Analysis of Differing Issues Amongst Women Politicians

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Introduction

In the arena of politics, women have a disadvantage opposed to men. The candidates themselves, when they run, have an equal chance of getting elected but run at lower rates than men. In the 2018 Midterm Elections, more women than ever before ran for office and achieved their goals. Women and men have different priorities, and this bleeds over into their political platforms and voting habits. Women tend to lean more towards social justice and care, while men are more clinical in their priorities, military and economics. Women on both sides of the aisle have similar priorities, but also, they differ greatly. This theory is important because it explains why there are far more women running as Democrats than as Republicans and it shows what women as candidates and voters care about the most.

Literature Review

The theory chosen for this analysis focuses on women candidates and politicians talking about different issues. The main author used in this research was Jennifer Lawless. Lawless (2008) believes that "voter assumptions about female candidates' ideology, combined with increasing party polarization, may also help to explain why fewer Republican women than Democratic women have been running for Congress over the last decade" (p. 128). According to a study completed by Lawless and Richard Fox (2004) "in terms of fundraising and vote totals, often considered the two most important indicators of electoral success, researchers find that women fare just as well, if not better than, their male counterparts" (p. 264). With these two statements, Lawless asserts that women must focus on different things than men to be successful in campaigning, but they also have to focus on different things depending on their parties. Women understand this theory and use their knowledge to exploit it to their benefit.

The research conducted shows an agreement amongst experts that this theory is sound and the reasonings behind the methods all tend to agree. A statement made by Kim Fridkin Kahn (1996) heavily agrees with Lawless by asserting "for voters, generic male and female candidates simply stand for different things" (p. 127). Voters are the ultimate deciders when it comes to a politician's level of success. Without winning the voters over, their career cannot go further, causing them to have to tailor their platforms to their constituents and focus on hot button topics.

In a study reviewed by Kathleen Dolan (2011) the study "confirm[s] the general pattern of men exhibiting higher levels of political knowledge than women" (p. 97), but Dolan goes on to say that there is no evidence that this is a biological issue, but a societal issue caused by gender roles and the socialization of politics. This "lack of knowledge" causes women to have to go to extra lengths to prove that they are fit for office and have to alter their stances to fit their voters' desires much more frequently than men.

Research conducted on the same issues shows a myriad of reasonings that women focus on different issues than other candidates. One theory given by Fox and Lawless (2001) "inherent in the eligibility pool is the assumption than women and men who make up the pool are similarly situated in how they view officeholding" (p. 412). Women have different priorities in the United States because of the societal gender roles that people adhere to. Women tend to care more about issues that help minorities, children, protect people in the workplace, and stop sexual crimes. The theory given by Fox and Lawless explains that men and women do not have the same priorities so their platforms will differ accordingly. Due to gender roles and the placement of politics throughout history, women have a much different viewpoint than men and other women from different backgrounds. Women from more liberal states tend to be more willing to introduce social reforms, while women from conservative states tend to stay in line with their parties'

stances on issues. To fix this issue and for politics to become more equal, voters need to become more open-minded and gender roles need to be ignored and broken and more importantly women as voters need to be independent and vote on issues that will benefit them.

All of the research conducted for this experiment, in addition to the supporting research from Lawless and Fox, there is agreement that the problem still exists. There is belief that the problem is more easily navigated, but the problem is still there and will always be there until true equality is achieved. Gender roles plays a huge part in this mindset and women have to use it to their advantage to be a successful politician.

One piece of data found in the research on this theory showed something interesting that none of the experts has mentioned yet. It coincides with the 2018 Midterm Elections and would need more election cycles to prove, but it seems like the less experienced (first term) politicians focused on more problems and were more radical in their beliefs. Politicians such as Ocasio-Cortez, Omar Ilhan, Abrams, Pressley, Davis, etc. all took big steps to stand out and doubled down on their main focuses. While the old guard amongst women in politics all seems to try to play it safe within their political parties and their stances all tend to be moderate and do not stand out in comparison to their fellow party members.

Methods

The method to my data collection for this research was simple. I searched prominent women politicians that have either been successful in their campaign or were successful to the point where they were a focus of the media. I tried to find members of both parties, but more of the women tended to be Democrats, especially the more inexperienced politicians. I picked both women that are new to office and women that have served for decades. When researching these candidates, I tried to find overviews of all of their stances as opposed to articles about specific
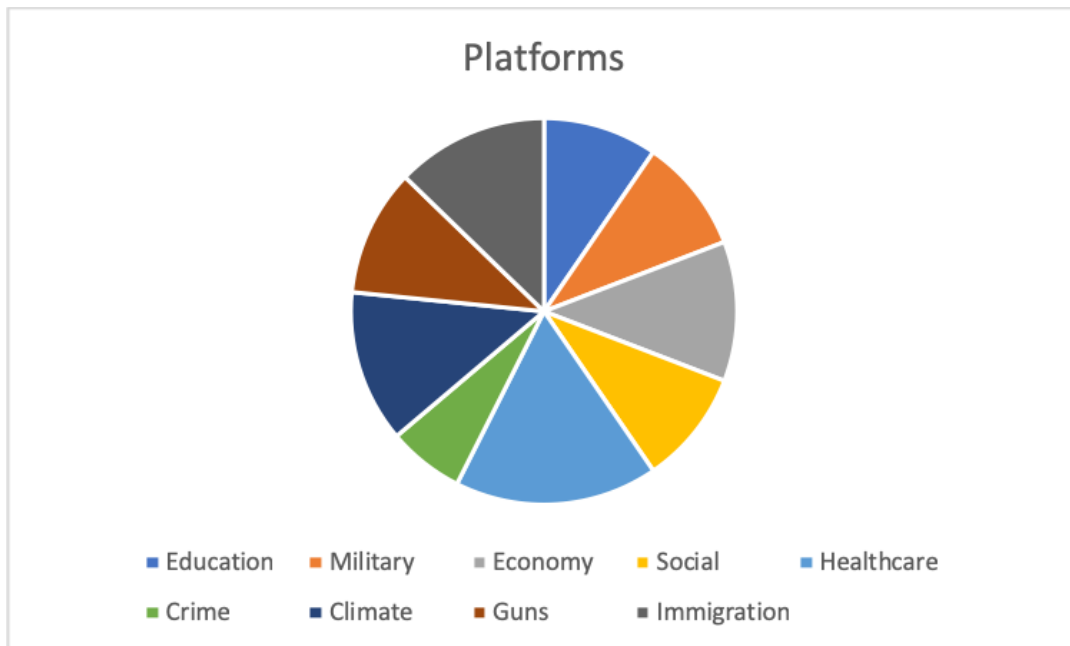
platforms. I used mostly national news, but for some of the candidates I had to use state-wide articles (Sinema and McSally).

Once I found the articles outlining their platforms, I coded the information by taking the most popular general platforms such as: education, military, economy, social, healthcare, crime, climate, guns, and immigration. These platforms are the generic topics on a political campaign, and I read each politician's platforms and code the information to adhere to those topics. When the politician focused heavily on a subject, I would code that section as a "1" and if they did not mention it or gave a generic answer, I coded it as "0". I then totaled up the findings and found which issues were most important to all the candidate researched. Next, I totaled the number of democrats and republicans as well as the inexperienced and experienced candidates researched. I made graphs for all three pieces of information that will be included in the next section.
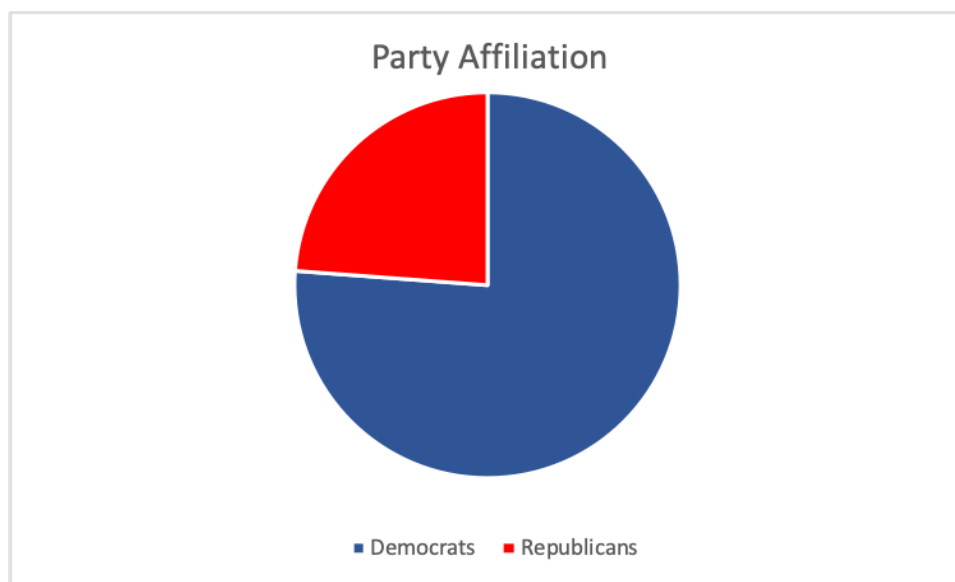
Findings

For this research, I used twenty-one women politicians and coded twenty-two articles. The articles coded were all primarily unbiased due them just being overviews about specific platforms that these women promoted. There was no conjecture about what else they should or should not support, all their platform information was given through direct quotes from the woman or the campaign itself. In the research, healthcare was the most common platform with sixteen candidates focusing on it, while crime was the lowest with six candidates. Education, social, and military had nine, economy had eleven, climate and immigration had 12 and guns had 10. There was no single issue that all women focused on. Some of the women researched only focused on one or two issues, while others were broader and cared about may issues. This

observation may be due to the difference of campaign they are running or ran. Women running

for president are expected to care about more issues, than someone running for governor.
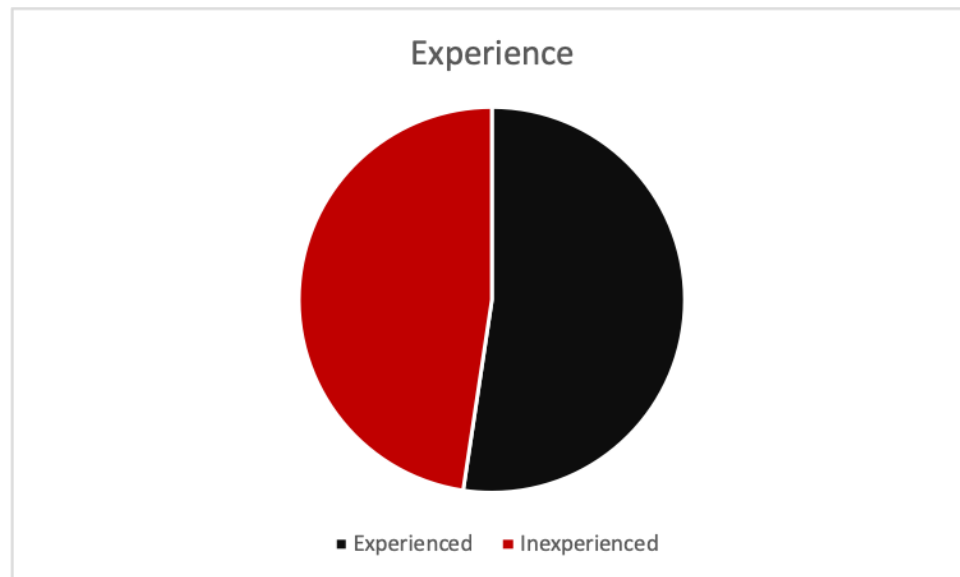

Platforms

Education Military Economy Social Healthcare
Crime Climate Guns Immigration

Candidate	Education	Military	Economy	Social	Healthcare	Crime	Climate	Guns	Immigration
Harris (D)	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Fiorina (R)	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Clinton (D)	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1
Warren (D)	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Palin (R)	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
Abrams (D)	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sinema (D)	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Gabbard (D)	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Klobuchar (D)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Gillibrand (D)	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
Boxer (D)	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Davis (D)	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
Haley (R)	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
McSally (R)	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1
Waters (D)	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Ocasio-Cortez (D)	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1
Ilhan (D)	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Feinstein (D)	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
Pressley (D)	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0
Valdez (D)	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Murkowski (R)	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
Totals	9	9	11	9	16	6	12	10	12

The platforms focused on were definitely in line with the belief by Dolan from the textbook that says "social welfare issues and an increased support for government spending on these programs constitute a major source of the gender gap. Women's lower levels of support for defense spending and military action have also played a role in explaining the gender gap over time" (p.89). Women tend to favor the Democrat party and with that they support issues that focuses on social welfare such as healthcare, social issues, and education while women that were Republican candidates tended to focus more on military, economy, and immigration. These research findings support the beliefs by Dolan, Lawless, and Fox that there is a differing of issues between not only men and women, but all women in the political arena.

Party Affiliation

■ Democrats   ■ Republicans

The data that I found regarding the correlation between experience and inexperience to political platforms was interesting. The more inexperienced and younger candidates were more radical in their views and focused on several topics as opposed to some of the older politicians that only focus on one or two issues their entire career. There seems to be a trend with younger politicians where they tend to be more revolutionary and believe much more radical beliefs than the establishment politicians in their respective parties. They focus much more on healthcare,

climate change, and education trying to push for more socialist policies or on the other side,

becoming more bipartisan than their fellow party members (Sinema). I was surprised by the

prevalence of less experienced successful politicians compared to the past. They may be more

polarizing than their elders, but they are handling their own and allowing women to have a more

diverse set of options come election time.

Conclusion

From the research conducted by both me and the experts in the political science field, the

theory researched in this paper seems to be very true. Women talk about different issues than

their opposite sex, members of different parties, and their elders in their own party. This gives

women a big choice during the polls and gives them a wide range of varying opinions that may

match their own. The research I conducted can be used to keep an eye on experienced and

inexperienced women politicians to see the landscape of typical gender roles in politics change.

The majority of these successful inexperienced politicians are Democrats, but their pathway may

influence Republican women to follow in their footsteps and change not only both parties, but

the political field as a whole to become more equal and encompassing. For women to have a

better chance at being represented equally, voters need to stop following gender roles and voting for the best candidate, no matter their gender. Republican politicians also need to tackle issues that make them stand out rather than just following party lines or else women will eventually only vote Democrat because those candidates are evolving and growing.

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