

Family Structure, Sex-Role Socialization, and the Decision to Run for Office

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ABSTRACT. A leading explanation for the small number of women in top elective positions is that not enough women comprise the pool of candidates generally considered “eligible” to run for political office. This explanation assumes that once more women excel in the areas of law and business, the leading occupations preceding a career in politics, the disparity between the number of women and men serving in elected positions will dissipate. Despite the fact that studies of the initial decision to run for office are critically important in evaluating women’s slow movement into elected positions, almost no empirical work examines the initial decision to seek office. This article, which examines the attitudes of over 200 women and men from the pool of potential candidates in New York State, offers a first look at some of the ways in which gender may interact with the initial decision to run for office. Ultimately, we argue that the “eligibility pool” explanation may not fully take into account the manner in which the continued prevalence of traditional sex-role socialization affects the initial decision to enter the political arena. We find that traditional family structures and historically socialized gender roles may continue to discourage women from seeking public office. These findings reinforce the notion that broad patterns of sex-role socialization continue to impede women from full inclusion in the electoral process. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2003 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

Although the number of women serving in elective office has grown dramatically over the course of the last twenty years, women remain severely underrepresented in most elected offices. The disparity is particularly evident in high-level elected positions, as men currently hold 86% of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, 87% of seats in the U.S. Senate, and 90% of state governorships.¹ The small number of women serving in these offices persists despite compelling evidence that, once they enter a race, women candidates for public office fare just as well as their male counterparts. In terms of fundraising and vote totals, often considered the two most important indicators of electoral success, recent investigations find no bias against women candidates (Burrell 1994, 1998; Cook 1998; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Fox 2000; Leeper 1991; Plutzer and Zipp 1996; Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997; Thompson and Steckenrider 1997). Further, the personal stories of women candidates who face overt gender discrimination once they enter the public arena are no longer commonplace (Schroeder 1999; Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1994; Woods 2000).

In light of these findings, many gender politics scholars point to the small number of women candidates as the leading explanation for the small number of women holding elective office (Burrell 1994; Carroll 1994; Chaney and Sinclair 1994; Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997). More specifically, researchers attribute the dearth of women in politics to the small proportion of women in the pool of candidates generally considered “eligible” for political office (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Duerst-Lahti 1998). As Clark explains, “Women are not found in the professions from which politicians inordinately are chosen—the law and other broker-type businesses. Therefore, they do not achieve the higher socioeconomic status that forms the eligibility pool for elective office” (1994, 106). According to this explanation, as women’s presence in the fields of law and business increases, so, too, will their economic status and their likelihood of seeking elected positions (see Simon and Landis 1989; Thomas 1998; Williams 1990).

An assumption on which the “eligibility pool” explanation is predicated is that men and women who are similarly situated in terms of socioeconomic status and professional accomplishment will be equally likely to decide to run for elective office. We argue that this assumption is potentially inaccurate and incomplete. With the exception of a 1994 poll conducted by the National Women’s Political Caucus (NWPC), almost no empirical analysis examines the manner in which gender influences potential candidates’ initial decisions to run for office (see Fox, Lawless, and Feeley 2001). In fact, virtually all information pertaining

to political ambition and the decision to run for office yields from samples of candidates and officeholders. We know from the ambition theory literature that politicians tend to behave in ways that maximize their likelihood of attaining higher office (Schlesinger 1965), but the theory is relatively silent when asked to decide whether potential candidates, the majority of whom will never seek office, will actually enter a race (S. Williams 1993; see also Squire 1993).

Yet research on women who have actually sought public office suggests that the initial decision to run is often among the most formidable barriers to entering the political arena (e.g., Burrell 1994; Fowler and McClure 1989). A wide range of scholarly literature concerning gender socialization, for example, reveals that women and men, regardless of occupational status, continue to view their family responsibilities differently (e.g., Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Jamieson 1995; McGlen and O'Connor 1998). Further, while the historical norm of men as providers and women as caretakers of the home has certainly declined, analysis of the political system continues to reveal prevalent stereotypes associated with these traditional roles (Fox 1997; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a, 1993b). Thus, to assume that men and women in the eligibility pool will consider running for office at equal rates is to fail to take into account the potential force of traditional family structures and attitudes about gender-based roles that often accompany traditional socialization.²

In this article, we take an initial step in attempting to fill a critical void in the gender politics research by examining whether the presence of traditional attitudes and family structures significantly influences eligible candidates' decisions to run for public office. In presenting our analysis, we rely on results of a mail survey of over 200 women and men whom we consider part of the pool of "eligible candidates" for a high-level political position in New York State. Our findings are an important contribution to the literature on political representation and women's electoral candidacies for two reasons. First, understanding the origins of a political candidacy may offer important evidence for evaluating women's slow entrance into high-level electoral politics. Second, only limited research has attempted to explore the extent to which traditional family structures and socialized attitudes continue to influence political elites' behavior. While our single-state study only begins to assess this critical area of gender politics, we hope our findings will be a springboard to future research in the field.

CENTRAL HYPOTHESES

For gender politics scholars, traditional sex-role socialization has played a prominent role in explaining the slow inclusion of women in electoral politics. Throughout the history of the United States, women and men have been taught, overtly and through inference, that politics is a business best left to men (Constantini and Craik 1972; Lee 1976). Traditional sex-role socialization, defined by Conover and Gray as a “division of activities into the public extra-familial jobs done by the male and the private intra-familial ones performed by the female,” has historically resulted in men’s entry into the public world of politics and women’s relegation to the private realm of the home (1983, 2-3). As we enter the twenty-first century, however, the extent to which socialized norms and traditional family structures persist among potential candidates for public office is not entirely evident.

Clearly, many of the barriers to women’s advancement in formerly male fields are drastically changing; women now enter law schools and MPA programs at equal levels with men (McGlen and O’Connor 1998; Szymborski 1996). Correspondingly, over the course of the last thirty years, women’s presence in the fields of business and law has increased dramatically (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Reingold 2000). Further, the conception of a rigid set of sex roles has dissipated with the increasing number of two-career families (McGlen and O’Connor 1998; see also Virginia Slims Polls 1970-1995).

Despite these educational and occupational shifts, contemporary studies of family gender dynamics reveal that many traditional roles and attitudes persist. Women, even in two-career households, for instance, are more likely than their spouses to spend time raising children and completing household tasks, such as cleaning and laundry (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Galinsky and Bond 1996; Glenn 1985; McGlen and O’Connor 1998; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). This pattern holds true even when women are the primary breadwinners in a family (Blumstein and Schwartz 1991; see also Brayfield 1992; Hochschild 1989). In fact, Conway, Steuernagel, and Ahern identify the sociocultural expectation that women are the primary caretakers of children as a leading reason for the exclusion of women from elite level politics (1997). Even by the late 1990s, for example, approximately 15% of General Social Survey respondents agreed that “women should take care of running their homes and leave running the country up to men” (GSS 1998). More than 20% of Americans also agreed with the statement: “Most men are better suited emotionally for politics than are most

women” (GSS 1998). And anecdotal evidence from some women candidates reveals that women are more likely than men to be concerned with family responsibilities when making decisions about pursuing elective office (Fowler and McClure 1989; Fox 1997; for other assessments for gender and political ambition, see Bledsoe and Herring 1990; Constantini 1990). In terms of attitudes about politics, therefore, many vestiges of traditional socialization remain intact in contemporary American families. These dynamics suggest that women and men in the pool of eligible candidates may also still conform, at least in part, to traditional family roles and the notion that the electoral arena is not an environment into which women should seek entry.

If we are to gain a better understanding of the gender dynamics associated with the initial decision to run for office, it is critical to explore more thoroughly the manner in which family structures and traditional socialization have an impact on men and women’s likelihood of launching a political candidacy. If certain aspects of gender socialization ultimately influence whether women and men consider running for office, then understanding the effects of traditional socialization is critical to exploring the likelihood that women and men in the eligibility pool will turn a consideration of a candidacy into an actual campaign. Thus, the effects of traditional socialization are key to understanding the long-term prospects for gender parity in elective office.

As previously mentioned, the NWPC poll is one of the only direct examinations of potential candidates and the initial decision to run for office (see also Duerst-Lahti 1998; Fox, Lawless, and Feeley 2001). While the NWPC study sheds some light on the attitudes of men and women in the “eligibility pool,” the study does not consider explicitly the role of family structure or traditional sex-role socialization as a reason for why men and women may or may not pursue public office. Rooted in literature that suggests that traditional gender socialization plays a significant role in men and women’s decisions to enter the political arena, we identified two overarching hypotheses, each of which consists of two components. Our *Consider Running Hypothesis* posits that women in the eligibility pool who have traditional family structures, or hold traditional attitudes about gender roles, will be less likely than similarly situated men to consider running for public office. The *High Ambition Hypothesis*, related to the *Consider Running Hypothesis*, predicts that women in the eligibility pool who have traditional family structures, or hold traditional attitudes about gender roles, will express less ambition than similarly situated men to serve in high-level elective office, such as governor, member of the U.S. House of Repre-

sentatives, or U.S. senator. Both hypotheses culminate to posit that historically socialized attitudes and roles, even among women in the pool of eligible candidates, will have an impact on the initial decision to seek elected office. Examining these hypotheses will allow us to begin to explore the interaction of gender and the decision to run for office, and the degree to which this interaction may be critical in assessing women's continued underrepresentation as candidates for elective office.

Methods and the Eligibility Pool Sample

Although understanding why candidates run is a critically important question, an empirical study of how people choose to run for office is very difficult to execute. The many undocumented considerations that enter the decision to run are among myriad methodological issues to confront. When a potential candidate decides not to run, the decision is often unknown and, thus, that individual is difficult to locate and survey. In addition, many individuals who ultimately run for office may have never considered themselves potential candidates until they were recruited to run. Moreover, research attempts to identify potential candidates can cause controversy in local political environments (see Maisel and Stone 1998).

In an attempt to test our two general hypotheses and explore the manner in which traditional socialization and family structure may have an impact on the initial decision to run for office, we randomly sampled men and women in occupations that match the professional backgrounds of members of the U.S. House of Representatives. We based our sample design on a breakdown of the five most common occupations of members of the U.S. House of Representatives before they entered politics: lawyers, business executives, legislative staff members, educators, and political activists (lobbyists and heads of interest groups) (Burrell 1994). In an effort to mirror the occupational ratios in the House, we randomly surveyed 200 lawyers, 150 business executives, 50 educators, 50 legislative staff members, and 50 lobbyists and heads of interest groups.³ Within each occupation, we stratified by gender, so as to have an equal number of men and women in each category. Ultimately, we distributed a four-page mail survey to 250 men and 250 women, each of whom could be considered part of the "eligibility pool" in the state of New York. We asked respondents about their familial arrangements, political activism, political outlook, and perceptions and willingness to run for office.⁴

We acknowledge that our methodology involved using a sampling design that relies on a gendered conception of the eligibility pool, as it is dominated by professions that, traditionally, have not been very inclusive of women. It is possible that female candidates might be more likely to emerge from other pools, such as community or church groups. The eligibility pool explanation, however, relies on this traditional composition of the pool to explain women's continued underrepresentation (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994). It is important to realize, therefore, that the women in this sample may have overcome the forces of traditional socialization to a greater extent than the overall population of potential women candidates, since our respondents were drawn from predominantly "male" occupations.⁵ In a sense, our conception of the eligibility pool serves as a stringent test case through which to explore gender differences and the role of gender socialization in political ambition. Considering the difficulty of amassing a sample of potential candidates, coupled with the fact that these "male" occupations do yield the majority of candidates, we believe that this is an effective means of assembling a sample of the eligibility pool.⁶

Because the occupational status of women in the eligibility pool in New York State closely parallels national trends, it serves as a good case study. In New York State, for instance, 25% of practicing attorneys are women, compared to 29% nationally. Women hold 12% of high-level (CEO or CFO) positions in top companies, compared to 11% nationally. And 35% of New York's full-time professors are women, compared to 42% nationally.⁷ Moreover, if we examine the occupational backgrounds of the New York delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives in the 103rd through 106th Congresses, our sampling ratios effectively match the actual occupational backgrounds of the members. Prior to their elections to the House, 24% of the New York delegation worked as lawyers, 22% as business executives, 27% as legislative staffers and interest group leaders (many of whom have law degrees), and 17% as educators; 10% of the members' previous occupations fell outside of this classification (Murray 2000). Despite these parallels to the nation, we must be careful when viewing the data and making inferences. New York State ranks 29th out of 50 states in terms of the percentage of women serving in the state legislature (CAWP 2002). This relatively poor record of placing women in stepping stone offices for high-level office suggests that we should be cautious when applying our findings to potential candidates in other states.

From the original sample of 500, 46 surveys were either undeliverable or returned because the individual was no longer employed in the

position. From the 454 remaining members of the sample, we received 222 surveys (117 men and 105 women), for a response rate of 48.9%, which is typical of other elite sample mail surveys (see Carroll 1994; Fox and Schuhmann 1999; Maisel and Stone 1998; Salant and Dillman 1994).⁸ Overall, the samples of men and women were similar in terms of age, race, religion, level of education, and occupation. Prior to assessing the manner in which traditional sex-role socialization and family structures may have an impact on the decision to seek office, though, it is important to note the manner in which historically socialized roles and attitudes may have already played a role in the formation of the eligibility pool.

Foremost, despite the fact that traditional family structures were prevalent in our sample, respondents' family arrangements indicate that women were less likely than men both to be married and to have children. Eighty-eight percent of men in the sample were married, compared to 70% of women (significant at $p < .05$). And men were 12% more likely than women to have children (84% of men compared to 72% of women) (significant at $p < .05$). Certainly not all women in the sample felt forced to choose between devotion to family and devotion to career, but rather, managed to maintain both a traditional family structure and high-level occupational status. Consistent with earlier analyses of professional women, though, the lower likelihood of women in the eligibility pool being married and/or having children suggests that to achieve the professional accomplishment of this group, some women may have eschewed traditional family structures (see, e.g., Carroll and Strimling 1983; Lee 1976).

Another potentially important difference between the men and women in the sample of the eligibility pool is that men reported higher incomes than did women. Twenty-three percent of female respondents, compared to only 7% of males, had personal incomes of \$50,000 or less. This gender difference indicates that traditional attitudes and family structures may have already influenced the pool of potential candidates, as women were more likely than men to earn less money, despite the fact that both men and women were chosen from the same tier of professional accomplishment (Christensen and Maslanka 1991; Flammang 1997; McGlen and O'Connor 1998). Because financial independence can be a significant determinant of whether a potential candidate actually runs for office (Clark 1994), the men in our sample may have been advantaged in terms of seriously considering entering politics.

Finally, it is essential to note that men in the sample were more likely than women to characterize themselves as possessing traits typically

considered appropriate for a political career. An extensive body of literature has found that preferences for “masculine” character traits influence candidate recruitment and self-selection (Flammang 1997; Fox 1997; Kahn 1996; Niven 1998). Stereotypical “masculine” traits, such as assertiveness and self-confidence, tend to be viewed as more desirable for activities such as campaigning and holding top elective office; “feminine” traits, including compassion and willingness to compromise, are linked to the traditional domain of family (Burrell 1994; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a, 1993b; Jewell and Whicker 1994; Leeper 1991; Rosenwasser and Dean 1989; Sapiro 1981-82). When asked to characterize themselves as possessing a series of “masculine” and “feminine” traits, more than 71% of male respondents, compared to 29% of female respondents, viewed themselves as possessing more “masculine” than “feminine” qualities (significant at $p < .05$).⁹ Thus, the men in the sample were more likely to possess the characteristics that might be linked to a political career, whereas women who were socioeconomically and professionally positioned to consider a political candidacy may have had to transgress traditionally socialized norms, or be willing to exist in an electoral environment that tends not to embrace stereotypical “women’s” traits.

Traditional Socialization, Family Structure, and the Decision to Run for Office

Our *Consider Running Hypothesis* asserts that among women in the eligibility pool, women with traditional family structures and historically socialized attitudes will be less likely than their similarly situated male counterparts to consider seeking public office. In an attempt to measure the impact of traditional socialization on the decision to run for office, we asked our respondents a series of questions regarding their level of interest and involvement in politics. Approximately 95% of both male and female respondents voted in the 1994, 1996, and 1998 elections; and 16% of the men and 17% of the women in the sample belonged to a political organization or interest group (these levels of voting are somewhat higher and political memberships somewhat lower than levels of elite political participation in a national sample; see Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Somewhat surprisingly, women and men asserted, in roughly equal proportions, that they had seriously considered running for office; 40% of women and 38% of men in the sample expressed interest in seeking an elected position. This finding demonstrates some progress when compared to earlier research that

found or hypothesized that women have less political ambition or inclination to seek elective office than do men (Fowler and McClure 1989; NWPC 1994). Despite equal levels of stated political ambition, however, it remains critically important to investigate the factors that influence the consideration of seeking office. Not only does the enduring legacy of gender role socialization in society make this an important endeavor, but the differences in family structures and sex-role attitudes between the men and women in our sample also suggest the importance of a fuller investigation.

To test our *Consider Running Hypothesis* more fully, we performed three logistic regression equations.¹⁰ The first equation included the women in the sample; the second equation included the men; and the third included the entire sample.¹¹ In each of the equations, the dependent variable was coded “1” if the respondent had seriously considered running for any political office and “0” if he/she had not (for specific coding instructions, see Appendix). By controlling for two demographic variables and two political interest variables that previous scholarship has associated with both political participation (see, for example, Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995) and women’s political ambition, we sought to uncover any independent effects of traditional sex-role socialization on eligibility pool members’ initial decision to run for office.

Turning first to demographics, we controlled for age and income. Previous literature has shown each of these variables to be important factors on which individuals rely when considering running for office. Sapiro’s (1982) study of national convention delegates, for instance, found that both women and men feel conflict between political ambition and caring for their children, but the restraints are far greater for women than men; as a result, women who do enter politics often become involved later in life (see also Bernstein 1986; Burrell 1994; Burt-Way and Kelly 1992; Clark 1994). In terms of income, research suggests that women candidates might feel less comfortable engaging in the fund-raising process (Staton/Hughes 1992). Thus, financial differences between women and men may result in what appear to be lower levels of political ambition among women.

We also included two general measures associated with political background: party and political interest group membership.¹² Evidence suggests that the policy issues that often spur women’s political activism tend to be “women’s issues” that are frequently embedded in the Democratic party’s policy agenda (Conway, Steuernagel, and Ahern 1997). Thus, we included in the regression equations a party variable to

identify Democrats. Interest group membership might also spur political ambition, not only because familiarity with the political environment could ensue as a result of membership, but also because membership in a political organization might indicate interest in politics which, in turn, might spur a candidacy.¹³ Although our survey instrument does not distinguish between mere “check book participation” in an interest group or political organization and more active membership, our measure is a more stringent indicator of political interest because of the lower threshold. In other words, if the organization membership variable serves as a significant predictor of considering a run for office, then we know that simply being involved in an organization, regardless of the degree of involvement, spurs the consideration of a candidacy. This is important because far fewer people actively engage in political groups than donate money to them.

Having controlled for personal attributes and political experiences that are associated with an increased propensity to consider running for office, we included in the regression equation three variables that attempt to gauge the impact of traditional family structures on considering a political candidacy. Two variables pertained specifically to the physical composition of the family: whether the respondent was married; and whether he/she had children living at home.¹⁴ We also included a measure of whether the respondent would be more likely to run if his/her spouse/partner was supportive of the endeavor (for analyses of the role of a cooperative and supportive family in women’s political careers, see Cantor, Bernay and Stoess 1992; Carroll 1994). We expected this sort of support to be more important to married women than to married men. Not only might women perceive entering the electoral arena as incompatible with their traditional role of mother or “wife” and, hence, rely on spousal support to mitigate the incompatibility, but evidence also suggests that women are more likely than men to believe it is important to have a spouse who understands and supports her role, whatever it may be (McGlen and O’Connor 1998; see also Virginia Slims Poll 1990).¹⁵

Finally, we included two variables to measure the degree to which the respondent subscribed to historically socialized roles and attitudes about gender. Foremost, we created a scaled “gender roles” variable to measure attitudes about traditional gender roles and women’s place in society. The scaled “gender roles” variable included general attitudes toward feminism, as well as attitudes regarding women’s physical autonomy, equity, and suitability for a political career. A wide range of literature has shown, for example, that women office-holders and

candidates are more likely to prioritize “women’s issues” (Dodson 1998; Thomas 1994). In addition, among women office holders, those who are more sympathetic to a feminist agenda are more likely to seek advancement to higher office (Dodson and Farrah 1988). Thus, we hypothesized that women supportive of feminism and “women’s issues” might be more likely to consider running for political office. The last variable in the equation gauged the level of “masculine” traits with which the respondent identified. Based on literature that suggests that traditional expectations of men and women continue to pervade the electoral environment (Flammang 1997; Fox 1997; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a, 1993b; Kahn 1996; Niven 1998), we expected respondents who characterized themselves as possessing “masculine” traits to be more likely to consider a run for office.

When we turn to family structures and traditional attitudes about gender roles, the results of the equations presented in Table 1 reveal clear support for our *Consider Running Hypothesis*. For all members of the eligibility pool, traditional gender socialization influenced whether or not respondents seriously considered running for office. Turning first to the sub-samples of women and men, the regression coefficients in columns one and two suggest that potential women candidates seemed to feel particularly constrained by traditional family structures and socialized attitudes about women’s roles. Although marital status did not have a statistically significant impact on considering a political candidacy, the results in Table 1 suggest that men still perceived more freedom to enter the public realm of politics, regardless of family structure. As was the finding of earlier studies of actual candidates (e.g., Sapiro 1982), the presence of children at home reduced the likelihood that women would consider running for office by approximately 27%, thereby suggesting that some vestiges of traditional family structures persist.¹⁶ For the men in our sample, the presence of children at home did not serve as a barrier to considering a run for office.

Family support was important to both men and women in the eligibility pool. For both men and women, a supportive spouse increased by more than 50% the likelihood that a respondent seriously considered running for office. In fact, family support was actually more significant for men than women. We attribute this seemingly counterintuitive finding to the fact that women were less likely to be married and, therefore, less likely to have the opportunity to rely on spousal support of a candidacy. After all, more married women (65%) than married men (53%) said they would be more likely to run for office if they were supported by a family member or spouse (significant at $p < .05$). It is quite plausible,

TABLE 1. Logistic Regression Coefficients Assessing Factors that Lead Men and Women to Consider Running for Public Office (Standard Errors in Parentheses)

| Explanatory Variables | <i>Seriously Considered Running for Office</i> | | | | |
|---|--|--|----------------|--|----------------|
| | Women | | Men | | Whole Sample |
| Gender (Female) | | | | | 7.32 (4.56) |
| Age | -.061* (.032) | | .073 (.042) | | .043 (.036) |
| Annual Personal Income | .160 (.237) | | -.485* (.335) | | -.052 (.190) |
| Party (Democrat) | 1.20** (.588) | | 1.20 (.748) | | 1.12* (.456) |
| Member of a Political Organization | 2.56*** (.771) | | .104 (.883) | | .373 (.816) |
| Married | .281 (.720) | | .283 (1.12) | | .141 (.598) |
| Children at Home | -1.30** (.629) | | .652 (.761) | | .241 (.647) |
| Support from Family | 1.01** (.458) | | 2.51*** (.590) | | 2.43*** (.550) |
| Attitudes about Gender Roles | -.193 (.167) | | .353** (.172) | | .349** (.158) |
| Possess "Masculine" Traits | .215 (.143) | | .347** (.167) | | .276* (.149) |
| Age * Female | | | | | -.103** (.048) |
| Member of a Political Organization * Female | | | | | 2.07* (1.11) |
| Children at Home * Female | | | | | -.983 (.862) |
| Support from Family * Female | | | | | -1.54** (.701) |
| Attitudes about Gender Roles * Female | | | | | -.536** (.228) |
| Possess "Masculine" Traits * Female | | | | | .021 (.195) |
| Constant | 10.8*** (3.67) | | 4.42 (4.37) | | 4.27 (3.33) |
| -2 Log Likelihood | 85.9 | | 76.4 | | 165.0 |
| N | 88 | | 88 | | 176 |

Note: See Appendix for specific coding instructions.
Significance levels: *** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .10.

therefore, that women rely on their families for external support of their non-traditional decision to think about running for office. Men, on the other hand, might rely on spousal support because dissipating sex-role stereotypes suggest to men that it is an appropriate consideration. Unquestionably, more research is needed in this area to investigate further the manner in which men and women conceptualize "family support."

It appears that overcoming sex-role socialization in terms of family structures is not the only pattern of traditional socialization that affects considering a run for office. For men, more traditional attitudes about gender roles, as well as a self-identification with “masculine” traits, substantially increased the likelihood of considering a run for public office. Otherwise a “typical” male respondent, a man with the most traditional outlook of gender roles (anti-choice, anti-ERA, negative impression of feminism, thinks men are better suited for politics than are women), was 60% more likely than a man with the most non-traditional attitudes about gender roles to consider a candidacy. Comparably, men who identified most strongly with “masculine” traits were 56% more likely than men who did not identify with traits of assertiveness, aggression, determination, and independence to consider a run for office. Whereas women who have considered running for office often must trump traditional attitudes about socially ascribed family structures, men are more likely to consider running for office when they subscribe to historically socialized roles.

Finally, we should note that Democratic party affiliation was a positive predictor of all respondents’ prospects for considering to run for office, but the effects were more significant for women than men. Controlling for other variables, Democratic women were 26% more likely than non-Democrats to have seriously considered running for office. The propensity of women candidates to be affiliated with the Democratic party has been attributed, most notably, to the fact that the Democratic party’s policy positions are more likely to coincide with a purported set of “women’s issues” (Burrell 1994; Thomas 1998). Thus, women might feel that the party serves as a venue through which to receive support for addressing “women’s issues” and other policies that have traditionally been relegated to the private sphere of the home. Similarly, women were 57% more likely to consider running for office if they were members of political interest groups.

The regression coefficients in the third column of Table 1 indicate that a number of variables that influenced men and women’s likelihood of considering a candidacy also had differential impacts on men and women. Most notably, as respondents aged, women were significantly less likely than similarly situated men to consider running for office. As mentioned earlier, considering that women in the sample had more child care responsibilities, this finding suggests that by the time women’s family structures allow them to think about a political candidacy, their increased age detracts from their likelihood of considering the idea. Further, the same traditional attitudes about gender roles that

bolstered men's likelihood of considering a candidacy made women significantly less likely to consider running for office. This finding suggests that perhaps both women and men who find themselves as the primary caretakers of children or the household engage in too many tasks to consider running for office. Because these roles have historically fallen on women, though, men are disadvantaged in terms of their political ambition only when they trump stereotypical roles. Finally, support from family was more important to men; as previously noted, though, the family structures of men and women in the sample differed, with women significantly less likely than men both to be married and to have children.

Together, these findings suggest that traditional gender socialization continues to be important in the electoral arena. Even women who have overcome a certain degree of traditional sex-role socialization, simply by virtue of the fact that they exist in the top tier of professional accomplishment, continue to be affected by family structure and traditional attitudes about gender roles in the initial decision to consider a political candidacy. Despite the fact that men and women express comparable levels of political ambition, the reality is that men and women in the eligibility pool face different decision criteria when considering a potential candidacy.

TRADITIONAL SOCIALIZATION, FAMILY STRUCTURE, AND INTEREST IN HIGH-LEVEL OFFICE

Turning now to our *High Ambition Hypothesis*—traditional socialization leads fewer women than men to express interest in high-level office—we uncovered only marginal support. In examining this hypothesis, we asked respondents two questions: if they were to run for office, which office would be the first position they would most likely seek? And second, from a list of nine possible local, state, and national level offices, which, if any, would they be interested in holding? Surprisingly, the only statistically significant difference among responses regarding office preference was that women (12%) were more likely than men (3%) to prefer a judgeship as their first elected position (significant at $p < .05$).¹⁷ The remainder of the responses suggested that men and women were just as likely to consider legislative and executive positions, at all levels of government.

Again, though, if we are to gain a fuller understanding of men and women's office preferences, it is important to explore the extent to

which traditional socialization affects eligibility pool members' choices. In order to operationalize more fully our *High Ambition Hypothesis*, we developed two sets of regression equations. In both sets of equations, as the dependent variable, we employed a dichotomous indicator of whether the respondent expressed any interest in serving in the U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate, or as Governor. We regressed on this "high-level office" variable the same independent variables we included in our "seriously considered running" regression equations (see Table 1 and Appendix). In addition, we included as an independent variable whether the respondent expressed interest in running for a low-level political office, since the literature on political ambition suggests that, in most states, politics is a career ladder. Interest in, as well as actually holding, low-level office can predict interest in holding high-level office (see Black 1972; Jacobson 2000; Kazee 1994; Prinz 1993; Rhode 1979; Schlesinger 1965).¹⁸

In the first set of equations, we considered only those respondents who said they had considered running for office. In these equations, there were no statistically significant differences between women and men (results not shown). In other words, among respondents who considered running for elective office, traditional family structures and adherence to gender roles did not influence interest in high-level office. This suggests that once women express an interest in seeking office, they are just as likely to aspire to hold the same types of offices as men.

In our second set of regression equations, we included the full sample of respondents. We wanted to test whether gender differences emerged once we suggested the possibility of launching a candidacy to our respondents. Many individuals who become officeholders or candidates may have never thought about running for office until later in life or until they were recruited to run. Thus, it is essential to determine whether men and women in the pipeline professions for political careers are similarly interested in these offices once the idea of a candidacy is suggested. Our analysis uncovered limited support for our *High Ambition Hypothesis*.

Again, we will first examine each of the sub-samples of respondents. From the outset, it is important to note that for neither men, nor women, did interest in low-level political office predict interest in high-level office. More specifically, only 42% of respondents who expressed interest in high-level office also stated that they would be interested in seeking low-level office. This finding questions the degree to which potential candidates' interest or success in one office generates thoughts of a higher office. Perhaps more importantly, because men were more

likely than women to express interest in high-level offices, we should be cautious in assuming that an increase in women high-office holders will ensue from an increase in the percentage of women holding local and state-level political positions.

Table 2 displays our second set of regression equations, in which we included the full sample of respondents. Turning to the family structure variables, traditional family structures played at least a marginal role. Our data suggest that, among women, the presence of children at home was a significant consideration that deterred women from expressing interest in high-level office by approximately 15%. Children at home did not have an impact on men's office preferences.¹⁹ A highly supportive family increased men's probability of expressing interest in high-level office by more than 35%; married men were more than 10% more likely than unmarried men to have expressed interest in running for Congress or a governorship. Neither support from family nor marital status was a statistically significant predictor among women. Once again, though, we cannot be certain as to whether "family support" meant the same thing to men and women in the sample. In a similar vein, it is quite possible that married men construed their marital status as evidence of family support and, therefore, received a boost in the propensity to express interest in running merely because they had a spouse who they perceived as unconditionally supportive. Women in the sample may not have confounded the presence of a husband with that of a supportive family member, perhaps because they were aware of the fact that transcending traditional roles might not be welcomed by their spouse.

Traditional attitudes and sex-role stereotypes also disparately affected the levels of office preferred by women and men respondents. Women who supported the ERA, abortion rights, feminism, and the notion that politics is not a male domain were 64% more likely than similarly-situated, but more traditional, women to express interest in high-level office. This finding suggests that a move away from traditional socialization was important for women who preferred high-level elective positions. Quite the contrary, no such move away from socialized norms was required for men in the sample. Neither disagreement with a feminist agenda, nor a belief in traditional roles and attitudes, increased men's interest in a high-level elected position.

Finally, it is important to recognize that traditional socialization may have manifested itself in one additional way in terms of the level of office members of the eligibility pool preferred. Consistent with research that associates economic independence with willingness to run for of-

TABLE 2. Logistic Regression Coefficients Assessing Factors that Lead Men and Women to Consider High-Level Office
(Standard Errors in Parentheses)

| Explanatory Variables | <i>Considered a High-Level Office</i> | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------|---------|--------|----------------|
| | Women | | Men | | Whole Sample |
| Gender (Female) | | | | | 3.08 (3.91) |
| Age | .048 | (.036) | -.030 | (.049) | .011 (.027) |
| Annual Personal Income | .382 | (.340) | 1.09** | (.443) | .623* (.323) |
| Party (Democrat) | -.182 | (.697) | .864 | (.740) | .369 (.494) |
| Member of a Political Organization | .213 | (.878) | .996 | (.777) | .774 (.551) |
| Married | -.074 | (.855) | 2.03* | (1.17) | .963 (.663) |
| Children at Home | -1.47 | (.764)* | -.313 | (.804) | -.319 (.664) |
| Support from Family | .212 | (.484) | 1.26*** | (.440) | 1.33*** (.423) |
| Attitudes about Gender Roles | -.495 | (.257)* | .090 | (.187) | .024 (.158) |
| Possess "Masculine" Traits | .288 | (.193) | .146 | (.154) | .100 (.146) |
| Interest in Low-Level Office | 1.11 | (.838) | -.372 | (.745) | -.420 (.697) |
| Income * Female | | | | | -.080 (.435) |
| Children at Home * Female | | | | | -1.51 (.951) |
| Support from Family * Female | | | | | -.980 (.632) |
| Attitudes about Gender Roles * Female | | | | | -.548* (.302) |
| Possess "Masculine" Traits * Female | | | | | .405* (.241) |
| Interest in Low-Level Office * Female | | | | | 1.15 (1.06) |
| Constant | .387 | (4.080) | -4.16 | (4.23) | -1.41 (3.01) |
| -2 Log Likelihood | 63.7 | | 74.8 | | 144.0 |
| N | 85 | | 88 | | 173 |

Note: See Appendix for specific coding instructions.
Significance levels: *** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .10.

office (Clark 1994), annual personal income was a significant predictor of whether men in the sample aspired to hold high-level political positions. Income was not a significant predictor of women's interest in these positions. This may be explained by the fact that women in the sample were less likely to have reached the highest levels of economic comfort, and accordingly, were less reliant on their financial state of affairs when thinking about the level of office they would aspire to hold. Because campaigns for the highest level offices are the most expensive (Jacobson 2000), the prospects of turning a preference for a high-level office into an actual campaign may come easier to the men than the women in the sample. Men who earned \$200,000 per year, for instance, were about 20% more likely than men who earned as much as \$100,000 annually to express interest in high-level office. Women were significantly less likely to find themselves in these income brackets, so it is not surprising that income had less of an effect on the offices they aspired to hold.²⁰

The results of the regression equation, including interaction terms (Table 2, column 3), lend additional support to the suggestion that traditional gender role socialization affected men and women in the eligibility pool differently, despite many of their socioeconomic and professional similarities. Women with fewer male traits were less likely than their male counterparts to express interest in high-level offices, as were women who held traditional attitudes about gender roles. Although these variables were significant only at the $p < .10$ level, the results are quite suggestive of the idea that traditional patterns of sex-role socialization make women less likely than their male counterparts to express interest in the highest levels of political office. Therefore, the increase of women in pipeline professions for political careers might not, in and of itself, generate a significant increase in the proportion of women serving as Members of Congress or Governors in years to come.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Studies that focus on the role of gender in political candidacies tend to emphasize normative concerns regarding political representation. As Tolleson-Rinehart (1994) notes, there appears to be something gravely wrong with a political system that produces governing bodies dominated by men, when, in fact, women comprise the majority of the population. At the very least, this dynamic offends our sense of "simple justice" (see also Carroll 1994; Leader 1977; Reingold 2000; Thomas

1998). A growing body of research suggests, however, that candidate sex is gradually becoming irrelevant in the electoral process; gender disparities in fundraising, vote totals, and overt discrimination have dissipated. In order to dismiss fully the role of gender dynamics in electoral politics, though, we believe we must turn our attention to the stage *before* individuals enter the electoral process and examine whether gender dynamics influence the initial decision to run for political office. Studying the role of gender socialization before individuals enter the political process may reveal important clues not only about the role gender may continue to play in the electoral process, but also the future prospects of gender parity in U.S. governing bodies (Rosenthal and Jones 2000).

Our research attempts to begin the process of examining the manner in which gender socialization and traditional family structures affect men and women's willingness to consider running for office. The preliminary evidence we uncovered suggests mixed prospects for gender parity in elective office. At least on the surface, women and men in the eligibility pool hold comparable levels of political ambition, both in terms of considering a political candidacy and the level of public office they might seek. This finding provides encouraging news for those concerned that women are not socialized to consider running for an elected position. Nevertheless, a more nuanced analysis demonstrates that traditional family structures and historically socialized gender roles continue to influence how women think about the decision to enter politics. Of course, our mixed findings raise an important question. If men and women express equal interest in considering a run for office, should we really be concerned that different factors influence men and women's political ambition? We suggest two main ways in which family structure and traditional socialization affect prospects for gender equity among potential candidates.

Foremost, even though women express a deep interest in participating in electoral politics, the evidence of a more complicated decision structure may deter women from entering the electoral arena. Of the twenty members of our sample who had actually sought elective office, men were more than twice as likely as women to have launched a campaign (fourteen men and six women ran for some elective position). Despite the small sample size, this finding suggests that the "double bind," whereby women must exhibit success as both mothers and professionals, is still imposed upon women (see Jamieson 1995). It seems that women have less freedom to abandon their professional careers or family opportunities to seek political careers. Again, research of women

who have actually made the decision to run suggests that women are less likely than men to seek office unless they are spurred on by non-career considerations, such as devotion to a policy issue (Fox 1997), or when they are recruited to run for office (Niven 1998). In fact, findings from studies of women candidates and officeholders indicate that when the decision calculus is influenced by considerations of family or career opportunities, women demonstrate lower likelihoods of exhibiting political ambition (e.g., Burt-Way and Kelly 1991; Fowler and McClure 1989). Our results substantiate the hypothesis that these considerations also affect women in the eligibility pool, and might detract from their decisions to wage candidacies.

Of equal importance, our findings allow us to speculate as to the broader population of women who do not occupy our “eligibility pool” professions. As previously discussed, the women in our sample *already* overcame many traditional barriers. Not only were they less likely than men to be married and have children, but because these women attained high levels of professional accomplishment in generally male-dominated professions, we can speculate that they might also have more familiarity and confidence with the prospect of entering a cynical, arduous, male-dominated political environment. Yet even these women seemed to be affected by family structure and traditional gender roles. As the political pipeline professions become less narrow, there is little reason to believe that the decision to run for office will become any less gendered. After all, if traditional sex-role socialization seems to play a role in the decision to run for office among women whom we know trumped stereotypical gender roles, then we would expect the barriers to be higher among women who, by virtue of their profession, have had to transgress fewer boundaries.

Overall, we must be careful in drawing general conclusions from our single state study that focused on only a few aspects of gender socialization. New York’s relatively poor record of placing women in stepping-stone offices, coupled with structural impediments, most notably incumbency, might have shaped respondents’ attitudes and political ambition. Nevertheless, we believe we have uncovered important findings that can help guide future research and explore the manner in which traditional family structures and sex-role socialization have an impact on men and women in the eligibility pool. Even though women now comprise an increasing proportion of the “eligibility pool” and state similar levels of interest in seeking office, future gender parity in political representation may be a precarious assumption. At the very least, our findings demand further investigation into how traditional

family obligations may or may not have an impact on the initial decision to run. A larger national study that examines the broad interaction of political ambition and gender could help provide great insight into the decision to run for office, as well as offer a broad assessment of the prospects for women's full inclusion at all levels of the political system.

APPENDIX Coding Instructions

Dependent Variables

Seriously Considered Running (0,1) indicates whether respondent had seriously considered running for public office (1) or not (0).

Interest in High-Level Office (0,1) indicates whether respondent expressed interest in serving as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate, or as Governor (1) or not (0).

Independent Variables

Gender (Female) (0,1) indicates whether the respondent was a woman (1) or a man (0).

Age (29 to 76) indicates respondent's age.

Annual Personal Income (1 to 6) indicates respondent's individual income for 1999. It ranges from a low of less than \$25,000 (1) to a high of over \$200,000 (6).

Party (Democrat) (0,1) indicates whether respondent was a Democrat (1) or not (0).

Member of a Political Organization (0,1) indicates whether respondent belonged to any political organizations or interest groups (1) or not (0).

Married (0,1) indicates whether respondent was married (1) or not (0).

Children at Home (0,1) indicates whether respondent had children living at home (1) or not (0).

Support from Family (1 to 4) indicates the importance of family support in seeking office. It ranges from respondent being "no more likely" to run for office if supported by a family member (1) to "definitely more likely" to run for office if supported by a family member (4).

Gender Roles (4 to 16) is a scale of increasing levels of agreement with traditional gender roles/attitudes about feminism, abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment, and the idea that men are better suited emotionally for politics than are women. Higher values indicate a more traditional outlook.

Possess "Masculine" Traits (4 to 16) is a scale based on whether the respondent considered four "masculine" traits (aggressive, assertive, independent, deter-

mined) accurate characteristics of himself/herself. The responses ranged from “very accurate” (4) to “inaccurate” (1) for each trait.

Interest in Lower-Level Office (0,1) indicates whether the respondent expressed interest in running for school board, mayor, city council, or statewide office (1) or not (0).

NOTES

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1. A glance at lower level offices also reveals a deep gender disparity: 80% of mayors, 78% of state legislators, and 73% of state-wide elected officials are male (CAWP 2001).

2. Throughout this article, the phrase “family structure” refers specifically to the physical construction of the family. A “traditional family structure” connotes the presence of a spouse and/or children. Terms including “socialized family roles” or “traditional family roles” refer to the behaviors that may result from the presence of a traditional family structure. Ultimately, we cannot draw causal linkages between a traditional family structure and traditional family roles for the respondents in our study because we do not have individual level data regarding the actual gender dynamics in our survey respondents’ families. Based on a wide body of empirical evidence that has uncovered such a correlation between traditional family structures and traditional gender roles and attitudes (see, for example, Blumstein and Schwartz 1991; McGlen and O’Connor 1998; Swift 1992), coupled with individual level data pertaining to respondents’ attitudes about feminism, women’s presence in the electoral arena, and identification with “masculine” and “feminine” traits, we draw conclusions in the aggregate about the pool of candidates with traditional family structures.

3. We obtained a random sample of lawyers from the 1997 edition of the *Martindale-Hubble Law Directory*, which provides the addresses and firms of all lawyers in New York; half the sample worked in New York City and half were employed throughout the rest of the state. We randomly selected businessmen and women from *Dun and Bradstreet’s 1998 Million Dollar Company Listing*, which lists all top officers of New York State companies with over one million dollars in sales or fees. Our selection process allowed for a cross-section of geographic location. We chose the lobbyists, interest group leaders, and legislative staff members at random from the *1998-1999 New York State Legislative Directory*, which contains all registered lobbying groups, political action committees, and staff members working in the New York State Legislature. Educators were randomly drawn from a compilation of professors (all disciplines) and administrative officials from all New York colleges and universities.

All correspondence was sent to respondents’ employment addresses, as these were the only addresses listed in the directories. Roughly 50% of the sample worked in one of the five New York City boroughs; the remaining half of the sample were employed throughout the rest of New York State. The residential breakdown of the sample revealed that 24% lived in New York City, 25% in the suburbs of New York City, and 47% in upstate and western New York. Four percent of the sample did not provide a city of residence.

4. In conducting the study, we employed a standard three-wave mail survey protocol (see Salant and Dillman 1994).

5. In addition, we acknowledge that some scholars have found different eligibility pools for Democrats and Republicans (Bond, Fleisher, and Talbert 1997; Jacobson 2000). This literature deals primarily with the distinction between “experienced” and “inexperienced” candidates, suggesting that Democrats have been more receptive than have Republicans to recruiting congressional candidates who lack previous electoral experience. The overwhelming majority of the members of Congress from both parties, however, tend to emerge from the traditional eligibility pool on which our sample is based (Ornstein, Mann, and Malbin 1999).

6. Moreover, our method has the advantage of allowing for meaningful comparisons between men and women in the sample. By contrast, the “reputational technique” of identifying potential candidates invites the possibility of informants’ own gender biases to prevent them from naming women as prospects (see Maisel and Stone 1998). This bias can easily result in too few women being identified and, therefore, prohibit statistical comparisons between women and men in the pool. We hope that our preliminary findings stimulate more research in this area and the employment of creative research strategies to address these questions.

7. Occupational breakdowns were compiled from the following sources: for lawyers, see Lanoue 1998, 1 and United States Census Bureau 1999, 424; for business executives, see Murray 2000; and for university professors, see National Center for Education Statistics 1998, 254.

8. The response rates within each of the occupations we sampled were as follows: Lawyers—57%; Business Owners/Managers—41%; Legislative Staffers—42%; Interest Group Leaders—24%; Educators—28%.

9. Respondents were asked to identify themselves as possessing the following “masculine” traits: assertive, aggressive, independent, and determined. In terms of “feminine” traits, respondents were asked whether they considered themselves compassionate, compromising, and interconnected.

10. In performing the regressions, we used list-wise deletion of cases with missing values. Although a total of 222 respondents are included in the sample, the regression equations are based on the 176 cases in which respondents answered all questions used in the analysis.

11. The first two equations compare the differences in the propensity to run for office within each gender. The third equation, through the use of interaction terms, allows us to determine whether there exist statistically significant differences between the men and women in the sample. We also performed the regression by interacting gender with every independent variable. Because the majority of the coefficients did not achieve conventional levels of statistical significance, we dropped several of the terms and included in the third equation only those that were statistically significant in at least one of the gender sub-samples.

12. Whether a respondent served on an appointive board or commission would also be a good indicator of political experience/exposure. Unfortunately, the survey instrument did not ask this question.

13. Other factors could certainly influence an individual’s consideration of running for office, such as professional credentials, including a law degree, or prior experience in a similar setting, such as college government or another elective position. Some research has found that strong credentials are more important to women than men (e.g., Fox 1997; Fox, Lawless, and Feeley 2001; Poole 1993). Because our focus is on the in-

fluence of traditional patterns of sex-role socialization, we opted to concentrate almost exclusively on the impact of family structures and attitudes about gender. In short, we are not attempting to specify fully a model of the decision to run for office; rather, we are attempting to determine the extent, if any, to which traditional sex-role socialization may still play a role in men and women's initial decision to launch a candidacy.

14. We also conducted our analysis substituting into the equations whether the respondent had children under the age of six living at home, since child care responsibilities might be particularly difficult to reconcile with political ambition prior to a child entering school. The "children under six" variable did not change the results. We opted to use as a variable whether the respondent had children of any age living at home since this is the most rigorous test of whether any sort of child care responsibilities or parental concerns influence the decision to run for political office.

15. We recognize that spousal support might be less important to the overall pool of potential women candidates since they were less likely to be married (see Carroll and Strimling 1983; Thomas 1994).

16. Because logistic regression analysis does not allow us to parcel out the independent effects of each variable unless we set all remaining variables at a constant measure, our analysis throughout the remainder of this section is based on the following: within each gender sub-sample, we set age, income, level of family support, attitudes about gender roles, and self-identification of "masculine" traits at their respective means. Our dummy variables were set at their modes, so the "typical" respondents to whom we refer are Democrats, married, have children at home, and do not belong to any political organizations.

17. Within our data, there is no clear explanation for the different levels of interest in the position of a judgeship. Men and women in the sample were just as likely to be lawyers, a credential clearly preceding election as a judge. Although we do not want to over-emphasize this finding, as the sample of men and women interested in a judgeship was quite small, some speculation is required. While a large body of literature describes the legal profession as largely "masculine" in orientation (see, for example, Baer 1999; Binion 1991), there are some factors that may make elected judgeships more appealing to women than men. Elections for judgeships, for instance, have traditionally not been hotly contested partisan elections containing characteristics of politics women historically eschewed (NWPC 1994). In addition, some of the characteristics of being a judge are more compatible with traditionally "feminine" traits. Judges often administer their courtrooms in an inclusive and cooperative fashion (see Fox and Van Sickle 2000).

18. Squire (1993) notes, though, that many states have "dead-end legislatures," which do not offer financial or staffing opportunities for advancement.

19. We ran similar regression equations with interest in local offices, such as city council and school board, as the dependent variable. In each of these equations, the family structure variables produced no significant results. This provides additional evidence for the hypothesis that, for women with traditional family structures, high-level offices may seem particularly less attainable.

20. In addition to personal income, information regarding a spouse/partner's income and employment status is necessary to understand fully the effects of personal income on high-level office interest. Having a spouse/partner who is a homemaker seems to be an asset in many fields and may enable a potential candidate to run for office. On the other hand, being the sole or primary breadwinner may inhibit a potential candidate from leaving a secure job to face an uncertain electoral outcome. In the latter situation, *not* being the primary breadwinner might actually advantage women.

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