

**Judging Amy: The Impact of Gender on Assessments of Political Quality**

Sarah A. Fulton  
Department of Political Science  
Texas A&M University  
[safulton@polisci.tamu.edu](mailto:safulton@polisci.tamu.edu)

An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Western Science Association's  
Annual Meeting in 2006

**DRAFT – PLEASE DO NOT CIRCULATE WITHOUT AUTHOR'S  
PERMISSION**

## **Abstract**

How do men and women differ in their judgment of political quality? Previous research on gender and perceived qualifications reports that women view themselves as less qualified to run for and hold political office than men. Nevertheless, I argue that this unitary notion of qualification is too simple. There are multiple dimensions to political quality, and men and women may assess strengths in one area, and weaknesses in another. In addition, previous research has not asked comparative questions and so cannot assess how men and women evaluate themselves relative to other political actors. But, relative political quality is arguably more important than self-quality because when it comes to deciding whether or not to run, individuals assess themselves relative to the person they would be challenging.

Analyzing state assembly-members' reports of their own performance, as well as that of the incumbent senator from their district, my results show that male and female assembly-members significantly differ when it comes to their perceptions of relative performance. While men tend to evaluate themselves more favorably relative to the incumbent senator from their district, women are less confident about their relative performance capabilities. But, this gender gap in relative performance arises from biases in men's judgments when they compare themselves to a female senator. Even after controlling for the personal and strategic strengths of the senator from their district, male assembly-members give themselves a relative performance advantage when they evaluate themselves against a female senator, as opposed to a male.

Besides judging themselves more favorably in the presence of a female senator, men's perceptions of relative performance lead them to assess more optimistic prospects of winning in senate districts with a female incumbent, rather than a male.

## Introduction

The presence of high quality candidates who contest elections is essential to the health of any representative democracy. Voters must be presented with appealing candidates who have a non-trivial chance of winning in order for the electoral mechanism to produce true political accountability. Yet, political quality remains a notoriously elusive concept in political science. The most widely accepted measure of political quality is Jacobson and Kernell's (1983) indicator of previous office-holding experience. But, as scholars have pointed out, previous success in attaining office may or may not reflect political quality, as there are many factors beyond the individual that may contribute to a previous electoral success. Consequently, researchers have developed more direct measures of political quality that express the skills, resources and attributes of individuals that electorates find most attractive (Mondak 1995; Stone, Maisel and Maestas 2004). In this conception, political quality is operationalized by such characteristics as performance, integrity and competence.

But, beyond objective indicators of political quality, the concept of *perceived* political quality is equally important to representative democracy, but arguably, even less understood. If perceived – but not real – inferiority undermines political ambition, such that objectively high quality candidates refrain from running, then elections may lose the feature of competition necessary to insure democratic accountability and responsiveness. The prospect of these erroneous beliefs deterring competition is even more disturbing in the context of gender, as previous research has demonstrated that women understate their qualifications in the political realm.

For example, two studies of citizens from political pipeline professions asked respondents to report whether they felt they were qualified to run for office, and concluded that women were more likely than men to view themselves as unqualified, and that compared to men, women relied more heavily on their self-perceived qualifications when deciding whether to run (Lawless and Fox 2005; National Women's Political Caucus 1994). Clearly, these conclusions are troubling from the perspective of gender representation to the extent that they imply women's lack of perceived qualification to deter women's candidacies.

But, as noted above, the concept of political quality encompasses a broad spectrum of considerations beyond the unitary notion of being qualified to run or not. There are a variety of qualities individuals may deem instrumental to running for and winning office – qualities like: dedication, communication or accessibility. However, the research on women's perceived qualifications has left unexplored, differences in the way men and women perceive themselves across multiple dimensions of political quality. As a consequence, whether men and women under-estimate their abilities in one dimension of political quality, and over-state their capacities in another, remains unknown.

Research in the field of social-psychology, however, provides some theoretical guidance on the matter. Much like political quality, researchers studying self-assessed intelligence report that men perceive themselves as more competent than women in general intellectual ability (Hogan 1978; Beloff 1992). However, once components of intelligence are disaggregated, it is only in areas such as math and spatial reasoning that men are more confident than women. In contrast, women view themselves in a more

favorable light than men when it comes to verbal skills and interpersonal intelligence (Furnham, Shahidi and Baluch 2002). These findings underscore the problem of treating intelligence – and political quality – as an undifferentiated property, and beg the question: if men and women perceive themselves as having different intellectual strengths, could the same also be true regarding the components of political quality? To wit, the research on women and politics has not addressed this question.

Beyond this, the research on self-assessed intelligence links perceived ability to motivation and ultimately, achievement (Eccles, Wigfield and Schiefele 1998; Pintrich and Schunk 1996). Pajares and Valiante (2001) write that, “the belief that one is capable... sets into motion a series of cognitive, emotional and behavior responses that result in healthier emotional states and higher achievement” (367). Applying these principles to the political realm, these findings raise the suspicion that self-perceived political quality may influence individuals’ desire for office and their success in achieving it.

Differentiating how men and women evaluate themselves among the various components of political quality is a principal contribution of this paper. To capture the multiple dimensions of quality, I ask respondents to rate themselves in a number of areas such as: personal, strategic and performance ability (following Stone, Maisel and Maestas 2004). As a consequence, my analysis offers a level of specificity that surpasses previous research on gender and political quality.

In addition, unlike previous research which does not ask comparative questions, my analysis asks respondents to evaluate themselves relative to other political actors – namely, the state senator from their district. I maintain that relative political quality is

quantity of concern because when it comes to deciding whether or not to run, individuals assess themselves relative to the person they would be challenging.

My results reveal a gender difference in relative performance. Men are more confident than women in their ability to “outperform” the senator from their district in areas like: legislative accomplishments, problem solving, and attention to important issues. But, this gender gap in relative performance does not stem from women underestimating their performance – rather, it arises because men rate themselves more favorably in the presence of a female senator, as compared with a male senator. These results persist even after controlling for other dimensions of political quality.

Besides judging themselves more favorably when the senator from their district is female, my analysis shows that relative performance assessments influence men’s electoral prospects to a greater extent when the senator is female, as opposed to a male. So, beyond estimating greater relative performance in the presence of a female senate incumbent, these more optimistic performance evaluations also lead male assembly-members to perceive higher prospects of victory. To the extent that electoral prospects influence decisions to run, a likely consequence of men’s perceived relative performance advantage and enhanced electoral prospects in the presence of female senate incumbents is that men may have greater incentive to run.

### **Data Description**

To investigate the effects of gender on perceived political quality, I administered a nationwide mail and Internet survey of state assembly members which I distributed during the summer of 2004. I sampled the universe of female state assembly members

nationally (n=1243), and then randomly sampled a number of men roughly equal to the proportion of women in each state assembly (n=1265). This sampling strategy maximizes the number of women, while maintaining equal proportions of men and women within each state assembly, so that neither men nor women were concentrated in a particular “type” of legislature (e.g., professional or unprofessional). Ultimately, of the 2508 surveys I distributed, 972 were returned, for a response rate of approximately 39%<sup>1</sup>.

In my survey, I asked assembly-members to rate themselves and the incumbent state senator from their district on nine quality dimensions, using a seven-point scale that ranges from “extremely strong” to “extremely weak”. These dimensions include: ability to stay in touch with the district, personal integrity, dedication to public service, name recognition, fundraising ability, attention to important issues, problem solving, public speaking ability and legislative accomplishments. I collapse these items into three quality indexes: personal, strategic and performance quality<sup>2</sup>.

Personal quality is tied to an individual’s character, personality and motivation for political involvement, such as: the ability to stay in touch with the district, personal integrity and dedication to public service. This factor balances an individual’s

---

<sup>1</sup> All analyses reported in this paper include statistical adjustments for my sampling design. Specifically, I stratify by gender to account for the fact that I sampled men and women separately. In addition, I cluster by state because observations within each state are not sampled independently. Finally, because the probability of being sampled is related to the number of women in the state assembly as well as state legislative professionalism, I weight each response by the inverse probability of being sampled.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix A reports the reliability coefficients for each of the three summary scales – personal, strategic and performance quality. The column titled “item-test” correlations reports the equality of factor loadings for each item comprising the summary scale. Because each of the summary scales are meant to capture a unique underlying dimension, each item’s “item-test correlation” should contribute equal information to that particular summary scale. The “item test correlations” for personal quality do not vary by more than 0.065; for strategic quality the range is 0.014; and for performance ability the variance is 0.088. These small variances suggest that the items “fit” each of the summary scales relatively well. In addition, the square-root of the scale reliability coefficient reports the correlation between the summary scale and the underlying dimension the scale is meant to express. These correlations also appear to be satisfactory. The reliability score for personal quality is 0.824; for strategic quality it is 0.762; and for performance quality it is 0.837. These data validate the use of personal, strategic and performance quality as distinct dimensions.

responsiveness to the interests of the constituency, as well as an individual's sense of civic responsibility. As these characteristics run through the core of an individual's political ethos, they comprise the personal quality index.

Strategic quality relates to the skills and resources that are necessary to advertise a candidacy and run an effective campaign, including: name recognition, fundraising ability and public speaking ability. Unlike personal quality, which taps an individual's faithfulness and commitment to office, strategic skills are the raw materials that generate electoral interest in a campaign and get an individual elected to office. Individuals with strategic quality are better able to market themselves to the electorate than those without such entrepreneurial talents.

Performance ability is attached to personal and strategic quality in the sense that both are necessary to be politically efficacious. Thus, personal and strategic skills precede performance ability. It is difficult to imagine an individual paying attention to important issues, solving problems and producing a record of legislative accomplishments without some combination of personal commitment and electoral savvy. But, the precise mix of personal and strategic resources required to produce an effective political record may vary from one individual to the next. For some, efficacy in office may be derived from personal dedication and character; while strategic strengths may underlie the legislative achievements of others.

### **Data Analysis**

To evaluate whether male and female assembly-members differ in their self-estimates of political quality, Table 1 shows each of the individual items comprising the

personal, strategic and performance quality indexes, and presents male and female assembly-members' average self-rating on each dimension. Each of the quality items is scaled from one to seven, with higher values representing strength on that dimension, and lower values indicating weakness.

Table 1 reports that there is no gender gap in total quality (the mean of the nine items). This finding runs contrary to previous research which suggests that women view themselves as less qualified to run than men. But, gender parity in total quality masks important variations within each of the individual quality items, as well as the clusters of items. While women consistently rate themselves higher than men in personal, strategic and performance quality dimensions, they are significantly more confident than men with respect to personal quality. Women see themselves as better able to communicate with their districts, they view themselves as having more personal integrity, and they feel that they are more dedicated to public service than men.

#### TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

These results corroborate research conducted in the area of self-assessed intelligence, which reports that women consider themselves to be stronger than men in the areas of communication and interpersonal skills (Furnham, Shahidi and Baluch 2002). Although it may be premature at this point to draw inferences about the factors driving these relationships, at the very least, these results underscore the importance of differentiating between the various quality dimensions. Treating political quality as if it were a unitary concept masks important variations among the different dimensions of political quality. Most importantly, my results show that women do not see themselves

as lagging in political quality behind men. Rather, women perceive themselves as having significantly greater inter-personal capabilities than their male counterparts.

But, might women be more generous than men in their evaluations of other political actors as well? In other words, the relationships depicted above may be driven by a tendency for women to over-estimate the political quality of themselves and others. To explore this possibility, Table 2 reports male and female assembly-members' quality ratings of the incumbent senator from their district. Like the self-quality ratings presented above, items are scaled from one to seven, with seven corresponding to extreme strength on that dimension, and one depicting extreme weakness.

#### TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Table 2 reveals that women consistently rate the incumbent senator from their district as higher than men on personal, strategic and performance quality dimensions. But, this gender difference is only significant with respect to strategic strength and performance in office. Compared to men, women see the senator from their district as being significantly better at marketing themselves to the electorate and producing an effective record in office.

Nevertheless, although women view senators' strategic and performance talents as more formidable than men, both men and women alike attribute to senators greater strategic power than they do to themselves (see Table 1). In contrast, both men and women perceive themselves to be more capable relative to their senator in terms of personal and performance ability (see Table 1).

But, when it comes to deciding whether to run for the senate, baseline evaluations of self- and senator political quality may be less consequential to the decision than

individuals' assessments of their quality relative to the senator they would be challenging in the event of a run. Thus, the relevant consideration is not the value of self- or senator quality, rather the more informative quantity is the difference between the two. Towards this end, I constructed measures of relative strength by subtracting assessments of the senators' quality from perceptions of self-quality. This variable ranges from -6 to +6, with positive scores representing the belief that assembly-members view their own quality to be greater than their senators', and negative scores depicting that assembly-members evaluate their senator as stronger on that dimension.

As suggested above, the relative ratings in Table 3 demonstrate that men and women alike, view themselves as stronger than their senator in personal skills and performance in office.

#### TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

But, both men and women view their senator as being more capable in strategic areas than themselves. And, when it comes to differences between men and women, women rate their relative personal abilities as greater than men's relative personal abilities, but this difference is not statistically significant. Men, on the other hand, view their relative strategic resources more favorably than women view their relative strategic strengths, but again, this difference is not significant.

The only dimension upon which men and women significantly diverge from one another is in their evaluation of relative performance in office. Men see their performance relative to their senator in a significantly better light than women see their performance relative to their senator. This suggests that along personal and strategic quality dimensions, gender does not alter the way individuals view themselves relative to

their senator. However, when it comes to job performance, women are not as confident as men in their ability to perform better than their senator. The difference in relative performance ratings is most salient when it comes to legislative accomplishments. Relative to their senator, men appear to give themselves more credit for their legislative accomplishments than women do.

So, what accounts for this gender difference in relative performance? Clearly, Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate that the gender difference in relative performance stems from men and women diverging in their estimates of their senators' performance ability, as opposed to differences in their own self-evaluations. In other words, women rate the performance ability of their senator higher than men, but do not differ significantly from men in their self-assessed performance.

In addition, it is important to point out that the gender differences in relative performance may be a consequence of true differences in political quality. Female assembly-members may have objectively less political quality than their male counterparts, and this quality difference may manifest itself in lower relative performance ratings. Alternatively, the distribution of senators' quality may – for whatever reason – be related to the assembly-members' gender. For instance, if male assembly-members are concentrated in districts with poor quality senators, and if female assembly-members are concentrated in districts with high quality senators, then the gender discrepancy in relative performance would not be a consequence of assembly-member gender, but of natural variations in the quality of senators located in male and female assembly-members' districts. This would assume a non-random distribution of senator quality by assembly-member gender.

Nevertheless, the proposition that female assembly-members have less political quality than males seems implausible. There is nothing inherent in being a woman that ought to diminish one's political quality or ability. To the contrary, if women experience greater barriers to their candidacies (e.g., subtle or overt discrimination), they ought to have more – rather than less – political quality than men. In addition, there is no reason to expect the political quality of senators to be non-randomly assigned to male and female assembly-members. It is difficult to imagine a mechanism that generates outcomes such that male assembly-members are paired with low performing senators, and female assembly-members are paired with high performing senators.

But, one way to control for these alternative hypotheses is to include variables for relative personal and strategic quality. As mentioned previously, personal and strategic strengths ought to positively contribute to performance ability. And, controlling for relative personal and strategic skills may help to disentangle whether women simply under-estimate their relative performance ability, or alternatively, whether true differences in political quality (i.e., personal and strategic skills) accounts for the gender discrepancy in relative performance. Towards this end, it is important to include variables for relative personal and strategic skills, along with assembly-member gender in any model of relative performance ability.

Beyond relative personal and strategic strengths, assembly-members' assessments of relative performance ought to be influenced by other points of similarity and difference between themselves and the senator from their district. For instance, I anticipate a senator's gender to influence assembly-members' relative evaluations of their senators' performance. Social psychological research in intelligence assessments

demonstrates that when men and women are asked to evaluate the intelligence of close family members, both sexes rate the intelligence of male relatives (e.g., fathers, brothers, uncles) more favorably than female relatives (e.g., mothers, sisters, aunts) (Furnham 2001; 2005). If these patterns persist in the realm of politics, then it is plausible that male senators may be rated as having better relative performance than female senators. In addition, I expect assembly-members to rate same-party senators more favorably than out-party senators (Stone, Maisel and Maestas 2004).

The difference in seniority between the assembly-member and senator should also impact relative performance ratings. The balance of performance assessments ought to favor the assembly-member when the senator from their district is relatively more junior. Conversely, assembly-members ought to give a relative performance advantage to the senator if the senator is more senior than they are.

Finally, although there is no difference in state legislative professionalism between assembly-members and the senators from their districts, it may be important to include a control for state legislative professionalism because it is possible that professionalism may differentially impact the competitiveness of state senate and state assembly seats. For instance, a senate seat in a professionalized institution may be much more difficult to win than an assembly seat in the same institution. If competitiveness drives the performance quality of senators and assembly-members, then professionalism would affect the gap in relative performance.

#### TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

To see whether any of these variables influence assembly-members' relative assessments, Table 4 presents my survey regression of relative performance ability. The

dependent variable – relative performance – ranges from -6 to +6, with positive scores indicating a relative performance advantage for the assembly-member, and negative scores representing a net performance advantage for the senator.

Model 1 shows how relative attributes of the assembly-member and senator affect relative performance ratings. Not surprisingly, relative personal and strategic quality has very strong effects on relative performance ratings. Assembly-members who perceive themselves as having an advantage in personal and strategic strengths relative to the senator in their district, also assess themselves as having greater relative performance ability. A one standard deviation increase in relative personal quality (from 0.856 to 2.129) produces four-fifths of a point increase in assembly-members' assessments of their relative performance. Similarly, one standard deviation change in strategic quality (from -0.181 to 1.025) generates a half-point increase in relative performance ability.

Model 1 also reports that even after controlling for relative personal and strategic talents, assembly-member gender has a negative and significant effect, indicating that female assembly-members evaluate their relative performance less favorably than male assembly-members, independent of relative evaluations of personal and strategic quality. This finding suggests that neither gender differences in assembly-member political quality, nor differences in the distribution of senator quality across assembly-member gender, drives the gender gap in relative performance. Even after taking personal and strategic skills into account, female assembly-members assess their relative performance less favorably than their male counterparts. Thus, the gender gap in perceived relative performance arises from factors attached to being either a male or female assembly-member. I explore what these factors are in the next section.

Interestingly, Model 1 shows that a senator's gender alters the way assembly-members evaluate their relative job performance. The positive and statistically significant coefficient for female senator illustrates that assembly-members view their relative job performance one-seventh of a point greater when evaluating themselves against a female senator as opposed to a male senator. In other words, assembly-members are more pessimistic about their relative performance compared to a male senator, and are more optimistic about their relative performance against a female senator. This difference is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. These results corroborate the expectation generated from the social-psychological literature on intelligence self-assessments, which suggests that regardless of assembly-member gender, the relative performance of male senators ought to be judged more favorably than the performance of female senators.

The coefficient for same-party senator is negative, confirming the expectation that assembly-members assess their relative performance less favorably when they compare themselves to a same-party incumbent. But, this variable does not approach conventional standards of statistical significance, mostly because partisanship influences evaluations of relative personal and strategic skills as well. When relative personal and strategic quality are omitted from the model, the coefficient for same-party senator increases by a magnitude of 7.5 times its value in Model 1 and becomes significant at  $p < 0.001$  (analysis not shown).

Model 1 also shows that a relative performance advantage also accrues to assembly-members who have served longer than the senator from their district, but the substantive effect of this variable is relatively small. For instance, a ten-year net increase

in seniority over the senator enhances an assembly-member's relative performance rating by less than one tenth of a point. And finally, Model 1 shows no effect of state legislative professionalism. Because professionalism is found to have no effect on the performance gap between assembly-members and the incumbent senator from their district, this null finding provides indirect evidence that professionalism does not differentially impact the level of contestation assembly-members and senators confront.

Nevertheless, because Model 1 does not test for gender interactions, it cannot speak to why male assembly-members' relative performance assessments are greater than their female counterparts'. Thus, I include gender interactions in Model 2. While I tested for gender interactions among all of the variables from Model 1, only one interaction proved significant – *female assembly-member\*female senator*. The positive main effect for female senator indicates that male assembly-members are more confident about their relative performance ability when they compare themselves relative to a female senator. Male assembly-members assess their relative performance three-tenths of a point higher when they rate themselves relative to a female, rather than a male senator.

In contrast, a senator's gender has no impact on female assembly-members' assessments. This is because the main effect of assembly-member gender is insignificant, and the combined conditional coefficient [*female senator* + (*female assembly member\*female senator*)] is statistically indistinguishable from zero ( $b=0.041$ ,  $p=0.710$ ). Figure 1 depicts these effects. Male and female assembly-members rate their relative performance against a male senator similarly. And, female assembly-members evaluate their relative performance compared to a female senator in much of the same way as they do against a male senator. But, male assembly-members view themselves in a

significantly more positive light when evaluating themselves relative to a female senator as opposed to a male senator.

#### FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

In addition, once male assembly-members' estimates of female senators' performance is taken into account, the main effect of assembly-member gender drops to zero. In other words, the gender gap in relative performance disappears once I control for the differential impact of senator gender on male and female assembly-members' relative evaluations. This means that one of the main reasons why male assembly-members rate their relative performance as greater than female assembly-members is because male assembly-members give themselves higher marks when they compare themselves relative to a female senator as opposed to a male senator.

Bearing in mind that *relative personal and strategic quality are controlled for*, this difference constitutes added performance value over and above what would be expected based upon accepted indicators of political quality. Independent of personal and strategic quality, male assembly-members are significantly more optimistic about their performance capabilities when they assess themselves relative to a female, rather than a male, senator. Because personal and strategic quality are already accounted for, this finding provides compelling evidence that a senator's gender is the discriminating variable upon which the performance of women senators is discounted. These results are consistent with those reported in the social-psychological literature on the effect of gender on performance evaluations in workplace settings, which finds that supervisors are less likely to attribute ability to the performance of women, as they are of men (Greenhaus and Parasuraman 1993).

So, does this gender gap in relative performance ability have implications for the decision to run? To evaluate this question, I draw upon the Black office-seeker calculus (Black 1972). Black's model maintains that the likelihood of running in any particular election is a function of the inherent value of serving in the House (e.g., the benefit term), discounted by strategic factors (e.g., the probability of winning the election) and the costs required to run a campaign.

$$R = (P*B) - C$$

Where,

R = Probability of running in a particular election year

P = Probability of winning the congressional seat in short-term

B = Benefit of holding a House seat in general

C = The cost required to run a campaign

The gender gap in relative performance may impact the decision in two separate ways: indirectly or directly. If relative performance assessments impact any of the factors that contribute to the decision to run – the probability of winning (P), ambition for office (B) and the costs of running (C) – this would provide evidence of an *indirect effect* of relative performance on the decision to run. Conversely, if relative performance evaluations affect the decision to run (R), this would suggest a *direct effect* for this variable.

In addition, because male assembly-members rated their relative performance more highly in the presence of a female senator, I was particularly interested in testing whether men's more generous performance evaluations translated into higher perceived prospects (P), greater ambition for office (B), lower costs of running (C) or an enhanced likelihood of running (R) in districts with a female senate incumbent.

Overall, my analyses reveal that relative performance ability has only weak effects on the components of the decision to run, especially the likelihood of running. Moreover, the impact of relative performance on the factors contributing to the decision to run show little variation by assembly-member or senator gender. But, my analysis of the likelihood of winning illustrate that relative performance ratings do play a greater role in determining male assembly-members' prospects in senate districts with female senate incumbents, as opposed to male senate incumbents. In other words, men's perceived prospects of winning are more responsive to their assessments of relative performance when the senator is female, rather than male.

Table 5 depicts these effects. The dependent variable – the likelihood of winning – is constructed by taking assembly-members' reports of their likelihood of winning the primary, as well as general, election for the senate seat in their district. Because this variable ranges from 1 (low likelihood of winning) to 49 (high likelihood of winning), I use survey regression analysis.

My model acknowledges that many factors affect the likelihood of winning, including: whether the incumbent senator from the district runs, relative district partisanship, the ratio of assembly-to-senate seats, the professionalism of the state legislature, as well as the personal demographic characteristics of the assembly-member. But of particular interest, my model tests whether the gender of the assembly-member relative to the senator, along with relative performance evaluations, influence assembly-members' assessments of the likelihood of winning.

To capture these factors, I include variables for:

RP = Relative Performance  
FA = Female Assembly-Member

FS = Female Senator  
RP\*FA = Relative Performance\*Female Assembly-Member  
FA\*FS = Female Assembly-Member\*Female Senator  
FS\*RP = Female Senator\*Relative Performance  
FA\*FS\*RP = Female AM\*Female Senator\*Relative Performance

The interaction between female senator and relative performance (FS\*RP) depicts the effect of relative performance for men in senate districts with a female incumbent. And, Table 5 shows that this variable affects men's likelihood of winning to a greater extent when the senator is female, as opposed to male. The null main effect of the relative performance variable illustrates that when the senator is male, relative performance evaluations contribute little to perceptions of winning. But, the interaction between female senator\*relative performance (FS\*RP) is positive and significant, indicating that when the senator is female, male assembly-members' beliefs about relative performance play a much larger role in their perceived prospects of winning, compared to when the senator is male. In short, men view their relative performance more favorably compared to a female senator, and these more positive performance evaluations translate into greater perceived electoral prospects in the presence of a female senator. Figure 2 illustrates these effects.

#### FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Figure 2 shows that when the senator from their district is male, men's perceived electoral prospects are invariant to relative performance evaluations. And, when men assess their relative performance to be about even with the senator from their district, they estimate similar likelihoods of winning, regardless of the senator's gender. But, as their assessments of relative performance become more favorable, men in districts with female senators begin to estimate higher likelihoods of winning. So, in addition to

estimating greater relative performance in the presence of a female senate incumbent, these more optimistic performance evaluations also lead male assembly-members to perceive higher prospects of victory. Most importantly, because electoral prospects significantly contribute to the likelihood of running (see Fulton, Maestas, Maisel and Stone 2006), more generous assessments of performance – and enhanced prospects of victory – give men greater incentive to run against female senate incumbents.

### **Conclusions and Future Research**

While previous research has demonstrated that women deem themselves to be less qualified to run than men, my analysis shows that qualification as a unitary concept, without relevant comparisons, leads our understanding of gender and perceptions of quality astray. Among each of the three dimensions of political quality, my results show that women perceive themselves to have as much, if not more political quality than men. And, once the political quality of other actors is taken into account, women significantly differ from men only on the dimension of relative performance. But, rather than women under-estimating their relative performance ability, my results suggest that men overstate their capacity to perform in the presence of a female senate incumbent.

Moreover, I show that perceived relative performance has significantly stronger effects on men's assessments of their electoral prospects when the senator from their district is female, as opposed to male. As prospects and running are intimately tied to one another, a likely consequence is that men may be stimulated to run against female senators – whose performance they judge to be weaker than their own, and whose weak performance translates more heavily into enhanced prospects of victory.

There are other implications of my research as well. Although my analysis has been limited to male assembly-members' perceptions of female senators' relative performance, they raise suspicion that biased assessments of women's performance ability may be more pervasive. And if performance evaluations form the basis for political rewards and/or promotions, then these biased performance assessments may inhibit women's advancement both within legislative institutions and within party structures.

**Appendix A – Reliability Coefficients of Personal, Strategic and Performance Quality Indices**

**Personal Quality Index**

Item	Number of Observations	Sign	Item-Test Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Ability to stay in touch with the district	931	+	0.766	0.697
Personal integrity	935	+	0.802	0.623
Dedication to public service	935	+	0.831	0.549
<b>Average Inter-Item Covariance:</b>				<b>0.215</b>
<b>Number of Items in the Scale:</b>				<b>3</b>
<b>Scale Reliability Coefficient:</b>				<b>0.679</b>
<b>Correlation Between Scale and Underlying Construct</b>				<b>0.824</b>

**Strategic Quality Index**

Item	Number of Observations	Sign	Item-Test Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Name Recognition	935	+	0.748	0.478
Fundraising Ability	915	+	0.749	0.478
Public Speaking Ability	931	+	0.735	0.519
<b>Average Inter-Item Covariance:</b>				<b>0.422</b>
<b>Number of Items in the Scale:</b>				<b>3</b>
<b>Scale Reliability Coefficient:</b>				<b>0.580</b>
<b>Correlation Between Scale and Underlying Construct</b>				<b>0.762</b>

**Performance Quality Index**

Item	Number of Observations	Sign	Item-Test Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Attention to important issues	932	+	0.812	0.612
Problem solving	933	+	0.842	0.535
Legislative accomplishments	930	+	0.754	0.736
<b>Average Inter-Item Covariance:</b>				<b>0.334</b>
<b>Number of Items in the Scale:</b>				<b>3</b>
<b>Scale Reliability Coefficient:</b>				<b>0.700</b>
<b>Correlation Between Scale and Underlying Construct</b>				<b>0.837</b>

## References

- Beloff, Halla. 1992. Mother, Father and Me: Our IQ. *The Psychologist*. 5: 309-11.
- Black, Gordon S. 1972. "A Theory of Political Ambition: Career Choices and the Role of Structural Incentives." *American Political Science Review* 66: 144-59.
- Blair, Diane D. and Jeanie R. Stanley. 1991. "Personal Relationships and Legislative Power: Male and Female Perceptions." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 16(4): 495-507.
- Eccles, Jacquelynne S., Allan Wigfield, and U. Schiefele. 1998. Motivation to Succeed. In W. Damon (series ed) and N. Eisenberg (vol. ed) *Handbook of Child Psychology*. New York: Wiley.
- Eccles, Jacquelynne S., Adler, T.F., Futterman, R., Goff, S.B., Kaczala, C.M., Meece, J.L., and Midgley, C. 1983. Motivation and Education: The Self-Determination Perspective. *Educational Psychologist* 26: 325-46.
- Fulton, Sarah A., Cherie D. Maestas, L. Sandy Maisel and Walter J. Stone. 2006. "The Sense of a Woman: Gender, Ambition and the Decision to Run for Congress." *Political Research Quarterly*, forthcoming.
- Furnham, Adrian. 2001. "Self-Estimates of Intelligence: Culture and Gender Differences in Self and Other Estimates of General and Multiple Intelligences." *Personality and Individual Differences* 31: 1381-1405.
- Furnham, Adrian. 2005. "Gender and Personality Differences in Self- and Other Ratings of Business Intelligence." *British Journal of Management* 16: 91-103.
- Furnham, Adrian, Shahidi Shahriar, and Bahman Baluch. 2002. Sex and Culture Differences in Perceptions of Estimated Multiple Intelligences for Self and Family: A British-Iranian Comparison. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 33: 270-85.
- Greenhaus, Jeffrey H. and Saroj Parasuraman. 1993. "Job Performance Attributions and Career Advancement Prospects: An Examination of Gender and Race Effects." *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 55: 273-297.
- Hogan, H. Wayne. 1978. "IQ: Self-Estimates of Males and Females." *Journal of Social Psychology*. 106: 137-138.
- Jacobson, Gary C., and Samuel Kernell. 1983. *Strategy and Choice in Congressional Elections*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Lawless, Jennifer L. and Richard L. Fox. 2005. *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office*. Book Manuscript.
- Mondak, Jeffery J. 1995. "Competence, Integrity and the Electoral Success of Congressional Incumbents." *Journal of Politics* 57(December):1043-69.
- National Women's Political Caucus. 1994. *Why Don't More Women Run? A study prepared by Mellman, Lazurus and Lake*. Washington, D.C.: National Women's Political Caucus.
- Pajares, Frank and Giovanni Valiante. 2001. "Gender Differences in Writing Motivation and Achievement of Middle School Students: A Function of Gender Orientation?" *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 26: 366-81.
- Pintrich, Paul R. and Dale H. Schunk. 1996. *Motivation in Education: Theory, Research and Applications*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Merrill-Prentice Hall.
- Stone, Walter J., L. Sandy Maisel and Cherie D. Maestas. 2004. "Quality Counts: Extending the Strategic Politician Model of Incumbent Deterrence." *American Journal of Political Science* 48(3): 479-95.

**Table 1. Ratings of Self-Quality**

	Ratings of Self	
	Men	Women
<b>Total Quality (Mean of Nine Items)</b>	5.900	5.934
<b>Personal Quality Index</b>	6.325	6.489**
Ability to Stay in Touch with District	5.917	6.083*
Personal Integrity	6.616	6.751**
Dedication to Public Service	6.443	6.626**
<b>Strategic Quality Index</b>	5.433	5.499
Name Recognition	5.777	5.866
Fundraising Ability	4.869	4.937
Public Speaking Ability	5.641	5.682
<b>Performance in Office Index</b>	5.961	5.991
Attention to Important Issues	6.241	6.305
Problem Solving	6.123	6.128
Legislative Accomplishments	5.525	5.546

Survey means of self-quality are presented by gender. Data are stratified by gender, clustered by state and weighted by the probability of being sampled. All results are generated in Stata 7.0. All significance tests are one-tailed. \*\*p<0.01 \*p<0.05

**Table 2. Ratings of Senator Quality**

	Ratings of Incumbent	
	Men	Women
<b>Total Quality (Mean of Nine Items)</b>	5.379	5.564*
<b>Personal Quality Index</b>	5.504	5.597
Ability to Stay in Touch with District	5.196	5.341
Personal Integrity	5.635	5.675
Dedication to Public Service	5.705	5.818
<b>Strategic Quality Index</b>	5.549	5.754**
Name Recognition	5.892	6.089**
Fundraising Ability	5.651	5.824*
Public Speaking Ability	5.151	5.381*
<b>Performance in Office Index</b>	5.129	5.349*
Attention to Important Issues	5.362	5.525
Problem Solving	5.156	5.357*
Legislative Accomplishments	4.896	5.206**

Survey means of senator quality are presented by gender. Data are stratified by gender, clustered by state and weighted by the probability of being sampled. All results are generated in Stata 7.0. All significance tests are one-tailed. \*\*p<0.01 \*p<0.05

**Table 3. Ratings of Self-Quality Relative to Senator-Quality**

	Relative Ratings	
	Men	Women
<b>Total Quality (Mean of Nine Items)</b>	0.524	0.425
<b>Personal Quality Index</b>	0.824	0.892
Ability to Stay in Touch with District	0.746	0.734
Personal Integrity	0.973	1.075
Dedication to Public Service	0.731	0.814
<b>Strategic Quality Index</b>	-0.111	-0.258
Name Recognition	-0.111	-0.221
Fundraising Ability	-0.746	-0.855
Public Speaking Ability	0.486	0.315
<b>Performance in Office Index</b>	0.832*	0.642
Attention to Important Issues	0.884	0.794
Problem Solving	0.958*	0.766
Legislative Accomplishments	0.639**	0.342

Survey means relative quality are presented by gender. Data are stratified by gender, clustered by state and weighted by the probability of being sampled. All results are generated in Stata 7.0. All significance tests are one-tailed. \*\*p<0.01 \*p<0.05

**Table 4. Predicting Relative Assessments of Performance in Office**

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>
Relative Personal Quality	0.636** (0.045)	0.633** (0.045)
Relative Strategic Quality	0.435** (0.047)	0.437** (0.046)
Female Assembly-Member	-0.141* (0.074)	-0.056 (0.085)
Female Senator	0.142* (0.074)	0.319** (0.098)
Relative Partisanship	-0.047 (0.036)	-0.047 (0.036)
Relative Seniority	0.008* (0.005)	0.009* (0.005)
State Legislative Professionalism	-0.391 (0.311)	-0.352 (0.313)
Female Assembly-Member*Female Senator		-0.360** (0.150)
Constant	0.403** (0.075)	0.362** (0.078)
Number of Observations	664	664
F-Test	122.51**	108.80**
R-Squared	0.623	0.626

Dependent variable is perceived relative performance in office. Survey regression coefficients are presented with standard errors in parentheses. Data are stratified by gender, clustered by state and weighted by the probability of being sampled. All results are generated in Stata 7.0. All significance tests are one-tailed. \*\*p<0.01 \*p<0.05

**Table 5. Likelihood of Winning, Next 1-2 Terms**

Likelihood of Senator Running, Next 1-2 Terms	-1.023** (0.275)
Relative Partisanship of Senate & Assembly District	1.346* (0.797)
Assembly-Member Age	-0.057 (0.052)
Ratio of Assembly-to-Senate Seats	3.212** (0.682)
Assembly-Member Activity in Campaigns & Elections	3.712** (1.188)
Assembly-Member Recruitment	1.361** (0.369)
Assembly-Member Term-Limited	2.526 (2.690)
Assembly-Member Seniority	0.267** (0.095)
Professionalism of State Legislature	3.136 (4.822)
Relative Performance Ability (RP)	0.653 (0.783)
Perceived Gender Bias in Politics	1.142 (0.840)
Female Assembly-Member (FA)	-2.939* (1.825)
Female Senator (FS)	-4.223* (2.112)
Female Assembly-Member*Relative Performance Ability (RP*FA)	1.156 (0.972)
Female Assembly-Member*Perceived Gender Bias in Politics	-2.860** (1.119)
Female Assembly-Member*Female Senator (FA*FS)	10.237** (3.108)
Female Senator*Relative Performance Ability (FS*RP)	2.024* (1.204)
Female Assembly-Member*Female Senator*Relative Performance Ability (FA*FS*RP)	-3.942* (1.776)
Constant	19.558** (3.913)
Number of Observations	529
F-Test	15.19**
R-Squared	0.203

Dependent variable is the likelihood of winning in the next 1-2 terms. Survey regression coefficients are presented with standard errors in parentheses. Data are stratified by gender, clustered by state and weighted by the probability of being sampled. All results are generated in Stata 7.0. All significance tests are one-tailed. \*\*p<0.01 \*p<0.05

**Figure 1. Effect of Senator Gender on Assessments of Relative Performance**

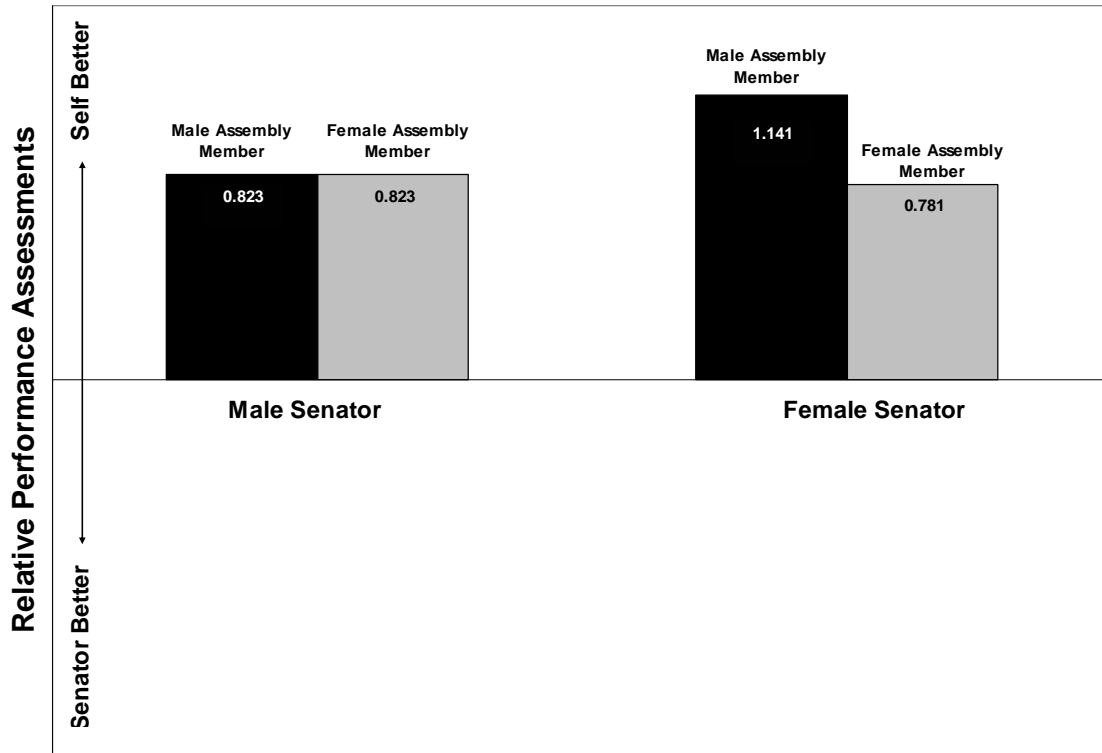


Figure 1 is constructed by setting the insignificant variables in Table 4, Model 2 to zero, and multiplying the coefficient for the significant variables by the sample mean, varying assembly-member and senator gender.

**Figure 2. Effect of Relative Performance and Senator Gender on Male Assembly-Member's Assessments of Likelihood of Winning**

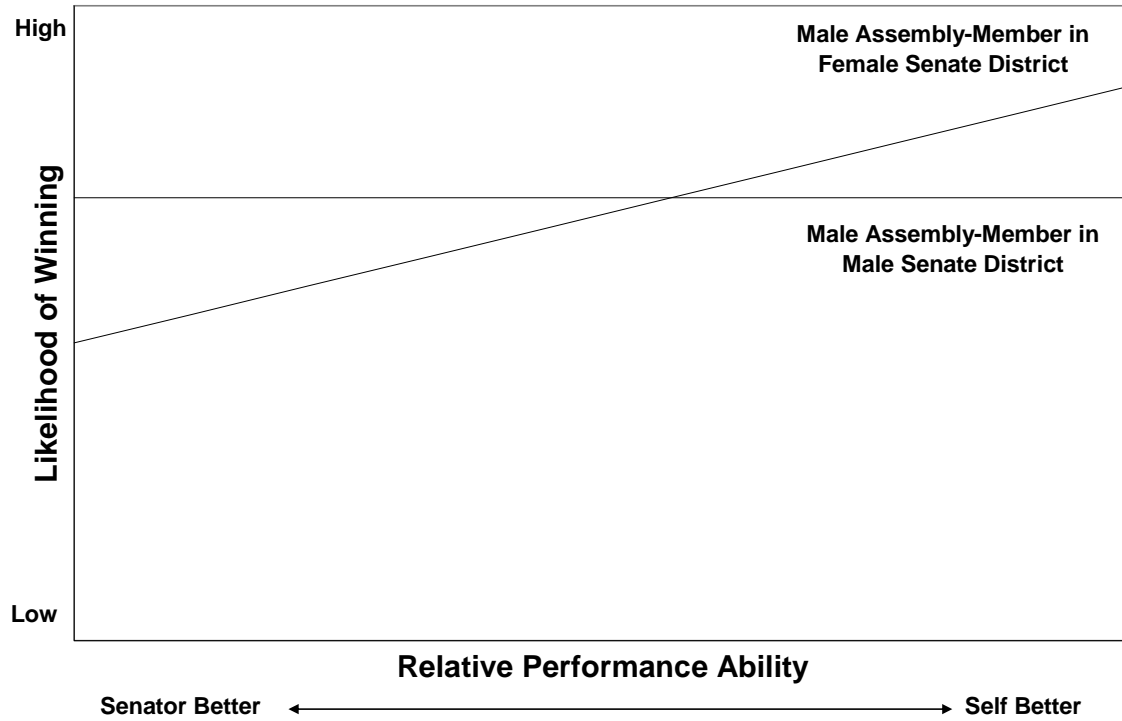


Figure 2 is constructed by setting the insignificant variables in Table 5 to zero, and multiplying the coefficient for the significant variables by the sample mean, varying relative performance assessments, and assembly-member and senator gender.