RECODING THE BOYS' CLUB:
WOMEN VS. THE POLITICAL TECH CEILING

recodingtheboysclub.com

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As you read this report on women in the tech industry, you will see well-honed research, a study that reflects compelling facts and emotions, and the story of ongoing sexism. It's hard for me to believe that even in the 21st century, even in the new and cutting-edge world of political technology, that the talent and ambitions of women have been sidelined.

I believe – perhaps naively – it won't happen again. The young women who produced this study – all undergraduate and graduate students in the UNC School of Media and Journalism – are smart and skilled, ambitious and talented. They can't be sidelined.

Or could they?

As the dean of a school steeped in the tradition of great journalism and significant media scholarship, I am proud knowing that in this century women are a force for our school. Seventy-five percent of our nearly 1,000 students are women, and all are eager to participate in the public square to help shape the world they live in. This generation of young women expect to be respected and rewarded for their talent, but then so did mine.

This research report reveals that the Boy's Club still dominates the political tech culture, even after the women's revolution in the 20th century.

When these young women of different backgrounds and political beliefs suggested a special undergraduate research project under the leadership of Professor Daniel Kreiss – who had challenged them to think about politics, social science themes and the intersection of technology and political communication – I was so pleased for them and for the school. They would not spout

ideas cavalierly about the workplace, they would document it. They wouldn't freelance about how the world communicates in the digital age, they would research it. They would learn rigorous methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative, and uncover the depth of the Boy's Club in recent political campaigns. If technology thrives in diversity, this report is a wakeup call that innovation and technology are in trouble if the Club door isn't opened wide.

Modern tech innovations are changing the way political campaigns around the world are run and how the election system works. Under Professor Kreiss' mentoring, these undergraduates have found evidence of discrimination and loss of talent that surely has changed them forever.

What could be more exciting for a dean than to support a new generation of talented women to learn early on about trends in the workplace and to understand the loss of talent that can emerge if the world isn't vigilant about diversity. And to know that they have produced a study that others will want to read – what we call research with impact – is deeply satisfying. I believe that these

young women will have a frame of reference that gives them a platform for jumpstarting their personal careers – in tech, in politics, in the media and in the academy. These are young women of substance who are ready to partner with women and men in tomorrow's world of politics to make it more responsive, less partisan and more interactive.

These young women leave the university with a wider perspective having delivered to us a piece of work that says we can't go back. No one can afford to lose talent. They are saying: "Guys, we are here to work with you. Make room. We're ready

to join forces and to innovate, all with the goal of making politics, public service and the body politic a stronger place for all citizens."

I say: Bravo!

Dean Susan King

School of Media and Journalism
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

FORWARD

Recent history has encouraged a review of opportunities for women in the workplace. Few industries have escaped with exception, as audits are begged across Entertainment, Business, Tech, and now the realm of Politics.

In a series of interviews and research studies included in their academic study, the Undergraduate Research Team at UNC's School of Media and Journalism shed light on the imbalance of gender diversity across political campaigns.

This research not only uncovers the success we sacrifice by resigning to a status-quo model, but further enunciates technology's unique ability to introduce a more equitable balance. As political campaigns embrace the immediate business impact of tech solutions, we expect to see additional opportunity delivered to the political industry across technology's most obvious themes: Innovation, Access, and Scale.

- Innovation demands diversity.
  Innovation is the fuel of improvement. When political campaigns are positioned to innovate, they rely on new ideas from a diversity of thought.

- Access creates opportunity.
  When political campaigns expand their purview using data, analytics, digital communication strategies, etc., they grow the opportunity landscape and increase access to leadership roles via new points of entry.

- Scale increases equitable representation.
  When political campaigns encourage a more equitable gender balance among a newly scaled workforce, campaigns become more representative of the electorate they intend to represent, which is just over 50% female.

Diversity, opportunity, and representation are imperative to improvement in political technology. As campaigns embrace tech adoption and urge an evolution across campaign strategy, these benefits are positioned to enhance the political industry as a whole. In this modern era, campaigns are uniquely positioned to recode the boys club.

Ali-Jae Henke
Head of Industry, Elections
Google

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents and analyzes the employment patterns and experiences of women working in political technology on U.S. presidential campaigns. This report is based on an analysis of a dataset of 995 staffers working in the areas of technology, digital media, data, and analytics on primary and general election presidential campaigns during the 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016 election cycles. We refer to these people collectively as 'political tech' staffers. In addition, we interviewed forty-five women from twelve different presidential campaigns during the 2008, 2012, and 2016 cycles. These campaigns were George W. Bush 2004, Jeb Bush 2016, Chris Christie 2016, Hillary Clinton 2008 and 2016, John Edwards 2004 and 2008, Rudy Giuliani 2008, John McCain 2008, Barack Obama 2008 and 2012, and Mitt Romney 2012.

We group our findings in this report into themes relating to the challenges women in political tech face in terms of representation, inclusiveness, and accountability, and share recommendations to address them from our interview participants.

Key Findings:

- Overall, there is a clear underrepresentation of women working in political tech on presidential campaigns — only 32% of political tech staffers from 2004-2016 were women. This gap has steadily closed: in 2004 only 19% of campaign staffers

in the dataset were women, but that number rose to 37% in 2016. Both sides of the aisle experience a gender gap in the hiring of political tech staffers: 65% of Democratic staffers were males, compared with 76% of Republican staffers.

- This gender gap extends to women in leadership roles on campaigns. For every woman who has served in a director-level or higher role, nearly three men have done so (at 29% and 71%, respectively).

- There is also a gender gap when it comes to entrepreneurship. In total, 119 staffers founded 125 firms and organizations between 2004 and the months after the 2016 cycle. Ninety-four men were listed as founders or principals of these organizations, compared with only 25 women.

- Women point to a number of reasons for disproportionate hiring on presidential campaigns in political tech, including time-constrained hiring processes, male-dominated political networks, and gendered stereotypes about women's competencies. In addition, the lack of work-life balance on campaigns disproportionately favors younger staffers and males, who often lack care-giving responsibilities. Meanwhile, women perceived that campaigns tend to view men as decision-makers and leaders and

hire and promote them accordingly.

- Once they were able to get hired onto a campaign, women related the challenges they faced making their voices heard. Women described barriers to taking credit for their work, and found that their age, gender, and experience at times limited their opportunities. The "bro culture" often found in political tech workplaces at times gave rise to inappropriate sexual comments and behavior on the part of males. Meanwhile, women felt excluded, both formally and informally, from parts of campaign culture and organization. When women achieved leadership roles, they encountered differing expectations than their male counterparts, and were called upon to provide "emotional labor." As a result of campaign culture around political tech, women related that "imposter syndrome" is particularly widespread, and many women lack confidence in their abilities, skills, and potential.

- Women argued that they have few ways of holding people accountable for inappropriate behavior, arbitrary exercises of power, and retaliation for reporting misconduct on campaigns. Campaign human resources departments lack the time, staff, and resources to provide policies, structure, and aid to staff. Women who find themselves in a toxic work environment due to a colleague's harassment or misconduct – implicit or explicit —

frequently fail to report these incidents. If they consider reporting, they fear potential repercussions and retaliation, which can affect their work and careers. Men, especially in leadership, often get a pass due to their high status, leaving the women who reported them vulnerable to backlash. Women also report having to pick up the slack for men who may be less qualified for their positions than the women serving under them.

- We asked our interviewees explicitly how campaigns could achieve more gender-equitable workspaces and what advice they have for women entering the field. Women helping women in an intentional way includes women in leadership promoting other women's voices and helping change campaign culture. Women can validate one another and form strong networks to promote their voices and careers. Male allies must use their already recognized voices to promote those of women and work to ensure representation through hiring and promotion. Campaigns can prioritize deliberate hiring aimed at achieving gender equity and diversity and develop new accountability mechanisms to create more inclusive environments.

INTRODUCTION

Women's experiences and roles in the workforce are long-standing subjects of public debate. In recent years in particular the experiences of women working in politics and women working in technology have received significant attention. To date, however, the nexus between these two fields has been left unexplored, even as technology has significantly reshaped electoral campaigning over the past two decades.

Recoding the Boy's Club changes that, offering the first in-depth documentation and analysis of women's experiences in a career path that did not really exist until 2004: political technology.

Recoding the Boys Club researches the intersection of two heavily male-dominated fields. It provides the first systematic study of the hiring patterns and career experiences of women working in the domain of political technology across four presidential election cycles (2004-2016). We define 'political technology' in an expansive way, encompassing the domains of 'technology,' 'digital media,' 'data,' and 'analytics' on presidential campaigns. We analyzed the differential hiring of 995 male and female technology staffers by party, campaign, and election cycle, including their representation in leadership positions, and, through analysis of career data, their rates of entrepreneurship. To gain a first-hand perspective on the experiences and career paths of women in this male-dominated field, our research team conducted forty-five in-depth interviews.

We also turned to these women for their recommendations for how the field can better achieve equity in political technology, as well as the importance of doing so.

Our quantitative findings revealed that there are significant gender gaps in the representation of female staffers and leaders in political tech on presidential campaigns, and there have been since 2004. Only 32% of all campaign staffers from 2004-2016 were women. This gap is slowly closing. In 2004 19% of campaign staffers in the dataset were women, but that number rose to 37% in 2016 (while this is progress, the persistence of this gap is striking given there was a female general election nominee.) Both sides of the aisle experience a gender gap in the hiring of political tech staffers: 65% of Democratic staffers were males, compared with 76% of Republican staffers. For every one woman who has served in a director-level or higher role, nearly three males have done so (at 29% and 71%, respectively).

In interviews, participants brought up a number of overarching themes about their experiences working in political tech that relate to representation, inclusivity, and accountability. We decided to report our general findings regarding the political tech workplaces that women encounter regardless of campaign. This means we do not make comparisons between campaigns. Instead, we focus on what we can learn from the experiences of women regardless of candidate and party, and analyze what general

conditions of organization and culture produce more equitable work environments.

In terms of representation, we not only document gender gaps in hiring on campaigns, but get women's perspectives on why they exist. Since campaigns are quickly launched and ultimately short-lived enterprises that often lack formal hiring processes, staffing occurs through mostly male-dominated political networks. Stereotypes about women's competencies and skills shape who is hired into particular positions and promoted within campaigns. Meanwhile, the lack of work-life balance limits women's participation in political tech.

Women argued that campaigns often failed to provide an inclusive environment. The deeply-rooted gender dynamics of the "boy's club" in politics and the "bro culture" of tech often blend together to create a difficult working environment for women. Our interviewees reported the lack of credit given to women, the ways their voices were discredited, formal and informal forms of exclusion in campaign culture, and workplaces that at times were characterized by inappropriateness and harassment. Women reported that in this environment, "imposter syndrome" was particularly widespread, and women in leadership were treated differently than their male counterparts.

At the same time, women stated that there is little accountability on campaigns. Human resource departments do not have the resources necessary to create more deliberate hiring and firing processes or hold people accountable for things such as harassment. As a result, women often fail to report misconduct,

and fear retaliation from the boy's club that can make their work difficult and negatively affect their careers.

In the end, we believe campaigns can potentially work and perform better from an organizational perspective if there was gender equity in political tech, from women's representation within them to the inclusion of their voices in decision-making.

Gender-balanced campaign teams can potentially lead to more effective ways of communicating with a diverse electorate, better technology, greater diversity of thinking, more possibilities for innovation, and the enhanced capacity of staffers to question their assumptions. More equitable work environments would help create more meritocratic campaigns. The increased presence of female leadership and women throughout the ranks of staffers on campaigns would further the possibility of ideas and people being evaluated fairly according to their merits and the best winning out. It would also mean more opportunities for women during the course of their careers, including to launch new ventures alongside their male counterparts.

To get there, this report discusses a set of recommendations drawn from our interviews that encompass strategies to achieve equitable representation and inclusiveness on campaigns through more conscientious hiring and validating and promoting women's voices, to the creation of more, and more robust, accountability mechanisms.

Taken together, these findings led to our project's name — women are recoding the

political tech boy's club, although there is
still a lot to be done.

FINDINGS

WHEN POLITICS MEETS TECH:
WHY GENDER EQUITY IS IMPORTANT

> " *I think it would've been different with a male [in my senior tech role]. I don't know how quite to articulate that, but I'm sure you've heard it from all walks of women you must've talked to, but it is definitely a male-dominant environment, and at the top…. It's so hard coming from technology because people inside of the campaign don't know what I do, like this concept of an engineering team inside of a campaign is so new, and so I sort of had to fight to do my job. I had to fight to be in the room when decisions were being made that affected what technology we had to build, and that was really hard… At [my tech firm] ideas come from anywhere, and hierarchy doesn't matter. Inside of a campaign, hierarchy matters very much."*

Senior Hillary Clinton 2016 presidential campaign staffer

This study concerns the intersection of politics and technology, a domain of contemporary campaigning that has grown leaps and bounds since the 1996 and 2000 presidential cycles, when the Internet first began to be widely used in electoral politics. Over the past four presidential cycles, in particular, there has been a dizzying array of changes, as new platforms from Facebook to YouTube, Twitter to Snapchat, have changed the face of political communication.

Campaigns have responded to these and other technological changes by seeking out new sources of talent, expertise, and skills among a generation of primarily young, technologically savvy staffers as well as professionals from the tech sector working in commercial firms. They have done so to gain the necessary expertise to build new technological and data infrastructures, create campaign messaging across a vast array of new digital platforms, analyze thousands of data points on members of the electorate, and engage in the data-driven analytics that enable more deliberate and effective targeting.

The evolving terms that campaigners use to refer to various operations of "technology, digital, data, and analytics" capture the considerable changes in these areas of campaign practice. As we use it here, "technology" refers broadly to the building of or working with information technology infrastructure. "Digital" (or "digital media") was only recently used widely during the 2012 cycle, although it captures what in previous cycles practitioners referred to as "new media," "Internet," and "eCampaign" operations. "Data" refers to

operations around the massive voter files built and maintained by political parties and firms. "Analytics" is a comparatively recent term as well, but broadly captures the use of data analysis for the purposes of what was formerly grouped under the labels of "micro-targeting" and "modeling," as well as new practices such as media buying and web optimization.

These changes reflect an ongoing process of specialization in these areas. As political technology progresses, there are increasing tensions between veteran campaign practitioners and mostly younger campaign staffers, in addition to those who take leaves from their lucrative jobs in tech firms to join the cause of a presidential campaign for a cycle before returning back to places such as Silicon Valley. These new staffers have more fluid careers than the professionals who made politics their lifetime trade in a different era, or still do in other domains of campaign practice. And, getting these political professionals to fully appreciate and embrace political tech — despite more than two decades of the Internet's uptake in campaigning — has long been a struggle for many of these tech staffers battling over limited budgets, entrenched campaign hierarchies, and well-worn ways of doing things.

To put it more bluntly, a woman who worked for a Republican presidential primary campaign in 2016 explained:

> *"I guess you know, the norms of your average political consultant that's been doing this for 700 years is very scared of digital still and I'm not sure how long that's gonna take. I mean, we might, you know, no disrespect to them, but we might*

just have to wait for most of them to die off before this changes."

Not only is political tech comparatively new on campaigns, as we discuss throughout this report it lies at the intersection of two fields that are historically male, at least in their contemporary practice. Politics has long been referred to as a 'boys' club' because of the underrepresentation of women among elected representatives and the legislative and political staffs that keep them getting elected. Tech, meanwhile, has drawn considerable scrutiny in recent years for its lack of gender and demographic diversity and pay equity.

As a result, women face unique hurdles working in political tech, whether it is over the course of a campaign or a career. As often younger and tech-savvy staffers, women stated that they encountered campaign leaderships that commonly fail to understand digital advertising and fundraising platforms, the technological and data infrastructures upon which campaigns run, the vast array of data that lies behind all contemporary political outreach efforts, and the returns on investment that should be expected from consulting services and targeted ads. As women, they face male-dominated workspaces at the intersection of these fields, which means fewer job and leadership opportunities, struggles to make their voices heard, formal and informal forms of workplace exclusion, and weak accountability mechanisms.

Why is gender equity important in political tech — from the presence of women in presidential campaigns to their inclusion in decision-making?

First, it matters for its own sake in a democratic country. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 50.8 percent of the population are women. And yet, in 2018, women make up less than 20 percent of Congress. This is a basic question of asking that our elected representatives reflect the population. We believe that this should extend to the staffers who work to elect these representatives. Through deliberate hiring, campaigns should strive to resemble the democratic public that candidates ultimately desire to serve. And, through intentional management and organization, campaigns should work to ensure that diverse voices are empowered to be heard on campaigns.

Second, gender equity would make for better-organized and more effective campaigns. As one senior member of both of Obama presidential runs argued:

> *"Men and women generally bring different skill sets to the table and different perspectives to the table. So a diverse leadership team creates a better culture, creates a better product, and has a clearer vision that works for more people."*

" *So a diverse leadership team creates a better culture, creates a better product, and has a clearer vision that works for more people."*

Our interviewees argued that more diverse campaign staffs would create more effective teams on a range of different measures. For example, the women we interviewed said that more diverse teams within campaigns are better able to anticipate, recognize, and solve problems. Ultimately, a number of our interviewees argued that the more people of diverse backgrounds that campaigns can bring to the table, the more effective they are going to be at understanding problems and challenges and generating multiple innovative solutions to them. In addition, bringing women into leadership means having a more diverse set of ideas and experiences that campaigns can draw on, enabling the organization to better question its core assumptions and long-held ways of doing things.

Third, gender equity would make for more meritocratic campaigns. As we detail throughout this report, women expressed that campaigns can be challenging because of "bro" cultures that exist when men are predominately in power and there is little gender diversity. Structural disparities in hiring and leadership, inappropriate behavior in the workplace, sexual harassment, and the routine silencing of women's voices on campaigns all create an uneven field for women. Addressing these things would help the best people and best ideas to rise to the top.

Fourth, gender equity on campaigns would make for more diverse and effective ways of engaging the electorate. Across our interviews, on both sides of the aisle, women argued that gender-balanced campaign staffs create qualitatively different content that better

engages women in the electorate, conservative and liberal — which ultimately helps their candidates win. If a campaign wants to reach, persuade, or mobilize its targets, it needs a team that can produce content that reflects and appeals to who they are. As a senior digital state staffer from Hillary Clinton's 2016 bid argued:

> *"Having a bunch of white men in a room trying to decide how to get Latina moms out to vote is not going to be as successful as making sure that people who are part of that community are at the table."*

Fifth, gender equity makes for better political tech. To create design that is responsive to the people who are going to use technologies — whether they are staffers on a campaign or volunteers in the electorate — requires diverse teams that can understand different users. Speaking of a team developing technology products that had equal numbers of men and women, a senior member of Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign argued that in her experience:

> *"Collaboration was better. I think our products were better. I think we resolved problems better, and we talked about collaboration and how we worked together, the process of working together, more than average, more than just the content of the work, and things that we were building."*

Taken together, political tech is both a unique area of campaign practice, and one where women face steep challenges in terms of representation, inclusion, and accountability, as we detail throughout

this report. But, the stakes are high. Achieving gender equity on campaigns is not only desirable from a democratic perspective, it potentially will make for more effective campaigns, from the dynamics of teams and ways they generate and take up good ideas and promote talent, to the content that engages the electorate and the tech campaigns deploy.

THE CHALLENGE OF REPRESENTATION

"

You need women in the room making these decisions....If we were 50-50, I bet everything would be a little different. I bet there would be a little less mansplaining. Maybe some woman-splaining if that's a thing. As simple and cliché as it sounds, we just want equality. We want leadership to accurately reflect the population and the audience that we're talking to, especially in politics."

State digital staffer for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign

Introduction

As we demonstrate in this section, women are underrepresented in the field of political technology, and especially lag behind their male peers in leadership positions. They do not have the same entrepreneurship opportunities in the field that men have.

The barriers to the equal representation of women in the field of political tech are multi-faceted and systemic. Women are underrepresented on campaigns because of the time constraints and network relationships that shape the hiring process, in addition to gendered assumptions relating to their qualifications. Because of the notorious time crunch of campaign hiring, attaining the necessary staffers often outweighs a commitment to recruiting diverse hires. Men's strong political networks provide informal avenues for them to be hired through word-of-mouth and former work relationships, which staffers responsible for hiring often turn to when pressed for time. Our interviewees also stated that women are less likely to be hired for tech roles given the pervasiveness of gendered stereotypes suggesting women are ill-fit for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. This is particularly true for women of color.

Campaigns are also not nine-to-five jobs. The hours are merciless. The mission to elect a candidate is prioritized over work-life balance and employees' health. Overworked employees are seldom given the time they need to recuperate, and staffers feel pressured by bosses and coworkers to work longer. Women

routinely cited that the goal of electing candidates outweighed any other considerations, and that people who complained of the undue time burdens or low pay might be asked to leave. While the lack of work-life balance on campaigns affects both men and women, it likely affects women disproportionately more given that they are often the primary caregivers and have familial obligations that men do not have. Women who had professional experience in the tech sector unfavorably compared their presidential campaign experience to their tech careers, and pointed to these dynamics being unique to campaigns. Meanwhile, campaign hierarchies and bureaucracies often promote men as decision-makers and leaders, resulting in women's voices often being absent from the corridors of power.

Where Are the Women in Political Tech?

First, we assessed the hiring patterns of men and women in political tech over the course of four presidential election cycles: 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016. The 2004 cycle marks the start of the institution-alization of technology operations within political campaigns. While there were certainly internet and other technology staffers on campaigns during previous cycles, such as 1996 and 2000, Howard Dean's Internet-fueled run at the presidency and George W. Bush's re-election bid in 2004 fundamentally changed the approach that campaigns had to the Internet and technology more broadly. This lead to dedicated divisions, more specialized staffers, and systematic strategizing for the use of technology,

digital media, data, and analytics during electoral bids.

We approached this section of the report with the foundational questions: Where are the women in political technology, and how has that changed over time?

Tech hiring by election cycle, 2004-2016
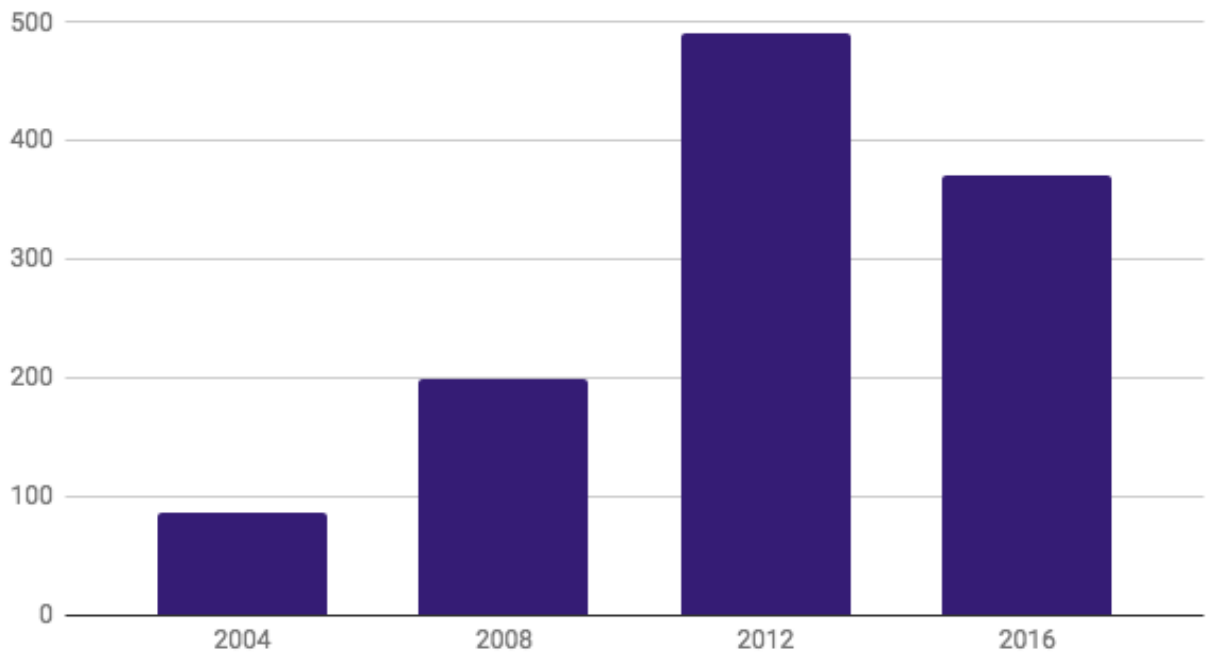
Using data from "Democracy in Action," which organizes public information on campaign staffing, we compiled a list of all staffers who either worked in campaign divisions dedicated to technology, digital, data, or analytics or who had these words in their titles from the 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016 presidential cycles. This dataset contains 995 total staffers. We then paired this dataset with employment history data from publicly available websites. For a

more detailed statement of the methods behind this study, see the methodological appendix.

Overall, we found 9% (N=87) of staffers in 2004, 20% (N=199) in 2008, 49% (N=491) in 2012, and 37% (N=371) in 2016 (a number of staffers worked on multiple presidential bids). Three-quarters of the campaign staffers in this dataset worked for Democratic campaigns (75.5%, N=751), while the remaining quarter were

hired by Republican campaigns (24.5%, N=244).

The dataset undercounts the total number of Republican staffers in important ways -- although there is no reason to think that this is relevant to the findings related to gender that we present here. Federal Election Commission (FEC) data does not include staffers that are hired directly by consultancies to handle technology, digital, data, and analytics for presidential campaign clients. Democratic campaigns hire comparatively more staffers in-house, showing up in FEC and other data, than Republican presidential campaigns who turn more to consultancies to do their staffing for them. To supplement the dataset, we proactively reached out to a number of Republican firms that handled various technology, digital, data, and analytics operations for 2016 campaigns, resulting in an additional 64 staffers that were not in the Democracy in Action data.

Again, even with the undercounting of Republicans, there is no theoretical reason to believe that campaigns and consultancies hire differently with respect to gender in political tech (indeed, our interview data suggests that they do not).

Overall, a gender gap is clearly present in presidential campaign hiring: Only 32% of all campaign staffers from 2004-2016 were women. However, the gender gap appears to be closing, albeit slowly: Only 19% of 2004 campaign staffers in the dataset were women, but this percentage increased to 23% in 2008, 34% in 2012, and – most recently – 37% in 2016. Males have overwhelmingly dominated presidential campaign staffing on both sides of the aisle, although slightly less so for Democratic candidates: 76% of staffers on all Republican campaigns were males, compared with 65% on all Democratic campaigns.

Presidential campaign tech hiring by gender, 2004 to 2016
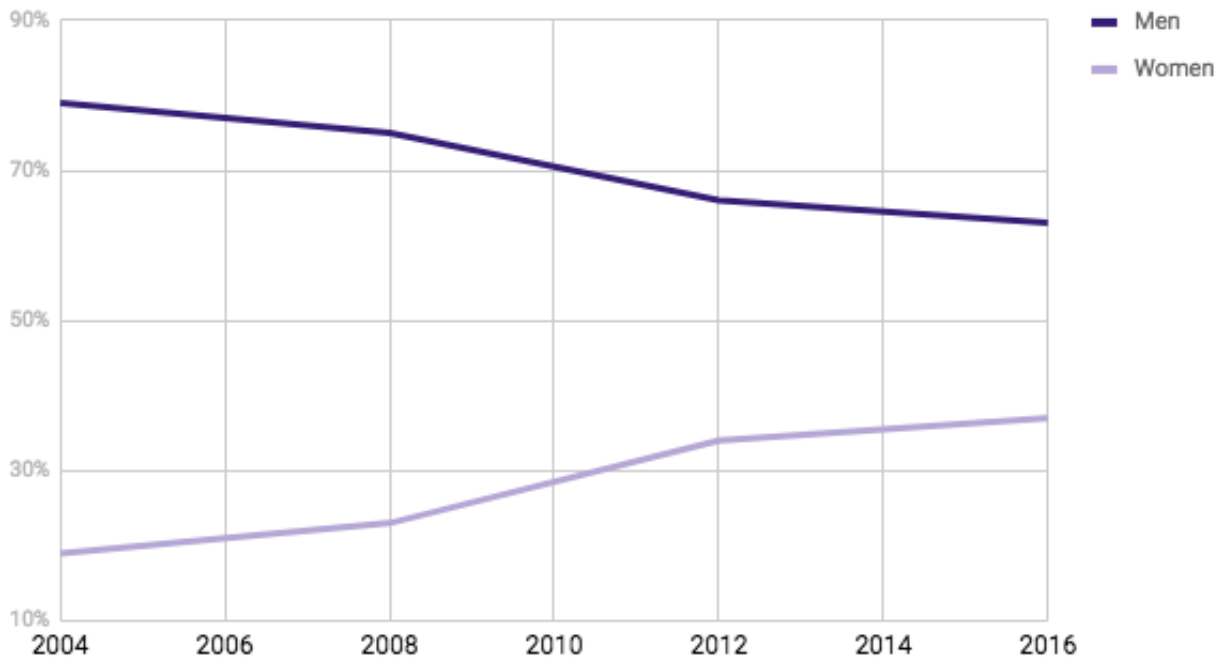
Among all campaign staffers in this dataset, approximately 81% (N=757) were only employed for one presidential campaign, while 18% (N=169) worked on two campaigns. Less than 2% (N=14) of staffers were employed by three or four campaigns. Notably, women consistently made up about a third of staffers working on one (32%, N=241) or two (33%, N=56) campaigns, but among staffers of three campaigns, the percentage of women dropped steeply to 23% (N=3). On the basis of our interviews, we suspect that part of this drop-off in female representation in repeat campaigns

relates to the lack of work-life balance and women's disproportionate roles as family caregivers, which we discuss extensively in the interview portion of this study. Even more, women across our interviews related a number of gender-specific challenges to campaign work that likely limited their desire and willingness to work on another presidential bid.

Given the importance of gender equity in leadership roles, as detailed in this report, we assessed staffers' roles in presidential campaigns to analyze who worked in director-level or higher roles. For every

Proportion of campaign tech staffers in director-level or higher positions, by gender
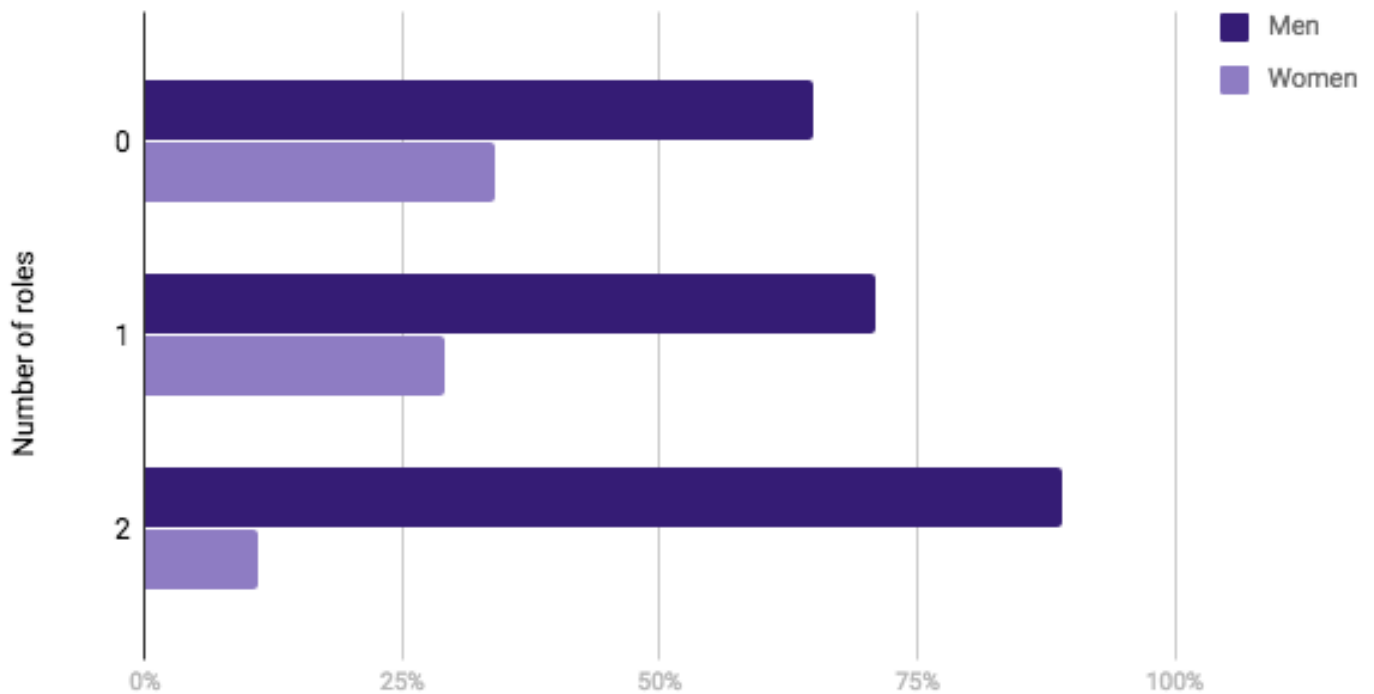
one woman who has served in a director-level or higher role, nearly three men have done the same (at 29% and 71%, respectively). The gap continues to increase by the number of these leadership roles. Among those in two director-level or higher roles across multiple campaigns, 89% (N=39) were men and only 11% (N=5) were women. Approximately 2% of all female staffers have been hired into two director-level or higher roles, compared with nearly 6% of male staffers. Further, nearly three-quarters of all women (73%, N=228) have not served in a director-level or higher role, compared with 64% (N=433) of men. Examining the distribution of campaign staffers per election year – as well as breakdowns of those same distributions by gender – paints a more detailed picture of hiring patterns over time and between parties as well as within particular campaigns.

2004 presidential campaign tech staffers, by candidate
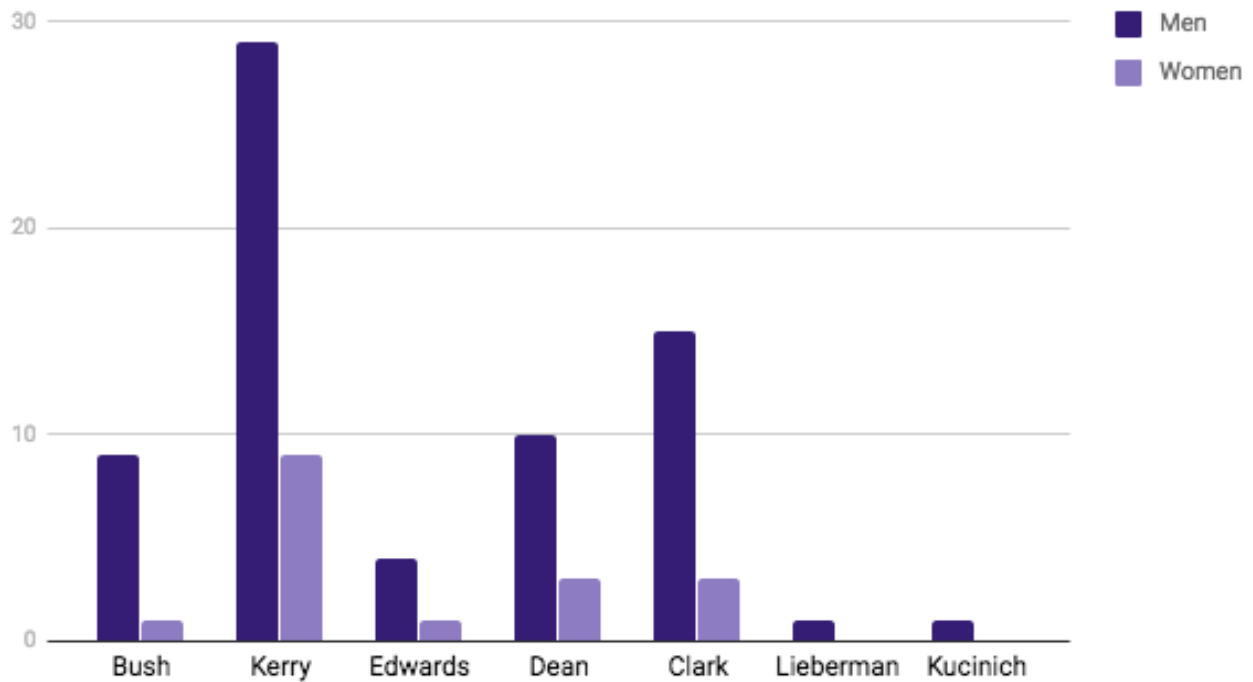
Despite the small percentage of staffers in this dataset who worked on any 2004 campaign (9% overall), George W. Bush's re-election campaign hired one woman for every nine men, illustrating a clear gap in hiring by gender. This gap remained consistent, though not quite as extreme, among Democratic campaigns, with an average of 21% women and 79% men. The John Kerry campaign, which comprised nearly half (45%) of the 2004 staffers in this dataset, hired approximately one woman for every three men (at 23% and 74%, respectively).

In terms of hiring by gender, little changed by party during the 2008 election: Democratic nominee Barack Obama hired similar percentages by gender compared with predecessor John Kerry, with 27% women and 72% men, while Republican nominee John McCain's campaign was made up of approximately 12% women and 88% men. Notably, the campaign for Democratic runner-up Hillary Clinton – a female candidate – nearly reached gender equity, with 40% of staffers being women.

Although the Obama re-election campaign hired nearly three quarters (75%) of the staffers in this dataset who worked on a 2012 campaign, Mitt Romney's campaign comprised around one-fifth (22%) of the remaining staffers, suggesting a stronger showing of Republican campaign staffers than in previous years. The remaining seven Republican candidates each hired 1% or less of 2012 campaign staffers. The 2012 election saw an increase in women on both sides of the aisle, with a nearly equal distribution within the Obama and Romney campaigns: Nearly one-third of staffers were women (34% and 37%, respectively).

2008 presidential campaign tech staffers, by candidate

2012 presidential campaign tech staffers, by candidate

Legend: Men, Women

X-axis: Obama, Romney, Johnson, Cain, Gingrich, Huntsman, Santorum, Karger, Perry
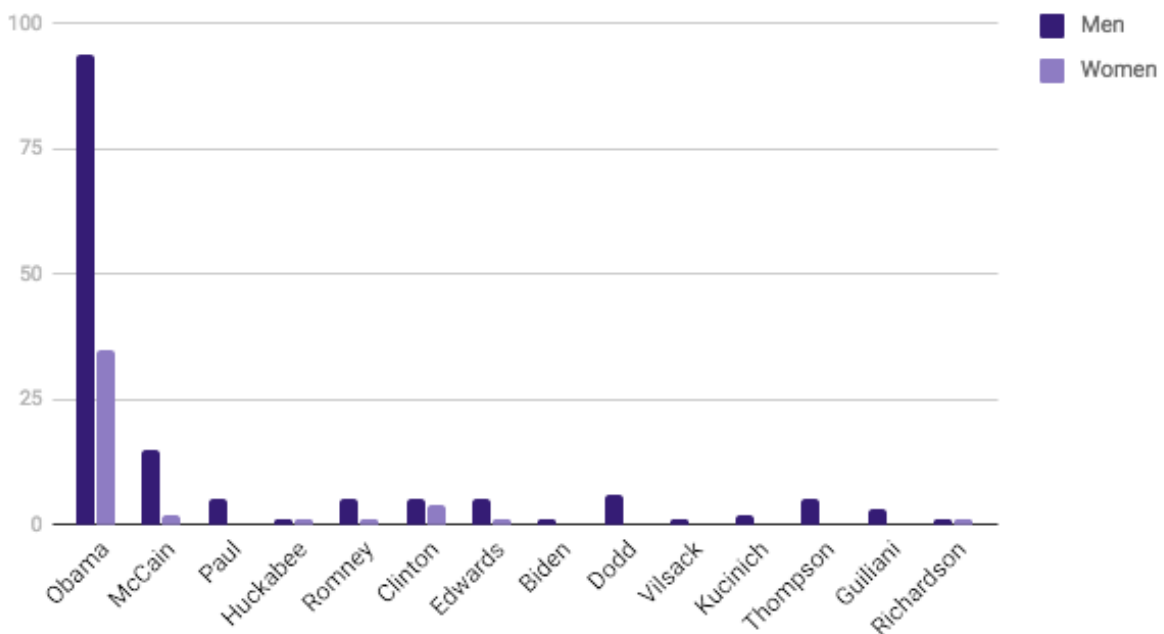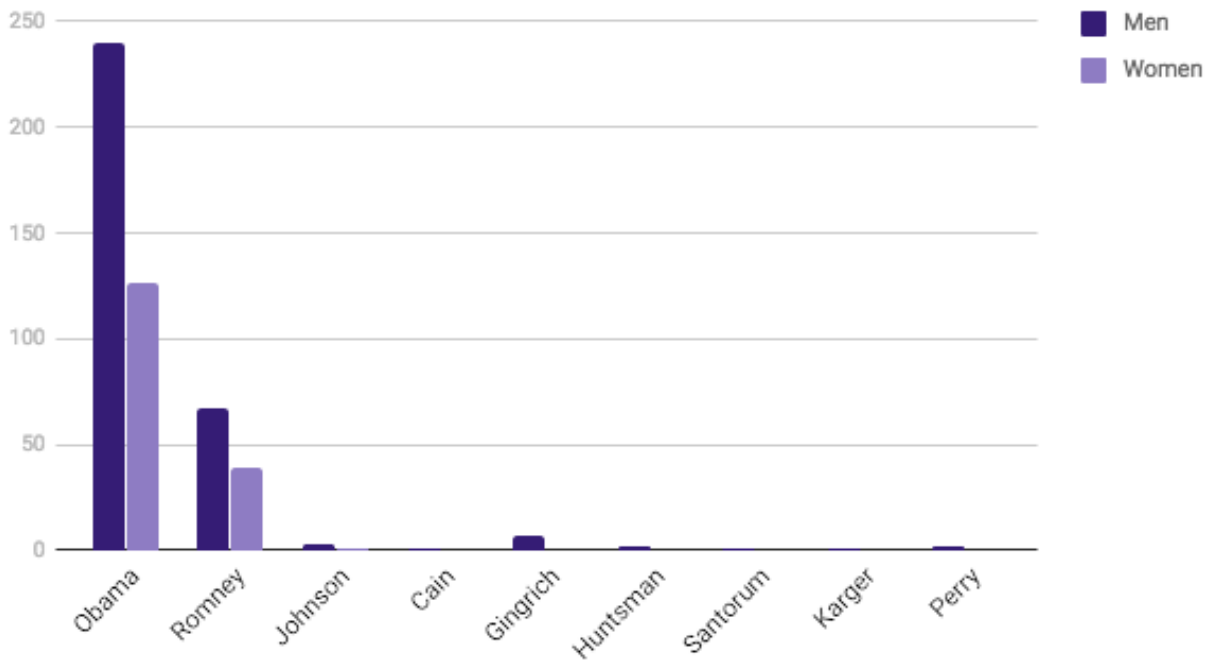
Among staffers included in this dataset for 2016 candidates, Republican campaigns hired an average of 79% men and 21% women. This also remained consistent for Democratic contender Bernie Sanders' campaign, in which 20% of staffers were women. Interestingly, though, hiring patterns by gender fluctuated within individual Republican campaigns. For instance, nearly 38% of Jeb Bush staffers were women, while the Donald Trump staffers indicated in this dataset included no women. This is in stark contrast with Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign, which resembled her 2008 campaign: 47% of Clinton's political tech staffers were women. We discuss the ways the Clinton campaign is an outlier in terms of gender equity, largely because of intentional hiring practices designed to achieve staff diversity, in greater detail below (see the section on *Women in leadership helping women* under Recommendations).

From 2004-2016, for every **one female** who served in a director-level or higher role...

...nearly **three males** have done the same.

2016 presidential campaign tech staffers, by candidate

Legend: Men, Women

Y-axis: 0, 25, 50, 75, 100, 125

X-axis categories: Clinton, Sanders, Trump, Bush, Rubio, Paul, Carson, Cruz, Fiorina, Christie, Huckabee, Jindal, Kasich, Walker
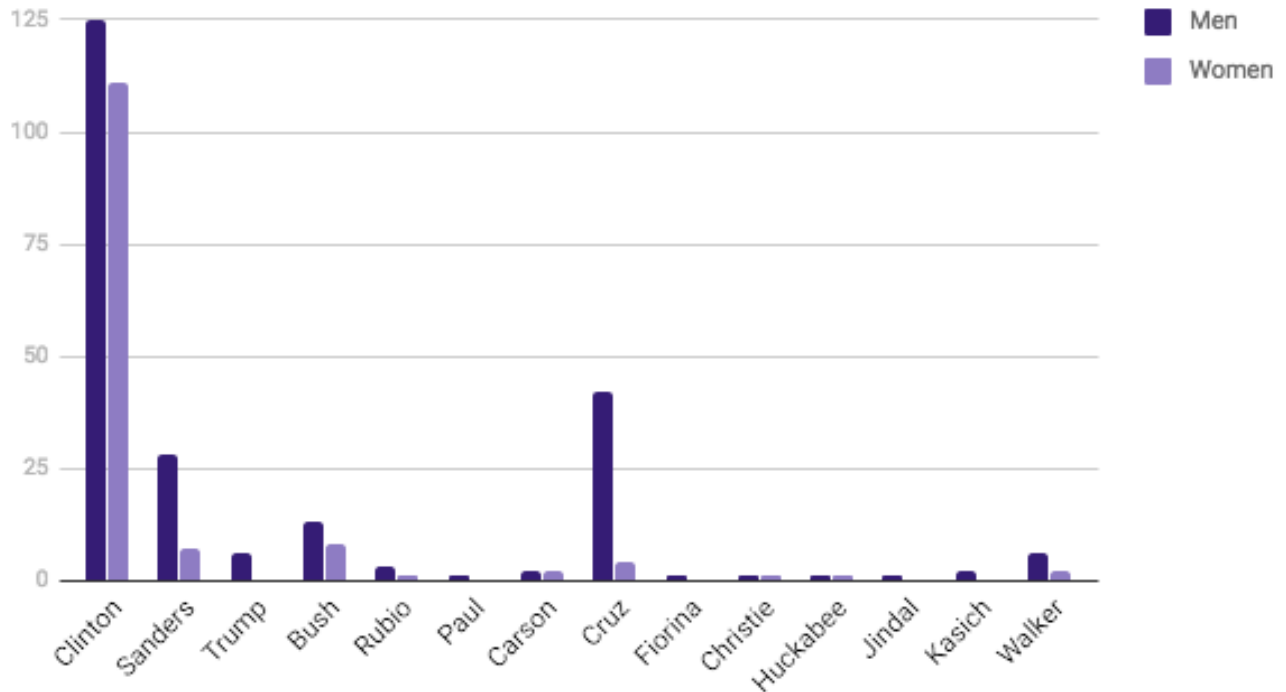
Notably, there were few differences in the frequencies of staffers working on consecutive campaigns by gender. Of the 137 women staffers who worked on a 2016 campaign, 20% had worked on a 2012 campaign. Meanwhile, 19% of the 232 men staffers who worked on a 2016 campaign previously worked on a 2012 campaign. Going back further, 15% of women who worked on a 2012 campaign also worked on a 2008 campaign, compared with 17% of men. This suggests, surprisingly and promisingly, that gender may not have played a significant role in staffers leaving the field of presidential politics across multiple election cycles. However, given the high

turnover rates depicted above among both men and women and the demands of presidential campaigns on staffers, attrition may be an expectation regardless of gender.

Nonetheless, these hiring data illustrate overall that disparities in gender representation in political tech clearly exist within presidential campaigns – and it is an issue that exists on both sides of the aisle. This gender gap also has implications for staffers' professional experiences after campaigns, such as opportunities for entrepreneurship. In total, 119 staffers (98 Democrats and 21 Republicans) founded 125 firms and organizations between 2004 and the months after the 2016 cycle. Ninety-four

men (79%) were listed as founders or principals of these organizations, compared with only 25 women (21%).

Campaigns have made advancements in terms of equal gender representation, albeit incrementally, over the past four election cycles. The Clinton campaign's clear role as an outlier in terms of gender equity, both in 2008 and 2016, may initiate important conversations related to campaign staffing moving forward. And as discussions surrounding gender in the workplace become more salient, particularly in the fields of politics and technology, the current social and political climate may present an opportunity for progress. But in order for this to occur, it is first important to understand why women are underrepresented in the field of political technology.

Why Are Women Underrepresented in Political Tech?

Time constraints: The time crunch campaigns often face to fill positions works against women's presence on campaigns. Because campaigns often lack the time and resources necessary for extensive hiring processes, including formal recruiting and job searches, they instead often engage in the rushed hiring of those who immediately appear on their radar — which disproportionately advantages white men. Echoing thirty other women, a junior Clinton digital staffer described her experiences staffing up for a general election in the context of diversity:

"Hiring sort of happens in spurts, and we were really good in the beginning, we continued to stay good, and then there was this spurt that sort of happens once it's clear we're going to get the nomination, where we kind of get an influx of money that allows us to staff up for what's going to be the staff through the general, and it's a huge growth, right, we almost double in size. That last kind of like spurt of hiring, it was, I feel like diversity went out the window, and it was just white guy after white guy, because at that point, it's like, the clock's running, it takes more time and energy and it's harder to find diverse candidates, and so the net result of that was that last phase was really kind of just not exactly diverse."

Male-dominated political networks: The compressed nature of hiring on campaigns often leads to an over-reliance on predominately male networks to supply campaign staffers. These networks especially come into play during the early phases of a campaign. Seventeen women related that before campaigns officially launch, the pipeline of hires mostly comes through networks of trusted former colleagues to ensure candidacies remain secret. These networks do the work of vetting potential staffers, in essence enabling campaigns to hire known quantities — all of which is made more important under time constraints which make extensive rounds of interviews hard. These practices reward well-established networks, which in the political technology space are historically male. Even more, the supply of potential applicants from tech companies is also predominantly male. As

the staffer cited above went on to relate, even amid efforts to explicitly identify and recruit diverse candidates, there were a number of factors that worked against achieving greater female representation on the Clinton campaign:

> *"Because you're against a ticking clock and there's a limited number of months or weeks that these people are working, there is a huge emphasis on hiring as quickly as possible. And that really prohibits you from doing a thorough and balanced search. It definitely favors the people that found their way to you, which all the things that help you do that, all traits that men have more than women. You have to be really confident. You have to be unafraid to walk in and say that you're qualified to do any job. There's some shameless self promoting in that, that is definitely part of networking in politics and definitely often how people get jobs. So women are just disadvantaged in doing that."*

Gendered interview styles and assumptions: As this woman pointed to, there are a number of cultural factors that shape women's presentation styles during interviews, and ultimately their ability to be hired, even if they managed to navigate relationship-based networks to get their foot in the door. Our interviewees witnessed how unwavering confidence and self-promotion are rewarded in campaign interviews – presentation styles that seldom come as easily for women as for men given socially-defined gender roles and expectations. Even more, a number of women reported that there were often negative, gendered

assumptions about the capabilities of female tech staffers among those responsible for hiring. Women reported at times feeling condescension and belittlement from interviewers who spent undue time verifying their skill-sets -- which they believed received a level of scrutiny that was not directed at male staffers. As one former Republican general election digital presidential staffer related, describing a hiring experience she had in political tech:

> *"It took him forever to hire me. He threw me through so many hoops. He made me do all of these tests like to prove myself so much. He- Yeah, and I was like, 'I am really good at what I do. I don't understand why he's putting me through this. Nobody else has had to go through this.'"*

“ *It was almost like a bragging rights thing…it's almost a badge of honor if you're in the office late every single night."*

Indeed, twelve interviewees described work cultures on campaigns where men were inherently regarded as more competent and talented than their female peers. In many cases, women believed they were just as, if not more, qualified than their male peers, yet described how campaign staffers often saw men as the experts within the domain of political technology. As one woman who worked

as an engineer for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign explained:

> *"There's been a ton of times where my experience has been marginalized or somebody assumes I'm not capable of doing something because I'm a woman. Oftentimes people will put, like I mentioned, tasks that are more stereotypically female on me, part of it is they think they're not good enough and they just sort of think it's my role to do, which ends up creating additional work for me, because I'm asked to do all the work the man is doing as well as additional things that somehow become my job, even if they really shouldn't be."*

The mission work of campaigns: Our interviewees cited that another reason women are underrepresented in political tech on campaigns is the working conditions. Again, these working conditions affect both men and women, but women disproportionately have caregiving obligations that men do not. This also helps explain why campaign staffs tend to be younger. Eight women in our interviews chuckled, for instance, when asked about work-life balance because that notion was roundly disregarded by campaigns. The mission to elect the candidate is the top priority for campaigns. Women reported that time spent away from the campaign was read by other staffers as a lack of commitment to the candidate. Every extra hour counted and was perceived as a potentially defining factor for victory.

As a result, women said they were discouraged from prioritizing their physical saw them as weak if they put

themselves first. Others pointed to the difficulties faced by, and often the sheer absence of, women with children. One veteran of the 2012 Obama reelection campaign pointed to the fact that on that bid there were a lot of men who had children, and even pregnant women, but very few women with young children. As a state digital staffer for the 2016 Hillary Clinton presidential campaign described:

> *"It was almost like a bragging rights thing, like, 'I worked until 2:00 in the morning on X project.' 'Well I worked until 1:00 for three days straight on this.' I think everyone wants to…everyone is so passionate about the same goal that it almost becomes…it's almost a badge of honor if you're in the office late every single night."*

Martyr mentality: Indeed, twenty women cited that they felt pressured by colleagues to work long hours to prove their commitment to the candidate. Colleagues pressured one another into staying later. Personal well-being and family responsibilities consequently became secondary considerations. As a senior state data staffer for the 2016 Hillary Clinton campaign described:

> *"I mean, I think, just in general, the idea of ever really putting yourself over the campaign, and over the mission, was not allowed. Even when it was, okay, there's some serious health issues going on here, because no one's taking care of themselves…All kinds of things that I think were sort of problematic. Including, we expect you to work 80 zillion hours a day…There was really*

nowhere to go if you objected. You sort of just accept."

Again, the women we interviewed did not necessarily see this as gendered in that it affected men and women equally, but it robbed them of time that could be spent in other realms of life where women disproportionately have responsibilities. As a senior digital staffer on the Hillary Clinton 2016 presidential campaign argued, the pressure to be a campaign "martyr" temporarily superseded any desire to maintain work-life balances:

> *"It's interesting. I definitely never felt I had to go above and beyond to compete with a man. I think in the campaign, the atmosphere had a very...there's some sort of really twisted martyr mentality that takes over, people are competitive, who's giving more of themselves to the job and who's staying later and who's working a little bit harder and I feel that competitiveness is at all levels of the campaign. I didn't personally feel that with myself and a man, but that mentality of, 'Okay, everyone's staying till midnight, I'm going to stay till one.' Or, everyone's getting ready to go home you might say, 'I'm just going to stay a little bit longer,' and people are like, 'Oh well, that person's giving a little bit more.' That's weird, I don't know what it is that sinks into people, but everyone wants to be a hero and stay as...and work as hard as they can. It's sort of a very competitive nature."*

The pay on campaigns: Broadly, our interviewees cited that because of these dynamics, campaigns tended to employ men and young people who lacked

familial and other responsibilities. That said, our interviewees also cited that the hours were clearly communicated upon hire, and many accepted the personal sacrifice given the mission to elect the candidate and the clear end date on election day. Women also noted that the pay was not commensurate with the hours worked, but most accepted that it was a worthy sacrifice to achieve their shared mission.

Fifteen interviewees described this general phenomenon of political campaigns facilitating a mission over money mentality that fosters atmospheres where 90-hour work weeks are the norm and other priorities such as family should be cast to the wayside. For example, a state data and analytics lead for a Democratic presidential campaign described how:

> *"Well I mean I think just in general, if you're going to work for a campaign, you're probably either doing it because you're a campaign veteran, a person who loves campaigns. Or because you really care about the cause. If you really care about the cause, they have a lot of room to just make you work like crazy and not pay you well. You're not there for yourself, you're there for the mission. And that was absolutely, I don't want to say manipulate us, but sort of...every second of your work counts. If you're not here for this half hour, that's a half hour less of working for your candidate."*

Women cited that campaign workers are expected to work nonstop, seven days a week, and that there was little recourse if they were unhappy about or unable to do this. For example, one woman working in digital on a Republican primary campaign in 2016 reported thinking her pay was not commensurate with the hours logged. She stated that when she reported her dissatisfaction in the hopes of a raise, she was replaced by a younger woman who was willing to work the hours for lesser pay:

> *"I didn't have any days off. I was working holidays. I was working weekends. There would be times when they would be like, 'Pack your bags. You might be going to Arizona for a week, or you might not.' I had no social life. I felt like I was making…I was working 90 hours a week. I felt like I was not making enough for the amount of work I was doing. It was just very strenuous. I asked for a raise. After that they pulled me off the road. At this point I was 23, almost 24. They found a girl who was 21, paid her a lesser salary, and she went on the road and did that."*

While we lack systematic data on pay in the political tech space, we know there is a wage gap across industries that leads women to lose a combined total of almost $900 billion every year. However, not everyone articulated that there was a lack of pay parity between comparatively older and younger employees or men and women. Eight interviewees stated that pay was standardized for the same campaign roles. Twelve others, however, echoed the staffer quoted above in arguing that there were pay differentials on campaigns, and this could relate to gender. One member of a 2016 Republican presidential primary campaign, for instance, described a time when senior staff were brainstorming whom to hire. A male senior staffer said, "No, he's too expensive…The partners knew that because these guys were male, they would have to pay them more than they would pay the women." Another female staffer on a Republican 2016 presidential primary campaign described a conversation with the campaign manager regarding the salary they had agreed upon prior to her joining the campaign:

> *"He said, 'It wouldn't be right for you to be making more money than the guy you report to.' He then continued to justify his decision by saying, 'Well, you don't have any kids, do you?' I said, 'No.' He said, 'Well, I'm going to cut your salary down. What we're going to pay you is plenty of money for a childless, unmarried woman.'"*

Campaign hierarchies and bureaucracies: Eleven women we interviewed emphasized that campaigns are hierarchical organizations, there are very few people at the top making the

> *I asked for a raise. After that they pulled me off the road…They found a girl who was 21, paid her a lesser salary.*

important decisions, and those decision-makers were often men. Of particular relevance for this study, women described how seniority was often more important than domain-specific expertise when it came to decision-making around political technology.

For example, campaigns often grow out of a small group of people closest to the candidate. These people in turn expand the organization as they recruit staffers, often hiring through networks of trusted relationships. The leadership of the campaign charts its course through the building of the organization and development and implementation of electoral strategy. Our interviewees argued that the small group of decision-makers around candidates are often males given the nature of the political field and hiring, and this works to limit the voices of women. Even on a comparatively diverse 2016 Hillary Clinton presidential bid, one former staffer who worked at the state-level as well as the campaign's Brooklyn headquarters described the role of senior males on the campaign:

> *"Sure it kills me, but I think part of that [a campaign that rewarded men, seniority, and status over merit] is a reflection of Hillary and the inner circle she's traditionally surrounded herself with. That ruins me to say because I've defended her for years and years. I think it's okay to find problematic things with our favorites, but I think it was that sort*

of almost like rigidly hierarchical system that led to having more people in power who didn't deserve to be in power, but were, and that led more smart young women to sort of be ignored at the expense of older white men who mostly, literally almost all, older white men who were just like, 'This is the way we're going to do it and this is the way it's going to happen and you can like it or you can leave.'"

" *I think the biggest enemy of creativity is bureaucracy... You don't really have time for everyone to put their ceremonial fingerprints on it."*

Seven of the women we interviewed at various levels within their campaigns talked about how rigid campaign hierarchies meant that oftentimes position was more important than expertise. This is one reason political tech is unique on campaigns. Seven women said their insights were overruled by superiors with less technical knowledge. Often, those overruling these women's expertise were men, specifically those in the inner circle of the candidate. Indeed, women commented that expertise in the private sector seldom translated to position or authority on the campaigns they worked on, even in the domains they were experts in. As one senior digital staffer on a Republican 2016 presidential campaign described her experiences:

> *"When I first got there, the CFO was from the [a different sector] and he didn't understand...Like I would start talking to him about platform stuff and all of that, and he just was so*

annoyed with me for asking him these questions. And I realized it was because he didn't understand, first of all, why I was so young and why I was asking him all these questions. He didn't, one, understand digital and how it pertained to what he did."

Even more, our interviewees stated that campaign bureaucracies limited the work they were able to perform. One woman remarked during her interview that she was shocked by how much less open collaboration there was on campaigns than in private sector tech companies, and how this limited staffers' ability to be innovative or even just get things done. As a senior digital staffer on a 2016 Republican presidential campaign described:

> *"Instead of just having to have the go ahead of let's say like one of two people or two of three people...it had to go through, like this is not an exaggeration, ten people had to all be like 'this is exactly what I want' before it would go. For me, that was frustrating because I think the biggest enemy of creativity is bureaucracy. I understand the necessity for oversight, but it's like I think when you've got a good idea in something as timely as a political campaign where the news cycle moves very, very quickly. You've got to go. You don't really have time for everyone to put their ceremonial fingerprints on it."*

One consequence of rigid campaign hierarchies and layers of bureaucracy, with all decisions signed off of at the top on some campaigns, is that many former

staffers described having very little opportunity to present new or different ideas to leadership. This meant that new ideas and perspectives could not move through the bureaucracy without significant effort. And, even when they did, a number of women described encountering campaign hierarchies that were dominated by men in senior leadership. As one Hillary Clinton 2016 presidential staffer who worked on tech products described:

> *"In my world where I was working closely with tech and digital, there were a lot of women in leadership, but it's like we would all sort of argue and then there would come a moment where it's like, hierarchy kind of would come to play, and I wouldn't want to push too much beyond where my boss, who was a woman, I felt like she had drawn the line, but ultimately, generally in those situations, at the top of the hierarchy was a guy. So it was like you could push, push, push, debate, debate, debate, but the person who ultimately, when we kind of hit deadlock, would break that deadlock and make the decision, was often a man. And I definitely felt at times that I was sometimes being pushier or more vocal than maybe was appreciated, but again, I think because I was older and came from an environment where I was always the only woman in the room, it never bothered me, and so I never let that stop me from doing that."*

Importance of women in leadership: This raises the issue of both the lack of women in leadership positions on campaigns in political tech, as detailed above, and the

importance of representation. The benefits of women in positions of power and leadership on campaigns was a theme brought up across our interviews. Our interviewees argued that women in leadership roles worked to actively combat unhealthy work practices related to gender and create a more inclusive environment, discussed in greater detail below. They also cited that women directly work to empower and promote fellow women. Moreover, lower level women believe it is more attainable to become a director when they see women in those roles and want to pay forward what was done for them.

For example, 32 interviewees argued that if campaigns had more equal gender representation at the senior level they would have better work environments and communications. As a senior Obama 2012 and Obama 2008 staffer argued: "Would it have been better if there were more women in more roles? I would say yes, organizationally and also from an output perspective."

It is important to note that while some participants said that talent should be the first consideration, the vast majority agreed that hiring more women should be a necessary priority. As we detail below, interviewees argued that when women have director roles, they are able to intentionally promote women's voices, such as through encouraging women to speak up in meetings, giving credit for work in visible spaces such as on email chains, and bringing more women into projects. Interviewees in particular mentioned these things while reflecting on their own careers. The same staffer went on to argue:

> "
>
> *...if we're saying that these communities are our path to victory, then why are we not putting more of them in the spotlight and staffing them up... better*

"When women are in positions of power they call bad behavior out, they make sure women have room to talk in a discussion and they help other women realize they can get to that position."

Nine interviewees also cited that having female directors made them personally believe that a similar position was attainable in their future. And, interviewees cited that this made them realize the importance of paying forward any efforts to help their careers that they received. As a digital veteran of Obama's 2012 re-election campaign and Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign stated:

"Again, it's important to see women in those positions because then you can picture yourself in those positions, and building the relationships with the people who you are working with to help mentor

you to grow into those positions is also really important."

The underrepresentation of women of color on campaigns: While we lack quantitative data on the racial and ethnic makeup of political tech staffers, our interviewees argued that the unique hiring practices on campaigns not only affect women, they make getting campaign jobs harder for women of color. Women of color have historically lacked the connections and relationships white men have due to the cultural and social makeup of political spaces and political exclusion. At the same time, five women reported personally being made to feel like a "token hire" and pressured to prove they were not, or witnessed this happen to other women of color. Our interviewees cited that achieving diversity and

inclusion on campaigns — especially in leadership — is important because it created more inclusive campaign teams that were able to reach voters from a range of cultural backgrounds more effectively.

Because politics and technology are both predominantly white, and male, fields, people of color, and particularly women of color, are often not well represented among the early hiring of campaigns, especially for senior-level positions. As a senior tech staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign related:

> *"There was a concerted effort to be diverse, but it could have been better, and I think it would have yielded different outcomes, especially more diversity in leadership positions. I think we talked a lot about how it was really*

important to get the people of color vote, but then a lot of the teams working with some of our coalitions and stuff, they were lower down in the food chain, and it's like, well, if we're saying that these communities are our path to victory, then why are we not putting more of them in the spotlight and staffing them up better and stuff like that, so there's sometimes a disconnect I think between the strategy and then the execution of it within the organization, and I think more diversity early on within leadership consistently could have helped that."

According to a director-level digital staffer on the Clinton campaign in 2016, prioritizing diversity during hiring takes deliberate effort: "On the hiring front, diversity in hiring was like a number one priority, almost to the point of being a hindrance to our hiring speed." Campaign staffers stated that there were often trade-offs between the deliberateness necessary to proactively create a diverse campaign staff and speed, particularly in contexts when positions needed to be filled quickly and as a result people hiring primarily focused on whether someone could do the job and how quickly they could drop everything and move to wherever was needed. Because of this, five women we interviewed believed diversity was overlooked during their campaign's hiring process, often in favor of quickly mobilizing pre-existing networks of relationships, which resulted in primarily-white workspaces.

At the same time, five interviewees argued that women of color on campaigns were often treated like "token hires," and they believed this lack of respect broadly

contributed to the underrepresentation of women of color in political tech. One tech staffer on Obama's reelection campaign compared her experiences in the tech industry with that presidential bid:

> "You know, within the progressive space, because there's this explicit recognition of gender and underrepresented voices, there's often, like I said, there's this acknowledgement of promotion as well, and again, there's two sides to this where there's always just an awareness of the fact that you represent a cohort, that you potentially could be the token. I think there's a higher bar or I think in situations where it's possible that you were the token representative, you're not the only one who's worried about it. Other people at the table are like, "Is she here on her own merit or is it because we value and include diverse experiences?" There's an awareness that potentially I cleared some bar, potentially I haven't cleared some bar and I'm here as a representative or potentially I did clear the bar, but everyone at the table thinks that I didn't and so now I'm going to have to prove it. I think when you're within tech, there's way more assumptions that if you're at the table, it's because you're the best in the business and no one's going to question your credentials in the same way."

This pressure extended to teams. A senior digital staffer for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential bid who worked on a state team praised for its diverse makeup in terms of both race and gender related

how the team believed it faced more pressure to perform and had more to prove in this context.

> " *I think a lot of it for me is just sort of, it's just seeing women or women of color in leadership. It really changes the entire work environment for me.* "

As detailed above, interviewees argued that achieving racial and gender diversity on campaigns will communicate to new generations of women and people of color that they can pursue these positions, in addition to leadership opportunities. For one state deputy digital director on the Clinton 2016 campaign, moving from a congressional office staff made up of primarily white men to a campaign staff with gender and racial diversity affected her sense of belonging and perception of her ability to move up the ranks in campaigns:

> "Walking into work every single day where you have a team of really, really strong women leading you versus walking into work and then seeing the chief of staff who was a balding white man and you have a lot of other white men in power positions, you don't see yourself in power positions. It's hard to imagine yourself moving up. I think a lot of it for me is just sort of, it's just seeing women or women of color in

leadership. It really changes the entire work environment for me."

As these interviewees suggest, there is a long struggle ahead to achieving equity on campaigns. Campaigns may recognize the importance and value of having women, and women of color, being represented in the ranks of campaign leadership and staffers. But, as we have detailed extensively, there are still a number of hurdles to diversifying campaign staffs given constrained hiring timelines and resources, the reliance on networks of relationships, and cultural expectations for men and women in political tech. As a senior digital staffer on the Hillary Clinton 2016 presidential campaign related:

> *"I think it's going to take a while for more women and girls to advance in this field and get to the top and to bring women and girls along with them, let alone, I think from a diversity standpoint, I think it's even worse when we talk about differences in ethnic diversity and racial diversity, I think that has, it has a long way to go, even further. I do believe the adage, if you don't see it, then you're not sure you can be it, and so I do believe that that's true. There are more women in leadership positions in digital and tech service today, but there are still not a ton and so if you don't see women at the top, then you're not sure where your place is, and you don't know if there's a place for you, so I think that whole paradigm still has a really long way to go before you can look up and say, 'Okay, there's women in all levels of this company. I can be at that level of that company.'"*

Comparisons with the tech sector: Finally, surprisingly, women who came to politics from the tech sector cited that there were better working conditions in their other professional lives. As detailed above, as campaigns have expanded to include technology, digital, data, and analytics teams, they have recruited more explicitly from the technology sector. Seven women with backgrounds in the tech sector argued that commercial tech companies better support work-life balance for their employees than campaigns. Four women specifically pointed out that tech companies more frequently relied on skills-based assessment when hiring and merit when promoting employees, whereas in their experience campaigns were often premised on networking and internal relationships. They also generally believed that this reflected the fact that campaigns are hastily assembled, temporary organizations.

To take one example, many of the women interviewed for this study emphasized how different the lack of work-life balance on campaigns was in comparison to their experiences in the private sector. Seven women discussed that in their private sector roles they were allotted a number of personal days to be used as needed or wanted. In contrast, the up-front expectation of campaign work was to go non-stop and maybe take a day off on a rare occasion to attend only to one's most essential self-care needs. When asked about work expectations, one digital analyst for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign who is now in the commercial technology sector said that:

> *"It made everyone angry and cooped up. I felt like robot, you just wake up*

every day and do the exact same thing. You had no control over your life or your schedule. It was the most unhealthy work environment, in that sense I've ever been a part of. I would love to go back and do another one but I am really afraid of dealing with that again. Campaigns need to adjust. No one can perform well working seven days a week. It's just this badge of honor that is so stupid and dated."

Furthermore, women cited that while taking personal time off in the private tech sector often did not negatively impact their professional reputation or job responsibilities, the reality was different on campaigns. Thirteen women described believing that they lost influence, status, and responsibilities on the campaign if they took time off. In one case, a woman described losing jurisdiction over things that were her responsibility after taking a pre-planned and pre-approved vacation. Ironically, she said she was still blamed when things went wrong as a result of other people who lacked her skill-set doing her work. Even more, women roundly cited that this culture of over-work on campaigns led to poor job performance. As a 2016 Hillary Clinton state data and analytics staffer with a wide variety of research experience stated:

"I was working on the data analytics team where like you were writing code all day, or you're in Excel all day. And, you put commas in the wrong place, and you mess something up for you significantly. To me, the really confusing part where they made mistakes, where I was sort of like, I'm not, yeah this

was a mistake, and I'm sorry I made a mistake, but maybe if I'd been allowed to not work a 12 hour day every day, or 14 hours or whatever, I wouldn't make mistakes like this.... If you're sleep deprived for six entire months, and then also are expected to work every single day, and even when you're not at work, your boss can call you and ask you to read something, or do something. Or check whatever. And you don't exercise, I don't know....

It was like the whole thing, of course this is maddening. I am making mistakes, and it's very, very frustrating because...I think to me, my perception of what was going on

> " *...people management in that context was almost, wouldn't say nonexistent, but I wasn't talking to people to be like, what role do you want in this company next, because we all had one goal...*

was like the way it used to be done, and to have data analytics now and how it's a complex role. In that world, more hours really was you knock on more doors, you can talk to more volunteers, whatever. As campaigning evolved, I just feel like the thing for the workplace was to be like not evolved with it. As a result, you ended up asking people working on data stuff, to work 7

days a week for 14 hours. Well the fact that that doesn't work should not surprise anyone."

At the same time, women often pointed out the differences between the private tech sector and campaigns in terms of the ways that hiring, job title assignments, and promotions occurred. Fourteen women argued that roles on campaigns were more likely to be received based on networking than in the commercial technology sector; in essence, that who you knew had the power to help you along with a job or promotion as much if not more than your skills or what you achieved. In contrast, women argued that while networking sometimes mattered in landing private sector tech roles, promotions were much more likely to be based on merit and the quality of work. At the same time, four women believed that in transitioning to campaign tech from the private sector they took job roles that did not reflect their actual qualifications. Even women who believed that their campaign roles were appropriate to their skills and experience noted that their job titles often did not reflect this, and that there was not much room for negotiation.

In the end, seven women stated that they recognized these issues, but did not work to address them given the short-lived nature of the campaign and mission to elect the candidate. A software engineer for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign remarked that:

> *"The campaign was different because it was five months. Who knows what dynamics would have played out? It's so hard to separate; people management in that context was almost, I wouldn't say*

nonexistent, but I wasn't talking to people to be like, what role do you want in this company next, because we all had one goal, which was to elect the secretary as president."

In sum, across our interviews we found that women were able to excuse aspects of campaigns that limited women's presence on them and, as we turn to in the next section, their voices into decision-making on campaigns.

WHEN WOMEN ARE THERE, ARE THEY HEARD?: THE CHALLENGE OF INCLUSIVITY

"
I think we need a moment of reckoning among women, but especially men, about the myriad of ways they hold women back, or just discount women's experiences or ideas without realizing it. I think it's great that some of the more egregious examples of sexual harassment, and sexual assault and sexism have been...that people are shining a light on those. But I think, in some ways, that makes it harder to address these smaller, little things that happen every day."

Senior Obama 2012 and Clinton 2016 staffer

Introduction

While women face barriers getting hired into political tech jobs on presidential campaigns, in this section we show how the workplaces they encounter once they get inside have underlying gender dynamics that limit their voices on campaigns.

As with any male-dominated job, the power of men often shaped women's roles and work in campaign tech departments. Women often felt at a disadvantage when it came to taking credit for their work, and found that their age, gender, and experience (especially for women coming from the tech sector) limited their opportunities to shape the decision-making and work of campaigns. The "bro culture" often found in political tech workplaces on campaigns created environments that were challenging for women to navigate, and at times gave rise to inappropriate sexual comments and behavior on the part of males. Meanwhile, women felt excluded, both formally and informally, from parts of campaign culture and organization in ways that limited their roles.

Our interviewees stated that when women overcame these gender dynamics and achieved managerial and director roles, they encountered differing expectations for women's leadership and discursive styles compared to their male counterparts. Women, especially leaders, were also expected to provide emotional labor on campaigns, regardless of their roles -- even as they contended with the devaluing of their voices by males and the "imposter syndrome." In this context,

women drew on strong mentoring and network relationships to navigate campaign dynamics and further their careers.

Taking credit on campaigns: Eleven of our interviewees argued that in men were both more likely to seek out and receive credit for ideas, even if they originated with women. Women argued that generally they were more collaborative, as opposed to competitive, and that males' ability to take credit for ideas impacted how the outside world such as the press perceived the leaders of tech teams and originators of campaign innovations. For example, a digital staffer on a 2016 Republican presidential campaign believed there was more competition than collaboration when discussing ideas, and that this dynamic would have been different if there were more women:

> *"Women are definitely better collaborators. We're more inclined to bring people together and with a lot of the men running the show, I used to watch and sit as they talked about how well we did X, Y, and Z thing and it was usually what I had done and taking full credit for that. I'm like, 'You copied on that. I'm the one that had this idea. I'm the one that's created this entire strategy...that you didn't think was going to work and now you're taking credit for it.'"*

Women argued that assertiveness was required to speak up and take credit for their work in male-dominated teams, particularly when somebody else was getting praised for it. But, credit was a double-edged sword, as one woman

related. On the one hand, if women did not stand up for themselves, they believed they fell into the stereotype of being too quiet and timid as a woman in a room full of men. However, this woman also argued that if women did stand up for themselves to ensure they received the recognition for their ideas that they deserved, they could be chastised for coming across as abrasive. In contrast, women argued that under similar circumstances men are often respected and seen as confident for standing up for themselves and taking credit. More broadly, as a senior digital staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign related:

> "I also think that, at the highest level of the campaign, the tenor of the conversation was somewhat aggressive and abrasive and I think in conversations like that, we know from theory and research, that men were able to perform in conversations like that by meeting strength with strength, are often respected, and women who meet strength with strength are often punished for that…. I think that a number of the very senior men in the campaign were yellers, were abrasive, and that's not the kind of behavior that women can get away with in a workplace."

There is more at stake with respect to receiving credit than just how a woman's

> ❝ *I think that a number of the very senior men in the campaign were yellers, were abrasive, and that's not the kind of behavior that women can get away with in a workplace.*❞

personality is judged by colleagues -- who receives credit on a campaign shapes that person's work, relationships, and professional career more broadly. For example, a senior digital staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign related the benefits of one of her bosses providing her with the opportunity to showcase her team's successes to others in the campaign:

> "In 2016, when it was like we have a really good fundraising day, he would have me email the campaign manager, not him, so that me and my team could get the credit and the recognition for that. He had me building relationships with senior leadership across the campaign so that I was working directly with his peers to get approval, to navigate internal politics in a way that ultimately benefited me both in the short-term and in the long-term because it made my teams work better and it helped me build relationships with people who could teach me something. He didn't have to do that, and a lot of managers don't."

Even more, credit extends outside the campaign in consequential ways. The press interacts with campaign staffers and in the process determines and publicizes who receives credit for the work of campaigns. The press then makes those staffers known to wider audiences outside the campaign in ways that have significance for future careers. For example, as one digital staffer on a

2016 Republican campaign stated, men often work to put themselves in the public eye, which in turn leads to more job opportunities for them in the future:

"I never put myself out in the public eye. I have not been someone toting and tooting my own horn, which is another thing these guys do really well.... They're constantly self-promoting, and nominating themselves for like, awards and stuff. They get themselves in the press so they also get a notice that anybody who's in the press, that winds up getting their name in the press, they wind up getting hired for a lot. Whether it's good or bad press, they somehow, it seems to not matter either way."

Women also cited that men are usually the ones chosen by campaigns to be their public faces. As a result, the press validates certain people as the drivers behind innovative campaign practices and technologies, regardless of whether this is true or not. This, in turn, has career and field impacts. Since male staffers have often been connected to innovative tech in media, they are the ones who continue to be profiled, get invited to conferences, and find work and entrepreneurship opportunities after elections end. Even more, this further perpetuates the idea that men are better suited to political tech, which then influences who gets hired on campaigns and who receives leadership opportunities. As a senior

" *...would I be getting the same answer if I was a 25-year old man?"*

veteran of Democratic campaigns during the 2008, 2012, and 2016 cycles stated:

"And I'll go back, this has stuck in my craw for a long time, but if you go back and look at pretty much any major outlet that wrote a 'here are the 10 staffers who made Barack win' or 'here are the 10 people you need to know from Obama's reelection in 2012,' in basically all of them you would see nine men and usually Stephanie Cutter. And what that meant was [you'd see these men] and not the woman they worked for."

Experience, age, and gender: Fifteen women reported that they were treated with a lack professional respect, and found it hard to discern if this was related to their age, newness to the political field, or gender. A number of women pointed to all three of these things as factors that caused senior leadership to view them as having less expertise and authority than others on the campaign.

As detailed above, we spoke to many women who described being newcomers to presidential politics in the course of relating their experiences working on a campaign. Some of these women were early in their careers when they joined a campaign and found that this lack of political experience led to their voice not being heard by political veterans. As a senior staffer on a Democratic presidential campaign described:

"In terms of me, I was the youngest one on senior staff and that often

came up, in times when I knew what we should be doing and was shrugged off as not knowing better or you're new here. Which is hard because those other things were true. I volunteered on a lot of stuff with politics but I hadn't worked on them before and other folks did have more experience so it's kind of hard to kind of suss out, would I be getting the same answer if I was a 25-year old man?"

Other women came to presidential politics from other industries, including tech, and found themselves at a disadvantage. These staffers often described bringing different understandings, expectations, and ideas about how to do political tech to campaigns based on their experiences outside of politics. At times, their approaches conflicted with the experiences and best practices of veterans of the field, even in the comparatively new domain of political tech. Four interviewees stated that, regardless of their career stage, they were often seen as inexperienced if they did not have the same campaign or political experience as political veterans. Women who had gained their primary professional experience in another industry stated that they were treated as junior on the campaign, even if their political work was directly relevant to their professional career. As one woman who worked for a 2016 Republican presidential primary candidate described her experiences on the campaign being both young and with her primary work experience in another industry:

"I don't know if it [having ideas discounted] was a matter of gender. I can kind of never know that

because that all kind of goes to how other people perceive you. At times I think if I had come from a different background or been a little older, or yeah. Maybe being a man would've helped, but again, I have no way of knowing that. I do know I felt different when I was in the meeting where it was like, it was mostly old men and then there were some young men and then there were some women older than me and then there was me. I mean, like, you couldn't help but feel different."

As a senior Hillary Clinton 2016 presidential campaign staffer with a professional background in commercial tech related:

"I feel like my uphill battle with the campaign, as crappy as the environment was being a woman, I felt like my bigger uphill battle was being an engineer, and when I think about the answer to your question, I would want to be in those rooms not because I was a woman, but because technology can help. Like, technology could've...the way we did polling is one example, but also the way we made decisions about how to spend our advertising money online versus offline.... I'm just telling you because when I reflect on what was heard, maybe I wasn't in those rooms because I'm a woman, but I think more, I wasn't in those rooms because I was this foreign engineer, and to me, that nobody could quite make sense of, and that was a really bigger hurdle to get over."

When gender, age, and political experience combined, women cited that they often limited their ability to bring new perspectives and their specialized skills to the campaigns they worked on - which are important reasons campaigns recruit from different professional fields in the first place. A tech staffer on a 2016 Republican primary campaign with a background in the commercial technology sector, for instance, described how:

"That was the toughest challenge I had with people who had been in politics was kind of like retraining them: 'yes, I know you did it this way back in 2012, we're going to try for something different because I think the technology has evolved and I think that the consumer has evolved and I think the way that people consume information has changed. We're not going to do it that way.'"

While outsider perspectives are important for campaigns, especially in the domain of rapidly changing consumer tech, fifteen women talked about how senior male leadership assumed they were less technically skilled than their male counterparts, even if they had extensive industry experience. Women described their male bosses unnecessarily criticizing their work, 'mansplaining.' and offering technical advice outside of their area of expertise (see below for a fuller discussion). Again, women described how their age and gender interacted to shape these dynamics. As one Obama reelection campaign veteran working in digital described:

"So, on Obama, it was a pretty…It was more men than women, I'm sure the numbers bear that out in

digital and tech. The leadership at the very top was men, in particular on the tech side, they were like a little bit of sexist men. And it was not necessarily the most women friendly workplace. When I worked in [redacted], my entire senior team was dudes…until I got there. We had like a senior staff retreat with donors, and the only women in the room were me, [names redacted], and then there were like 30 men, mostly white. So that was not ideal either, which meant that I had to find different ways to argue for my program because often, I was dismissed. Because also, I'm pretty young, so I was dismissed as…I reminded people of their granddaughters as opposed to a professional, which was problematic."

Relatedly, women we interviewed stated that they often felt stereotyped and boxed into traditionally female roles. Women argued that gender expectations showed in the tasks women were expected to perform and the behaviors they were judged for (discussed in greater detail below). For example, eight women from both Democratic and Republican campaigns discussed being expected to take on traditionally female responsibilities such as clerical work that they believed they were overqualified for and were not a part of their job description. Meanwhile, many women often felt that they did not get credit for the work they did do. A Hillary Clinton campaign 2016 veteran with prior digital experience, for instance, was expected to take notes for her male bosses in meetings:

"I had to unlearn a lot of things…It was your typical girl in the meeting takes all the notes and then does all of the work and gets none of the credit. It was very much the dynamic in [redacted state name], which frustrated me for a lot of reasons…. I was like, 'We're working for fucking Hillary Clinton and this is what our dynamic is?'"

" *I had to unlearn a lot of things…It was your typical girl in the meeting takes all the notes and then does all of the work and gets none of the credit…"*

Female staffers also described how their gender and age shaped their ability and willingness to speak up about these dynamics. Some women described male bosses expressing explicitly derogatory views regarding their age or gender. Others spoke about fearing retaliation, either in the context of their superior's power over their job and its responsibilities or capacity to harm their careers. As a state data and analytics staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign related:

"In a meeting about a report it wasn't out of my mind that this boss had made multiple sexist jokes. I was aware of that dynamic and knowing I'm a woman in my mid-twenties and he's in a more

powerful position in his forties and would often, the power dynamics of trying to derail what I wanted to do that are kind of hard to suss out in a boss because they are allowed to tell you what to do or override your decisions."

Finally, a number of interviewees also argued that digital operations, a growing area of campaigns where women are comparatively better represented, is often not taken as seriously as better established areas of campaigns such as communications or even more recently organized areas of political technology with higher status, such as data and analytics. As a result, eight of our interviewees working in digital politics wondered if they experienced being dismissed on campaigns because they were women, or if it was because digital was often looked down upon. As a senior state digital staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign related:

"The other thing that I don't know if it's tied specifically to being a woman or what, but working in digital, it was belittled a lot in the beginning. I don't know if it's because it's digital and politics was newish and not yet getting the props that it deserved, or if it was because the mouthpiece of the digital program was me a woman. A lot of the times we'd have meetings and people would be condescending and be like, the only question they would ask me about our plan for something is like, 'What's our hashtag gonna be?' which is like shitty, and digital is a lot more than hashtags. But again, I can't say for sure if that was because of the

digital or because of me being a woman."

Bro culture: As this staffer reveals, a number of interviewees argued that campaigns, particularly within the domain of political technology, is still a boys' club.

One example women cited is that drinking late in the office, or outside of it, is often a big part of the campaign experience. This has the capacity to blur the lines of what is appropriate to do at work and with co-workers and, at times, turned campaigns into a 'frat-like' culture.

Campaigns are notorious for their stress, long hours -- and booze. Women cited experiencing a number of situations that blurred lines between professional and social, which increased the possibility of inappropriateness. For example, one woman stated that a male colleague who was often inappropriately flirtatious texted her to "prepare your body" for the drinking they were going to do that night at bars. A senior state digital staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign described how:

> *"There was just always like a fratty vibe to campaigns, like you're always working late, there's always alcohol. People who could and should report probably feel uncomfortable given the nature of how weird your relationships are with people you work with on the campaign."*

As this woman pointed to, what was inappropriate or not could be hard to define in the context of a campaign because the lines between working and personal relationships were so often

blurred. Fifteen women discussed offhand sexist comments, jokes, or other gender-related comments being a routine part of office culture. Three women spoke of incidents where they felt uncomfortable by flirtatious comments made by male peers or superiors, but did not define it as 'inappropriate' in the broader context of the campaign. They instead preferred the language of 'off-putting' (which still clearly signals the fact that it made women uncomfortable.) As another senior state digital staffer for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign described:

> *"Yeah, just like the way he would talk to you would be kind...It seemed overly flirtatious. And again maybe he didn't intend to come off that way, but that's how it came off. It was never like, there was no inappropriate behavior. It was just kind of off-putting behavior."*

" *Everybody has been making the same jokes that every time a new article comes about #MeToo, like when is it hitting campaigns?*

Overall, a number of women cited that the mix of long hours, bro culture, alcohol, blurred lines, and stress can provide a toxic mix that results in women feeling uncomfortable and potentially can lead to inappropriate behavior, harassment, and

even assault in the workplace. As one staffer argued, speaking about campaigns more broadly (not necessarily political tech):

> "I think it's something that a lot of women are dealing with, but like it's so rampant in campaigns. Everybody has been making the same jokes that every time a new article comes about #MeToo, like when is it hitting campaigns? It hasn't hit campaigns yet. It's because it totally is coming, it's just like a matter of when and it's because it's so well known that this is how bad shit is here. Long hours, a lot of alcohol."

Double standards: Women raised an issue of a double standard when it came to the bro culture of campaigns. Our interviewees argued that there is a stigma attached to women who party on campaigns, whereas men are praised or even celebrated for the same behavior. For example, one state data and analytics director on the 2016 Clinton campaign described the tendency to ignore or even celebrate men's 'extracurricular' activities:

> "I can tell you that my [white male] deputies got a lot more credit than some other women in the office. I think that's just a way young men are viewed as for their potential and no one talks about their extracurricular drinking activities, like it's an asset that they're extra fun and the things they do versus young women in the office that seem more as irresponsible. And so that to me was really interesting to kind of be aware of that going on."

Two women also argued that these double standards applied to office relationships. Given that staffers are spending upward of fifteen hours a day together, they get to know each other pretty well. This fact, coupled with the prevalence of alcohol and stress, increases the likelihood of hookups and dating on campaigns. Women cited, however, that there was often an unfair double standard when it came to dating colleagues. When asked about what advice she would give to a new generation of campaigners, for instance, a senior director on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign advised against starting a relationship or fling on the campaign trail, which she said can make an already stressful experience absolutely exhausting:

> "Do I think that [dating or hookups] punishes women more than men? Yes. Depends on the campaign, but generally, yes. Yeah…. There's obviously gossip…. But I think it's not that there's a judgment call being made about your character so much as when you're doing so much emotional labor for work, adding on a layer of sitting in a meeting with your now ex-boyfriend or flirting with one guy while the guy that you're seeing is ten desks over…. It just adds a layer of exhaustion that is so unneeded and very rarely worth it."

Informal forms of exclusion: Related to the idea of bro culture, numerous women pointed to feeling excluded from informal forms of socializing on campaigns. Some of our interviewees cited that they were not invited to hang out with 'the boys'

outside of the office -- at those informal sites of socializing that often have important professional consequences in terms of helping staffers build relationships and trust.

For example, three women cited feeling excluded from social activities with 'the boys.' One woman who played football with other men and women in the office to blow off steam said that it was ironic when she -- and every other woman on the campaign -- did not get invited to join the office fantasy football league. For her, this captured the ways in which informal forms of exclusion limit women's professional opportunities:

> *my other boss just flat out left me out of meetings and wouldn't give me certain positions, only gave his buddies that were men certain positions."*

> *"So that I think was more funny to me than anything; that here we were, a few women and a couple guys had organized this football that we were playing but weren't invited to the league about fake football. But yeah I think in this instance I don't think I missed out on a ton. Those weren't really the folks I wanted to connect with professionally, but I think that was a great example of what happens all over, is those informal ways to get face time."*

Beyond this, women pointed to more explicit forms of professional exclusion within campaigns. Five women in leadership positions said they were not invited to meetings they should have been at, and that people were not reprimanded for excluding others from meetings, even if they did not have a good reason. One digital staffer on a 2016 Republican presidential campaign, for instance, described the systematic way she was left out of key channels of communication on the campaign:

> *"Then, my other boss just flat out left me out of meetings and wouldn't give me certain positions, only gave his buddies that were men certain positions and kept them in the loop and let them basically do whatever they wanted. Whereas I was so restricted on things and cut out of things. They were just charismatic and charming and buddies with everybody, you know."*

Challenges faced by women in leadership: Fifteen women pointed to the unique challenges that female directors and managers on campaigns faced. These women argued that sexism is still prevalent and does not disappear when women reach positions of power. Even when women were in higher-level positions, they believed their leadership styles were judged by different standards than their male co-workers.

For example, eight women argued that stereotypes about women in positions of power were prevalent. Interviewees cited not being able to act as leaders without being labeled a "bitch," and that they could not be detail-oriented without seeming like they "nagged" others on the team. The way female directors and

managers were talked about was sexist and lacked respect, as one senior state data staffer for the 2016 Clinton campaign and veteran of the Obama re-election bid stated in the context of recalling the way male colleagues spoke about a woman in a leadership role:

> *"I felt the way she was talked about was not okay. And that was absolutely gendered. Yeah, and I think also, to be honest, some of her flaws were things that were very traditionally thought of to be like flaws of women. She was pretty, she was like really detail-oriented, and people thought she was things you think of as like gendered traits. I just felt that the things they were complaining about were things...To be fair, she wasn't my boss, I didn't work with her that closely, so I can't really say that those weren't actual problems. Maybe they were, but I still think that there's a difference between saying I don't like her leadership style, and saying she's a bitch."*

At the same time, 18 women reported that aggressive personalities were especially prevalent within the senior ranks of male campaign staff. Women on both sides of the aisle told stories of senior staff males who yelled to quell opposition and created environments where abrasive competitiveness was ubiquitous. Women reported male behavior that belittled and devalued women's opinions more generally, and was rarely reprimanded since leaders themselves also employed this approach. As one senior digital staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign stated:

> *"I think in our department, we largely tried to keep that abrasive competitiveness out of our work, but at the senior staff level, it was much more pervasive.... I would say that specifically, [name redacted] his strategy of winning arguments with other department heads was to yell at them and belittle them. That happened a number of times during the campaign. It wasn't ever punished. He won arguments...he was the loudest and he would win. And I can't think, that I can't think of a single example of a woman leader on the campaign acting like that.*

A number of women argued that other approaches to leadership, including more collaborative ones, at times failed to garner respect from abrasive men. As a result, our interviewees cited that women in leadership roles sometimes tried to assume assertive qualities typical of men. They reported being sanctioned for breaking gendered behavior norms which prescribed compassion and cooperation. While men respected and rewarded other men for acting aggressively, our interviewees argued that women who imitated that behavior were met with disdain. Women in leadership therefore faced a double bind to earn respect in the workplace. And, as detailed above, women reported feeling an added pressure to maintain their likeability on top of executing regular work

responsibilities — a pressure men rarely faced.

Emotional labor: Our interviewees reported that women in leadership on campaigns were also expected to engage in "emotional labor." As researchers have used the term, emotional labor refers to the ways workers manage their feelings in accordance with organizationally defined expectations, rules, and guidelines. In practice for female leadership in political tech, it involved listening, validating, and being a support system for the people these staffers worked with. In interviews, we heard from four staffers that women expend more time and energy on emotional labor than men. As one senior staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign summed up: "The...women really ended up taking on the emotional labor of managing the team and ensuring that relationships with other departments were productive."

As this staffer goes on to argue, senior male staffers on the campaign did not have the same responsibilities or expectations. This highlights that men are able to spend more time on traditional campaign labor than women, and are not as invested, or expected to be, in the social and emotional work required to make workplaces function, which could lead to differential promotions or credit if emotional labor is not recognized by campaigns.
For example, another important aspect of emotional labor is balancing productivity with maintaining good relationships with coworkers. Another senior digital staffer from Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign said, in sharp contrast to senior men on the campaign being abrasive and yelling

> "*Even though I wasn't the highest ranking person on any of the teams I was ever on...I always felt very much like I was a leader and responsible for other people's moods, and feelings, and ability to work.*"

as detailed above: "So certainly there was an emotional labor of getting things done while making sure everyone still likes you, and thought that you were a nice person, and I don't think that the men at the senior level of the campaign felt that pressure."

A Senior staffer on Hilary 2016 and digital stagger for Obama 2012 stated that emotional labor is especially tricky in the context of women at times having to do extra work to carry someone that was not pulling their weight:

> *"The rest of us had to compensate, but also be really nice about it and sensitive. On the Clinton campaign I really did feel like...a woman leader. Even though I wasn't the highest ranking person on any of the teams I was ever on, except for the small team that I managed, I always felt very much like I was a leader and responsible for other people's moods, and feelings, and ability to work."*

These interviews highlighted the importance of emotional labor in building positive and productive team dynamics.

Because campaign work is particularly demanding and stressful, this labor is necessary to ensure that teams function well together and produce quality work. However, women should not have to carry all the emotional weight on their shoulders. Both men and women should be equally invested in and equipped with the emotional intelligence and compassion to manage group dynamics, personalities, and conflicts, and feel the shared responsibility of doing so.

Habitual disregard for female voices:
Relatedly, 19 women across our interviews cited having to navigate workplaces that were at times characterized by conflict and aggression, not collaboration, which they argued was more of an approach of the women on campaigns. They argued that men were often assertive and dominant in meetings, providing little space for women to voice their opinions and thoughts. They argued that men regularly condescended to women by discounting their competency and explaining already-understood concepts – a phenomenon colloquially known as "mansplaining."

For example, 18 of our interviewees stated that men often talked over women in meetings and devalued their speech when they did interject. They cited that aggressive personalities were especially prevalent within the highest ranks across all campaigns, but when women tried to adopt more aggressive demeanors to assimilate, they were punished for breaking gendered behavior norms. Others described needing confidence to push back on males who devalued their knowledge and experience. As a senior tech staffer on the 2016 Hillary Clinton presidential campaign described, pointing

to what a number of women cited was a phenomenon of 'progressive hypocrisy,' where men who worked in Democratic politics believed they could get a 'pass on feminism' because they are progressive (especially if they were working on Clinton's campaign):

> *"I mean, I think there was a lot of, yeah, progressive men who think that they are experts on particular topics…. I got mansplained so much on that campaign, it was ridiculous, and I remember joking around and being like, 'Is it still mansplaining if it's like a woke, gay man who's mansplaining?' And it's like, yeah, it still is, and my boss still quotes me, I guess at some point, I snapped at some guy, and I was like, 'Don't mansplain to me what a database is. I have a computer science degree…' She was like, 'That was amazing when you said that,' and I remember who I said that to, we're great friends, but still, at that time, he in the official rankings, probably outranked me, but I felt comfortable saying stuff like that, because it was just like, you know, again, if you feel confident to sort of push back, then it was bearable, but I could see that if you didn't have that confidence or didn't have that experience to push back on that kind of stuff, it could really be frustrating."*

As this staffer makes clear, even in the best case scenario - which a number of women described as a 2016 Hillary Clinton campaign where there was greater representation of and inclusion

for women - women still argued that they were the ones calling out problematic male behavior, not everyone felt comfortable doing so, and it did not often change that behavior. As a digital staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign described:

> *"I do think that [on Hillary for America] there was a pretty good sense of women calling things out, and men recognizing or at least acknowledging, not to say that that really would change their behavior, but I don't remember any men calling anything out on their own accord of like, 'Hey, man. That's not cool,' or, 'I just saw that happen. Are you okay?' I don't remember anything like that ever happening, but I do remember women being like, 'You need to respect women,' or this incident happened and not having a terrible reaction to that, if that makes sense."*

Several other women in our study reported feeling supported by both male peers and male supervisors. One regional digital director on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign, for instance, spoke highly of a former manager who went out of his way to solicit feedback about how women's experiences on the campaign could be improved. As she recalled:

> *"One thing that he would always ask in our one-on-ones that we had every week, every other week, was just like, 'Is there anything that you feel particularly as a woman that we could do differently or better or places you're being singled out?"*

This staffer also noted that when she was a victim of "accidental behavior that typically happen[s] to women," such as being talked over, "he did a really good job of calling out that behavior in the moment to people who were doing it, but also saying to [her] afterwards like, 'I'm sorry that happened.'"

> "*...there was definitely a dynamic within our team of people who had worked together before...I was very mindful of trying to play by the rules and not make recommendations for how to change the rules until I had built up that trust.... I had 10 fucking years of experience.*

Imposter syndrome: Four of our interviewees argued that many women lacked the necessary confidence to speak out in campaign settings, especially to call out problematic male behavior, but more broadly to make their voices heard. A senior digital staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign, for instance, described experiencing "imposter syndrome," where she hesitated to share ideas and make suggestions because she felt like an outsider to the campaign and

was unsure about her ideas and experience, despite having significant experience and expertise in the work domain she was responsible for. Research has found that "imposter syndrome," or the mistaken belief that one is unqualified or underqualified relative to peers, disproportionately affects women and people of color.

Even more, these women compared their own self-doubts with the personas of more outspoken male staffers, who seemingly had more confidence in their expertise and little reticence about contributing their thoughts. A number of our female interviewees, in particular, discussed how males on campaigns were more confident and assertive than women. As a tech staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign argued:

> *"It's just a no brainer that men will…often present their ideas with more confidence and certainty than a woman even if they're not necessarily more correct or qualified. Because they come off like that people will often assume that they are more correct than the woman that has question marks in her voice."*

Contrasting herself with males on the campaign, one digital staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign recalled the ways that she carried herself professionally:

> *"I think the one thing that I was conscious of, and I think this is a gender-specific thing, is I'm always really mindful of not stepping on people or taking up space. I don't*

want to ever have someone feel like I'm threatening their area, and there was definitely a dynamic within our team of people who had worked together before, who had already been there for a couple months, and so I was very mindful of trying to play by the rules and not make recommendations for how to change the rules until I had built up that trust…. I had 10 fucking years of experience. I had done this for a very long time. I definitely knew what I was doing, and yet, I watched the situation, and I felt like, well, I don't know anything about a political campaign."

Indeed, a number of women who came from outside of the political field to a presidential campaign echoed this staffer in citing their lack of campaign experience as one reason they refrained from sharing their expertise, which in turn cuts against the innovations that people coming to campaigns from outside of the field can bring, as detailed above. As one digital staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign related: "In that way, I think I delayed the advancement that I could've had earlier because I was really sort of…I didn't want to rock the boat, and I felt like I had not been in politics before." Interviewees believed that, by contrast, male colleagues, even those in similar situations, had less hesitation to speak their minds and share their opinions.

Interviewees stated that one thing feeding imposter syndrome was the fact that their skills or knowledge in traditionally male domains such as coding, software development, and video editing were underestimated or demeaned by male

peers. As a national and state digital staffer for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign related:

"I mean, there's lots of little things, especially in video, like men tend to feel like they know more about technical stuff. They'll try to control all of that if they can. Yeah. Then just like the side comments that people probably don't even realize they're doing of just like, 'I can't believe that you actually do that,' is just not productive….There's definitely a day-to-day, and this is obviously very specific to my job as a video producer, that my God, every single time I get up on a press riser and set up a tripod, put my camera up and every time I cover an event, which happened countless times on the campaign, there have been men who come up to me and try to tell me how to use my camera. I am not exaggerating when I say that. There have been guys who come up to me and tell me that I should frame the shot differently….There's just been endless mansplaining when it comes to actual video shooting."

In this context, women described a long process of gaining their confidence and voice. Once they did so, they related looking back and evaluating their earlier selves. As one senior digital staffer on

Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign related how far she has come in her career:

"I think I'm still, even now, still learning to use my voice and feel confident speaking out and feeling self-confident about my opinion. I'm still learning that after all these years, and even being at a necessarily strong female environment for part of my career, I can still second guess myself and hold back. So yeah, so I wish I had not held back at certain moments and said what I really thought…"

Mentoring relationships: For many women, mentorship was crucial to enabling them to break into campaign networks, ascend political ladders, and ultimately further their careers. Women sought mentorships for setting goals, confidence boosts, advice, social support, and learning of employment opportunities. Similarly, some female mentors specifically sought out younger female mentees to fulfill a perceived duty of helping to increase gender parity in politics.

For example, according to 32 of our interviewees, the presence of senior women on campaigns helped them, or other women, navigate campaign environments. Female mentors helped women resolve workplace conflicts and set personal goals. Sixteen women reported that female mentors helped them build confidence in their competency. Oftentimes senior women

helped their mentees with job placement, and so mentorship helped advance women's representation in the field of political tech. Eighteen women, for instance, credited at least one employment opportunity to their mentors' networks. As a senior digital staffer on the Hillary Clinton 2016 presidential campaign and veteran of the candidate's 2008 campaign as well related:

> *"I think, I hope, I'll have them [my mentors] for the rest of my life, because even now I'm, actually I don't know if I'm mid-career, but older and I still feel like they are just as important now as they ever were. In terms of helping me set goals, helping me look ahead in your career, helping you see all the different sides of choices in front of you. So yeah, from the very beginning, my mentors have changed over time, but they have always been really important particularly when I'm trying to figure out a next step or I'm thinking about how to tell my story or my narrative."*

Though 15 women noted they had meaningful male mentors, according to seven interviewees women reported experiencing more ease approaching women for mentorship, especially when personal circumstances such as motherhood made gender a more salient factor in a woman's career. As a senior digital staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign related:

> *"I suppose I've had a few male mentors, but I feel more comfortable with women. I wouldn't oppose it, and I've had a few in the past, and I*

> *still would consider them a mentor today, and having a situation, I might reach out to them, but definitely in terms of feeling comfortable and feeling like I could talk about a spectrum of things when you're thinking about a career moment in your life, for me.... I'm also a new mom and so my family and my personal life is a big factor for whatever things I'm making professionally, and so I think I feel more comfortable talking to a woman about probably that whole spectrum."*

Women intentionally mentoring young men can also reap benefits in terms of their increased awareness of gender issues on campaigns. A woman mentoring a male can also have spillover effects in terms of creating male allies who can work to check the behavior of other males or promote women's voices from a position of power. For example, a senior regional digital staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign spoke about a male hire with a female mentor who was surprisingly aware and had a detailed understanding of gendered work dynamics:

> *"What annoys me is that everybody thinks that he's in charge when the two of us get on a phone call even though I hired him and he recognizes that and tries to step back as much as possible. I think the reason why is because his mentor is a woman and so he's always been aware of...I've thought about this a lot recently, because this woman brought him up in politics, he seems to be more attuned to understanding that there are gender dynamics that*

exist at a really minute level and so he's more aware of them and that's been fascinating."

While some women said that gender was an irrelevant factor in their mentoring and they are equally open to both male and female mentees, others were very intentional in choosing women to mentor because they view mentorship as a duty to help level the gendered playing field in politics. As a senior veteran of Democratic campaigns during the 2008, 2012, and 2016 cycles related:

> *"I feel pretty strongly about your job as a woman being to promote other women pretty intensely. I do that. I've hired and trained lots and lots and lots of women who I'm recommending for jobs all the time and roles all the time, and serving as a reference all the time. That kind of shameless promotion I think is really important. When you're seeking out mentors, looking for people who are where you want to be, looking for women who are where you want to be someday, I think it's helpful. But I also think as a woman who has been...I almost don't want to put it on someone younger in their career to come find me, I want to go find them."*

Network relationships: Other women emphasized the importance of having a network of female colleagues, often at

> **"** *I...try and be someone who looks out for junior staffers, who will make sure that like, 'Hey, you're sabotaging yourself here?'"*

similar stages in their careers, in order to navigate a male-dominated field. These female-centric networks, which do not necessarily have to be limited to the field of political tech, are important in terms of creating support structures and hiring and promotion opportunities for all women in the network over the course of their careers.

For example, 16 women expressed that the support provided through these networks helped build their confidence and ultimately helped them and other women advance in their careers. Through these networks, women supported each other and counteracted the male-dominated networks of the campaign world. As a senior veteran of Democratic campaigns during the 2008, 2012, and 2016 cycles related:

> *"I have a group of women now that a friend of mine who actually used to have the job that I'm in right now, a few years ago, but she just got together a bunch of girlfriends and we've grown the list and it's become something where if someone writes something, we share it with the group and everyone shares it on their social networks. Or when we know of organizations that are looking for jobs, we trade it back and forth and say, 'Anyone know of any good women for these jobs?' Things like that. Where I think it's a priority to have a strong female network, whether that's mentors or not, and I think we all view it as important to try and mentor people. I don't know*

how much I succeed at that, but to try and be someone who looks out for junior staffers, who will make sure that like, 'Hey, you're sabotaging yourself here' or 'Hey, you should be going out for that job. Why aren't you?' and who connects people."

Meanwhile, as a state data and analytics director on the 2016 Clinton campaign described:

> *"I definitely found my professional networks to be supportive in terms of figuring out how to navigate things...How to navigate salary conversations and how to deal with bosses. I think I've just gotten personal support by folks I've worked with previously but those are less women in tech and more just previous coworkers in other fields."*

THE CHALLENGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

> " *That was the campaign where I really had to learn how to edge into a conversation where all dudes were talking to each other and I wanted to speak up and say something. And I remember lots of conversations with other women, particularly who worked closely on that bridge between digital and tech, being really exhausted by that. Because a lot of the women on the technology team were product managers, they were basically responsible for managing a team of male developers without being the direct report. That's a challenging position no matter what, especially if the structure isn't super intentional, that's the nature of technology a little bit or the way tech teams are specifically built. But in this situation, I think, they often felt pretty undermined and disempowered. Again, whether that was because they were women or not, I can't definitively say. There was a pattern that all women kind of felt that way."*

Senior veteran of Democratic campaigns during the 2008, 2012, and 2016 cycles

Introduction

In addition to the challenges women face in terms of representation and culturally male-dominated workplaces, women have few ways of holding people accountable for inappropriate behavior, arbitrary exercises of power, and retaliation for reporting. In this context, and coupled with the time delimited nature of campaigns and the mission-driven aspect of the work, women often avoid or ignore issues in the workplace.

Women argued that campaign human resources departments often lack the time, staff, and resources to provide policies, structure, and aid to staff. As a result, women who find themselves on the receiving end of a toxic work environment due to a colleague's harassment or misconduct -- implicit or explicit — frequently fail to report these incidents. If they consider reporting, they fear potential repercussions and retaliation. Indeed, our interviewees argued that men in trouble often get a pass due to their high status and powerful networks, leaving the women who reported them vulnerable to backlash.

Women, in turn, report having to pick up the slack for men who may be less qualified for their position than the women serving under them. Without accountability in the campaign workplace, female staffers tend to avoid and ignore the issues facing them in order to keep the mission of the campaign on track, which often outweighs the desire to shake the system up and create more equity in the workplace.

HR departments' lack of time and resources: Our interviewees reported that campaigns often lack the human resources infrastructure that is common in other workplaces. Thirty-six women pointed to two problems. Campaigns either lack a formal HR department entirely, or the department is understaffed and has limited resources. Both of which lead women to have doubts that campaign HR could be effective and helpful at resolving workplace issues.

Women argued that when formal human resources departments on campaigns do exist, they are oftentimes understaffed because campaign budgets are tight and HR is often an after-thought given the mission of getting a candidate elected. To take one example, on Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign - where there were over there was over 800 staffers at headquarters alone - a team of four human resources and diversity officers were responsible for approximately 4,200 staffers nationwide.

Five women cited that because employees are usually working on the campaign for only a short period of time, things such as employee satisfaction, development and growth, long-term job satisfaction, and advancement are not a top priority. Eight women described, for instance, how ineffective staffers were often worked around rather than coached or fired due to time constraints and sunk costs in employees. As a tech staffer on Obama's reelection campaign described:

"HR departments aren't there, they're really there to process paperwork. They're not there to help you figure out how to move somebody around. Once you hired somebody into that position, you don't have money to hire somebody else for that position and you're not going to fire them. It's just not going to work. It's not going to happen. Firing on campaigns doesn't happen, so there's such a disincentive to take risks. It's only a year. You only have a year. Are you really going to hire somebody, have them work for three months, figure out it's not working, fire them and then hire somebody else and have them ramp up for three months? No."

> **"** *...she wasn't offered his salary, or his title, she was just told to do all of the stuff he was supposed to do."*

In this context, women described a practice called 'layering,' where a lower level staff member unofficially takes on the responsibilities of a higher-level staffer. Women described a mentality on campaigns that they are too short and high profile to fire certain people who do not do their jobs well, especially if that hiring might lead to bad press. Women described disproportionately being asked to take on the work of male superiors without an increase in pay or position, redistributing labor to compensate for the underperforming employee, rather than firing him. As a senior state data staffer for the 2016 Hillary Clinton campaign described:

"I don't know if anybody told you, I don't know what your experience is if you've ever worked on a campaign. There's this thing that they do called 'layering' someone, which is if someone's not doing their job well, they can't really fire you because they don't want you to go to the media, and then that will look bad for them. So they just bring in someone to do your job over you, while you're still there. I had at least one friend who was essentially asked to layer her boss because he wasn't doing his job. But she wasn't offered his salary, or his title, she was just told to do all of the stuff he was supposed to do."

Fear of retaliation: The lack of effective human resources infrastructure has implications for all staffers, but women in particular see the repercussions disproportionately affecting them when they encounter workplace issues and have nowhere to turn or ways of holding people accountable.

For example, 14 women cited fearing that anything they requested or any complaint they made — from asking for a higher salary to reporting inappropriate behavior — would get them fired or have consequences for their jobs or careers. As a staffer on a 2016 Republican presidential campaign described, speaking in the context of a request for a salary increase: "If someone complains or says anything or whatever, they'll fire them and bring on someone else who's young and who will do it for nothing."

Indeed, only 12 women reported the presence of a functional human resources department and 10 women specifically stated that there was no reliable system for employees to report conflicts without the fear of retribution. As a staffer on a 2016 Republican presidential campaign described:

> *"Thinking back also, no, I don't feel like there was a place I could have gone....I felt like I would have been retaliated against, and I would have just been fired if I complained."*
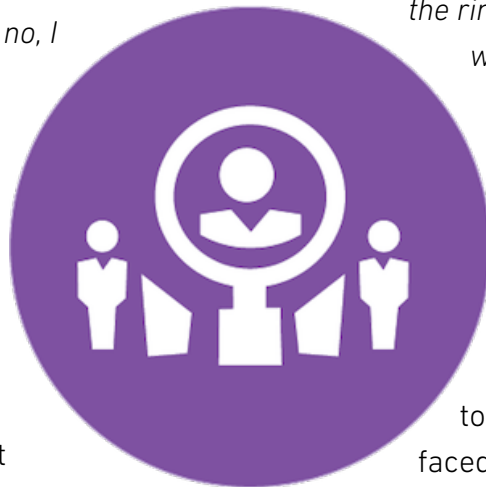
As a result, one theme that resonated across ten interviews is that women often kept silent given their fear of retaliation or backlash from higher-ups. Women we spoke to described the potential consequences of reporting workplace issues, including salary cuts, spiteful treatment, a ruined reputation, or burning bridges that limit the possibilities for future work. As a digital staffer for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign pointed out, "you don't want to be the person that shakes things up."

One digital staffer on a 2012 presidential campaign described the very real consequences for her career that she experienced, for instance, when she spoke out about mistreatment while working at a political consultancy after the campaign:

"When I spoke out a lot about the treatment though and even though I was the one being mistreated at the end of the day, I not only lost my job but he spoke so poorly of me to my next boss, that it made him not want to hire me. That guy put me through the ringer. I'm convinced that's why I was treated so poorly."

In lieu of strong human resources departments that could address issues such as these in an institutionalized and clear way, women at times turned to the legal system, where they faced barriers to accountability given the financial, emotional, and career costs of suing.

Avoiding and ignoring issues: Eight women we interviewed had witnessed and/or experienced several types of explicit inappropriate behavior, ranging from verbal abuses of power to offensive remarks made by male staffers. They also stated that most of the instances were simply not reported given the lack of support from human resources and already-hectic campaign schedules. Instead, women typically confided in friends or female colleagues, or, as a digital staffer working for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign related, internalized their thoughts and emotions:

> **"** *I think within the campaign there was sort of like this mentality that it doesn't matter what's going on. We have an election to win."*

> *"I only had a few jobs and most of them are crazy lifestyle campaigns. This isn't a normal corporate office. Lines are blurred where jokes are taken. It's a matter of, "Oh, that was a weird thing for her/him to say to me. That was inappropriate," and just paying attention to myself and my feeling of if I feel something is wrong, which I've gotten better at. I still see things and I have to decide, do I want to make a stink about it or do I need to let it go?"*

As detailed above, campaigns are a unique working environment because everyone knows there is a clear end date in sight. Coupled with the mission-driven nature of the work, staffers often used these factors to justify the long hours, missed vacations, and personal health sacrifices. Unfortunately, women reported that this also extends to ignoring sexism or abusive behaviors in the workplace. As a digital staffer on Mitt Romney's 2012 presidential campaign related:

> *was sort of like this mentality that it doesn't matter what's going on. We have an election to win. I don't wanna speak for other women, but I can 100% see if a woman had an issue as far as sexual harassment or unfair work hours or anything, which all of the hours were unfair. You all are working for a common goal, and that was to get him elected, and to win. Everyone seemed to be sort of addicted to that."*

Another reason female staffers avoided reporting inappropriate coworkers was due to the tight-knit nature of campaigns. When a staffer on a 2016 Republican primary bid was approached about an offensive racial remark a male co-worker made to her female colleague, she wanted to stand up for her, but felt she had to be careful about who she reported the incident to:

> *"It's such a close-knit environment. If you go out and complain or report anything, it's kind of like you have a target on your back. If you make a complaint, you're out of the game. The problem is when you're in this position, these guys are paying your salary. I heard someone say once, 'Don't bite the hand that feeds you.' If you complain and then they can fire you for any reason. Then you don't have a job, right? What are you supposed to do?"*

Meanwhile, one state deputy digital director on Clinton's 2016 campaign said a campaign manager on a Democratic congressional campaign she worked for would consistently hit on female staffers as young as 20. While it was an open

secret she discussed with many of her colleagues, the staffer did not face consequences because he was close to the candidate:

> *"There were a lot of occasions where I would overhear some of them talking about how they were Snapchatting with him in the middle of the night and just all kinds of things that were super inappropriate given that he was the campaign manager, and they were field organizers and fellows."*

Instead of reporting issues to human resources or a senior staffer, ten women cited that it's typically more common to warn female friends and colleagues to avoid the problematic co-worker. As one senior-level digital staffer who worked on Clinton's 2008 and 2016 campaigns related:

> *"You might say, 'Oh that firm, they're a bunch of chauvinistic pigs,' or you might say, 'Oh that firm is...there are no women at that firm.' You would acknowledge it, but in informal friend groups, nothing too formal or you just know who the bad guys are or the creepy guys are. You just look out for each other and tell each other to stay away. You don't have it registered in any public way."*

However, looking back on their campaign experiences, nine of the women we interviewed regretted not reporting or doing more about the inappropriate behavior they witnessed. As one senior digital staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign described:

> *"You might all acknowledge that this dude is creepy and yeah, you don't really want to be alone with him and so your male colleagues will help ensure that you're not alone with that creepy dude, but neither of you are reporting that guy to anybody, so you're both just as culpable because neither of you are doing anything."*

RECOMMENDATIONS

" *Someone basically made like a really crude comment...saying I could essentially grab her ass, and still not get fired.... And I remember us being told...we don't want to bring more press to this. Which we were like 'okay.' I think in general, honestly my impression was there were not a lot of HR processes that were established, and not just for harassment type of things, but for other things."*

Senior state data staffer for the 2016 Hillary Clinton campaign

Introduction

We asked our interviewees explicitly how campaigns could achieve more gender-inclusive workspaces and what advice they have for women entering the field. We ended up with a number of themes regarding what women in political technology can themselves do to address the representation and inclusion barriers that women in the field face, and what campaigns can do to work towards gender equity.

One central idea that emerged is of women helping women in an intentional way. Women in leadership positions, in particular, can promote women's voices in office culture, help to combat the toxic elements of bro culture and hold men accountable, work to ensure that credit is fairly recognized among campaign hierarchies, and support the careers of new generations of female staffers getting their start. Regardless of their career stage or position, women can create strong networks to help them navigate things such as salary negotiations and reporting, find employment on campaigns, and promote their careers and work. Women can also validate one another, instilling confidence in the face of slights and gendered stereotypes of technical competence.

The burden of promoting representation, inclusiveness, and accountability does not rest on the backs of female staffers alone. As we discussed earlier, male allies must use their already recognized voices to promote those of women and work to ensure representation through hiring and promotion. Campaigns themselves must create more deliberate hiring processes designed to achieve gender equity and diversity more broadly, giving women more opportunities to enter the field. Meanwhile, enforcing accountability, both through stronger HR departments and other institutionalized means, would help ensure robust reporting mechanisms and enforce clear consequences to root out misconduct. Formal and informal networking events for women would create more channels of communication, helping to root out problems before they occur.

In short, our interviewees argued that we can recode the boys' club, but it will require a lot of hard work.

Women in leadership helping women: One recommendation in particular echoed throughout our interviews — the need for women to help women. And, our interviewees argued that women need to be intentional about the ways they help other women whether they seek to rectify problems with representation, inclusiveness, or accountability.

As discussed in earlier sections, our interviewees argued that women in leadership positions have many unique opportunities to help other women in the field of political technology. Our interviewees suggested that women in positions of power can insist on hiring practices that make an intentional effort to achieve diversity. They can work to combat unhealthy work environments and practices on campaigns. They can prioritize women's voices being included in meetings. They can ensure credit is given internally when it is due and call out inappropriate comments and aspects of bro cultures that penalize women. They

can support women when they experience harassment or inappropriate behavior and help them hold perpetrators accountable. Moreover, women can actively seek out other women for new opportunities on campaigns and work to promote the careers of those younger than them.

For example, one veteran of both Obama's and Clinton's 2016 campaigns described her own attempts to be intentional about how she was promoting equity on campaigns and in political tech more generally:

> "Like, when I have the ability to do it: making sure you create a safe place to talk. If they get interrupted, calling it out. If they haven't spoken up in a meeting, directly calling on them to do so. If you are working on something and you need a partner to help you do it, intentionally going to them first…It was day by day, what's the series of things we can do to make sure people feel comfortable and strengthen their position in the room…I wish we were all more intentional about this."

> " *I mean not everything is a revolution. Sometimes it's just doing what you can to help the other women around you.*"

As this woman advocates, those who are further along in their careers and in positions of power should take an active role in intentionally helping women, and those who are younger and less experienced should pay it forward as they follow in their footsteps. A director on a Republican presidential primary

campaign in 2016 explains this extremely well:

> "I think the way you do it is, for lack of a better word, sort of forming the 'young woman's club.' By giving each other the kinds of support that men have enjoyed since the beginning of time. I think by really being supportive of each other, giving each other opportunities, imparting as much wisdom as you possibly can to women coming into your field. I think that this is one subtle way that you start to get around this thing. I mean not everything is a revolution. Sometimes it's just doing what you can to help the other women around you."

Even more, our interviewees argued that it is particularly important for women, and men, with a commitment to equity to be in a campaign's leadership. And, these men and women need to make a basic commitment to not tolerate inappropriate behavior. For example, one senior state digital staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign stressed the importance of leaders' commitment to equity and inclusiveness to setting the expectations for the entire organization:

> "I think the thing is like, this is really a top down kind of thing. If you have organizers who are the bottom rung of an organization trying to elect the president, and they are sexist to their fellow organizers or their volunteers or what have you, that's like a top down issue where their

boss is probably doing it, and then that person's boss is probably doing it, and that person's boss is probably doing it. The problem is we need to not have these people at the tippy tippy top of the organization exhibiting just horrible behavior because whether we like it or not, that kind of thing trickles down and sets an example and makes everyone else feel like acting like that is okay."

Thirty-two of our interviewees argued that having women in senior positions helped reduce sexism in the workplace. Having women in leadership positions and better represented within the ranks of staffers can create new norms of behavior that challenge the toxic elements of bro culture detailed above. As a senior veteran of Democratic campaigns during the 2008, 2012, and 2016 cycles related:

> *"When women are in positions of power they call bad behavior out, they make sure women have room to talk in a discussion and they help other women realize they can get to that position. The problem is that women being in these positions is rare."*

Strong networks of women: The women we interviewed recommended that women starting out in the field of political tech, or who are less-established in their careers, build a network of supportive peers that they can turn to for advice, to promote their accomplishments, and to further each other's careers. In these networks, there is often a source of comfort in shared experience, and unlike more formal mentorship roles, these networks

are relatively informal and often among friends.

For example, women can rely on their networks to help them navigate uncertainty in their professional lives. When dealing with tough aspects of their jobs, such as conversations about salary or a difficult boss, several interviewees recalled the importance of having a network of women from which they could learn or solicit advice. As a state data and analytics director on the 2016 Clinton campaign said:

> *"[Watching] women who are more advanced in their careers navigate struggles I haven't had to deal with has been really helpful. There were so many discussions on salary negotiations ages before I was really in a place to be able to do that, so by the time I was in those roles, I had seen it laid out and I had seen people offer advice on what they went through."*

Interviewees also stressed the importance of the information they often gained from their networks; for example, as detailed above, the ways that friends would tell friends to steer clear of certain firms that they knew had bad reputations. Another benefit of these networks for the women involved in them is having a group of women who will promote their achievements and recommend them for jobs. As previously discussed in detail, some women are more reluctant to self-promote, especially in contrast to their male colleagues. Hence, interviewees cited that women can take it upon themselves to highlight the accomplishments of the female colleagues in their networks. A former

Obama 2012 and Clinton 2016 staffer said she has a group of girlfriends that will always share each other's pieces on social media and flag jobs for one another if they know of an organization that is hiring. As a senior digital staffer for Clinton in 2016 recalled:

"When I was doing my grad school program, I was very much aware of how men and women really talk differently about the work that we were doing. We were all doing really cool work and really 'cutting edge' work, and I started to notice that the men were much faster at tooting their own horn than the women were, and that that would lead them to these opportunities that we weren't being given. They were tweeting about all of their things and posting it everywhere, and we were just like, 'Oh, it's not finished,' or, 'Oh, it's this.' So we started doing this informal thing where I'd be like, 'Okay, what are you working on this week?' With the women, at the school. 'Okay, you're working on this? Okay, cool. I'm gonna talk about it in this thing, I'll tweet it for you and then you can retweet it and then the next.' Helping each other toot our own horns"

Others echoed these sentiments, discussing how important networks are to helping women find employment in the political space more generally. As a

senior veteran of Democratic campaigns during the 2008, 2012, and 2016 cycles described:

"A lot of the women that I know are in either…they're all in politics, but they're in slightly different versions of that than what I do. And so great. So you want to go in nonprofits? Well, I have a friend who runs this nonprofit and another one who's worked for a ton of them and knows a bunch of funders, and how can I connect people?…I just think we find it helpful to do what wasn't always done for us, but at least we had peers. And to try and do that and be more deliberate about it."

Validation and self-confidence:
Networks of women also work to instill self-confidence in their members. A former Clinton 2016 staffer argued for the importance of validation to furthering women's work and careers:

"There was an Onion story a few years ago that was 'women get together for drinks to validate the shit out of each other.' And I have a wonderful group of female friends that…who are all women in powerful positions in different places, but we do that. We validate the shit out of each other. These are people who when they're talking to me say, 'Oh, here's how you could deal with this' or 'Here's what you could do with it.' 'Here's a way that you're not standing up for yourself enough, go out there and do it.' And I do the same thing for her, because it's easier to talk to someone else and

give them the good advice that you don't always take."

Validation helps women believe in themselves and their abilities. Several interviewees said that there is a culture of self-doubt that needs to be overcome for many women in political tech. And, self-confidence is something that can be socially produced on campaigns and within networks. Interviewees argued that women in the field should actively work to empower other women, helping to build their self-confidence and offering social support, whether those women are their colleagues or prospective political tech career hopefuls. Making the field more welcoming for women will help boost their confidence, and women can do this by clearly conveying that their female colleagues deserve to be in the positions they hold. As a state digital staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign stated:

> *"I think really empowering women to make sure that they know there is an opportunity for them to apply and they do deserve to be there, and I think the keyword there is 'deserve'. I think that women so often feel like they don't deserve to be in a space or that their voice won't be able to be loud enough to be heard by others. So I think that really working to create a*

" *We validate the shit out of each other. These are people who when they're talking to me say, 'Oh, here's how you could deal with this' or 'Here's what you could do with it.' 'Here's a way that you're not standing up for yourself enough, go out there and do it.'*

space where women feel like they do belong is important."

Strong validation from other women can create the internal self-confidence necessary to navigate male-dominated environments. A state data and analytics staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential bid offered the following advice to women seeking careers in political tech:

> *"Be confident in your skills, and your abilities and what you can do. Because, I think, often, women tend to doubt themselves a lot, and I know I do, especially. So, when I was coming onto the analytics team, I was worried that my skills wouldn't be up to par. That I didn't know enough about data analytics technology as some of the other people did. As some of the other men, in particular, did. But, even if I didn't, I was able to pick it up fairly quickly, I think. And I think make an important contribution."*

In terms of being more confident, a senior digital staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign emphasized the importance of women always believing in their capacity to learn new things, and working to expand their technical skills and education throughout the course of their careers:

"I think that knowledge is empowering, I think it helps you have confidence when you do encounter those situations where you have the difficult boss, or you have a team of 10 men and just you. If you know what you're talking about, not just from a policy standpoint, but from a technology standpoint, I think it helps you be respected, stay the course, and just build better tools."

In terms of advice to young women starting out their careers, a number of our interviewees stressed how important self-confidence is. As two senior veterans of Democratic campaigns during the 2008, 2012, and 2016 cycles described:

"Just learn as much as you can. Don't take shit from anybody. I mean that's really it, honestly, those are the two big things. Stay positive…At the end of the day no one should treat anybody differently because of their gender, race, sexual orientation, disability status, anything like that. And just stick to your guns."

"Be confident, more than anything. Don't be afraid to ask questions. There's people who will help. Also, walk in knowing that sometimes you're going to be the only woman in the room and just own that, because we've all been there."

Confidence can go a long way, especially if women feel supported — if they do, our interviewees cited that women are more likely to stand up for themselves. Several interviewees spoke about the recent shift in their own willingness, and women's willingness in general, to speak up in their professional lives given the MeToo movement. As a senior digital staffer on the Hillary Clinton 2016 presidential campaign related:

"Before MeToo, but certainly with that, I would argue that more and more women are not afraid to speak out or to call bullshit on something, and so I think with more and more women pursuing careers in these fields, there's also power in numbers and more people, if they feel that something's unfair or biased, they only over time have gotten more and more confidence that they should speak out, they can speak out. They'll be supported if they speak out."

Finally, women talked about the need to change representations of who belongs in the tech sector and get involved in promoting women in tech-related fields. As one senior state level data and analytics staffer for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign related, this needs to happen far afield from just political tech:

"We need to change the concept in which we have these images of San Francisco, Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook culture of all just white males…. Having and investing in mentorship programs with young girls who have an interest in science for them to know: don't get discouraged by your male counterparts. You do you. You rock what you're doing and continue and to do that in the future."

> **"** *...don't get discouraged by your male counterparts. You do you. You rock what you're doing and continue and to do that in the future."*

Deliberate hiring: Our interviewees related that the two most important things that campaigns can do to further gender equity in political tech is embrace more deliberate hiring and promotion practices and create real accountability mechanisms. Achieving representation and inclusion on campaigns and in political tech more generally is premised on making a deliberate effort to hire and promote women. Across our interviews, it was clear that a diverse campaign staff is not something that happens on its own. It must be actively constructed by intentional hiring practices established by campaign leadership. As a senior staffer on Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign expressed, campaign staff should be intentional in the earliest stages of an electoral bid about hiring a diverse group of people:

> *"I think a big, big part of that [diversity] is in the hiring process. I think it's easy on a campaign, especially on a digital team where things are moving so quickly, to think well, we just have to get everyone in here and then we can...once we've hired people, we can start solving these problems*

and addressing issues of bias and gender imbalance. But that's way too late! You have to really, deliberately think about this when you're building a team."

Senior leadership play an important role in this, which is why it is important to hire and promote women into positions of power. As a state digital staffer for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign argued "Part of it is, like I said, hiring the right people at the upper levels, because those are the ones that really tell you to branch out and do something that nobody has ever done before, etc." As one senior staffer on the 2016 Clinton campaign described her own department that she worked to staff, it featured both diversity and, as a consequence of this, awareness of gender-related issues that arose in the workplace:

> *"On top of it, the team that we brought together was, a majority of the team leads, across the [redacted] team, were all women, which also, I think, just led to us being particularly conscious about gender issues and it certainly meant that we talked about them very openly. We thought about them a lot as the media and the campaign played out. We were very aware of when gender stereotypes were happening, we're trying to identify them, trying to be mindful of them. I felt like actually the gender dynamic, we had a very, largely female team and I will say, I felt we hired, over the course of the campaign, a lot of younger people who particularly were really good at speaking out if they felt like the situation wasn't fair or if there was bias at play in some*

way, or they felt they were being mansplained to."

A candidate's vision for her or his staff can also shape the composition of a campaign's staffers. A common theme across our interviews was that the Clinton campaign's comparative gender equity was different from other campaigns these women had worked on, and it offered a model for intentionality in hiring to achieve diversity. Indeed, this was echoed in our quantitative results, although a common sentiment was also that this apparent diversity masked the fact that the campaign was also dominated by senior male staffers at the highest levels.

Finally, it matters how a campaign institutionalizes the hiring process. Diversity and inclusion can be a more deliberate and institutionalized part of the hiring process. As a senior digital staffer on the Hillary Clinton 2016 presidential campaign described, a member of the HR team regularly talked with staffers about setting diversity goals and evaluated how they were progressing towards them. As this staffer argued,

> *"It felt like we were just really in an environment that valued diversity. When you talk about gender, I think not only did we have individuals to who it was really important to, so they were advocates for it, but then the campaign to set up a structure, also to be supportive of it."*

Accountability mechanisms: Finally, one of the biggest issues with campaigns is the lack of robust human resources departments or other formal accountability mechanisms that could promote everything from fairness in

hiring and promotion to ensuring institutionalized reporting mechanisms for workplace issues.

In the commercial sector, for instance, HR departments serve a defined function that includes the supervision of hiring, firing, payroll, and other employee practices to ensure the organization is following both the law and a set of defined, codified, and fair procedures. Yet, across our interviews, women pointed to a lack of well resourced, clearly structured, and formalized HR departments on a diverse array of campaigns. More formal oversight would have been beneficial for women reporting harassment to their superiors or HR, to ensure standards and fairness in hiring and firing, to provide a way to hold those in positions of power accountable, and to preventing retaliation against whistleblowers. If HR departments had more resources, structures, formalized roles, and visible presences on campaigns, workplace conflicts and dynamics may be mediated in a more equitable way.

Even without a formal HR department, there are other ways to ensure greater accountability on campaigns. Having a designated officer to adjudicate or intervene in workplace disputes, appointed directly by the candidate, could mitigate the likelihood of conflicts of interest and reprisals. If the adjudicator cannot be fired by campaign staff, they will likely be more independent, impartial, and ultimately consequential in ensuring workplace fairness. As one senior staffer on a 2016 Republican primary campaign suggested:

> *"There has to be some sort of accountability held upon these*

people making the decisions…. Every campaign should have an ombudsman - and most importantly, someone who has NO political motives. This should be someone who is an independent outsider who can review complaints so they can be fairly heard. I think it should be someone who has never worked in the political industry and who will have no problem determining fair protocols, even if these decisions could hurt the candidate's chances of winning…. The ombudsman should make it clear that nobody is above harassment or wrongful procedures. Give examples of how people in power ARE held accountable."

Women in our interviews also sought more opportunities to voice complaints and discuss workplace issues. Women suggested that campaigns are more equitable when they create both formal and informal groups or meetings for women to discuss common issues they face, which also double as a source of support, mentoring, and networking. There are a number of potential advantages to these more formal and informal discussion spaces, including the opportunity to create channels of communication between directors and lower-level staffers, helping to make the former aware of issues before they turn into crises and conflict. Women on different teams in the campaign would have the opportunity to meet and create relationships with peers, and in the process, find potential support and allies.

" *Every campaign should have an ombudsman - and most importantly, someone who has NO political motives."*

CONCLUSION

Political tech marks the unique intersection of two very different fields. Applying tech to politics has not only changed the organization, content, and strategies of campaigns, it has presented new opportunities for women to get involved in the electoral process — and along with that, new barriers.

The challenge of representation for women in political tech is hard to ignore. As our quantitative findings revealed, there are disparities in the hiring of women into political tech positions across electoral cycles, campaigns, parties, and roles. These disparities are, in part, the product of the unique nature of campaigns, and also reflective of entrenched sexism and gender stereotypes. More deliberate and intentional hiring and promotion by campaigns can offer immediate and practical steps towards addressing these problems — and by proactively seeking out more diverse staffers, campaigns potentially will become more meritocratic, inclusive, and, we believe, organizationally and electorally effective.

An inclusive environment in political tech on campaigns will mean valuing input from all staff members, including women. Mentorships and strong networks can help women on campaigns and in their careers through validation and promotion, helping to create more self-confidence among women to speak up and make their voices heard and call out misconduct that is not conducive to respectful and fair working environments. As women recode the boy's club, bro culture should also be reset, from inappropriateness in the workplace to erasing practices such as mansplaining, taking undeserved credit, and double standards relating to how women should behave at work and manage their teams.

In an ideal world, we would have little need for accountability. Until then, however, campaigns can create stronger accountability mechanisms to ensure hiring, firing, and promotion are fair, people are performing in their jobs and being evaluated fairly, and women in particular do not have to fear being retaliated against if they speak out. Women in leadership roles and their male allies can work to change campaign culture, including advocating for women to be more vocal about the problems they experience. Staff members should not be afraid to shake an unfair and ineffective system up — this is a key part of the recoding project, after all.

APPENDICES

Quantitative Methods

Quantitative Data

The quantitative research presented in this report focuses specifically on hiring patterns for political tech staffers employed by U.S. presidential campaigns from 2004 to 2016. Using data from "Democracy in Action," which organizes public data on campaign staffing, one of the authors compiled a list of all staffers who either worked in campaign divisions dedicated to technology, digital, data, or analytics or who had these words in their titles from the 2004, 2008, and 2012 presidential cycles. To supplement the 2004 to 2012 data of 629 staffers, we later compiled and added the same data for the 2016 presidential cycle, leading to a dataset of 995 total staffers. The dataset also contains staffers' complete employment biographies from publicly available websites.

Variables and Coding Procedure

Each of the eight undergraduate researchers involved in the quantitative analysis coded 100 unique units for the full study and 100 units for the intercoder reliability test. Coding began with the recording of fundamental information such as the gender and political party of employment for each staffer. Coders then identified the staffer's employment history specific to presidential campaigns, including the election cycles and candidates for which the staffer worked as well as the total number of campaigns worked. Staffers were then coded for the presence of director-level or higher positions on presidential campaigns as a sign of leadership or promotion within the campaign; when coding this variable, coders were instructed to be as inclusive as possible, although we drew the line at 'director' (i.e.: no deputy director level positions were included.)

Finally, coders assessed whether staffers who worked on a 2016 presidential campaign served in roles in digital/social media, data, technology, or analytics divisions (if applicable) based on divisions and titles denoted by campaign on p2016.org. If the role was not listed on the campaign's organizational chart on this site, it was not coded as a part of these four divisions. Coding of divisions reached 99% simple agreement and Krippendorff's alpha of .82 but only accounted for 29% of the full dataset, most of which fell within 'digital/social media'; therefore, the variable was removed from quantitative analysis.

Similar to Kreiss (2016), in the interest of being as inclusive as possible, we coded organizational founders as staffers who indicated their titles on LinkedIn or other

publicly available sources as "founder," "founding partner," or "principal." Meanwhile, we also accounted for some staffers founding multiple firms or groups of individuals co-founding firms by calculating the number of unique organizations founded as well as the number of founders following a presidential campaign.

Reliability

Eight coders were comprehensively trained in independently coding all 995 units in the dataset. After coders completed training, a subgroup of the main study data – 100 units, or 10% of the dataset – was selected for reliability testing using sampling theory and guidance from Lacy et al. (2015). Using Krippendorff's alpha, intercoder reliability was assessed, with all variables reaching acceptable levels of alpha: gender (.83), party (1.0), director-level (.74), number of campaigns (.92), 2000 campaigns (.98), 2004 campaigns (1.0), 2008 campaigns (1.0), 2012 campaigns (.90), and 2016 campaigns (1.0). Average pairwise percent agreement ranged from 88% to 100% for all variables, with six variables reaching at least 98% simple agreement.

Qualitative Methods

This report is animated by interviews the research team conducted with forty-five women who worked in U.S. presidential politics between the years of 2004-2016 in the areas of technology, digital, data, or analytics. These interviews were all conducted from January-April 2018 with the exception of three pilot interviews which took place during the fall of 2017 to train the undergraduate researchers on qualitative interview methods. In addition, all of the undergraduate researchers had to observe at least one interview with the lead researcher (Daniel Kreiss) before conducting their own interviews in teams of two or three students.

During the spring semester 2018, we worked to identify contact information for all of the women in our dataset to invite them to participate in the study. We were able to identify contact information for approximately 172 women in the dataset, and of them we were able to conduct forty-five interviews. Given the potentially sensitive nature of these interviews, and the likelihood that participants would address themes that affected future employment, all participants were granted confidentiality and information was reported only using general descriptors of roles on presidential campaigns. This research was approved by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Institutional Review Board. We made attribution reporting decisions in terms of campaigns these women worked on and their roles within them with attention to whether information would breach their confidentiality. In a number of cases, campaigns had so few women, or so few women in particular roles, that it was impossible to report specific campaigns or organizational roles. In these cases, we opted to provide only party and electoral cycle data. In the end, we spoke with forty-five women who worked on twelve different presidential campaigns during the 2008, 2012, and 2016 cycles. These campaigns were

George W. Bush 2004, Jeb Bush 2016, Chris Christie 2016, Hillary Clinton 2008 and 2016, John Edwards 2004 and 2008, Rudy Giuliani 2008, John McCain 2008, Barack Obama 2008 and 2012, and Mitt Romney 2012.

The research team developed a common interview protocol that asked general questions about women's organizational experiences working on campaigns, their reception and treatment on campaigns, the attitudes and behaviors of male colleagues, experiences with gender bias and sexual harassment or more broadly times when workplace conditions made them uncomfortable, and their careers in the field in terms of mentors they have had and opportunities for advancement and entrepreneurship. We also specifically asked, given the quantitative findings, about what would be different about campaigns with greater gender equity in terms of hiring and workplace culture, as well as any recommendations they had to work towards these things. These interviews were semi-structured, however, often proceeding from asking women about the chronological arc of their careers and campaign experiences, which offered us the opportunity to learn about things we did not anticipate going into the study. Interviews, on average, lasted approximately an hour, with a few proceeding to take significantly longer.

To analyze the data, all of the researchers wrote theoretical memos after each interview took place and was transcribed. The research team then met for one hour-long session to sketch out initial themes that inductively emerged through analysis of the data. Each member of the research team then chose twelve transcripts to inductively analyze (so each transcript

had at least three separate analyses given the lead researcher read every one), generating themes and sub-themes and attendant quotes for each. The lead researcher then developed a spreadsheet of themes and sub-themes inductively developed from the transcripts, which the rest of the research team also populated. The entire research team then met for an hour to collapse these down into four main themes and 47 sub-themes, which the team then wrote up with attendant quotes illustrating these themes and checked the frequency of in the interview transcripts. In the course of crafting this report, we further collapsed and recombined these themes and subthemes, resulting in the final organization of the report around representation, inclusiveness, and accountability, in addition to recommendations for addressing challenges in each domain.

The research team made the decision to approach the findings through the lens of the overlapping themes that emerged from the interview data regarding the workplaces that women encountered, regardless of the specific campaigns they worked on. The difficulties of drawing firm conclusions about specific campaigns was apparent early on in the interviews, as women working on the same campaign at times had very different experiences depending on their roles or bosses. At the same time, we wanted to be careful about drawing any explicit or implicit comparisons between campaigns based on incomplete interview data. As such, we focused here on the themes that emerged in common across these interviews. This makes the report less about 'who did what better' and more about 'what can we learn from the experiences of women on

campaigns regardless of candidate or party, and what general conditions of organization and culture produce more equitable work environments.' We believe that this approach ultimately resulted in a report that provides a clearer summation of women's experiences in the political technology domain and a more generalized set of recommendations for what should happen going forward.

Throughout this report, we cite the number of times across our interviews that women addressed the themes we are discussing. This frequency data reflects the total number of women who mentioned that theme, either in response to an explicit question or proactively in the context of the interview. Because the interviews were semi-structured, and therefore allowed for considerable dialogue between the interviewers and the participants and as a result considerable variation in the specific questions asked, we report these frequencies as general indications of how often a phenomenon came up in interviews, not as a definitive metric for how many women shared similar thoughts.

NOTES

1. This discussion is in Daniel Kreiss, Prototype Politics: Technology-intensive Campaigning and the Data of Democracy. Oxford University Press, 2016. We embrace the same terminology here.

2. For an excellent overview of women's long history in technology, see Marie Hicks, Programmed inequality: How Britain Discarded Women Technologists and Lost its Edge in Computing. MIT Press, 2017.

3. Aaron Blake, "Yes, Politics is Still Dominated by Old, White Men. Here's Why." The Washington Post, September 3, 2014. Online at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2014/09/03/why-politics-is-still-dominated-by-old-white-men/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.3fe4ee646857

4. See Emily Chang, Brotopia: Breaking Up the Boys Club of Silicon Valley. 2018. Penguin: New York. Moshe Y. Vardi, "How We Lost the Women in Computing." Communications of the ACM 61, no. 5 (2018): 9-9.; Rani Molla, "It's Not Just Google — Many Major Tech Companies are Struggling With Diversity." Recode, August 7, 2017. Online at: https://www.recode.net/2017/8/7/16108122/major-tech-companies-silicon-valley-diversity-women-tech-engineer; Daisuke Wakabayashi, "At Google, Employee-Led Effort Finds Men Are Paid More Than Women." The New York Times. September 8, 2017. Online at: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/08/technology/google-salaries-gender-disparity.html;

5. See, for instance, Sheen S. Levine and David Stark, "Diversity Makes You Brighter." The New York Times. December 9, 2015. Online at: https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/09/opinion/diversity-makes-you-brighter.html

6. George-Levi Gayle, Limor Golan, and Robert A. Miller. "Gender Differences in Executive Compensation and Job Mobility." Journal of Labor Economics 30, no. 4 (2012): 829-872.

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8. Kreiss, Prototype Politics

9. For a study of how the culture of recruiting effects women's participation in the tech industry see: Alison T. Wynn and Shelley J. Correll. "Puncturing the Pipeline: Do Technology Companies Alienate Women in Recruiting Sessions?." Social Studies of Science 48, no. 1 (2018): 149-164.

10. See "Women Candidates and their Campaigns," Political Parity. Online at: https://www.politicalparity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Parity-Research-Full.pdf; Madeleine Kunin. Pearls, Politics, & Power: How Women Can Win and Lead. Chelsea Green Publishing, 2008.

11. Joan C. Williams, "The 5 Biases Pushing Women Out of STEM." Harvard Business Review (2015).

12. Nilanjana Dasgupta and Jane G. Stout. "Girls and Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics: STEMing the Tide and Broadening Participation in STEM Careers." Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences 1, no. 1 (2014): 21-29.

13. National Partnership for Women & Families, "America's Women and the Wage Gap." Online at: http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/workplace-fairness/fair-pay/americas-women-and-the-wage-gap.pdf Research has shown that even when important variables like part-time working, industry, and occupation are taken into account, a statistically significant gender wage gap remains: Katie Meara, Francesco Pastore, and Allan Webster. "Is the Gender Pay Gap in the US Just the Result of Gender Segregation at Work?." (2017).

14. There have been a number of surveys of salaries in political tech on the Democratic side of the aisle. The "2017 Progressive Data, Analytics, and Technology Salary Survey" found that men and women made the same median salary (online at: https://www.crackthecode.io/salary2017).

15. For more on how a lack of women in top leadership affects promotions for women in the workplace see: Jessica A. Kennedy and Laura J. Kray. "A Pawn in Someone Else's Game?: The Cognitive, Motivational, and Paradigmatic Barriers to Women's Excelling in Negotiation." Research in Organizational Behavior 35 (2015): 3-28.

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17. For a more detailed account of how a lack of recognition and shadowing of women's accomplishments have perpetuated a masculine-associated conception of technology, see: Ruth Oldenziel, Making Technology Masculine: Men, Women and Modern Machines in America, 1870-1945. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010.

18. One study of 240 Silicon Valley leaders reported that visibility of work was the number one factor leading to promotions. See Shelley Cornell and Lori Mackenzie. "To Succeed in Tech, Women Need More Visibility." Harvard Business Review. September 13 (2016).

19. For rates of 'field-crossing' from the tech industry and commercial sectors into presidential politics see Kreiss, Prototype Politics.

20. For more on the origins of the term "mansplaining" see: Anne-Charlotte Husson, "Feminist Thought and Online Lexical Creativity: the Case of 'Mansplaining'." In Feminist Thought-Politics of Concepts. 5th Christina Conference on Gender Studies. 2013

21. One study found that in male-dominated fields, women increasingly initiate certain behaviors, like drinking, to be part of socializing situations with men where informal decision-making may occur: Gloria Messick Svare, Leonard Miller, and Genevieve Ames. "Social Climate and Workplace Drinking Among Women in a Male-dominated Occupation." Addictive behaviors 29, no. 8 (2004): 1691-1698.

22. For more on how stereotypical gender traits lead to perceived incongruence of leader role and gender role for women, see Gary N. Powell and Laura M. Graves, "Women and Men in Management." Sage, 2003; Kim L. Fridkin and Patrick J. Kenney. "How the Gender of US Senators Influences People's Understanding and Engagement in Politics." The Journal of Politics 76, no. 4 (2014): 1017-1031.

23. Amy S. Wharton, "The Sociology of Emotional Labor." Annual Review of Sociology 35 (2009): 147-165.

24. See Suw Charman-Anderson, Lauren Kane, and Al Meadows, "Championing the Success of Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths, and Medicine: A Collection of Thought Pieces from Members of the Academic Community." VOCED. (2017).

25. Tony Lee, "HR Lessons from the Campaign Trail," Society for Human Resource Management. Available online at: https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/behavioral-competencies/global-and-cultural-effectiveness/pages/hr-lessons-from-the-campaign-trail.aspx

26. For Democracy in Action's disclaimer about the data, see: http://www.p2016.org/parties/disclaimer10.html.

27. Daniel Kreiss, Prototype Politics.

28. Stephen Lacy, Brendan R. Watson, Daniel Riffe, and Jennette Lovejoy. "Issues and Best Practices in Content Analysis." Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly 92, no. 4 (2015): 791-811.

RESOURCES

TheBridge: The Bridge is a network connecting tech, political & non-profit professionals from the Bay Area to DC. Resources include a weekly newsletter, an extensive job board, and profiles of its members. Additionally, it organizes networking and educational events at locations like Google and Microsoft.

https://www.thebridgework.com/

Better Brave: BetterBrave is combating sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace by providing resources, tools, and employment lawyers to targets. In short, they help connect the victim of ANY type of workplace harassment or aggression with any type of resource that is best for them.

https://www.betterbrave.org/

Futures Without Violence/Workplaces Respond: Futures Without Violence/Workplaces Respond is a national resource center that educates and builds collaborations among workplace and non-workplace stakeholders – employers, worker associations, unions, and anti-violence advocates – to prevent and respond to domestic violence, sexual harassment & violence, trafficking, stalking, and exploitation impacting the workplace.

https://www.workplacesrespond.org/

Project Include: Project Include's mission is to give everyone a fair chance to succeed in tech. We are a non-profit that uses data and advocacy to accelerate diversity and inclusion solutions in the tech industry.

http://projectinclude.org/

TIME'S UP: The TIME'S UP Legal Defense Fund provides subsidized legal support to those who have experienced sexual harassment, assault, or abuse in the workplace. The organization works in partnership with the National Women's Law Center.

https://www.timesupnow.com/

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