

Stronger Together:
Political Ambition and the Presentation of Women
Running for Office *

Chris W. Bonneau
cwbonneau@gmail.com

and

Kristin Kanthak
kanthak@pitt.edu
University of Pittsburgh
4600 Posvar Hall
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

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Abstract

Does the presence of women candidates encourage other women to run for office? The extant literature is unclear on the question, with some studies (Beaman, Chattopadhyay, Duflo, Pande & Topalova 2009, Gilardi 2015) pointing to evidence in the affirmative, but others indicating these effects may be null (Broockman 2014, Carreras 2017). We draw on the literature on role model effects in psychology to argue that an individual's feelings about a particular candidate may affect whether or not that candidate is actually able to inspire that individual to run herself. Using campaign ads from Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign for the U.S. presidency, we find evidence that observing Clinton running for office does indeed increase the political ambition of some of her women supporters. At the same time, though, observing her run actually decreases ambition in other women. This effect is much greater than the effect of the context of the political ad, which does not seem to have a significant effect on women's political ambition. Furthermore, because observing Clinton also decreases the ambition of her male supporters, the net effect of her campaign may be to shrink the size of the political ambition gender gap.

Keywords— Election Aversion, Political Ambition, Presidential Election, Hillary Clinton, experiment

How do we convince more women to run for office? The answer to this question is important because we know that the salutary effects of increased women’s representation are myriad. The presence of women candidates tend to increase women’s – and often men’s – levels of political engagement (Atkeson 2003), knowledge (Fridkin & Kenney 2014), activism (Campbell & Wolbrecht 2006), willingness to discuss politics (Hansen 1997), and positivity about the political process (Karp & Banducci 2008). And although asking women to run tends to help narrow the political ambition gap (Lawless & Fox 2005, Fox & Lawless 2010), few political elites actually do that (Fox & Lawless 2010). One potential means for encouraging future women candidates is to encourage present women candidates. The presence of women candidates may beget more women candidates if being exposed to women leaders increase women’s own political ambition, and much of the extant literature (Beaman et al. 2009, Gilardi 2015) indicates that this is true. Yet other studies indicate that this is a null finding (Broockman 2014, Carreras 2017). Why might some studies show evidence of a role model effect, whereas others do not?

In this paper, we argue that these conflicting results exist in the literature because researchers have not yet considered the important effects of a target’s feelings about a *particular* candidate in how that target might react to that prospective politician’s candidacy. Perhaps observing a woman candidate running encourages others to enter politics, *but only if the target already has warm feelings toward that candidate*. Extant research on the effect of candidates’ entry on women’s political ambition cannot answer that question because it relies either on fictional candidates, for whom subjects have no real feelings either way, or a great many candidates, when feelings about particular candidates may or may not “wash out” and appear to be a null result. And although we know that candidate “likeability” matters in terms of how voters feel about voting for a candidate (Redlawsk & Lau 2006, Baum 2005) and that women candidates care about their “likeability” and endeavor to increase it (Hayes

& Lawless 2016), we know of no other study tying how voters feel about a candidate to how that candidate might affect their willingness to engage in future political activity, including running for office.

Thus, our study represents the first exploration into how candidate “likeability” ties into how effective that candidate might be in encouraging others to run. We are able to do this because we assess the effects of the candidacy of one particular woman who is both well-known and politically polarizing – Hillary Clinton. In our study, we expose subjects to a set of real advertisements from Hillary Clinton’s 2016 campaign for president. We then ask subjects about their likelihood of running for office someday. Relative to the control group, women who already had strong feelings in support of Clinton reported as much as a 1/2 point rise in their political ambition on a 7-point scale, a result that was shared with neither men nor women who did not support Clinton. Indeed, among women who had negative feelings about Clinton, viewing one of her ads resulted in as much as a 3/4 point *decrease* in political ambition. Furthermore, we show evidence that much of the effect is due to Republican women who view Clinton relatively warmly.

Our approach relies on the psychology literature on role model effects, which finds that neither all role models, nor all role aspirants, are created equal. For example, the ability to perceive a heroic woman as a hero¹ is based in part on the subject’s own characteristics (Calvert, Kondla, Ertel & Meisel 2001). Most notably, one must *like* a potential role model for that role model to affect the goals of a “role aspirant” (Morgenroth, Ryan & Peters 2015). In our context, then, a candidate may inspire political ambition in another person only if that target person already feels warmly toward the candidate. And this effect is complicated in the electoral setting because some people see those who are in competitive settings (like elections) as less warm and caring (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu 2002), thus rendering it more

¹In this study, the heroic woman was television’s Xena: Warrior Princess.

difficult for subjects to muster warm feelings toward those running for office.

At least part of the effect of role models is that they may tend to eliminate stereotype threat, the feeling that one's performance might confirm a negative stereotype about a group to which the subject is a member (Steele & Aronson 1995). For example, in one study, both women who had been told women were good at a task and women who had read about other successful women performed better on a difficult task (McIntyre, Paulson & Lord 2003). And indeed, evidence shows that politicians can serve as positive role models, including Barack Obama as a role model for young African-Americans (Marx, Ko & Friedman 2009) and Hillary Clinton for young women (Taylor, Lord, McIntyre & Paulson 2011). Notably, in that study, the effect of Clinton for mitigating stereotype threat is based at least partially on the view of subjects on how much Clinton "deserves" her success.

Drawing on these previous studies, then, we study how Clinton's performance of gender affects our subjects' reported levels of political ambition. If telling people that members of their group are actually good at a task (as McIntyre, Paulson & Lord (2003) does) increases their performance, perhaps showing subjects Hillary Clinton on the campaign trail performing in more traditionally female roles might allow them to re-cast politics as a more female-friendly environment. And indeed, our design allows us to assess these effects of Clinton's performance of gender on subjects' political ambition. This is because the Clinton campaign devised a number of campaign ads that show Clinton in non-traditional campaign settings. Of course, the campaign created typical ads that show Clinton speaking at a large rally, telling supporters that she would "fight" for them. But the campaign also designed ads that showed other sides of Clinton as well, including ads in which she listens empathetically as supporters tell her their stories and ask for her support. In this sense, then, the Clinton campaign provides us with a real candidate whose performance of gender varies, thus allowing us to assess the effects of this performance without having to sacrifice authenticity by

using actors performing as pretend politicians.

Theory

When women run for political office, they win at least as much as men do (Darcy, Welch & Clark 1994) and they are at least as effective at representing their constituents (Anzia & Berry 2011, Volden, Wiseman & Wittmer 2013). The reason that we do not see more women representatives, then, is because fewer women choose to run. There are myriad reasons why that is the case. Women are more conflict averse (Miller, Danaher & Forbes 1986, Schneider, Holman, Diekman & McAndrew 2016), they are more competition averse (Croson & Gneezy 2009, Niederle & Vesterlund 2007) and women are more election averse (Kanthak & Woon 2015). We also know that women approach politics differently. They have less political efficacy than do men (Verba, Burns & Schlozman 1997) and are more interested in communal rather than power goals (Schneider et al. 2016), for example.

And this is why role models are potentially important. If seeing women run for office encourages other women to run, as Beaman et al. (2009) and Gilardi (2015) find, then the effects of encouraging a woman to run are multiplicative: *Her* candidacy increases not only the number of women candidates by one, but also by the number of future women candidates she inspires. And for this reason, it is important to understand the limits of the role model effect on encouraging others to run, since we know from Broockman (2014) and Carreras (2017) that the effect appears not to be absolute.

We consider two ways in which seeing a woman candidate running might affect others to run. First, we explore the effect of the gendered context in how candidates are presented. We know that women's goals tend to be more communal rather than power-related (Diekman, Brown, Johnston & Clark 2010), that this result applies to the specific context of politics

(Schneider et al. 2016), and that priming the competitive nature of politics tends to decrease women’s political ambition (Preece & Stoddard 2015). Furthermore, politics is still seen as a man’s domain (Lawless & Fox 2005, Krook & O’Brien 2010), where metaphors of “fighting” abound, metaphors of “compromise” are rare, and the incongruity between female gender roles and leadership roles can lead to women in leadership being perceived less favorably (Eagly & Karau 2002). Similarly, women candidates are generally viewed to be more competent on so-called “compassion” issues (Rosenwasser & Seale 1988), an effect that is largely down to the traits women candidates are ascribed to have (Huddy & Terkildsen 1993). And second, we explore the effects of a subject’s feelings about a particular candidate to assess how Morgenroth, Ryan & Peters (2015)’s findings about how a role aspirant’s response to a role model and that aspirant’s feelings about the role model are intertwined.

Hillary Clinton’s historic 2016 run for the U.S. presidency provides us with a new opportunity to test both these questions in a way that has heretofore been impossible. Our design, pre-registered with the Open Science Framework, calls for each of our subjects to answer a series of questions about their political views and experiences, view one of four Clinton campaign ads or a short control video, then answer another series of questions, including a question about their likelihood of running for office in the future. By comparing the effects of the treatment ads to that of the control ad, we can discern the effects of the ads on reported future political ambition. The design thus allows us to compare women to men, supporters to non-supporters, and treatments to each other.

Most studies on the effects of the gender of candidates (see, for example Huddy & Terkildsen (1993)) use vignettes of fictional candidates, which allows the researcher to manipulate the gender of the candidate to better discern the effect of gender on a candidate. We explicitly lose this bit of control over our experiment by choosing as our candidate the very real Hillary Clinton. We do this intentionally, however, so that we can take full advantage

of the fact that our subjects already have preconceived notions about Clinton before they begin our experiment. Generally, these notions would be considered a contaminant in the experimental setting, but we are able to measure those preconceived notions and estimate directly what effect they will have on ambition. Of course, when candidates are real, citizens form real preferences about them, and these preferences can inform how they react to the candidate and in turn, how that candidate will affect their own political ambition. Preconceived notions, then, are an inextricable part of political ambition equation. Despite their importance, however, we believe we are the first researchers to add these notions explicitly into our research design, rather than to attempt to design them away.

At the same time, using Clinton as an example allows us to address both our questions. First, because the Clinton campaign created and uploaded a series of web ads depicting the candidate in non-traditional campaign contexts, we can test the effects of these contexts on the political ambition of our subjects. And second, because we measure subjects' feelings about Hillary Clinton prior to viewing these web ads, we can directly measure how feelings about Clinton prior to treatment correlate with the effects of viewing these ads on political ambition. We explain each of these in more detail below.

We explore the role of context by showing our subjects one of four treatment videos, which vary on how Clinton's performance of gender is depicted. For example, in a video we call "Caregiver" (Campaign 2016*c*), Clinton is depicted as empathetically listening to a supporter describe his struggles to care for his elderly parent. Here, Clinton is enmeshed in a "compassion" issue that voters perceive to be a strength for women and she is engaging with the supporter as a compassionate listener. We think, then, that this video depicts a side of campaigning for which women may feel *more* qualified to perform than are men. In a second video, "Cookstoves," (Campaign 2016*d*), Clinton is having a "wonky" conversation about a project she spearheaded as Secretary of State. She is speaking one-on-one, which may be

a more woman-friendly aspect of campaigning, but she is doing so on a policy issue (and indeed, one that involves compassion for impoverished women who may face danger from using unsafe cooking practices). In the third video, “Bullying,” (Campaign 2016a), Clinton is speaking empathetically to a young girl, but is doing so during a large campaign rally. In this sense, the ad may trigger perceptions of running for office as a more traditionally male venture, although the topic of conversation may be considered compassionate. In the last video, “Fight,” (Campaign 2016b), Clinton is depicted in the most traditional campaign role which is likely also the most traditionally male. Here, she is using the “fighting” analogy and addressing a large crowd at a rally, critiquing her opponent, Donald Trump. These four treatment videos, then, can be compared to a control video (DDOTVideos 2016), which describes a bike sharing program.

By randomly assigning one of these videos to each of our subjects and then asking them about their future political plans, we can test the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 *Viewing videos of Hillary Clinton engaged in non-traditional campaigning activities will increase the political ambition of women, but not men.*

Specifically, we expect that relative to the control group, for women:

- “Caregiver” will be associated with the largest increase in political ambition, as it shows Clinton listening empathetically as a supporter tells a story.
- “Cookstoves” will be associated with a smaller increase in political ambition, as it shows Clinton talking about policy in a small group
- “Bullying” will be associated with a smaller increase in political ambition, as it shows Clinton talking empathetically to a girl, but doing so in a large crowd

- “Fight” will not be associated with an increase in political ambition, as it shows Clinton addressing a large crowd and using fighting metaphors.

Prior to showing any video, we ask subjects to rank their warmth toward Hillary Clinton (among other politicians and groups) on a 100-point scale. We can therefore account for the differential effects of viewing the videos on those who feel warmly toward Clinton with those who do not. Drawing from the psychology literature on role model effects, we derive the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2 *The effect of viewing the Hillary Clinton videos will be larger among female subjects who are Clinton supporters.*

Data and Results

We tested our hypotheses by recruiting subjects from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk.² In order to ensure that we had enough subjects for each condition, we recruited 765 subjects and paid them \$0.50 each. Given our hypotheses about gender differences, we used some screening questions to ensure that about half of our subjects would be women. Consistent with best practices, we also had two attention check questions in the survey, and excluded sixty people for failing the check.³ Our sample consisted of 302 men and 403 women. Our sample was overwhelmingly white, with 571 white respondents, 48 African-American subjects, 39 Asian-American respondents, and 31 Hispanic/Latino subjects. Slightly more than half of our subjects were between the ages of 25 and 40, with another 25% being from 41 to 55. In terms of ideology, 268 self-identified as liberal or very liberal, with 135 self-identifying as

²See (Berinsky, Huber & Lenz 2012) for the validity of using Mechanical Turk.

³Including these people in the results does not change them significantly.

conservative or very conservative. Finally, 92.7% of our subjects reports being registered to vote.

We asked our subjects a battery of questions about their feelings toward major political candidates (Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, Marco Rubio, and Bernie Sanders) as well as about others groups such as scientists, bicyclists, the police, and blacks. Consistent with public opinion surveys at the time of the campaign, our respondents did not view Clinton warmly: her average was only 36.9%. However, this is higher than Trump’s average of 27.8%. The highest politician was Bernie Sanders at 55.3%, eclipsing even President Obama’s average of 53.8%.⁴

After asking some additional questions about party identification, presidential approval, etc., we then randomly assigned subjects to watch one of five different videos.⁵ Our control video is about bike sharing in Washington, DC. We have four videos about Hillary Clinton, each of which emphasizes a different aspect of her candidacy. First, the “caregiver” video shows Clinton listening empathetically as a supporter tells a story. Second, “cookstoves” shows her talking about policy in a small group. Third, the “bullying” video has Clinton talking to a girl about bullying, but in a large crowd. Finally, in “fight,” Clinton is addressing a large crowd and criticizing her campaigning opponent, Donald Trump; it is a more traditional campaign portrayal.⁶

After the video, we ask respondents questions about political efficacy and, most importantly for our purposes, if they have plans to run for political office in the future. The response to “I have plans to run for political office in the future” constitutes the dependent variable in our analysis. Not surprisingly, the dependent variable is skewed: fully 64.8% of

⁴Interestingly, the highest group of all was scientists at 78.2%, for which we are grateful.

⁵These videos are available in an online appendix.

⁶Later in the survey as an attention check, we ask respondents which video they watched, and we exclude those who answered incorrectly.

respondents answered “disagree strongly” and another 17.2% responded “disagree moderately.” In contrast, only 5.9% agreed with that statement even “a little.”⁷

The results from our test of Hypothesis One can be seen in Figure 1.

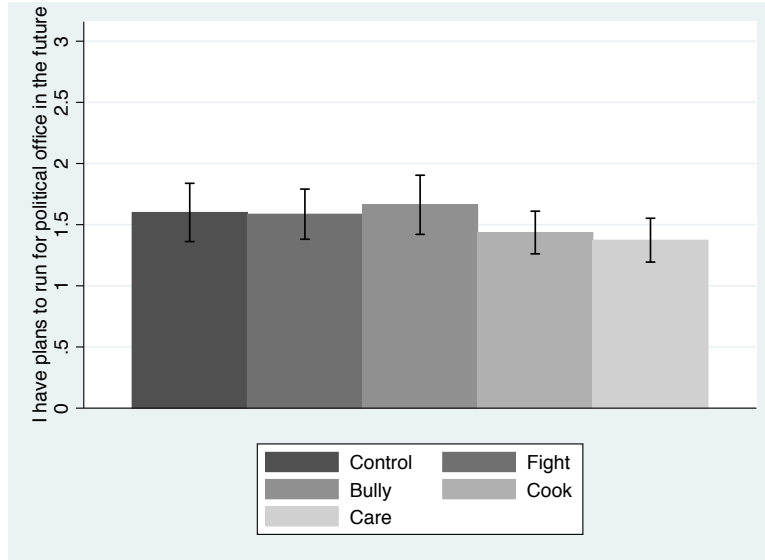


Figure 1: Effect of Clinton ads on women’s political ambition

This figure shows two points quite clearly. First, as is clear from the results of those who viewed the control video, women do not express a desire to run for office. That said, there are also no significant differences among women in the different treatments. While viewing a video of Hillary Clinton campaigning does make women slightly more likely to want to run for office, these differences are not statistically significant compared to our control video. Therefore, in contrast with our Hypothesis One, we find no evidence here that showing women videos of Clinton in non-traditional campaigning activities leads to an increase in political ambition. Indeed, the “care” video, which we hypothesized would increase political ambition by the greatest amount, is associated with a slight decrease in the mean level of

⁷We also asked a question about whether our respondents would “never run for office.” The correlation between responses on that measure and our current measure is -0.49. Analysis using the alternative measure yields substantively identical results.

political ambition our subjects report, although that effect does not approach statistical significance.

What happens when we account for the reported differences in our subjects' warmth for Hillary Clinton? It is important to note that our subjects did not hold Clinton in particularly high regard. Among all subjects, her mean feeling thermometer score was 37.1 (out of 100), and fully 36% of subjects rated her at 10 or below, compared with only 6% at 90 or above. For men, the numbers were worse, with an average of 32.8 and 18% scoring her at 10 or below and only 5.4% scoring her at 90 or above. Somewhat surprisingly, the numbers were not much better for women. The average was 40.7 and 31.9% rated her 10 or below and 6.6% at 90 or higher. So, put simply, our subjects did not feel warmly toward Clinton. That being said, Clinton had fairly high unfavorable ratings among voters throughout the campaign so our subjects here are reflective of voters in general. These results for women's political ambition conditioned on how they feel toward Clinton – our test of Hypothesis Two – are reported in Figure 2.

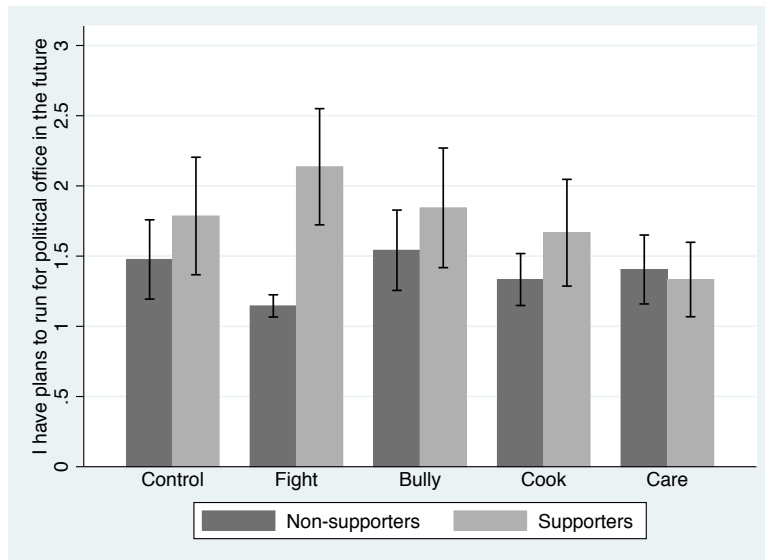


Figure 2: Effect of Clinton ads on women's political ambition, by level of support

Most notably, the mean value of our dependent variable either stays the same or *actually decreases* for women who are not supporters of Hillary Clinton. In other words, this indicates that seeing Clinton run for office can actually decrease political ambition among women. The same, however, is not true for Clinton supporters. In contrast, Clinton supporters report an increase in political ambition in most cases. That difference is dramatic enough in the “Fight” case to yield a statistically significant difference in women’s political ambition between Clinton supporters and non-supporters, since that treatment appears to decrease political ambition among non-supporters while increasing it among supporters. This result provides modest support for Hypothesis Two, and also provides an explanation for the null results in the literature on the effect of women in power on other women’s political ambition. For polarizing candidates, changes in ambition may cancel each other out, thus leading to the null result. On the other hand, when candidates are widely popular, viewing them running for office would have a net positive effect.⁸

But Figure 2 also provides further evidence counter to Hypothesis One. Again, we expected for the “care” treatment to have the greatest effect and the “Fight” treatment to have the weakest effect. For Clinton supporters, the opposite is true and in fact, the effect of the “caregiver” treatment seems to be a decrease in the political ambition of even Clinton supporters. In fact, the difference between “Fight” and “caregiver” is statistically significant, although in the opposite direction of that hypothesized. This may be because the “caregiver” treatment, rather than simply providing women with a situation in which gender norms favor women’s more empathetic approach, actually triggered women’s concerns about family obligations that could in reality decrease their political ambition (Silbermann 2015).

⁸This explanation can also account for why the presence of women candidates is not associated with decreases in political ambition. Although this would theoretically occur with a very unpopular elected official, unpopular elected officials are by definition rare because they tend to lose office (or they never gain it in the first place).

Or it could be that politics is not traditionally portrayed as being about caring; rather, it is about fighting and conflict. In sum, although feelings about the candidate seem to matter a great deal, depictions of that candidate in less traditionally male roles do not, and may have negative unintended consequences.

What about men?

The focus of our study was on women, as our hypotheses related to the effect of Clinton’s campaign on women. But our general interest is in the gender gap in political ambition, which requires us to measure the effect of the Clinton ads on men as well as women. After all, if seeing a Clinton ad increases ambition somewhat among Clinton’s women supporters, but actually increases men’s ambition by an even greater amount, Clinton’s candidacy could actually *exacerbate* the ambition gender gap. For this reason, we now turn to the effect of the Clinton videos on men.

We see those effects in Figure 3. Notably, there appears, like women, to be differences in

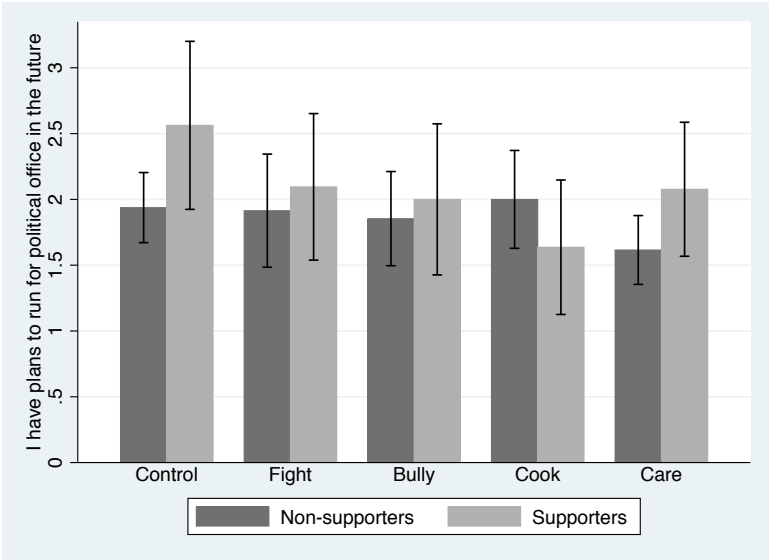


Figure 3: Effect of Clinton ads on men’s political ambition by level of support

men’s political ambition depending on their level of support of Clinton. Specifically, viewing Clinton ads appears to have no effect at all on Clinton non-supporters, but actually seems to *decrease* the political ambition of Clinton’s male supporters. This is true in all cases except for the “care” treatment, which seems to have no effect on men’s level of political ambition regardless of their views of Clinton herself. Given Hypothesis One, we might have expected the “care” treatment to decrease men’s political ambition if we had successfully created an environment in which running for office was viewed as a “woman’s domain.” This obviously did not happen.

So what are the comparative statics? It is easy to see by comparing Figures 2 and 3 that among non-supporters, viewing Clinton ads would certainly not mitigate the gender ambition gap. The ads seem to have no effect on male non-supporters, and have a negative effect on female non-supporters. If anything, then, Clinton’s run for office exacerbated the ambition gender gap among her non-supporters. But what about supporters?

We can see the effect of viewing the Clinton ads on supporters in Figure 4.

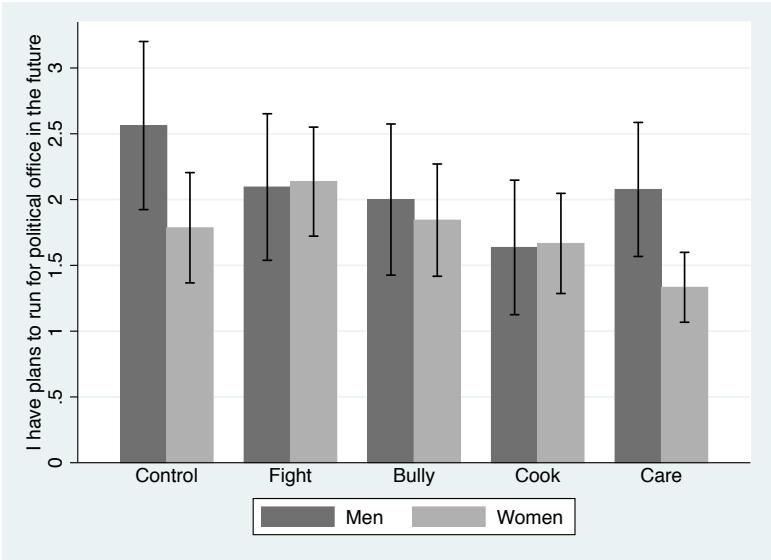


Figure 4: Effect of Clinton ads on the political ambition of her supporters

Here, the traditional ambition gender gap presents itself clearly in the control group: Men are more politically ambitious than are women. But among supporters, most treatments combine to decrease ambition among men and increase it among women. Because of this, we see that viewing campaign ads for a woman candidate (at least among her supporters) can *erase the ambition gender gap*. Indeed, in the “cookstoves” treatment, the mean level of political ambition among women is actually *greater* than that of men. Again, our results on the “care” treatment point out the dangers of depicting politics as too closely related to family, as the gender gap in ambition appears in that treatment as well.

In sum, then, our results show no support for Hypothesis One – that non-traditional depictions of women running for office would increase political ambition among women – but strong support for Hypothesis Two – that feelings about a candidate change the effect of seeing a woman run on the political ambition of women observers. Among those who feel warmly toward Clinton, seeing her run had the effect of mitigating the ambition gender gap. At the same time, her run appears to exacerbate the ambition gender gap among her non-supporters, as it actually decreases the political ambition of women non-supporters.

What about party?

It may also be the case that Democrats and Republicans react differently to Clinton, a question to which we now turn. We would expect that Republicans and Democrats who feel strongly either positively or negatively about Clinton may do so for different reasons, and so this may have an effect on how seeing Clinton run affects their political ambition. For example, among Democrats, those who strongly dislike Clinton may be reacting to her role as an “establishment” candidate whereas Republicans who strongly like Clinton may be

reacting to perceived sexism of their own candidate.⁹

To get a better sense of what these values mean for election aversion, we use the estimates from Table 1 to construct graphs of expected values when the dependent variable is set to “1.” In other words, we consider variables that increase the likelihood for our subjects to answer “Strongly disagree” to the statement “I have plans to run for political office in the future” to be variables that increase election aversion. We present those results for our subjects who are self-identified Democrats in Figure 5.

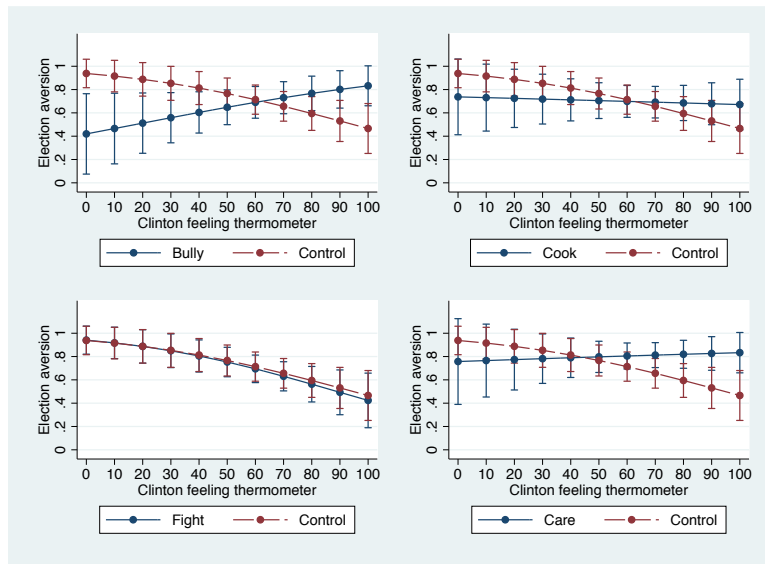


Figure 5: Effect of Clinton ads on Democratic women

As is clear from Figure 5, only the “Bully” treatment is associated with a statistically significant decrease in election aversion, and even then, that decrease exists only for those Democrats who feel the least warmly toward Clinton. In other words, when Democratic women who feel very cold toward Clinton see her in a traditional campaign setting, their level of election aversion declines significantly vis-a-vis the control group. Democratic women in the control group who feel most cold toward Clinton almost all report the highest levels

⁹Of course, this reasoning is speculative and our instrument does not allow us to test directly the motivations of our subjects.

Table 1: Effect of Clinton videos on “I will run” response

| | Democrats | Republican |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|
| Clinton Support | 0.0162* (1.98) | -0.0162 (-0.99) |
| “Fight” | -0.0226 (-0.03) | -0.685 (-1.66) |
| “Bully” | 1.741* (2.15) | -0.668 (-1.59) |
| “Cook” | 0.904 (1.05) | -0.496 (-1.24) |
| “Care” | 0.841 (0.90) | -0.299 (-0.68) |
| “Fight” * Support | 0.00130 (0.11) | 0.0296 (1.68) |
| “Bully” * Support | -0.0279* (-2.39) | 0.0349* (1.99) |
| “Cook” * Support | -0.0143 (-1.22) | 0.0204 (1.12) |
| “Care” * Support | -0.0189 (-1.45) | 0.0147 (0.80) |
| <i>Cutpoints omitted for space</i> | ** | ** |
| <i>N</i> | 173 | 227 |
| <i>PseudoR²</i> | 0.0381 | 0.0484 |

t statistics in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

of election aversion, whereas those in the treatment group see their willingness to say they have no plans to run for office drop to nearly 0.4.

These results are again counter to our expectation, as we believed that those who felt most warmly to Clinton would be more likely to see a decrease in election aversion from having viewed one of her ads. Indeed, none of the ads had a significant effect on the election aversion of Clinton supporters. If anything, all of the treatments may *increase* election aversion vis-a-vis the control, except for the “Fight” treatment, where there is clearly no effect. Furthermore, viewing Clinton ads seems to erase the statistically significant relationship between esteem toward Clinton and *decreased* election aversion, which we see from the control group. Put another way, women Democrats in our study who like Clinton seem to be significantly less election averse than those who do not like Clinton *unless those supporters actually see her running*. Then they are no more ambitious than women who dislike Clinton.

We could speculate that this is a result of the treatment having no real effect at all. Perhaps seeing Clinton run decreases women’s political ambition, but our experiment – with its one ad – is not sufficient to pick that up. This is certainly a possibility. Yet a closer look at the effect on our *Republican* subjects, which we show in Figure 6 provides evidence that this is not likely. Indeed, non-Democrats who like Clinton seem to demonstrate a strong response to viewing even one Clinton ad.

Most notably, being in the “Bully” treatment group is associated with a statistically significant decline in election aversion for Republican women who rate Clinton higher than 50 on our 100-point feeling thermometer scale. And that effect is substantively significant as well. Those Republicans who most like Clinton are almost certain to strongly disagree with the statement that they will run for office someday, unless they are exposed to the “Bully” treatment. When that is the case, they are almost certain *not* to select the “strongly

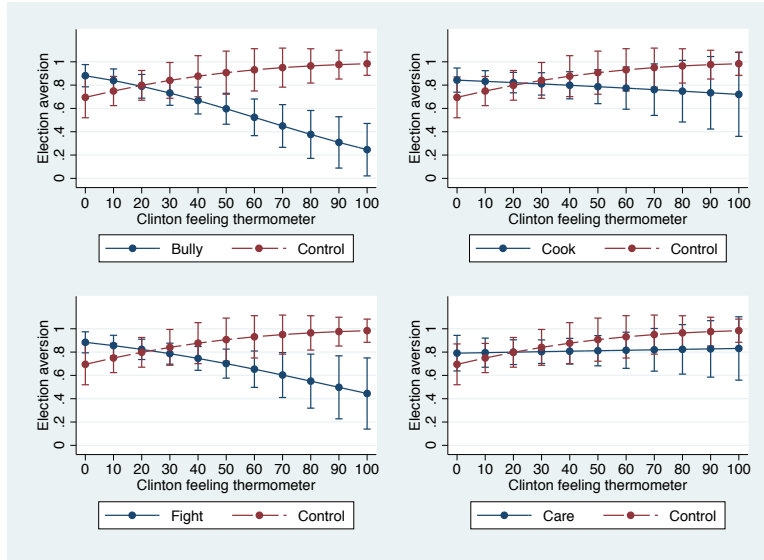


Figure 6: Effect of Clinton ads on Republican women

disagree” choice. The ”Fight” ad shows a similar significant effect for Republican Clinton supporters, although not dramatic. Among those with the most esteem for Clinton, viewing the ad drops their level of election aversion from nearly 1.0 to just above 0.4.

Notably, the “Bully” and the “Fight” treatments are the two treatments in which Clinton is addressing a large crowd. The two treatments that included Clinton engaged in more traditionally “female” acts of listening and talking one-on-one never had a statistically significant effect on levels of election aversion. In other words, contrary to our Hypothesis One, we see no evidence – regardless of how we “cut” the data – that portraying Clinton in less traditionally political settings has any positive effect on increasing women’s political ambition. We should also note here that the “Fight” treatment sees Clinton speaking out to a large crowd against Donald Trump’s policies, which may indicate that the decrease in election aversion among Republican Clinton supporters could be driven at least partly by dislike of their own party’s candidate. Furthermore, the “Bully” treatment depicts Clinton responding to a young girl who had been bullied, which may trigger thoughts of Trump

himself as a bully. If true, we may expect to see more moderate Republican women running in the future, as a response to Trump's candidacy rather than to Clinton's candidacy, a speculation that is reserved for future inquiry.

Conclusions

Our results indicate that seeing a woman run for the highest office in the United States can affect the political ambition of the people who see her do so. Merely by asking our subjects to view a short video, we were able to affect the reported future political ambition both for women who supported and did not support Clinton. Notably, though, the results were not all positive. For women who do not support Clinton, viewing an ad may actually decrease political ambition. Notably, among supporters of Clinton, women's ambition increased while that of men decreased, thus mitigating the gender gap in political ambition.

Of course, our choice to focus on the very real Hillary Clinton may serve to be as polarizing in the research community as Clinton is herself in the electorate. We give away some of the control that researchers hope to gain by turning to experiments in the first place. We invite our subjects to take their preconceived notions about Clinton into the experiment with them. Rather than design them away, we measure them and use them directly as an explanatory variable. And indeed, views about Clinton explain a great deal, whereas presentations of Clinton do not. We believe that this result serves as evidence to support the use of real candidates in this type of experiment. People have real views about candidates, and we know from the extant psychology literature that those views can inform whether or not a person will choose a particular role model. Those views are vitally important, and previous research has masked their effects, either through the use of fictional candidates or through measuring the aggregate effects of candidates on political ambition. Our individual

approach, along with our focus on a particular candidate, allows us to study this concept directly for what we believe to be the first time.

Similarly, our results point to the importance of seeing women candidates who represent a variety of political views. Women's political ambitions are stoked only when they actually *like* the woman who is running. Of course, the very polarizing Hillary Clinton is a perfect case in which to study this. But other candidates would likely prompt a similar, although perhaps not as dramatic, of an effect. Although we can rightly claim to have studied the universe of female major party candidates for the United States presidency, future research may help to ascertain how much of the effect we see is specific to Clinton and how much of it will apply to other, less polarizing, candidates.

Our results also point to a potential decrease in political ambition among men who see a woman they like run for political office. This is a fascinating result, and merits future study. Too much of the work on women in politics, we think, focuses on what affects women and focuses too little on what affects men. Do these men feel intimidated by a high-quality woman running for office? Does seeing a highly-qualified woman candidate make them recalibrate their views of their own relative abilities? Answers to these compelling questions await future research.

To conclude, although we would like to increase our number of subjects to ascertain the strength of the effects we see here, ethical considerations preclude this. Our intent was not to decrease the political ambition of any of our subjects, and we were surprised that we had done so. Institutional Review Boards do not consider decreasing the political ambition of subjects to be a "harm," and so they will generally not prevent researchers from doing so. We think, however, that researchers ought to avoid decreasing political ambition in their subjects. Democracy relies on the interest of outsiders in running for political office. Political scientists know better than most the importance of candidate emergence, and so they should

be most concerned about protecting it.

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