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# Intimidating exemplars: the deterrent effect of excellent women in office

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**Intimidating exemplars: The deterrent effect of excellent women in office**

by

**Madeline Onute Salucka**

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Major: Political Science

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Ames, Iowa

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## **DEDICATION**

To my parents and sister, for the countless papers they have read and their endless encouragement and support. Without them I could not have possibly come this far and I am forever grateful.

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**ABSTRACT**

It is well known that there are far fewer women than men serving in U.S. politics and elective office, and a great deal of research has been done to uncover the reason why. One factor articulated by Lawless and Fox is the way women perceive their qualifications to run for office, something they attribute to traditional gender socialization. I posit a different explanation—Intimidating Exemplars Theory. Drawing on concepts from Festinger’s Social Comparison Theory, I hypothesize that when considering a run for office, potential female candidates compare themselves to the women already in office. Since current female public officials have to be more highly qualified to reach office than men do, potential female candidates may compare themselves to these current officeholders and determine that they do not have the qualifications necessary to run. Results from a survey of elected officials in Iowa and of Iowa State University students support this theory. Female elected officials do name higher achieving female politicians as exemplars and emphasize their background/experience more than they did for male exemplars. Implications of this theory for political science and women candidates are also discussed.

## CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

### Background

It is well known that there are far fewer women serving in U.S. politics and elective offices than there are men. According to the 2010 census, women make up 50.8% of the population, yet in 2016 women comprise only 19.4% of Congress, 24.7% of statewide elective executive offices, and 24.5% of state legislatures (Howden and Meyer 2011; Center for the American Woman and Politics [CAWP] 2016). In fact, in the world ranking of women in national legislatures the United States comes in at number 95 out of 191 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2016). Clearly there is a dearth of women serving in elected office, but it is not clear why this is the case.

Several theories have been put forth to explain the underrepresentation of women in politics including the existence of separate men's and women's issues, low prevalence in the eligibility pool, voter bias and stereotypes, recruitment obstacles, and institutional barriers (Sapiro, 1981; Welch, 1978; Lawless, 2004; Devitt, 1999; Sanbonmatsu, 2006; Fox and Lawless, 2004). An additional obstacle is the way women perceive their own qualifications for office. The conventional explanation for the reason women underestimate their qualifications to run is traditional gender socialization. The idea is that women have been socialized to view politics as a career for men, not women, and so women believe they are not qualified enough to enter that realm (Lawless and Fox, 2010). I posit that it may also be attributed to the presence of exceptionally well-qualified women currently serving in office. Drawing on concepts from Social

Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954), it is possible that when considering the possibility of running for office, potential female candidates make comparisons between themselves and women serving at higher levels of office. If these exemplars are very qualified, this may be one of the reasons potential female candidates believe they are not qualified enough to run. In other words, extremely well qualified women serving in office may actually deter potential female candidates from running.

If this is indeed the case, it will mean that the approach to increasing the number of women in office may need to be revisited. It may not be sufficient or wise to simply rely on a few barrier breakers to serve as role models for potential candidates. The role may need to shift from exemplar/role model to mentor in order to encourage potential candidates with different kinds of qualifications to run. To replicate some existing findings regarding obstacles women face in getting to elected office and to gain an initial understanding of the possible comparisons those thinking of running for office make, two surveys were conducted, one of elected officials in Iowa and one of students at Iowa State University. The intent of the surveys was to gauge the political experience, interest, and ambition of the participants and examine exemplars elected officials name. I expected gender differences within each sample but not many differences between the samples in terms of desire to run for future office, position they would run for, comfort level engaging in various campaign activities, and a few other variables. Surprisingly, the hypothesized gender differences were present in the student responses but not in the responses from elected

officials. I expected elected officials to make upward comparisons to those within their own gender and the results support this expectation. Further, I hypothesized that female elected officials would focus more on the education and background of the exemplars they picked. Interestingly, the results suggest that when men and women choose an exemplar of their gender they emphasize background and education more than they do for exemplars of the opposite gender. I begin by addressing the question of whether we need more women in office.

### **Do We Need More Women?**

Is it important to increase the number of women serving in office to a number more commensurate to women's share of the population? It may be important for a number of reasons. Women may have different interests than men and if they do they may be better served by women. Men and women might work differently and have different decision-making styles. Further, more women in office could increase institutional legitimacy. Additionally, women may serve as role models for young girls.

Though there are numerous conceptions of what representation means and the different forms it may take, this paper will focus on two of the types discussed in Pitkin's (1972) seminal work on representation and the schools of thought that surround them. Descriptive representation can be understood as a representative "standing for," or being reflective of, a constituent in terms of the representative's characteristics or something they are as opposed to something they do or believe (Pitkin, 1972, 60). In other words, descriptive representation would simply be a woman representing a woman or an African-American

representing an African American. Substantive representation can be understood as “acting for,” or a representative acting on issues constituents care about (Pitkin, 1972, 113). When it comes to substantive representation, it matters little if the representative shares characteristics like race, gender, ethnicity, etc. with their constituent only that they act appropriately on the issues important to the constituent. The question is, do women have interests different than men that require different substantive representation? Also, are there reasons descriptive representation might matter on its own?

Certainly one cannot generalize the interests of every single woman to apply to women as a whole. With that being said, are there certain politically relevant problems and solutions unique to women as a group (Sapiro, 1981)? “Women’s issues” can be interpreted in roughly three ways: issues women are more concerned about because of their domestic relevance, issues women simply care about more than men do, or issues that regardless of their concern with the issue women have a unique interest in it (Sapiro, 1981).

The idea that women may be more concerned about an issue simply because of its domestic relevance may seem outdated and, quite frankly, rather patriarchal. However, a 2008 media release on a study conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that, “among full-time workers who are parents of children under 18, married mothers were more likely to provide childcare to household children than were married fathers.” Not only were 71% of the mothers compared to 54% of the fathers providing care, but they also reported spending more time doing so than fathers, 1.2 hours compared to 0.8 hours per

day (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). Further, “in households with children under 18, married mothers who were employed full time were more likely to do household activities—such as housework, cooking, or lawn care—on an average day than were father who were employed full time” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). Despite the fact that times are changing and progress has been made dispelling the norm of traditional gender roles, women still bear more of the burden in the domestic realm.

The other two interpretations—issues women care more about or have a unique interest in—are somewhat related as there are many policy areas and issues that could fall under either one. For example, women receive an uneven distribution of wealth and have different healthcare concerns and access than men do (Sapiro, 1981). Each of these issues can be categorized as “women’s issues” since women may care more about them than men do and even if they do not, they still have a stake in the outcomes. Clearly there is a distinct set of “women’s issues,” but what needs to be done to ensure their representation?

One way to achieve greater substantive representation is through descriptive representation (Lublin, 1997). For example, women and men have different experiences due both to biological differences and societal gender norms and disparities and it is simply not possible for men to try and interpret women’s experiences as they do not have the requisite insight (Temerius, 1995). Additionally, a survey, conducted by Reingold, of state legislators in California and Arizona found that “female legislators are, indeed, more likely than their male counterparts to think of themselves as representatives of women and to consider

women an important constituency group with particular political concerns” (1992, 509). Not only did those female legislators surveyed think of themselves as representatives of women, but they also felt they were “uniquely qualified to or responsible for representing women’s concerns” (Reingold, 1992, 509). Further, in an examination of case studies from the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress, Dodson found that increased numbers of women serving brought a new energy that helped keep their priorities on the agenda (2006). The case studies also showed that women make an impact on work done in the area of “women’s health and that improvements in descriptive representation increase the probability of substantive representation” (2006, 190).

More generally, many studies show that women serving in state legislatures and in Congress have a higher likelihood of “taking the lead on legislation dealing with women, children, and family issues” than the men serving do (Reingold, 1992, 510). In an analysis of the 103<sup>rd</sup> and 104<sup>th</sup> Congresses, Swers found that women, regardless of ideological beliefs or district type, were more likely to sponsor women’s issue bills than their male counterparts (2002). Additionally, while ideology is the main driving factor of cosponsorship and voting activity, “congresswomen are more likely to cosponsor women’s issue bills” and “gender does play a significant role in determining how legislators vote on women’s issues” (Swers, 2002, 125).

Not only do women provide a different kind of representation for women and “women’s issues,” but they also bring a different type of work and leadership style. When it comes to working with others, “women are more likely to engage in

collegial and consensus styles of decision making” (Deen and Little, 1999, 124). Moreover, men typically have a preference for power goals whereas women are more likely to embrace process-oriented goals (Deen and Little, 1999, 125). An argument is not being made that one style is better than the other, but rather that institutions may benefit from diversity in the way its members work and interact.

When it comes to types of representation, a great deal of debate surrounds the necessity of descriptive representation; even Pitkin acknowledges the idea that it may not be all that important. There are, however, a number of advantages that come with descriptive representation. First of all, there is something to be said for being able to find someone that bears some resemblance to yourself in the body charged with representing you and your interests. Improving descriptive representation in situations where there is a long history of inequality on the base of sex or race can provide a degree of legitimacy and create a sense of the representatives “ability to rule” for members of groups that have historically questioned representatives’ ability to do so given the presence of inequality and discrimination (Mansbridge, 1999). Put differently, women and women’s rights have a history of not only being ignored, but actively repressed. As such, there is naturally a level of distrust in the ability of an unrepresentative institution to be able to address the failings of previous institutions. Descriptive representation can impact the way women feel about governing bodies.

Another benefit of increasing the number of women in office is the impact it can have on younger generations of girls. Recent research indicates the more



politics is “infused with visible female role models,” the more adolescent girls report expecting to eventually be politically active (Campbell and Wolbrecht, 2006, 244). It is clear that it is important to increase the number of women serving in elected office for a number of reasons including improved descriptive and substantive representation for women and diversity in leadership and working styles in government. The next step is to review conventional wisdom regarding the causes women’s underrepresentation in elected office.

## CHAPTER TWO. LITERATURE REVIEW & SOCIAL COMPARISONS

Before diving into the Intimidating Exemplars Theory, it is important to review alternative explanations for the lack of women in politics and elected office. There have been many hypotheses regarding the underrepresentation of women in politics including women's prevalence in the eligibility pool, voter bias and media coverage, incumbency advantages, recruitment obstacles, and the way women view their qualifications to run for office.

Initially it was thought that women were underrepresented in politics and elected office because they were underrepresented in the "eligibility pool" (Welch, 1978, 372). The idea was that women were socialized to believe that their duty was in the home raising children so there were very few women in the "eligibility pool," the typical jobs that have a tendency to lend themselves to a future in public office: law, business, and medicine among others (Welch, 1978). This line of reasoning would suggest that all that has to be done to increase the proportion of women in public office is to increase their presence in such fields and disciplines (Fox, Lawless, and Feeley, 2001). Although women are still underrepresented in the upper levels of these careers, they have immensely increased their numbers in the lower ranks (Lawless and Fox, 2010). Increasing the number of women in the lower levels has not led to a dramatic increase in the number of women in elected office, which may mean the pipeline starts in the upper ranks of office (Lawless and Fox, 2010). In that case, as women increase their numbers in those positions they may increase their numbers in elected

office, but given the current rate of achieving those positions the change is likely to come at an incremental pace (Lawless and Fox, 2010).

Another possible factor is that voters just do not vote for women. There is evidence that voters tend to view “masculine” characteristics—being self-confident, assertive, tough, and aggressive—to be more important than “feminine” characteristics—being compassionate, compromising, sensitive, and emotional—in politics (Lawless, 2004). Not surprisingly, voters have a tendency to view women as more likely to possess “feminine” characteristics and men and more likely to possess “masculine” characteristics (Lawless, 2004). Studies have also shown that women candidates tend to be seen as better with “feminine” issues—improving the educational system, working on minority rights, and alleviating the issues faced by the elderly, disabled, and handicapped—and male candidates are viewed as better with “masculine” issues—dealing with terrorism, handling a military crisis, maintaining the military, and “filling the president’s role as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces” (Rossenwasser and Seale, 1988, 594).

When it comes to the idea that women are not emotionally suited for politics or are too fragile, a study by Dolan showed that a majority of respondents (69%) did not agree that men are emotionally better suited for politics than women (2014). However, that does mean that 31% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that men are better suited emotionally for politics (Dolan, 2014). Voters may also stereotype candidate ideology based on candidate gender. While women tend to be more liberal than men, when voters

use gender stereotypes as a shortcut to assume a candidate's ideology or position they view female candidates as more liberal than they are (Koch, 2000). Given the stereotypes they face, women candidates actively work to counteract the effects.

In a study of female candidates for U.S. Senate and gubernatorial positions in the 1980s and 1990s, "Kahn (1996) found that women appeared in their own campaign ads more often than men, dressed professionally, emphasized their positions on policies, and worked to present themselves as possessing competence and leadership in order to dispel negative gender stereotypes" (Dolan, 2014, 28). Stereotypes may not always be a bad thing. In a study of female candidate campaigns, Herrnson and his coauthors found that when women take advantage of stereotypes and focus on issues typically associated with women or target women they improve their chances of electoral success (2003).

Conversely, a study done by Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton suggests, "a candidate's sex does not affect his or her chances of winning an election" (Fox, Lawless, and Feeley, 2001, 412). Further, there is typically more support for the idea that it would be a good thing to have more women in office and that the government may be better off with their increased presence than there is against it (Dolan, 2014). Overall, Dolan finds that "gender stereotypes are not uniformly and consistently present as an influence on evaluations of candidates of either sex" (2014, 121). Stereotypes are used in a number of ways by voters and can have positive and negative effects on female candidates. There is evidence that

voters' use of stereotypes may be decreasing. Nevertheless, they remain an obstacle women must overcome.

Along with any potential voter bias is a possible media bias as well. An analysis of the way newspapers covered four gubernatorial races in 1998 revealed that, although male and female candidates received the same amount of coverage, male candidates' received more issue coverage than female candidates' and female candidates' received more attention on personal characteristics like age, attire, and personality than the male candidates did (Devitt, 1999). Similarly, an analysis of the newspaper coverage received by the presidential campaigns of Elizabeth Dole, George W. Bush, John McCain, and Steve Forbes found that Dole received more coverage on her personal traits than her male opponents (Aday and Devitt, 2001).

Moreover, a study by Kahn and Goldenberg demonstrates that women and men do not receive the same media attention in their campaigns for U.S. Senate (1991). Women not only received less coverage than men, but the coverage they did receive focused more on their viability and less on their issue positions (Kahn and Goldenberg, 1991). To add insult to injury, the viability coverage of women was more negative than that of the men (Kahn and Goldenberg, 1991). While the coverage of women candidate may be increasing in quantity, there is a substantive difference in the type of coverage candidates get based on their gender.

In addition to potential voter and media bias, there are recruitment and institutional obstacles women have to overcome. There are two primary ways a

potential candidate for office becomes an actual candidate for office—self-initiative or recruitment by party leaders—and women face obstacles on both fronts (Matthews, 1984). We will first focus on recruitment. Men continue to dominate leadership positions across the states. In 2014, women held only 20% of state senate leadership positions, 16% of state house leadership positions, and 16 states had no women in leadership positions at all (CAWP, 2014). Further, in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress only three women hold leadership positions (CAWP, 2015). This is a problem because “even if we assume that the men who occupy positions in these institutions no longer exhibit signs of bias against women, years of traditional conceptions about candidate quality, electability, and background persist” (Fox and Lawless, 2010, 312).

When it comes time to recruit potential candidates, party leaders, who are overwhelmingly men, think of those contacts that are in their networks, which are also overwhelmingly men (Sanbonmatsu, 2006). Due to the gendered nature of the social networks of men in leadership roles, women’s names as potential candidates are much less likely to be submitted. In fact, “politically active women who occupy the same professional spheres as politically active men are significantly less likely than men to report being sought out by electoral gatekeepers” to run for office (Fox and Lawless, 2010, 322).

If a woman is suggested as a possible candidate, some male leaders may be just as happy to recruit and support her as they would a male candidate. However, even when women get their names submitted and considered, there are still obstacles with party leaders they have to overcome. In a four state

survey of local party leaders, Niven found that “male party leaders prefer male candidates” (Fox and Lawless, 2010, 312). Additionally, party leaders may be reluctant to endorse women because they fear voters will not vote for them (Dubeck, 1976). Sanbonmatsu notes in her book that, while many party leaders had doubts about women’s electability in at least some districts in their state, none of them “thought twice about whether men could win election in all districts in their state” (2006, 119). While women are less likely to be recruited, they benefit more from encouragement to run for office. Women are not as likely to be self starter candidates like men; “women are half as likely as men to be open to the idea of a candidacy at some point in the future...that gender gap disappears entirely when potential candidates receive support from gatekeepers” (Fox and Lawless, 2010, 322).

The role of incumbency is also an obstacle women have to contend with. With a reelection rate of over 90% in federal legislative positions, it is hard to unseat an incumbent, most of whom are male, giving women an uphill battle when running for office (Fox and Lawless, 2004). Furthermore, when women do happen to be an incumbent, they are more likely to than their male counterparts to have to face a contested primary or general election (Anzia and Berry, 2011). Moreover, women face more competition in primary elections whether they are running as incumbents, challengers, or for an open seat and they are more likely to be challenged by a fellow member of their party, meaning they have to fend off attacks from both sides (Lawless and Pearson, 2008).

Not only is it difficult getting party leaders to recruit women, it is tough to get women to think they are qualified enough to run. As mentioned above, one of the ways potential candidates become actual candidates is through self-initiative. The problem is that women are less likely than men to consider running for office and to turn their consideration into an actual candidacy (Fox and Lawless, 2004). A major factor in this difference is that women, regardless of their actual qualifications, are more likely to view themselves as not qualified enough to run (Fox and Lawless, 2004). In fact, in their study of equally qualified potential candidates, Fox and Lawless found that men were almost twice as likely than their female counterparts to rate themselves as highly qualified (2004).

Another hurdle is the way women perceive running for office. Over 90% of women in the eligibility pool feel as though there is a bias against women (Anzia and Berry, 2011). Additionally, despite the fact that research has shown that women fare just as well as men when it comes to fundraising and vote totals, women are more concerned than men about their ability to raise enough money to win (Fox and Lawless, 2004; Anzia and Berry, 2011).

It is clear that there are a number of factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of women in elected office. Although women have increased their numbers in the fields that tend to lead to office, they still have to contend with potential voter and media bias, recruitment and incumbency challenges, and their underestimation of their own qualifications to run. Given all of the hurdles potential candidates have to overcome, the women that end up running for office



and winning have to be “better” than the men to do so (Lawless and Pearson, 2008, 78).

### **Women Currently In Office**

As previously discussed, women face many obstacles both in making the decision to run for office and once they embark on a campaign. How do the obstacles that women face impact the women that eventually do run for and win office? Generally, given the fact that women have to overcome many obstacles including self-doubt, recruitment and institutional obstacles, and potential voter and media bias, women that run have to be better than their male counterparts to do as well as them. Women serving in elected office typically have more experience, bring back more money to their districts, and speak more in Congress (Pearson and McGhee, 2013; Anzia and Berry, 2011; Pearson and Dancey, 2011).

Given the fact that women tend to underestimate their qualifications for office, it is reasonable to think that, generally, once women make the decision to run they may actually be more qualified than their male counterparts. Even in adolescence, “male students rate their mathematical abilities higher than female students do, despite no sex difference in objective indicators of competence...in language arts, male and female students offer comparable self-assessments, although objective indicators reveal that female students are actually higher achieving in these fields” (Lawless and Fox, 2010, 115). When equal to their male counterparts female students rated themselves lower and when objectively higher achieving than their male counterparts female students rate themselves

equally. Since women tend to underestimate their qualifications to run for office, it is reasonable to think that once women reach the point where they feel they are qualified enough to run they may actually be more qualified than their male colleagues that run.

Additionally, taking into account the concerns party leaders have about the electability of women candidates in at least some of the districts in their states, “one might expect that a woman endorsed by a political party would have more observable credentials than would be required of a man” (Dubeck, 1976, 44). If there are concerns about women’s electability or bias against women on the part of the voters, then women may have to be better than men to do as well as them, as conventional wisdom says. It may be that women win just as often as men when they do run, but in order for voters to overlook any stereotypes or bias they may have about female candidates those candidates may have to be of superior quality (Fulton, 2012). Women also believe that they have to be more qualified than men to do as well as them (Lawless and Fox, 2010). Overall, it seems as though overcoming the way they view their own qualifications, party concerns, and voter bias requires women to be better than their male counterparts, but what exactly does this look like? What does it mean for women that they have to be better than men to do as well as them?

To win at rates commensurate to those of their male counterparts, women raise as much or more money as men from a more diverse array of sources, have more electoral experience, bring more money back for their districts, and speak more in Congress (Lawless and Fox, 2010; Jenkins, 2007; Pearson and

McGhee, 2013; Anzia and Berry, 2011; Pearson and Dancey, 2011). Additionally, in a study regarding incumbent quality, Fulton used input from political activists and potential candidates to rate their congressional incumbents on a number of issues including personal integrity, grasp of issues, ability to work with political leaders, and public speaking ability along with a few others and found that congresswomen were rated higher than congressmen (Fulton, 2012). Not only have congresswomen been rated higher than congressmen, they also outperform congressmen in many other ways.

One area where women outperform men is fundraising. Even though women are often concerned about their ability to raise enough money to win, they actually raise as much money if not more money than the men, but “work more aggressively to do so, by employing multiple methods and targeting multiple sources” (Lawless and Fox, 2010; Jenkins, 2007, 234). Despite many women’s belief that they cannot fundraise as well as men, it turns out they fare just as well if not better. Electoral experience is an additional area where women excel.

Having electoral experience increases any candidate’s, male or female, chance of winning an election, but do more women have electoral experience than men? In a study of the electoral experience of nonincumbent candidates for the U.S. House from 1984-2010, Pearson and McGhee found that “of nonincumbent female Democrats, 34% have experience, as do 28% of nonincumbent female Republicans, compared to 21% and 19% of their male counterparts, respectively” (Pearson and McGhee, 2013, 447). Such a difference

in the experience level of male and female candidates is significant “considering that the overall proportion of experienced candidates is 0.23 for Democrats and 0.21 for Republicans” (Pearson and McGhee, 2013, 449). Women tend to have more electoral experience, but do they perform better than men once in Congress?

In an examination of funding from congressional discretionary funds in congressional districts, Anzia and Berry found that congresswomen secure roughly 9% more funding than congressmen and given that the average district size is around 563,732 residents that comes out to be about \$49 million more for districts represented by congresswomen (2011). Not only do congresswomen secure more funding, but they also tend to sponsor more bills—about 3 more per Congress, be more active in cosponsoring bills, and get more cosponsorship support than their male counterparts (Anzia and Berry, 2011). Along with securing more funding, congresswomen also speak more on the house floor. Looking at the 103<sup>rd</sup> and 109<sup>th</sup> Congresses, Pearson and Dancey found that “congresswomen gave significantly more one-minute speeches and more speeches during key debates than congressmen” (2011, 918).

To overcome the many obstacles they face in becoming candidates and running for office, women candidates have to be better than men to do as well as them; “male and female nonincumbent candidates win at approximately the same rates despite the advantages women possess” (Pearson and McGhee, 2013, 458). Women tend to have more electoral experience, bring more money back to their district, sponsor more legislation, and speak more on the House floor. On

the one hand, that congresswomen are more qualified than congressmen in some areas is an encouraging testament to the women serving in elected office. On the other hand, having such well qualified women in elected office may be having a negative impact on the way potential women candidates view their qualifications to run for and hold elected office. The next step is to examine what impact current women in office may have on potential female candidates.

### **Social Comparison Theory**

Social Comparison Theory has its roots in psychology, but is quite applicable in many other disciplines, including political science. Introduced by Festinger, Social Comparison Theory develops from the innate human desire to evaluate one's opinions and abilities (1954). In order to evaluate one's self and abilities one must compare them with the opinions and abilities of others (Festinger, 1954). Put differently, to get an idea of where one stands in terms of their abilities, opinions, etc. people will compare themselves to others in those areas. The next aspect to examine is types comparisons.

There are a number of ways comparisons take place including comparison level and comparison person. The comparison-level choice is simply the "level of performance typical of the person or persons with whom one chooses to compare" and comparison person is the individual chosen within the level (Blanton, Buunk, Gibbons, Kuyper, 1999). When it comes to evaluating abilities, there is a drive for upward comparisons (Festinger, 1954). In a longitudinal study of students in their first year of secondary education, Blanton, Buunk, Gibbons, and Kuyper found that when given the opportunity to choose a target to compare

test scores with, 94% of those who choose to compare picked a comparison subject of their same gender (1999). Along with choosing someone of the same-sex, students generally also compared to someone that was slightly outperforming them in the class (Blanton et al., 1999). A separate study of students found that “participants identify themselves with their more successful and close comparison targets” (Huguet, Dumas, Monteil, Genestoux, 2001, 567).

In a study of career referents, Gibson and Lawrence found that participants tended to make same-sex upward comparisons (2010). When it comes to comparison level, men and women both compare upward and both tend to compare to members of the same-sex since “women tend to see their careers as similar to those of other women, whereas men see their careers as similar to those of other men” (Gibson and Lawrence, 2010, 1159). Indeed, from their survey “77% of the women who have high-level career referents have high-level women referents. 70% of women who have highest-level career referents have highest-level women referents” (Gibson and Lawrence, 2010, 1170). Overall, people tend to make upward comparisons with those of their same sex because “individuals whose conceptualization of themselves is organized around a dichotomy that is based on stereotypes about men and women are unlikely to think about and evaluate themselves without reference to their gender” (Miller, 1984, 1227). We know that people intentionally make comparisons between themselves and others to gauge where they stand in any given realm, but can social comparisons occur without one’s knowledge or intention of it happening?

Individuals have also been found to make these kinds of comparisons unintentionally. From the results of two different studies, Gilbert, Giesler, and Morris found that “social comparisons may be relatively spontaneous, effortless, and unintentional reactions to the performance of others” (Gilbert, Giesler, and Morris, 1995, 227). A separate study indicates that even “casual exposure to another person is sufficient to produce a marked impact on a person’s momentary concept of self” (Morse and Gergen, 1970, 154.) Social comparisons happen both intentionally and unintentionally, but what effects do they have?

As we have seen, social comparisons are a mechanism used to identify where we stand in terms of our abilities, attitudes, etc. compared to those around us. But what happens when we engage in social comparisons? What impact does social comparison, intentional or unintentional, have on the way we view ourselves? Upward comparisons can sometimes have positive effects. Having a successful other as a comparison target can lead “individuals to set higher personal standards for evaluating their own success, which can motivate efforts toward these new and more challenging goals” (Gilbert, Giesler, and Morris, 1995, 558). However, it is often the case that “self-evaluation and self-esteem are also frequently lowered by upward comparison” (Collins, 1996, 61).

While upward comparisons may have the potential to lead individuals to set higher personal standards or to eventually attain a higher end, in the meantime it may lower one’s self-views. On the other hand, comparing to someone with less desirable characteristics may increase one’s self-esteem. In a study done by Morse and Gergen, they found that “the presence of a person

perceived to have highly desirable characteristics produces a decrease in self-esteem. If the other's characteristics are undesirable, self-esteem increases" (Morse and Gergen, 1970, 149).

In a complex, multi-study approach by Stapel and Blanton they found that when individuals are primed with a comparison target, it activates thoughts of the self and can influence self-evaluation even when the individual is not consciously aware the priming took place (Stapel and Blanton, 2004). They also found that subliminally presented comparison person information results in an increase or decrease in explicit self-evaluation depending on whether it was an upward or downward comparison (Stapel and Blanton, 2004). In support of this finding, another study of theirs found that participant signature size decreased when they were subliminally primed with an upward comparison and increased when subliminally primed with a downward comparison (Stapel and Blanton, 2004). An additional study replicated these findings showing that "an association between 'I' and 'unattractive' were facilitated after subliminal exposure to an attractive person" and vice versa when primed with an unattractive person (Stapel and Blanton, 2004, 478). Interestingly, they also found that certainty of the self plays a moderating role, when one is uncertain about themselves "subliminal exposure to comparison information" is more likely to produce contrast effects (Stapel and Blanton, 2004, 478). When someone is more confident in themselves and their abilities they are less likely to engage in social comparisons and when they do make such comparisons they are less likely to yield contrast results.



When presented with comparison information, assimilation is more apt to occur when it “is used as an interpretation frame to define and make sense of the self (answering ‘Who am I? X or Y?’), whereas contrast is a more likely outcome when comparison information is used as a standard to evaluate the self on relevant dimensions (answering the questions ‘How X am I?’)” (Stapel and Blanton, 2004, 479).

Overall, social comparisons take place so people can better recognize where they stand. Social comparisons can happen intentionally and when they do people tend to compare to better performing same-sex others. Social comparisons can also happen unintentionally when individuals are subliminally primed with comparison information. Typically, downward comparisons lead to an increase in self-esteem and self-view where as upward comparisons lead to a decrease in self-esteem and self-view. While upward comparisons may eventually lead individuals to greater achievements that does not negate the negative impact it can initially have on conceptions of the self. Upward comparisons, especially when people are uncertain of their self-views, can have “powerful, and sometimes painful, contrast effects...in the self-evaluation of ability” (Pelham and Wachsmuth, 1995, 826).

### **CHAPTER THREE. INTIMIDATING EXEMPLARS**

What consequences could there be from having especially well-qualified women serving in elected office? One would think that having well-qualified women in office would be a good thing, and it is certainly laudable to increase the representation of women. However, perhaps the presence of well-qualified women in elected office is deterring potential female candidates from running. We have seen that given the obstacles women face to becoming candidates and in running for office they have to be better than their male counterparts. Likewise, women are more concerned and unsure about their qualifications to run than men are. Additionally, insights from Social Comparison Theory indicate that when people are uncertain about their self-views and where they stand they tend to make upward comparisons with members of the same sex and these comparisons tend to result in negative, contrast effects.

Social Comparison Theory tells us that if potential women candidates are considering a run for office but are unsure of where they stand in terms of their qualifications to do so, they will likely engage in social comparisons to evaluate their qualifications. We know that people tend to make upward comparisons to same-sex others. This means that these potential candidates may be comparing themselves to the women that are currently serving in office to assess their own qualifications. These comparisons may be causing potential female candidates to think they are not qualified enough to run. While this is likely not the case for every single woman considering a candidacy, it may be an additional factor holding some women back from running for office. It is assumed this intimidating

exemplar effect largely impacts women. It may affect some men as well, but generally men are more confident in themselves and their qualifications and require less encouragement to run (Lawless and Fox, 2010). As such, it is less likely that men engage in social comparisons to the same degree as women and if they do it is less likely they will experience negative, contrast effects. Further, there are more men serving in office than there are women so it is more likely that a potential male candidate will find a comparison other that is already similar to him.

### **Hypotheses and Methods**

In an attempt to replicate some of the conventional thinking regarding obstacles women face in getting to office and to test the Intimidating Exemplars Theory, two surveys were conducted with the approval of the Iowa State University Institutional Review Board. One survey was of elected officials in Iowa. Every member of the Iowa State Legislature received a survey, as did every city council member and board of supervisors member whose contact information was available online. Due to budget restrictions, a random sample of school board members also received a survey. For the elected officials survey, participants received a letter with a brief explanation of the survey about a week before they received the online survey. Overall, 353 surveys were started and 318 surveys were completed. This means I received an overall response rate of 25.2%. However, the response rate on individual questions may vary since more surveys were started than completed and since responses are not included if gender was not indicated. For the student survey, a survey was emailed to the

study body of Iowa State University. 786 surveys were started and 566 were completed. The survey was sent out by the registrar office's mailer, not Qualtrics, which means the total number of surveys sent is unknown. It is assumed that since it was sent to the entire student body and total enrollment for the Fall 2015 semester was 36,001 that 36,001 surveys were sent. As such, the response rate was 1.57%. Again, the response rate on individual questions may vary since more surveys were started than completed and since responses are not included if gender was not indicated.

The results from the first part of the survey for both samples will be discussed first in the results. Since the survey was given to a group of respondents that have not run for public office and a group that has, it presents a unique opportunity to compare the results for the two groups to see if running for office changes anything for women. Overall, I hypothesized that there would be gender differences within both of the samples, but few differences between the samples. The questions for the first part of the results examine respondent's future political aspirations, encouragement received to run for office, and comfort level engaging in a number of campaign activities among other factors. Given the fact that a number of women and female officeholders tend to be Democrats, I hypothesize that in both samples more women will identify as Democrats (Lawless and Fox, 2010). Further, considering the argument that female candidates are more qualified than male candidates, I hypothesize that more female elected officials than male elected officials will have advanced degrees.

H<sub>1</sub>: For elected officials and students, more women will identify as Democrats.

H<sub>2</sub>: For elected officials, more women will have advanced degrees than men.

In terms of the current office elected officials are in and the first office students indicate they would run for, the hypothesis is that more female elected officials will be in school board positions and that more female students will indicate the school board is the first position they would run for. It is also hypothesized that more female elected officials will have previously run for and won elected office given the findings from the Pearson and McGhee article that indicate nonincumbent female candidates for the U.S. House tend to have more electoral experience than male candidates (2013). I hypothesize that since men tend to be more ambitious when it comes to elected office, men will be more likely to indicate a desire to be involved in politics as the primary reason they first ran for office.

H<sub>3</sub>: Female elected officials will be more likely to be in school board positions and female students will be more likely to indicate the school board as the first position they would run for.

H<sub>4</sub>: More female elected officials will have previously run for elected office than male elected officials.

H<sub>5</sub>: More female elected officials will have previously won elected office than male elected officials.

H<sub>6</sub>: Male elected officials will be more likely to indicate a desire to be involved in politics as the primary reason they first ran for office than female elected officials.

Additionally, it is hypothesized that women from both samples will indicate being uncomfortable engaging in a number of campaign activities more often than the men. Further, since women tend to be less likely to run for office it is

hypothesized that fewer women will indicate considering running for higher office for the elected officials and running for office at all for the students. Considering the recruitment issues women face, it is hypothesized that fewer female elected officials will report having received encouragement to run for higher office and that fewer female students will report having received encouragement to run for office at all. Finally, since women tend to underestimate their qualifications to run for office, it is hypothesized women from both samples will indicate they believe it is unlikely they would win if they were to run for office.

H<sub>7</sub>: Female elected officials and students will be more likely to indicate being uncomfortable engaging in a number of campaign activities than the male respondents.

H<sub>8</sub>: Fewer female elected officials will indicate they have considered running for higher office than male elected officials and fewer female students will indicate they have considered running for office than male students.

H<sub>9</sub>: Fewer female elected officials will report having received encouragement to run for higher office than the male elected officials and fewer female students will report having received encouragement to run for office than male students.

H<sub>10</sub>: Female elected officials will be more likely to indicate they believe it is unlikely they would win if they were to run for higher office than male elected officials. Female students will be more likely to indicate they believe it is unlikely they would win if they were to run for office than male students.

The second portion of the results section will focus on the responses given by elected officials to open-ended questions to test the Intimidating Exemplars Theory. Respondents were asked what qualifications they believe they bring to the office they currently hold and it is hypothesized that women will emphasize their education/experience more than the men. Given the insights from Social

Comparison Theory, it is hypothesized that when asked to name an exemplar, elected officials will make upward comparisons to those within their gender. Additionally, I hypothesize that female elected officials will emphasize education/experience more often when describing their exemplar than male elected officials will.

H<sub>11</sub>: Female elected officials will emphasize their education/experience more than male elected officials.

H<sub>12</sub>: Elected officials will make upward comparisons.

H<sub>13</sub>: Elected officials will compare to those within their gender.

H<sub>14</sub>: Female elected officials will focus on the education/experience of the exemplar they name more than male elected officials will.

A number of the questions asked had pre-defined responses for the respondents to simply pick from. Respondents were asked a number of background questions including race, marital status, and party affiliation. Elected officials were asked what position they are currently serving in, whether they had run for office or won an elected office prior to their current position, whether they had been encouraged by anyone to run for their current office or higher office, and whether they had ever considered running for higher office. Students were asked whether they have ever considered running for office. Both samples were asked about their comfort level engaging in a number of campaign activities and what they thought the odds of their winning an election to higher office might be.

There were also a number of open-ended questions.<sup>1</sup> As one would expect, such open-ended questions garnered a wide variety of responses. For the question, “What qualifications do you feel you bring to the position you currently hold?” there are seven different qualification categories in which responses could fall. The categories are as follows: personality traits or behaviors like being open minded, a hard worker, etc; work and/or educational background; skills or understanding of a particular subject such as financial skills; volunteer/service activities; live in the community/knowledge of the community, etc.; actions; work with others or work across partisan lines; time.<sup>2</sup> Multiple categories within a single response was allowed and happened often.

A number of analyses will be done on responses to the question, “If you had to choose one political figure you feel is particularly well qualified for the office they hold, who would it be, what office did/do they hold, and why did you choose them?” From here on, the official named by respondents for this question will be referred to as the exemplar. First, the gender of the respondent will be compared to the gender of the exemplar to see if men do compare to other men and women to other women. Then, the position the exemplar is in will be compared to the position the elected official respondent is in to see if they make upward comparisons. Next, the reasoning elected officials gave for picking their

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<sup>1</sup> The open-ended responses from the students are not analyzed in these results, as the interest is more in how those more involved in politics view potential exemplars.

<sup>2</sup> The category of skills or knowledge may seem like an overlap with experience/education, but a large number of responses contained the different wording and seemed to allude to knowledge gained from a way other than education or work experience.



exemplar will be examined. Inevitably there were a vast number of reasons given, so responses were grouped with other similar responses and the top answers given by men and women will be examined participants to see if they differ. Additionally, I will look at the top descriptors used to discuss male and female exemplars to see if there are any differences. To aid in the analysis of the results three categories of reasoning were created: personality, background/experience, and actions. Responses could be assigned multiple categories. The “actions” category simply refers to things like reaching out to constituents or reading up on different issues to stay informed. I will look to see if the reasons used differ when female participants describe female exemplars and when they describe male exemplars and whether the reasons employed by male participants differ when describing male and female exemplars. It should be noted that the question does not explicitly ask respondents to name someone they would compare themselves to because the goal is to try and gauge who respondents would implicitly compare themselves to. While not a perfect measure, it is a good place to start.

## CHAPTER FOUR. RESULTS

To begin, tables 1-3 present some descriptive characteristics of each sample. There is little of note in the breakdown of participant race. There is slightly more diversity in the student respondents, though that may be expected given the underrepresentation of minority groups in elected office.

**Table 1. Respondent Race—Elected Officials and Students**

Race:	Elected Officials		Students	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
African-American	1.9%	1.4%	3.3%	2.4%
White/Caucasian	96.2	97.1	84.1	86.5
Latino/a	0.9	0.5	3.3	3.0
Asian	-	-	4.1	2.7
Other	0.9	1.0	5.2	5.4
N	106	209	270	296

Table 2 presents the marital status of the survey participants and whether they have children living at home. It is interesting to note that there is a significant difference between the percent of the female and male elected officials that are married. There is also a significant difference between the percent of female and male elected officials that are divorced. Though the number of female elected officials that are married is still high, perhaps the fact that it is lower than the percentage of males is an indication of the barrier home life can be for potential female candidates. As might be expected, few respondents in the student survey have children living at home. There was no significant gender difference for the elected officials. While it is widely known that many potential candidates wait until

their children are grown and out of the house before deciding to run, I expected there to be a larger portion of elected officials with children living at home.

**Table 2. Respondent Marital Status & Children in the Home—Elected Officials & Students**

	Elected Officials		Students	
<b>Marital Status:</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Single	5.6%	5.7%	93.3%	90.6%
Married	80.4*	90.9	5.6	8.4
Divorced	8.4*	2.4	-	0.7
Widowed	5.6*	1.0	-	-
Civil Union	-	-	1.1	0.3
N	107	209	269	297
<b>Do you currently have children living at home?</b>				
Yes	38.3%	35.7%	2.6%	3.7%
No	61.7	64.3	97.4	96.3
N	107	207	268	297

Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

Table 3 shows the party breakdown from both samples. As imagined, a higher proportion of women in both samples identified as Democrats than the men and both differences are statistically significant confirming  $H_1$ . There was also a statistically significant gender gap between elected officials in the percent that identify as Republican.

**Table 3. Respondent Party—Elected Officials & Students**

<b>Party:</b>	<b>Elected Officials</b>		<b>Students</b>	
	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Democrat	46.7%*	27.4%	36.6%*	25.2%
Republican	27.1*	48.1	26.8	32.4
Independent	22.4	21.6	30.6	32.8
Other	3.7	2.9	6.0	9.7
N	107	208	265	290

Each \* denotes a subset of gender: categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

An examination of the elected officials' level of education in table 4 yields some interesting findings. Though the results are not significant, a larger proportion of the female respondents (33.7%) completed a graduate degree compared to the men (25.7%), which supports H<sub>2</sub>. Additionally, if the categories of "graduate of four-year college" and "completed graduate degree" are combined there is a 10.5% difference between the men (62.6%) and women (73.1), though it is not statistically significant. Looking at the type of graduate degree, there is a 23-percentage point difference in the proportion of women and men with Master's degrees, a finding that is statistically significant. Also statistically significant, is the higher proportion of men with doctoral degrees. A majority of the men and women who responded either graduated from a four-year institution or obtained a graduate degree, though there is a higher percentage of women than men. There are also differences in the types of graduate degrees obtained by the men and women.

**Table 4. Respondent Level of Education—Elected Officials**

<b>Level of Education:</b>	<b>Elected Officials</b>	
	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Did not complete high school	-	1.0%
High school graduate	3.8%	7.3
Completed some college	23.1	29.1
Graduate of four-year college (received B.A. or B.S.)	39.4	36.9
Completed graduate degree	33.7	25.7
N	104	206
<b>If you completed a graduate degree, which degree(s) did you receive?</b>		
M.A.	73.0%*	50.0%
Ph.D.	2.7*	16.1
J.D.	10.8	19.6
M.B.A.	13.5	14.3
N	37	56

Each \* denotes a subset of gender: categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

Next we will look at the positions in which respondents are current serving.

Table 5 presents the breakdown. There is a significant difference in the proportion of respondents serving as school board members confirming H<sub>3</sub>. 29% of the women are serving as school board members compared to 13.9% of the men. This is not all that surprising given the fact that in their 2001 ambition survey Fox and Lawless found that the women surveyed were more likely than the men to express interest in running for a school board position (2012). This is

important because it may be a manifestation of the idea that women are better than men, or perhaps more suited than men, in areas of education. Conversely, the higher presence of women on school boards may fuel that stereotype. Additionally, a larger proportion of women are serving on city councils compared to men, though the difference is not significant. In all other positions, men outnumbered women with significant differences in the office of the mayor and the state assembly.

**Table 5. Respondent Current Position—Elected Officials**

In what elected office are you currently serving?	Elected Officials	
	Women	Men
School Board	29.0%*	13.9%
City Council	51.4	44
Mayor	5.6*	14.8
Board of Supervisors	10.3	16.7
State Assembly	0.9*	7.2
State Senate	2.8	3.3
N	107	209

Note:  $X^2=22.013$ ,  $p<.001$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender: categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

Looking at the student responses regarding the first position for which they would most likely run if they were to run for higher office we see similar results that also confirm  $H_3$ . Significant differences emerge in the proportion of students indicating the first office they would seek would be school board, mayor, and state assembly. Table 6 shows that a higher proportion of female students indicated the first office they would run for would be school board. A higher proportion of male than female students indicated mayor or state assembly as

the first office they would seek. These are the same positions as the ones that have significant differences for the offices elected officials are currently in. Further, the chi-square results for both samples are significant at the .001 level. For students, gender and the first position they would most likely seek are related. Gender and current position are related for elected officials.

**Table 6. Respondent First Office Likely Run For—Students**

If you were to run for higher office, what would be the first position for which you would most likely run?	Students	
	Women	Men
School Board	27.1%*	13.1
City Council	23.4	28.3
Mayor	1.9*	6.7
County Supervisor	0.7	1.7
State Assembly	1.9*	5.7
State Senate	3.7*	8.8
Judge	3.7	2.0
State-Wide Executive Office	1.1	0.7
Governor	0.7	1.3
U.S. House of Representatives	1.9	3.4
U.S. Senate	4.5	2.4
President	1.1*	4.7
Other	0.7	2.4
I would not consider running	27.5*	18.9
N	269	297

Note:  $X^2=53.246$ ,  $p<.000$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

A look at whether elected officials had run for public office or won an election to public office prior to the position they are currently serving in yields

interesting and unexpected results. Given the information presented in the literature review, the expectation was that women would have more electoral experience than men. That is, however, not the case. As Tables 7 and 8 show, a significantly higher proportion of men had both previously run for public office and won an election to public office prior to their current position, which is the opposite of H<sub>4</sub> and H<sub>5</sub>. One explanation may be that the information presented in the literature review pertains to nonincumbent candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives, which may deal with a different kind of candidate than state or local level office. Given the findings of the Pearson and McGhee article, more nonincumbent men than women are willing and likely to run for the U.S. House without prior electoral experience in which case those candidates would not be captured in this type of survey. Further, this survey does not take into account the number of years of experience respondents have. More men may have won previous office, but it may be possible that women have more years of experience.

**Table 7. Respondent Previously Run for Public Office—Elected Officials**

	<b>Elected Officials</b>	
<b>Had you ever run for public office prior to being elected to the position in which you are currently serving?</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Yes	20.6%*	34.8%
No	79.4*	65.2
N	107	207

Note:  $X^2=6.802$ ,  $p<.009$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level



**Table 8. Respondent Previously Won Public Office—Elected Officials**

	Elected Officials	
Had you ever won an election to public office prior to the position in which you are currently serving?	Women	Men
Yes	18.7%*	30.1%
No	81.3*	69.6
N	107	209

Note:  $X^2=4.792$ ,  $p<.029$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

An analysis of the primary reason elected officials decided to run for office for the first time shows similarities between the men and women in all but one category. As seen in Table 9, men were almost twice as likely to indicate that the primary reason they first ran for office was their longstanding desire to be involved in politics, a difference that is statistically significant and confirms H<sub>6</sub>. This may support the argument that men tend to be more motivated and guided by political ambition and women more motivated by community issues (Lawless and Fox, 2010). Further, though the difference is not significant, more women indicated a party leader or elected official asking them to serve as the primary reason for their first run. This finding supports evidence discussed in the literature review regarding the role encouragement plays in getting women to run for office.

Similarly, even though the differences are not statistically significant it is worth noting that when asked about whether they had been encouraged to run for their current position, women were more likely to indicate receiving encouragement from a number of sources. Again this may speak to the fact that

women need more encouragement than men to make that decision to run for office and that if they receive encourage that can increase the chance they will make the decision to run for office.

**Table 9. Respondent's Primary Reason First Ran—Elected Officials**

<b>Which of the following represents the primary reason you decided to run the first time you ran for office?</b>	<b>Elected Officials</b>	
	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Concern about one or more specific policy issues	26.4%	28.4%
A party leader or an elected official asked me to run or serve	27.4	22.6
My longstanding desire to be involved in politics	8.5*	17.3
My desire to change the way government works	6.6	5.3
Dissatisfaction with the incumbent	8.5	7.7
It seemed like a winnable race	0.9	1.9
Other	21.7	16.8
N	106	208

Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

**Table 10. Respondent's Encouragement for Current Office—Elected Officials**

	Elected Officials	
	Women	Men
<b>When you ran for the office in which you are currently serving, had any of the following encouraged you to run?</b>		
Party Official	15.4%	17.7%
Elected Official	64.4	57.8
Non-Elected Political Activist	29.8	23.4
Co-Worker	16.3	15.1
Friend	67.3	64.6
Spouse/Partner	42.3	34.4
Family Member	26.0	20.8
N	104	192

The next area of examination looks at how comfortable elected officials and students indicated they would be engaging in a number of campaign activities. Table 11 presents the results from the question regarding comfort level attending fundraisers. Given the rather well-known fact that women tend to think they are not as good at fundraising as men, we would expect to see gender differences in their comfort level attending fundraisers and asking for campaign contributions. Somewhat surprisingly, there are no real gender differences within the samples or differences between the samples. However, when asked about their comfort asking people for campaign contributions, differences emerge. Statistically significant differences appear between the men and women in the student sample. A higher proportion of female students indicate they are very uncomfortable asking for campaign contributions and a larger proportion of the

male students indicate they are either comfortable or very comfortable asking for campaign contributions. As evidence by the chi-square value for the students, gender and comfort level asking for campaign contribution are indeed related. There are, however, no real gender differences in elected officials comfort level asking for campaign contributions. Though this is unexpected, it actually makes sense. Those in the elected official survey have already successfully run for and won public office at least once. That will inevitably ease some of the doubts women have about their ability to raise money. This explains why we observe the expected gender difference for the students but not elected officials.

**Table 11. Respondents' Comfort Level Attending Fundraisers—Elected Officials & Students**

	Elected Officials		Students	
<b>If you were a candidate for public office indicate your comfort level-attending fundraisers</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Very Uncomfortable	9.5%	10.2%	9.8%	8.6%
Uncomfortable	22.9	22.4	15.2	23.8
Comfortable	41.9	49.3	45.5	40.3
Very Comfortable	25.7	18.0	29.5	27.2
N	205	105	264	290

Note: For students,  $X^2=6.574$ ,  $p<.087$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

**Table 12. Respondents' Comfort Level Asking for Campaign Contributions—Elected Officials & Students**

If you were a candidate for public office indicate your comfort level- <i>Asking people for campaign contributions</i>	Elected Officials		Students	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Very Uncomfortable	17.1%	22.3%	25.9%*	18.3%
Uncomfortable	46.7	42.7	45.9	37.9
Comfortable	29.6	28.6	24.4*	35.2
Very Comfortable	7.6	5.3	3.8*	8.6
N	105	206	266	290

Note: For students,  $X^2=16.34$ ,  $p<.001$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

The same pattern emerges when it comes to going door-to-door to meet constituents and asking peoples' votes. A statistically significant, higher percentage of male students indicated they were very comfortable going door-to-door to meet constituents. A larger proportion of female students indicated they were uncomfortable or very uncomfortable doing so than males. There were, however, no major gender differences for the elected officials. The chi-square results indicate there is no real relationship between gender and comfort level going door-to-door to meet constituents for elected officials, but there is a relationship between the two with the students.

We see about the same results for comfort level asking for peoples' votes. Overall, for the students, women were more uncomfortable doing so than the

men and most of the differences were significant. There were no major gender differences for the elected officials. Again, the chi-square results show that for students there is a relationship between gender and comfort level asking for peoples' votes, but there is no such relationship with the elected officials.

**Table 13. Respondents' Comfort Level Going Door-to-Door—Elected Officials & Students**

	Elected Officials		Students	
<b>If you were a candidate for public office indicate your comfort level- Going door-to-door to meet constituents</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Very Uncomfortable	10.4%	8.3%	23.7%	17.2%
Uncomfortable	14.2	13.7	31.2	24.5
Comfortable	44.3	49.3	31.6	34.8
Very Comfortable	31.1	28.8	13.5*	23.4
N	106	205	266	290

Note: For students,  $X^2=12.827$ ,  $p<.005$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

**Table 14. Respondents' Comfort Level Asking for Votes—Elected Officials & Students**

	Elected Officials		Students	
<b>If you were a candidate for public office indicate your comfort level- Asking people to vote for you</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Very Uncomfortable	2.8%	3.9%	12.0%*	6.2%
Uncomfortable	11.3	9.2	29.3*	21.7
Comfortable	46.2	50.2	41.4	39.7
Very Comfortable	39.6	36.7	17.3*	32.4
N	106	207	266	290

Note: For students,  $X^2=21.087$ ,  $p<.000$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

As far as comfort interacting with journalists and the media, there were no major gender differences with the elected officials. A larger proportion of male students compared to female students were very comfortable doing so. The chi-square results indicate no relationship between gender and comfort level interacting with journalists and the media for elected officials and just barely miss statistical significance (.066) for the students.

**Table 15. Respondents' Comfort Level Interacting with Journalists/Media—Elected Officials & Students**

If you were a candidate for public office indicate your comfort level- <i>Interacting with journalists and the media</i>	Elected Officials		Students	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Very Uncomfortable	7.5%	4.9%	13.9%	9.3%
Uncomfortable	16.0	14.6	22.2	21.8
Comfortable	45.3	52.9	43.2	39.4
Very Comfortable	31.1	27.7	20.7*	29.4
N	106	206	266	289

Note: For students,  $X^2=7.186$ ,  $p<.066$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

The same tendencies are exhibited when it comes to comfort level participating in a negative campaign. More female students were uncomfortable or very uncomfortable and more male students were comfortable or very comfortable and most of the differences are statistically significant. There were, however, no major difference between men and women among elected officials. Chi-square results indicate a relationship between gender and comfort level participating and a negative campaign for the students, but no such relationship with the elected officials.



**Table 16. Respondents' Comfort Level Participating in a Negative Campaign—Elected Officials & Students**

	Elected Officials		Students	
<b>If you were a candidate for public office indicate your comfort level- <i>Participating in a negative campaign</i></b>				
	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Very Uncomfortable	63.5%	58.0%	59.0%*	39.8%
Uncomfortable	30.8	35.6	31.2*	39.4
Comfortable	3.8	2.9	7.5*	15.6
Very Comfortable	3.4	1.9	2.3	5.2
N	104	205	266	289

Note: For students,  $X^2=23.924$ ,  $p<.000$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

As Tables 17 and 18 show, comfort level having their name in the spotlight and their family in the spotlight exhibits the same general pattern we have been seeing. Female students tend to be more uncomfortable than male students with no major gender differences for the elected officials. There is a relationship between gender and comfort level with both activities for the students but not for the elected officials.

**Table 17. Respondents' Comfort Level Having Name in Spotlight—Elected Officials & Students**

	Elected Officials		Students	
<b>If you were a candidate for public office indicate your comfort level- <i>Having name in the spotlight</i></b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Very Uncomfortable	6.7%	5.8%	16.2%*	10.3%
Uncomfortable	21.0	17.0	27.8*	18.3
Comfortable	54.3	59.2	40.2	43.4
Very Comfortable	18.1	18.0	15.8*	27.9
N	105	206	266	290

Note: For students,  $X^2=18.702$ ,  $p<.000$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

**Table 18. Respondents' Comfort Level Having Family in Spotlight—Elected Officials & Students**

	Elected Officials		Students	
<b>If you were a candidate for public office indicate your comfort level- <i>Having family in the spotlight</i></b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Very Uncomfortable	19.6%	19.5%	33.5%*	24.6%
Uncomfortable	32.4	40.5	40.1	40.6
Comfortable	43.1	35.6	27.3	21.8
Very Comfortable	4.9	4.4	4.1	8.0
N	102	205	266	289

Note: for students,  $X^2=8.827$ ,  $p<.032$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

Differences do begin to appear when examining comfort level committing your time, asking people to volunteer for the campaign, and dealing with party officials. When it comes to committing their time, statistically significant differences appear with higher proportions of women in both the elected officials survey and the student survey indicating they are either comfortable or very comfortable doing so. Further, for the elected officials there is a relationship between gender and comfort level committing their time but the chi-square results fall short of significant for the students (.085). These results are surprising and we can really only speculate as to the cause of the differences. Perhaps women are more comfortable committing their time because that is one way they believe they can really make a difference in their campaign. It is impossible to say, but would be an interesting area for future study.

**Table 19. Respondents' Comfort Level Committing Time—Elected Officials & Students**

	Elected Officials		Students	
<b>If you were a candidate for public office indicate your comfort level- Committing your time</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Very Uncomfortable	4.7%	2.9%	6.0%	4.5%
Uncomfortable	9.4	5.8	8.6	10.7
Comfortable	43.4*	63.3	50.4*	41.0
Very Comfortable	42.5*	28.0	35.0*	43.8
N	106	207	266	290

Note: For elected officials,  $X^2=11.320$ ,  $p<.010$ . For students,  $X^2=6.616$ ,  $p<.085$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

Comfort level asking people to volunteer for the campaign presents some interesting results. A higher percentage of women than men in the elected officials group indicated being very comfortable asking people to volunteer for the campaign, but a lower percentage of women than men in the student group indicated being very comfortable doing so. Both differences are statistically significant. Chi-square results fall short of significance for both groups indicating there is not a relationship between gender and comfort level asking people to volunteer for the campaign. The best explanation I can posit for the difference in comfort level between the two groups for the women is that, again, the elected officials have run a campaign so they have experience asking people to volunteer.

**Table 20. Respondents' Comfort Level Asking People to Volunteer for the Campaign—Elected Officials & Students**

	Elected Officials		Students	
<b>If you were a candidate for public office indicate your comfort level- Asking people to volunteer for the campaign</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Very Uncomfortable	4.8%	5.9%	10.2%	8.3%
Uncomfortable	24.0	30.2	22.9	18.3
Comfortable	50.0	53.7	50.8	49.3
Very Comfortable	21.2*	10.2	16.9*	24.1
N	104	205	266	290

Note: For elected officials,  $X^2=7.159$ ,  $p<.067$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

Comfort level dealing with party officials also yields some interesting findings. A greater proportion of women in the student survey indicated they were uncomfortable dealing with party officials compared to the men and a greater proportion of the men compared indicated they were very comfortable doing so and both differences are statistically significant. These results are to be expected especially given the fact that it is common knowledge that women face recruitment and gate keeping obstacles when it comes to running for office. What is somewhat surprising is the fact that a higher percentage of women from the elected officials survey indicated they would be very comfortable dealing with party officials than the men, but a larger proportion of the men indicated they were comfortable doing so than the women and both of the differences are statistically significant. The fact that female elected officials indicated they would be more comfortable than the women from the student survey may be due to the fact that the elected officials have already gone through a campaign and likely interact with party officials. There is a relationship between gender and comfort level dealing with party officials for the students, and it just misses statistical significant for the elected officials (.058). It may be that the gender differences within the elected officials sample are just a fluke. There does not seem to be another explanation that would explain the difference.

**Table 21. Respondents' Comfort Level Dealing with Party Officials—Elected Officials & Students**

	Elected Officials		Students	
<b>If you were a candidate for public office indicate your comfort level- <i>Dealing with party officials</i></b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Very Uncomfortable	11.9%	8.9%	12.5%	11.4%
Uncomfortable	22.8	19.8	27.9*	18.3
Comfortable	42.6*	57.9	46.4	46.6
Very Comfortable	22.8*	13.4	13.2*	23.8
N	101	202	265	290

Note: For elected officials,  $X^2=14.048$ ,  $p<.003$ . For students,  $X^2=7.499$ ,  $p<.058$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

Tables 10-21 presented mixed evidence regarding  $H_7$ . Overall, analyzing comfort level engaging in different campaign activities shed light on differences between those who have run for office and those who have not. The expectation was the women would generally feel more uncomfortable participating in campaign activities than men would and this was typically the case for the students. It was, however, not the case with female elected officials. While it may seem odd at first, perhaps it is an indication that before running for office women believe they would be uncomfortable participating in many campaign activities, but once they actually run for office most of that discomfort dissipates. This would explain the fact that the results from the student results are generally supportive of  $H_7$  while the elected officials results were not. Next, we will examine whether there are differences between men and women in their aspirations for office.

Table 22 presents information on whether elected officials have ever seriously considered running for higher office. In the student survey, students were not directly asked if they ever considered running for office. Rather, when asked, “If you were to run for higher office, what would be the first position for which you would most likely run?” one of the options they could select was, “I would not consider running.” Table 23 shows the student responses. Though a larger proportion of women from the elected official sample indicated they have not seriously considered running for higher office than men did, the difference is not significant. However, the larger proportion of female students that indicated they would not consider running compared to the men is significant. These results somewhat support  $H_8$ . Perhaps this means that once women run for office the difference between their ambition and their male colleagues’ ambition begins to decrease, but does not disappear completely, which would explain the difference between the elected official results and the student results.

**Table 22. Respondent Consider Running for Higher Office—Elected Officials**

	<b>Elected Officials</b>	
<b>Have you ever seriously considered running for office at a higher level than the office you currently serve in?</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Yes	37.4%	43.5%
No	62.6	56.5
N	107	209

**Table 23. Respondent Consider Running for Office—Students**

	Students	
<b>I would not consider running</b>	<b>Women</b> 27.5%*	<b>Men</b> 18.9%
N	269	297

Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

Not surprisingly, a lower percentage of women compared to the percent of men in the student sample reported being encouraged to run for office. This supports findings mentioned in the literature review regarding the decreased likelihood that women are encouraged to run for office. For the students, there is a relationship between gender and being encouraged to run for office. What is somewhat surprising is that for the elected officials, although the differences are not significant, for every option listed as someone who may have encouraged them to run for higher office, a larger proportion of women reported receiving encouragement from all but one group. The student results support H<sub>9</sub>, but the elected officials results are the opposite of what was expected with H<sub>9</sub>. I posit that the explanation for the difference may be that once a woman runs for office and wins, she no longer faces the same lack of encouragement since she has proved herself to be a successful candidate. This explains the reported lack of encouragement female students received, which was to be expected given the recruitment obstacles women face.



**Table 24. Respondent Received Encouraged to Run for Higher Office—Elected Officials**

	Elected Officials	
Have any of the following ever encouraged or suggested you run for higher office?	Women	Men
Party Official	41.3%	39.7%
Elected Official	62.7	59.6
Non-Elected Political Activist	49.3	34.2
Co-Worker	36.0	26.0
Friend	65.3	66.4
Spouse/Partner	38.7	28.0
Family Member	37.3	27.4
N	75	146

**Table 25. Respondent Encouraged to Run for Office—Students**

	Student	
Has anyone ever suggested that you run for political office now or at sometime in the future?	Women	Men
Yes	33.0%*	43.1%
No	67.0	56.9
N	270	297

Note:  $X^2=6.149$ ,  $p<.013$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

When it comes to what elected officials and students think their odds of winning their first race would be, the results are similar to a number of the other findings already discussed. There are no major gender differences for the elected officials. The proportion of men that said they thought it was very likely they

would win their first race was double that of the women, but it is not statistically significant. For the students, more women than men indicated they thought it was very unlikely that they would win their first race and more men than women thought it was very likely they would win their race. There is a relationship between gender and perceived odds of winning their first race for the students, but not for the elected officials. Overall, there is mixed support for H<sub>10</sub>. Again, the student findings reinforce conventional knowledge regarding how women perceive their chances of winning. The elected official results seem to suggest that gender differences may decrease once women get into office.

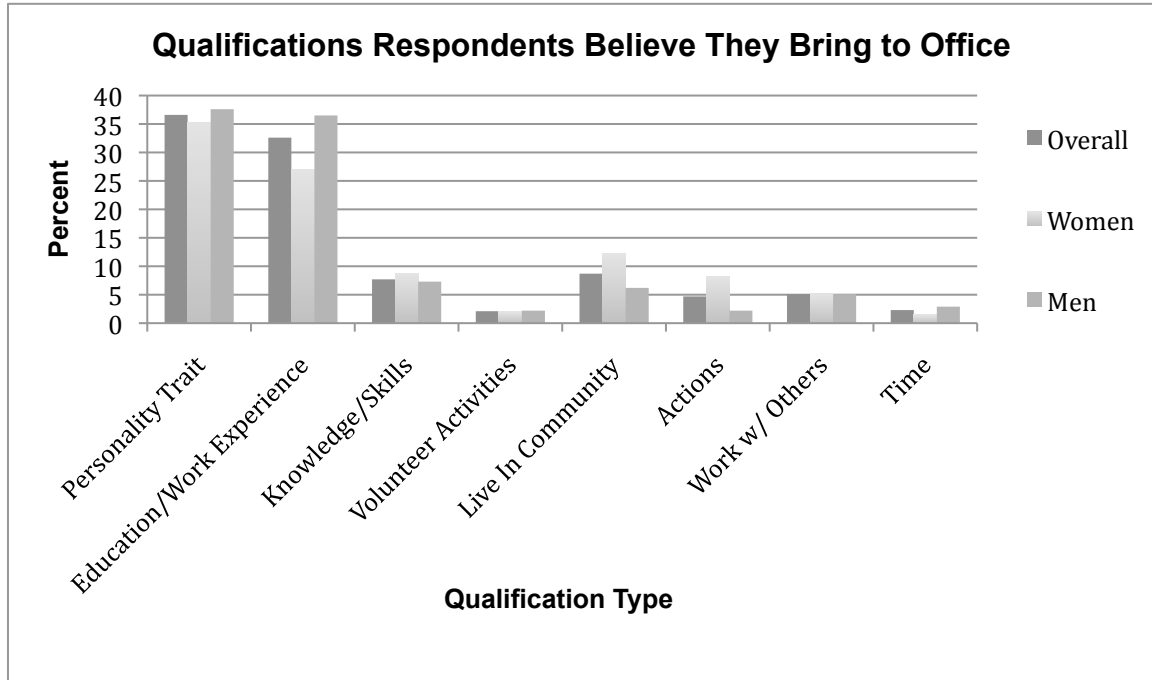
**Table 26. Respondent Perceived Odds Winning First Race—Elected Officials & Students**

	Elected Officials		Students	
<b>If you were to ever run, what do you think the odds are of you winning your first race?</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Very Unlikely	6.3%	6.2%	25.8%*	18.4%
Unlikely	30.2	24.1	46.4	46.8
Likely	59.4	61.5	25.8	28.0
Very Likely	4.2	8.2	1.9*	6.8
N	96	195	267	293

Note: For students,  $X^2=11.413$ ,  $p<.010$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

The remainder of the results portion will focus on the open-ended responses given by elected officials to a number of questions to test the Intimidating Exemplars Theory. First, I will look at the responses given to the question, “What qualifications do you feel you bring to the position you currently

hold?" Figure 1 presents a bar chart of the frequency each qualification type was used overall and by gender. H<sub>11</sub> was that women would mention their work experience/education more often than men, but surprisingly that was not the case. While personality traits and education/work experience were the top two mentioned qualifications by both the men and the women, men mentioned both more than the women did. Women mentioned actions such as learning about issues and the fact that they live in the community or have children in the school district more than men did. This finding was unexpected. The assumption is that women compare themselves to other, higher achieving women and that these women are exceptionally well qualified for the positions they are in, which would cause women to be more cognizant of their experience and focus on that more than the men do. Since a number of the women in the sample are on school boards and city councils it may be that they feel their connection to the city is a more valuable asset than their background. It may also be because this question was asked on the survey before any question asking them to name someone they believe is especially well qualified for the position they are in. Perhaps when women are not comparing themselves to others, their own education/experience are not as salient factors. If the question had been asked after respondents were prompted to name an exemplar it may have caused them to think more about their own education/experience.



**Figure 1. Respondent Perceived Qualifications Bring to Office**

Next, I will look at the exemplars named by participants to see if they do make upward comparisons to those within their gender. Table 24 shows the kind of comparisons elected officials make. Overwhelmingly, both men and women made upward comparisons.

**Table 27. Respondent Comparison Level—Elected Officials**

Comparison Level	Elected Officials	
	Women	Men
Same Level Comparison	9.1%	5.1%
Upward Comparison	90.9	94.9
N	66	117

As Table 27 shows, both the men and the women overwhelmingly answered the survey question with someone who was at higher level than their own position. This confirms H<sub>12</sub>, that men and women compare themselves to other elected officials that are in higher positions. The next area of examination

was whether men and women look to those of their gender as comparison targets.

**Table 28. Respondent Exemplar Gender—Elected Officials**

<b>Gender of Comparison Level Target</b>	<b>Elected Officials</b>	
	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Female	50.0%*	9.0%
Male	50.0*	91.0
N	111	62

Note:  $X^2=36.964$ ,  $p<.000$ . Each \* denotes a subset of gender: categories whose column proportions differ significantly from each other at the .05 level

Table 28 shows that women were significantly more likely to name a woman in response to the question than the men were. Given the results of the survey, it is clear that when prompted to name someone they think is qualified, both men and women look upward and are more likely to look within their own gender confirming  $H_{13}$ . Further, the chi-square results indicate there is a relationship between participant gender and exemplar gender. This supports the hypothesis that when thinking of running for office potential female candidates will look to other women that are already serving in office as a possible comparison target. Next, I will compare the top reasons men and women gave for the reason they named their exemplar.

**Table 29. Respondent Reasons Given By Men and Women for Exemplar Choice**

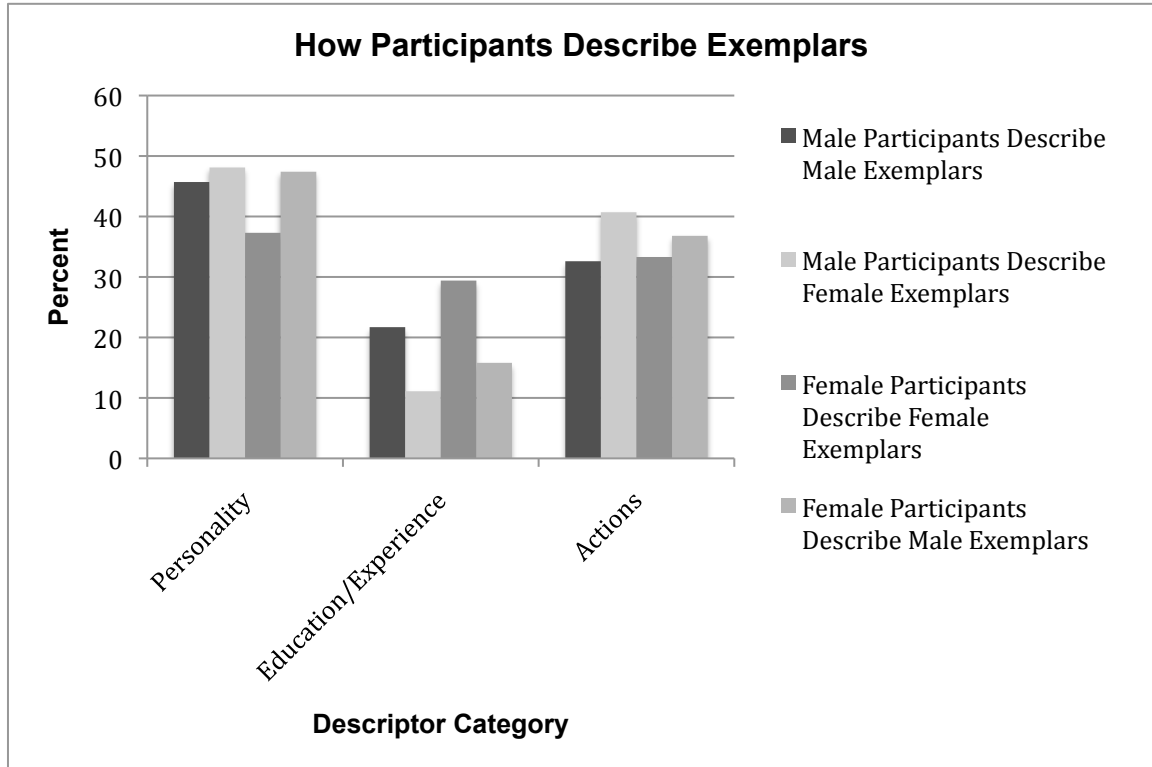
<b>Women</b>	<b>% Used</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>% Used</b>
Smart/Knowledgeable	10.5	Education/ Experience	12.1
Education/ Experience	7.9	Values	6.5
Well Informed/Willing to Learn	6.6	Dedicated	6.0
Communicates with Electorate	5.9	Honest	5.5
Dedicated	5.9	Best Interest of Constituents	5.0
		Work With Those Who Disagree	5.0

The top five reasons given by men and women for why they choose the exemplar they did are quite interesting. The top three used by women all have to do with being intelligent, education or experience, and being well informed or willing to learn about the issues. They all have to do with intelligence or background. Background/experience is the number one for men but the next three all have to do with personality. This is interesting when compared with the fact that personality traits are the number one way women in the sample described their own qualifications, but it appears that when they evaluate others they focus more on intelligence and background/experience. Table 30 presents the top reasons used to describe female and male exemplars.

**Table 30. Respondent Given Reasons Used to Describe Male and Female Exemplars**

<b>Describe Women</b>	<b>% Used</b>	<b>Describe Men</b>	<b>% Used</b>
Education/ Experience	13.7	Education/ Experience	8.9
Smart/ Knowledgeable	9.8	Well Informed/Willing to Learn	6.5
Dedicated	6.9	Dedicated	6.1
Tenacity	4.9	Smart/ Knowledgeable	5.7
Values	4.9	Best Interest of Constituents	5.3
Political Savvy	4.9	Way Handled Job	5.3
Communicates with Electorate	4.9		

The reasons used to describe male and female exemplars are pretty similar to those used by men and women. It is interesting that the second most used descriptor to describe women is smart or knowledgeable and the second one for men is well informed or willing to learn. The descriptor for women indicates more of an innate, natural ability whereas the way men are described is a willingness to try to learn. Also interesting is the inclusion of tenacity for women. This reinforces the belief that women have to have a thick skin to be able to make it to office. Next I'll look at the condensed grouping of descriptors—personality, background/experience, actions—and if there are differences in how male participants describe male exemplars, male participants describe female exemplars, female participants describe female exemplars, and how female participants describe male exemplars.



**Figure 2. Respondents Describe Exemplars**

For all groups personality was the most used descriptor. However, the most even distribution of the different categories was with female participants discussing female exemplars. Interestingly, background/experience was mentioned more by participants when discussing exemplars of the same gender than when discussing exemplars of the opposite gender and female participants describing female exemplars used background/experience the most.

The findings from the analysis of how respondents describe male and female exemplars in general and how male and female participants describe exemplars differently based on the exemplar's gender are important. In their survey of potential candidates for office Lawless and Fox found that,

women rarely assessed themselves relative to current officeholders and candidates. When women determined whether they were qualified to seek public office, they envisioned an extremely accomplished, well-rounded candidate – one who is educated, has political experience, community connections, professional ties, and possesses the



personality traits and qualities necessary to run a successful campaign and endure the scrutiny and criticism it entails (2010,133).

I do not know exactly how Lawless and Fox arrived at this finding, but the findings from Table 30 and Figure 2 suggest part of the assertion may not be entirely correct or at least not show the whole picture. My analysis suggests that when women do compare to women currently in office or evaluate current female officeholders they do expect/perceive them to be well-rounded candidates adept in many areas. Overall, there is a great deal of support for H<sub>14</sub>. This means that when potential candidates look at women currently in office they perceive them as strong in many areas and may then believe if they want to run for office they must be as well rounded.

Taken together, the findings seem to support the hypotheses. Elected officials overwhelmingly made upward comparisons within their own gender. Further when evaluating the qualities of exemplars, when evaluating those of their own gender respondents were more likely to mention education/experience. As such, if potential female candidates are comparing themselves to women serving in higher office and they place more emphasis on that exemplar's background/experience and that background/experience is more than necessary to actually hold office it may lead potential female candidates to believe they are not qualified enough to run.

## CHAPTER FIVE. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Overall, we have seen that women face a number of obstacles in becoming candidates and running for elected office. Those obstacles include doubts about their qualifications to run, recruitment and incumbency challenges, and potential voter and media bias. The presence of these barriers subsequently means that the women who do decide to become candidates and win office are more qualified than their male counterparts. Congresswomen typically have more electoral experience than congressmen, bring more money back to their district, sponsor more legislation, and speak more on the House floor. Drawing on the women and politics literature and Social Comparison Theory, Intimidating Exemplars Theory emerges. When potential female candidates make social comparisons they will compare themselves to other women that are performing at higher levels than they are. Since these high performing women are so well qualified and potential candidates are unsure of their qualifications, the comparisons will likely result in contrast effects which keep women from running for office, or at least lead them to try and gain more experience before doing so.

Looking at the survey results we see that many gender differences are present in the student sample for a number of analyses including whether they have ever thought about running for office, encouragement to run for office, and perceived likelihood of winning an election, among a number of others. However, there are few gender differences in the sample of elected officials. This is important because it suggests that many potential female candidates still face obstacles in becoming a candidate for office including being less likely to

consider a run for office, feeling uncomfortable engaging in a number of campaign activities, failing to receive enough encouragement to run, etc. and these obstacles may keep them from running. However, once a woman runs for office it seems that a number of the obstacles she may have faced before running begin to decrease. To increase the number of women that run, a continued effort needs to be on encouraging women to do so and providing campaign assistance to increase their comfort level in running. On the bright side, there were few gender differences in those same areas for elected officials indicating that once in office many of those obstacles women face begin to dissipate. Women serving in office have made the initial decision to run for office and have had to partake in a campaign so they have already overcome the barriers that potential candidates face, which explains the fact that there are gender differences in the student sample but few in the elected officials sample.

More importantly, the results show that elected officials make upward comparisons within their gender. This means that potential female candidates are likely to compare themselves to women that are currently serving in office. Further, when looking at women serving in office, female elected officials emphasized their background/education more than they did when looking at the men serving in office. Moreover, the way female participants described female exemplars suggests that when women look at other women serving in office they expect well rounded politicians that excel in a number of areas including background/experience and personality. Putting together the fact that women look to higher serving women and emphasize their background/experience and

that many of the women serving in office are highly qualified, there is strong support for the Intimidating Exemplars Theory. Comparisons potential female candidates make between themselves and women in office may deter them from running. Given this information, work should be done to try and figure out how to mediate the effects of comparisons potential female candidates may make. Additionally, women with varying qualifications should be encouraged to run to provide a wider spectrum of possible exemplars for potential candidates to compare themselves to.

### **Future Research**

While the surveys conducted provided valuable insights, there is certainly room for improvement. In order to try and gauge who elected officials would compare themselves to, they were prompted to answer a question regarding a political official they think is especially qualified for the position they are in. This format is less ideal since elected officials were prompted to answer the question and the interest is in the individuals elected officials would compare themselves with implicitly. Further, the survey is of elected officials who have already made the decision to run, the ideal subjects would be qualified potential candidates who have yet to run to see if they exhibit the same tendencies when it comes to comparisons and what they would emphasize when making comparisons and how that may impact the way they view their qualifications. As such, there are a number of areas where future research could take place to improve our understanding of the obstacles potential female candidates face. Later work could focus on potential candidates for office and what impacts their decision to

run or not to run, including comparisons they may make between themselves and those serving in office and how those comparisons may impact their decision to run. Further, work could be done on whether simply being presented with highly qualified women currently serving in office results in potential candidates making comparisons and what kind of comparisons they may make. Overall, the survey results discussed in this paper support existing literature regarding some of the obstacles potential female candidates face and provides an initial look at possible deterrent effect women serving in office may have on the ambition of potential female candidates.

## APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board  
Office for Responsible Research  
Vice President for Research  
1138 Pearson Hall  
Ames, Iowa 50011-2207  
515 294-4566  
FAX 515 294-4267

**Date:** 9/3/2015

**To:** Madeline Salucka  
503 Ross Hall

**CC:** Dr. David Andersen  
547 Ross Hall

**From:** Office for Responsible Research

**Title:** Extraordinary Women in Elected Office: Are They Keeping Potential Candidates from Running

**IRB ID:** 15-303

**Study Review Date:** 9/2/2015

The project referenced above has been declared exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b) because it meets the following federal requirements for exemption:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey or interview procedures with adults or observation of public behavior where
  - Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; or
  - Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could not reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, or reputation.

The determination of exemption means that:

- **You do not need to submit an application for annual continuing review.**
- **You must carry out the research as described in the IRB application.** Review by IRB staff is required prior to implementing modifications that may change the exempt status of the research. In general, review is required for any modifications to the research procedures (e.g., method of data collection, nature or scope of information to be collected, changes in confidentiality measures, etc.), modifications that result in the inclusion of participants from vulnerable populations, and/or any change that may increase the risk or discomfort to participants. Changes to key personnel must also be approved. The purpose of review is to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption.

Non-exempt research is subject to many regulatory requirements that must be addressed prior to implementation of the study. Conducting non-exempt research without IRB review and approval may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct according to ISU policy.

**Detailed information about requirements for submission of modifications can be found on the Exempt Study Modification Form.** A Personnel Change Form may be submitted when the only modification involves changes in study staff. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an Application for Approval of Research Involving Humans Form will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review. **Only the IRB or designees may make the determination of exemption**, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

Please be aware that **approval from other entities may also be needed**. For example, access to data from private records (e.g. student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies *requires* permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. **An IRB determination of exemption in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.**

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or IRB@iastate.edu.

**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board  
Office for Responsible Research  
Vice President for Research  
1138 Pearson Hall  
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515 294-4566  
FAX 515 294-4267

**Date:** 9/3/2015

**To:** Madeline Salucka  
503 Ross Hall

**CC:** Dr. David Andersen  
547 Ross Hall

**From:** Office for Responsible Research

**Title:** Intimidating Exemplars: The Deterrent Effect of Excellent Women in Office

**IRB ID:** 15-345

**Study Review Date:** 9/2/2015

The project referenced above has been declared exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b) because it meets the following federal requirements for exemption:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey or interview procedures with adults or observation of public behavior where
  - Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; or
  - Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could not reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, or reputation.

The determination of exemption means that:

- **You do not need to submit an application for annual continuing review.**
- **You must carry out the research as described in the IRB application.** Review by IRB staff is required prior to implementing modifications that may change the exempt status of the research. In general, review is required for any modifications to the research procedures (e.g., method of data collection, nature or scope of information to be collected, changes in confidentiality measures, etc.), modifications that result in the inclusion of participants from vulnerable populations, and/or any change that may increase the risk or discomfort to participants. Changes to key personnel must also be approved. The purpose of review is to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption.

Non-exempt research is subject to many regulatory requirements that must be addressed prior to implementation of the study. Conducting non-exempt research without IRB review and approval may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct according to ISU policy.

**Detailed information about requirements for submission of modifications can be found on the Exempt Study Modification Form.** A Personnel Change Form may be submitted when the only modification involves changes in study staff. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an Application for Approval of Research Involving Humans Form will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review. **Only the IRB or designees may make the determination of exemption**, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

Please be aware that **approval from other entities may also be needed**. For example, access to data from private records (e.g. student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. **An IRB determination of exemption in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.**

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or [IRB@iastate.edu](mailto:IRB@iastate.edu).

### APPENDIX B: ELECTED OFFICIALS SURVEY

What elected office are you currently serving in:

- School Board
- City Council
- Mayor
- Board of Supervisors
- State Assembly
- State Senate

At any time while you were in high school or college, did you run for an elected position in student government? Yes No

Had you ever **run** for public office prior to being elected to the position you are currently serving in? Yes No

Had you ever **won** an election to public office prior to your current position? Yes No

Which of the following represents why you decided to run the first time you ran for office:

- Concern about one or more specific policy issues
- A party leader or an elected official asked me to run or serve
- My longstanding desire to be involved in politics
- My desire to change the way government works
- Dissatisfaction with the incumbent
- It seemed like a winnable race
- Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

When you ran for the office you are currently in, had any of the following encouraged or suggested you run for public office? (check all the apply)

- Party Official
- Elected Official
- Non-Elected Political Activist
- Co-Worker
- Friend
- Spouse/Partner
- Family Member

What qualifications do you feel you bring to the position you currently hold?

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Have you ever seriously considered running for office at a higher level than the office you are currently in?                      Yes    No

Are there any circumstances under which you would consider running for office at a higher level than the office you are currently in?    Yes    No

If yes, what circumstances?

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Have any of the following ever encouraged or suggested you run for higher public office? (check all the apply)

- Party Official
- Elected Official
- Non-Elected Political Activist
- Co-Worker
- Friend
- Spouse/Partner
- Family Member

What qualifications do you think are necessary to hold higher elective office?

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If you were a candidate for public office please use the following scale to indicate your comfort level engaging in these campaign activities:

1 = very uncomfortable 2 = comfortable  
3 = uncomfortable 4 = very uncomfortable

- Attending fundraisers
- Asking people for campaign contributions
- Going door-to-door to meet constituents
- Asking people to vote for you
- Interacting with journalists and the media
- Participating in a negative campaign
- Committing your time
- Asking people to volunteer for the campaign
- Dealing with party officials
- Having name in the spotlight
- Having family in the spotlight

If you were to run for higher office, what would be the first position for which you would most likely run?

- School Board
- City Council
- Mayor
- State Assembly
- State Senate
- Judge
- State-Wide Executive Office (i.e. State Treasurer)
- Governor
- U.S. House of Representatives
- U.S. Senate
- President
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- I would not consider running

Other than your first choice noted above, what other offices would you be interested in potentially pursuing? (check all that apply)

- School Board
- City Council
- Mayor
- State Assembly
- State Senate
- Judge
- State-Wide Executive Office (i.e. State Treasurer)
- Governor
- U.S. House of Representatives
- U.S. Senate
- President
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- I would not consider running

If you were to ever run, what do you think the odds are of you winning your first race?

- Very Unlikely    Unlikely    Likely    Very Likely

What factor do you think most limits your ability to seek and win higher office? \_\_\_\_\_

If you had to choose one political figure you feel is particularly well qualified for the office they hold, who would it be, what office did/do they hold, and why did you choose them? \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:      Male                  Female

Party Affiliation:    Democrat    Republican    Independent  
 Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Race:            African-American                  White/Caucasian  
                   Latino/a                                  Asian  
 Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status:    Single    Married    Civil Union    Divorced    Separated    Widowed

Do you have children living at home?    Yes    No  
 If yes, what are their ages? \_\_\_\_\_

Current Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Level of education:    Did not complete high school  
                                   High school graduate  
                                   Completed some college  
                                   Graduate of four-year college (received B.A. or B.S.)  
                                   Completed graduate degree  
                                   If you have completed graduate school, which degree(s)  
                                   have you received?    M.A.    Ph.D.    M.D.    J.D.    M.B.A.

## APPENDIX C: STUDENT SURVEY

At any time while you were in high school or college, did you run for an elected position in student government?                      Yes                      No

If yes, what position(s) did you seek?

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever considered running for office at any level?                      Yes                      No

If you were to run for office, what would be the first position for which you would most likely run?

- \_\_\_\_\_ School Board
- \_\_\_\_\_ City Council
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mayor
- \_\_\_\_\_ State Legislator
- \_\_\_\_\_ State-Wide Office (i.e. State Treasurer)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Governor
- \_\_\_\_\_ U.S. House of Representatives
- \_\_\_\_\_ U.S. Senate
- \_\_\_\_\_ Judge
- \_\_\_\_\_ President
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ I would not consider running

Other than your first choice noted above, what other offices would you be interested in potentially pursuing? (check all that apply)

- \_\_\_\_\_ School Board
- \_\_\_\_\_ City Council
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mayor
- \_\_\_\_\_ State Legislator
- \_\_\_\_\_ State-Wide Office (i.e. State Treasurer)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Governor
- \_\_\_\_\_ U.S. House of Representatives
- \_\_\_\_\_ U.S. Senate
- \_\_\_\_\_ Judge
- \_\_\_\_\_ President
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ I would not consider running

Has anyone ever suggested that you run for political office now or at sometime in the future? Yes No

If yes, what position(s) did they suggest? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what was this person(s) relationship to you? \_\_\_\_\_

What qualifications do you think are necessary to hold elective office? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you were a candidate for public office please use the following scale to indicate your comfort level engaging in these campaign activities

- 1 = very comfortable 2 = comfortable
- 3 = uncomfortable 4 = very uncomfortable
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attending fundraisers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Asking people for campaign contributions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Going door-to-door to meet constituents
- \_\_\_\_\_ Asking people to vote for you
- \_\_\_\_\_ Interacting with journalists and the media
- \_\_\_\_\_ Participating in a negative campaign
- \_\_\_\_\_ Committing your time
- \_\_\_\_\_ Asking people to volunteer for the campaign
- \_\_\_\_\_ Dealing with party officials
- \_\_\_\_\_ Having name in the spotlight
- \_\_\_\_\_ Having family in the spotlight

If you were to ever run, what do you think the odds are of you winning your first race?

- Very Unlikely    Unlikely    Likely    Very Likely

Party Affiliation:    Democrat    Republican    Independent  
Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a member of any local or national political organizations?    Yes    No  
If yes, which one(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

If you had to choose one political figure you feel is particularly well qualified for the office they hold, who would it be?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Gender:    Male    Female

Race:    African-American    White/Caucasian  
         Latino/a    Asian  
Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status: Single    Married    Civil Union    Divorced    Separated    Widowed

Religion: Catholic Protestant Jewish Muslim Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have children living at home? Yes No  
If yes, what are their ages? \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you employed outside of your schoolwork? Yes No  
If so, what is your job? \_\_\_\_\_

What degree are you currently pursuing? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your major area? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any previous degrees? Yes No  
If so, what are they? \_\_\_\_\_

City of residence: \_\_\_\_\_

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