Candidates
Session 7

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17.263: American Elections

Roadmap

Why Candidates Matter

Why Candidates Run

Changing the Mix of Candidates

What You Will Need Today

New York Times opinion piece by political theorist Michael Sandel:

"Disdain for the Less Educated Is the Last Acceptable Prejudice," *New York Times*, September 2, 2020.

But First, the News

RBG's replacement is almost certain to be a woman. Will she therefore have have a similar judicial philosophy to her predecessor?

Image courtesy of Supreme Court of the United States, Photographer Steve Petteway. Source: Supreme Court of the United States on Wikimedia Commons. This image is in the public domain.

Why Candidates Matter

Identity Poll

Which identity categories describe you?

Comparison to the US Population

Category	% of US population
white	73
working class	30 ($+9$ if "lower class" included)
female	51
immigrant	14
suburbanite	52
Southern	25
right-handed	90
no college (age 18–24)	44

Descriptive Representation

Descriptive representation refers to the degree to which the personal attributes of government officials resemble those of their constituents.

▶ Why might descriptive representation be valuable?

　　▶ Effects on policymaking

　　▶ Effects on citizens

▶ What are potential problems with descriptive representation?

　　▶ Reification of identity groups

　　▶ Some attributes should not be descriptively represented

　　▶ Prioritization of attributes

Breakout: Education and Representation

First, take 5 minutes to read Michael Sandel's *New York Times* piece:

Then, take 10 minutes to discuss with your breakout group:

▶ Do you agree with Sandel that prejudice against the poorly educated is more socially acceptable than racism or sexism?

▶ Do you think "credentialist prejudice" *should* be more acceptable, at least in some domains?

▶ What about in the domain of political representation?

▶ More generally, by what criteria can we distinguish acceptable (or even desirable) forms of discrimination from unacceptable forms?

Why Candidates Run

Supply and Demand

Carnes distinguishes between supply-side and demand-side factors in the what might be termed the "production" of candidates.

▶ What does he mean by this distinction?

▶ What are examples of each kind of factor?

▶ How do these factors interact? That is, how does the effect of supply-side factors depend on demand-side ones, and vice versa?

Strategic Candidacy

▶ Because both the costs and the potential benefits of running for office are large, we should expect citizens to be both rational (making optimal choices given their information and preferences) and strategic (accounting for the expected actions of other actors).

▶ One way to model the strategic chocie to run is through a so-called citizen-candidate model, which treats every citizen as a potential candidate for office.

A Thought Experiment (inspired by Hall 2019)

A Republican Alice is considering whether to challenge the Democrat Claudia, who is otherwise unopposed. Let:

$$C_A \geq 0 \equiv \text{the cost to A of running for office}$$
$$B_A \geq 0 \equiv \text{the benefits to A of holding office}$$
$$I_A \geq 0 \equiv \text{ideological distance between C and A}$$
$$1 \geq \pi_A \geq 0 \equiv \text{probability that A wins the election}$$

Alice's preferences (U_A) over possible outcomes are:

$$U_A(\text{A doesn't run; C wins}) = -I_A$$
$$U_A(\text{A runs; C wins}) = -I_A - C_A$$
$$U_A(\text{A runs; A wins}) = B_A - C_A$$

Alice's expected utility to running is:

$$EU_A(\text{run}) = -C_A + \pi_A B_A - (1 - \pi_A)I_A$$

Comparative Statics

Alice to run iff her expected value of running exceed that of not running:

$$\overbrace{[-C_A + \pi_A B_A - (1 - \pi_A)I_A]}^{EU_A(\text{run})} - \overbrace{[-I_A]}^{E_A(\text{not run})} > 0 \implies$$
$$\underbrace{-C_A}_{\text{negative}} + \underbrace{\pi_A(B_A + I_A)}_{\text{positive}} > 0.$$

So, Alice's probability of running is:

► decreasing in the cost of running (C_A)

► increasing in the probability of winning (π_A)

► increasing in the benefits of holding office (B_A)

► increasing in the ideological distance between A and C (I_A).

What Kind of Candidates Run for Office?

Calculus of Candidacy: $-C_A + \pi_A(B_A + I_A)$

▶ Given the calculus of candidacy, what individual and contextual (or supply- and demand-side) factors affect who runs for office?

    ▶ Costs

    ▶ Benefits

    ▶ Ideology

    ▶ Probability

▶ How might expectations about others affect the strategic calculus?

▶ What about candidates' expectations (beliefs) about themselves?

    ▶ e.g., What if they believe their π to be lower than others'?

Changing the Mix of Candidates

Candidates and Democratic Choice

In her Persuall comments on Carnes (2014), Kade Bose made the astute point that one reason working-class citizens are underrepresented is that

voters may be able to remove officials who don't represent them, but the available replacements most likely will take a more similar stance as the official they replaced.

This highlights the more general point that voters' ability to select representatives depends on the pool of candidates who run in the first place. If certain types are in short supply, then voters' choices will be artificially limited.

The Rise of (Mostly Democratic) Women in Congress
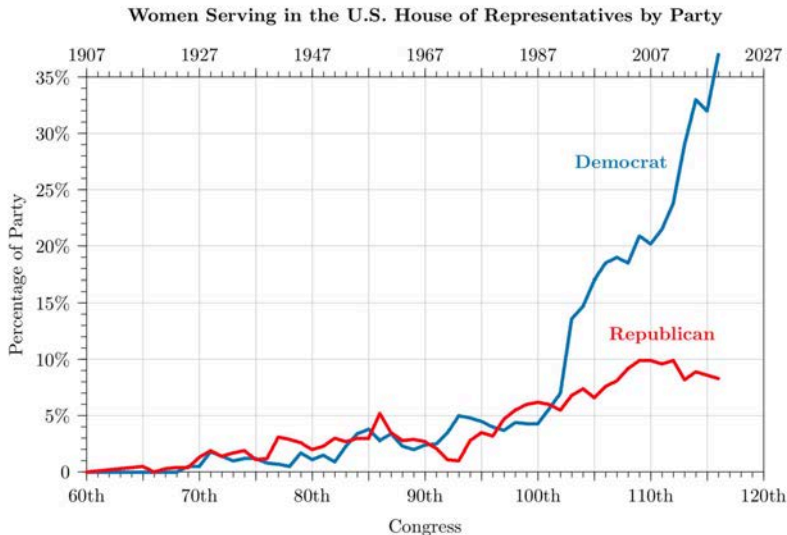
Women Serving in the U.S. House of Representatives by Party

A Republican Echo?

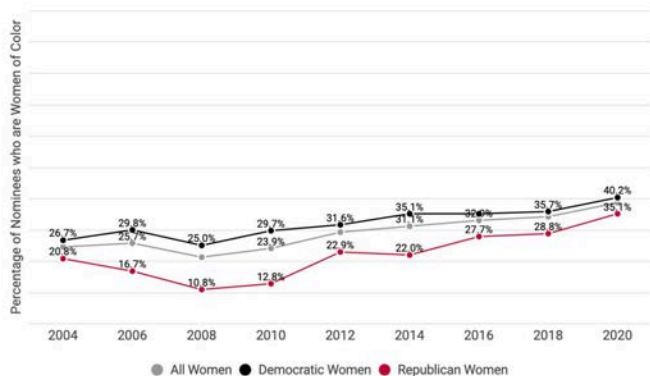**Women Nominees for U.S. House**
2016, 2018, and 2020
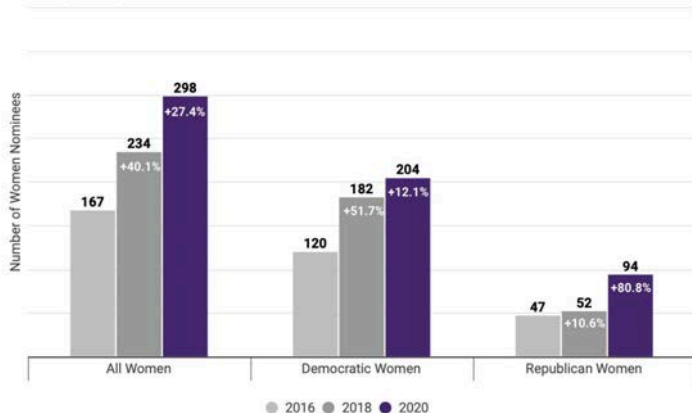
Counts include only major-party nominees and do not include nominees for non-voting positions in the U.S. House. Nominees will be determined in Louisiana on November 3, 2020. Percentages reflect the percentage increase in women's nominations between from the previous election year (column to the left).

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The Intersection of Race and Gender

Women of Color as a Percentage of All Women Nominees for U.S. House by Party, 2004-2020

Breakout: Brainstorming Reforms

Relying on evidence from the readings, brainstorm ways to increase the representativeness of the candidate pool in American elections.

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