. Strong Democrats, Independents, and conservative Independents were the least likely to be unsure about their candidate choice.

It served useful to concentrate on specific elections instead of solely the average results throughout the four quasi-elections, and the chart below depicts the percentage of votes for Miller by partisanship in the election in which Miller was the Governor incumbent candidate and the election in which she was the County Commissioner incumbent candidate. By isolating the incumbency variables, I was able to examine the effect of the level of office on a female politician's likelihood to win by the partisanship of her voters. Selecting two elections in which Miller was incumbent served to focus on

the level of office's effect on vote choice, and as the incumbent candidate, Miller would presumably have an advantage in both of these elections. Because there was a small number of Independents, people of other parties, and those unsure about their partisanship, I only included six levels of partisanship in Figure 3.4, with each group relating to a specific party.

Figure 3.4: Kate Miller's Quasi-election Results by Office and by Partisanship, n=19



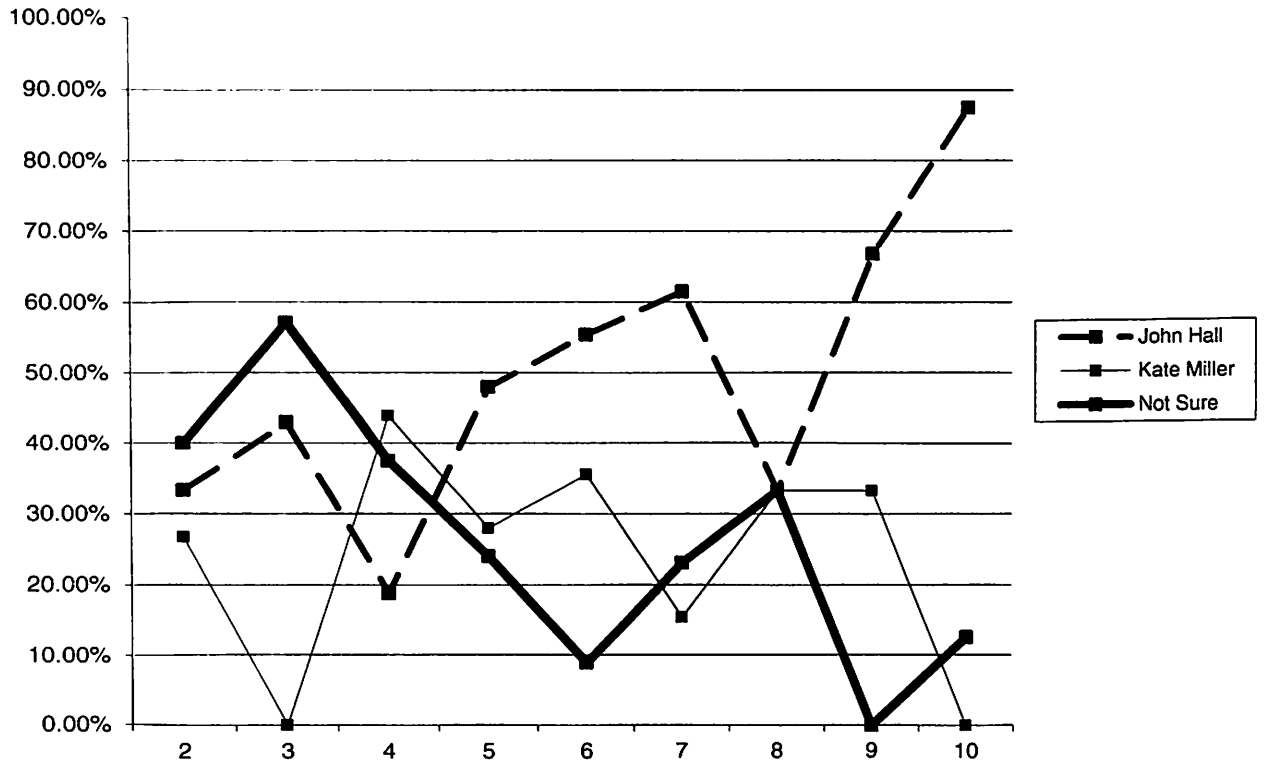
Interestingly, the only groups who voted for Kate Miller more as the Governor incumbent candidate than the County Commissioner incumbent candidate were the two extreme ends of the spectrum, the strong Democrats and strong Republicans, demonstrating that perhaps it is not partisanship which causes a bias against female politicians in executive positions, but it is instead the level of party loyalty which determines the likelihood of a voter to choose a female politician for different levels of political position. Usually, voters who are most loyal to their party are most involved in politics, and so perhaps a greater understanding and interest in politics leads to a stronger

likelihood of voting for a female candidate into an executive position. It should also be noted that voters with strong party loyalty are most likely to vote, and so perhaps in a genuine election, a female candidate would fair better in an executive race. What was also surprising about these results is that Independents and Independent Liberals were the most likely to vote for Miller for County Commissioner rather than Governor, demonstrating that perhaps Independent voters as well as Republican voters are more likely to vote for a female politician into a lower-level office rather than into an executive position.

It should also be noted that strong Republicans and those who were unsure about partisanship were most likely to be unsure about candidate choice in the quasi-elections, as the groups chose "not sure" in the election 44.4 percent and 50 percent of the time, respectably. Not so strong Democrats, Democratic-leaning Independents, and Independents never chose "not sure" in these quasi-elections, and strong Democrats, Republican-leaning Independents, and not so strong Republicans were unsure about candidate choice between 15-25 percent of the time.

The survey included two questions pertaining to gender perceptions, and I combined the two gender variables into one to measure traditional gender roles and in turn cultural conservatism. The level of cultural conservatism was measured on a scale from 2-10, with 2 being the least conservative and 10 being the most conservative. The average percentage of each of these group's votes for each option is depicted in Figure 3.5.

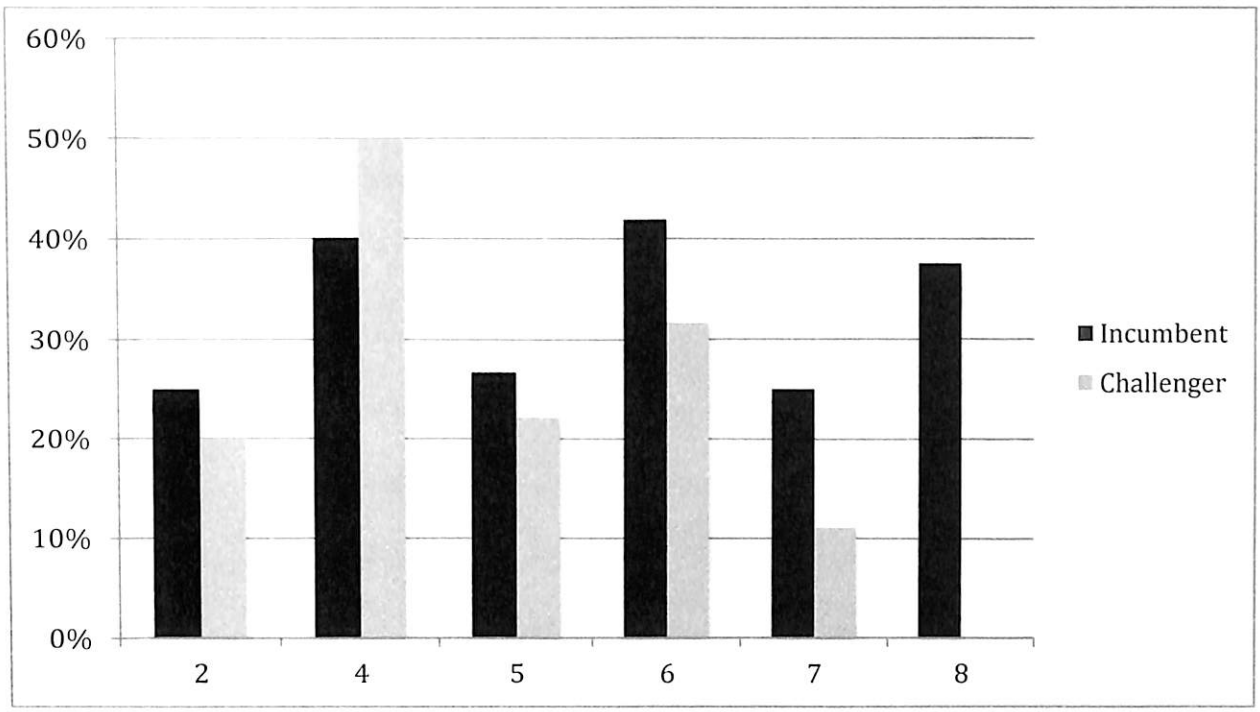
Figure 3.5: Average Percentages of Quasi-election Results by Level of Cultural Conservatism, n=200



As the figure shows, the percentage of votes between candidates was closest in the least culturally conservative group, and the percentage of votes was most dispersed in the most culturally conservative group, with 0 percent of the most culturally conservative people voting for Miller and close to 90 percent voting for Hall. The votes for John Hall increase with the level of cultural conservatism, except for those ranking "4" on the culturally conservative scale, who voted for Hall the least out of any group, and another decrease in the ranking of "8," almost to as low of a percentage as that of those with a ranking of "3" who voted for Hall. The pattern of the percentages of people who voted for Kate Miller in each of these groups is less obvious, and is not a steady increase or decrease, but differs greatly from ranking to ranking. Perhaps this is because Miller did

not receive as many votes overall, and so it was easier for the percentages to differ, and perhaps because people of all cultural conservatism rankings may be likely to vote for a female politician into a low-ranking position like county commissioner rather than into an executive position.

Figure 3.6: Average Percentages of Votes for Kate Miller as Incumbent and Challenger by Level of Cultural Conservatism, n=33



I also determined how incumbency affected each group of people's vote choice. I recoded the variables for each election into two "incumbency" and "challenger" variables. Figure 3.6 depicts the percentage in each group who voted for Kate Miller when she was an incumbent and when she was a challenger in all of the elections. Cultural conservatism levels "3," "9," and "10" were left out of the graph because Miller received no votes from sections "3" and "10" of the population, making it impossible to measure the effect of incumbency on these voters. It also turned out that the people with a

score of "9" in cultural conservatism received only quasi-ballots when Miller was the challenger, and so this section of the sample was also left out of the figure.

Figure 3.6 shows that all the groups except "4" are more likely to vote for Miller when she was an incumbent, most notably those of the cultural conservatism ranking "7," who voted for Miller 15 percent more of the time when she was an incumbent as opposed to a challenger, and those of "8" who only voted for Miller when she was an incumbent. Though the difference between levels "2" and "4" is difficult to understand, it does seem that the more culturally conservative a person is, the larger the gap is between the likelihood to vote for a female as an incumbent as opposed to a challenger.

3.4. Conclusions

Though this survey's sample population was not precisely descriptive of the South as a whole, I was still able to examine patterns in Southern vote choice by gender of the candidate. I found that both incumbency and level of office affect the likelihood of a female politician's success in elections, as she is more likely to be elected when she is in a lower-level office as opposed to an executive office, and to a lesser degree, is more likely to be elected when she is the incumbent candidate. I also showed that more Democratic voters are more likely to vote for a female candidate than Republican voters, and that Independents are in fact the most likely to vote for a male candidate as opposed to a female candidate, perhaps because of a lack of political knowledge and interest. I also discovered that the only groups that are more likely to vote for a female candidate in an executive position as opposed to a low-level office are the extreme voters of each party. These factors are important in a study of Southern politics, as the South is

predominantly Republican and composed of many strong Republicans, so its dominant partisanship may affect the success of Southern female candidates.

Traditional gender perceptions and cultural conservatism also play a part in these elections, as the most culturally conservative people are much less likely to vote for a female candidate, and the likelihood to vote for a male candidate as opposed to a female candidate generally increases with level of cultural conservatism. It also seems likely that the more culturally conservative a person is, the larger the gap between the likelihood for that person to vote for a female as a challenger candidate as opposed to an incumbent candidate. This is important because it is likely that one reason there are fewer female politicians in the South as opposed to other regions is because the South is a culturally conservative area and therefore its gender roles may cause a voter bias.

In conclusion, my survey first and foremost demonstrated that some sort of voter bias exists in the South, as the only non-biased choice in the quasi-election was for "not sure," and because John Hall received so many more votes than Kate Miller overall. It seems that a voter bias against female candidates is most pronounced when in executive positions, and especially when she is the challenger candidate. Partisanship and cultural conservatism are also correlated to a voter bias against female candidates, as when the levels of political or cultural conservatism increase, the likelihood to vote for a female candidate decreases. All of these factors can help to explain the lack of female politicians in the South.

CHAPTER IV: Conclusion

As predicted, both a lack of female candidate emergence and a voting bias against female candidates exist in the South, which I showed in my analysis of the Carsey-Berry Data Set of Legislative Election Returns as well as through an investigation of the results of my survey. I also hypothesized that a prominence of cultural conservatism as well as traditional gender role attitudes would alter or cause both of the aforementioned effects on female political representation in the South. Though cultural conservatism is difficult to define and analyze, through both an examination of the religiosity of the South as well as gender role attitude questions in my secondary sources and my survey, I believe I was able to determine that the states with the highest percentages of Southern Baptists, and in turn presumably the states that have the highest levels of cultural conservatism, are the states with the fewest female politicians.

4.1: Other Possible Causes

But cultural conservatism, candidate non-emergence, and voter bias are not the only factors that could affect the percentage of female politicians in the South. There are other possible causes for an underrepresentation that were not discussed in detail in this study.

Females on average make less money than men (http://www.time.com), and the South is the poorest region of the U.S (http://money.cnn.com). Perhaps the deficiency in

the number of Southern female candidates and politicians is caused by female candidates' lack of resources for a campaign. Another related possible cause is that because of Southern female candidates' minimal allocation of resources, these candidates are unable to support a political career once in office, as no Southern state has a professional legislature, and thus these legislators make less money than representatives in professional legislatures which pay more and have longer sessions.

According to JC McKinney in *The Changing South: National Incorporation of a Region*, the South is also home, in general, to less-educated people than in other regions of the U.S. Southerners are less likely to have finished high school and to have obtained college degrees than Americans in other regions, and this could be another reason that there is an underrepresentation of women in Southern politics because it is likely that less-educated females could be less likely to become interested in politics or to consider a career in politics. Less-educated voters could also be less likely to select a female candidate as education and progressive ideas often go hand and hand, though this is not decided because the sample population in my survey was highly educated yet still consistently chose a male candidate.

Another factor that could relate to both low education and traditional gender roles is that women are traditionally caretakers and therefore often plan a family and raise children before they have the opportunity to become interested in politics, and are therefore lacking in experience, connections, and money. It is difficult for inexperienced candidates to allocate enough campaign resources to run for candidacy because financial support is usually given to candidates who are expected to win. This could be a problem specifically in the South because less-educated women are more likely to have children

unplanned and at a younger age, and would not have as much money to support both their families and political careers. This could also have influence in the South because as stated before, conservative gender role attitudes relate to opinions about women working outside of the home, and being a mother could therefore intensify a traditional gender role effect.

Another potential factor that was touched on briefly in this study is the prominence of the Republican Party in the South. Not only are women more likely to be Democrats as opposed to Republicans, but Republicans are also thought to be less savvy at recruiting female candidates. In *Political Parties and the Recruitment of Women to State Legislatures*, it is stated that Democratic women state representatives are more likely to be members of at least one major women's organization (84 percent as compared to 70 percent for Republican women), and in state senates, 90 percent of Democratic women are members of at least one major women's organization as compared to 69 percent of Republican women. E.M.I.L.Y. is a program specifically made to recruit female politicians, and while it is open only for Democratic female candidates, there is no Republican counterpart. Because the South is predominantly Republican, this could play a part in the underrepresentation of female politicians in the South.

Yet another potential cause of the lack of female politicians in the South is the media's portrayal of female candidates. According to *Portraying Politics*, female candidates and politicians are portrayed in a different light than their male counterparts in both the campaign cycle as well as while in office. There is a much stronger media emphasis on female candidates' appearances when compared to males', which may dissuade some potential female candidates from running for office, and larger attention is

also paid to female candidates' families. In states with traditional gender attitudes, criticism of a woman's family could be of more significance than in other states, as with the conception that a female's main role is as caretaker could also come the notion that a female candidate should be more concerned with the media's portrayal of her family than with her political aspirations. Also the characterization of a female politician's family could be of more personal impact on the candidate in a region where a woman's most important role is as mother and wife.

4.2: Possible Solutions

The difference between the percentage of female politicians in the South and in other regions is not easily explicable; there are boundless potential explanations and causes for the discrepancy. However, determining some of the causes is still productive, as it can lead to solutions to the problem.

One method that could encourage women's involvement in politics in the South is improving education. With better education, females who are interested in politics can acquire the tools needed to plan for a political career as well as gain the confidence needed to run for candidacy and to make the connections necessary for an effective campaign. Education can also cultivate an interest in politics as well as expand knowledge of politics. Education stimulates progressive thought in both potential female candidates as well as their possible constituencies, and can thus help to eliminate conservative gender attitudes. Education can also lead to a higher income. With higher incomes, potential female candidates could afford a career in politics of which they may otherwise be unable to bear the expense.

Quota systems exist in the electoral systems of many countries to encourage an increase in female political representation. In these systems, a certain number of female candidates must be either depicted on the ballot or elected into office. However, because many of the causes behind the Southern gap in females in politics when compared to the population are cultural, to implement such a structural change—a change that essentially forces the election of female representatives—would not truly be solving the underlying cultural issue but instead disguising it, and would therefore be ineffective in the American South.

However, some policy changes could allow room for female politicians' success without forcing representation. One such change that could possibly increase the number of female candidates is the establishment of professional legislatures in Southern states. As demonstrated in the cases of the professional legislatures of Michigan and New York in this study, professional legislatures can attract more female candidates, as professional state legislators do not need a second source of income and can be more financially capable of supporting a career in politics.

Yet another policy change that could allow for more female state legislators would be the implementation of term limits in more states. Through my examination of state legislature returns, I determined it is possible that term limits can encourage female candidates to run for office as they are given more opportunities for open seats than in legislatures in which representative turnover is low.

Because of the Republican Party's dominance in the South, the party's implementation of more programs to support female Republican candidates could also lead to a higher level of female representation in Southern politics, as Coates and Rice

showed that encouragement can directly influence a person, especially a woman, to summon the confidence necessary to consider a career in politics and to take the steps necessary to solidify this goal.

With implementation of the aforementioned suggestions, a cultivation of Southern female politicians is possible. But because many of the causes behind the underrepresentation of Southern females in politics are cultural, it is difficult to prescribe efforts that would change a culture, as culture transforms overtime. Perhaps these reforms would speed up the process, and hopefully as the nation and world continue to progress and liberal ideas progress, these views will spread to even the most conservative areas of the United States. A Southern acceptance of untraditional gender attitudes would presumably lead to a greater acceptance of female politicians, and this acceptance could cause women to find the courage and inspiration to run for office as well as the ability to partake in a fair race.

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