



GENDERING POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

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PUZZLE

- **What keeps women from running for office?**
 - Much recent scholarship on US suggests women have **lower political ambition** than men thanks to socialisation (e.g., Fox and Lawless 2004, 2011)
 - “When women run, women win” implies that women’s decision-making is irrational
 - Many other scholars contest this account (see large literatures on structural factors, media bias, voter bias, etc.)
 - Also unclear that this translates well to systems that don’t allow candidate self-nomination (Piscopo 2018)

POSSIBILITY

- “**It’s the campaigns, stupid!**”
 - Dittmar (2015) finds that campaign consultants identify voter gender biases and proactively address them via campaign strategy
 - Two challenges:
 - This still only considers **women who have decided to run**—not women who never enter the ring
 - It’s not clear that consultants and candidates **agree about what the problems are**

THEORETICAL APPROACH

- “Gendering [is] a political process that silences, stereotypes, enforces invisibility, excludes, and challenges the epistemic authority of Congresswomen” (Hawkesworth 2003, 529)
- “Campaigns are gendered institutions, whereby gender is not only embedded in expectations for and behavior of candidates, but also influences the psyche and strategic considerations of all those involved....For female candidates, the expectations of gender and those of the offices they seek conflict as long as institutional power is based in men and masculinity” (Dittmar 2012, 2-3)
- Henceforth, for an aspect of campaigning to be “gendered,” it must be something that does the above: **something that women systematically perceive or experience in campaigning that men do not**

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

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- Two years of participant-observation fieldwork with a national organisation that trains US women to run for office
 - Observations of prospective candidates (“**outsiders**”): what do they fear? Where do they see gender as relevant?
 - Observations of political consultants (“**insiders**”): do they have the same fears? Where do they see gender as relevant?

CASE

- National organisation: Emerge America
 - Highly successful Democratic program: ~70% win rate, ~50% run rate
 - Roughly 2000 alumnae in 17 states at time of fieldwork
- Fieldwork organisation: Emerge California
 - Oldest state chapter (started in 2003)
 - Observed trainings in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 cohorts
 - Roughly 35 women in each cohort; diverse in terms of ethnicity, LGBTQ, socioeconomic status, age, prior political experience

PROGRAMME

- ~70+ hours of trainings, spread over six months (mostly in the format of full weekend workshops)
- Training topics (roughly by workshop):
 - Public speaking, media, and messaging
 - Fundraising
 - Networking and endorsements
 - Campaign strategy
 - Field operations
 - Ethics
 - Diversity

TRAININGS

- Typical daily format: workshop organised around an aspect of campaigning (e.g., media)
- 2-3 sets of consultants give presentations, 1 group of alumnae give “elected” perspective, 1-2 sets of interactive activities (e.g., practice pitches)
- Trainees ask questions during each session and then socialise during meals and networking events

A DAY IN EMERGE



SAMPLE OBSERVATIONS

- “If you wanted to be nice, you should have opened a day spa.” – R., Campaign Consultant, 2015
- “Avoid aggression at all costs.” – E., Campaign Consultant, 2015
- “You will hear over and over it’s not your time to run; you’re too young, too old; your kids are too young or too old; your plant is dying, you don’t have a boyfriend...” – E., City Commissioner, 2015
- “If I were coaching a dude running against a woman, I would say, ‘get her offended,’ because you just need to make a woman look crazy and emotional to discredit her.” – C., Campaign Consultant, 2015
- “Guys just feel it is personally fulfilling to put name on a piece of mail and send it to 4500 households. For women it is more uncomfortable; they want every word in that mail to be perfect and the pictures carefully curated. You’d think it was the Iran Nuclear Deal.” – J., Emerge Staff, 2016
- “A push-up bra will have a lot of utility for you.” – M., County Supervisor, 2016
- “There’s ongoing sexual harassment once you’re in office. It’s hard being in a space where you’re supposed to have power and don’t.” – A., State Representative, 2016

FINDINGS

I. How do women perceive campaigns to be gendered?

...REALISATION

- We don't actually have a very good typology for thinking through campaign audiences
 - Most campaign literature is on campaign efficacy (persuasion or turnout)
- Start with a basic question: who are the audiences of campaigns: i.e., who might women fear will discriminate against them?
 - Fenno (1978) does discuss four audiences: the geographic region, electoral supporters, primary supporters, and intimates
 - But, these are A) national re-election races (so not prospective candidates), and B) Fenno is not interested in how members of different groups might experience campaigns differently
 - Dittmar (2015) does address B), as does Hawkesworth (2003). But again, both focus on national races (A).

A NEW TYPOLOGY FOR CAMPAIGNS

Audience	Tasks
Outsiders (internal)	<i>Self Family Friends</i> Decision to run Allocation of money, time, and energy to campaign vs. to intimates
Outsiders (public)	<i>Voters Small donors Media</i> Public appearances (e.g., town halls, local events, door-knocking) Messaging Scandal management
Insiders (staff)	<i>Hired staff Volunteers Consultants Vendors</i> Hiring Setting campaign strategy (platform, budgets, timeline) Selection of consultants/vendors Operations (social media, fundraising, field)
Insiders (elites)	<i>Party insiders Interest groups Major donors Elected officials</i> Endorsement (party, interest groups, current officials) Fundraising Networking to secure future benefits and recruitment Interactions with opponents (if race contested)

(WOMEN) OUTSIDERS' FEARS

Audience	Fears
Outsiders (internal)	Structural factors: work-life balance/timing (wrong time), opportunity costs (too costly)
Outsiders (public)	Discrimination (overt and covert): both voters (stereotyped as too emotional, under-qualified; fundraising difficult) and media (focus on appearance, scandal)
Insiders (staff)	Resource limitations: inability to obtain good advising for a woman, conflicting advice from consultants
Insiders (elites)	Discrimination (covert): mostly to do with access to resources/endorsements/network (old boys' club)

2. How do political insiders perceive campaigns to be gendered?

INSIDERS' FEARS

Audience	Fears
Outsiders (internal)	Supply-side factors: women just won't run, recruiting costly
Outsiders (public)	Discrimination (overt and covert): both voters and media
Insiders (staff)	N/A
Insiders (elites)	Discrimination (covert): some old boys' club concerns, but also scarcity of mentors

DO WOMEN AND INSIDERS AGREE?

- **Internal:** outsiders see problems as structural; insiders see constraints as psychological (lack of empowerment)
- Effect: interventions are directed at encouraging women, not removing structural barriers (e.g., campaign finance reform)

AGREE TO DISAGREE (2)

- **Public:** mostly agreement on voter and media biases
- However, difference on difficulties of fundraising:
outsiders see it as fundamentally biased against them;
insiders see it as amenable to training
- Effect: interventions are directed at teaching women
how to fundraise, rather than addressing potential
for bias

AGREE TO DISAGREE (3)

- **Staff:** outsiders see major scarcity issues and limitations; insiders do not see any
- Effect: interventions do not adequately address conflicting advice, and scarcity mindset promotes dependence on “specialist” consultants

AGREE TO DISAGREE (4)

- **Elites:** agreement on old boys' club
- However, pervasive insider concern with not enough mentors
- Effect: interventions are mostly undertaken by organisation staff and allies, putting immense burden on organisation rather than parties

“MISTAKES ARE PROOF YOU ARE TRYING”

- *Trying is good.* But these mismatched perceptions have serious implications:
- **(1) Internal:** misallocated resources—should be put towards initiatives like public campaign financing, childcare, etc. instead of “asking women seven times”
- **(2) Public (less serious):** misdirected fundraising trainings—small improvements could help women focus on alternative strategies
- **(3) Staff:** faux resource scarcity—drives up costs, reduces women’s ambitions
- **(4) Elite:** systemic pipeline fragility—over-reliance on informal institutions to improve descriptive representation

DISCUSSION

- Since 2016 when fieldwork was conducted, explosive growth of number of female candidates in the US—and attendant growth in organisations
 - In 2017, Emily's List ushered more than 20,000 women through bootcamps
 - In 2017, Emerge America had over 200% more applicants than previous year
- These organisations are now being “exported” around the world, and in some countries are now prerequisites for governments to receive World Bank/etc. funding (Piscopo 2018)
 - **Yet, unclear that we have even learned the right lessons in the US, let alone whether they generalise to other contexts (e.g., systems where candidates can't self-nominate)**
 - **Moreover, studying the ways in which women think through the challenges of campaigning helps us understand campaigns from a perspective other than efficacy**

REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK

- What's compelling—in terms of nomenclature, evidence, presentation, implications? What's not?
- What have I overlooked in terms of potential contributions? What would you like to see more (or less) of?
- Currently relying heavily on a few similar (qualitative) studies—are there other scholars or debates I should be aware of, particularly in contexts outside the US?

Thanks!

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